
POLITICAL MONITOR No. 36

OFFICIAL MEDIA

GOVERNMENT AND KARENNI GROUP HOLDS PEACE TALKS

The government's Union Peace-making Committee and the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) signed a 6-point agreement after holding a 3rd round of peace talks in Loikaw, the capital of Kayah State. The agreement includes formation of joint-monitoring groups, opening liaison offices as well as measures for the resettlement of IDPs and resumption of their livelihoods. During the 2-day peace talks from 22-23 October, the two sides discussed issues including land confiscation, compensation and returning land to farmers, reclamation for high-land cultivation, regional development and military affairs. The talks were attended by Vice-Chairman of the Union Peace Committee Minister Aung Min and KNPP Vice-Chairman Khu Oo Yei.¹

UNION PARLIAMENT ISSUES STATEMENT URGING PEACE

The Union Parliament issued a statement on 24 October calling for nation-wide efforts to achieve genuine peace and stability in the country. The parliament stated that work is underway to enact a law to protect the rights of ethnic nationalities with the aim to assist the peace process and to review the Constitution to work for national reconciliation. The statement also stressed that peace and stability and the rule of law are essential prerequisites for democratization and development of the country and it urged people to refrain from performing actions or using expressions that can disrupt the ongoing peace process which is paving the way for moving towards national unity and reconciliation, the rule of law and the development of the Union. *(Please see Annex A for full text of the statement).*²

HLUTTAW SESSIONS – Highlights

Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) sessions

The 8th Regular Session of the First Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) held its 11th day meeting on 21 October. During the session:

- U Thein Tun Oo of Amarapura Constituency raised the question **on returning of fire-arms to their owners**. Deputy Minister for Home Affairs Brig-Gen Kyaw Kyaw Tun said that **there were no plans to return seized fire-arms to its original owners who had valid licences or permits**.
- U Thein Nyunt of Thingangyun Constituency submitted a **motion calling to mend the Child Law (The State Law and Order Restoration Council Law No.9/93)**. Deputy Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Daw Su Su Hlaing, Deputy Attorney-General U Tun Tun Oo and Judge of the Supreme Court of the Union U Myint Aung responded by saying that **the motion which included the death penalty issue proved to be contentious. The session rejected the motion for discussion.**³

¹ Nationwide ceasefire a step towards holding political dialogues –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-10-23-red.pdf> (NLM) 23 October 2013 (p. 1 & 8) /
Union Peace-making Work Committee, KNPP build more trust after third talks –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-10-24-red.pdf> (NLM) 24 October 2013 (p. 16)

² Those who love their own country, want to adopt the federal system, adore democracy are to refrain from actions and expressions causing disruption to ongoing peace process –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-10-25-red.pdf> (NLM) 25 October 2013 (p. 16 & 9)

³ No plan to return seized firearms with license or permits to owners, heirs –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-10-22-red.pdf> (NLM) 22 October 2013 (p. 16)

The 8th Regular Session of the First Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) held its 12th day meeting on 22 October. During the session:

- Union Minister for Environmental Conservation and Forestry U Win Tun responding to a question on action taken against illegally use of Chainsaws in Rakhine State said that Notification No.29/2013 of rules and regulations for chainsaw users has been issued in the newspapers and that licences were issued for 52 chainsaws in Gwa Township, from 6 June to 3 October this year. Action will be taken against those who fail to get chainsaw licences. A total of 219 chainsaws used in illegal logging have been seized since 2011 to September this year. He said the Ministry will supervise the use of chain saws and take stern action against illegal users in cooperation with related ministries and regional administrative bodies.⁴

The 8th Regular Session of the First Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) held its 13th day meeting on 23 October. During the session:

- Bill Committee members U Khin Maung Shwe and U Soe Soe submitted reports on the **Bill amending the Poisons Act of 1919 and the Bill amending the Myanmar Indigenous Medicine Law**. The two bills were approved at the session.
- Deputy Minister for Agriculture and Irrigation U Khin Zaw replied to a question raised by Dr Aung Than of Shwebo Constituency on the **Irrigation Department's preventive measures against the floods in the villages to the west of Shwebo, Sagaing Region**. He said that work had been carried out by the Irrigation Department in 2011-2013 FY and plans to implement further works would be done in coordination with the Regional Government and local farmers of the region.⁵

Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) sessions

The 8th Regular Session of the First Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) held its 10th day meeting on 21 October. During the session:

- MP U Myo Myint of Mandalay Region Constituency No (6) submitted a proposal **urging the Union Government to implement Flood Damage Analysis and Mitigation Measures for long-term interest of the people in Burma**. U Myo Myint said that **National Level Water Resources Committee had been formed along with Expert Group that comprises 28 members to support the committee in order to manage water resources and that he hopes the committee will take effective measures for prevention of flood and inundation by adopting short and long-term master plans that benefit the country**. The proposal was discussed at the session.
- **The report on the Multimodal Transport Bill** was read out by Bill Committee Member Col Maung Maung Htoo. It mentioned that the **Pyithu Hluttaw Transport, Communications and Construction Committee submitted a multimodal transport bill according to ASEAN Multimodal Transport Convention signed by Burma to take action against commodities transport and commodities damages in trading between ASEAN countries**.
- Defence Services Personnel Hluttaw Representative Brig-Gen Khin Maung Aye submitted a proposal **urging the Supreme Court of the Union to amend the Union Judiciary Law to empower Admiralty or Maritime Jurisdiction**. He said that it was enacted in Section 11 (d) of Union Judiciary Law of the constitution that the Supreme Court has jurisdiction in piracy, offences committed at international water or airspace, offences committed at ground or

⁴ Seized cars and motor cycles to be put up for competitive bidding system: Dy NPED Minister – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-10-23-red.pdf> (NLM) 23 October 2013 (p. 16)

⁵ Pyithu Hluttaw approves Poisons Act amending bill, Myanmar Indigenous Medicine Act amending bill – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-10-24-red.pdf> (NLM) 24 October 2013 (p. 16)

international waters or airspace by violating international law. As the Supreme Court has yet to mandate matters related to maritime jurisdiction, controversy on legal affairs to sue civil case at the court occurred, he added. The Hluttaw decided to discuss the proposal.⁶

The 8th Regular Session of the First Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) held its 13th day meeting on 23 October. The following key proposal was submitted and discussed at the session:

- During the discussion of the motion submitted by U Myo Myint of Mandalay Region Constituency No (6) urging **the government to initiate an engineering and technical education system through realistic scenario to be able to turn out engineers and technicians with the establishment of the Centres of Excellence**, MP Steven Thabeik of Chin State Constituency No (4) said that **“the education system should not be placed in the trial period. It is high time to systematically and correctly reengineer the educational system. If not so, there is no doubt to say that we will be left far behind in the development of education system compared to neighbouring countries.”** U Kan Nyunt of Sagaing Region Constituency No (5) welcomed the establishment of the Centres of Excellence and a realistic scenario for turning out qualified engineers.⁷

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw sessions

The 8th Regular Session of the First Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Union Parliament) held its 5th day meeting on 24 October. During the session:

- The Parliament discussed **a message sent by the President to change the already approved plan of building a 50-megawatt natural gas turbine from Mawlamyine to Kyaukpyu in Rakhine State**, which would provide energy to both Mon and Rakhine States. **Union Minister for Electric Power U Khin Maung Soe explained the plant will be built with a loan of USD 57.1 million from EXIM Bank of China and provide energy to more than 500,000 households in Rakhine State that are far beyond the reach of national power grid and only have access to electricity through other power sources. As plans are already arranged to generate more electricity for Mawlamyine and nearby regions and 20 million cubic feet of natural gas are available from Shwe offshore gas field for Kyaukpyu region, the plan of building a power plant should be moved to Rakhine State.**
- The Speaker of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw sought the Hluttaw’s approval on **Announcement No (2/2013) to ensure genuine peace in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.**
- The Joint Bill Committee submitted a **report on the additional budget allocation bill of the Union for 2013-2014** to Pyidaungsu Hluttaw.⁸

UNOFFICIAL MEDIA

ETHNIC AFFAIRS MINISTERS TO JOIN PEACE-MAKING WORK COMMITTEE

Ethnic affairs ministers will begin formally participating in the national peace process through the government’s peace-making committee, the ethnic affairs ministers of Karen and Mon states said. The move follows an 18 October meeting between ethnic affairs ministers and the Vice-Chair of the Peace-Making Work Committee, Union Minister Aung Min, at the President’s Office in the capital, according to Karen Ethnic Affair Minister U Aung Kyaw Thein. “The Peace-Making Work Committee’s

