
POLITICAL MONITOR No. 30

OFFICIAL MEDIA

PRESIDENT THEIN SEIN AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MEET WITH NLD LEADER AUNG SAN SUU KYI TO DISCUSS PEACEFUL, SMOOTH POWER TRANSFER

President Thein Sein and Chairperson of the National League for Democracy Aung San Suu Kyi held talks on 2 December, focusing on the peaceful transfer of power to the next government. During the 45-minute meeting, the President and the NLD leader discussed cooperation between the current and the future government to ensure a smooth, peaceful power transfer and to minimise the public's concerns about the transfer, said Ye Htut, the president's spokesman and Union Minister for Information, who was also present at the meeting. They also exchanged views and discussed establishing a tradition of systematically transferring the duties of an outgoing Head of State to the incoming one, the spokesman added.

The NLD Chairperson also met with Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing in Nay Pyi Taw on 2 December. After the meeting, the Commander-in-Chief's Office released a statement saying the two sides agreed to pay attention to the desires of the people, to coordinate and cooperate with each other to ensure stability, the rule of law, unity and the development of the country. President Thein Sein, Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and Union Parliament Speaker Thura Shwe Mann all vowed to assist in a peaceful transfer of power last month, following the NLD's landslide victory in the election.¹

ETHNIC SIGNATORIES AIM FOR INCLUSION OF ALL IN POST-NCA MEETINGS

Non-signatory ceasefire groups have been invited to attend a meeting to approve the draft political dialogue framework slated for 14-15 December, according to a spokesperson of ethnic signatories. "We would like non-signatories to take part in the upcoming meetings," said Dr Salai Lian Hmung Sakhong of Chin National Front, one of the ceasefire signatory groups. A framework for political dialogue that is inclusive of all stakeholders is being drafted by a joint drafting team of 3 members from each of the political parties, the present USDP government and ethnic signatories at Myanmar Peace Centre in Yangon. "I cannot say whether it is possible or not to get them involved in the framework approval meetings, but we are genuinely making efforts for it to happen," said the spokesperson. Coordination is underway with the leaders of government side as well as non-signatories for the latter's participation in the upcoming events, he added. According to the ethnic spokesperson, non-signatories are unlikely to raise serious objections to the ongoing framework drafting. This is because the 10 elements recently approved by the three stakeholder groups differ little from those approved by ethnic armed organizations – including the non-signatories before the inking of truce pact. A shared vision is needed for signatories and non-signatories, said Myo Win of All Burma Students' Democratic Front, another NCA signatory. A compromise was reached between the government and 8 Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs) to invite non-signatories to meetings during the framework drafting process as well as political dialogue, thus granting them the status of special invitees, said Khun Myint Tun, the leader of the Pa-O National Liberation Organisation, which is an NCA signatory.

The joint drafting team was given five days to complete its task – it is midway through the process. The draft will be submitted for approval by a 24-member drafting committee of the Union Peace

¹ Passing the Baton: President, C-in-C discuss peaceful, smooth power transfer with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-12-03-red.pdf> (GNLM) 3 December 2015 (p. 1)

Dialogue Joint Committee on 5-6 December at Myanmar Peace Centre, said Hla Maung Shwe, who represents the government side on the committee.²

POLITICAL DIALOGUE FRAMEWORK DRAFTING KICKS OFF

A 9-member team began the task of drawing up the details of a political dialogue framework at Myanmar Peace Centre in Yangon on 1 December. The remaining members of those selected to represent political parties and the current government's side were also confirmed, according to a spokesperson. "The drafting of the framework began today," said Hla Maung Shwe, who represents the government side. The government has also selected Dr Kyaw Yin Hlaing, a director at Myanmar Peace Centre, as its representative to the team, while political parties named Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) representative from the National League for Democracy party Naing Ngan Lin. "Today was very productive. It will take until 5 December to finalize the details," said Thu Wai, who also represents the group of political parties.

The framework is expected to be submitted for approval by the President on 15 or 16 December and will first require approval from the relevant meetings on 7-9 December in Yangon and 12-14 December in Nay Pyi Taw, added Thu Wai. The joint drafting team of 3 members from each of the political parties, the present government and ethnic group ceasefire signatories was formed on 30 November. According to a press conference held afterwards, the framework will be drafted between 1 and 5 December and it will pave the way for political dialogue, which will take place no later than 14 January as per the requirements of the nationwide ceasefire agreement, which was signed in October. The names of those who will also be involved in drafting the framework were announced at the press conference, with one more representative from political party and the government to be confirmed on 1 December.

