

POLITICAL MONITOR NO. 23

OFFICIAL MEDIA

US SECRETARY OF STATE CLINTON & PRESIDENT MEET AT US-ASEAN ECONOMIC FORUM

President U Thein Sein attended the US-ASEAN Economic Forum held in Siem Reap, Cambodia where he met US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton as well as other ASEAN leaders. They discussed the promotion and cooperation of bilateral ties between the US and Burma, the easing of sanctions on Burma, political prisoners, environmental protection and the recent sectarian violence in the Rakhine State. Secretary Clinton reiterated that the rule of law must be entirely enforced and transparency strictly guided and expressed her desire that on-going democratic changes in Burma continue. The President also met other ASEAN leaders including Cambodian Prime Minister Samdech Hun Sen and Thai PM Yingluck Shinawatra.¹

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The US-ASEAN Business Forum is the largest ever gathering of America corporate leaders in Asia, and included executives from Coca-Cola, Caterpillar, DHL and Goldman Sachs.²

PRESIDENT ADDRESSES US-ASEAN ECONOMIC FORUM, CLARIFIES REFORMS

At a dinner hosted by the US-ASEAN Economic Council and the US-ASEAN Merchants' Association³ as part of the US-ASEAN Economic Forum, President U Thein Sein delivered an address where he outlined his government's recent reforms.

The President explained that with the establishment of a new government in Burma, the government has been striving to fulfil wishes of the Burmese to see true changes by simultaneously implementing three key reform measures.

The first is to change from the centralized system of the past 50 years and build a mature democratic State. In order to do this, there must be reforms of Executive, Legislative and Judiciary bodies, measures to review or revoke existing laws that are no longer valid, as well as a reform of the bureaucratic system and the mindset of government officials.

The government has met newly elected MP Aung San Suu Kyi and has invited her to hold discussions, set aside differences and work together based on common grounds. It is also engaging with leaders of the ethnic nationalities, political parties, civil society, and foreign and domestic intelligentsia.

¹ President U Thein Sein leaves for Cambodia to attend US-ASEAN Economic Forum – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-07-14.pdf> (NLM) 14 July 2012 (p. 1) / President U Thein Sein holds meeting with US Secretary of State – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-07-15.pdf> (NLM) 15 July 2012 (p. 1) / President U Thein Sein meets Cambodian Prime Minister – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-07-15.pdf> (NLM) 15 July 2012 (p. 16) / President U Thein Sein holds discussions with Thai Prime Minister – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-07-15.pdf> (NLM) 15 July 2012 (p. 16) / Clinton meets Burma's president for landmark talks –

http://www.france24.com/en/20120713-clinton-meet-burma-president-landmark-talks-thein-sein-siem-reap-cambodia-usa?ns_campaign=editorial&ns_source=RSS_public&ns_mchannel=RSS&ns_fee=0&ns_linkname=20120713_clinton_meet_burma_president_landmark_talks (France 24) 13 July 2012

² Clinton meets Burma's president for landmark talks – http://www.france24.com/en/20120713-clinton-meet-burma-president-landmark-talks-thein-sein-siem-reap-cambodia-usa?ns_campaign=editorial&ns_source=RSS_public&ns_mchannel=RSS&ns_fee=0&ns_linkname=20120713_clinton_meet_burma_president_landmark_talks (France 24) 13 July 2012

³ Those in attendance included Cambodian Prime Minister Samdech Hun Sen, Thai Prime Minister Ms Yingluck Shinawatra, and US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (who all also spoke), and well as ASEAN ministers, high-level officials, and ASEAN and US businessmen.

⁴ To best serve interest of people and country, we have fervent desire to seek technical know-how, to set up economic engagement with other countries but sanctions are still restricting us from doing so - President U Thein Sein – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-07-15.pdf> (NLM) 15 July 2012 (p. 1 & 8)

In order to achieve national reconsolidation, the government has granted amnesty to many prisoners, relaxed regulations on media and telecommunications, invited expatriates to return home, eased printing and censorship procedures and has committed to enact a media law for media freedom and transparency.

The government has also permitted the formation of political parties and civil society organizations and enacted necessary laws to protect the fundamental rights of citizens, such as the formation of labour unions and the freedom of assembly and speech.

The second reform measure is to achieve a long lasting peace after 60 years since independence. In 2011, the government launched a new mode of operandi and coordination through a new dialogue, enabling the signing of ceasefire agreements with the ten ethnic armed groups, and has also made important engagement with the KIO/KIA from Kachin State as well.

