

## POLITICAL MONITOR No. 24

### OFFICIAL MEDIA

#### **PEACE COMMISSION, UNFC DISCUSS PROPOSALS**

A meeting between the Peace Commission, and the Delegation for Political Negotiation was held from 9 to 10 November at the National Reconciliation & Peace Centre in Yangon. The meeting was attended by nine representatives of the government, the Hluttaw and the Tatmadaw and eleven representatives of the DPN. They met again on 15 October. Four points of the UNFC proposal were agreed upon by the participants, but another four points were left for further discussion. "It is the third time since negotiations were held between the Peace Commission and the DPN. The peace process is actually a trust building process. We have always opened ways for further discussions. Discussions are moving toward the positive ends," member of the supporting group to the Peace Commission Hla Maung Shwe said. As the remaining points are mainly concerned with the Joint Monitoring Committee, the issues will be discussed at the Political Framework Review Meeting at the end of November. "We are trying to speed up the process by discussing the issues phase by phase. Everyone has agreed to abide by the NCA. The most important problem for us is that not all EAOs can participate in the process. But we have been feeling the same with the people for a long time, and we want to leave peace for future generations," Khu Oo Reh, Leader of the DPN said. The Coordinating Team of the 8 NCA Signatories and the government are now preparing for the sub-national level political dialogues. The initial political dialogues will be held in Kayin State and Tanintharyi Region and these will be held in other states and regions step by step before holding the second Union Peace Conference.<sup>1</sup>

#### **FEDERALISM WORKSHOP HELD IN NAY PYI TAW**

The Union Minister for Ethnic Affairs Naing Thet Lwin delivered a speech at a workshop on federalism held at Royal President Hotel in Nay Pyi Taw on 16 November. The Minister said, "It is necessary for us to thoroughly study the characteristics of federalism, now that the term 'federal' is officially accepted, mottos and slogans such as 'From 21<sup>st</sup> Panlong Union Peace Conference to Democratic Federal Union,' are being heard everywhere. And billboards showing support of the whole populace are ubiquitous" he said in his speech. He went on to say: "In exercising federalism, one country differs from another. Similarly, their results are found to be different. Only if federalism is suitable for the real situation of a nation, can success be achieved. We need to openly discuss federal systems. If we can relate experiences gained from this workshop and study further, it will be of great help for peace, stability and development of our country." Executive Director of the Euro-Burma Office (EBO) Myanmar Harn Yawng hwe, a representative of the Canada Foreign Ministry (Myanmar Affairs) and Programme Director of Forum of Federations extended greetings at the meeting. The workshop was attended by regional and state ministers for ethnic affairs, international scholars and responsible officials. The Canadian official said: "I am very glad to share knowledge and experience on Federalism not only from Canada but also from India and Germany. Federal systems should be built depending on the respective countries' historical background and nature. According to the experience of Canada, it is of great importance to have a political leader with skills and a broad-minded vision. There needs to be peaceful negotiation among political leaders. And we need to reach an all-inclusive agreement. If we build federalism based on understanding, we will gain national reconciliation, political stability and economic wealth." Executive Director of the EBO Myanmar Harn Yawng hwe, said the conference was important from an informational and practical

---

<sup>1</sup> Meeting among Peace Commission, Delegation for Political Negotiation and Technology Supporting Groups Held – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs23/GNLM2016-11-10-red.pdf> (GNLM) 10 November 2016 (p. 2)/  
Peace Commission, UNFC discuss unsettled proposals – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs23/GNLM2016-11-11-red.pdf> (GNLM) 11 November 2016 (p. 1)

perspective. “At the request of the Ministry of Ethnic Affairs to discuss federalism, we held this meeting in collaboration with Forum of Federations and international experts understand what federalism is, how it is to be implemented. Ministers at Region and State levels as well as the whole populace need to know federalism so that we can build a federal nation. Federal is a system of governance.” The programme director of Forum of Federations said the two-day workshop was designed to give historical context to federalism and to see how it could be applied to Myanmar. “Federalism causes unity, economic development, mutual understanding and peace” he said. “Our organization is a Canada-based non-governmental organization, consisting of board of members sent by 10 federal countries.”<sup>2</sup>

