

POLITICAL MONITOR NO.10

OFFICIAL MEDIA

GOVERNMENT AND ETHNIC ARMED ORGANISATIONS IN NATIONWIDE CEASEFIRE TALKS

Union Peace-Making Work Committee (UPMWC) and National Cease-fire Coordination Team-NCCT representing ethnic armed groups launched two-day talks to complete a single text document for the nationwide ceasefire. In his opening remarks on 5 April, 3rd Vice-Chair of the UPMWC Minister Aung Min, called for completing the single text document during the talks. 2nd Vice-Chair Thein Zaw of the UPMWC, also said he believes that the talks would help move the talks forward a political dialogue. On behalf of KIO, General Guan Maw pledged that he would make endeavours for reaching peace in the country. The Union Peace-making Work Committee (UPMWC) and the National Ceasefire Coordination Team-NCCT agreed on a first draft for a ceasefire agreement on 8 April. After the four day talks from 5 to 8 April both sides found consensus on the details of the introduction and first seven chapters of the draft nationwide ceasefire deal and also agreed to continue the peace talks in the first week of May.¹

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RECEIVES LEADERS OF WA, SSA-N AND MILITIA GROUPS

Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing received Deputy Secretary-General of the United Wa State Army (UWSA) Pauk Yuri and Vice-Chairman of Shan State Army (SSA-Wanhai) Khe Taing at the North-East Command Headquarters in Lashio, Shan State (North) on 6 April. At the meetings, the Senior General Min Aung Hlaing expressed that he wishes to cooperate with ethnic armed groups for the sake of the country, saying all national people are required to safeguard national security in unity. He highlighted that all national people are to join hands with the government in marching towards democracy in line with the law for ensuring stability and regional development. The most important thing in peace talks is mutual trust, he added. In meeting with 27 militia troops from the area of North-East Command, the Senior General praised the militia troops for discharging defence duty of the State in joining hands with the Defence Services and the people with patriotic spirit. As the militia troops are taking up defence and security duty of the State and the respective regions voluntarily, he will coordinate with departments concerned for undertaking productions as their livelihoods. He urged the militia leaders to be loyal to the State and the Armed Forces.²

PRESIDENT THEIN SEIN RECEIVES US ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR EAST ASIAN AND PACIFIC AFFAIRS

President Thein Sein received the US Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Daniel R. Russel in Naypyitaw on 10 April and held talks focused on providing health care services and

¹ UPMWC, ethnic armed groups, launch talks to complete single text document for nationwide ceasefire –

<http://www.moi.gov.mm/npe/nlm/content/6-april-14> (NLM) 6 April 2014 (p. 1 & 3)/

Union Peace-Making Work Committee, ethnic armed groups discuss ceasefire deal in details –

<http://www.moi.gov.mm/npe/nlm/content/7-april-14> (NLM) 7 April 2014 (p. 1& 8)/

Five chapters of draft ceasefire deal finalized on third day –

<http://www.moi.gov.mm/npe/nlm/content/8-april-14> (NLM) 8 April 2014 (p. 1)/

Gov't, ethnic armed groups agree on first draft for nationwide ceasefire deal –

<http://www.moi.gov.mm/npe/nlm/content/9-april-14> (NLM) 9 April 2014 (p. 1)

² Senior General Min Aung Hlaing receives UWSA Deputy Secretary-General, Vice-Chairman of SSA (Wamhaing), leaders of 27 militia troop –

<http://www.moi.gov.mm/npe/nlm/content/7-april-14> (NLM) 7 April 2014 (p. 2)

resuming humanitarian activities by UN and of international aid groups in Rakhine State. Mr Russel said that the US is closely monitoring the developments in Burma and he also reiterated President Obama's support on Burma's assumption of the ASEAN chairmanship and the on-going democratic reforms process. The Assistant Secretary also met with Foreign Minister Wunna Maung Lwin and cordially discussed promotion of bilateral relations and cooperation between Myanmar and the U.S. as well as ASEAN Summit and its related meetings.³

