
POLITICAL MONITOR NO.2

OFFICIAL MEDIA

FORMER PRIME MINISTER OF JAPAN ARRIVES IN YANGON

Former Prime Minister of Japan and Member of House of Representative Mr Taro Aso arrived in Burma on 2 January to begin his four day official to the country. In his meeting the with President Thein Sein in Naypyitaw on 3 January, Mr Aso said that Japan would provide assistance for development of ethnic affairs and public's social status, human resources, administrative system and infrastructures development.

The two leaders also discussed matters related to industrial sector, legal firms, investment in State-level enterprises, cooperation between private sectors in addition to the government sector and development of SMEs, upgrading of culture, sports, electricity, drinking water, public transport sectors in Yangon, universities and hospitals and providing necessary assistance to national races groups. The two leaders also discussed cooperation in industrial sector, legal firms, more investment in State-level enterprises between private sectors and government sectors.

The Deputy Prime Minister also held meetings with the Lower House Speaker Thura Shwe Mann and Chief of Defense Services Min Aung Hlaing, and discussed cooperation between the two parliaments, promoting bilateral relations between the two armed forces as well as providing health care service and development aid.¹

PRESIDENT RECEIVES US SENATOR AND PARTY

President Thein Sein received a delegation led by US Senator Mr. James Mountain Inhofe at the Credentials hall of the Presidential Palace in Naypyitaw on 9 January. During the meeting, they exchanged views on bilateral cooperation in oil and gas sectors, forming committees for cooperation in implementing agreements on trade and other matters, promotion of social status of Myanmar through mutual economic cooperation in agriculture, trading and energy sectors, cooperation between the two armies, giving trainings to young officers of the Burmese armed forces, as well as further cementing relations between the two countries. Other members of the visiting US delegation included Arkansas Senator John Boozman, New Mexico Congressman Steven Pearce, Congressman from Florida Mr. Vernon Buchanan, Congressman from Minnesota Mr. Erik Paulsen and US Ambassador to Myanmar Mr. Derek Mitchell.²

INDONESIAN FOREIGN MINISTER VISITS RAKHINE STATE

A delegation led by Indonesian Foreign Affairs Minister Dr. R M Marty M Natalegawa arrived in Burma on 8 January to begin a two-day official visit. The Indonesian Foreign Minister accompanied by the Minister for Border Affairs Thein Htay and Deputy Foreign Minister Thant Kyaw, visited refugee camps in Pauktaw Township, Minbya Township, Kyauktaw Township and Maungtaw Township and talked with refugees from both sides of the divide. The visiting Foreign Minister also met Rakhine State government officials and discussed rehabilitation of internally displaced people in the state. During the meeting, the Indonesian foreign minister expressed his support for to the

¹ Former Prime Minister of Japan arrives in Yangon – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2013-01-03.pdf> (NLM) 3 January 2013 (p. 16)/ President U Thein Sein receives Japanese Dy Prime Minister and Finance Minister – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2013-01-04.pdf> (NLM) 4 January 2013 (p. 16)/ Myanmar Tatmadaw to cooperate with Japan in all potential areas – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2013-01-04.pdf> (NLM) 4 January 2013 (p. 16)/ Myanmar, Japan to strengthen parliamentary ties – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2013-01-04.pdf> (NLM) 4 January 2013 (p. 7)

² President U Thein Sein meets US Senator and party, discusses bilateral cooperation – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2013-01-10.pdf> (NLM) 10 January 2013 (p. 1)

Burmese government and also pledged to assist in providing the basic needs such as food, education, health, economy and job opportunities of the displaced people of the two communities and to overcome the potential challenges in coordination with the Myanmar government. He also said that Indonesia would provide US\$ 1 million as aid for those affected by the communal violence in the Rakhine State.³