The third reform measure is to transform the centralized economy into a market-oriented economy, with special emphasis on the development of rural areas and poverty alleviation. These initiatives are being implemented despite little assistance from international monetary institutions, including the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) due to sanctions. The government has a fervent desire to seek technical knowhow and to set up economic engagement with other countries but sanctions restrict it from doing so. With the enactment of the Myanmar Foreign Investment Law, the hope is to attract more investment that will both serve the interest of the nation and investors alike, and the Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) has been created to ensure that established standards are abided.

In his conclusion, the President pledged to work together with Asian countries to achieve their objectives through a green economy in order to protect the environment and prevent natural disasters, to overcome obstacles and achieve regional development and also contribute to the maintenance of world peace and prosperity. He also reiterated Burma's commitment to actively participate in attaining the ASEAN aims of achieving "Rich ASEAN 2030" and at the same time build mutual understanding.⁴

PRESIDENT MAKES OFFICIAL VISIT TO THAILAND

President U Thein Sein led an official delegation to Thailand from 22 – 24 July. The President held official talks with Thai Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra and discussed a wide range of issues including greater cooperation between the two countries in trade and economic sectors including the establishment of border industrial zones along the Thai-Burma border. They also discussed Burmese migrant workers in Thailand, as well as the early and successful implementation of the Dawei Region Special Economic Zone project. The Thai PM proposed further coordination and consultations of two working committees in August regarding the project. In addition, three MOUs were signed on 1) the comprehensive development in Dawei special economic zone and related projects in the area, 2) a MoU on development cooperation in Burma and 3) a joint statement on the establishment of an energy forum.

President Thein Sein also met representatives from various Thai business sectors, including the heads of the energy giant Petroleum Authority of Thailand (PTT) and the industrial conglomerate Siam Cement, and visited the deep-sea port operations in Laem Chabang in Chon Buri on 22 July. According to recent statistics, Thailand is the second largest investor in Burma in terms of trade investment and economic cooperation with an estimated US\$ 9 billion, accounting for 23.32 per cent of total investment in Burma.⁵

⁴ To best serve interest of people and country, we have fervent desire to seek technical know-how, to set up economic engagement with other countries but sanctions are still restricting us from doing so - President U Thein Sein – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-07-15.pdf> (NLM) 15 July 2012 (p. 1 & 8)

⁵ President U Thein Sein leaves for Thailand on goodwill visit – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-07-23.pdf> (NLM) 23 July 2012 (p. 1) / President U Thein Sein heads for home -

UNESCO CHIEF MEETS BURMESE PRESIDENT

During her first visit to Burma from 7 to 10 August, United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Director-General Irina Bokova met President U Thein Sein and five senior government ministers as well as National League for Democracy chairperson MP Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. In the official meetings in Nay Pyi Taw, both sides agreed to further strengthen cooperation between Burma and UNESCO, including the establishment of a project office in Burma.

Bokova also visited Bagan on 8 August and encouraged authorities to resubmit the nomination of Bagan as a World Heritage Site, after its first nomination was rejected back in 1995 due to lack of information and data. Recently, the UNESCO and Burma signed a cooperation agreement worth USD\$530,000 project on "Building Capacity to Safeguard Cultural Heritage in Burma."⁶

TURKISH FOREIGN MINISTER MAKES 1st HISTORIC VISIT

In the first-ever high-ranking official visit, Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu visited Burma from 8-10 August and met President Thein Sein in Nay Pyi Taw as well as key government ministers including the Ministers for Immigration, Border Affairs and Foreign Affairs. The FM said that the recent communal violence in Rakhine State should not tarnish the image of the positive steps being undertaken by the Burmese government and that Turkey would like to provide humanitarian aid and assistance. The misunderstanding of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) countries could be prevented by allowing international assistance while at the same time giving access to independent observers to the affected area could dispel doubts regarding the issue. A donation of

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-07-27.pdf> (NLM) 27 July 2012 (p. 9) /

President U Thein Sein receives red carpet treatment from Thai Prime Minister Ms Yingluck Shinawatra –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-07-26.pdf> (NLM) 26 July 2012 (p. 1 & 8) /

Myanmar vows to strengthen prevailing friendship, open-hearted mutual trust, bilateral cooperation between two neighbouring countries/Thai Prime Minister Ms Yingluck Shinawatra hosts dinner to President U Thein Sein –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-07-27.pdf> (NLM) 27 July 2012 (p. 1 & 8) /

