
POLITICAL MONITOR NO.12

OFFICIAL MEDIA

US UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE MEETS BURMESE LEADERS

Vice-President Nyan Tun received the US delegation headed by Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy and Human Rights Ms Sarah Sewall in Nay Pyi Taw on 8 May at the Presidential Palace in Naypyitaw. Both sides exchanged views on the national humanitarian assistance and relations between the two armed forces as well as matters on human rights and press freedom. The visiting US delegation also called on the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and discussed the role of the Burmese Armed Forces in the on-going democratic reform process, security and defence duty of the country, cooperation with international organizations in prevention against recruitment of minors and the military codes of conduct. Under-Secretary Sewall also called on Foreign Minister Wunna Maung Lwin on 9 May, and exchanged views on the situation in the Rakhine State, eradication of narcotic drugs and anti-human trafficking in Burma.¹

MYANMAR PEACE CENTRE HOSTS 88 GENERATION PEACE AND OPEN SOCIETY, KNU DELEGATION

The Myanmar Peace Centre (MPC) hosted two separate meetings regarding the ongoing peace process at its building on Shweli Road in Kamayut Township, Yangon on 6 May. At the meeting Vice-Chair of the Union Peace-Making Work Committee and Minister at the President Office Aung Min met representatives from the 88 Generation Peace and Open Society and discussed cooperation between the two organizations and the ongoing peace process and both sides agreed to hold monthly meetings. Nyo Ohn Myint from MPC who was present at the meeting told local news media that the meeting was aimed at narrowing the information gap between the two organizations.

In a separate meeting with the Karen National Union (KNU), Minister Aung Min acknowledged the role of KNU's Vice-President Pado Naw Zipporah Sein, who is also the general secretary of the organization and released a statement calling for the participation of all ethnic armed groups in the Government's peace plan. The KNU Vice-Chair Zipporah Sein elaborated on her delegation's tour of Ayeyawady Region, highlighting the importance of Karen Unity and Peace at the meeting.

The two leaders stated that the recent census-taking in Kayin State was implemented smoothly and said that genuine peace is critical for reaching a nation-wide ceasefire deal and for creating an all inclusive process which includes government, all non-state armed groups, political parties and civil society. Zipporah Sein also emphasized the need of taking a step-by-step plan paving the way for reaching lasting peace that guarantees the right to equality.

The Myanmar Peace Centre was opened on 3 November, 2012 to assist the Union Peace-making Central Committee and the Union Peace-making Work Committee for the peace process, to coordinate all peace initiatives, to act as a one-stop service centre for donor governments and INGOs

¹ Myanmar, US exchange views on national reconciliation –
<http://www.moi.gov.mm/npe:zg/newspaper-journal/content/10/05/2014/id-9116> (NLM) 9 May 2014 (p. 3)/
Commander-in-Chief holds talks with US delegates –
<http://www.moi.gov.mm/npe:zg/newspaper-journal/content/10/05/2014/id-9116> (NLM) 9 May 2014 (p. 3)/
Union FM, US delegates meet –
<http://www.moi.gov.mm/npe:zg/newspaper-journal/content/10/05/2014/id-9116> (NLM) 9 May 2014 (p. 3)

that want to support the peace process and serve as a platform for government officials, ethnic armed groups, civil society organizations, international donors and INGOs to meet and negotiate.²

UN SECRETARY-GENERAL'S PARTNERSHIP GROUP ON BURMA DISCUSSES VIOLENCE IN RAKHINE STATE, NAT'L RECONCILIATION

The United Nations Secretary-General convened the first meeting of the Partnership Group on Burma (Myanmar) on 25 April in New York aimed at further broadening the scope of the partnership between Burma and the United Nations, with officials discussing a wide range of issues, including the recent attacks on international aid organizations in Rakhine and national reconciliation, initiated by the UN Secretary-General. The Partnership Group welcomed the participation of the Burmese delegation led by Minister for Immigration and Population Khin Yi, saying that the negotiation between the government and the armed ethnic groups was a positive signal. Referring to the recent developments in Rakhine, Member States stressed the need for firm action by the government to curb violence and hatred in that state. Member States welcomed the decision of the UN Secretary-General to increase international presence in Rakhine. The UN Secretary-General reiterated that the United Nations as a whole would continue to support the Government and people of Myanmar during the critical transitional phase.³

