
POLITICAL MONITOR No. 15

OFFICIAL MEDIA

PRESIDENT THEIN SEIN HOSTS SPECIAL ADVISOR TO UN SECRETARY-GENERAL

President Thein Sein received the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Advisor on Myanmar Vijay Nambiar and party on 27 May in Nay Pyi Taw. At the meeting, the President said that Myanmar is deeply concerned with the issue of boat people but ready to provide humanitarian assistance in accordance with United Nations policy and international obligations. He added that although the boat people recently rescued at sea by the Myanmar navy were Bangladeshis and not from Myanmar, the country is providing them with emergency relief. The two sides discussed regional cooperation to fight people smugglers and address the issue of migrants by creating job opportunities, as well as the need to increase international awareness of the real situation in Myanmar.¹

PRESIDENT THEIN SEIN ATTENEDS OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF MYANMAR CENSUS 2014

President U Thein Sein delivered an address at the launching ceremony of the main results of the 2014 population and housing census at Myanmar International Convention Centre in Yangon on 29 May. In his address, the President said that soon after taking office in May 2011, a decision was taken to conduct a nation-wide census in the country and that Myanmar government approached the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon for technical support and mobilization of resources to conduct a nationwide census. He stated that the four-year long undertaking was implemented in 4 phases - the preparatory phase; the data collection phase; the data processing phase; and lastly, the data analysis and dissemination phase and that the Provisional Results were announced in August 2014 in line with international standards and practices. The President said the information gained from the census would provide Myanmar with an accurate data on potential national human resources that we can utilize in national development tasks and that information released is invaluable not only for the Government but also for the private sector, ethnic national leaders, political leaders, members of parliament, development partners, civil society organizations and for all who are providing public services. He expressed appreciation over the participation and cooperation rendered in the census process by rendered by ethnic leaders and also to the United Nations and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), donor countries including, Australia, Finland, Germany, Italy, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States of America for their financial, technical and logistical support.²

PYIDAUNGSU HLUTTAW SPEAKER MEETS POLITICAL PARTIES

Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and Pyithu Hluttaw Thura Shwe Mann met with leaders of political parties at the Pyithu Hluttaw, Hluttaw Complex in Naypyitaw 29 May. At the meeting, the Speaker called for participation of all political parties for ensuring peace and stability for successfully holding the free and fair multi-party democracy general elections in 2015, and cooperation among them for serving the national interest as well as making genuine peace process in the nation. The meeting was attended by leaders of Union Solidarity and Development Party, National League for Democracy, Shan Nationalities Democratic Party, National Unity Party, Rakhine National Party, National Democratic Force, Pa-O National Organization, All Mon Region Democracy Party, Phalon-Sawaw Democratic Party, Wa Democratic Party, Kayin State Democracy and Development Party, Kayin People's Party, Chin

¹ President U Thein Sein hosts special advisor to UN Secretary-General - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-05-28.pdf> (GNLM) 28 May 2015 (p. 1)

² We need to decide how we want Myanmar to appear in the future and work together towards that goal, President says - Main Results of 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census released - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-05-30.pdf> (GNLM) 30 May 2015 (p. 1 & 3)

Progressive Party, Chin National Democratic Party, Unity and Democracy Party of Kachin State (SaDaKa), Taaung (Palaung) National Party, Inn National Development Party, and Shan Nationalities League for Democracy.³

MILITARY IS NOT ATTACKING ETHNIC PEOPLE, SAYS SENIOR GENERAL

During a high-level meeting of the Defence Services, Senior-General Min Aung Hlaing said that the military was not attacking ethnic people, but fighting against enemies threatening sovereignty of the country, illegal trade of natural resources and drug traffickers. The Senior General said after regaining independence the military could safeguard the sovereignty of the country after engaging in 1,557 major battles and 16,571 minor ones between 1948 and 2015. He noted that the military needs to possess fighting power to be able to clear the threats. It also needs to cultivate fighting spirit and nationalistic spirit, he said. The Defence Services is now constructing 11 billion kyats worth 546 apartments in 5 military commands, and it is planning to construct more apartments estimated 6 billion kyats worth apartment in 3 commands.⁴