Thai investment invited in rubber, oil palm and other commercial plantations to be established for development of job creation in regions sharing border with Thailand - President U Thein Sein / Thai government would push forward for earliest completion of Dawei Deep Sea Port Project for it would be biggest deep sea port in region - Thai Prime Minister Ms. Yingluck Shinawatra –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-07-26.pdf> (NLM) 26 July 2012 (p. 1, 9 & 10) /

President U Thein Sein receives Thai businessmen –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-07-27.pdf> (NLM) 27 July 2012 (p. 16) /

President U Thein Sein visits Laem Chabang Port, Industrial Estate in Chonburi Province, Thailand –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-07-26.pdf> (NLM) 26 July 2012 (p. 16)

⁶ As armed groups are in border areas, continued efforts are to be made for development of education and health sectors in those regions when peace prevails - President U Thein Sein / As peace and sustainable development are interdependent, it is now crucial for the two to emerge simultaneously - UNESCO Director-General Ms Irina Bokova –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-08-08.pdf> (NLM) 8 August 2012 (p. 1 & 2) /

DG of UNESCO arrives in Nay Pyi Taw –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-08-08.pdf> (NLM) 8 August 2012 (p. 9) /

Director-General Pledges Full Support to Myanmar's Democratic Transition –

[http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/about-us/who-we-are/director-general/singleview-](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/about-us/who-we-are/director-general/singleview-dg/news/director_general_pledges_full_support_to_myanmars_democratic_transition/)

[dg/news/director_general_pledges_full_support_to_myanmars_democratic_transition/](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/about-us/who-we-are/director-general/singleview-dg/news/director_general_pledges_full_support_to_myanmars_democratic_transition/) UNESCO Director-General's Official website) – 7 August 2012 /

Director-General Visits the Buddhist Monuments of Bagan –

[http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/about-us/who-we-are/director-general/singleview-](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/about-us/who-we-are/director-general/singleview-dg/news/director_general_visits_the_buddhist_monuments_of_bagan/)

[dg/news/director_general_visits_the_buddhist_monuments_of_bagan/](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/about-us/who-we-are/director-general/singleview-dg/news/director_general_visits_the_buddhist_monuments_of_bagan/) (UNESCO Director-General's Official website) – 9 August 2012 /

Director-General Pledges Full Support to Myanmar's Democratic Transition –

[http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/about-us/who-we-are/director-general/singleview-](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/about-us/who-we-are/director-general/singleview-dg/news/director_general_pledges_full_support_to_myanmars_democratic_transition/)

[dg/news/director_general_pledges_full_support_to_myanmars_democratic_transition/](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/about-us/who-we-are/director-general/singleview-dg/news/director_general_pledges_full_support_to_myanmars_democratic_transition/) (UNESCO) – 7 August 2012 /

Director-General Visits the Buddhist Monuments of Bagan –

[http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/about-us/who-we-are/director-general/singleview-](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/about-us/who-we-are/director-general/singleview-dg/news/director_general_visits_the_buddhist_monuments_of_bagan/)

[dg/news/director_general_visits_the_buddhist_monuments_of_bagan/](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/about-us/who-we-are/director-general/singleview-dg/news/director_general_visits_the_buddhist_monuments_of_bagan/) (UNESCO) – 9 August 2012

US\$ 50 million was presented by the Turkish delegation to provide humanitarian assistance to those affected by the recent unrest in the Rakhine State.⁷

BURMESE LEADERS RECEIVE CZECH DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

The Czech First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister Karel Schwarzenberg visited Burma from 16 to 19 July where he met President Thein Sein, Foreign Minister U Wunna Maung Lwin and Speaker of the Lower House U Shwe Mann, among others. Their discussions focussed on promoting amity and cooperation between two countries, as well as the economy, technology, health and education sectors, and they also exchanged views on matters of mutual interest and democratic reforms being undertaken by the Burmese government.⁸

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Minister Schwarzenberg said that European Union's sanctions against Burma will likely remain in place and would be permanently removed once the country's democratic reforms are deemed "irreversible". However, he added that the current changes are better than imagined, but the possibility of back-tracking in the democratic reforms could not be ruled out at this juncture. He also discussed the issue of political prisoners with the President. In addition, Minister Schwarzenberg met Aung San Suu Kyi and presented her with a dried yellow rose from the coffin of Czech democracy hero and former President Vaclav Havel who died last year and had been a supporter and admirer.⁹

PRESIDENT MEETS LEADERS OF POLITICAL PARTIES

President U Thein Sein met with leaders of several political parties on two separate occasions on 18 July and 4 August in Nay Pyi Taw.