PRESIDENT MEETS NEW KNU LEADERS

President Thein Sein received the newly elected leadership of the Karen National Union (KNU) in Naypyitaw on 5 January aimed at consolidating the ceasefire signed between the two sides a year ago. In his meeting with the KNU leader, the President called for cooperation on common ground for granting equal constitutional rights to all national races despite political differences and also stressed the need to grasp the chance to build up the society where the eternal peace prevails. Regarding the Kachin conflict, he stated that the government has been trying to make negotiations on points where both sides agreed, having entered ceasefire agreement with KIA and negotiations are being held at different levels to restore peace. The KNU chairman expressed his desire to build peace on ceasefire and negotiations, and assured the President that there would be no turning back and that the KNU would like to mediate in helping bring peace to the conflict-prone Kachin State. Other issues discussed during the meeting included continuation of peace talks, ceasefire, liaison offices and regional development tasks. The KNU delegation also held talks with the Burmese Defense Services Chief, Vice-Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and the Vice-Chair of the Union-level Peace-making Group Union Minister U Aung Min.⁴

GOVERNMENT ISSUES PRESS STATEMENT ON KIA CONFLICT

A press statement dated 4 January 2013 was issued by the government information team regarding the on-going military offensive in the Kachin State. According to the press release, the government information team said that government troops cleared and occupied Point-771 hill and its surrounding areas in Kachin State and that the military operation was taken to clear KIO/KIA from blocking the use of Myitkyina-Bhamo Union Highway. The statement also stated that the offensive had been taken as self defense and in order to protect the safety of lives and properties of the people, safe and smooth transportation and peace and tranquility of the region. However, on a more positive note, the government would continue to strive achieve everlasting peace with all nationalities armed groups for nation reconciliation and national unity and peace negotiations with the KIO/KIA would also be continued. *(Please see Appendix A for full text of Press Statement).*

HLUTTAW SESSIONS – Highlights

Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) sessions

The 6th Regular Session of the First Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) held its 1st day meeting on 9th January. In his opening address, the Speaker of the House Thura Shwe Mann said that important national projects and budget for the fiscal year 2013-14 would be discussed during the session. He also called for coordination and cooperation between the Hluttaw representatives and authorities

³ Rakhine State sees Progress –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2013-01-09.pdf> (NLM) 9 January 2013 (p.16)/

Rehabilitation of displaced people in Rakhine State discussed –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2013-01-10.pdf> (NLM) 10 January 2013 (p. 9)/

Indonesia Foreign Minister to Visit Arakan State –

<http://www.irrawaddy.org/archives/23424> (Irrawaddy) 7 January 2013

⁴ No problems unsolvable with mutual trust, understanding and empathy: President –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2013-01-06.pdf> (NLM) 6 January 2013 (p. 1)/

Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services, KNU Chairman hold talks –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2013-01-07.pdf> (NLM) 7 January 2013 (p. 16)/

Peace talks between President and KNU leaders bear fruits: Union Minister U Aung Min –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2013-01-06.pdf> (NLM) 6 January 2013 (p. 16)

responsible for administration and judiciary to help settle challenges of the people apart from discussions, submitting proposals and legislation at the Hluttaws.

During today's session, five foreign visits by the Deputy Speaker and MPs of Pyithu Hluttaw were put on record and six questions were raised and answered. The key issues raised and discussed included the following:

- U Win Sein, Chairman of the Government's Guarantees, Pledges and Undertakings Vetting Committee, reported on the answers of the respective ministries by mail to the remaining questions of the fifth session;
- Chief Justice of the Union U Tun Tun Oo submitted a bill revoking **the Custodian of Movable Property Act 1945**;
- Daw Tin Nwe Oo of the Dagon Myothit (North) Constituency, submitted a bill revoking **the 1933 Municipal Law**. The Bill Committee of Pyithu Hluttaw discussed **the Disaster Management Bill, the Treasury bonds bill, a bill amending the transfer of property act, a bill revoking the Custodian of Movable Property Act 1945 and a bill revoking the 1933 Municipal Law**.⁵

HLUTTAW SESSIONS – Highlights

Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) sessions

The 6th Regular Session of the First Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) held its 1st day meeting on 9th January. In his address, the Speaker U Khin Aung Myint urged those present to strive for completion of ongoing tasks at the Hluttaw session where National Planning Bill and Union Government Budget Bill are expected to be discussed and passed. He also called on Hluttaw representatives of respective committees to focus on discussions concerning their respective committees, and also to raise and respond to questions in accord with the provisions stated in Amyotha Hluttaw Bylaw 126 (e).

