

POLITICAL MONITOR No. 21

OFFICIAL MEDIA

MYANMAR PRESIDENT RESHUFFLES CABINET

The President's Office has announced a cabinet reshuffle involving the reassignment, assignment and retirement of union ministers and deputy ministers. Union Minister Lt-Gen Wai Lwin and Deputy Minister Maj- Gen Kyaw Nyunt of Defence and Union Minister Lt-Gen Thet Naing Win and Deputy Minister Maj-Gen Tin Aung Chit of Border Affairs were reassigned to their former military responsibilities. Ministers Tin Naing Thein, Myat Hein, Khin Yi and Than Htay were allowed to resign as union ministers of their own volition. They were from the Ministry of the President's Office-5, the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, the Ministry of Immigration and Population, and the Ministry of Rail Transportation, respectively. Deputy Information Minister Pike Htway, Deputy Religious Affairs Minister Dr Maung Htay, Deputy Cooperatives Minister Than Tun and Deputy Labour, Employment and Social Security Minister Daw Win Maw Tun were also allowed to resign of their own volition. Dr Kyaw Kyaw Htay, member of the Union Civil Services Board, was also allowed to resign of his own volition. Maj-Gen Than Htut, of the Office of the Commander- in-Chief (Army), was assigned to serve as Deputy Minister for Border Affairs.¹

PRESIDENT THEIN SEIN MEETS ETHNIC LEADERS

President U Thein Sein met with leaders of 4 ethnic armed groups that are signatories to the Union Day Deed of Commitment, on 3 August in Naypyitaw. They discussed preparations for signing the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) before the 8 November general elections. Also present at the meeting were senior government ministers, the KNU Chairman General Saw Mutu Sae Po Quartermaster-General Brig-Gen Saw Yin Nu of the KNU/KNLA (Peace Council), Vice Chief of Staff Maj-Gen Saw Mo Shae of DKBA and Col Sai La of the Restoration Council of the Shan State (RCSS) and officials from the Myanmar Peace Centre.²

GOV'T, ARMED GROUPS AGREE TO 'FINAL' TALKS IN NAY PYI TAW

Negotiations on a Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement remained deadlocked 7 August over the number of ethnic armed organizations to be included in the signing of the agreement. Despite the hurdle, the negotiation teams representing the government and EAOs managed to finalize the contents of the peace deal on the final day of the 9th round of talks at the Myanmar Peace Centre in Yangon. The document, comprising 33 paragraphs and 7 chapters was approved, according to a joint statement between the government's Union Peace-making Work Committee and the Senior Delegation of Ethnic Armed Organizations. At a press conference, spokesmen for the two sides said top leaders from both parties are expected to meet in Nay Pyi Taw later this month to iron out their difference over the issue of inclusiveness in the signing process. Ethnic armed group spokesman Pu Zing Cung reiterated his side's insistence that all 17 senior delegation members be included in the NCA signing. MPC official and spokesperson for the government's side Hla Maung Shwe, repeated the government policy of initially signing the deal alongside the 15 ethnic armed groups with which it has already struck bilateral peace agreements. The ethnic side said no guarantees had yet been given against attacks by government forces on groups not included in the signing process. Nai Hong Sar, another ethnic

¹ Myanmar president reshuffles cabinet –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-08-13-red.pdf> (GNLM) 13 August 2015 (p. 1)

² President U Thein Sein, ethnic leaders eye preparations for NCA signing –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-08-04-red.pdf> (GNLM) 4 August 2015 (p. 1) /

Nay Pyi Taw ceasefire summit tipped for last week of August –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-08-13-red.pdf> (GNLM) 13 August 2015 (p. 1)

spokesman, said a nationwide ceasefire would be meaningless if groups still locked in fighting with the government were not part of the signing process. The 9th round of talks marked the second formal meeting between the UPWC and the recently formed delegation of senior ethnic armed group representatives. According to the press conference, the Nay Pyi Taw meeting will be the final negotiations on whether the signing of NCA will take place before the country's 8 November election. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar Ms Yanghee Lee also visited the Myanmar Peace Centre on 7 August to observe the ongoing talks between EAOs and the government.³

MYANMAR HIT BY CYCLONE KOMEN AND FLOODING

Since the second week of July, heavy and continuous rains have led to unprecedented flooding, landslides, destruction of homes and farms, loss of livestock and loss of life in 12 Regions and States in Myanmar, with Rakhine, Kachin, Chin, Magway, Ayerwaddy and Sagaing regions being heavily affected. The floods were made worse by Cyclone Komen, which ploughed through the country causing extensive damage in the Rakhine state.

