

POLITICAL MONITOR No. 23

OFFICIAL MEDIA

UPWC, NCCT HOLD PEACE TALKS

The Union Peace-Making Work Committee (UPWC) and Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT) ended five days of talks on 26 September. The meeting which began 22 September concluded with the release of a joint statement that stated the 4th draft of a ceasefire agreement had been approved with an agreement to hold the next round of meetings in October. Both sides stressed in the joint statement that great strides are being made in pursuit of an all-inclusive political as soon as a nationwide ceasefire agreement text is finalized. In his closing remarks, Union Minister Aung Min, who heads the UPWC, said that it is usual to encounter more difficulties when both sides are close to achieving peace. Like a marathon, a series of peace talks presents challenges and obstacles, but the shared goal is peace within reach and it can be realized through broad and sustained efforts, he added. NCCT leader Naing Han Thar said that situations that had been tackled by both sides on the front line for more than sixty years is more difficult than the present challenges despite having more difficulties than the previous meetings.¹

109 CHILD SOLDIERS RELEASED

A total of 109 children were released from military service and handed over to their families in a ceremony held on 25 September, according to the Office of the Commander-in-Chief (Army). This is the 7th time that child recruits serving in the army have been returned to their families and arrangements are under way to provide education for the returnees. With a view to protecting underage children from military service, Myanmar signed an 18-month Action Plan with the United Nations' CTFMR and renewed it to another 6 months in December 2013. According to reports, action has been taken against 45 officers and 254 military personnel of other ranks in line with the military law. Minister for Defence Lt-General Wai Lwin Co-Chairman of the Country Taskforce on Monitoring and Reporting (CTFMR) Renata Lok-Dessallien attended the ceremony.²

HLUTTAW SESSIONS – Highlights

Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) sessions

The 11th Regular Session of the First Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) held its 7th day meeting on 23 September and discussed the following issues during the session.

- Chairman of the Anti-Corruption Commission Mya Win, briefed the session and stated that **the commission had received 533 complaint letters during the period from 10 March to 21 August this year, and 3 complaints have been dealt with. He also said that under the anti-corruption law, wealth and property accrued from corruption are liable to be nationalized and talked of arrangements to protect informers from possible threats, with help to be sought from the Ministry of Home Affairs as necessary.**
- Deputy Minister for Information Pike Htway responded to questions on the **dissemination of information about the State Constitution said the Myanmar Radio and Television had broadcasted songs, talk shows as well as educational TV programmes on the State**

¹ 6th UPWC-NCCT meeting seeks compromise over remaining points to finalize text for nationwide ceasefire deal – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs19/NLM2014-09-23-red.pdf> (NLM) 23 September 2014 (p. 1 & 9) / UPWC, NCCT to hold next round of talks in October – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs19/NLM2014-09-27-red.pdf> (NLM) 27 September 2014 (p. 1)

² Underage soldiers reunited with their families – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs19/NLM2014-09-26-red.pdf> (NLM) 26 September 2014 (p. 1)

Constitution and said that the Constitution has been published in both Myanmar and English languages in the two state-run dailies.

- Regarding the names referring to the Pyithu Hluttaw and the Amyotha Hluttaw in the English newspaper of the New Light of Myanmar, the Deputy Minister said that foreign readers complained of confusion in literal transcription of the two Hluttaws and that English equivalent were written in the said newspaper as of 15 May. Now, the NLM uses both literal transcription and English equivalent of the two Hluttaws.
- The session also agreed to discuss a bill calling for an amendment to the law of protection of peasants' rights and promotion of their interests.³

The 11th Regular Session of the First Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) held its 8th day meeting on 24 September discussed the following issues and questions.

- MP Sai Than Naing of Papun Constituency, submitted two proposals urging the government to enact a law to confer certificates of honour and provide financial support to ex-service who either lost their lives/or sustained disabilities as well as calling for the immediate ceasefire of relevant parties and loss of lives and proprieties resulting from the on-going civil conflicts. Deputy Minister for Defence Lt-Gen Kyaw Nyunt said that according to Defence Council Notification 2/Htoo/2012 families of servicemen receives 450,000 kyats as compensation for deaths and for disabilities 600,000 kyats. Job placements and opportunities are given to those with disabilities as well as vocational training schools under the Ministry of Social Welfare and Resettlement.⁴

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Union Parliament) sessions

The 11th Regular Session of the First Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Union Parliament) held its 5th day meeting on 22 September and focussed on land confiscation issues. Salient points of the discussions included the following:

- The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw commission recommended that land owners should be compensated for land confiscated for expansion of regiments at prevailing prices, that land should be confiscated just as much as the expansion of regiments and units required, that confiscated land should not be rented instead of returning to land owners and the confiscated land that does not share borders with regiment compounds should be returned to land owners.
- It also recommended that land owners should be compensated for land confiscated for urbanization and industrial zones at prevailing prices and that confiscated land that is no longer needed as the intended projects have been cancelled should be returned to its rightful owners.
- The commission forwarded 2,689 complaints over land confiscation to the Ministry of Defence and 6,559 complaints to region/state governments. Among them 583 complaints about the Ministry of Defence and 299 complaints about state/Region government have been addressed so far, according to the representative.
- The session also approved the labour dispute resolution bill, the political party's registration amendment bill and the Myanmar architecture bill.⁵

³ Anti-corruption Commission receives 533 letters of complaint, with three solved – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs19/NLM2014-09-24-red.pdf> (NLM) 24 September 2014 (p. 3 & 9)

⁴ Proposal on immediate ceasefire echoes in 8th day of Pyithu Hluttaw session – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs19/NLM2014-09-25-red.pdf> (NLM) 25 September 2014 (p. 2)

⁵ Local authorities fail to address land confiscation issues: Pyidaungsu Hluttaw's commission – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs19/NLM2014-09-23-red.pdf> (NLM) 23 September 2014 (p. 3)

The 11th Regular Session of the First Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Union Parliament) held its 6th day meeting on 23 September continued discussions on land confiscation.

- MP Kyi Thar of Gwa constituency, Rakhine State said **land disputes occurred due to protests of residents against land grabbing cases**. He said that **township administration offices and land record departments failed to keep land records sufficiently and also suggested the need of a fundamental land law and the enactment of law on systematic land use by the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw**.
- Similarly, Mi Myint Than of Ye township constituency, said that **residents unavoidably turned to migrants after their lands were seized and also called for the contribution of persons concerned in solving land-grabbing cases, which would cause more complications for the next government**.
- U Oo Rej, MP from Pruhso township constituency, urged **the respective administrative bodies for solving land seizures by giving out compensation or returning the land for the interest of public**.
- MP Win Myint, representative of Pathein township constituency, **discussed the state and region governments did not transfer the complaints which have been scrutinized by investigation commission on land seizures to the township land use management committee**.
- Kyaw Min, representative of Letpadan township constituency, said **compensations should be given out for those lands which cannot be returned and the farm lands and garden lands seized for the welfare funds of military should be returned to the owners, suggesting the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw to approve land policies after reviewing the loss of farmers**.⁶

The 11th Regular Session of the First Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Union Parliament) held its 7th day meeting on 24 September and discussed a report on efforts for the implementation of the recommendation for settlement of land confiscation issues.

- Concerning the issues, Deputy Minister for Agriculture and Irrigation Khin Zaw said that for sound reasons, his ministry could not return the land for **104 out of the total 127 complaints while it was able to strike deals with landowners in 9 cases. The ministry returned the all the land to landowners in 5 cases but it was able to return the land only partially in 2 cases**.
- Deputy Minister for Transport Zin Yaw explained **the measures being taken for confiscated land for airport projects. He said that his ministry compensated the landowners for 5,569 acres of land for Nay Pyi Taw International Airport at the prevailing prices at the time of the confiscation but land owners are asking for compensation at current prevailing prices again. The Deputy Minister continued by saying that he is asking for more budget allocation to compensate for land confiscated for Pakokku Airport and Kyaukhtu Airport. The ministry compensated K 54.86 million to landowners for 9690.4 acres of land confiscated for Hanthawady Airport, the deputy minister added. Negotiations are underway to compensate for land confiscated for Tachilek and Bagan-Nyaung-U Airports. Union-level officials will explain the measures taken for land confiscation issues on 25 September**.⁷

⁶ Pyidaungsu Hluttaw in progress for the sixth day –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs19/NLM2014-09-24-red.pdf> (NLM) 24 September 2014 (p. 9)

⁷ Union-level officials explain measures taken for land confiscation issues at Pyidaungsu Hluttaw –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs19/NLM2014-09-25-red.pdf> (NLM) 25 September 2014 (p. 2)

The 11th Regular Session of the First Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Union Parliament) held its 8th day meeting on 25 September and Union level officials reported on settlements on land confiscation issues recommended by the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw at the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw session.