The following issues were raised and discussed during the session;

- Dr Tin Shwe of Yangon Region Constituency No (6) (USDP) raised **the question on the government's implementation of the plans laid down by the 4th GMS**. In responding, the Union Minister for National Planning and Economic Development Dr Kan Zaw replied that plans were underway to focus on fostering regional cooperation among the nations for more investments in infrastructural development. Papers on investment in goods transport and service sectors and on SME credit guarantee scheme and industrial development of GMS economic corridor were submitted and discussed. The MoU on formation of Freight and Transport Association among GMS nations was signed. Myanmar hosted 4th GMS Economic Corridor Forum and other GMS meetings and Strategic Framework and Action Plan and Draft Action Plan for GMS Human Resources Development;
- Dr Myat Nyana Soe of Yangon Region Constituency No (4) (NLD) asked if there is a plan **to take actions against entrepreneurs who committed malpractices in garment sectors**. The Union Minister for Commerce responded and said actions would be taken against those found guilty of malpractices, inspections had been carried out by a combined team of officials from the Chamber of Commerce and those from Myanmar Garment Entrepreneurs Association.
- The session approved **the Bill Revoking the Law Protecting the Peaceful and Systematic Transfer of State Responsibility and the Successful Performance of the Functions of the National Convention against Disturbances and Oppositions and Bill Revoking the National Traditional Medicine Council** sent by Pyithu Hluttaw with amendments;

⁵ Speaker urges MPs to coordinate, cooperate with authorities to help address challenges of people – www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2013-01-10.pdf (NLM) 10 January 2013 (p. 16)

- Chairman of Amyotha Hluttaw Economic and Commerce Committee Daw Nan Ni Ni Aye and Secretary of Amyotha Hluttaw Monetary and Taxation Committee **the reports of their committees;**
- U Saw Tun Mya Aung of Kayin State Constituency No. (5) submitted a proposal urging **the Union government to make necessary measures for cultivating democratic practices in basic education high schools;**
- U Hla Swe of Magway Region Constituency No (12) submitted a proposal urging **the Union government to call on the US government for fully lifting of its sanctions against Myanmar.** The Hluttaw approved to hold discussions on the proposals.⁶

UNOFFICIAL MEDIA

KACHIN CONFLICT UPDATE

Despite calls from UN, US and UK to restrain violence in Kachin region, government troops continued military offensives in several KIO-controlled areas. After days of airstrikes and artillery shelling that began in the final week of December, the KIA lost control of its Point 771 outpost near Lajayang on 3 January. The Hpun Pyan Bum outpost, which was under the control of KIA Brigade 5, started coming under heavy artillery fire on Monday, and has also been the target of aerial attacks, according to sources in Laiza. The outpost, at the base of the Hpun Pyan Bum hill, about 7 km west of the KIA stronghold of Laiza, is the second KIA position in the area to fall since the Burmese government army stepped up its offensive late last month. According to La Hseng, chairman of the Northern Command of the All Burma Students' Democratic Front (ABSDF), a KIA ally, said that Burmese forces are continuing their advance on Laiza.

Similar calls to end the on-going Kachin conflict has been made by the United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC) and 88 Generation Students groups while the Karen National Union (KNU) has offered to mediate in order to restore peace in the Kachin State. The government however has stated that despite the on-going clashes, peace negotiations with the KIO/KIA would continue.

The ongoing armed conflict between the army and KIA started in June last year, when fighting broke out after a 17-year ceasefire agreement fell apart has created a tense atmosphere in Laiza, where the streets are quiet and the KIA has ordered a high alert, and some residents have even begun to build bunkers, said local sources.