On 18 July he met with officials from the Group of Friends of Democracy Parties – a group of 10 parties¹⁰. He explained current policies and urged those present to work together with the government to fulfil these objectives. He stated that the common goal of the government and parties is to establish a peaceful and developed society. As Burma is a fledgling democracy, every step must be taken cautiously and candid suggestions are welcome to promote the interest of the country. The government is striving to successfully implement political reforms, national reconciliation and the overall development of the country's social and economic sectors and invites the different political parties to participate. The group raised questions regarding political,

⁷ No: 197: Press Release Regarding the Visit of H.E. Mr. Ahmet Davutoğlu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, to Myanmar

http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-197_-8-august-2012_-press-release-regarding-the-visit-of-h_e_-mr_-ahmet-davuto%C4%9Flu_-minister-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-turkey_-to-myanmar.en.mfa (Republic of Turkey / Ministry of Foreign Affairs) - 8 August 2012 /

Rakhine unrest has nothing to do with race or religion - President U Thein Sein / Rakhine issue should not tarnish positive image of Myanmar - Turkish FM –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-08-10..pdf> (NLM) 10 August 2012 (p. 1 & 8) /

Union FM receives Turkish Foreign Minister –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-08-10..pdf> (NLM) 10 August 2012 (p. 7)

⁸ Minister Schwarzenberg in Myanmar/Burma -

http://www.mzv.cz/jnp/en/event_calendar/x2012_07_15_minister_schwarzenberg_in_myanmar_burma.html (Czech Foreign Ministry) /

President U Thein Sein receives First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-07-19op.pdf> (NLM) 19 July 2012 (p. 1)/

Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker receives Czech delegation –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-07-19op.pdf> (NLM) 19 July 2012 (p. 9)/

Czech delegation led by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister arrives in Yangon –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-07-17.pdf> (NLM) 17 July 2012 (p. 9)

⁹ EU Sanctions End When Reform 'Irreversible' –

<http://www.irrawaddy.org/?slide=eu-sanctions-end-when-reform-irreversible> (Irrawaddy) 19 July 2012

¹⁰ The Group of Friends of Democracy Parties includes the Union Democracy Party (UDP), the Peace and Unity Party (PUP), the Democracy and Peace Party (DPP), the Democratic Party (Myanmar) (DPM), the National Democratic Force (NDF), the Shan Nationalities Democratic Party (SNDP), the Rakhine Nationalities Development Party (RNDP), the Chin National Party (CNP), the All Mon Region Democracy Party (AMRDP) and the Phalon-Sawaw Democratic Party (PSDP).

economic, internal peace and regional development matters. They also met with the Speaker of the Lower House and Chairman of the Union Election Commission and discussed the recent 2012 By-elections as well as ways to improve the current election system.¹¹

On 4 August President Thein Sein also met leaders from 14 other political parties¹². They discussed on-going political developments and current reforms by the government. The President reiterated that his government is taking steps to promote change, acknowledging that this is not easy and urged all participants to work in unison and in cooperation until the country reaches their common goals.¹³

BORDER AFFAIRS MINISTER LEADS VISIT OF DIPLOMATS TO RAKHINE STATE

Union Minister for Border Affairs and for Myanmar Industrial Development Lt-Gen Thein Htay, accompanied by Deputy Ministers Brig-Gen Kyaw Zan Myint, U Phone Swe and U Kyaw Kyaw Win, UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Situation in Myanmar Tomas Ojea Quintana, foreign ambassadors and diplomats, heads of UN agencies and officials, representatives of the Myanmar Islam Organization and religious leaders and departmental heads toured Rakhine State where recent communal unrests took place earlier this year in June 2012 on 1 August. The group visited relief camps in Bawdupha village, Sittwe Township as well as relief camps in Maungdaw Township and were briefed on the rehabilitation process of those affected by the recent unrest by the Rakhine State government and those in charge of the camps. They were also briefed on the on-going Kaladan River Development Project, which is central in promoting the regional and economic development of the Rakhine State. Prior to their departure, the diplomats donated relief goods to and urged the international community to join hands with the Burmese government to address the complex issue and to provide more humanitarian aid.¹⁴

UN HUMAN RIGHTS SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR QUINTANA VISITS BURMA

UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Myanmar Tomas Ojea Quintana visited Burma from 29 July to 4 August.