AUNG SAN SUU KYI LEAVES FOR EUROPE

Chairperson of Pyithu Hluttaw Rule of Law and Tranquillity Committee Aung San Suu Kyi left Yangon for Berlin, the capital of Germany, on 9 April. The NLD is scheduled to meet German leaders including Chancellor Merkel and also accept the Willy Brandt prize. She will also visit France on 14 April and meet with senior officials including French President François Hollande and the French Parliamentary Speaker.⁴

EU PROVIDES TRAINING TO BURMESE POLICE FORCE

The 16 Police Officers and 12 Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) from Mingla Taungnyunt and Sanchaung Townships in Yangon Region graduated from the EU-funded Community Policing program. The trainees from the two townships took part in a two 4-week programs (separate courses for officers and NCOs) where they received training in best practice Community Policing, based on respecting human and fundamental rights. EU Ambassador Roland Korbia also presented 10 police bicycles to the Sanchaung Police Force and more bicycles will be handed over in the coming weeks. The EU-funded Community Policing program started earlier this year with the training of 18 police officers from Mingala Taungnyunt Township and based on the program's success was extended to include police officials from Sanchaung Township in February this year.⁵

UNION GOVERNMENT TO FULLY PROTECT AID GROUPS IN RAKHINE STATE

The Union Government has announced that it will provide aid groups from the UN and other international organizations with full security services and will cooperate with them on all levels. In a press release issued regarding the investigation commission for the riots in Sittway from 26 to 27 March, the Union Government pledged that it will form a support group for emergency situations as part of efforts to support local authorities and security forces as the response to the riots in Sittway, Rakhine State was now adequate, officials said. The authorities will also expose the ringleaders and others involved in the riots which targeted the facilities of aid groups, with officials saying that serious action will be taken. According to the report of the investigation commission, instigators used the fact that Yvonne Dunton from the Malteser International organization took down a Buddhist flag outside her rented house as an excuse to start the violence, further straining the relations between local people and international aid groups. The residences and facilities of the aid groups were destroyed during the riots due to a sluggish response from authorities, the report said.

³ President, US Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs discuss resuming activities of int'l aid groups in Rakhine State –

<http://www.moi.gov.mm/npe/nlm/content/11-april-14> (NLM) 11 April 2014 (p. 3)/

Union FM meets U.S. Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs of State Department –

<http://www.moi.gov.mm/npe/nlm/content/11-april-14> (NLM) 11 April 2014 (p. 2)

⁴ Daw Aung San Suu Kyi leaves for Europe –

<http://www.moi.gov.mm/npe/nlm/content/10-april-14> (NLM) 10 April 2014 (p. 1)

⁵ EU trains Myanmar Police officers on community policing and giving bicycles –

<http://www.moi.gov.mm/npe/nlm/content/5-april-14> (NLM) 5 April 2014 (p. 2)

During the riots, 14 offices of 18 aid groups, 16 homes, 15 warehouses, 14 vehicles, 2 watercraft, 29 motorcycles and office equipment, valued at K 430 million and USD 430,000 were damaged.⁶

UNOFFICIAL MEDIA

TNLA CLASHES WITH BURMA ARMY AS CENSUS CONTINUES

Clashes are continuing in northern Shan State between the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) and government troops, as census enumerators try to collect demographic data in the area. Fighting was reported twice on 4 April in Thar Pan Kon village, Kutkai Township, according to TNLA spokesman Mai Aie Kyaw. "Our troops are active in that area to crack down on opium cultivation, and that no TNLA casualties were reported, while it was unknown whether any government soldiers had been wounded or killed," he said. Clashes between both sides also broke out on 2 April, he added. Regarding the on-going census, the TNLA, an ethnic Palaung armed group, said it would not try to block data collection. "We told our troops to avoid fighting during the census. We let the census proceed in our territory, no problem," Mai Aie Kyaw said. The KIA and the TNLA are the only two major ethnic armed groups that have not signed ceasefires with the government. More troops from the Burma Army have been deployed to northern Shan State recently, despite pledges in Naypyidaw to work toward a nationwide ceasefire accord. The TNLA reported that 40 Burma Army trucks with new recruits travelled through Namkhan Township on Thursday, and that clashes between both sides broke out 30 times in March. Government troops have also continued to fight in northern Shan State with Kachin and ethnic Shan armed groups.⁷