According to the announcement on 30 November, Deputy Minister for Defence Rear Admiral Myint Nwe and Hla Maung Shwe, a senior adviser at Myanmar Peace Centre, were selected on behalf of the government side while Thu Wai of Democratic Party (Myanmar) and Sai Kyaw Nyunt of Shan National League for Democracy were named to represent political parties. Ethnic ceasefire signatories declared its full list of representatives, which included Dr Salai Lian Hmung Sakhong of Chin National Front, Myo Win of All Burma Students' Democratic Front and Saw Kyaw Nyunt of Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army (Peace Council).

In accordance with the concepts approved at the 3-day meeting, the framework must be drafted in accordance with the terms of the National Ceasefire Agreement signed in October and a new draft framework will be set up collaboratively, making it flexible enough to accommodate a transition of government in Myanmar, said a spokesperson. Although various stakeholders drew up frameworks before the ceasefire deal was signed, it has been agreed that each will be considered as a reference tool only as amalgamating the contents of each framework would be overly complicated. From 29 November to 1 December, the drafting committee has reached an agreement on 10 elements, which include basic principles, representation and participation of stakeholders in political dialogue, the method of decision-making, the management of political dialogue, the signing of Union agreement and the implementation process, to be involved in the framework. According to the terms of NCA, the framework must be created within 60 days after the signing of the NCA.³

² Ethnic signatories aim for inclusion of all in post-NCA meetings –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-12-04-red.pdf> (GNLM) 4 December 2015 (p. 1 & 3)

³ A Matter of the Framework: Political dialogue framework drafting kicks off –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-12-02-red.pdf> (GNLM) 2 December 2015 (p. 1 & 3)/
En Route to Dialogue: Political dialogue framework drafting process continues –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-11-29-red.pdf> (GNLM) 29 November 2015 (p. 1)/
A Flexible, Fresh Draft: Political Dialogue Joint Committee Agrees On Key Points –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-11-28-red.pdf> (GNLM) 28 November 2015 (p. 1 & 3)

MYANMAR, US EYE SMOOTH TRANSFER OF EXECUTIVE DUTIES

President Thein Sein received the visiting US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Daniel R. Russel in Nay Pyi Taw on 24 November. During the meeting, they discussed the successful completion of the general election in Myanmar, planning a smooth process for the transfer of executive power, and enhancing Myanmar-US bilateral relations. The US delegation also called on Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and during the meeting, the Senior General said that he has plans to meet with the chairperson of the National League for Democracy Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to establish relations with the incoming government. He added that to best serve the interests of the country the Tatmadaw will participate in maintaining stability and the development of the nation. The pair also discussed US concerns and interests related to Myanmar's political transition, current relations between Myanmar and the US and two armed forces. Mr Russel and party also met Union Minister for Foreign Affairs Wunna Maung Lwin and discussed matters pertinent to the recent general election of Myanmar and enhancement of Myanmar-US bilateral relations and cooperation. ⁴

UEC TO FORM ELECTION TRIBUNALS TO ADJUDICATE ANY OBJECTION

The Union Election Commission has said it will set up tribunals to adjudicate any objections it receives about the general election. During a workshop held to discuss preparations for the formation of tribunals in Nay Pyi Taw on 23 November, the Commission Chairman Tin Aye said the tribunals will probe objections and cases of failure to submit campaign costs. Workshop participants included UEC members, officials of the Supreme Court of the Union and the Office of the Attorney-General of the Union and representatives from 5 local and foreign election observer groups. The objective of the workshop was to ensure smoothness and transparency in the formation of the tribunals in line with the law, said Tin Aye. The UEC will set up tribunals in Regions and States in order to gain full access to witnesses of those who make objections and those whose seats are being contested, the chairman said. He added that the aim of the tribunals will be to settle cases speedily and keep hearing costs to a minimum. The Commission has said it will cooperate with the Supreme Court of the Union and the Office of the Attorney-General of the Union.⁵