President Thein Sein, Vice-Presidents Nyan Tun and Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing visited the affected Regions and States and promised that the government would make utmost efforts to provide aid to flood victims across the country.

The Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement had delivered K160 million worth of rice, emergency foods and construction materials, including compensation for 46 dead persons, to more than 230,000 flood victims in six regions and six states as of Monday. The Ministry of Border Affairs distributed relief supplies and cash K11.8 million in total to flood victims in Sagaing and Magway regions, Rakhine, Mon and Kayin states. The ministry has provided K93.457 million to the people. Rehabilitation of Rakhine State ravaged by flood is being undertaken through K3.216 billion from the special fund of the president.

The nationwide death toll from severe flooding has risen to more than 100, and the number of people affected by floods since June reached nearly 1 million nationwide, according to an updated figure released by the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement. The floods inundated more than 1.2 million acres of rice fields, destroying more than 439,400 acres, according to the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation.

Schools forced to close their doors due to recent flash floods and flooding need urgent assistance in order to be reopened, the Ministry of Education said. The Ministry appealed to private donors to assist in the reopening of more than 2,490 schools in the worst-hit areas. The recent floods and landslides destroyed or damaged more than 3,060 schools, forcing them to close. The ministry has already reopened 569 schools which were damaged during the disasters.

United Nations warned that the death toll from flash floods and landslides in Myanmar is set to be higher. The worst-hit areas have not yet been reached by assessment teams, meaning the number of people affected may be "significantly higher," according to a statement of the coordination of humanitarian affairs (OCHA). Responding to the country's appeal for aid, many nations and

³ Gov't, armed groups remain deadlocked, agree to 'final' talks in Nay Pyi Taw – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-08-08-red.pdf> (GNLM) 8 August 2015 (p. 1&3)/
Final talks on ceasefire deal set for 6 Aug. – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-08-05-red.pdf> (GNLM) 5 August 2015 (p. 1) /
Gov't, ethnic armed groups to negotiate 'inclusiveness' hurdle to peace deal – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-08-07-red.pdf> (GNLM) 7 August 2015 (p. 1)/
UN Special Rapporteur observes ongoing peace talks – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-08-08-red.pdf> (GNLM) 8 August 2015 (p. 3)

international organisations are providing relief aid including tarpaulins, blankets, water and health care provisions.⁴

UNICEF URGES PARTIES TO MAKE CHILD-FOCUSED POLICY PLATFORMS

UNICEF (Myanmar) urged all of the country's political parties to put children at the centre of their policy platforms for the 8 November general election. "Children do not vote but their families do," said Bertrand Bainvel, UNICEF's Chief Representative to Myanmar, calling on parties contesting the election to make new commitments for children. Bainvel said a "6 per cent increase in the share of the government's budget—from 9 percent to 15 percent—dedicated to education, health and social welfare" would improve the prospects of "millions of Myanmar children." "I would like to urge parties to prioritize the critically important first 1,000 days in the life of a child, to achieve universal free and compulsory education by 2020, to expand social welfare and social interventions and to build a social protection system for children," he said. Referring to 2014 census data, UNICEF Myanmar said children were overrepresented in the poorest section of the population, with 4.4 million children aged 5 to 18 out of school and 10 million living in poverty. UNICEF and the NGO Child Rights Working Group (NCRWG) are working together to secure commitments from political parties to increase social

