
POLITICAL MONITOR No. 14

OFFICIAL MEDIA

PRESIDENT MEETS REPRESENTATIVES FROM POLITICAL PARTIES

The nationwide ceasefire agreement, this year's general election and land disputes dominated discussions when President Thein Sein met with representatives of political parties on 18 May. In his opening speech, the President expressed his willingness to begin political dialogues before the upcoming elections, pledging that any constitutional amendments prior to the election would be carried out through such dialogue. He urged all political parties to participate in the process of the Deed of Commitment for Peace and National Reconciliation, which was signed on 12 February, and to make efforts toward conducting a political dialogue. Nearly 130 politicians from 68 parties attended the meeting. Some participants suggested a timeframe for holding a political dialogues. Others urged the government to hold the upcoming general election in a free and transparent manner. Yet others urged the government to speed up its efforts to settle land disputes in the remaining term. In responding the questions, President Thein Sein pledged to speed up the government's efforts to deal with the issues raised.¹

GOV'T, ETHNIC ARMED ORGANISATIONS AND POLITICAL PARTY REPRESENTATIVES ATTEND FORUM TO DISCUSS DEED OF COMMITMENT

Representatives of the Myanmar government, ethnic armed groups and political parties gathered 9 May in Yangon for the first coordination meeting of signatories to the Deed of Commitment for Peace and National Reconciliation signed in February. The forum, aimed at speeding up the signing of the National Ceasefire Agreement, also included some non-signatory ethnic armed organizations and political parties, as well as ethnic affairs ministers and civil society organizations.

In his welcome speech, Chairman of the Karen National Union (KNU) Saw Mutu Sae Po, a signatory to the Deed of Commitment and one of the organizers of the forum, said stakeholders must keep their promises and back up their words with action. The signatories must "build a culture to realize the pledges and open the way for an inclusive and harmonious future for the good of the country," the KNU chairman said. Only the political course can achieve a democratic federal system that guarantees self-determination for ethnic groups, as more than 60 years of armed struggle have created many losers and few winners, he said. The Deed of Commitment calls for a preliminary rounds of political talks before the 2015 general elections, with all of the forum attendees agreeing on the need for such talks before and after the national poll and forming a Coordination Team for Peace and National Reconciliation in order to realize the pledges in the deed of commitment.

The Vice-Chairman of Union Peace-Making Work Committee (UPWC) Union Minister U Aung Min, stated Nay Pyi Taw's commitment to implementing the pledges. "It is undeniable that everyone's wish is peace," said Minister Aung Min. The forum was organized by the KNU and the Restoration Council of the Shan State (RCSS), the political wing of Shan State Army (SSA), bringing government representatives led by the Union Ministers, ethnic affairs ministers, leaders and representatives from seven armed groups and 64 political parties and 27 responsible persons from CSOs.

The country's peace process is progressing with the signing of the draft ceasefire deal between the government's UPWC and NCCT of ethnic armed groups on 31 March. Indicating its readiness to sign the accord as soon as possible, the government side says it is now waiting for the approval of ethnic leaders on the deal. "NCCT's Ethnic Conference that will gather all ethnic group leaders including non-NCCT members to discuss and approve the draft deal will take place in the third week of this May at

¹ Ceasefire agreement, election dominate discussions between president, political parties – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-05-19-red.pdf> (GNLM) 19May 2015 (p. 1 & 3)

one of three tentative places, and Lokhella is expected to host the conference”, said Pado Saw Kwe Htoo Win, one of the NCCT leaders.²

PRESIDENT THEIN SEIN RECEIVES CHINESE STATE COUNCILLOR

President Thein Sein welcomed the State Councillor and Secretary General of China’s State Council Yang Jing, at the Presidential Palace on 11 May and discussed cooperation in the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, promotion of bilateral ties, investment in the energy sector and the development of the Kyaukpyu special economic zone in Rakhine State. The two leaders also discussed the 21st Century Maritime Silk Route Economic Belt, a Chinese initiative to foster international investment and cooperation. The Chinese delegation also held meetings with Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw Thura Shwe Mann and Yangon Region Chief Minister Myint Swe and exchanged views on bilateral ties and cooperation between Myanmar and China.³