UEC RELEASES DATES FOR ELECTORAL ROLL ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Union Election Commission issued a statement listing dates and locations for the announcement of electoral rolls for the 2015 general elections on 22 May. Voter lists will be announced for the second time at the offices of ward and village election sub-commissions in Dagon Myothit (South, North and East), North Okkalapa, Thingangyun, Thanlyin, Kyauktan, Thongwa, Kayan, Insein, Mingaladon, Shwepyitha, Hlinethaya and Htantabin townships in Yangon Region, as well as Tatkon, Pyinmana, Lewe, Pobbathiri, Zeyathiri, Ottarathiri, Zabuthiri and Dekkhinathiri townships in Nay Pyi Taw Council Area from 25 May to 7 June 2015. Voters whose names are absent from rolls must submit form No. 3, the statement said, while those listed with incorrect information must use form No. 4-C. People may contest the nomination of unsuitable persons, such as those who are deceased or imprisoned, with form No. 4. Visitors' names will be included in voter list of permanent residences provided they submit household registration form No. 66/6. Political parties should cooperate with the Union Election Commission in assisting voters to be properly enrolled, the statement said.⁵

Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) sessions

The 12th Regular Session of the First Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) held its 54th rd day meeting on 28 May and the following issues were raised and discussed.

- The session approved the referendum amendment bill for the amendment to the 2008 Constitution ;
- MP U Aung Sein from Manaung constituency, tabled a motion demanding the local government pay the township's development committee staff from its own budget. He said that the staff from remote regions are paid double and that the local government should take charge of their regular pays as the local development committee is short on budgets. Deputy Minister for Finance Dr Lin Aung suggested inserting additional pays in the Union Funds ;
- MP Daw Sanda Min of the Zabuthiri constituency asked if local governments are taking legal action against mines breaking the laws and any knowledge of illegal mining along the Chindwin River. Deputy Minister at the President Office U Kyaw Win said that legal action will

³ Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker meets political parties –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-05-30.pdf> (GNLM) 30 May 2015 (p. 2)

⁴ Military is not attacking ethnic people, says Senior General –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-05-31.pdf> (GNLM) 31 May 2015 (p. 3)

⁵ UEC releases dates for electoral roll Announcements –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-05-23.pdf> (GNLM) 23 May 2015 (p. 3)

be taken against violators after a joint inspection by related ministries and local governments.⁶

Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) sessions

The 12th Regular Session of the First Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) held its 52nd day meeting on 19 May and the following issues were raised and discussed.

- An MP raised a question and asked if **the authorities have a plan to monitor activities of the KNU, which is cooperating with the government for peace in Karen State.** Deputy Minister at the President Office U Aung Thein briefed the session, and said that **the authorities are monitoring the Karen National Union (KNU) and other ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) and cooperating with them in accordance with an agreement between the government and the groups. Authorities will raise objections over activities that contravene conditions of the peace deal, the three main national causes of the Tatmadaw, and the rule of law and security,** according to the deputy minister. In addition, the Deputy Minister said **authorities are also providing help to the KNU by establishing farms for their resettlement.**⁷

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Union Parliament) sessions

The 12th Regular Session of the First Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Union Parliament) held its 49th day meeting on 26 May and the following issues were raised and discussed.

- The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw session was **overwhelmed with the implementation of the report of the investigating commission to prevent losses from confiscation of farmland and other types of land.** MP U Aung Thein Lin said that it is necessary to confiscate land after issuing land confiscation orders and compensating land owners for their land at the prevailing prices, adding that land that is not used for permitted purposes must be confiscated while confiscated land must also be returned to former owners if it is not used for the purpose of confiscation. MP U Khine Maung Yi stated that **the process for returning land lacks transparency and timeframe for the settlement of land confiscation disputes should be set. In addition the representative pointed out that state and region governments are compensating for land differently and standards should be set for land compensation.** MP U Hla Swe was of the view that **some land had not been returned to its original owners in Magway Region and consequently should be returned.**⁸

