

POLITICAL MONITOR NO. 36

OFFICIAL MEDIA

US SECRETARY OF STATE CLINTON VISITS BURMA

On 30 November, the Secretary of State of the United States, Hilary Clinton, arrived in Nay Pyi Taw on a historic visit to Burma.¹ During her three-day visit, the first by a US Secretary of State in more than 50 years, Secretary Clinton met with President U Thein Sein², the Speaker of the House of Representatives U Shwe Mann³, the Speaker of the House of Nationalities and Union Parliament U Khin Aung Myint⁴, as well as Foreign Minister U Wunna Maung Lwin⁵. Clinton also met opposition leader and Nobel peace laureate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi⁶ and members of political parties as well as representatives of civil society and ethnic nationalities leaders⁷.

In his meeting with Secretary Clinton, President U Thein Sein expressed, among other things, that the engagement between the two countries would be promoted to the level of friendly relations and cooperation, that as the government has only been in office for 8 months all steps are being taken cautiously for a smooth transition to democracy, and that restrictions on media and civil society have been eased. He also emphasized that there will be an all-inclusiveness in politics in accordance with the law, that political dialogue with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has been initiated and election laws and labour laws have been rewritten, including necessary steps to promote reforms and economic development of the country. Also, a rigorous peace and reconciliation process to bring an end to the ethnic armed conflicts has been implemented. He said that Burma has been strengthening friendly ties with all countries, upholding an independent and active foreign policy in accord with five principles of peaceful co-existence. Regarding nuclear non-proliferation, he added that Burma has adhered to UN Security Council Resolutions 1718 and 1874 and that non-proliferation commitments with respect to North Korea are being respected and that Burma is working closely with the IAEA. In addition, he said that Burma desires assistance and cooperation from the United States on these matters to the fullest extent possible through bilateral cooperation.⁸

In responding, Secretary Clinton said the US wanted to be a partner with Burma and that much work remains to be done with the democratization process. She extended an invitation for a Burmese delegation to visit the US early next year and asked to coordinate matters in order to send a World Bank mission to assist Burma's banking system. She also expressed her wish to cooperate in the fight against drugs and said that a plan would be made for Burma to participate in environmental

¹ US Secretary of State arrives in Nay Pyi Taw -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-12-01.pdf> (NLM) 1 December 2011 (p. 2)

² Peace, stability, economic growth and HRD essential for democratization process - President U Thein Sein/ US wants to be Myanmar's partner, US to help Myanmar on basis of mutual respect - US Secretary of State Mrs Hillary Clinton-

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-12-02.pdf> (NLM) 2 December 2011 (p. 1, 8 & 9)

³Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann receives US Secretary of State Mrs Hillary Clinton -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-12-02.pdf> (NLM) 2 December 2011 (p. 7)

⁴Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker U Khin Aung Myint receives US Secretary of State Mrs. Hillary Clinton -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-12-02.pdf> (NLM) 2 December 2011 (p. 2)

⁵ Myanmar, US to promote relations -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-12-02.pdf> (NLM) 2 December 2011 (p. 7)

⁶ US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton Meets Daw Aung San Suu Kyi -

<http://www.nldburma.org/international-affairs/north-america/452-us-secretary-of-state-hillary-clinton-meets-daw-aung-san-suu-kyi.html> (NLD website) 3 December 2011

⁷ Ethnic leaders brief Clinton on conflicts -

<http://mizzima.com/news/inside-burma/6250-ethnic-leaders-brief-clinton-on-conflicts.html> (Mizzima) 2 December 2011

⁸ Peace, stability, economic growth and HRD essential for democratization process - President U Thein Sein/ US wants to be Myanmar's partner, US to help Myanmar on basis of mutual respect - US Secretary of State Mrs Hillary Clinton-

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-12-02.pdf> (NLM) 2 December 2011 (p. 1, 8 & 9)

conservation programs for countries in the Mekong River project. She added that the reappointment of ambassadors would be considered as part of normalizing diplomatic relations. In addition, a roadmap will be drawn up to relax and lift economic sanctions, restrictions on the tourism sector and the export and import embargo, saying that the US wants to be a partner of Burma and will provide assistance by showing mutual respect. She also conveyed personal letters from US President Obama to President U Thein Sein and to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi during the visit.⁹

Unofficial Media

After her meetings in Nay Pyi Taw, Clinton flew to Rangoon where she met Suu Kyi for the first time – the two women met both privately and formally. Suu Kyi endorsed the new American engagement with Burma's government and called on other countries, including China, to support Burma's nascent efforts to build a freer, more open society and economy. Clinton called Suu Kyi an inspiration. That they met at all, and appeared together before international and local journalists, was itself a measure of the changes that have swept Burma since the president U Thein Sein, took office in March.¹⁰