MYANMAR, CHINA TO FURTHER STRENGTHEN EXISTING PAUKPHAW RELATIONS

Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Kham received the Chinese delegation led by Vice Minister of the International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party Chen Fengxiang on 19 May and discussed strengthening of existing Paukphaw relationship and promoting development of political and economic sectors between the two countries. The Chinese Vice Minister also called on Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and discussed border issues and the role of Defence Services in the upcoming election. They also exchanged views on the role of the Myanmar Tatmadaw in assuming the responsibilities in national politics and also promoting of bilateral ties between the two countries.⁴

KOKANG AND GOVERNMENT TROOPS CONTINUE TO CLASH

Government troops recaptured Point 2202 Hill, a stronghold of MNDAA in the north of Laukkai, with the help of artillery barrages and air strikes the ground troops took the hill on 14 May, following close combat. Similarly on 15 May, government troops on seized a MNDAA base at Point 2202 Hill in Laukkai, northeastern Shan State. The three columns of government soldiers also took control of Point 2071 hill near border point BP-120 as they pursued troops of the MN DAA, an insurgent group led by Pheung Kya-shin, who fled to Sekawlyan area and seized Hohtolin and Setoneswe villages. Following the clashes, the Tatmadaw force found 5 bodies of MNDAA soldiers along with weapons and ammunition.⁵

² Gov’t, ethnic armed group and political party representatives attend peace and national reconciliation forum in Yangon - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-05-10.pdf> (GNLM) 10 May 2015 (p. 1 & 3)

³ President U Thein Sein receives State Councillor and Secretary General of China’s State Council, attends meeting on infrastructure development plans – http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/12_May%2015_gnlm-red.pdf (GNLM) 12 May 2015 (p. 1 & 3)/
Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw meets State Councillor and Secretary General of China’s State Councillor – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-05-13.pdf> (GNLM) 13 May 2015 (p. 3)/
Yangon Region Chief Minister receives State Councillor and Secretary General of China’s State Councillor – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-05-14.pdf> (GNLM) 14 May 2015 (p. 3)

⁴ Myanmar, China to further strengthen existing Paukphaw relations – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-05-20.pdf> (GNLM) 20 May 2015 (p. 3)/
Senior General Min Aung Hlaing: Tatmadaw will keep an eye on stability of the State – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-05-20.pdf> (GNLM) 20 May 2015 (p. 2)

⁵ Army captures Point-2202 Hill of MNDAA insurgents in Laukkai – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-05-16.pdf> (GNLM) 16 May 2015 (p. 3)/
Gov’t troops take control of insurgent bases – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-05-17.pdf> (GNLM) 17 May 2015 (p. 1)/
Military columns still combating Kokang insurgents – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-02-22-red.pdf> (GNLM) 22 May 2015 (p. 3)

MYANMAR CHIEF OF STAFF RECEIVES FRENCH DELEGATION

Chief of the General Staff (Army, Navy and Air) General Hla Htay Win received the Deputy Director Thierry Vankerk-Hoven of Security and Defence Cooperation of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DCSC) at the hall of Bayintnaung Yeiktha, on 14 May and discussed further strengthening bilateral relations between two armed forces of Myanmar and France, cooperation in non-military training courses and exchange of visits between the two armed forces. The meeting was also attended by senior military officers of the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services, French Military Attaché Lt-Col Thierry Poignant and officials.⁶

UEC MEETS CSOs FOR 2015 GENERAL ELECTION

The meeting on cooperation between the Union Election Commission (UEC) and civil society organizations was held at the Micasa Hotel in Yangon on 14 May. At the meeting, Chairman of the Commission Tin Aye said that collection of voters' lists was successful thanks to active cooperation of civil society organizations and rules for local observers was also drafted with the cooperation of CSOs. Collection of voters' lists have been completed for 75 percent of the country and the first announcement of voters' lists in Yangon Region was made on 30 March and the second, third and fourth announcement of voters' lists will be made on 25 May, 8 June and 22 June respectively.