### **8<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF JMC-U HELD**

Lt.-Gen. Yar Pyae, the Chairman of the Union Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC-U) at its meeting on 17 November said that the meeting will point out the weaknesses and strong points of the JMC process, in order to prevent armed conflicts as much as possible. He added that for the first time teams had been sent to verify the fighting that took place with the aim of finding out who was right and who was wrong and to reduce tensions. The Vice Chairman Saw Isaac Poe, said that it has been one year, one month and two days since the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) was signed and all leaders who signed it were responsible for its implementation. The meeting will last three days. The financial and implementation report of the temporary office of JMC’s technical support committee, the draft budget, the implementation of the standard operating procedures, the implementation of ceasefire during the seventh meeting and the eighth meeting of the body, formation of JMC-S in Chin State and verification of fighting in Shan State will be discussed at the three-day meeting.<sup>3</sup>

### **COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MIN AUNG HLAING ATTENDS EUROPEAN UNION MILITARY COMMITTEE-EUMC MEETING**

Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Services, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing met the Chairman of the European Military Council General Mikhail Kostarakos, in Brussels, Belgium on 7 November. At the meeting, they discussed exchange of visits between the Tatmadaw and armed forces of the member countries of EU, promoting relations between Myanmar and EU, training and future cooperation.<sup>4</sup>

### **THIRD MEETING HELD TO IMPLEMENT PEACE, STABILITY AND DEVELOPMENT IN RAKHINE STATE**

At the 3<sup>rd</sup> Work Coordination Meeting of the Central Committee for the Implementation of Peace, Stability and Development in Rakhine State on 18 November, the committee’s chairperson State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, and Rakhine State Chief Minister Nyi Pu clarified the ground situation in the state. The Chief Minister stated that the World Food Programme, the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement and the Rakhine State government have delivered food to the local people in affected areas in the state from 4 to 15 November. Measures would be taken to step up assistance in the current supply of humanitarian aid to the people in northern Rakhine State to be more effective. The Myanmar Police Force (MPF) refuted the allegations regarding the formation of

---

<sup>2</sup> Workshop on federalism held in Nay Pyi Taw –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs23/GNLM2016-11-17-red.pdf> (GNLM) 17 November 2016 (p. 10)

<sup>3</sup> Eighth meeting of JMC-U held –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs23/GNLM2016-11-18-red.pdf> (GNLM) 18 November 2016 (p. 3)

<sup>4</sup> C-in-C of Defence Services holds talks with EU Military Council Chairman –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs23/GNLM2016-11-08-red.pdf> (GNLM) 8 November 2016 (p. 2)/

C-in-C of Defence Services concludes working visit to Italy –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs23/GNLM2016-11-15-red.pdf> (GNLM) 15 November 2016 (p. 2)

'community police' force in the Rakhine State. "There is no plan to establish community police in Rakhine State and in other regions and states," said Deputy Minister for Home Affairs Maj-Gen Aung Soe. "However, to reinforce the country's police force, the MPF has a plan to recruit new members in the regions and states", he added.<sup>5</sup>

### **BORDER GUARD FORCES TIGHTEN SECURITY ALONG THE NAF RIVER**

Following the 9 October attacks on border guard posts in northern Rakhine state, Myanmar Border Guard Forces have boosted patrols on full alert with watercraft along the Naf River at the country's western border in an effort to heighten security and reduce illegal migration, arms smuggling, drug trafficking and illegal fishing. Border forces have been conducting area clearance operations along the 32-mile river while cooperating with border guard forces of Bangladesh, said an officer of the Pass of Entry and Exit (POE). The forces are also alerted for search and rescue operations. Border guard forces have also stopped and searched boats in the river for suspected attackers and handed them over to police stations to act against them under the law. "For aggressive attackers, not to sever communication including river routes, security arrangements were increased," said Police Brig-Gen Thura San Lwin. Following accusations of human rights abuses by security forces during the area clearance operations, diplomats recently visited Rakhine State. The UN Resident Coordinator Renata Dessallien speaking at the press conference in Sittway held at the end of her two-day visit to the areas where armed attacks took place said, "We didn't find alleged military rapes of women in Rakhine State". "We did not hear anything about recruitment nor rape cases in Maungtaw district following the armed attacks," said Shar Alaung, a local Muslim man from Maungni Village in Maungtaw. Al Husein, a Muslim man from Myomataung Ward, Maungtaw, has blamed joblessness and non-education for the attacks, saying that not respecting the rule of law due to non-education caused the deadly attacks. "The situation here would become stable if the government created job opportunities in the future," said Hussein. Socio-economic sectors including education, economy, health and agriculture stopped due to the attacks, said Dr Hla Myint of Ward 4, Maungtaw, adding that those who are living on the soil of this country should respect the law of this country. Chris Carter, UN Senior Advisor for Rakhine, said the UN would provide humanitarian aid to families of the displaced people.<sup>6</sup>