In Rakhine State, he took part in a visit organized by the Government for members of the diplomatic community and the United Nations Country Team. In Maungdaw, he met with state and local authorities and members of the Muslim community, and also visited burned Rakhine villages and observed the construction of new shelters. In addition, his team visited camps for internally displaced persons for both Rakhine Buddhist and Muslim communities in Sittwe and Maungdaw. He

¹¹ President U Thein Sein meets Group of Friends of Democracy Parties – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-07-19op.pdf> (NLM) 19 July 2012 (p. 1) / Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann receives chairmen, vice-chairmen, general secretaries of Group of Friends of Democracy Parties – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-07-28.pdf> (NLM) 28 July 2012 (p. 16) / Consequences of election system rest on basic causes regarding principles, religion, ethnic affairs, race, language and social standing of the people of the country – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-07-28.pdf> (NLM) 28 July 2012 (p. 16 & 9)

¹² The 14 parties included the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD), the Rakhine League for Democracy, the National Unity Party (NUP), the Kayin People's Party (KPP), the Myanmar New Society Democratic Party (MNSDP), the New National Democracy Party (NNDP), the National Political Alliances League, the Chin Progressive Party (CPP), the Zomi League/Congress for Democracy, the Pa-O National League, the Diversity and Peace Party, the Mon Democratic Party, the Modern People's Party, and the Myanmar National Congress Party.

¹³ Myanmar must take every step cautiously with democracy in infancy. President U Thein Sein meets party officials – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-08-05.pdf> (NLM) 5 August 2012 (p. 1 & 8) / See also: Thein Sein Talks Peace with Ethnic Parties - www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-08-03.pdf (Irrawaddy) 6 August 2012

¹⁴ Union Minister, diplomats observe recent situations in Rakhine State – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-08-02.pdf> (NLM) 2 August 2012 (p. 16 & 9) / International partners should stand behind Myanmar government to address Rakhine State's complex issue: Ambassadors – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-08-03.pdf> (NLM) 3 August 2012 (p. 16 & 9)

also interviewed 5 UN staff in Buthidaung Prison who had been detained in connection with the events in Rakhine State.

In Nay Pyi Taw, Quintana met with key government officials including the Minister of Home Affairs, the Minister of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement (also the Minister of Labour), the Minister of Immigration and Population, the Deputy Minister of Health, the Deputy Minister of Education, the Attorney General, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, the Vice-Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw and members of several parliamentary committees.

In Yangon, he met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Border Affairs, as well as members of the National Human Rights Commission, members of the 88 Generation Students Group, and representatives of civil society organizations, and discussed a broad range of human rights issues with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. As part of his mandate, he also visited Insein Prison and met 3 political prisoners detained there.¹⁵

KARENNI OPENS LIAISON OFFICE IN LOIKAW

Following its union-level cease-fire agreement, the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) opened its first liaison office in the Karenni state capital, Loikaw on 25 July. The opening ceremony was attended by Kayah (Karenni) State Chief Minister U Khin Maung Oo, the state Hluttaw speaker, the chief justice of the state high court, state ministers, Loikaw Township in-charge of KNPP U Daniel and other officials. Further KNPP liaison offices will be opened in Shadaw and Hpasawng townships in line with the agreement.¹⁶

HLUTTAW SESSIONS – Highlights

Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) sessions

The following proposals and laws were submitted and discussed during the 7th to 22nd day sessions of the Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House):

- **A proposal on enacting a law safeguarding the rights of the ethnic people** was submitted by U T Khun Myat of Kutkai Constituency (7th day session)¹⁷
- **A proposal regarding the removal of sanctions** was submitted by Daw Nan Wah Wah Nu of Kunhein Constituency (8th day session)¹⁸
- U Thein Nyunt of Thingangyun Constituency submitted a proposal to **discuss the law amending the Emergency Provisions Act (Act No. 17/50)** (10th day session). The Deputy Minister for Home Affairs Brig-Gen Kyaw Zan Myint seconded the proposal for further discussions.