KIA UNDER ATTACK ON SEVERAL FRONTS

Burmese government troops launch multiple offensive fronts on 10 April to attack KIA positions in Bang Hkam and Nong Mun area located near China-Burma border in northern Shan State, said a KIA frontline source. Burmese army troops have approached KIA positions from three sides; Mansi – Kai Htik route, Man Win – Lagat Yang route and Nmau River route. As nationwide census began on 30 March, about 1000 Burmese army troops arrived in Man Win Gyi area in Kachin-Shan border and threatened KIA local officers to allow census in KIA-controlled territories or face a military action. The latest offensive began after Lt. Colonel Myo Nyunt of 567th Light Infantry Regiment (LIR) was killed by KIA troops guarding Maru Mawn Gate. A KIA official said Lt. Colonel Myo Nyunt and his soldier were shot by KIA troops after they refused to stop and identify themselves at KIA's Maru Mawn Gate located near Nam Hka village. Burmese army troops under 88th Light Infantry Division (LID) entered KIA-controlled territories in Nong Luk and Nawng Lum village beginning 10 April morning after the incident at Maru Mawn Gate, reported a local source. A series of battles fought between the two sides on 10 April in southern Kachin State and northern Shan State as Burmese army encroached into KIA-controlled territories. KIA's 27th Battalion troops encountered Burmese army's 68th LIB troops at Loi Pu Si Bum at 1 pm. Kachin people militia (MHH in Kachin) troops engaged in a battle against Burmese army's 601st LIR troops at Hka Pra village at about 1:45 pm. A platoon of KIA troops under 27th Battalion fought against a combined force of Burmese army's 68th LIB troops and infantry units under 88th LID between Bang Hkam and Lagat Yang village at 4:45 pm. Another battle took place between KIA's 27th Battalion troops and Burmese army's 68th LIB troops at Nam Hka Loi Seng Bum located near China-Burma border on the same day.

⁶ Union Government to fully protect aid groups in Rakhine State –
<http://www.moi.gov.mm/npe/nlm/content/9-april-14> (NLM) 9 April 2014 (p. 1)/
Gov't to take action against riot ringleaders in Sittway –
<http://www.moi.gov.mm/npe/nlm/content/10-april-14> (NLM) 10 April 2014 (p. 1)

⁷ TNLA clashes with Burma Army as census continues –
<http://www.irrawaddy.org/burma/tnla-clashes-burma-army-census-continues.html> (Irrawaddy) 4 April 2014

Burmese army's 68th LIB, 69th LIB, 323rd LIB, 522nd and 567th Light Infantry Regiments (LIRs) under Theinni-based 16th Military Operation Command (MOC-16), and at least 4 Infantry Battalions under Magway-based 88th Light Infantry Division (LID) have participated in this latest offensive operation.⁸