### **FIRE SET TO 60 HOMES IN MAUNGTAW, RAKHINE STATE**

About 60 houses in a village in Maungtaw Township were torched on 13 November. According to the government, during clearance operation on 13 November, the combined team comprising the government troops and the border guard police discovered the arson attack in Darkyizar village. The attempt is aimed at sowing a seed of misunderstanding between the government troops and the people and international communities, and tarnishing the image of the troops, officials said. In connection with the 9 October attack which killed nine border guard policemen, dozens of suspected perpetrators were rounded up and arrested by the authorities over the weekend in the northern Rakhine State. In an area clearance operation by the combined forces of the government troops and the border guard police at Wetpyin village in Maungtaw Township on 12 November, 4 suspects were arrested. 30 more suspects, who had fled from other villages, were also arrested during the clearing in Yetwinkyun village.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Third meeting held to implement Peace, Stability and Development in Rakhine State – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs23/GNLM2016-11-19-red.pdf> (GNLM) 19 November 2016 (p. 3)

<sup>6</sup> Border guard forces tighten security along the Naf River: UN Resident Coordinator Ms Renata Dessallien says no credible evidence of rapes or human rights abuses by troops found – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs23/GNLM2016-11-07-red.pdf> (GNLM) 7 November 2016 (p. 1&3)

<sup>7</sup> Violent attackers set fire to 60 homes – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs23/GNLM2016-11-15-red.pdf> (GNLM) 15 November 2016 (p. 1)/ 35 suspects in violent attacks arrested in Maungtaw –

## US-MYANMAR PARTNERSHIP MEETING HELD IN NAY PYI TAW

The First Myanmar-US Partnership meeting between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Myanmar and the State Department of the United States of America was held in the Ayeyawady Hall of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nay Pyi Taw on 15 November. The meeting was attended by the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Kyaw Tin, Permanent Secretaries, Directors-General and senior officials from various ministries. The U.S delegation was led by Scot Marciel, U.S. Ambassador to Myanmar, U.S Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Southeast Asia, Patrick Murphy and responsible officials. During the meeting, both sides discussed matters on the promotion of bilateral relations and cooperation between Myanmar and the U.S including cooperation in trade and investment sector, health and education sector, tourism sector, combating drugs and human trafficking and capacity building for government officials.<sup>8</sup>

## MYANMAR-SWITZERLAND FOREIGN OFFICE CONSULTATIONS

The First Myanmar-Switzerland Foreign Office Consultations was held in Nay Pyi Taw on 8 November. The meeting was attended by Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Myanmar Kyaw Tin while the Swiss delegation was led by Assistant State Secretary for Asia-Pacific of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of the Swiss Confederation Johannes Matyass. The meeting discussed promotion of bilateral relations and cooperation in various sectors of economy, investment, education and culture and to launch a series of events to mark the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of diplomatic relations between Myanmar and Switzerland. The State Counsellor also received the visiting Swiss delegation on 8 November and exchanged views on the promotion of bilateral relations and cooperation in the areas of education, economy and culture.<sup>9</sup>

## UNOFFICIAL MEDIA

## BURMESE ARMY ARTILLERY ASSAULT CAUSES PANIC IN NAMHSAN

Artillery shelling by Burmese government forces close to the Palaung (Ta'ang) Self-Administered Zone capital Namhsan has caused panic among residents, according to a local politician. Thein Zaw, an executive committee member of the Palaung regional administration and MP representing Mantong Township in the Shan State regional assembly, told local news media that government forces from the 1st Military Operations Command (MOC-1), situated east of Namhsan, launched artillery strikes towards a village outside the town on 8 November amid clashes with the Ta'ang Nationalities Liberation Army (TNLA). "Burmese troops under MOC-1 fired about five rounds on 8 November morning which landed near a village about five miles outside Namhsan, residents informed us," said Thein Zaw. He said the Burmese army began shelling the area after troops under the 120th Light Infantry Battalion suffered casualties when they were ambushed in Hochaung village about two miles outside Namhsan on 5 November, suggesting the step up in aggression could be connected to the incident. "According to the local sources, a Burmese military column was hit with a mine explosion and suffered casualties in the early hours of 5 November," he said. "Ten servicemen were injured in the attack, three of whom succumbed to their wounds at Namhsan hospital later that morning. Four others are still in critical condition." Thein Zaw noted that the artillery shelling began after the incident. He said the ongoing violence between the Burmese army and TNLA in