- Deputy Minister for Industry Thein Aung said that **283.21 acres of land confiscated for No. 5 Textile Factory in Pakokku and 1,926.85 acres of land Seikpyu confiscated for one of the projects of the ministry have been handed over to Magway Region Government since 7 December 2013 as the projects were cancelled.** The minister also said that **9.46 acres of land confiscated for Yadanabon Bridge will be handed over to Mandalay Region Government.**
- Deputy Minister for Construction Soe Tint said that **Punhlaing Golf Resort was implemented with the approval of the Myanmar Investment Commission on 652 acres of land. Although a total of 67 farmers complained about the land confiscated for the project, only 13 of them could provide receipts for farmland tax. Four of the thirteen farmers have been compensated K 395.2 million for 39.52 acres of land.**
- The session also approved **the reports on settlement of land confiscation issues and urged the union government to implement the recommendations.**⁸

UNOFFICIAL MEDIA

TATMADAW SAYS PEACE TALKS ARE BASED ON ITS 6-POINT POLICY

Myanmar's army (Tatmadaw) will continue participating in peace talks in line with the 6-point policy set by the commander-in-chief of defence services, according to Lt-General Myint Soe from the office of the Ministry of Defence. He made the comment at the opening of the latest round of peace talks between the Union Peace Working Committee (UPWC) and the Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT), at the Myanmar Peace Centre on 22 September. Myint Soe said soldiers wanted peace the most and that both sides needed to negotiate with a sense of fairness and tolerance. "The meetings are not for disagreements and the army remains committed to the success of peace talks," he added. "I want to urge both sides to constructively join hands and continue their efforts for peace, stability and development while realising the army's position," he said. The 6-point policy of the commander-in-chief is:

1. to have a keen desire to reach eternal peace
2. to keep promises agreed to in peace deals
3. to avoid capitalising on the peace agreement
4. to avoid placing a heavy burden on local people
5. to strictly abide by the existing laws, and
6. to march towards a democratic country in accord with the 2008 Constitution

The NCCT offered 10-point guidelines for peace talks after a meeting in Laiza, Kachin State and these are identical to those of the commander-in-chief, Myint Soe said.⁹

BURMA ARMY DETAINS KIO OFFICER IN WESTERN KACHIN STATE

Maran La Hkawng, KIO Vice-Administrator for the Gauri area in Kamaing sub-township and Mangshang Ying Bawm and Naw Seng, were detained by surrounded on Saturday 20 September by Burma army soldiers in Kamaing Township, western Kachin State. The detainees were brought to the

⁸ Settlement on land issues reported at Pyidaungsu Hluttaw – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs19/NLM2014-09-26-red.pdf> (NLM) 26 September 2014 (p. 2)

⁹ Tatmadaw says peace talks are based on its six-point policy – http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=7647:tatmadaw-says-peace-talks-are-based-on-its-six-point-policy&catid=44:national&Itemid=384 (Eleven News Media) 24 September 2014

Kamaing military strategic command where they continue to be detained, according to local people. The arrest was carried out during an operation involving troops from Light Infantry Division (LID) No. 66, Infantry Battalion No. 11 led by Col Thant Zin Aung. The arrest of Maran La Hkawng is likely linked to a disagreement with the KIO over collecting tax from eel fishermen in the area, according to local people. This is the first such known arrest of someone either from the KIO or its armed wing the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) since the government allowed mining to resume in Kachin state's jade rich Hpakant area on 1 September. In June earlier this year, two KIO officials from Hpakant were arrested by soldiers from the same LID No. 66 unit who are officially securing the Myitkyina to Hpakant road. In August, KIO officially requested that the two KIO captives be released however they have yet to be freed and instead have been charged with being associated with the KIO, says Lt-Col Nhpang Naw Bu, a KIO official serving on the joint conflict resolution team who is based at the KIO's Laiza headquarters.¹⁰

