
POLITICAL MONITOR No. 16

OFFICIAL MEDIA

LAW KHEE LAR ETHNIC ARMED ORGANIZATIONS SUMMIT BEGINS

A conference of ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) began on 2 June in Law Khee Lar, Kayin State, to seek a final approval on a draft peace deal between the EAOs and the government. The Ethnic Armed Organizations Summit scheduled from 2-6 June discussed the draft National Ceasefire Accord approved in late March by the Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team, representing 16 ethnic armed organizations (EAOs), and the government's Union Peace-making Work Committee. Leaders of all ethnic armed groups—including NCCT members and non-members - have been invited to the Law Khee Lar Summit. According to sources, observers from the United Nations including Vijay Nambiar, the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Myanmar, officials from the People's Republic of China and Nippon Foundation's Myanmar Liaison Office were present on the first day of the summit.

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's special adviser on Myanmar Vijay Nambiar said real trust and progress in Myanmar can be brought about by ethnic rebel leaders jointly implementing a ceasefire accord with the government and starting a credible political dialogue and called on the ethnic leaders to negotiate a ceasefire and political dialogue as soon as possible. Nambiar also pointed out that a nationwide ceasefire is only the first step and political dialogue is the only way forward in Myanmar. "The success of reforms in Myanmar will depend on a sustained peace in the country. Every transition is deeply difficult and fraught with setbacks, but we cannot wait until everything is perfect. We cannot allow the best to become the enemy of the good. If we do that we may get neither peace nor democracy", he said.¹

MYANMAR PEACE CENTRE OFFICIALS MEET NCCT IN CHIANG MAI, THAILAND

Officials led by the Senior Adviser of the Myanmar Peace Centre (MPC) Hla Maung Shwe met Nai Hongsa, Pado Kwe Htoo Win and other members of the Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT) in Chiang Mai on 11 June. Senior Adviser Hla Maung Shwe said, In proposing the amendments to the draft accord approved by the peace negotiating teams from the government and ethnic armed groups in late March, the leaders at Law Khee Lar agreed that any signing of a draft deal must be inclusive of all ethnic groups. "My understanding is that it is the time for the (government's) Union Peace-Making Central Committee and Union Peace-Making Work Committee to define and examine further amendments to the approved draft by the ethnic side."

"As a working group, we were there to take the amended peace draft sent back by the ethnic side to the government and report to Union Minister U Aung Min-led peace negotiating team on what the NCCT said," U Hla Maung Shwe recounted. On the proposed amendments to the draft NCA, he expressed his view that 7 out of 12 points would require further discussion between the two sides. According to the sources, no date was set at the Chiang Mai meeting for further negotiations between the government side and a new high-level nationwide ceasefire coordination team, appointed by the ethnic armed organizations at the Law Khee Lar summit, to finalize the draft text for the ceasefire with the government. U Hla Maung Shwe repeated that it is up to the UPWC to decide whether the meeting will take place.²

¹ Law Khee Lar ethnic armed organizations summit begins – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-06-03.pdf> (GNLM) 3 June 2015 (p. 1)/ UN special envoy calls on ethnic leaders to get ceasefire, political dialogue started as soon as possible – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-06-04.pdf> (GNLM) 4 June 2015 (p. 1)

² Gov't must examine proposed changes to ceasefire deal: senior MPC adviser – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-06-13.pdf> (GNLM) 13 June 2015 (p. 1)

UEC HOLDS PRESS CONFERENCE ON COLLECTING PRELIMINARY VOTER LIST

Chairman of Union Election Commission (UEC) U Tin Aye gave a press conference on the electoral body's primary voter list collection process before 2015 general election on 9 June. The UEC Chair Tin Aye said the preliminary voter list need to be accurate and it can be corrected before issuing the final list, urging the media to help UEC erase the doubt on the commission's accidental mistakes on the voter list. The Commission conducted collection of preliminary voter list in Ahlone Township, Yangon Region, Tiddim Township in Chin state and Myitkyina Township in Kachin state. UEC member U Win Kyi, also explained the commission's website for checking and confirming voter lists. The event was attended by 73 responsible persons from 51 media organizations, including the members of Myanmar Press Council (Interim).