---

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs23/GNLM2016-11-16-red.pdf> (GNLM) 16 November 2016 (p. 1)/  
More suspects in 9<sup>th</sup> October attacks arrested –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs23/GNLM2016-11-12-red.pdf> (GNLM) 12 November 2016 (p. 1)

<sup>8</sup> 1st US-Myanmar Partnership meeting held in Nay Pyi Taw –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs23/GNLM2016-11-16-red.pdf> (GNLM) 16 November 2016 (p. 3)

<sup>9</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> Myanmar-Switzerland Foreign Office Consultations held in Nay Pyi Taw –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs23/GNLM2016-11-09-red.pdf> (GNLM) 9 November 2016 (p. 2)/  
State Counsellor receives Swiss Assistant State Secretary for Asia-Pacific –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs23/GNLM2016-11-09-red.pdf> (GNLM) 9 November 2016 (p. 3)

northern Shan State had compelled scores of local villagers to flee their homes, and he urged Aung San Suu Kyi's government to take steps to alleviate the hostilities. Meanwhile, the TNLA has released a statement, claiming the Burmese unit positioned around Namhsan had been shelling nearby villages with 105mm artillery rounds, which injured two residents in Humang village on 30 October.<sup>10</sup>

### **COMMITTEE FORMED TO PREPARE FOR CSO PEACE FORUM**

Members of the government and civil society organisations (CSOs) have formed an ad hoc committee to prepare for a planned peace forum to be arranged for and led by the latter. A meeting between civil society groups and a government committee formed to engage with CSOs and led by Yangon Region Social Affairs Minister Naing Ngan Lin was held on 6 November at the National Reconciliation and Peace Center in Yangon to discuss preparations for the peace forum. During the meeting, terms of reference for the peace forum, which were previously presented by CSOs to the government, were discussed. The temporary preparatory committee is made up of 39 representatives from a variety of CSOs. The size of the forum has been set by the government at 500 participants, a cap that had initially dissatisfied some CSOs at the meeting, according to Ko Thwin Lwin Aung of the Genuine People's Servants organisation. Sai Aung Myint Oo, a member of the National Ethnic Youth Alliance who attended the meeting, said talks between CSOs and the government's engagement committee would continue to decide when the forum will be held. "There are different perspectives among us on the date when the forum should be held. We still need to confirm a date," he said. Their objections were eventually dropped, however, after it was agreed that CSOs would be allowed to hold additional smaller forums in order to prepare for the main one. "We are afraid that more voices from around the country could not be collected. But we were able to agree with the government's team that CSOs will have smaller forums ahead of the main forum so that we can have more diverse input and voices," Ko Thwin Lwin Aung said. Daw Doi Bu, a member of the government's committee for engaging with CSOs, said the forum would be part of broader sub-national-level dialogues that are "topically based". Daw Doi Bu proposed that the agreed-to, smaller, topically held sub-national-level dialogues and the CSO peace forum be held at least twice before the second iteration of the 21st-century Panglong Conference – also known as the Union Peace Conference – which is expected to convene in February. "In the first [smaller forums], CSOs should form committees and organise other necessary tasks such as collecting voices and topics of discussion, and agendas to be brought to the following main CSO forum," she said. The government will not interfere with the management of the peace forum, according to Daw Doi Bu, and will instead let the preparation committee arrange and organise the forum. Funding for the forum has yet to be discussed. "Not only CSOs that have nationwide networks but also CSOs that represent a specific location or region are to participate in the peace forum. We want to include as many groups as possible," she said. Stakeholders deemed eligible to participate in the sub-national-level dialogues include representatives from the government, the hluttaws, the Tatmadaw, ethnic armed organisations that are signatory to the nationwide ceasefire agreement (NCA), registered political parties, ethnic representatives, CSOs and "other appropriate individuals". The next meeting of the ad hoc preparatory committee for the CSO peace forum is scheduled to take place on 11 November. As laid out in the framework for political dialogue, working committees formed to organise the sub-national-level dialogues are to carry over the results from those dialogues to the Union Peace Conference.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Burmese army artillery assault causes panic in Namhsan – <http://www.dvb.no/news/burmese-army-artillery-assault-causes-panic-namhsan/72434> (DVB) 9 November 2016