Tin Aye also urged CSOs and political parties to help in educating the public to check the voters' lists and called on the political parties and CSOs to conduct multiplier voter education training on completion of the courses. The chairman also pointed out the need to make concerted efforts for voter education and promised to hold 2015 election in a free, fair and transparent manner. In conclusion, he urged CSOs to cooperate for success of 2015 general election and help public to understand the voting process. The meeting was attended by the UEC chairman and officials, 48 CSOs and 6 international organizations.

In a separate meeting held on 15 May, Union Election Commission (UEC) member Myint Naing said the commission is three-quarters of the way to completing its compilation of the national electoral roll and urged political parties to nominate female candidates for the elections so as to increase the percentage of women among Hluttaw MPs. He also said party representatives who have attended voter education courses to share their knowledge with the people.⁷

Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) sessions

The 12th Regular Session of the First Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) held its 43rd day meeting on 11 May and the following issues were raised and discussed.

- MP Thein Yi from Htantabin Township asked if there **were plans to provide transportation for voters on election day**. Union Election Commission member Win Ko said, " **the government will not make any transport arrangements for voters in the upcoming general elections, even in remote areas.**" He added that such facilitation by any political party or electoral representative is tantamount to a breach of the electoral law. U Win Ko also said **polling stations will open in remote areas in accordance with the law, following consultation with sub-commissions on the appropriate number of polling stations for each township.**

⁶ General Hla Htay Win meets French delegation – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-05-15.pdf> (GNLM) 15 May 2015 (p. 2)

⁷ UEC meets CSOs for 2015 general election – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-05-15.pdf> (GNLM) 15 May 2015 (p. 3)/ UEC member urges parties to nominate women as candidates – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-05-17.pdf> (GNLM) 17 May 2015 (p. 4)

Regarding voter education, Win Ko added that **voter education will be conducted by media, election commissions in constituencies, political parties and civil service organizations.**⁸

The 12th Regular Session of the First Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) held its 46th day meeting on 14 May and the following issues were raised and discussed.

- In responding to a question raised by a representative on whether the government has plans to give special allowances for military operations, Deputy Minister for Defence Maj-Gen Kyaw Nyunt said that **the government had no plans at the moment to give allowances equal to their salaries to defence services personnel who are discharging duties in military and security operations. However, all defence services personnel, from privates to generals, are entitled to the allowances of K 10,000 per month for hardship and risks involved in their job, the deputy minister added. Salaries for defence services personnel are the same for those who are discharging duties in military operation and those who are performing ordinary duties, according to the deputy minister.**⁹

Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) sessions

The 12th Regular Session of the First Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) held its 50th day meeting on 19 May and the following issues were raised and discussed.

- Deputy Minister at the President Office Kyaw Win explained the three steps of government's reform plan in response to the query of MP Khet Htein Nan from Kachin state constituency 1 at Amyotha Hluttaw session on 19 May. The Deputy Minister said **since the government has taken office in 2011, it adopted the first phase of reform plan namely 'First Wave', and formed Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, Pyithu Hluttaw and Amyotha Hluttaw along with the Union Government and State/Region governments in accordance with 2008 Constitution. Under the 'Second Wave', the government made political and economic reforms in 2011; development of management on public affairs in 2012; modification of private sector. The 'Third Wave' initiated on 10 June 2014 includes laying a good foundation for the new democratic state and fulfilling the needs of people in social and economic sectors.**
- MP Nein Khinn Paung of Chin State Constituency 7, raised the question for publication of newspapers in Zolai language, one of the Chin ethnic groups. Deputy Minister for Information Pike Htway said **there are many other ethnic languages in Chin state, and permission for Zolai language newspaper is tantamount to negligence on other minorities in Chin state, adding that it will not be allowed for this newspaper.**¹⁰

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Union Parliament) sessions

The 12th Regular Session of the First Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Union Parliament) held its 44th day meeting on 12 May and the following issues were raised and discussed.