53 CHILDREN RELEASED BY MYANMAR ARMY

UNICEF announced on 30 November that the Government of Myanmar had discharged 53 children and young people who had been recruited by the country's Defence Services. With this latest release, the total number of children discharged in 2015 reached 146, according to the UNICEF press release. Since June 2012, when the Myanmar government signed a Joint Action Plan with the United Nations, 699 children have been released by the army. The UN Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting (CTFMR) on Grave Violations against Children welcomed the mass discharge, while also stressing the need for the Government of Myanmar to continue making every effort to end the recruitment and use of children in its armed forces. "Today's release is the result of continued efforts of the Government of Myanmar and the Tatmadaw to put an end to the harmful practice of recruiting and using children. I am delighted to see these children and young people returning to their homes and families," said Renata Lok-Dessallien, the United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Myanmar and co-chair of the CTFMR. "We are hopeful that institutional checks that have been put in

⁴ Myanmar, US eye smooth transfer of executive duties –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-11-25-red.pdf> (GNLM) 25 November 2015 (p. 3)/
Senior General Min Aung Hlaing holds talks with US Assistant Secretary of State –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-11-25-red.pdf> (GNLM) 25 November 2015 (p. 3)/
Union ministers receives foreign guests –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-11-25-red.pdf> (GNLM) 25 November 2015 (p. 3)

⁵ UEC to form Election Tribunals to adjudicate any objection –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-11-24-red.pdf> (GNLM) 24 November 2015 (p. 1)

place and continued efforts will ensure that recruitment of children will exist no more.” The CTFMR has called on the government to accelerate essential remaining steps, particularly by adopting legal measures in the re-drafted Child Law that are necessary to prohibit and criminalise the use and recruitment of children, whether committed by military personnel or civilians, by reinforcing age-assessment procedures within the military recruitment process and by including the prevention of violations against children in the military curriculum. Since the signature of the Joint Action Plan, important actions have been taken, namely the centralisation of the recruitment, and the signature in September of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. “The signature of the protocol is a crucial step toward a child-free army,” said Bertrand Bainvel, the UNICEF Representative to Myanmar and co-chair of the CTFMR. “Now it is urgent that Myanmar ratifies the protocol. Along with the review and the adoption of the revised Child Law, this would be one of the most important legacies the outgoing parliament has the opportunity to leave to new generations in Myanmar.”⁶

UEC REMINDS CANDIDATES TO SUBMIT CAMPAIGN SPENDING RECORDS

The Union Election Committee issued a notice on 30 November reminding candidates who ran in the 2015 general election to submit their campaign spending data within 30 days of the announcement of the election results by region or state sub-commissions. The notice also said candidates who fail to submit their campaign spending records would be disqualified as candidates. Only a few candidates have submitted their campaign spending records so far, the notice said. The UEC also released statistics on the general election on Monday. According to the data, the Pyithu Hluttaw elections were held in 97.88 percent of constituencies scheduled for elections, while the Amyotha Hluttaw elections were held in 100 percent of constituencies scheduled for elections. State and Region Hluttaw elections were held in 97.92 percent of all scheduled constituencies. Voter turnout in each of the three Hluttaw elections was around 69 per cent.⁷

UNOFFICIAL MEDIA

SHAN CSOs BLAST ‘SILENCE’ OVER CONFLICT

Shan civil society organisations have appealed to the international community to break its silence over what they call war crimes committed by the Myanmar military during more than a month of fighting in central Shan State that has displaced some 10,000 people. Activists also expressed doubts over an agreement on measures to end the conflict that was reportedly reached between the government and the Shan State Progress Party (SSPP) during talks in Yangon on 24 November.

Representatives for more than 30 Shan groups, based inside Myanmar and on the border with Thailand, held a news conference in Bangkok and released a joint statement to raise awareness of the unfolding humanitarian crisis. “The offensive, which began on 6 October, was taking place while election monitors and journalists from across the globe were in Burma to observe the recent polls. Yet most news reports have only praised the ‘peaceful’ nature of the elections, and no foreign governments have publicly raised concerns about the attacks and war crimes being committed by Burmese government troops,” the statement said. “Keeping silent about Nay Pyi Taw’s latest attacks and war crimes is giving the green light to these atrocities,” said human rights activist Nang Charm Tong. She noted that some of those displaced over the last month were among the estimated 30,000 people displaced in the same area during the government’s offensive in March 2011 against the SSPP when the group refused to become a Border Guard Force. The community groups said it was impossible to know how many people had been killed in offensives by the Tatmadaw, sometimes

⁶ 53 children released by Myanmar Army –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-12-01-red.pdf> (GNLM) 1 December 2015 (p. 1)

⁷ UEC reminds candidates to submit campaign spending records –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-12-01-red.pdf> (GNLM) 1 December 2015 (p. 3)

involving artillery and air strikes against civilian areas. But several examples of alleged war crimes were listed, including the gang rape on 5 November of a 32-year-old woman, the shelling of civilian areas in Mong Nawng town, and the case of 17 villagers who went missing on November 22 and are feared dead after being shot at while harvesting rice near Mong Ark village in Mong Shu township.