¹⁵ Mr. Tomas Ojea Quintana, UN Special Rapporteur on human rights situation in Myanmar, visits Insein Jail (Central), Insein General Hospital – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-07-31.pdf> (NLM) 31 July 2012 (p. 9) / Chief Justice of Union receives UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Situation in Myanmar – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-08-04.pdf> (NLM) 4 August 2012 (p. 1) / Statement of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar – <http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=12405&LangID=E> (UNOHCHR) 4 August 2012 / UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Situation in Myanmar calls on MNHRC Chairman – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-08-02.pdf> (NLM) 2 August 2012 (p. 8) / UN Special Rapporteur visits five detainees in Buthidaung Prison – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-08-03.pdf> (NLM) 3 August 2012 (p. 9)

¹⁶ KNPP opens liaison office in Loikaw – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-07-31.pdf> (NLM) 31 July 2012 (p. 2)

¹⁷ Pyithu Hluttaw session continues for seventh day / Eight questions answered, one proposal discussed, one more submitted and one bill approved – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-07-13.pdf> (NLM) 13 July 2012 (p. 1 & 8)

¹⁸ Pyithu Hluttaw session continues for eighth day / Six questions answered, one important proposal approved, one bill submitted, one bill reviewed – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-07-14.pdf> (NLM) 14 July 2012 (p. 16 & 8)

- A proposal on **the law revoking for the 1908 Unlawful Associations Act (India Act-14)** was submitted by Daw Nan Wah Nu of Kunhein Constituency (10th day session). The proposal was revoked by the Deputy Minister for Home Affairs.¹⁹
- 15 MPs discussed the **Foreign Investment Bill**. (11th day session)²⁰
- **The proposal on promulgation of national races rights protection law** submitted by U T Khun Myat of Kutkai Constituency was discussed by several MPs including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi of Kawhmu Constituency (NLD) (13th day session). The MPs stated that it was necessary to enact a law safeguarding nationalities' rights in order to allow them to enjoy the fundamental rights as well as having the right to enjoy social life and development while accelerating development of other sectors. Suu Kyi said that the present constitution did not specifically define the word national races and there there was a need to hold further discussions.²¹
- U Thein Nyunt of Thingangyun Constituency submitted the proposal "**urging the government to enact a law to register non-governmental organisations (NGOs) for as called for by the President and the participation of civil society in the country's democratic reform process**". Union Minister for Home Affairs Lt-Gen Ko Ko said he had no reason to object the proposal. (17th day session).²²
- U Htay Oo of Hinthada Constituency (USDP) submitted the proposal on **adopting Migration Policy for ensuring social security of Myanmar citizen migrant workers in any foreign country** (18th day session).
- **The University Education Bill** was discussed by Daw Tin Nwe Oo of Dagon Myothit (North), Thura U Aung Ko of Kanpetlet Constituency and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi of Kawhmu Constituency. (18th day session)²³
- **The formation of the 15-member Committee for Rule of Law and Peace and Stability** was approved at the 21st day session. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi of Kawhmu Constituency and U Win Myint of Pathein Constituency were appointed as Chairman and Secretary respectively of the Committee.²⁴
- **A proposal to declare movable and immovable assets and interests of persons assigned to Union Government members, Region or State government members for emergence of Good Governance and Clean Government** was submitted by U Win Myint of Pathein was debated during the 22nd day session by 13 MPs including Defence Services personnel representatives Col Khin Maung Tun and Col Aung Myint. Attorney-General Dr Tun Shin said that, Articles 68 and 100 of the Constitution were in conformity while Article 101 of was not so and thus to enact a law needed more clarity and therefore suggested to put the proposal on record as it is

¹⁹ Pyithu Hluttaw meeting continues for tenth day / Four questions raised, receipt of one bill reported to Hluttaw, two new proposals submitted –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-07-18.pdf> (NLM) 18 July 2012 (p. 16 & 8)

²⁰ Pyithu Hluttaw session continues for eleventh day / Three questions answered, one bill discussed –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-07-19op.pdf> (NLM) 19 July 2012 (p. 16 & 9)

²¹ Discussions in Hluttaw should not include characteristics and behaviours of a person / Discussions about a proposal must be related with proposals under debate at the Hluttaw Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker urges some representatives to strictly abide by Hluttaw laws and rules in making discussion –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-07-26.pdf> (NLM) 26 July 2012 (p. 6 & 7)

²² Incumbent government focuses on local sufficiency of oil and gas: Union Energy Minister / Pyithu Hluttaw regular session continues for 17th day –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-07-31.pdf> (NLM) 31 July 2012 (p. 6)

²³ Monetary and financial restrictions related to trade and investment eased: Deputy Minister / Pyithu Hluttaw regular session continues for 18th day –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-08-01.pdf> (NLM) 1 August 2012 (p. 1 & 8)