- MP Daw Khin San Hlaing from Pale Township constituency, said **service charge of 0.7 percent on the loan for more than 30 years will cost millions of dollar, adding that the loans should be used effectively.** Member of Pyithu Hluttaw's Banks and Financial Development Committee Kyaw Khaing Win, a said **the management of the World Bank has agreed the proposed plans which will be implemented by this loan. He also urged the ministry to submit the criteria and reasons to the Hluttaw for implementing the projects in selected townships.** Deputy Minister for Livestock, Fisheries and Rural Development Tin Ngwe and Deputy Minister

⁸ No free transportation for voters, says UE –

http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/12_May%2015_gnlm-red.pdf (GNLM) 12 May 2015 (p. 3)

⁹ Pyithu Hluttaw discusses special allowances for defence services personnel –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-05-15.pdf> (GNLM) 15 May 2015 (p. 2)

¹⁰ Three steps of reform plan clarified in Amyotha Hluttaw –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-05-20.pdf> (GNLM) 20 May 2015 (p. 2)

for National Planning and Economic Development Daw Lei Thein discussed the suggestions submitted by the MPs.¹¹

The 12th Regular Session of the First Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Union Parliament) held its 45th day meeting on 14 May and the following issues were raised and discussed.

- Union Minister for Defence Lt-Gen Wai Lwin called for the **Pyidaungsu Hluttaw to extend the period of the state of emergency imposed in line with the presidential ordinance for another 90 days as the situation in the self-administered Kokang area has not yet returned to normal. The Minister** added that **more time is needed as security, stability, economy and the legal system in Kokang of Shan State are still below normal. A state of emergency with a 3-month period of martial law has been declared in the area since 17 February 2015. The period is due on 17 May. The proposal is expected to be brought to parliament for approval on 15 May.**¹²

The 12th Regular Session of the First Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Union Parliament) held its 46th day meeting on 15 May and the following issues were raised and discussed.

- Speaker Thura Shwe Mann sought **approval from the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw on 15 May on the extension of the state of emergency for another 90 days in the Kokang self-administered area in Shan State, with members of parliament speaking in support of the extension. A state of emergency with a three-month period of martial law has been declared in the area since 17 February 2015, and expires on 17 May. MPs condemned acts of disturbance orchestrated by destructive elements, calling for the parliament to put on record whoever makes efforts to remove threats to national security.**
- Union Defence Minister Lt-Gen Wai Lwin **expounded the handling of situations in Laukkai, including military operations, security, and economic and judicial affairs.**¹³

UNOFFICIAL MEDIA

WOMAN'S PARTY WON'T BUDGE ON NAME CHANGE, RISKING UEC APPROVAL

Members of a proposed Woman's Party said they will not bow to the government's request that they change their name to something "more specific," arguing that doing so this close to elections would confuse their supporters and damage their support base.

Party Chair Mi Than Shin, also known as Mi Layaung Mon said that the Union Elections Commission (UEC) requested that the party choose a new name, preferably with something "in front of or behind" the word woman.

Deputy Director of the UEC Hla Maung Cho confirmed that the party's application for registration eligibility, which was submitted in April, has been deferred pending an identity adjustment, a request premised on Article 8 (b) of Burma's Political Party registration Law. The law states that "if the name, flag or logo of a party applying for registration is too similar to that of another registered party or parties that have already submitted an application... the commission can direct it to choose a different name within a fixed time."