⁴ Utmost efforts to be made for providing emergency aid: President U Thein Sein – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-08-02-red.pdf> (GNLM) 2 August 2015 (p. 1)/
President urges local authorities to fulfil needs of flood victims – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-08-03-red.pdf> (GNLM) 3 August 2015 (p. 3)/
U Thein Sein flies over flood-hit areas in Magway – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-08-06-red.pdf> (GNLM) 6 August 2015 (p. 3)/
Government prepares to dedicate all available financial, human and material resources in bringing normalcy to flood stricken areas – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-08-08-red.pdf> (GNLM) 8 August 2015 (p. 1)/
President U Thein Sein helps flood victims in Rakhine State – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-08-08-red.pdf> (GNLM) 8 August 2015 (p. 3)/
Vice President meets flood victims in Kalay, Haka – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-08-04-red.pdf> (GNLM) 4 August 2015 (p. 3)/
Armed forces chief encourages flood and landslide-hit victims, gives relief supplies in Chin State, Sagaing Region – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-08-09-red.pdf> (GNLM) 9 August 2015 (p. 3)/
Death toll hits 46: flood disaster affect TS more than 200,00: gov't – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-08-04-red.pdf> (GNLM) 4 August 2015 (p. 1)/
Rising river danger flood warning issued for Ayeyawaddy Region – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-08-05-red.pdf> (GNLM) 5 August 2015 (p. 1)/
Ministries, UNFPA provide disaster relief supplies – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-08-05-red.pdf> (GNLM) 5 August 2015 (p. 3)/
Death toll rises: 69 perish in floods 270,000 affected – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-08-06-red.pdf> (GNLM) 6 August 2015 (p. 1)/
State of Emergency: Rakhine bears brunt of flood disaster – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-08-07-red.pdf> (GNLM) 7 August 2015 (p. 1)/
UN warns Myanmar to expect higher death toll from floods, landslides – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-08-03-red.pdf> (GNLM) 3 August 2015 (p. 1)/
Chinese Embassy plans US \$300,000 donation for disaster-hit areas – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-08-04-red.pdf> (GNLM) 4 August 2015 (p. 2)/
Thai province donates goods for Kayin State flood victims – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-08-05-red.pdf> (GNLM) 5 August 2015 (p. 3)/
Thailand donates relief supplies for flood victims – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-08-07-red.pdf> (GNLM) 7 August 2015 (p. 2)/
India's relief aid arrives in Kalay region – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-08-07-red.pdf> (GNLM) 7 August 2015 (p. 2)/
Bangladesh donates medicines worth \$800,000 to flood victims – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-08-10-red.pdf> (GNLM) 10 August 2015 (p. 2)/
Israel's relief supplies to flood victims – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-08-11-red.pdf> (GNLM) 11 August 2015 (p. 4)/
Aid from Australia arrive in Yangon – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-08-11-red.pdf> (GNLM) 11 August 2015 (p. 4)

spending for children should they get elected, and to provide an opportunity for them to raise their concerns with candidates.⁵

NOMINATION FOR HLUTTAW CANDIDATES CONTINUES

A total of 69 candidates for Pyithu Hluttaw, 48 candidates for Amyotha Hluttaw, 146 candidates for state/region Hluttaws and 9 candidate for state/region ethnic affairs submitted their nomination for 2015 General Election on 10 August. From 20 July to 10 August, 4,224 candidates including 1,191 for Pyithu Hluttaw, 627 for Amyotha Hluttaw, 2,278 for state/region Hluttaws and 128 for ethnic affairs constituencies. They represent 80 political parties while 162 of them are individual candidates. Detailed nomination process is available at www.uecmyanmar.org⁶

UEC CHAIRMAN, CHINESE AMBASSADOR DISCUSS GENERAL ELECTION

Union Election Commission Chairman Tin Aye invited Beijing to send observers to the upcoming general election at his meeting 12 August with the Chinese ambassador to Myanmar. During the meeting in Nay Pyi Taw, the UEC chairman explained that the government has invited local and foreign observers to the 8 November election. Human rights NGO the Carter Center and the European Union have signed agreements with the UEC to observe the ballot, the UEC chairman said. The UEC would invite election commissions from ASEAN countries and ambassadors to observe the elections.⁷

UNOFFICIAL MEDIA

SECRETARY GENERAL HTAY OO REPLACES SHWE MANN AS USDP CHAIR

Burma's ruling Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) released a statement on Thursday, announcing that party chairman Shwe Mann had been replaced by Htay Oo, who was previously a vice-chairman. Noting that Shwe Mann had the "heavy duties" of being USDP chairman as well as Lower House speaker, the statement said he was being replaced as "now is a time to focus on party duties". President Thein Sein becomes acting chairman of the party, while Htay Oo becomes joint-chairman. Tin Naing Thein is the new USDP general-secretary, taking over from Maung Maung Thein, who was also [ousted in the internal coup](#) on 13 August.

A retired major-general from the Burmese armed forces, 65-year-old Htay Oo has long been regarded as a rising star among many in the military-backed ruling party. He is due to run for re-election as a Lower House MP in his home constituency, Hinthada. He was formerly general-secretary of the USDP, and was Burma's Minister for Agriculture and Irrigation from 2004-11.