<sup>11</sup> Committee formed to prepare for CSO peace forum – <http://www.mmmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/23531-committee-formed-to-prepare-for-cso-peace-forum.html> (Myanmar Times) 8 November 2016



## LOCAL ETHNIC PARTIES IN SHAN STATE FORM LEAGUE AIMED AT UNITY

Taking another swing at unifying the ethnic votes in Shan State, local parties have established the League for Shan State Ethnic Parties with the goal of amplifying their voices. “The LSEEP intends to work together with any political parties who have the same basic purpose and we encourage the stability and development of Shan State,” read a statement released by the League. Representatives from 8 political parties were present and signed on to the statement on 3 November, when the League was officially formed. According to Sao Thar Oo, the Federal Union Party’s vice president, two additional political parties intend to join the LSEEP but were absent from the signing. “Representatives from two parties couldn’t attend and they will join us later on,” said Sao Thar Oo, whose party is one of the eight. Vice President No 2 of the Shan Nationalities Democratic Party (SNDP) Sai Hla Kyaw said that given Shan State’s significance in the peace process – with a majority of Myanmar’s ethnic armed forces within its borders – it was important for local political parties to be able to cohesively organise their messaging on important issues related to peace and conflict. Sao Thar Oo said his party had joined the league with the hope of bringing unity among Shan State’s many indigenous ethnic groups. “There are many Shan ethnicities and different tribes. It will be better if everyone is united and working for the politics of Shan State, and also the politics of Myanmar, in the future,” he said. Sai Hla Kyaw said the League’s members would consider coordinating to avoid vote-splitting in certain constituencies in future elections, including a by-election slated for April 1, 2017. Shan State has the most seats available in the upcoming contest, with eight constituencies currently lacking representation. “We will join the election separately but we might separate the constituencies while we contest. For this by-election, the Inn National Development Party is the local ethnic party for Nyaung Shwe constituency and we, the SNDP, will not contest there,” he said. Sai Hla Kyaw said the reason for divvying up the electoral map in this way was that local parties were best suited to reflect the needs of their constituencies. Vote-splitting was a concern among dozens of ethnic political parties that contested last year’s general election, though a post-vote breakdown indicated that across much of the country these parties would not have significantly improved their electoral success had they better coordinated. The poll gave the National League for Democracy an overwhelming mandate, but Shan State is one of two state legislatures where the NLD failed to win a majority of seats. In forming the league, the SNDP, the Federal Union Party and the Inn National Development Party were joined by the Lahu National Development Party, the Inn National Organization Party, the Danu National Organisation Party, the Kokang Democracy and Unity Party and the Lisu National Development Party. It was not immediately clear which other two parties had also expressed an intention to join later.<sup>12</sup>

## USDP MP KICKED FROM SEAT FOLLOWING ELECTION COMPLAINT

A prominent member of the former ruling Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) has been ousted from his parliamentary seat after the election commission ruled against him in a campaign-related dispute, according to the Joint Hluttaw Rights Committee. Ko Ko Naing served as a Pyithu Hluttaw lawmaker representing Mandalay’s Yamethin township. According to the Chair of the Hluttaw Rights Committee, Hla Moe, the sitting MP was stripped of his seat on 17 November after an election complaint against him was upheld. Ko Ko Naing won Yamethin in the 2015 election and performed his role as a Pyithu Hluttaw representative for 10 months. The case against him was filed by his rival for the Yamethin seat Tun Tun Win, according to Hla Moe. The complaint attested that Ko Ko Naing staged a campaign-like event celebrating the passage of the four “race and religion” laws, before the official campaigning period began. The package of four laws drafted and supported by Ma

---

<sup>12</sup> Local ethnic parties in Shan State form league aimed at unity – <http://www.mmmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/23532-local-ethnic-parties-in-shan-state-form-league-aimed-at-unity.html> (Myanmar Times) 8 November 2016