Hla Maung Cho did not elaborate on which party's name was in conflict with the Woman's Party, though another new applicant, the National Party, could be the root of the problem. The Burmese

¹¹ Pyidaungsu Hluttaw gives green light to \$400m loan from World Bank – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-05-13.pdf> (GNLM) 13 May 2015 (p. 2)

¹² Pyidaungsu Hluttaw urged to extend period of state of emergency in Kokang – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-05-15.pdf> (GNLM) 15 May 2015 (p. 2)

¹³ Pyidaungsu Hluttaw approves call to extend 'state of emergency' period – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-05-16.pdf> (GNLM) 16 May 2015 (p. 2)

word for “woman” —*amyothamee*—is spelled and pronounced similarly to the Burmese word for “national” —*amyotha*—which, rather ironically, also means “man.”

In a letter sent to the Woman’s Party the UEC explained that the term “woman” represented a wide variety of voters throughout the country, hence it was “too general” to join the ranks of other registered parties such as the United Democratic Party and the Union Democratic Party.

“We don’t wish to change our name,” said Mi Than Shin. “It has been six months now [since we formed the party]. We can’t back down now, because we have already started to organize and collect members. “We cannot accept the name change. If we cannot register under our name, at worst we will not be able to contest,” she said, adding that the party had already conceded to the UEC’s demand that it drop one of its 15 core members and find a replacement.

The Woman’s Party was founded in October last year with the aim of increasing female representation in politics by creating an inclusive and welcoming space for women of all ethnicities to participate in governance. The chairwoman said that the party has received support in several parts of the country, and hopes to establish chapters in each ethnic state to empower more minority women. Representatives of the Woman’s Party are travelling to Naypyidaw to negotiate the name change with the UEC, Mi Than Shin said.¹⁴

KAYAH ALLIANCE PUSHES FOR ELECTORAL SUPPORT

A three-day conference organised by the Kayan National Party (KNP), the Kayah Unity Democracy Party (KUDP) and the All Nationalities Democracy Party (ANDP), aimed at uniting Kayan parties into a single political entity concluded in Loikaw, the Kayah capital on 13 May. The conference was attended by 400 participants from across the state gave their views on intra-party cooperation and a planned merger. “I am very happy to see all our Kayah tribes united here. Together they could obtain the majority at state parliament,” said one local woman in the audience. “I don’t vote anymore because I am too old – my turn has passed – but I tell every young person to get registered on the electoral roll.” This conference concluded a series of 7 meetings held in all of the state’s townships over the past two weeks. “We collected the voice of the people. Slowly and steadily, we will bring it up to the next government. Make the sound louder and louder so that they can be heard,” ANDP vice chair U Solomon said. Statements from villagers in Bawlawke and Mese townships were read by party leaders and discussed. The alliance, which was created in November 2014, will eventually give birth to a single Kayah party, they say. While the Union Solidarity and Development Party won virtually all seats in 2010 – including in the state hluttaw – the three parties hope for a better showing later this year. They say the state hluttaw has been mostly inactive under USDP leadership, with few achievements to boast of over the past four years. “We hope to get seats for Kayah people at the state hluttaw for the first time,” said U Stephen Tun of the KUDP. Both the KUDP and the ANDP were formed in 2013 and will field candidates for election for the first time. The KNP alone ran for 2010 election from its base in southern Shan State’s Pekon township, just over the border from Kayah State.

Sai Naing Htwe, vice chair of the KUDP, said representation in Nay Pyi Taw’s Pyidaungsu Hluttaw would also be important. “At the Union level, Kayah State is the smallest. We always come last and hold the lowest position for everything,” he said.

The centralised political structure in the 2008 constitution leaves state governments and hluttaws with only limited power. “Central government has complete control over state institutions. When people

¹⁴ Woman’s Party Won’t Budge on Name Change, Risking UEC Approval – <http://www.irrawaddy.org/burma/womans-party-wont-budge-on-name-change-risking-uec-approval.html> (the Irrawaddy) 11 May 2015

are not satisfied with something, the chief minister can just say it is not up to him, but to the central government,” U Solomon said.