²⁴ Hluttaw representatives urged to discharge duties and exercise rights vested by the committee with a sense of uprightness and benevolence: Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-08-08.pdf> (NLM) 8 August 2012 (p. 7 & 8)

reasonable and to seek the decision of the Hluttaw over whether the proposal should be all inclusive and all political exposed persons or not. **The proposal was put to the vote and was objected.**²⁵

- A proposal on **adopting the Migration Policy for ensuring social security for Myanmar citizen migrant workers abroad** submitted by U Htay Oo of Hinthada (USDP) was discussed by 19 MPs (23rd day session).²⁶

Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) sessions

The following proposals, questions and laws were submitted and discussed during 7th to 22nd day sessions of the Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House):

- U Phone Myint Aung of Yangon Region Constituency (3) raised a question regarding the publication of **punitive actions against corrupt civil servants should be publicized** (7th day session).²⁷
- Dr. Aye Maung of Rakhine State Constituency No.1 submitted the proposal **“urging the Union Government to designate National Races Affairs Ministers and Chairmen of Leading Committee of Self-Administered Division or Zone, who are same as the posts of Region or State Ministers, as members of Region or State Government in accord with the Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar”** (8th day session).²⁸
- Deputy Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement U Phone Swe submitted the **Disaster Management Bill** (13th day session).²⁹
- U Myint Hlaing of Rakhine State Constituency No (12) asked if **the rehabilitation measures of the Union government being implemented for those affected by the recent communal riots in Rakhine State are achieving success and if it is possible for their lives restored back to normalcy, and whether the ministry has any plan to adopt long-term plans for guaranteeing no reoccurrence of similar cases, full security, stability, and the rule of law.** Union Minister for Home Affairs Lt-Gen Ko Ko replied that Article 144 of Penal Code was issued in affected areas in June to control the situation and an investigating team had been formed to look into the issue. Furthermore, operation of relief camps and the necessary humanitarian assistance programmes being provided, the Minister for Home Affairs has been tasked to undertake restoration and rehabilitation tasks in Rakhine State. Regulations on travel, birth, death, construction of new religious buildings are now being implemented in line with the situation, and plans to increase the number of police stations for better security to the region are being carried in order to prevent further incidents from reoccurring. (18th day session)³⁰

²⁵ Signing MoUs and agreements with international news agencies beneficial to improvement of programme sector, development of human resources and cooperation with international community –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-08-09.pdf> (NLM) 9 August 2012 (p. 1 & 8)

²⁶ State to give priority to Enhancing Labour Migration Management Systems, Enhancing Social Protection for Migrant Workers and Improving Market Information System –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-08-10..pdf> (NLM) 10 August 2012 (p. 16 & 9)

²⁷ Amyotha Hluttaw session continues for seventh day / Eight questions answered, two proposals put forward and members of the vice-president scrutinizing board selected at today's session –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-07-13.pdf> (NLM) 13 July 2012 (p. 1 & 9)

²⁸ Eighth day session of Amyotha Hluttaw continues / One bill approved, one bill discussed, one bill submitted, one proposal discussed –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-07-14.pdf> (NLM) 14 July 2012 (p. 16 & 9)

²⁹ Amyotha Hluttaw session continues for 13th day / Five questions answered, two bills put forward -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-07-25.pdf> (NLM) 25 July 2012 (p. 1 & 8)

³⁰ Reforms must be undertaken for financial and legal institutional development during the drafting process of monetary and capital market law: MPs –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-08-01.pdf> (NLM) 1 August 2012 (p. 1, 9 & 10)

- **The Anti-Bribery Bill was approved** (19th day session).³¹
- Union Minister Lt-Gen Ko Ko submitted a proposal on the **Bill Revoking Land Confiscation (Mines) Act** for consideration by the Upper House and the Union Minister for Finance and Revenue U Hla Tun submitted the **Securities Exchange Bill** (21st day session).³²
- Dr Myat Nyana Soe of Yangon Region Constituency No 4 submitted a proposal **urging the Union Government to adopt a special plan as a national duty to ensure prevalence of law and order for taking action against infiltration of foreigners from neighbouring countries and holding of citizenship scrutiny cards through misconduct ways**. As the proposal did not gain the required number of votes, it was rejected. (22nd day session)³³