The Election Commission also released a notification on 7 June and stated that voter lists will be announced for the third time at the offices of district sub-commissions in all districts in Kayah State, all districts in Kayin State, all districts in Chin State, all districts in Mon State, all districts in Magway Region, Sagaing, Shwebo, Monywa, Yinmabin and Tamu districts in Sagaing Region, Dawei and Myeik districts in Taninthayi Region, Bago District in Bago Region, Mandalay, PyinOoLwin, Kyaukse and Myingyan districts in Mandalay Region and Taunggyi, Loilem, Langkho districts, Pao-O Self-Administered Zone and Danu Self-Administered Zone in Shan State from 8 to 21 June 2015. Voters may apply registration for absence of their names in the list with form No 3 and for correction for wrong facts and figures with form No 4-C. People may complain for nomination of unsuitable persons (e.g. dead persons or prisoners) with form No 4. Visitors' names will be included in voter list of permanent residences where they hold the household registration form No. 66/6. Political parties should cooperate with the Election Commission in the tasks to enable voters to include the list and in producing a comprehensive voter lists.³

Hluttaw Session Highlights

Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) sessions

The 12th Regular Session of the First Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) held its 62nd day meeting on 11 June and issues regarding land confiscation were raised and discussed.

- MP Paw Khin of the Natogyi Constituency asked **for settlement of a land ownership dispute arising from land grabbing for the construction of Yangon-Mandalay Highway in Pyinsi village.** Deputy Minister for Home Affairs Brig-Gen Kyaw Zan Myint said that **investigations and hearings had been conducted by the village's land management committee and that Mandalay Region Land management committee has ordered the return of 3.17 acres of land to the original owners.**⁴

The 12th Regular Session of the First Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) held its 63rd day meeting on 12 June and issues regarding land confiscation were raised and discussed.

- MP Khin Maung Nyo of Pauk Constituency raised questions **on land confiscated for a factory of the Ministry of Defence and requested that the ministry pay decent compensation to land owners, relocate posts on the land, and allow farmers to grow crops on vacant land.** Deputy Minister for Defence Maj-Gen Kyaw Nyunt said that **a total of 3,390 acres of land were confiscated for construction of a factory for defence industry in Pauk Township and compensation of K17.4 million was paid to land owners in 2011.** He also added that **peasants**

³ UEC holds press conference on collecting preliminary voter list –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-06-09.pdf> (GNLM) 9 June 2015 (p. 3)/
UEC issues notification –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-06-08-red.pdf> (GNLM) 8 June 2015 (p. 3)

⁴ Pyithu Hluttaw discusses communications problems, land ownership dispute –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-06-12.pdf> (GNLM) 12 June 2015 (p. 2)

are allowed to grow crops in places where security of the factory cannot be breached, while posts will not be relocated, as they have been erected in the correct places ;

- Similarly, MP Zaw Tun of Moemauk Constituency asked **whether the ministry has plans to release 67 acres of land owned by 12 farmers in his constituency**. The Deputy Minister said the land was confiscated for an artillery regiment and families of the regiment are working on the land at present. However, the land is too close to military facilities and cannot be returned to its owners ;
- MP Ye Tun of Hsipaw Constituency also raised a question regarding **40 acres of land confiscated by a battalion in Hsipaw, Shan State**. In responding, the Deputy Minister said that **the land will be released to its former owners**.⁵

Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) sessions

The 12th Regular Session of the First Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) held its 55th day meeting on 1 June and the following issues were raised and discussed.

- MP Khin Maung Yi of Ayeeyawady Region Constituency raised the question regarding **the possible plan of the Myanmar Police Force to protect government witnesses on the major crimes**. Deputy Minister for Home Affairs Brig-Gen Kyaw Tun said the **MPF will make a special security plan for the government witnesses in serious criminal cases although police force has not adopted the witness protection programme yet**.⁶

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Union Parliament) sessions

The 12th Regular Session of the First Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Union Parliament) held its 58th day meeting on 11 June and the following issues were raised and discussed.

- MP Khin Deputy Minister for Mines U Than Tun Aung, read out **the progress report of the committee responsible for the investigative report on the Letpadaung copper mine project**. **According to the profit-sharing ratio of the modified contract, the government will receive 51 percent while Myanmar Economic Holdings Ltd and the Myanmar Wanbao Company will take 19 per cent and 30 percent respectively, the deputy minister said**. The new contract requires the project to annually contribute US \$1 million for regional development activities at its construction period, 2 percent of its annual profits at its production period, and \$2 mil for reclamation activities at its shutdown. The copper mine project has employed 1,678 local people and 336 from other areas. According to the progress report, 37 of 42 suggestions made in the investigative report have been implemented.⁷

UNOFFICIAL MEDIA

ARMED ETHNIC GROUP LEADERS APPOINT NEW NEGOTIATING TEAM

Leaders of ethnic armed organisations (EAOs) meeting in Kayin State formed a new high-level team to replace negotiators who worked for more than 18 months on a nationwide ceasefire agreement with the government.