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BATTLES INTENSIFY IN SOUTHERN KACHIN STATE

Battles continue to rage between KIA's 12th Battalion troops and a combined force of Burmese Army's 56th and 86th Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) troops at Nam Lim Pa, La Ait Bum and Nam Hpalang Bum in Mansi Township on 23 May. Government forces fired several artillery rounds on KIA's 12th Battalion positions at La Ait Bum followed by ground forces' assault at 8:10 am. One KIA officer and 3 soldiers were killed by artillery shells, reported KIA frontline source. The two sides fought again in the afternoon at Nam Lim Pa and Nam Hpalang Bum. On May 24, KIA's 12th Battalion troops ambushed about 50 Burmese Army reinforcement troops from 437th Light Infantry Regiment on the road between Manta and Mong Hta, and struck an army truck at around 7:45 am. The two sides have been engaged in a series of battles for several days in Mansi Township. The Burmese Air Force fighters bombed KIA's 1st and 12th Battalion positions to support ground forces' assaults. Burmese Army troops

⁶ Pyithu Hluttaw approves referendum amendment bill for constitutional change – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-05-29.pdf> (GNLM) 29 May 2015 (p. 2)

⁷ Govt monitoring, assisting ethnic armed groups in line with peace deal – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-05-27.pdf> (GNLM) 27 May 2015 (p. 2)

⁸ Pyidaungsu Hluttaw discusses settlement of land confiscation disputes – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-05-27.pdf> (GNLM) 27 May 2015 (p. 2)

first entered KIA's 12th Battalion area under the pretext of stopping illegal logging activities in last March. Despite a convoy of log trucks laden with logs from Sagaing and Mandalay Division had been stopped and some Chinese nationals were detained in prison, Burmese Army troops from 15th LIB, 56th LIB, 86th LIB, 142nd LIB, 321st LIR and 601st LIR continued their presence in KIA's 12th Battalion area in Nam Lim Pa, Kawng Ra, and Magyeng. KIO officials and local observers said Burmese Army has more intentions than just stopping illegal logging and trading activities, to occupy the area and build permanent bases.⁹

CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM ESSENTIAL, SAYS UNA AND 88GPOS ALLIANCE

The United Nationalities Alliance (UNA) and the 88 Generation Peace and Open Society (88GPOS) civil society organisation have declared that a fair election in Burma is impossible in 2015 unless amendments are made to the 2008 Constitution. "If the 2015 election is held without amending the Constitution, the election might be free, but it won't be fair," said UNA leader Aye Thar Aung, following a joint meeting between the organisations' delegates in Rangoon's Tamwe Township. The two groups joined forces last year in response to slow progress on reformation of the Constitution which, alongside other caveats, provides the military with a parliamentary veto and effectively bars opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi from taking up the presidency. "We concluded that the charter must be amended before the election. We also agreed that we will send a letter to the ethnic armed groups' conference to be held at Lawkheela, stating that we support the ethnic leaders on the signing the nationwide ceasefire agreement, throughout the peace process, and on the establishment of a federal union," said Aye Thar Aung. "What we will try to achieve is a parliamentary decision to amend the constitution – that is what we want to get, anyway," 88GPOS student leader Min Ko Naing told reporters at a press conference. Aye Thar Aung said that the meeting – in which UNA leaders Khun Htun Oo, Sai Nyunt Lwin, Sai Leik and Aye Thar Aung met with 88GPOS leaders Min Ko Naing, Ko Gyi, Mya Aye Pyone Cho and Ko Jimmy – was called in response to the uncertainty surrounding constitutional amendment, the ending of civil war and the establishment of a truly democratic system.¹⁰

PARTIES QUIETLY LAUNCH ELECTION CAMPAIGNS

As political parties begin to shape up for the elections later this year, some of the main lines of the likely campaigns are starting to become apparent. In particular, the Rakhine National Party is setting its sights not only on the 63 constituencies of Rakhine State, but also on areas where large concentrations of Rakhine people live in Ayeyarwady Region. The party is now selecting its candidates there with a view to becoming the main rival of the USDP and NLD. But they know they have their work cut out. Rakhine National Party central executive committee member U Aye Ther Aung said, "Villagers are still frightened of the authorities because they lived under military rule for decades. The ruling party knows what to do to win their votes." He accused the USDP of using the power of incumbency to sway people's votes, and was not above resorting to intimidation, including cutting off electricity or blocking roads to communities thought to be anti-government. "We're campaigning all over Rakhine State," U Aye Ther Aung said. "Our focus is not only on the election. We are also explaining about democracy, and that power derives from the people." Nan Khin Htwe Myint, a spokesperson for the NLD, said the party had been touring rural villages around the country to educate voters on the voting system and ensuring that its supporters were registered to vote. "We conduct training and voter education," she said. "It would be a mistake to think people at the village level don't follow politics." Not that this is part of the political campaign, which has not yet officially begun. The