Meanwhile, both the USDP's news publications, the *Union Daily* and *Leader Journal*, have temporarily stopped printing in the wake of the party shake-up. CEO and editor-in-chief of the *Union Daily*, Win Tin, said, "Publishing and distribution was halted as from today, but we are not closing the newspaper house. Our party leaders told us to cease publishing in the meantime."⁸

⁵ UNICEF urges parties to make child-focused policy platforms – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-08-02-red.pdf> (GNLM) 2 August 2015 (p. 2)

⁶ Nomination for Hluttaw candidates Continues – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-08-11-red.pdf> (GNLM) 11 August 2015 (p. 3)/
Nomination for Hluttaw candidates Continues – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-08-09-red.pdf> (GNLM) 9 August 2015 (p. 3)

⁷ UEC chairman, Chinese ambassador discuss general election – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2015-08-13-red.pdf> (GNLM) 13 August 2015 (p. 3)

⁸ Htay Oo replaces Shwe Mann – <http://www.dvb.no/news/htay-oo-replaces-shwe-mann-burma-myanmar/55933> (DVB) 14 August 2015/
Military close off USDP HQ, Shwe Mann under guard – <http://www.dvb.no/news/breaking-news-military-close-off-usdp-hq-shwe-mann-under-guard-burma-myanmar/55909> (DVB) 13 August 2015

VICE PRESIDENTS TO RUN ON USDP TICKET

While the country awaits a decision from President Thein Sein as to whether he will stand for election to parliament, his two Vice Presidents have taken the plunge. The Union Election Commission (UEC), which is collecting lists of candidates from parties contesting the November 8 election, has recorded that Vice President Sai Mauk Khan will contest the Pyithu Hluttaw seat of Lashio, in the Shan State, where he will face Tun Shwe of the National League for Democracy. Vice President Nyan Htun, meanwhile, has registered with the UEC to fight the Pyithu Hluttaw seat of Kani Township, Sagaing Region. Both vice presidents are members of the ruling Union Solidarity and Development Party.

Sai Mauk Khan was elected vice president in 2011 after defeating Aye Maung of the Rakhine National Party. U Nyan Htun, former navy commander in chief, was elected in 2012 to replace Thiha Thura Tin Aung Myint Oo. Vice President Nyan Htun will face the NLD's U Tun Naing. In a July 30 interview with Nikkei Asian Review, the president said he would be willing to serve a second presidential term, depending on the country's situation, the prevailing circumstances, and the wishes of the people. USDP General Secretary Maung Maung Thein said the party had reserved a seat for him in Zabuthiri Township, Nay Pyi Taw. "It depends on him whether he will decide to contest it or not," said Maung Maung Thein.

USDP has registered more than 900 candidates as of 4 August. Military officers are not included in the list. Maung Maung Thein could not say how many officers would run as USDP candidates, but he said some ministers from the President's Office would run. MP Hla Tun will contest Kyaukpadaung, Mandalay Region, MP Thein Nyunt would run in Maupin, Ayeyarwady Region, and MP Soe Maung will contest Yesagy, Magwe Region. In the case of two other ministers, Aung Min and Soe Thein, the situation has been unclear since the USDP rejected their proposal to run in Kayah State. "We proposed that Aung Min should contest Taungoo, Bago Region, and Soe Thein should run for Kyunsu, as voters there are waiting for them to contest again. But they have not yet responded," said Maung Maung Thein.

According to the UEC candidates list Navy Chief General Thura Thet Swe will run in Coco Island, Deputy Commerce Minister Dr Pwin Sann in Mayangone Township, former Minister for National Planning and Economic Development Soe Thar in Twante Township and Vice-Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw Nanda Kyaw Swar in Dagon Township, all in Yangon Region. From the business world, Zaykabar Khin Shwe will run in Yangon Region Constituency No. 8 and Yan Win, Chair of A1 Group will contest in Ayeyarwady Region constituency No 8, both from the USDP. As for the rest of the USDP candidates' list, Maung Maung Thein said two thirds of the MPs elected in 2010 would run in their existing constituencies. As of August 4, 2006 candidates from 56 parties, plus 64 independents, have registered with the UEC.⁹

VOTER ID CARDS TO BE GIVEN TO FLOOD VICTIMS BEREFT OF DOCUMENTS: UEC

The Union Election Commission (UEC) has said it will issue special identity cards to ensure the right to vote in Burma's upcoming general election for victims of recent widespread flooding in the country who have lost their identity documents in the high waters. With tens of thousands of people having fled their homes over the last few weeks due to severe floods that continue to ravage parts of the country, UEC Director Thaung Hlaing said the commission was stepping in with a voting contingency plan. "People are worrying that they will lose their voting rights since their NRC [national registration certificate] cards and household registrations were lost or damaged during the floods. So we will arrange to issue the identity cards for voters," UEC Director Thaung Hlaing said.