As the Shan groups point out, few senior foreign officials – including those from the United Nations – have spoken out forcefully in public about the conflict, which led to the cancellation of voting in two whole townships. US Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Russel who recently visited Myanmar said the US “expectation or insistence that all parties, including the military, must respect the will of the voters”. Asked by local news media about the fighting, he replied that it was “a concern to us”. Mr Russel added that he had urged Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, the commander-in-chief, to “show restraint at this sensitive time”. “I encouraged him to work toward an inclusive and peaceful approach, and I asked that the welfare of the civilians in the region be protected to the maximum extent,” the US diplomat said.

There was also confusion over the status of an agreement reportedly reached between the government and the main ethnic armed group in the area, the SSPP and its military wing, the Shan State Army-North. The SSPP was one of several major armed groups not to join a “nationwide” ceasefire pact reached by 8 other organisations with the government last month. Sai Khur Seng of the Shan Sapawa Environmental Organisation, said he understood that the points agreed in two days of talks in Yangon still had to be signed off by the SSPP leadership and higher government authorities. He said he believed that more talks were to be held between the two sides, and that there was concern that fighting would continue if the SSPP did not agree to pull back its forces south of the route linking the garrison town of Mine Naung in Kyethi township and the town of Mong Shu. The government has said nothing about the two days of talks in Yangon or the reported agreement. However, a senior SSPP official, who asked not to be named, said that the 6 points would be brought to the respective top leaders of both sides within 5 days. “After that, we are going to take a consensus among members of central executive committees. Then we will hold meetings again with the government and will consider the implementation part,” he said. He also maintained that the fighting had stopped three days ago, although this is disputed by various sources in the area.

Sai Zaw Win, a politician in Namsan Township for the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy, said it would be good for civilians if both sides observed the 6 points they had reportedly agreed to. “Both sides should retreat back. That’s a way to relieve people’s suffering,” he said by telephone from Shan State, where he has been involved in delivering aid to IDPs. The fighting has run into the harvest season and that due to the fighting many villagers were facing financial hardships. Some refugees went back to check their land during the day but did not dare stay there, said Nan Sai Hein, a Shan Youth Community network member from Mong Shu. A Shan activist at the Bangkok press conference said that whatever agreement had been signed there was no possibility that government troops would retreat from areas they had seized during the latest fighting. “Local people will remain suspected of supporting the SSPP, and will continue to be at the mercy of the government forces,” she said. “The Tatmadaw has been progressively seizing territories of the SSPP over the past few years, so even if there is a lull in fighting now, it will only be a matter of time before they launch another offensive to further squeeze the SSPP, which will again lead to displacement.”⁸

LAND RETURNED ‘TO THE WRONG HANDS’

More than 95 percent of confiscated lands – some 350,000 acres – have been returned to farmers across Burma, according to the government’s Land Utilisation Management Committee, noting that

⁸ Shan CSOs blast ‘silence’ over conflict –

<http://www.mmmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/17869-shan-csos-blast-silence-over-conflict.html> (Myanmar Times)
27 November 2015

just 17,091 acres are left to be returned nationwide. In a statement issued on 29 November, it said the vast majority of lands returned were in Irrawaddy (Ayarwaddy) and Sagaing Divisions with more than 80,000 and 50,000 acres respectively. The vast majority of the land seizures took place during the military junta era of the 1990s, when army-backed firms requested land for a variety of enterprises, displacing thousands of local people in the process.

Nu Aung, the coordinator of 88 Generation and Open Peace Society's Agriculture and Farmers' Affairs, said some portions of the land were handed into the wrong hands. "From what we have learned, some of the land was not returned to the rightful owners but handed over to tenant farmers who had been working those lands in recent years, leading to further disputes between the original owners and tenant farmers," she said. "Also, in some cases, the original owners were not provided the forms that legally allows them to the work the land so they cannot take it for granted that they can back to work the land without any stress." She added: "There are also cases of local government officials knowingly handing over land to people who are close to them instead of the original owners. The majority of the farmers we communication with, who are the rightful owners, did not get their land back."