Fighting between the government troops and KIA occurred 2,400 times from June 2011 to December 2012, and despite union-level peace talks last year, the armed clashes did not stop. Clashes in northern Myanmar have escalated since December, resulting in a rising number of civilian deaths and a large-scale of internal displacement. The number of internal displaced persons has increased to 160,000 by December amid the escalating clashes. There are more than 30 IDPs camps along the Myanmar-China border.⁷

⁶ Proposals calling for cultivating of democratic practices in and lifting of US sanctions against Myanmar submitted – www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2013-01-10.pdf (NLM) 10 January 2013 (p. 16)

⁷ Offensive war continues despite calls from international community for restraint – <http://kachinlandnews.com/?p=22875> (Kachinland News) 5 January 2013/
Villagers Flee as Govt Troops Seize another KIA Outpost – <http://www.irrawaddy.org/archives/23651> (Irrawaddy) 9 January 2012/
Govt Troops Move Closer to Laiza, as Planes Pound Targets – <http://www.irrawaddy.org/?slide=govt-troops-move-closer-to-laiza-as-planes-pound-targets> (Irrawaddy) 7 January 2013/
Ethnic bloc calls for end to Kachin conflict – <http://mizzima.com/special/kachin-battle-report/8683-ethnic-bloc-calls-for-end-to-kachin-conflict.html> (Mizzima) 3 January 2012/
KNU offers to mediate Kachin conflict in northern Myanmar – <http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/national/2028-knu-offers-to-mediate-kachin-conflict-in-northern-myanmar> (Eleven News Media) 7 January 2013/

UNFC CLAIMS THAT THE NEXT ETHNIC PEACE TALKS COULD BE IN THAILAND

The next step on the way to conducting the long-awaited peace conference to discuss and reach an agreement on its framework and a meeting between the government and ethnic groups is most likely to take place in Thailand, according to Nai Hong Sar, General Secretary of the 11 armed movement alliance, United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC).

Speaking at a recent meeting in Chiangmai, he reported that U Aung Min, Vice Chairman of the Union Peacemaking Work Committee (UPWC), during his last visit to Thailand in November 2012, had suggested that the "Framework for Political Dialogue" meeting be held at the newly inaugurated Myanmar Peace Centre (MPC) in Rangoon. "To which we replied that, given the circumstances, it would be difficult for the UNFC to send a delegation there:

- Many of the UNFC members are believed to be still on the government's blacklist
- There is still fighting between the Burma Army and some of the UNFC member organizations (i.e. Kachin Independence Organization, Shan State Progress Party and Palaung State Liberation Front)
- Both sides have just begun the trust building process."

The UNFC, after rejections by U Aung Min of some other countries as possible venues, proposed Thailand. "He accepted," Nai Hong Sar told the participants.

Nai Hong Sar was speaking at the 8th monthly meeting of the Working Group for Ethnic Coordination (WGEC), formed after a 3-day conference on the border in February 2012 which was attended by representatives from 17 armed groups. Its aim was to develop a coordinated set of principles and plan for holding peace talks with Naypyitaw.

One result was the Ethnic Nationalities Conference in September in Chiangmai which came up with a 6 point peace roadmap:

- To draft a framework for political dialogue
- To hold meetings and reach agreement with the government on the framework for political dialogue
- To hold public consultations at community and state/regional levels
- To hold an inter-state conference
- To hold a Union conference participated by equal number of representatives from ethnic forces, democratic forces and the government until a Union Accord" is signed
- To set a time frame for the process

A draft framework, details of which are yet to be disclosed, has been drawn up by the WGEC. It is awaiting perusal and subsequent approval by leaders of the armed organizations. The MPC meanwhile is also drafting another framework, according to Euro Burma Office (EBO) that serves as a go-between between the two sides.⁸

NLD ASSEMBLY RESCHEDULED FOR FEBRUARY

The National League for Democracy (NLD) will hold its first national assembly in the first week of February according to the party's spokesman U Nyan Win. He stated that township-level assemblies will soon be completed to select delegates for district, regional and finally national assemblies. "With the exception of the Kachin State, almost all townships around the country are holding their

Myanmar to continue peace negotiations with the KIO/KIA –
<http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/politics/2003-myanmar-to-continue-peace-negotiations-with-kio-kia> (Eleven News Media) 4 January 2013

⁸ The Next Ethnic Peace Talks Could Be In Thailand: UNFC –
http://www.english.panglong.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5187:the-next-ethnic-peace-talks-could-be-in-thailand-unfc&catid=85:politics&Itemid=266 (S.H.A.N.) 8 January 2013

assemblies now,” he said. “There are many townships so this step takes quite a while to organize but the other levels will be quite straightforward. We expect they will take only a short time and then the nationwide assembly will start in the first week of February,” he said. It is not clear how long the national assembly will run for but one of the main tasks will be updating and clarifying the party’s policies. He said the assemblies were cancelled in some areas of Kachin State because of the fighting between the Tatmadaw and Kachin Independence Army.