⁹ Battles intensify in Southern Kachin State –
<http://kachinlandnews.com/?p=25698> (Kachinland News) 24 May 2016/
Two Burmese Fighter Jets launched bombing raids for the second time in a day –
<http://kachinlandnews.com/?p=25688> (Kachinland News) 21 May 2015

¹⁰ Constitutional reform essential, says UNA and 88GPOS alliance –
<http://www.dvb.no/news/constitutional-reform-essential-say-una-and-88gpos-alliance/51293> (DVB) 23 May 2015

NLD says its activities are related to a celebration of the centenary year of General Aung San. It was in that capacity that the general's daughter, NLD chair Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, visited Mon State from 16-17 May, addressing audiences of thousands, then travelled to Putao township in Kachin State on 23 May. U Tun Hein, a senior NLD official, said the visit was in connection with the electoral campaign. The USDP for its part has launched a door-to-door information campaign targeting farmers and workers, including in remote villages and ethnic areas. USDP senior official U Tint Zaw said, "In some cases we help people get national ID cards. We provide solar power in villages without electricity, we provide healthcare and fresh water, we assist with land-grab problems. We've been doing this ever since the party was formed in 1993." The party also offers low-interest loans. "Our support is growing," U Tint Zaw said. "We're inviting people either to join the party or to contribute funds."¹¹

NLD LEADER CALLS FOR URGENT SIX-WAY TALKS

Opposition leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has called on the government to convene an urgent session of six-way talks to discuss amendments to Myanmar's constitution, while questioning whether there is a commitment to hold parliamentary elections on time. Addressing a rally in Putao in Kachin State on 23 May, the National League for Democracy (NLD) leader accused the government of having no desire to hold another session of the talks, which were last held on 10 April and resulted in a commitment to meet again in the first 10 days of May. "The NLD wants to amend the constitution in parliament and we are trying to do it," she said. "Some people don't want to amend certain sections. So we try to negotiate amendments through discussions in the six-way talks. But I don't see any sign of the next six-way talks." Director of the President's Office U Zaw Htay, said that the government would hold the talks soon and that it was discussing a date with the president, the commander-in-chief of the military and the two speakers of parliament. "The government has to hold the six-way talks," he said. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said the NLD wanted to know the rules and regulations for the elections, and that the party would decide whether to take part after they were laid out by the Union Election Commission. "People worry whether the NLD will contest the election. The 2015 election is very important for the future of Myanmar," she said, receiving a warm welcome from a crowd of about 1000 mostly ethnic Kachin supporters. "I cannot say exactly if the government will hand over power if the NLD wins the elections," she said, speaking just days before the anniversary of the 1990 elections, which resulted in a landslide NLD victory that the military junta refused to recognise. President U Thein Sein and UEC chair U Tin Aye have insisted the elections will be held in October or early November. The NLD leader said her party would invite others to form a government of national reconciliation in the event of an NLD victory. "Our government would work for the country and together with other people who truly want good for the country. Our intention is not to get power, but to have national reconciliation," she said.¹²

ARAKAN NATIONAL PARTY MEMBERS COMPETE FOR CANDIDACY

The Arakan National Party (ANP) is undergoing internal elections to select candidates who will stand in the upcoming elections. Khine Pye Soe, vice chairman of the ANP – a result of a merger between two major Arakanese parties, the Rakhine Nationalities Development Party (RNDP) and the Arakan League for Democracy (ALD) – said that the selection process is necessary as the number of party members who have expressed wish to stand exceeds the number of seats available to contest. "In 2010, the Rakhine Nationalities Development Party (RNDP) didn't have many election candidates, and we had to handpick eligible contenders by consulting experts. In 2015, now we have merged with the