⁶ Multimodal Transport Bill discussed at Amyotha Hluttaw session –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-10-22-red.pdf> (NLM) 22 October 2013 (p. 16)

⁷ Motion for reengineering of educational system under discussion on the floor of Amyotha Hluttaw –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-10-24-red.pdf> (NLM) 24 October 2013 (p. 16 & 8)

⁸ Pyidaungsu Hluttaw puts temporary halt on change of plan of building gas turbine from Mawlamyine to Kyaukpyu –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-10-25-red.pdf> (NLM) 25 October 2013 (p. 16)

results will be more successful if it involves the ministers who represent all the ethnic groups from each state,” he said, adding that U Aung Min promised to involve the ethnic affairs ministers in the Peace-Making Work Committee. The meeting was held to discuss the peace process and ceasefire agreements.

The ethnic affairs ministers said a conference bringing together all ethnic groups is being planned and that it will discuss the roles of the union government, the Peace-Making Work Committee, armed ethnic groups and ethnic political parties. Ethnic Affairs Minister for Mon State U Naing Chit Oo said that according to Aung Min ethnic affairs ministers from each region and state will participate in drafting the framework and principles for the conference and that they will begin doing so in April. “U Aung Min promised that he would let the ethnic affairs ministers participate in ‘ceasefire work’. He also promised that he would take suggestions from us to set up the framework for second ‘Pin Lone’ conference,” U Naing Chit Oo added.⁹

MP: MILITARY IS STILL STUDYING THE CONSTITUTION

Burma’s military is still in the process of studying the constitution and has yet to submit its report to parliament according to military MP Brigadier General Wai Lin. He was replying to a question about the military’s pending report on the constitution after a parliamentary session of the Lower House in Nay Pyi Taw on 22 October. He said the military would submit its report to parliament no later than 15 November and that it was too early to comment on details as they were still reviewing the constitution. “Regarding the constitution, the committee is receiving suggestions from MPs, political parties, organisations and members of the public. Likewise, the military is also preparing a report. When we get suggestions from the military, we will send them to Union Parliament along with suggestions from others after November 15,” said the secretary of the Constitutional Review Joint Committee of Union Parliament Aye Mauk.¹⁰

CLASHES BETWEEN KIA AND BURMA ARMY CONTINUE IN MABEIN AND MANSI

Fighting between Burma government forces and the Kachin Independence Army continued on 23 October in northern Shan state’s Mabein township, an area bordering Kachin state and the territory of KIA battalion 12 under the 3rd brigade. The clashes involved units from KIA battalions 12 and 27 and took place at Saga Nam Hkum near Je U village. According to a KIA officer, the Burmese Army repeatedly bombed Mung Ding Pa village on 21 and 22 October and left villagers dead and four injured. About 60 villagers from Mung Ding Pa have been able to escape to nearby Mung Hkawng village, according to aid workers. Many of the villagers in Mung Ding Pa who have not been able to flee the area are taking shelter in the village church. Burmese army units in Mansi Township also attacked Mung Hkawng and Nam Lim Pa villages and more than 1,000 IDPs have been completely surrounded by government forces, according to a villager. The KIO has lodged a protest with the authorities regarding the latest clashes despite a new agreement signed on 10 October aimed at reducing hostilities and laying the groundwork for political dialogue.¹¹

⁹ Ethnic affairs ministers to join Peace-Making Work Committee – <http://mizzima.com/mizzima-news/ethnic-issues/item/10379-ethnic-affairs-ministers-to-join-peace-making-work-committee> (Mizzima) 21 October 2013

¹⁰ Military is still studying the Constitution to make a report to parliament, says MP – <http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/politics/3829-military-is-still-studying-the-constitution-to-make-a-report-to-parliament-says-mp> (Eleven News Media) 23 October 2013

¹¹ Clashes between KIA and Burma army continues in Mabein and Mansi – <http://www.kachinnews.com/news/2584-clashes-between-kia-and-burma-army-continues-in-mabein-and-mansi.html> (KNG) 24 October 2013 / Kachin Rebels complain to Myanmar Government over fresh clashes – <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/cease-fire-10232013173922.html> (RFA) 23 October 2013