However, the selection process has been controversial, with some grassroots members unhappy at the central committee selecting members to organize the township assemblies. The most significant disputes occurred in Ayeyarwady, Magwe and Mandalay regions. In Labutta township, more than 100 members, including a victorious NLD representative from the 1990 election, resigned in October because they were unhappy at what they called the “undemocratic” nature of the assemblies.

U Nyan Win acknowledged the assemblies had been controversial but said no members had resigned since the Labutta group. “[The disputes] happened because the NLD is open to all comers so there are many voices in the party. We’re trying to solve those kinds of problems as much as we can,” he said. While the NLD was established in 1988, it has never been able to hold a national assembly because its leaders spent much of the past two decades under house arrest.⁹

TIGER HEAD MEETS PARTIES FOR SHAN STATE CONFERENCE

The Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD), popularly known as the Tiger Head party, has since 28 December been meeting Shan State-based political parties for the preparation of an all Shan State conference, according to SNLD sources.

The planned conference will be a follow up of the Shan forum on Trust-building for Peace held in Rangoon, 26-28 November 2012 that urged and reiterated the call for a “genuinely” federal arrangement. According to sources from the SNLD, the plan has already received approval from Naypyitaw.

“The Wa Democratic Party (WDP) is the only party we have failed to meet on this trip,” said Sai Nyunt Lwin aka Sai Nood, the SNLD’s General Secretary.

The conference planned for April 2013, will be inviting political parties, armed movements that have concluded ceasefire with Naypyitaw and “other political forces”, all Shan State-based.

Shan State-based political parties include:

- Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD)
- Shan Nationalities Democratic Party (SNDP)
- Inn National Development Party (INDP)
- Kayan National Party (KNP)
- Lahu National Development Party (LNDP)
- Kokang Democracy and Unity Party (KDUP)
- PaO National Organization (PNO)
- Ta-ang (Palaung) National Party (TNP)
- Wa Democratic Party (WDP)
- Wa National Unity Party (WNUP)
- Danu National Races Democracy Party (DNRDP)

Shan State-based armed movements that have signed ceasefire agreement are:

- National Democratic Alliance Army (NDAA)
- PaO National Liberation Organization (PNLO)

⁹ NLD assembly rescheduled for February –

<http://www.mmmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/3707-nld-assembly-rescheduled-for-feb.html> (Myanmar Times) 7 January 2013

- Restoration Council of Shan State / Shan State Army (RCSS/SSA)
- Shan State Progress Party / Shan State Army (SSPP/SSA)
- United Wa State Party / United Wa State Army (UWSP/UWSA)

The SNLD that has been spearheading the project said it has also met all the armed groups except for the UWSA. “Lt-Gen Hso Ten (patron of SSPP/SSA, close ally of the UWSP/UWSA) had undertaken the responsibility to meet its leaders and explain the plan to them,” said Sai Nood. In fact, it was the UWSA that had urged the SNLD leader Hkun Htun Oo to hold such a meeting, said another SNLD source. Hkun Htun Oo, 70, and Sai Nood, 60, who were sentenced to 93 years and 85 years respectively by the current government’s predecessor in 2005, were released on 13 January 2012 under a general amnesty.¹⁰

BURMESE SOLDIERS INCITING MORE CONFLICTS BETWEEN ARAKANESE AND MUSLIMS

Local residents from Minbya in Arakan (Rakhine) State have said Burmese army soldiers are inciting communal strife between Arakanese and Muslims in their area. A farmer from Panmyaung Village in Minbya Township said that they had to flee from their farmlands as the Burmese soldiers brought dozens of Muslim villagers to their paddy fields on 2nd of January.