MORE EFFORT NEEDED TO ERASE PERCEPTIONS OF AID BIAS IN RAKHINE STATE, UNICEF REP SAYS

UNICEF Myanmar held a briefing session in Yangon on 30 April regarding the situation for children in Rakhine State, stating that UNICEF is working on various areas related to promotion and protection of the rights of all children in the state. In his opening remarks UNICEF Representative to Burma Bertrand Bainvel, said that the Rakhine issue is not only a concern for the people of Rakhine State but also for all the people in Burma. Bainvel expressed the belief that a long-term plan for children in Rakhine in cooperation with the local authorities would bring forth an environment for a "better, stronger and more sustainable" result for each child in the state. Responding to questions about aid work in Rakhine, Bainvel emphasized UNICEF's work is based on need, not on race or religion, adding that much more effort is needed to "delete perceptions" of discrimination and bias. Questions of aid delivery have caused difficulties in the state in the past, with some believing international aid organisations were paying more attention to some communities than others. Bainvel said organizations working in Rakhine State have to work under whatever pressure and accept the challenges after recent violence, but there remains a determination to provide assistance to needy children no matter the situation. At the briefing, UNICEF officials also outlined the organization's new commitments for improving the lives of all children in Rakhine State in 2014-2015 and said it will spend US\$12 million in its Multi-Sector State-Level Work Plan that will be implemented over those two years.⁴

MINISTER FOR IMMIGRATION AND POPULATION BRIEFS MEDIA ON PRELIMINARY RESULTS OF CENSUS

Minister for Immigration and Population Khin Yi briefed the media on the 2014 Population and Housing Census Enumeration at the Yangon Regional Government Office on 7 May. Khin Yi stated that recent census "ensured a successful outcome" with coverage rate of 99 percent and a response rate of 98 percent. He announced that the final population information with the nearly-completed

² Myanmar Peace Centre hosts 88 Generation Peace and Open Society, KNU delegation – <http://www.moi.gov.mm/npe:zg/newspaper-journal/content/7/05/2014/id-9079> (NLM) 7 May 2014 (p. 1 & 2)

³ UN Secretary-General's Partnership Group on Myanmar meeting discusses violence in Rakhine State, nat'l reconciliation – <http://www.moi.gov.mm/npe:zg/newspaper-journal/content/1/05/2014/id-9003> (NLM) 1 May 2014 (p. 3)

⁴ More effort needed to erase perceptions of aid bias in Rakhine State, UNICEF rep says – <http://www.moi.gov.mm/npe:zg/newspaper-journal/content/1/05/2014/id-9003> (NLM) 1 May 2014 (p. 1)

data would be released in May 2015, following the release of preliminary findings in August that will include the exact number of males and females and households in townships.

Regarding the census delays in some areas in the country, Minister Khin Yi said that four options suggested by International Technical Advisory Board and local and UNFPA experts would be taken into consideration in the counting process for “self-identified people as Rohingya in three districts in Rakhine State” during the period of the eight-week technical delay. If none of the four options is working for them, the completion of the census-taking process might be announced and will state why the process could not continue.

The first option is to conclude the process and to state which areas were left out and why, while the second option would be the release of an estimated number of the population using “other sources.” The third option is to continue the process after further coordination in order to avoid unnecessary delays, and the last one is to carry out surveys covering 10 to 20 percent of the total areas left out instead of covering the whole area.

There are 1.33 million Bengali in the country, with 1.05 million living in Rakhine State, officials said. A Swiss diplomat who attended the briefing session told local news media that the census was meeting international standards and was satisfactory, and that one of the four options the Union minister said would be the best way for Rakhine State in the counting process.

In responding to questions, the Minister for Immigration and Population reaffirmed that only those who are eligible for citizenship under the 1982 Citizenship Law would be granted Burmese citizenship despite outside proposals to give citizenship status to the “so-called Rohingya,” adding that the term Rohingya has never existed in Burma’s ethnic history. The census is the first census in Burma after 30 years and began on 30 March 2014 and involved an estimated 90,000 census-takers and 25,000 census-auditors covered around 81,000 areas across the country during the 12-day population survey.⁵

UNOFFICIAL MEDIA

BURMA MILITARY INTELLIGENCE RAIDS RCSS LIAISON OFFICE IN KENG TUNG

Burma Military Affairs Security (MAS), formerly known as Military Intelligence, together with police and Burma Army raided the Restoration Council of Shan State’s liaison office in the eastern Shan State capital Keng Tung (Kyaintone), on 6 May, 2014.