Ba Tha prohibit polygamy, force people to seek government approval before converting religions, restrict interfaith marriage and “organise” family planning with a 36-month birth spacing stipulation. Ko Ko Naing also served as the Vice-Chair of the Parliamentary Legal Affairs and Special Cases Assessment Commission, which is headed by former Speaker Thura Shwe Mann. Hla Moe said Ko Ko Naing can continue to serve on the commission even though he is no longer a lawmaker as commissions can involve civilian experts. “Ko Ko Naing lost his position as MP, but he has a chance to continue his work in his capacity as a member of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Legal Affairs Assessment and Special Issues Commission,” Hla Moe said. The Union Election Commission said it has addressed 39 cases of election complaints since the 8 November 2015.<sup>13</sup>

### **SNLD LOOKS FOR POLITICAL ACTIVISTS TO RUN IN BY-ELECTIONS**

“Priority will be given to candidates who are residents, are eager to actively take part in social and political activities and want to participate in the by-elections to be held in April,” said Sai Boe Aung General Secretary of Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD) on 15 November. The SNLD, also known as the White Tiger Party, is preparing to run in the by-elections for seven vacant seats, but it has not confirmed the candidates. “We are still negotiating who will be chosen as the candidates. The possible candidate must accept the party’s policy. Qualified residents will be prioritized regardless of gender. Education level will be taken into account. It’s preferable if the candidate has taken an active part in social and political activities in the past,” said Sai Boe Aung. The various political parties must submit candidate nominations to the Union Election Commission (UEC). The nomination will start on 28 November and end on 7 December. The deadline for candidate retraction is 9 December and the nominations will be scrutinised on 12 December. The SNLD participated in the 2015 general elections and won 40 seats in the Lower House Parliament, Upper House Parliament, State Hluttaw (Parliament) and Kachin State Hluttaw (Parliament). The Shan State has 7 seats in the April by-elections -2 in Lower House Parliament and 5 for State Hluttaw (Parliament). The Union Election Commission assigned Kyethee and Mongshe Townships in Shan State as election areas in the 2015 general elections, but later the elections were suspended due to security concerns.<sup>14</sup>

### **ANP LOOKS FOR CANDIDATE TO RUN IN APRIL BY-ELECTION**

Taking aim for another crack at Ann Township in their Rakhine State, the Arakan National Party (ANP) has decided to run a candidate in the by-election to be held there on 1 April 2017. In all, there will be 19 by-election vacancies and all the by-election vacancies will be contested by the present and former ruling parties, the National League for Democracy (NLD) and the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP). ANP representatives took their decision at a central executive committee meeting in Sittwe from 11 to 12 November. The party secretary, Tun Aung Kyaw, said a six-member team would now select a candidate. “We’re going to Ann Township to meet with party members, to discuss by-election preparations and to consider a possible candidate,” he said. The candidate is expected to be named by 28 November. The ANP expects stiff competition in Ann from both the NLD and the USDP, as both are stronger in southern Rakhine State than in the north. The Ann seat, in the Pyithu Hluttaw, was vacated by USDP MP Thein Swe in March, when he accepted a cabinet post as Union minister for Labour, Immigration and Population. Thein Swe defeated the ANP’s Kyaw Than Hlaing in the 2015 election. Tun Aung Kyaw said Kyaw Than Hlaing was willing to compete in the April by-election, but other potential candidates will also be considered. One is likely to be the party chair, Dr Aye Maung, who lost his Rambre township seat last November. “We must

<sup>13</sup> USDP MP kicked from seat following election complaint – <http://www.mmmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/23761-usdp-mp-kicked-from-seat-following-election-complaint.html> (Myanmar Times) 18 November 2016

<sup>14</sup> SNLD looks for political activists to run in by-elections – <http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/politics/6625> (Eleven Myanmar) 16 November 2016

compete in the by-election and we must win. The party will choose the candidate who has the power to bring in the voters,” said Dr Aye Maung. Though the ANP did better than any other ethnic-based party, winning a total of 44 seats in the state and national legislatures, it fell short in southern Rakhine State, losing Gwa as well as Rambre and Ann townships. As a result, it failed to take a clear majority in the state hluttaw. “We need a victory, so I will fight any election we need to fight. The 2017 by-election will be part of the run-up to the 2020 general election,” he said.<sup>15</sup>