In 2010, farmers and activists across Burma staged 'plough protests' demanding the return of their farmlands seized over decades of military rule. Many protestors were jailed and prosecuted for their involvement. Nu Aung said she hopes the incoming National League for Democracy government will oversee the full return of land to rightful owners. "There's pretty much no land left for the new government to confiscate and we believe that they are not the kind of government that would take people's land. We would like the new government to focus on allowing farmers to work their land free of stress and return the remaining portions rightfully," she said.⁹

BURMA ARMY, KAREN REBELS VISIT COLOMBIA

A joint delegation composed of officials from the Tatmadaw, Karen National Union (KNU) and the government-affiliated Myanmar Peace Center travelled to Colombia to study the country's peace process. The delegation included senior Burmese military officials Lt-Gen Ye Aung and Maj-Gen Tun Naung; KNU advisor Tu Tu Lay; Maj. Paw Doh of the KNU; and Maj-Gen Saw Moses, second-in-command of the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA). One representative of the KNU/KNLA Peace Council as well as members of the MPC also joined the study mission, according to MPC official Hla Maung Shwe. "It was the first time that Burma Army officials and armed ethnic groups have joined a delegation together. They will study the peace process and conflict resolution in Colombia," Hla Maung Shwe said. Asked why Burma's other non-state armed groups were not represented in the delegation, the MPC official said the Karen groups had a closer relationship with the government and have made considerable progress on trust-building through regular bilateral conferences. "Other ethnic rebels will have the chance to participate when the trust is stronger," Hla Maung Shwe said. The South American nation is undergoing a hard-fought resolution to internal conflict that has been ongoing since the mid-twentieth century. The Colombian peace process has been described by some as a new model for conflict resolution. The Colombian government began holding peace talks with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in 2012 in the Cuban capital of Havana. The two sides are near to reaching an agreement, which is expected to be penned by a March 2016 deadline. The agreement stipulates that the FARC must disarm within 60 days of signing the final document.¹⁰

ARAKAN NATIONAL PARTY STAKES CLAIM FOR POST OF CHIEF MINISTER

The Arakan National Party (ANP), the most successful of the ethnic parties in last month's election, is staking its claim to the post of chief minister in Rakhine State where it expects the NLD to allow it to

⁹ Land returned 'to the wrong hands' –

<http://www.dvb.no/news/land-returned-to-the-wrong-hands/59705> (DVB) 30 November 2015

¹⁰ Burma Army, Karen Rebels Visit Colombia –

<http://www.irrawaddy.org/burma/102296.html> (the Irrawaddy) 4 December 2015

form the next government. The ANP emerged as the single largest party in the 47-seat Rakhine assembly but fell just short of an overall majority.

Aye Thar Aung, a member of the ANP central executive committee who was among 22 party candidates to win a seat in the Union Parliament in Nay Pyi Taw, noted that the chief minister is appointed by the president who will be nominated by the National League for Democracy. “If the NLD appoints a chief minister from the NLD, then the members of government will also come from the NLD. So we would not be able to form a government ... I think that the NLD will negotiate with us [ethnic parties] over this issue,” he said. Despite the success of Aung San Suu Kyi’s party in securing an absolute majority in the Union Parliament, or Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, Aye Thar Aung said she would still need the support of ethnic parties to carry out her goals. “The NLD needs to cooperate with the ethnic parties to amend the constitution, and for national reconciliation and the peace process. If the NLD wants cooperation with us, they need to give us the opportunity of the post of chief minister,” he said. The prospect of a state government led by the ANP, which strongly defends the Buddhist Rakhine majority, is causing alarm among minority Muslim communities that have been living in segregated camps and villages without access to basic services since communal violence erupted in 2012.

NLD spokesperson Tun Hein said he could not comment on the ANP’s demands. He said the NLD planned to include ethnic parties when it forms governments, as Aung San Suu Kyi has stated, and that the issue would be discussed soon. The NLD says Aung San Suu Kyi is willing to meet the United Nationalities Alliance (UNA), a loose grouping of 8 ethnic political parties that were established before the 1990 elections. But the UNA, which includes the ANP, has not yet discussed a date for the talks. “I think the meeting between the NLD’s leader and UNA leaders will be held after the election process is over. Also our conference will be held early next year,” said Myo Kyaw, an alliance member.¹¹

SNLD PLANS FIVE-YEAR STRATEGY

The Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD) held a three-day 2015 general election review conference in northern Shan State at the end of November to explore their political role over the next five years. Nearly 200 members attended the political party’s meeting, which was held in Kyaukme Township from 28 to 30 November. Duties and responsibilities were discussed both for winning MPs and for unelected candidates, said Sai Leik, the party spokesperson. “Youth are the power of politics,” Sai Leik said, explaining that at the strategy session, the SNLD discussed the formation of a youth committee. He also added that they would like to partner with civil society and community-based organizations, and focus more on the inclusion of women.