NLD DISMISSES REUTERS REPORT THAT IT MIGHT SUPPORT SHWE MANN'S PRESIDENCY

Burma's leading opposition party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), has refuted reports suggesting that it might support former military strongman and current house Speaker Shwe Mann as a presidential candidate in general elections scheduled for 2015. "One senior member of [Aung San] Suu Kyi's party [the NLD] said it might give its backing for Shwe Mann," read a report published by Reuters on 23 September. The article cited NLD central committee member Han Tha Myint explaining that the party does not have a fitting number-two choice if Aung San Suu Kyi cannot run. Han Tha Myint has denied the suggestion that the party had made any official endorsement of the Speaker, who is also the chairman of the ruling Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP). "All I said was that there are many options, among which could be a candidate from outside our party," Han Tha Myint told the DVB by phone on Wednesday, 24 September. He denied he told Reuters that his party would back a Shwe Mann bid for presidency if the NLD does not have a suitable candidate. As explained in Reuters' article, the NLD does not currently have a candidate lined up as a potential successor for incumbent Thein Sein of the USDP. "We believe there are no number two positions in our party," Han Tha Myint told Reuters. In a letter addressed to Reuters Bureau Chief in Myanmar Paul Mooney on 24 September, Han Thar Myint said, "Proposing somebody outside our party who has the same objectives as us and who thinks like us. It's a hypothetical situation right now and I don't want to speculate".¹¹

PILOT SCREENING PROCESS SEES 40 GRANTED CITIZENSHIP IN RAKHINE STATE

The Rakhine regional government said that 40 Bengali residents of the state have been granted citizenship under the 1982 Citizenship Law in a new citizenship-screening pilot project, and they are now free to leave the state and travel nationwide. Chief Minister of Rakhine State Maung Maung Ohn said, "Since they are now Myanmar citizens, they have citizens' rights. They are allowed to travel independently in the entire country." He however cautioned that their movements within Rakhine State would be restricted due to the communal tension in the state between ethnic Rakhine residents and the Bengalis. The citizenship screening pilot project is taking place in Sittwe District's Myebon Township, where an estimated 3,000 Bengalis reside. Chief Minister Maung Maung Ohn said more than 1,000 had already applied for citizenship. The screening process takes place at the township, regional and state levels. Both ethnic Rakhine and Bengalis residents of the state participate in the first two levels. "The citizenship-screening process is continuing," an official with

¹⁰ Burma army detains KIO officer in western Kachin state –
<http://www.kachinnews.com/news/2681-burma-army-detains-kio-officer-in-western-kachin-state.html> (KNG) 24
September 2014

¹¹ Opposition party 'did not say' it would support Shwe Mann –
<http://english.dvb.no/news/opposition-party-did-not-say-it-would-support-shwe-mann-burma-myanmar/44415> (DVB)
24 September 2014

the immigration and national registration department of Rakhine State said. The official said that those who lacked proper documents are screened through interviews with other people. The 40 who have passed the screening process are “now citizens of Myanmar”, he said.¹²

USDP PLANNING VOTER SURVEYS AHEAD OF 2015 ELECTION

USDP Executive Committee member Tint Zaw told local news media on 22 September that the USDP is planning to conduct voter surveys as part of its preparations for the general election due to be held in 2015. The opinion of survey respondents would be sought on what they wanted from the party, what they regarded as its weaknesses and whether they intended to vote in the election, said Tint Zaw, adding that USDP executive committee members and the chairs of its state and regional branches were working on plans for the survey. In addition, the party has a schedule for what to do when, but no date has been fixed. He also noted that conducting opinion polls was an important part of the party's election strategy. USDP's Yangon Region branch secretary Tha Win on 22 September said that the party has no plans to survey voters in the commercial capital, which is home to about seven million of the nation's 54.1 million people.¹³

ANALYSIS

The meeting between the Union Peace-Making Work Committee (UPWC) and Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT) concluded with both sides remaining deadlocked on several key issues. Some of the unresolved matters are: troop deployment; a code of conduct; the formation of a ceasefire monitoring joint-committee, and a road map for the political dialogue. Recent hostilities between government troops and EAOs in the Karen area does not seem to be politically motivated but such incidents could lead to a widening conflict. The concerns have arisen due to the lack of monitoring. The Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement without a joint military code of conduct on the ground would also be meaningless. It is therefore crucial for the government, including the military and EAOs, to accept that the on-going conflicts can only be resolved by building trust, understanding and adherence to a set of clearly defined rules of engagement.

¹² Pilot screening process sees 40 granted citizenship in Rakhine so far –
http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=7658:pilot-screening-process-sees-40-granted-citizenship-in-rakhine-so-far&catid=44:national&Itemid=384 (Eleven News Media) 24 September 2014

¹³ USDP planning voter surveys ahead of 2015 election –
<http://mizzima.com/mizzima-news/politics/item/13045-usdp-planning-voter-surveys-ahead-of-2015-election> (Mizzima)
23 September 2014