SHAN, WA REBELS CLASH OVER GOLD IN EASTERN BURMA

Clashes broke out on 5 and 6 April between the Shan State Army South (SSA-South) and the United Wa State Army (UWSA), with the fighting brought on by a dispute over Wa gold mining activities in southern Shan State's Mong Pan Township. Officials from the Restoration Council of Shan State, the political wing of the SSA-S, said the clashes began on 5 April morning, with the altercation reportedly stemming from continued Wa gold mining activities in an RCSS-controlled area of Mong Pan, a territory near the Salween River in eastern Burma. The Wa control land east of the Salween near Mong Tong Township, where UWSA troops regularly provide security for Wa companies mining gold along the river. The SSA-S controls Mong Pan, west of the Salween, with the weekend clashes occurring some 20 miles south of the town. Col Aung Kyan Murng, the coordinator of RCSS's Mong Pan Liaison office, said that the fighting occurred because the Wa had crossed the river to the west. "Their territory is on the eastern side of the Salween," he said. The fighting took place at just after 9 am on Saturday (5 April), with both RCSS and Wa troops converging on the area. One Wa soldier was reportedly killed and another injured, Aung Kyan Murng said. The UWSA could not be reached for comment. The RCSS said it had not been in contact with the UWSA since the fighting. A local RCSS official in Mong Pan, who asked to remain anonymous, told local news media that the clashes occurred because the UWSA had not complied with an RCSS demand that the Wa cease mining operations in RCSS territory. Locals said the clashes continued on Monday, but Aung Kyan Murng could not confirm those accounts and said the RCSS was still trying to make contact with its troops in the area concerned. "The Wa must leave the territory—if not, the fighting is likely to continue," said a local RCSS official. He added that "leaders of both parties should talk about it, the problem will not be solved only with troops on the ground." Territories between the two ethnic rebel groups have been delineated via mutual agreement, and rules are in place that forbids incursions into the other's area of control. The Salween River, running north to south through the area, divides the two sides and demarcates their respective territories. Both armed rebel groups provide security for affiliated gold mining enterprises in Shan State.⁹

88 GENERATION TO DISCUSS CHARTER REFORM WITH ETHNIC ALLIANCE

The 88 Generation Group will join with the United Nationalities Alliance (UNA) — an alliance of ethnic parties — to discuss amending the 2008 Constitution. Both sides have agreed to have two representatives as well as a coordination team to mediate discussions with the government over the emergence of a genuine democracy and a federal system. "Two representatives from the 88 Generation Peace and Open Society will be Mya Aye and Gyin Mi. The UNA side has not yet chosen its representatives," said Sai Nyunt Lwin, general secretary from Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD). The 88 Generation Peace and Open Society and National League for Democracy (NLD) have agreed to cooperate on amending Section 436 of the 2008 Constitution which regulates any changes of the military-drafted charter. "Two representatives from each side will discuss how to cooperate on the constitutional amendment. Both sides will meet again if necessary," said Aye Thar Aung, leader of the Rakhine National Party. According to Section 436, Chapter 12, the military drafted charter can only be amended with the approval of more than seventy-five percent of all

⁸ KIA under attack on several fronts –
<http://kachinlandnews.com/?p=24304> (KNL) 11 April 2014

⁹ Shan, Wa rebels Clash over gold in Eastern Burma –
<http://www.irrawaddy.org/burma/shan-wa-rebels-clash-gold-eastern-burma.html>(Irrawaddy) 8 April 2014

representatives in parliament, after which the decision must be ratified by a majority in a nation-wide referendum.¹⁰

PEACE TEAMS SEEK RELEASE OF FORCED KIA RECRUITS

Two ethnic based organisations have been advocating for the release of 33 men and women who were forcefully recruited by the Kachin Independence Army (KIA). The Shan Ethnic Affairs Team and members of the Peace Creation Group (PCG), from Kachin State, have been following up on complaints from parents and concerned relatives on 6 April. “There are three people who were released so far. Parents of the recruits reported to us. According to the statistics, 29 Shan recruits are still in captivity. We are ready to help when other ethnic groups ask us. Since women were also captured, think about how their parents will be suffered!” said Sai Tha Zone, the leader of Shan Ethnic Affairs Team. Forced recruitment into the army is endemic among the military as well as ethnic armed groups. The U.N. has been dealing with complaints and following up but this is harder in areas controlled by ethnic armed groups. Sin Wel, the mother of Htun Htun Naing who was captured when working in the gold mines near Sha-ngor village, appealed saying that the KIA asked for ransom to get her son back. “They asked for KS 100,000 (US\$ 100) to release my son. I gave them KS 200,000 (US\$ 200) but my son hasn’t come back. They contacted me frequently to return my son back. My son is all I have. I couldn’t even sleep when I heard that defence forces marched to Kachin State,” said the distressed mother. Sann Aung from the PCG said that they have tried to contact the KIA and that they are now joining forces with the Shan Ethnic Affairs Team, who are also working on similar cases. “We already talked this case to the KIA central by phone. We also plan to contact by the letter. As the raw recruits have been engaged in active duty for long, there must be negotiations for their safe return. They released many then and I hope they will this time too,” he said.¹¹