“About 60 Muslims led by two Burmese soldiers who are deployed in Nagarar Village came to our paddy fields today when we were harvesting our paddies. All Arakanese farmers fled from their fields leaving behind their heaps of paddies and paddy sheaves in fear of attack by the group”, said the farmer. The farmer said their paddy fields are located in Shwelaungkyaw in Gangar Field between Panmyaung and Pyinyaung Villages in Minbya Township.

“The Burmese soldiers were in their full uniforms with arms and they brought a large group of Muslims intentionally to trouble us while we were busy with our paddy harvest”, said the farmer. He said the paddy fields in Shwelaungkyaw are owned by U Thar Sein Aung, U Krun Kyan Aung, U Mae Kyaw, U Hla Tun Sein and U Kyan Sein Aung, who are farmers from Panmyaung Village.

Another local resident also said the Burmese soldiers brought the Muslim villagers to the paddy fields of Arakanese farmers while the two communities are still living in a state of distrust and tension in Arakan State for nothing more than their purpose to reignite another communal conflict between them in the region.

“We believe the soldiers have no purpose other than inciting another communal fight in our region. There is no reason they had to bring the Muslim villagers to the paddy fields where the Arakanese farmers were working”, said the resident. Nagarar Muslim Village is located between Panmyaung and Shwe Tamar Villages in Minbya Township.

The farmer said they still do not know if the soldiers and the group of Muslim villagers took away or destructed their paddy harvests as they dare go back to their paddy fields.

A youth from the local area also said that the local residents and the farmers are now planning to report the case to the higher authorities as well as to the Commission of Investigation for the communal unrest in Arakan State.¹¹

ZOMI CONGRESS TO OPEN OFFICES IN CHIN STATE AND SAGAING REGION

The Zomi Congress for Democracy (ZCD) said it will open branch offices of the party in Tedim, Tonzang and Cikha towns of Chin State as well as Tamu and Kalay of Sagaing region. ZCD, previously

¹⁰ Tiger Head meets parties for Shan State conference –
http://www.english.panglong.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5179:tiger-head-meets-parties-for-shan-state-conference&catid=85:politics&Itemid=266 (S.H.A.N.) 4 January 2013

¹¹ Burmese soldiers inciting more conflicts between Arakanese and Muslims –
<http://www.narinjara.com/main/index.php/burmese-soldiers-inciting-more-conflicts-between-arakanese-and-muslims/> (Narinjara) 5 January 2013

known as Zomi National Congress, will not recruit new membership for the new branch offices, which will be run by existing party members, according to the Chin World Media.

Pu Gin Kam Lian, General Secretary, said their recent new registration, which required an alteration of the party's name, didn't affect relationship with party members in the past. "We will keep on moving forward with our hard core members. In each township, we have new members including youths joining the party," added Pu Gin Kam Lian. Leaders of the party including Chairman Pu Chin Sian Thang, General Secretary Pu Gin Kam Lian and Secretary Pu Zam Mung are expected to join the opening ceremonies of new branch offices.

Headquartered in Rangoon, ZCD said its current focus is not on preparation for the upcoming 2015 elections but on other issues that the party would put forward at the 'second' Panglong Conference. Founded in 1988, ZNC was committed to restoring and establishing democratic government and federal union of Burma, with its leader Pu Chin Sian Thang, an elected MP during the 1990 elections.¹²