Military Security Affairs, police and soldiers, numbering about 20 personnel, raided and searched the RCSS’s liaison office, while Sai Soe Mong, the liaison officer in Keng Tung, was summoned to the office of MAS. Sai Soe Mong, the liaison officer in Keng Tung said: “I was summoned to the MAS’s office. When I was there, they (MAS, police and soldiers) raided and searched my office. I requested to leave, but I was not allowed to.” Sai Soe Mong was allowed to leave after 4 hours at the MAS office, when the raid team had finished their mission.

“Such action could affect our trust. In fact, if they would like to investigate, they should give a warrant and inform us. Now, the police, the spies (MAS) and soldiers raided our office while we were building peace. We should solve the matter peacefully and politely,” said the RCSS/SSA liaison officer. He added: “According to our Shan culture, we take off our shoes before entering a house, but Burma Army did not listen to us.”

Regarding the latest incident, Chairman of the Restoration Council of the Shan State (RCSS) Lt-Gen Yawd Serk, sent a letter on 8 May to the Union Peace Working Committee (UPWC) to clarify the raid

⁵ Preliminary results of census to be published in August with near complete coverage – <http://www.moi.gov.mm/npe:zg/newspaper-journal/content/8/05/2014/id-9093> (NLM) 8 May 2014 (p. 1)

on its liaison office by about 20 personnel, including Burmese Military Affairs Security (MAS), police and soldiers.

Major Sai Lao Hseng, spokesman of the RCSS said: “Our office was legally established under bilateral agreement between the government/Burma Army and RCSS. They detained our officers, and raided our office. The raid was not about solving problems and building peace. Now, we are uncertain whether the government/Burma Army is really committed to peace building.”

RCSS/SSA has opened 6 liaison offices across Shan State after it reached a ceasefire with Naypyitaw in late 2011.⁶

ETHNIC ALLIANCE SETS UP ‘FEDERAL ARMY’ OFFICE

The major alliance of ethnic armed groups in Burma, the United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC), has opened an office for its “Federal Union Army,” which will pave the way for the involvement of ethnic fighters in the national armed forces. The office in the Kachin Independence Army (KIA)-controlled border town of Mai Ja Yang has apparently been open for some months. But the existence of the office, named the Federal Union Army (Northern Command) War Office, has only just come to light.

Khun Okkar, Joint-Secretary 2 of the UNFC, told local news media on 8 May that a delegation had been working at the office since February, but that the alliance—which comprises 12 ethnic armed groups across Burma—did not publicly announce it so as not to disturb the peace process. Drawn-out negotiations toward a nationwide ceasefire agreement are ongoing, but new clashes in northern Burma in recent weeks have seen thousands more civilians displaced by violence. “We opened a war office in the north in February. We let [KIA Chief of Staff] General Gam Shawng lead the northern command. The federal army and our UNFC are twins. Since we formed UNFC [in 2011], we decided to form it, but we kept it low profile.” said Khun Okkar. He said the UNFC would open two more offices for the organization in Karenni (Kayah) State and either Karen or Mon state.

Khun Okkar said the purpose of the UNFC’s new organization was to prepare troops to be part of an army for all of Burma that would include ethnic soldiers. The proposal for Burma to have a federal army, incorporating ethnic armed groups, has been a key part of ethnic leaders’ proposals for ending decades of civil conflict. “When there is a federal system in our country, we need to have federal defense army. To do this, we need to form it. This is our preparation. This army will stay under control federal union government,” said Khun Okkar. He declined to share details of the ethnic armed groups’ vision for how the posited federal army would work. Some have suggested that a federal army would include ethnic units. “We are working to have nationwide peace agreement. We have to be very careful when we talk about the federal army issue in order not to disturb the peace process,” said Khun Okkar.⁷

KNU, WA SLAM CONFLICT IN NORTHERN BURMA

The United Wa State Army (UWSA) and the Karen National Union (KNU) released a joint-statement on 29 April and denounced the hostile approach and use of military force by Burmese government troops and several ethnic armed groups in Kachin and Shan states during an ongoing offensive that