CEASEFIRE TEAM MEETS WITH ETHNIC LEADERS

Leaders of the Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT), a coalition of ethnic armed organisations discussing a nation-wide ceasefire with the government met representatives of the United Nationalities Alliance (UNA), representing Shan, Rakhine, Kayin, Mon and Zomi minority parties on 9 April in Yangon. “The internal conflict has been happening for over sixty years. Now we are trying to end the conflict and bringing about internal peace. The ethnic leaders have to be informed about the peace process. This event is held to involve them in the peace process and exchange the different opinions,” said NCCT leader Dr. Salai Lian Hmung. The UNA expressed their views about amending the 2008 Constitution and bringing about a nation-wide ceasefire, as well as looking towards federal solutions to the ethnic conflict, according to Khun Tun Oo from the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy. “The main cause of the internal conflict is politics. Therefore, internal peace can’t be got only by signing the ceasefire agreement,” said Aye Thar Aung from the Arakan National Party, as well as member of the UNA. “We need to solve the political tension. Almost all national problems might be solved by having the inclusive meeting like the Pinlon agreement. Furthermore, building the federal state could give the genuine ethnic unity and stop the chronic internal war,” he added. The NCCT has already drawn up a draft ceasefire agreement with

¹⁰ 88 Generation to discuss charter reform with ethnic alliance – http://elevenmyanmar.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5662:88-generation-to-discuss-charter-reform-with-ethnic-alliance&catid=32:politics&Itemid=354 (Eleven News Media) 4 April 2014

¹¹ Peace teams seek release of forced KIA recruits – http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5718:peace-teams-seek-release-of-forced-kia-recruits&catid=32:politics&Itemid=354 (Eleven News Media) 9 April 2014

the government's Union Peace Working Committee in early April and is due to resume discussions in May.¹²

MON STATE TO ALLOW ETHNIC LANGUAGE CLASSES IN GOVT SCHOOLS

The Mon State Parliament has passed a bill to allow the teaching of ethnic languages in government schools for the first time in more than half a century, state lawmakers say. The state legislature voted on 9 April to allow primary school students to take classes in Mon language and literature. Students can also elect to study ethnic Pa-O or Karen languages. All other classes will be conducted in Burmese language, according to national policy. The law will be effective during the upcoming academic year, which begins in July. Mon State will be the first state in the country to allow the teaching of ethnic languages at government schools. Elsewhere, students must study ethnic languages on their own time, outside of school hours. "Our parliament passed the bill already. Nobody was against it. Teaching Mon will happen once daily at the government schools," Nai San Tin, a state lawmaker for the All Mon Region Democracy Party, told The Irrawaddy on Thursday. Students will start Mon language classes when they begin primary school and will continue until fourth grade. The classes will focus on grammar, writing and literature, as well as Mon culture. Lawmakers said they would wait for the results of national education reform efforts before extending Mon language classes to secondary schools in the state. Ethnic education departments around the country are continuing to push the central government for greater freedom to teach ethnic languages. Nai Banyar Aung Moe, an MP in the Upper House of Parliament in Naypyidaw, said he would submit a proposal to allow university-level classes focused on Mon language. He praised the state legislature's decision to pass the new education bill. "We are worried our Mon children cannot read their language. This is great news for our Mon because we have struggled for this for a long time," he said. The Mon State Education Department will be responsible for hiring Mon-speaking teachers. These teachers will be paid a lower salary than other government teachers, earning only as much as Mon-language teachers at non-state schools, according to Aung Naing Oo, a state lawmaker representing the All Mon Region Democracy Party. The New Mon State Party (NMSP), an armed group that has a ceasefire agreement with the government, has since 1972 run its own schools under its Mon National Education Department. It runs 156 schools, employing 800 teachers and serving 17,000 students. At these schools, students learn in the Mon language at the primary level. A mix of the Mon language and Burmese is used during middle school.¹³