Clinton also met leaders of ethnic political parties and social organizations to hear first-hand what it is like to deal with the new Burmese government as well as the situation in the ethnic areas and on the current conflicts. She said that when she returned to the US, she would make further recommendations to the government on how to deal with ethnic issues.¹¹

In wrapping up her visit, the US Secretary of State announced US\$ 1.2 million in new aid aimed at civil society to support microfinance, healthcare and help for the victims of landmines in the war-torn country.¹² Secretary Clinton was accompanied by Assistant Secretary of State Kurt Campbell, Assistant Secretary of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Michael Posner and US Special Representative and Policy Coordinator for Myanmar Derek Mitchell.¹³ Clinton is the first US Secretary of State to travel to Burma since John Foster Dulles in 1955.

GOVERNMENT & KIO MEET FOR PEACE TALKS

A delegation led by Leader U Aung Thaung, U Thein Zaw and Union Minister for Rail Transportation U Aung Min met with a six-member delegation led by KIO Chairman Lanyaw Zawng Hra met for peace talks in Ruili in China's southwest Yunnan province on 29 November.¹⁴

Unofficial Media: While no agreement was made, both sides agreed to further the talks and meetings. KIO officials said that while the government officials only want to talk about a ceasefire, the KIO wants political resolutions and long-term peace. An official of the KIO stated that no exact date had been set for future talks, and that the KIO wanted a political dialogue which would provide concrete peace. However, continued offensives by government forces were still on-going in the Kachin State even after the talks took place.¹⁵

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Dissident Leader in Myanmar Endorses U.S. Overtures - <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/03/world/asia/aung-san-suu-kyi-endorses-us-overtures-to-myanmar.html?ref=myanmar> (New York Times) 2 December 2011

¹¹ Ethnic leaders brief Clinton on conflicts - <http://mizzima.com/news/inside-burma/6250-ethnic-leaders-brief-clinton-on-conflicts.html> (Mizzima) 2 December 2011

¹² Clinton departs Burma, offers \$1.2m in aid - <http://www.dvb.no/news/clinton-departs-burma-offers-1-2m-in-aid/19048> (DVB) 2 December 2011

¹³ US Secretary of State arrives in Nay Pyi Taw - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-12-01.pdf> (NLM) 1 December 2011 (p. 2)

¹⁴ Trio and KIO meet for peace talks - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-12-01.pdf> (NLM) 1 December 2011 (p. 16)

¹⁵ Naypyidaw Signs Peace Agreement with SSA-South - http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=22590 (Irrawaddy) 2 December 2011

DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER RETURNS FROM CHINA

A Burmese delegation led by Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs U Maung Myint arrived back in Nay Pyi Taw on 27 November from Yunnan Province, the People's Republic of China, after paying a goodwill visit at the invitation of Mr Gu Zhao Xi, Vice Governor of Yunnan Province. On 23 November, the Deputy Foreign Minister met the Governor of Yunnan Province Mr Gu Zhao Xi and also visited Jinghong, Xishuangbanna Dai Autonomous Sub-Province in Yunnan Province.¹⁶

LOWER HOUSE DELEGATION LEAVES FOR CHINA VISIT

At the invitation of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, a Burmese Hluttaw delegation led by the Chairman of the International Relations Committee of the Pyithu Hluttaw U Hla Myint Oo (USDP - Pinyinmana Township Constituency Pyithu Hluttaw Representative) left for the People's Republic of China on 28 November. The Members of the delegation included Secretary of Pyithu Hluttaw International Relations Committee Pyithu Hluttaw Representative of U Ko Ko Tun (USDP) of Aunglan Township Constituency in Magway Region, Secretary of Pyithu Hluttaw Bill Committee Pyithu Hluttaw Representative U Saw Hla Tun (USDP) of Chaung-U Township Constituency in Sagaing Region, members of the International Relations Committee of Pyithu Hluttaw Pyithu Hluttaw Representative U Nelson (a) U Hsaung Si (SNDP) of Kyaukme Constituency in Shan State, Pyithu Hluttaw Representative U Aung Kyaw Soe (USDP) of Natmauk Township Constituency in Magway Region, Defence Services Personnel Representative of Pyithu Hluttaw Col Tint Hsan, Pyithu Hluttaw U Tun Aung Kyaw (RNDP) of Punnakayun Constituency and Deputy Director U Zaw Zaw Htaik of Pyithu Hluttaw Deputy Speaker's Office.¹⁷

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Session - Highlights

During the 6th day of the second regular session of the first Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Union Hluttaw), the following key issues were discussed.