¹¹ Parties quietly launch election campaigns – <http://www.mmmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/14643-parties-quietly-launch-election-campaigns.html> (Myanmar Times) 25 May 2015

¹² NLD leader calls for urgent six-way talks – <http://www.mmmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/14647-nld-leader-calls-for-urgent-six-way-talks.html> (Myanmar Times) 25 May 2015

ALD, we have over 100 people seeking to become candidates for just 63 parliamentary seats,” said Khine Pye Soe, previous deputy leader of the RNDP. “As Burma is now in a period of democratic transition, we have decided that we can promote democracy by holding internal democratic elections within our party to appoint candidates on village or ward and township levels via a secret voting system,” he said. The party’s first candidate ballot was held in Rathedaung Township on 24 May, in which Khin Swe Wai won candidacy for a lower house seat, while Than Naing and Pho Min were each appointed as regional parliament candidates. The party will continue with the selection process to appoint candidates in all townships in Arakan State, Irrawaddy Division and Chin State’s Paletwa by 15 June. Those party members who wish to apply for candidacy are required to pay a 30,000 kyat (US\$30) application fee and 500,000 kyat as a deposit for a party conference. If appointed to run in the election, each candidate has to supply 20 million kyat for campaigning.¹³

ETHNIC PARTY OPENS NEW CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT CAMPAIGN

Ethnic political parties have opened up a new front in the campaign to amend the 2008 constitution. While others have taken aim at the clauses that govern eligibility for the presidency and entrench the role of the military in governance, the Nationalities Brotherhood Federation (NBF) issued a statement on 25 May calling for the amendment of section 261, which concerns the appointment of the chief ministers of the states and regions. The constitution decrees that the chief minister of a state or region shall be selected by the president.

The NBF, an alliance of more than 20 political parties, wants to win a majority of seats in every state and region where its member organisations are competing. It has set its sights on winning at least 161 townships, as well as the posts of ethnic affairs ministers. Vice Chair of the Federal Union Party U Saw Than Myint which is affiliated with the NBF, said the alliance’s call for the amendment of the constitution would probably be considered. “This is a question of the rights of ethnic peoples, under a law the president has just signed,” he said. “We don’t want the chief minister to be selected by the president. The state and regional parliaments should select their own chief ministers.” U Saw Than Myint predicted clashes in the next parliament between majority Bamar and minority MPs unless the amendment was approved. The NBF statement also takes issue with claims by ethnic-majority parties – apparently a reference to the ruling Union Solidarity and Development Party and the opposition National League for Democracy – that they can represent ethnic minorities. “We reject the idea that some non-ethnic parties are saying they represent ethnic peoples. Only ethnic political parties can represent ethnic peoples,” said U Saw Than Myint. The statement also called for the signing of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement to allow political dialogue to begin. The NBF and its partners have already drawn up a framework for the dialogue, which they presented to the leaders of Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT) in March.¹⁴

UEC, CARTER CENTRE SIGNS MOU TO OBSERVE ELECTORAL PROCESS

The Union Election Commission (UEC) and Carter Centre headed by former US president Jimmy Carter has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on 26 May to observe the 2015 general election. There will be two parts in the observation process: short and long term periods. “The observers assigned to observe for long term will monitor how to make the list of representatives, how the representatives stage election campaign, how the media report about the election, and which sectors they are spending. They will analyse the UEC and check how the UEC is doing, how the UEC is preparing for the voting system and voting list, and what kind of training to be given to the electoral staff. They

¹³ Arakan National Party members compete for candidacy – <http://www.dvb.no/news/arakan-national-party-members-contest-candidacy-burma-myanmar/51333> (DVB) 25 May 2015