### **YOUTH ADVOCATES URGE LAWMAKER PARTICIPATION IN CHILD RIGHTS FORUM**

Myanmar children’s rights advocates and appointed children’s representatives called on parliamentarians to participate in the upcoming National Children’s Forum in Naypyidaw, during which they hope that new laws and policies protecting the country’s youth emerge and existing laws are reinforced. The forum will be held at the Mingalar Thiri Hotel from 18 to 20 November, coinciding with Universal Children’s Day on 20 November. Myanmar signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child in July 1991, adopting survival, developmental, protection and participation rights for children. Director of Equality Myanmar Aung Myo Min, said at a press conference on 15 November in Rangoon that regarding participation rights, many Asean countries, including Burma, largely fail to consider children’s voices when addressing children’s issues. “At this forum, children will present their needs and recommendations to the country’s legislators to address the problems,” he said. Aung Myo Min added that many child rape cases are seen on social media and that about 300 girls and boys under age 18 are trafficked each month to Thailand, according to data compiled by civil society organizations working along the border in Thailand’s Mae Sot. He added that in underage rape cases, perpetrators are quickly released and not severely punished. About 70 lawmakers from the Union Parliament, along with other interested lawmakers, were invited to join 130 children’s representatives from 14 different states and divisions at the forum to discuss current issues. Ma Theint Honey Htun, a children’s representative from Karenni State who will attend the forum, said state representatives would discuss education, public health, protection, peace and environmental preservation in regards to youth at the forum. She said prior to the forum, representatives discussed with children the difficulties they face including drugs, landmines and security issues in conflict areas, limited education and water scarcity. I would like lawmakers to attend the forum and to listen to our voices. I hope they will address the problems and needs that we present,” Ma Theint Honey Htun added. Mg Zin Min Thu, one of six representatives from Rangoon Division who will attend the forum, said they also discussed domestic violence, child labor, education and health problems. “Aung Myo Min said the children’s recommendations from the forum would also be used in an alternative report put out by non-governmental and civil society organizations next year coinciding with a government report on the Convention of the Rights of the Child.<sup>16</sup>

### **KYAUKPHYU FARMERS PROTEST AGAINST CNPC**

Around 200 local farmers from Kyaukphyu Township protested on 6 November in front of the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) office in Rakhine State calling for compensation for land and crop losses caused by the Shwe Gas pipeline project. Farmers from three villages in Kyakphyu Township gathered at Kankawtaw pagoda and then marched to the CNPC office. They called for the return of their seized land and full compensation for 18.03 acres of land owned by 21 farmers, according to Kyi Hnin who led the march. “We staged a protest in May of this year. The CNPC

<sup>15</sup> ANP looks for candidate to run in April by-election – <http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/23669-anp-looks-for-candidate-to-run-in-april-by-election.html> (Myanmar Times) 15 November 2016

<sup>16</sup> Youth Advocates Urge Lawmaker Participation in Child Rights Forum – <http://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/youth-advocates-urge-lawmaker-participation-in-child-rights-forum.html> (the Irrawaddy) 16 November 2016



conducted inspections several times. We are marching because the CNPC failed to take effective action,” said Kyi Kyi Hnin from the Kyaukphyu Rural Development Association. Farmers demonstrated for two hours, holding posters that read: "Respect the rights of land owners"; "Get out, CNPC"; "Take appropriate action on land confiscation by Shwe Gas now".<sup>17</sup>

## ANALYSIS

The continued unrests in Rakhine State and the fighting between government forces and the Ta'ang Nationalities Liberation Army (TNLA) in Shan State paints a very dismal picture of the on-going national reconciliation process in Myanmar. The NLD government since taking office has taken measures including the convening of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Panglong Union Conference but to date has failed to end the conflict. In seeking to resolve the array of conflicts, one key stakeholder stands out more than others – the Tatmadaw (military). The development and role of the Tatmadaw is indeed a crucial factor in Myanmar's democratic transition and the role it has assumed in the everyday running of the country has been disputed. Under such circumstances, the visit and meeting between Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and General Mikhail Kostarakos of the European Military Council is indeed a positive step and future visits and exchanges should be encouraged. The international community should assist the NLD government in providing such cooperation programmes to transform the Tatmadaw to becoming an institution that serves the country and people. While the attempts to transform, this institution may seem like a tall order, further neglect and isolationist approaches could be detrimental. It therefore is important for both the NLD government and the international community continue to engage the Tatmadaw with a view to transforming the Tatmadaw into an army that serves, promotes and protects all those living in Myanmar irrespective of race, religion or ethnicity.

---

<sup>17</sup> Kyaukphyu farmers protest against CNPC –  
<http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/local/6502> (Eleven Myanmar) 7 November 2016