⁶ Burma military intelligence raids RCSS liaison office in Keng Tung – http://www.english.panglong.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5813:burma-military-intelligence-raids-rcss-liaison-office-in-keng-tung&catid=85:politics&Itemid=266 (S.H.A.N.) 7 May 2014/
RCSS asks Naypyitaw to clarify raid on liaison office – http://www.english.panglong.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5817:rcss-asks-naypyitaw-to-clarify-raid-on-liaison-office&catid=85:politics&Itemid=266 (S.H.A.N.) 9 May 2014

⁷ Burma Ethnic Alliance Sets Up ‘Federal Army’ Office – <http://www.irrawaddy.org/burma/burma-ethnic-alliance-sets-federal-army-office.html> (Irrawaddy) 9 May 2014

has displaced thousands of ethnic civilians in recent weeks. The statement, issued shortly after a meeting between the groups' leaders in Panghsang, capital of the Wa Self-Administered Division in eastern Burma, demanded that all parties do more to find a political solution to the conflict as the current exchanges risk damaging nationwide reconciliation efforts.

Aung Myint, secretary to head office of the United Wa State Party, the UWSA's political wing, said that while the Wa have enjoyed a peaceful relationship with the government for 25 years, they remain attentive to the overall peace process. "We have been at peace [with the government] for 25 years, but we now have cause to denounce the use of military action as a solution to problems. There is fighting in certain areas while they are signing peace agreements," he said.

The UWSA and KNU leaders also agreed to propose amendments to the 2008 Constitution when the peace process reaches the stage of political dialogue. The UWSA also expressed its intention to demand a fully autonomous Wa State at the appropriate stage of negotiation. Both parties reiterated that ethnic discrimination and political inequality are core contributors to Burma's decades of civil war and unrest. UWSA leaders have said that they will increase their involvement once both parties are nearing the stage of political dialogue.

Both the UWSA and the KNU are currently in Union-level discussions with the government, as both have secured regional peace pacts, but remain united in their condemnation of the government's actions towards the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) and the Shan State Army-North (SSA-N), all of which are affected by the recent fighting.⁸

ETHNIC GROUPS CONCERNED OVER US, UK MILITARY ENGAGEMENT WITH BURMA

Kachin ethnic leader Gen. Gun Maw said ethnic rebels groups have doubts about US and UK military engagement with the Burma Army, as the military has yet to prove that it will end its oppression of the country's ethnic minorities and democratic opposition.

Gun Maw said ethnic armed groups understand that Western military support for Burmese military focuses on changing the mindset and behaviour of the army and excludes combat skills training, but he stressed that concerns remain over any type of engagement that bolsters the army's capabilities in their ongoing fight against rebel groups.

"If these skills development [programs] enhance their [Burma Army's] combat ability and affect the ethnics, we, the ethnics, would have to speak out loud about it," he told The Irrawaddy in an interview after a meeting of the ethnic alliance's Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team in Chiang Mai, Thailand, on 29 April. "There is no fixed rule that the specific technical support can only be used for specific affairs," the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) deputy commander-in-chief noted.

Gun Maw said ethnic groups feared that expanding Western military-to-military engagement could, in the near future, enhance the Burma Army's combat skills, while US engagement appears to offer international support for the army even before it has reformed its military operations and long-standing goal of stamping out ethnic ambitions for political autonomy.

During his recent visit to the US in April, Gun Maw met senior US government officials and raised the question of the Washington's should clarify its military engagement with the Burmese government and urged the US to be more clear about its objectives. A senior US State Department official was quoted as saying in February that Washington would consider future arms sales to Burma, US officials were at pains to stress that the military cooperation so far only concerned training Burmese officers in increasing professionalism and respect for human rights. Considerations of any other type of support, the US Embassy said, were "speculative."

⁸ KNU, UWSA slam conflict in northern Burma – <http://english.dvb.no/news/knu-uwsa-slam-conflict-in-northern-burma-myanmar/40097> (DVB) 30 April 2014

The UK has appointed a permanent military attaché at its Rangoon embassy in 2013 and the UK chief of defense staff also visited Burma in June last year. The London-based Campaign Against Arms Trade said Britain in January 2013 approved sales of US\$5.3 million worth of “inertial equipment,” most likely technology that aids radar navigation systems, to Burma. Since 2008, it has sold Burma another \$700,000 worth of defense equipment, mostly software, and measurement and navigation equipment, although one of the export licenses also included a bomb suit.⁹

NATIONAL UNITY PARTY ELECTS FORMER MINISTER FOR MINES AS NEW CHAIRMAN

The National Unity Party (NUP) has appointed 88-year-old retired Brigadier-General Than Tin as its new chairman to replace Lt-Gen Tun Yi, who passed away last month. The NUP was formed by the former ruling military junta in 1988 from the remnants of former dictator Ne Win’s Burmese Socialist Programme Party (BSPP). It won ten constituencies in the 1990 general election and 64 seats in 2010 polls.