KIO WITHDRAWS FROM TWO POSTS IN BURMA'S NORTHERN SHAN STATE

The Kachin Independence Organization's (KIO) armed wing withdrew from two posts in western Shan state's Mabein Township close to the Kachin state border, according to KIO officials. The withdrawal took place after Burmese government officials met with a KIO delegation in Kachin state's capital Myitkyina from 8-10 October. The frontline posts located at Je U and Nam Hkan east of the Shweli river (N'mau Hka in Kachin) were abandoned by the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) battalion 12 troops manning them. After their departure, the troops headed west to KIA Battalion 12 territory in Mansi (or Manje) township in Bhamo (or Manmaw) district, said Doi Pyi Sa, head of the KIO's IDP and Refugee Committee, adding that Burmese troops now control Je U and Nam Hkan which is close to the KIO run Nam Lim Pa IDP camp. The camp, which is home to more than 1,000 displaced people, is located inside Kachin state near the Chinese border.¹²

MON POLITICAL PARTY READY FOR NATIONAL ELECTIONS

The Mon Democracy Party (MDP) announced at the recent Mon National Conference they are prepared to represent their constituency during the 2015 national elections said MDP General Secretary Dr. Min Soe Lin. The MDP, previously known as the Mon National Democratic Front (MNDF), contested the 1990 elections but was later forced to disband by the former military ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). In 2010, the MDP registered under their current name, setting their sights on the upcoming national elections. Nai Kyaw Win, MDP's Foreign Affairs officer-in charge, said that part of MDP's mandate includes consultations with other ethnic groups from Burma. "We have discussed about the matters of Mon ethnic and other ethnic groups concerned with current political situation in Burma."¹³

ANALYSIS

The agreement between the KNPP and government has provided yet another crucial and important piece to the jig-saw in achieving peace and reconciliation in Burma. The peace talks are merely a first step of the peace process which entails a code of conduct, monitoring and promotion and implementation of development in areas of conflict. However, economic development, the rights and protections of ethnic languages, cultures and religions are also key in achieving harmony, and the government will therefore need to consider adopting a comprehensive strategy to address such matters while implementing peace efforts. To that end, the statement issued by the Union Parliament urging for peace is timely and welcome. Despite the series of talks and cease-fire agreements signed, the continued fighting in ethnic areas casts doubts surrounding the peace initiatives and thus the calls for a political dialogue becomes more valid than ever before. The government will need to deliver and show its commitment to the peace process, though the question remains whether the Tatmadaw (military) is prepared to follow the agenda of the President.

¹² KIO withdraws two post in Burma's northern Shan State –
<http://www.kachinnews.com/news/2583-kio-withdraws-two-posts-in-burma-s-northern-shan-state.html> (KNG) 22 October 2013

¹³ Mon political party ready for national elections –
<http://monnews.org/2013/10/22/mon-political-party-ready-national-elections/> (IMNA) 22 October 2013

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: STATEMENT ISSUED BY UNION PARLIAMENT URGING FOR PEACE

Republic of the Union of Myanmar

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw

Announcement No. (2/2013)

5th Waning of Thadingyut, 1375 ME

24 October 2013

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw's announcement on ensuring genuine peace in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar

1. Announcement No. (1/2013) of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw on ensuring peace, the rule of law and amity and friendship among citizens had already been released on 31 July 2013.
2. Presently, not only the entire people but also the world nations and international organizations including the United Nations are encouraging the peace process paving the way for moving towards genuine peace and stability and the rule of law in the Union which is imperative for the success of the reform process of the government.
3. Hluttaw formed the committee for national races affairs and peace-making since its inception and the committee is taking part in the peace process. Likewise, the committee for fundamental rights of the citizens, democracy and human rights was also formed and its functions are in progress. Moreover, works are underway to enact a law for protection of the rights of national races to be able to assist the peace process and a joint committee for reviewing the Constitution is seriously taking into account national unity and reconciliation.
4. Peace and stability and the rule of law are essential prerequisites for democratization and development of the country.
5. So, an announcement is released to emphatically and firmly request those who love their own country, who want to adopt the federal system and who adore democracy to refrain from performing actions or using expressions that can disrupt the ongoing peace process which is paving the way for moving towards national unity and reconciliation, the rule of law and the development of the Union.

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw.¹⁴

¹⁴ Those who love their own country, want to adopt the federal system, adore democracy are to refrain from actions and expressions causing disruption to ongoing peace process –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs16/NLM-2013-10-25-red.pdf> (NLM) 25 October 2013 (p. 16 & 9)