- The President sought the agreement of the Union Hluttaw to **approve the combining of the Ministry of Industry (1) and Ministry of Industry (2) as the Ministry of Industry.**
- **A discussion on the Ward or Village-tract Administration Bill was held, with amendments submitted** by Daw Khin Waing Kyi (NDF) of Yangon Region Constituency No. 1 and Dr Banya Aung Moe (AMRDP) of Mon State Constituency No.7. **The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw approved the bill.**
- **The Hluttaw approved the appointments of new members to the Joint Bill Committee and Investment and Industrial Development Committee.** U Aung Lin Hlaing (USDP) of Bokpyin Constituency of the Public Accounts Committee of the Pyithu Hluttaw was appointed to the Joint Bill Committee to replace U Kyi Tha (USDP) of Gwa Constituency. U Kyi Tha has subsequently been appointed as the Secretary of the Investment and Industrial Development Committee of the Pyithu Hluttaw.¹⁸

¹⁶ Dy Foreign Minister arrives back from China -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-11-28.pdf> (NLM) 28 November 2011 (p. 9)

¹⁷ Pyithu Hluttaw delegation leaves for PRC -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-11-29.pdf> (NLM) 29 November 2011 (p. 9)

¹⁸ Second regular session of first Pyidaungsu Hluttaw concludes successfully/Messages of President read, approval sought for remarks of President, one bill approved, member of Joint Committee substituted, tasks of Hluttaw session explained - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-11-26.pdf> (NLM) 26 November 2011 (p. 1, 8 & 9)

NLD SUBMITS PARTY REGISTRATION

In line with the right to submit applications for the formation of political parties, 21 persons, including U Tin Oo - a former Commander-in-Chief of the Burmese Army and Vice-Chairman of the NLD, submitted an application to form the National League for Democracy (NLD) Party to the Union Election Commission (UEC). The UEC has requested the concerned ministries to scrutinize whether the NLD's application conforms to Sections 4 and 6 of the Political Parties Registration Law.¹⁹

UNOFFICIAL MEDIA

MILITARY COUP WILL NEVER HAPPEN AGAIN IN BURMA: UPPER HOUSE SPEAKER

Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker (Upper House) U Khin Aung Myint said during his meeting with US Secretary of State Clinton that a military coup will never happen again in Burma. Rakhine Nationalities Development Party (RNDP) President Dr. Aye Maung of who attended the meeting said that the Upper House Speaker assured Secretary Clinton that a military coup will not occur in Burma in the future and that the country will not turn back, since almost all of the members of parliament have vowed to achieve democracy in the country. The meeting was held in the presence of 33 representatives of the Upper House including Dr. Aye Maung, who is currently serving as Chairman of the Amyotha Hluttaw Government's Guarantees, Pledges and Undertakings Vetting Committee and is prominent ethnic Rakhine politician. Under the Burma's 2008 Constitution, articles 417 and 418 clearly stipulate the right for the military to seize power if necessary in the interest of the state.²⁰

ANALYSIS

The visit by US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has been heralded as a landmark visit and possibly the opening of a new chapter in US-Burma relations. Initial discussions between President U Thein Sein and Secretary of State Clinton were hopeful. While the US has opted to take a more cautious step-by-step approach, the government in Nay Pyi Taw has pledged to undertake reforms with the unspoken hope that they will be reciprocated by a relaxation of US' imposed restrictive measures. Recognizing the danger of antagonizing China, the President cleverly invoked the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence. These principles were developed in the 1950's by the then Chinese Premier Chou En Lai, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, and Burmese Prime Minister U Nu. This will serve to allay Chinese fears that improved US relations may disadvantage them.

While international focus has centered on the visit by the US Secretary of State, the meeting between the government and KIO in Ruili (Shweli) was a significant attempt to bring to an end a five-decade long conflict. While no agreement was reached, both sides agreed to continue talking. However, the fact that this meeting is the first one six months after hostilities started reflects badly on the government and raises questions about both the competence of the government appointed negotiators and the sincerity of the government.

¹⁹ 21 persons including U Tin Oo submit application to form National League for Democracy Party to UEC/Scrutiny underway to ensure whether it is in conformity with Sections 4 and 6 of Political Parties Registration Law - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs12/NLM2011-11-26.pdf> (NLM 26 November 2011 (p. 16))

²⁰ Military Coup Will Never Happen Again Burma: Speaker of the Upper House - <http://www.narinjara.com/details.asp?id=3185> (Narinjara) 2 December 2011