NUP spokesman Han Shwe said the party’s executive committee unanimously decided to name Than Tin as the party’s new chairman at a meeting on 30 April. He cited Than Tin’s prior position as party general-secretary, his experience in the Burmese independence movement in colonial days, and his role as a minister in the BSPP government in the late 1970s. Than Tin was also a member of the government committee that drafted the 1974 Constitution.

“We appoint our leaders considering criteria based on their political history – they took part in the independence movement against the British rulers and the anti-fascist resistance, and they have shared their experiences with the following generations,” said Han Shwe. “U Than Tin is a very well-experienced man – he is a retired serviceman who took part in the anti-colonial and anti-fascist movements for Burma’s independence and we believe that he is very capable of assuming the party’s leadership role.”

Than Tin becomes the third person to take the party’s chair after Thaw Kyaw and Tun Yi. The party has announced that it plans to contest 18 of the 30 vacated seats in by-elections scheduled for later this year.¹⁰

COMMITTEE ADVISES EU TO CONSIDER PLIGHT OF POLITICAL PRISONERS

Members of the Scrutinising Committee for Remaining Political Prisoners advised the European Union (EU) to consider the current difficulties of political prisoners in drawing up their policy for human rights in Burma. Delegations from the EU and the local civic bodies met at the EU office in Yangon on 29 April and held discussions on the human rights situation in Burma, according to Bo Kyi of the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) and Ye Aung of the Former Political Prisoners Society (FPPS).

“Many organisations came and presented their actions for human rights violations in Burma and we told them that there are still political prisoners in jail and some of them are tormented during interrogation,” said Ye Aung. Bo Kyi echoed, “If the EU plans the policy to maintain human rights in Burma, we recommend them to focus on the plight of political prisoners. Similarly, other ethnic groups like Kachin and Rakhine stated the situation in their region.”

Designations from the EU listened and noted the presentations from local civic bodies rather than interacting.

⁹ Ethnic groups concerned over US, UK Military engagement with Burma – <http://www.irrawaddy.org/burma/ethnic-groups-concerned-us-uk-military-engagement-burma.html> (Irrawaddy) 30 April 2014

¹⁰ NUP elects Than Tin, 88 as chairman – <http://english.dvb.no/news/nup-elects-than-tin-88-as-chairman-burma-myanmar/40234> (DVB) 2 May 2014

At present, there are over 30 political prisoners in jail. To discuss matters on defining the terms of what constitutes a political prisoner and to discuss the release of remaining political prisoners, the committee along with the AAPP and the FPPS sent a letter requesting a meeting in May to Deputy Minister Aung Thein of the Presidential Office on April 24, but have not received a reply. "The committee works slowly on this case. The government also seemed to hesitate on this matter for political concerns. In addition, we have no authority on our own . . . It is like we are just meant to follow the government's orders. The government has to solve this first," Bo Kyi continued.

The AAPP and the FPPS also met with Laetitia Bonnet, the leader of the research team on Myanmar for Indonesia-based Asia Justice and Rights (AJAR) at the AAPP's office on 29 April. Bo Kyi and Zaw Moe from the AAPP and Ye Aung, Htun Kyi and Tin Maung Oo from the FPPS attended the meeting and discussed matters pertaining to the remaining political prisoners. According to the FPPS, the profiles of 3,000 ex-political prisoners have been enumerated so far.¹¹

NLD SEEKS CLOSER TIES WITH JAPANESE OPPOSITION PARTY

Aung San Suu Kyi has called for closer co-operation between the National League for Democracy (NLD) and Japan's centrist opposition Democratic Party of Japan, a central executive committee of the NLD said on April 30. Dr Zaw Myint Maung said the leader of the National League for Democracy leader made the call at a meeting with a DPJ delegation led by former Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda at the NLD's Shwegondaing headquarters. As well as discussing future co-operation, the Japanese delegation was interested in understanding the NLD's views on a range of issues, Dr Zaw Myint Maung said.