UNOFFICIAL MEDIA

23rd CLASH BETWEEN SSA AND BURMA ARMY

The Shan State Progress Party / Shan State Army (SSPP/SSA) fought its 23rd engagement with a Burma Army column that had trespassed on the territory under its control on 18 July, according to local sources. The incident took place in Hsipaw township between the SSA 1st Brigade and Burma Infantry Battalion No.41. The Burmese column was said to have suffered at least 10 killed and 15 wounded. According to the SSA, its liaison officer in Lashio was informed by the regional command in advance that the column would only go as far as Na Piem and not beyond it. The regional command had not yet responded to the clash place. The two sides had recently fought for the possession of two strategic hills in Monghsu, south of Lashio, and the SSA that had retreated on both occasions. The Restoration Council of Shan State / Shan State Army (RCSS/SSA), the sister organization of the SSPP/SSA, which had also had 24 clashes, noted that the reason why these had taken place even after ceasefire agreements were signed was because the Burma Army has continued military activities, especially its “area clearing” and “area control” operations.³⁴

KNU AND GOVERNMENT TO NEGOTIATE A SEPARATION OF FORCES IN KAREN STATE

Government and Karen National Union (KNU) representatives met in the border town of Myawaddy on 5 August and discussed a ‘cease-fire code of conduct’ to be adopted and implemented between the armies’s two sides. A KNU delegate explained that the third round of ‘peace talks’ would also include the ‘sensitive issue’ of negotiating for the withdrawal of Burma Army troops and camps now based in Karen State, adding that “the most important step to follow-up after the second round of talks is that both sides must follow the agreed to code of conduct that also involves the movement of troops and the location of army camps.” The meeting was attended by KNU Secretary-General Naw Sipporah Sein and Railways Minister U Aung Min leading the Union-level Peace-making team.³⁵

ANALYSIS

³¹ Anti-bribery bill approved / Amyotha Hluttaw regular session continues for 19th day –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-08-02.pdf> (NLM) 2 August 2012 (p. 1 & 8)

³² Marine Police Force is under constitution for prevention against the acts jeopardizing the interest of State and people and sovereignty of nation, combating crimes and attempts to commit crimes and discharging of duties for security of coasts and water courses –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-08-08.pdf> (NLM) 8 August 2012 (p. 10 & 11)

³³ HIV/STD Control Project implemented as a national concern in region/state/district/ township, including border towns Muse, Tachileik and Kawthoung after HIV/STD Control teams were formed / Every citizen to take responsibility of paying tax for national development –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-08-09.pdf> (NLM) 9 August 2012 (p. 16 & 9)

³⁴ 23rd clash after ceasefire pact –

http://www.english.panglong.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4816:23rd-clash-after-ceasefire-pact&catid=86:war&Itemid=284 (Shan Herald) 20 July 2012

³⁵ KNU and government to negotiate withdrawal of Burma Army from Karen State –

<http://karennews.org/2012/08/knu-and-government-to-negotiate-withdrawal-of-burma-army-from-karen-state-2.html/> (Karen News) 6 August 2012

The highly anticipated debut of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi as an MP was greeted positively during the recent parliament sessions. So much so, that she has been appointed Chair the 15-member Committee for Rule of Law and Peace and Stability. How she manages the affairs of the select committee may indicate how she will one day lead the country. While she has yet to make her mark, the Upper and Lower Houses have been quite active with discussions and submission of proposals on important issues including the rights and protection of migrant Burmese workers, the call for assets declarations by government officials and disaster management. The fact that these issues, which had been discarded and neglected by previous government, have now come to the fore-front of parliamentary discussions should be seen as a positive step. However, the law on assets declaration was rejected by parliament. This shows that better preparation may be needed when dealing with such sensitive issues in the future.

On the international front, the Burmese government has been strongly criticized over its handling of the recent unrest in the Rakhine State, and its actions are now being closely monitored by the international community. The recent visit by the Turkish Foreign Minister to the affected region is testimony to this. Once again, President Thein Sein is confronted with yet another major issue - one which could undermine his democratic aspirations if not handled in the right way. For the time being, the violence has died down, but locals worry that it could erupt again at any time in the future. Therefore, it would seem that the Rakhine issue will need to be added to the President's list of priorities as he strives to bring change to Burma.

While things may seem gloomy both at home and abroad, the meetings with US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Thai Premier Yingluck Shinawatra have given President Thein Sein the much needed boost and reasons to smile. To what extent the President can remain positive and hopeful will depend on his achievements in the coming months. The challenges that he faces vary; the enactment of laws and goodwill of the international community to provide much needed financial assistance will go a long way in aiding the country.

Democratic aspirations will only become reality if all stakeholders are willing to change, and only then can they expect others to do the same to promote and work for the interest of the country and people.