Nang Noon, an SNLD candidate from Mong Bain, told SHAN news agency that, SNLD party leader, Khun Htun Oo, emphasized future cooperation with the Shan State Joint Action Committee, Committee for Shan State Unity, and the United Nationalities Alliance in an effort to partner with other ethnic groups in Shan State. The strategy meeting led to the formation of a parliamentary committee, she added, with representatives from the Upper House, Lower House and State Parliament on the central committee. In Burma’s general election, held on November 8, the SNLD—known locally as the Tiger Head Party—won three Upper House seats, twelve Lower House seats and 25 out of 160 seats in the State Parliament.¹²

SPURNED NDF SEES FUTURE IN GOVT OVERSIGHT

After failing to win any seats in last month’s election, the National Democratic Force (NDF) has vowed to continue its political activities by setting up an oversight group to monitor the activities of the next

¹¹ Arakan National Party stakes claim for post of chief minister – <http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/17985-arakan-national-party-stakes-claim-for-post-of-chief-minister.html> (Myanmar Times) 4 December 2015

¹² SNLD plans five-year strategy – <http://english.panglong.org/snld-plans-five-year-strategy/> (S.H.A.N.) 3 December 2015

government. The Political Monitoring and Evaluation Society of Myanmar (PMESM) was announced on 9 November, the day after the poll, and its leadership is comprised of unsuccessful candidates from the NDF. It expects to begin its activities in January, shortly before elected candidates take their seat in the next parliament. “Mainly, we’ll be constructive and aim for the public interest,” said Kyaw Thura, who failed to win the Lower House seat of Kyauktada in downtown Rangoon last month. “We won’t be the opposition to the new government, but we will stand up for people against things which are unacceptable to the majority of citizens and which can harm the interests of the people.”

Htet Aung Kyaw, who had unsuccessfully contested a divisional seat in Rangoon’s Latha Township, said the group so far had a membership of over 200 people. Other parties that unsuccessfully contested the election say that they were not inclined to join the monitoring group until they had a clearer idea of its purpose and function. “We’ll have to wait and see if their actions will really contribute to the new government of the victorious party and future development of the country,” said Aung Moe Zaw, the chairman of the Democratic Party for a New Society. “I think it is too early to give comment now as it has not even been established. We’ll wait and see what they will do before deciding whether or not to join them.” The NDF, composed largely of erstwhile members of the National League for Democracy (NLD), broke with their former party in 2010 as a result of the NLD’s decision to boycott that year’s election. The party won 16 of the 161 regional and Union seats it contested in 2010, but failed to pick up any of the 13 seats it sought in the 2012 byelections. In 2011, three lawmakers broke away to form the New National Democracy Party, which also failed to win seats in the Nov. 8 poll. A number of other NDF lawmakers defected to the NLD soon after that party swept the 2012 byelections.¹³

ANALYSIS

The meetings between President Thein Sein, Commander-in-Chief Min Aung Hlaing and NLD Chairperson Aung San Suu Kyi can be seen as positive steps towards a smooth transfer of power in the coming months. If indeed the current leadership and incoming government are truly committed to national reconciliation then such meetings will prove to be crucial. The on-going peace process will also have an impact on the transfer of power and as such the inclusion of the Non-signatories to the existing National Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) as well as the discussions being done towards the Political Framework Dialogue will also be needed. The current developments prevailing in Myanmar are so vast that time and patience will be of the utmost importance and that the inclusion and contribution of all stakeholders will be needed if the country’s democratic transition is to be successful. However, the transition will not be successful without the cooperation and collaboration of the Tatmadaw and that the coming weeks or months will see if the military is indeed committed to transforming the country from decades of military rule to a democratic state.

¹³ Spurned NDF Sees Future in Govt Oversight – <http://www.irrawaddy.org/elections/102207.html> (the Irrawaddy) 3 December 2015