Constitutional reform is one of the major issues that the parties plan to campaign on, along with land rights. Disputes over land being confiscated from farmers for large development projects have occurred regularly in recent years, and are a major flashpoint for conflict with the authorities. The parties say that representation in parliament will help them address these issues. Nevertheless, they face challenges when canvassing for support. “People are still afraid to talk about politics,” said U Stephen Tun of the KUDP. “Because of this situation lasting for 60 years, it is hard to break the ice.”¹⁵

CHIN PARTIES TO MEET ON ELECTORAL COOPERATION

Nine Chin political parties are set to work out details on how to cooperate in the forth-coming general elections to maximise their chances of winning seats. Director of Gender and Development Initiative Salai Isaac said that the aim was to set out guidelines for cooperation. “The political parties will go deeper and an electoral cooperation framework would be probably drawn from the meeting,” he said.

The meeting is a follow-up to an election agreement reached on 21 March by 9 out of 10 ethnic Chin parties who said they would seek to avoid fielding candidates against each other. The country’s diverse ethnic groups have high hopes of increasing their representation in parliament in this year’s elections. The need to cooperate is driven by concern that having too many candidates from local parties competing against each other will enable the National League for Democracy or the Union Solidarity and Development Party to win seats under Myanmar’s first-past-the-post voting system.

Salai Isaac Khen said the agenda of the meeting included discussions of the draft nationwide ceasefire agreement signed on 31 March and the role of Chin political parties in dialogue with the government once a ceasefire is finalised. “Recently due to fighting near the border of Rakhine and Chin states, local Chin residents left their homes. This will also be another topic to be discussed,” he said. Salai Lian Hmung, a member of the Chin National Front (CNF), is expected to also attend the talks.¹⁶

COMMITTEE DEMANDS GOVT CLARIFY WHITE CARDS

The White Card Campaign Committee (WCCC) has demanded a meeting with the government over the voting status of temporary citizens. WCC spokesperson Sayadaw U Par-mouk-kha said that members of the activist group want to meet a commission set up by President Thein Sein to study the laws governing the temporary ID documents known as white cards. The cards were issued as a stop-gap to Myanmar residents whose citizenship still needs to be established. President Thein Sein ordered the invalidation of the temporary papers on 11 February. Holders were given until 31 May to hand in their white cards and undergo a citizen verification process carried out by local authorities. The Upper House of parliament voted on 2 February in favour of a proposal allowing white-card holders to vote in a constitutional referendum. But protests largely driven by Buddhist nationalists, monks and parties representing the Buddhist majority in Rakhine State led to a swift government U-turn. Officials have since collected more than 300,000 cards, which are no longer valid. However, the White Card Campaign Committee is demanding the government explain how they will proceed.

“We want to know whether those whose white cards were revoked have the right to vote. We need to know this before the election,” said U Par-mouk-kha. WCC members say they are prepared to “change the election results”. “We are watching very closely what the government is doing over the

¹⁵ Kayah alliance pushes for electoral support – <http://www.mmmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/14454-kayah-alliance-pushes-for-electoral-support.html> (Myanmar Times) 14 May 2015

¹⁶ Chin parties to meet on electoral cooperation – <http://www.mmmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/14474-chin-parties-to-meet-on-electoral-cooperation.html> (Myanmar Times) 15 May 2015

white-card issue. What we said about changing the election result doesn't mean we will disturb the election, but it could encourage a change in the election results for some parties," said one WCC member, Ko Naung Taw Lay. Director-General of the Ministry of Immigration Maung Than said that the ministry could not say what the policy would be with regard to the former white-card holders, but that it would be announced before the election.¹⁷