BURMA'S CENSUS EXERCISE EXTENDED TILL END OF APRIL

Burma's first census in three decades, which was scheduled to end on 10 April, has been extended to at least the end of the month to cover those who could not participate in the 12-day nationwide exercise, a senior official said. The exercise, which began on 30 March, had covered about 10 million of the country's estimated 11 million households as of Tuesday, according to Director of the Population Department Khaing Khaing Soe. Those who could not meet census takers during the exercise would have to provide their personal data to administrative offices closest to them or to a hotline that had been set up until the end of the month, she said. "They have to go and provide their data to the closest local administration office. We have already informed village and township census committees about those who were not listed on the census data," she said. "If they can't go and contact them, we have opened a hotline, whose number is 1840, until the end of April," she said. "When they call and let us know their data, we will take prompt action."

¹² Ceasefire team meets with ethnic leaders –

http://elevenmyanmar.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5736:ceasefire-team-meets-with-ethnic-leaders&catid=32:politics&Itemid=354 (Eleven News Media) 11 April 2014

¹³ Mon State to Allow Ethnic Language Classes in Govt Schools –

<http://www.irrawaddy.org/burma/mon-state-allow-ethnic-language-classes-govt-schools.html> (Irrawaddy) 10 April 2014

Khaing Khaing Soe said that "95 percent" of the census has been successful but added that complete data derived from the exercise would be announced only in a year's time. "We can't provide all the details yet but what we can say is that 95 percent of the work has been successful," she said. "The census process is not done yet. We will work on it until we get as much details as we can. We will announce the complete data of this census in March or April of 2015."¹⁴

ANALYSIS

Burma has emerged from half a decade of isolation under military rule and embarking on a path to open democracy. The country has made headway in its transition to democracy in the last three years though many challenges still remain.

The recent meeting between the government's Union Peacemaking Working Committee (UPWC) and the ethnic armed groups' National Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT) can be seen as a major step where both sides were able to outline a draft agreement.

The signing of a Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement will be the first phase but one crucial in paving the way for peace. However, in order to sustain peace a national dialogue is necessary to implement a national dialogue where all stakeholders are allowed to have their say in solving issues political, social and economic issues.

The government will also need to adopt policies in resolving deep-rooted disputes and disagreements over self-autonomy, economic development and the right to access natural resources as well as protecting and preserving cultures and languages of ethnic minorities and religious groups.

But peace will not be achieved through political compromises alone. Mutual trust between the government and ethnic groups is crucial and thus all stakeholders will need to demonstrate their sincerity and seriousness if there is to be genuine peace.

However, the continued clashes between government troops and ethnic armed organisations in Shan and Kachin States are indications that sustainable peace in the country continues to be elusive and fragile.

¹⁴ Myanmar's Census Exercise Extended Till End of April – <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/census-04102014181432.html> (RFA) 10 April 2014/
Census meets delays in remote regions and areas – http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5730:census-meets-delays-in-remote-regions-and-areas&catid=32:politics&Itemid=354 (Eleven News Media) 11 April 2014/
Some Mon households not counted for census – <http://monnews.org/2014/04/10/mon-households-counted-census/> (IMNA) 10 April 2014