ANALYSIS

The on-going military offensive by government forces to take control of KIA targets close to the rebel strong-hold of Laiza has proven to be costly and with no end in sight. While a Presidential order has been issued to end fighting, it seems that some elements within the government is keen to crush the KIA resistance and gain control over these areas in order to exploit the natural resources and attract foreign investment. The international community on its part has condemned and criticized the recent hostilities, but has failed to achieve any progress. Under the circumstances many feel that the prolongation of the conflict will not serve the interest of either party, since defeat for the KIA would only foster ethnic hatred while the government would be confronted with more challenges in establishing long-lasting peace. It is evident that the two sides harbour two incompatible views on ending the conflict. The KIA like many other ethnic armed groups desire self-autonomy while the government is adamant in upholding the current 2008 constitution and preventing the break-up of the Union. With both the government and the KIA maintaining such rigid positions and reluctance, many feel that the only viable option left is that of convening a Panglong type conference. The government while not ruling out the idea of holding such an event has stated that the time is not yet right to do so and would rather see it prolonged. On the other hand, the KIA and many ethnic armed groups feel that by holding such a conference would allow them to address their issues which have been left discarded since independence in 1948. A compromise on this issue will no doubt be necessary if there is to be genuine peace in the country. To achieve this, it is important for both sides to start negotiating a framework within which they can begin a political dialogue. The President has time and time again, reiterated that he is dedicated to bringing changes to the country including an end to decades of ethnic conflicts. If he is genuinely sincere in changing the destiny of the country, now is the time to do so. His legacy as a reformist leader will in time be judged on his actions than words.

¹² ZCD to Open Offices in Chin State and Sagaing Region – <http://chinlandguardian.com/news-2009/1961-zcd-to-open-offices-in-chin-state-and-sagaing-region.html> (Chinland Guardian) 3 January 2013/
ZNC to register as 'Zomi Congress for Democracy' – <http://chinlandguardian.com/news-2009/1828-znc-to-register-as-zomi-congress-for-democracy.html> (Chinland Guardian) 10 July 2012

Appendix A:

Press Release on the armed conflicts between Myanmar Tatmadaw and KIO/KIA in Kachin State

**Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Information Team
Press Release (1/2013)
4 January 2013**

1. Myanmar Tatmadaw (Myanmar Army) troops cleared and captured Point-771 hill and its surrounding areas in Kachin State where the KIO/KIA troops were taking position and mainly blocked the Myitkyina-Bhamo Union Highway to lay land mines, ambush the Tatmadaw military columns and threatening people not to be able to use the high way.
2. With regard to the matter mentioned above, the Spokesperson of the Secretary General of the United Nations issued a statement on 2 January 2013, in which it was stated that the Secretary General has taken serious note of Tatmadaw's attack on KIA camps in Kachin State and called upon the Myanmar authorities to desist from any action that could endanger the lives of civilians living in the areas.
3. As the democratization process is being carried out in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar with might and main, national reconsolidation and national unity are prerequisites for the peace, tranquility and development of the nation. The Government has been relentlessly working to achieve sustainable peace with various nationalities armed groups and have successfully reached peace agreements with all armed groups except KIO/KIA. Peace negotiations with KIO/KIA have already been conducted 11 times.
4. Although instruction has been given to the Tatmadaw to cease all offensive against the KIO/KIA, KIA constantly blasted mines to destroy railroads, roads and bridges, hampering the businesses, destroyed electricity gridlines and frequently laid landmines and ambushed security forces. Due to these circumstances, the Tatmadaw had to take military action as self defense and in order to protect the safety of lives and properties of the people, safe and smooth transportation and peace and tranquility of the region. Even though Tatmadaw had to take this action, it has exercised with maximum restraint in using force.
5. It is learnt that the areas captured and occupied by the Tatmadaw are the uninhabited hillocks that the KIA has set up strongholds to block the Myitkyina-Bhamo Union Highway.
6. The Government has provided temporary shelters, food, education and necessary healthcare to the families who were displaced from their homes since clashes between KIO/KIA and Tatmadaw troops broke out last year. The Government has also received assistance from the United Nations and International Organizations for the relief and rehabilitation works. It was found out that majority of the displaced persons were fled from their home because of the threat and disturbance made by the KIA and they have come to take refuge in places where law and order prevail.
7. The Government will continue to strive to achieve everlasting peace with all nationalities armed groups for nation reconciliation and national Unity. Peace negotiations with KIO/KIA will also be continued. The Government always welcomes to work together with all national races and the entire people of Myanmar to achieve success in democratization process, sustainable development for the people and for the prevalence of peace and rule of law.¹³

¹³ The armed conflicts between Myanmar Tatmadaw (Myanmar Army) and KIO/KIA in Kachin State - Press Release (1/2013) – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2013-01-05.pdf> (NLM) 5 January 2013 (p. 1)