Participants said the decision yesterday followed 8 days of heated discussions in Law Khee Lar on the Myanmar-Thai border between faction leaders and members of their Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT), which signed a draft accord with the government on 31 March.

⁵ Pyithu Hluttaw raises questions on land disputes –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-06-13.pdf> (GNLM) 13 June 2015 (p. 2)

⁶ MP queries witness protection plan of Myanmar Police Force –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-06-02.pdf> (GNLM) 2 June 2015 (p. 2)

⁷ Pyidaungsu Hluttaw hears report on disputed mine project –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-06-12.pdf> (GNLM) 12 June 2015 (p. 2)

Divisions among the ethnic armed organisations over the terms of the ceasefire and whether it would include three groups fighting the Tatmadaw in the Kokang region have since held up the process. But the development could disappoint China and the United Nations, who sent senior envoys to the Law Khee Lar talks to press for an early signing of the ceasefire accord.

Joint-Secretary of the Chin National Front (CNF) Kwa Uk Lian said, "That high level negotiation team has full power of decision-making in the peace talks, but they have no authority to sign [a ceasefire]."

The new 15-strong team is comprised of 10 new members, some of them regarded as more hard-line in their approach, and 5 former NCCT members, including chair Naing Han Thar and General Gun Maw of the Kachin Independence Army. The 3 factions fighting in the Kokang region will also be represented in the new group. The Law Khee Lar meeting also discussed 15 proposed amendments to the ceasefire draft and earlier agreed it would not accept government demands for the three Kokang factions to be excluded from the ceasefire accord. The new negotiating group will be led jointly by Naw Zipporah Sein, Karen National Union deputy chair; La Gya, secretary of Kachin Independence Organisation; and Pu Zing Cung, a senior official of the Chin National Front. It includes one representative each from the Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Chin, Mon and Rakhine communities plus the All Burma Students' Democratic Front. Shan State has three representatives and former NCCT members make up the remaining five.

Kwa Uk Lian said that while the new members had no experience in past NCCT discussions they had a mandate to make decisions and understood the policy hammered out at the 8-day conference. "Top leaders will be on stand-by next to the negotiators when they have to make critical decision during the peace talks," he said. The existing NCCT and government representatives are due to meet in Chiang Mai today for two days of informal discussions, U Hla Maung Shwe, a senior adviser at the Myanmar Peace Center, said. He said he could not anticipate how the government would react to the formation of the new ethnic negotiating team.⁸

UNFC URGES GOVT TO RECOGNISE MNDAA IN CEASEFIRE

The Burmese government should stop excluding a handful of ethnic armies from the peace process and should not consider the Kokang rebels to be foreign enemies, according to the head of the United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC). Chairman of the UNFC Lt-Gen N'Ban La urged the government to include all UNFC and Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT) member organisations in a future nationwide ceasefire agreement (NCA).

Naypyidaw has previously made clear its position that any peace deal should not include the Kokang militia known as the Myanmar Nationalities Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), the Ta-ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) or the Arakan Army (AA), all of whom its forces are currently battling.

"The Kokang and Ta-ang groups are UNFC and NCCT members and we believe that they should also be included in an NCA which would reflect the term 'nationwide'," said N'Ban La, who is also vice-chairman of the Kachin Independence Army. "I would like to urge [armed groups] to continue with their stance of all-inclusiveness for the NCA," he said. MNDAA representative Hpone Win Naing said that the group's attempts to reach out to the government are being rebuffed. "We were hoping to talk about a ceasefire and making peace, but the government is completely ignoring us," he said.⁹

SUU KYI URGED TO TAKE PM POST

Upper House Speaker Khin Aung Myint suggested that opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi should assume the title as the country's prime minister if the charter amendment is delayed and further bars

⁸ Armed ethnic group leaders appoint new negotiating team – <http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/14954-armed-ethnic-group-leaders-appoint-new-negotiating-team.html> (Myanmar Times) 10 June 2015