⁹ Vice presidents to run on USDP ticket – <http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/15883-vice-presidents-to-run-on-usdp-ticket.html> (Myanmar Times) 7 August 2015

The UEC announced that it would issue the “voter registration cards” to eligible voters about one week ahead of election day, state-run media reported on Wednesday, with the document allowing voters who lost their NRC or household registrations to vote in the poll scheduled for November 8. Thaung Hlaing said the commission was in the process of determining how best to distribute the cards, with one option under consideration being to give the documents directly to voters via ward and village-level election subcommissions in each state and division, possibly by going door-to-door. “If the voters bring the cards to the polling station on electionday, it can prove their identity if someone objects to them voting in the election, and the process will be fast to find their names on the voter lists,” he said.

The UEC will post a second round of voter lists nationwide later this month, after preliminary lists were released in four phases beginning in March. The preliminary rollout faced criticism from political parties and civil society groups who said the voter rosters were riddled with errors, potentially disenfranchising millions of people if left uncorrected. Voters will have just 14 days to make sure their names appear on the lists, or risk losing their right to cast a ballot in the country’s much-anticipated nationwide election. The pledge to issue the special cards is the second step taken by the UEC in as many days to attempt to address concerns about the impact that the widespread flooding might have on the election and preparations for the poll. The Election Commission on 3 August also extended the deadline for political parties to submit their candidate rosters by one week, from 8 to 14 August, saying parties had requested more time to make the filings because of the logistical difficulties that the floods were presenting.¹⁰

NLD EXCLUDES MOST OF '88 GENERATION FROM POLLS

The National League for Democracy (NLD) has rejected bids by 17 members of the “ 88 Generation Students Group” to join its ranks and contest November's election, a controversial omission of a group that was expected to galvanise its bid to dominate the ballot Reuters reported on 2 August. The party selected only one member of the popular crop of activists, who suffered years of persecution after leading nationwide student protests in 1988 that were brutally crushed by the ruling military. Pyone Cho was the sole member of the group selected to represent the party in the ballot. The NLD received 3,000 applications and will field 1,090 candidates. The NLD's candidate list does include several intellectuals and activists, including free speech advocate Nay Phone Latt and Susanna Hla Hla Soe.

Some experts said the decision risks dividing groups that have a shared vision of a more democratic Myanmar under which the military, which is guaranteed three ministerial positions and a quarter of legislative seats, has no political role. NLD Party spokesman Nyan Win said it was the prerogative of the NLD’s Central Executive Committee to choose who it wanted for its members of parliament.¹¹

3 NEW PARTIES VOW TO FIGHT FOR BURMA’S FARMERS

More than 400 candidates from 3 new political parties devoted to representing Burma’s farmers will contest seats in the upcoming November election. Myanmar Farmers Development Party (MFDP), the largest, has nominated representatives for 110 Townships in 7 divisions, said party chair Kyaw Swa Soe. The Party Chair also stated that he will stand for election in the Pegu (Bago) Constituency of Daik-U, and says he will work to prioritise the interests of local farmers. His party, which registered with the Union Election Commission in 2012, is based in Rangoon. The MFDP’s Nyi Min Sein has the task of competing against Aung San Suu Kyi for a Lower House seat in Kawhmu. “Farmers have been exploited

¹⁰ Voter ID Cards to Be Given to Flood Victims Bereft of Documents: UEC – <http://www.irrawaddy.org/burma/voter-id-cards-to-be-given-to-flood-victims-bereft-of-documents-uec.html> (Irrawaddy) 5 August 2015

¹¹ NLD excludes most of '88 Generation from Myanmar poll – <http://mizzima.com/news-election-2015-election-news/nld-excludes-most-%E2%80%9988-generation-myanmar-poll> (Mizzima) 3 August 2015

for some 50 years,” he said. “So I think when people come to believe in our policies and see our goodwill, they will vote for our party.”