NLD MP U Zay Yar Thaw (Pyithu Hluttaw, Pobbathiri Township, Mandalay Region) told local news media that the meeting also covered potential future communication between the Japanese and Myanmar parliaments and general issues of friendship between the two countries.

President U Thein Sein met Mr Noda in Nay Pyi Taw on 29 April and it was reported on the president's website that they discussed the Thilawa Special Economic Zone and the upgrading of the Yangon-Mandalay railway. Both projects are being developed with assistance from the Japanese International Co-operation Agency.¹²

ARAKAN CONFERENCE CALLS FOR RAKHINE TO GET 50% OF OIL AND GAS REVENUES

Delegates at the Arakan National Conference in Kyaukphyu have called for Rakhine State to receive a 50 percent share of all revenues from oil and gas projects in their region. On 28 April, Kyaw Khine from the Watch the Oil civil society group called on delegates at the conference and said Rakhine should receive 50 percent share of the oil and gas revenues for state development as well as the electricity generated by natural gas found in Rakhine State. The conference, the first of its kind to be held in Rakhine since 1947, began on 27 April and ends on 1 May. Delegates also proposed that Rakhine take direct responsibility for managing the exploitation of natural resources in the state. "If laws like these are not prescribed soon, Rakhine State could soon be left depleted of resources," Ko Soe Shwe from the Sky Youth civil society group told the conference.

All natural resources are managed by the Union government but the conference heard proposals for the states and regions to arrange for local level administrators and civil society groups to be included in contract agreements.

¹¹ Committee advises EU to consider plight of political prisoners – http://elevenmyanmar.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5921:committee-advises-eu-to-consider-plight-of-political-prisoners&catid=32:politics&Itemid=354 (Eleven News Media) 1 May 2014

¹² NLD seeks closer ties with Japanese opposition party – <http://mizzima.com/mizzima-news/politics/item/11134-nld-seeks-closer-ties-with-japanese-opposition-party> (Mizzima) 1 May 2014

Reacting to the proposals made at the conference, Amyotha Hluttaw MP and secretary of its Mining and Natural Resources Committee, Hla Swe, said all natural resources had to be considered for the national benefit.

“It would not be fair to use half of the revenues from Rakhine’s natural resources for the state’s sole benefit,” said Hla Swe (Union Solidarity and Development Party, Magway Region). “While some areas of the country have plentiful resources, others such as the Naga Self-Administered Zone in Sagaing Region have none,” he said. “Those states blessed with natural resources should share for the sake of fairness.”

The New Light of Myanmar reported last August that the Kyaukphyu-Kunming natural gas pipeline would transport 500 million cubic feet of gas a day, of which 400 million cubic feet a day would go to China and the rest be reserved for domestic use. It said that of the amount reserved for domestic purposes, 20 million cubic feet a day would be allocated for use at Kyaukphyu.¹³

ANALYSIS

While the government backed Myanmar Peace Centre on one hand has been holding talks with the 88 Generation Peace and Open Society group and the Karen National Union (KNU) on peace and national reconciliation, the military (Tatmadaw) on its part has raided the Restoration Council of Shan State’s (RCSS) liaison office in Keng Tung on 6 May. And thus the two sharp contrasting events once again brings to light not only of the fragility of the on-going peace process but also the government’s commitment towards national reconciliation. While the participation of high ranking military officials to recent rounds of peace talks had been welcomed and seen as a positive step in the right direction, the unwarranted raid on the RCSS liaison office will have only created doubts and suspicion over the military’s true agenda regarding the peace process.

Questions will now begin to rise amongst the ethnic armed organizations regarding the ceasefire agreements and if the government can uphold and deliver its promises of genuine peace in the country. While the reasoning and logic behind the raid in Keng Tung still remains unclear, it is yet further signs that the government and military are not on the same wave length regarding the peace process. And such a scenario is a worrying sign for the democratic reform process and could also derailing the upcoming peace talks between Naypyitaw and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA).

In order to achieve peace it is essential that action should be taken against those accountable for the recent raid on the RCSS office in a timely and transparent manner. However, failure to do so, could see the entire peace process taking backward steps and moreover deterioration of the already fragile trust between Naypyitaw and the ethnic armed organizations.

¹³ Arakan Conference calls for Rakhine to get 50% of oil and gas revenues – <http://mizzima.com/mizzima-news/development/item/11125-arakan-national-conference-calls-for-rakhine-to-get-50-of-oil-and-gas-revenues> (Mizzima) 29 April 2014