⁹ UNFC urges govt to recognise MNDAA in ceasefire – <http://www.dvb.no/news/unfc-urges-govt-to-recognise-mndaa-in-ceasefire-burma-myanmar/51761> (DVB) 3 June 2015

her from becoming the president. "Unless Section 59(F) is amended, Suu Kyi will be suitable for the position of speaker of the parliament. As for me, I thought she would be the prime minister. In my suggestion regarding constitutional amendment, I proposed that she take the position of prime minister," Khin Aung Myint said on 9 June. Under Section 59(F) of the 2008 Constitution, individuals with foreign spouses or children cannot join the presidential race. Khin Aung Myint said that he told Suu Kyi of his idea during a discussion on charter amendment, adding that the prime minister post will not be entangled in Section 59(F). President Thein Sein, Union Speaker Thura Shwe Mann, senior general Min Aung Hlaing and Aung San Suu Kyi are all expected to vie for the presidency.¹⁰

KAREN WOMEN'S GROUP CONDUCTS TRAINING FOR COMMUNITIES TO UNDERSTAND CEASEFIRES

A Karen woman's groups is running training for community-based-organisation to help them understand and identify the different and often conflicting elements in Burma's ceasefire process. The Director of the Karen Women Empowerment Group (KWEG) Naw Suzanna Hla Soe said that topics covered in the training were understanding armed conflict, violence resulting from the conflicts and identifying different types of problems within the community. Naw Suzanna Hla Soe said that Burma was not the only country experiencing armed conflict. "According to our experience, not only in Myanmar, but also around the world there are negotiations and discussion for peace happening when there are conflicts. Our country has been suffering from conflict over 60-years so we want a genuine peace." She also said that the section of civilian protection found in the current nationwide ceasefire draft was also explained to the groups attending the training. [It is important]...to have civilians involved, that's why we are providing civilian monitoring training".

Naw Eh Paw Wah, who attended the training, said, "This training is helping the peace process. In fact, after the signing of the ceasefire, these are the things to do. If the civilians know nothing, it will affect them more. After the [ceasefire] signing and when they start to implement it, the civilians will already know the basics. "The Karen Women Empowerment Group organized the Civilian Monitoring of Ceasefire Training from 25th to 30th May and is the second training and was held in Hpa-an Township Karen State. 25 representatives from community-based-organisations from Kyarin Seikgyi, Kawkareik townships and representatives from Karen Human Right Group (KHRG) and Karen Student Network Group (KSNG), Karen Women Organisation (KWO) attended the training. The first Civilian Monitoring of Ceasefire training was held in Hpa-an, Karen State from 4th to 9th June, 2015.¹¹

KHUN TUN OO CALLS FOR CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

Continuing with the current political system shows is irresponsible towards the next generation, so, everyone should attempt to change the political system and constitution, said Khun Tun Oo, the Shan chairman of the United Nationalities Alliance (UNA), an alliance of ethnic political parties. Speaking at an event to celebrate 25 years since the 1990 elections in Yangon on 27 May, Khun Tun Oo said: "If we continue with this system we will be being irresponsible to future generations. If possible we do not want to continue this system for the next generation [to inherit]. I urge everyone to enthusiastically attempt together [to change the system]." He added: "The current parliament's term is nearly over, though government promises of reform are frequently heard they fail to keep their promises so we need to be unified."

¹⁰ Suu Kyi urged to take PM post – <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/breakingnews/Suu-Kyi-urged-to-take-PM-post-30262056.html> (the Nation/Eleven News Media) 10 June 2015

¹¹ Karen Women's Group Training Communities To Understand Ceasefires – <http://karennews.org/2015/06/karen-womens-group-training-communities-to-understand-ceasefires.html/> (IMNA) 1 June 2015

He believes that the push for constitutional change should not just come from the political class but from all types and classes of people. He said: "All people and ethnic armed groups want to have peace and a federal union, but they need to try hard to achieve that. It is impossible to do if only political parties and organizations [make the demands], when all classes of people participate we can reach that goal."

Ex-parliament members, representatives from ethnic armed organisations and monks were amongst those who attended the event commemorating the 1990 elections. Representatives from the National League for Democracy (NLD) and the 88 Generation Peace and Open Society did not attend.¹²

'WHITE CARD' HOLDERS TO GET A TURQUOISE ALTERNATIVE: OFFICIAL

Burma's Immigration and National Registration Department says people living in the country who lack identity documents after handing over their temporary ID cards will be issued an alternative form of documentation beginning on 5 June. The plan appears to be an attempt to deal with hundreds of thousands of people in Burma who have recently seen their only form of government ID, namely the temporary identity documents known as "white cards," invalidated by the authorities.