BAGO REGION VOTER LIST 90 PER CENT COMPLETE

The list of eligible voters in Bago Region's 28 townships is 90 per cent complete, according to the Chairperson of the Bago Region Election Commission, Win Maung. The voter lists for Bago District, Bago Region, will be announced on 26 May, while preparation for Taungoo District, Pyay District and Tharyawady District remains ongoing. "The voter list for 8 townships located in Bago District will be announced on 26 May. The remaining districts' voter lists will be completed by the end of May. We hope the lists for the remaining townships will be announced in the mid-June. The Union Election Commission is trying to announce the voter lists nationwide on 23 June," said Win Maung. The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), an international organisation, has encouraged the public to check the voter lists when they are announced. The Union Election Commission has announced that people can correct mistakes in the voter lists at ward administration offices. They can submit Form No. 3 if an eligible voter's name is not included on the list, and they can submit Form No. 4 if a voter list contains ineligible names, such as the names of the deceased, or to correct inaccurate personal information. Temporary residents of these townships must register and vote in the township where they have permanent residency, unless they are registered as guests in their current townships.¹⁸

GOVT ORDERS HUMAN RIGHTS TRAINING IN MINDAT, CHIN STATE, TO STOP

The authorities issued official letters ordering the Chin Women's Organization (CWO) to stop their ongoing human rights training in Mindat, Chin State. Ngwe Doe, head of the Mindat Township General Administration Department, said that official permission was not obtained for the training and that action would be taken in accordance with the law if it continued. In his letter to the CWO, Ngwe Doe said that the organisers did not provide details regarding the trainers invited, topics to be discussed and other relevant documents including an authorisation letter from the local administrator. He added that they should also include a letter from the trainers promising that they would not talk about politics at the event. The training, organized from 11 to 15 May by the CWO and the Chin Youth Organization (CYO) and in collaboration with the Equality Myanmar, a non-governmental organization that facilitates a broad range of human rights education and advocacy programs.

On 4 May, Khin Win Yi, a Mindat CWO leader, had written a letter to the head of the Mindat General Administration Department regarding the planned human rights training. However, Shing Ha Law, head of the ward general administration, ordered the organizers to stop their training being held at the house of U Law Ngai starting from 11 May 2015, immediately. On Tuesday, Ngwe Doe from the GDA department also wrote to U Law Ngai, informing him not to allow the training at his house as the organizing groups are not officially registered and didn't get permission from the authorities. Similarly,

¹⁷ Committee demands govt clarify white cards –
<http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/14427-committee-demands-govt-clarify-white-cards.html>
(Myanmar Times) 13 May 2015

¹⁸ Bago voter list 90 per cent complete –
<http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/politics/bago-voter-list-90-cent-complete> (Eleven News Media) 11 May 2015

the application by a Falam youth group to conduct human rights training in Falam last month was also rejected by the Chin State regional government.¹⁹

ANALYSIS

Meetings with civil society organisations, compilation of voters list, formation of political alliances show that Myanmar's election process is gaining momentum and that things are moving in the right direction. However, the recent actions taken by the Chin Regional government to restrict the holding of human rights training in Falam will not be conducive towards the on-going democratic reform process. More importantly, if democracy is to flourish in Myanmar, both the central and regional governments should find ways in promoting the dissemination of democratic practices and fundamental human rights on a nation-wide basis.

While the electoral process is making progress, the continued fighting in the Kokang region calls into question the status of the on-going peace process. To that end, the visits by high-ranking Chinese officials to Naypyidaw is a sign that the two governments are fully aware of the impact of the conflict in Sino-Myanmar relations and that the two countries will need to find an amicable solution in ending the conflict. Meetings between the China and Myanmar officials alone will not be enough to end the clashes and that the Myanmar government together with the Tatmadaw will also need to engage with Kokang group if the conflict is to end peacefully. On a wider scale, the fighting between government troops and the Kokang could also jeopardize the on-going peace process and also the upcoming elections later this year.

¹⁹ Govt order Chin women to stop human rights training –
<http://chinlandguardian.com/index.php/chin-news/item/2304-govt-order-chin-women-to-stop-human-rights-training>
(Chinland Guardian) 14 May 2015