The Myanmar Peasant Workers People’s Party (MPWPP) has registered 15 candidates to contest seats in the Lower House, 2 seats in the Upper House, and 8 in regional assemblies. The party’s general secretary, Myo Khine, said the party is focused on supporting the health and education of farmers, and provides support in land disputes. “Our party will also work on behalf of workers on issues of forced labour and low wages. The party believes Burmese workers should be paid at ASEAN standards,” he said. “We will also prioritise land laws, when related to labourers and farmers, and campaign to amend laws to protect them.”

The Confederate Farmers Party (CFP), will compete for 15 seats. Party chairman San Linn said the CFP will seek to solve land management complaints in the Daik-U, Waw, Thanatpin, and Kawa Townships, Pegu (Bago) Region. “There are no legal experts in the land management committee, so when implementing their duties, they make mistakes,” said San Linn. “Nonetheless, the affected farmers have no recourse. We want to solve these problems.” The Myanmar Peasant Workers People’s Party has stated that they may submit more candidates before the new deadline.¹²

MON HLUTTAW CANDIDATE SELECTED FOR THANBYUZAYAT TOWNSHIP

Due to the substandard qualifications of the candidates selected by Mon National Party (MNP) and All Mon Regions Democracy Party (AMDP), about 50 enterprises who work for various Mon national movements held discussions over three days at Mon Hall, in Thanbyuzayat Town. “When we selected the candidate, we chose a person who is able to debate in the Hluttaw (Parliament). That person must be at least a high school graduate and must be able to propose and insist on, the rights of Mon people. Based on such points, we chose our representative,” said Naing Linn, who is the spokesperson of the Hluttaw candidate for the Mon people selection committee. Naing Linn also said that the Mon youth group of Thanbyuzayat Township, Summer Mon Language Teaching group, and the Mon National Day Organizing Association established a Hluttaw candidate for the Mon people selection committee. Nai Pan Maung was selected to run in the 2015 elections as the Mon Pyithu Hluttaw candidate for Thanbyuzayat Township Constituency.

“Because there are 3 candidates for Mon people, it doesn’t look as if one of them can win the Thanbyuzayat Township constituency entirely. So, more powerful parties will more likely become the winner,” said an election observer from Thanbyuzayat Town, who did not want to reveal his name. For upcoming elections, MNP appointed Mi Chaw Su Lat to run as the Pyithu Hluttaw candidate of Thanbyuzayat Township, while the AMDP also appointed Nai Than Shwe as the candidate for the township. Likewise, Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) have U Aung Than Oo running as the Pyithu Hluttaw candidate for the Thanbyuzayat township, whereas U Nyan Hein of National League for Democracy (NLD) will also compete for the township’s Pyithu Hluttaw candidate. During the 2010 elections, AMDP’s Nai Thein Aung was selected as the Pyithu Hluttaw candidate of the Thanbyuzayat Township.¹³

ANALYSIS

The announcement in state run-media on the reshuffling of the senior ministers from the cabinet by President Thein Sein and the removal of Speaker Thura Shwe Mann from his post as USDP party chair has not only made headlines but more importantly raised concerns and public confidence in Myanmar’s ongoing democratic transformation. Furthermore, the reassignment of four Ministers can

¹² 3 new parties vow to fight for Burma’s farmers –

<http://www.dvb.no/news/3-new-parties-vow-to-fight-for-burmas-farmers-myanmar/55553> (DVB) 5 August 2015

¹³ Mon Hluttaw candidate selected for Thanbyuzayat Township –

<http://monnews.org/2015/08/08/mon-hluttaw-candidate-selected-for-thanbyuzayat-township/> (IMNA) 8 August 2015

also be seen as an attempt to putting the house in order within the military institutions. While the changes have come within USDP ranks, it is important to note the relationship which exists between the party and the military institutions and that the recent changes may have been directly or indirectly influenced and even approved by the Tatmadaw. Undemocratic as it maybe, the changes could yet prove to be to serve the country's interest and that the outcome will be more clearer after the elections on 8 November later this year.

On a more positive note, the achievement by the government's Union Peace-making Working Committee (UPWC) team and the Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs) Senior Delegation in reaching an agreement on the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement draft will give the peace process a much needed impetus at a time when democratic reforms have been marred by the recent purge and changes within the USDP leadership. The signing of the NCA will no doubt contribute to bringing the much needed stability within the country. It is critical that without a political process that involves all ethnic groups that can secure equality, justice and self-determination for the ethnic minorities is established. Otherwise, there is little hope for lasting peace. The signing of the NCA is the beginning step to achieve genuine peace and the political dialogue that follows will be pivotal in determining the country's political landscape.