Director of Immigration and National Registration Department Tin Chit said that not all former white card holders would receive the new document on Friday. "Even though the process starts on 5 June, the card may be issued on 7 or 8 June," he said, citing the time required to process would-be card holders. The new cards will be valid for 2 years with the possibility to renew the document at that time, the director said. With a far more unwieldy nomenclature than its predecessor, the "identity card for those whose nationality will be scrutinized" will do just as its name implies, Tin Chit said, offering former white card holders a form of ID until their claim to citizenship can be assessed. Tin Chit said the card will be a blue-green color.

Holders making a claim to Burmese citizenship will need to submit an application to the Ministry of Immigration and Population tracing familial roots in Burma in accordance with the 1982 Citizenship Law. The so-called "citizenship scrutiny process" is not well understood, but has been promoted by the government as a way for white card holders, the largest contingent being stateless minority Rohingya Muslims, to become citizens. Applicants who undergo the citizenship scrutiny process can receive full, naturalized or associated citizenship. Holders of the new cards who fail to receive any of these designations would simply continue to hold their blue-green card, according to Tin Chit.

Minister for Immigration and Population U Khin Yi said that those who returned their white cards would be given new identity documents allowing them to remain inside the country. The plan appears to have come in response to mounting calls internationally for Burma to address the stateless status of the Rohingya, more than 100,000 of whom have fled the country since violence between Buddhists and Muslims in 2012. The plight of the Rohingya has made headlines in recent weeks as thousands of so-called "boat people" have washed ashore in Southeast Asia from Bangladesh and Burma, the former seeking economic opportunity and the latter said to be fleeing persecution in Arakan State.

The government began issuing white cards in 1995, according to Tin Chit, but Thein Sein announced in February that these cards would expire on 31 March, with the president asking white card holders to return them to local authorities by 31 May. More than 400,000 white cards have since been returned, 90 percent of them coming from Arakan State. Tin Chit said that government records indicated that more than 760,000 white cards had been issued, though some estimates put the number of people holding the temporary ID as high as 1.5 million.

¹² Khun Tun Oo Calls for Constitutional Change –

<http://www.bnionline.net/news/shan-state/item/543-khun-tun-oo-calls-for-constitutional-change.html> (BNI/S.H.A.N.) 2 June 2015

White card holders were allowed to vote in Burma's general election in 2010, but Parliament is in the process of stripping white card holders from election laws dictating eligible voters for nationwide polls due late this year. It appears unlikely that holders of the new blue-green cards will be granted suffrage.

Tin Chit said the government would also process those who claim to have once held a white card but lost it, as is the case for many Rohingya Muslims whose homes were burned to the ground in the 2012 violence. Those unable to produce a physical card would be allowed to tell local authorities their white card ID number, which the government can check against national registries, he said. "After giving new identity cards for those people who return white cards, we will give [blue-green cards] to those people [with no card in hand]," said Tin Chit.

The largest group of white card holders was Rohingya living in Arakan State, though holders of the temporary identity document were from a variety of ethnic groups sprinkled throughout the country. In an apparent deflecting of recent international criticism, Tin Chit said there would be no blanket citizenship granted to Rohingya Muslims. "Every citizen is interrogated under the Citizenship Law to obtain citizenship cards and we cannot make special [exceptions] to Bengalis, so come and undergo scrutiny and get the relevant cards," Tin Chit said, referring to the Muslim minority by the official government term.¹³

ANALYSIS

The formation of a new high-level team to represent ethnic armed organisations (EAOs) in future peace talks with the government has put a spanner in the works towards the on-going peace process. The Law Khee Lar meeting initially had been held with the aim of seeking the approval and endorsement by EAO leaders on the existing National Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) draft. However, the week long summit has added further implications and more uncertainty towards the peace process and seeking a way forward will no doubt be difficult. While the government or even the Tatamada has yet to make an official response on the creation of the EAOs new negotiating team, it will no doubt will have created further mistrust among stakeholders involved.

¹³ Former 'White Card' Holders to Get a Turquoise Alternative: Official – <http://www.irrawaddy.org/burma/former-white-card-holders-to-get-a-turquoise-alternative-official.html> (the Irrawaddy) 3 June 2015