¹⁴ UEC, Carter Centre signs MoU to observe electoral process – <http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/politics/uec-carter-centre-signs-mou-observe-electoral-process> (Eleven News Media) 27 May 2015

will observe the election for about 3 or 4 months. They will scrutinise the complaint letters after the election. They will monitor the election process. After the elected representatives take their pledge at the parliament, they can leave,” said the UEC Chairperson Tin Aye. Moreover, the UEC is in discussion with the European Union (EU) and will invite election commissions from the Asean region 3 or 4 days before the election. It will be the first time international observers are allowed to observe the election. In 2010 general election and 2012 by-election, only the diplomats were allowed to observe the elections. Although the observers can ask questions if they are not cleared about the facts, they cannot interfere or hinder the election process directly or indirectly. Each election observers cannot make personal remarks to the media and only a responsible person will be allowed to make comments about the election process. The organisations observing the election can submit advices, techniques and analysis to the UEC. All organisations must adhere to the rules and regulations issued by the poll commission.¹⁵

ELECTION INFORMATION CENTER UNVEILED IN RANGOON

Burma’s Union Election Commission (UEC) has launched an Information Center in Rangoon (Yangon) and a new website where eligible voters can check their names against voting lists compiled by the commission. At an opening ceremony on 26 May, UEC chairman Tin Aye said the Information Center would allow interested parties to access elections-related data faster and more conveniently in Rangoon, where most of the country’s political parties, civil society groups and media outlets are based, according to a UEC press release. The chairman said that through the center, updated documents and information about the election would be made available, including relevant laws and regulations, orders and instructions issued by the UEC, and materials on the commission’s operations.

The UEC also launched the <https://checkvoterlist.uecmyanmar.org> website on the same day, saying voters would be able to search their names online in addition to checking them at election subcommission offices in their wards. The rollout of the website was not an unequivocal success, however, with some Rangoon voters who attempted to check their names on the website complaining that their searches did not produce a match. “There are going to be complaints like that,” said Hla Maung Cho. “We are not now posting all of the voter lists. Only the voter lists in 13 townships in Rangoon are now posted and we will update it gradually.” In Rangoon, physical copies of the voter lists were put up in the wards of 14 townships on Monday, and will remain posted from 9 am to 4 pm daily through 7 June. An initial batch of 10 Rangoon townships was made public from 30 March to 12 April 12. The 8 townships of the Naypyidaw Union Territory also released voter lists on Monday, though the UEC’s new website did not allow for a search of those rolls as of 27 May.

The UEC has said the voting rosters will be made public in 4 stages, with the last releases on 22 June. The purpose of the exercise is to allow eligible voters to ensure that they will be able to cast a ballot by checking that their names are on the lists. Voters are also being instructed to inform local election officials if names are erroneously included on a list. The compilation of accurate voter rolls is viewed as an important gauge of the 2015 poll’s credibility. The UEC has said it is committed to ensuring a free and fair election in November amid intense international scrutiny in the lead up to what could be Burma’s first credible poll in 25 years. The electoral commission has not yet announced a date for Election Day.¹⁶

ANALYSIS

The visit of UN Secretary-General’s Special Envoy Vijay Nambiar once again brings to light the seriousness of the unresolved and sensitive issue regarding the boat people vis-à-vis the Rohingya.

¹⁵ Election Information Center Unveiled in Rangoon –

<http://www.irrawaddy.org/burma/election-information-center-unveiled-in-rangoon.html> (the Irrawaddy) 27 May 2015

¹⁶ Ethnic party opens new constitution amendment campaign –

<http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/14690-ethnic-party-opens-new-constitution-amendment-campaign.html> (Myanmar Times) 27 May 2015

The issue which has persisted for decades by successive governments prior 2010 has left the current President in an awkward predicament and that a resolution is unlikely in the near foreseeable future. However, the authorities in Myanmar will need to learn from the past and should take the necessary steps to resolve the issue in a timely and acceptable manner. Similarly, the continued bombardment of Kachin Independence Army (KIA) positions by government forces create a worrying sign for the peace process but also towards national reconciliation. Stakeholders especially ethnic armed organisations (EAOs) will no doubt be closely monitoring the clashes and question the sincerity of the government's true intentions to achieve peace. Such skirmishes are not new and will most likely continue to occur but should be avoided at all costs by all concerned parties. On a more positive note, it seems that steps and preparations for the elections later this year are making progress and that the elections should be seen as another indicator for the democratic reform process in the country.