
POLITICAL MONITOR NO.38

OFFICIAL MEDIA

GOVERNMENT AND CHIN NATIONAL FRONT (CNF) SIGN PEACE AGREEMENT

Union level Peace-making Work Committee and the Chin National Front (CNF) held peace negotiations for the second time in Yangon from 7 to 9 December in the presence of international observers. The negotiations concluded with 27 out of 31 proposals of the Chin National Front agreed and, 4 recorded for further talks. The discussions were mainly focused on ceasefire, political dialogue and holding of a conference to be attended by all national races people.

The Union-level Peacemaking Work Committee and the CNF reaffirmed the promotion of democracy, equality and points that can guarantee self-determination as basic principles apart from non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of national solidarity and perpetuation of sovereignty while building the genuine Union as the ultimate goal.

Among the 27 points finally signed on 9 December are agreements on Chin national affairs for designation of Chin National Day and Chin State Day. In addition, the agreement also covers national integration, human rights and environmental conservation, military affairs, development of Chin State, and cooperation of the Union government, the State government and the Chin National Front in social and cultural affairs.

The government side was led by President's Office Minister U Aung Min, who is Vice Chairman of the Central Level Peace Making committee, while the CNF was headed by its General Secretary Pu Zing Cung. Members of the Chin National Party (CNP) and the Chin Progressive Party (CPP) were also present as observers at the meeting.¹

DIPLOMATS TOUR RAKHINE STATE WITH VICE-PRESIDENT

Vice-President Dr Sai Mauk Kham, Commander-in-Chief (Army) General Hla Htay Win senior government officials accompanied by ambassadors from Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Pakistan and Turkey arrived in Rakhine State on 8 December. On arrival at Sittway airport, they were welcomed by the Rakhine State chief minister, the commander and state ministers and later held a meeting with ambassadors, diplomats, members of UN agencies, Rakhine State government officials regarding the restoration of peace and stability, relief and rehabilitation in Rakhine State.

At the meeting, Vice-President said that the government is attempting to restore peace and stability in the state; however some believe that the authorities are using force to control the unrests; some media have portrayed the conflict as "genocide". The Vice-President also reaffirmed that there was no racial or religious discrimination by local authorities in Rakhine State and that fabricated news reporting and information could lead to misunderstanding of the true situation. The Ministry of Information has also issued press releases to provide an update on the situation in Rakhine State. Furthermore, the government has been working together with UN agencies UNHCR, INGOs and NGOs in implementing the socioeconomic development, of the people in Rakhine State. Vice-President Dr Sai Mauk Kham also expressed his belief that the diplomats and members of the UN agencies would witness the actual situation in Rakhine State, and that they would convey the right messages to their respective capitals and headquarters.

¹ Union level Peace-making Work Committee and Chin National Front hold peace talks. Rays of peace lightens Chin State – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-12-11.pdf> (NLM) 11 December 2012 (p.1)/
CNF and Government sign agreement – <http://www.khonumthung.org/?p=1189> (Khonumthung) 10 December 2012/
Chin: Peace Talks Extended – <http://www.unpo.org/article/15248> (UNPO) 10 December 2012

In responding, the UN Resident Coordinator Nigam thanked the government for arranging the trip and pointed out that the formation of the commission to investigate the recent communal unrests was a positive step and called for immediate response to the humanitarian issues. He called for providing shelter to displaced persons, allotment of land, ending hostilities of the local people towards the aid groups, social harmony between two societies and granting citizenships to the eligible persons in accord with 1982 citizenship law which he said is key in addressing the issue. The ambassadors of Indonesia, Bangladesh, Turkey and Cambodia also reiterated their continued support of the government's efforts regarding the Rakhine State incident, acknowledging it as a sensitive issue. The Vice-President and entourage then proceeded to Minbya, Kyauktaw and Maungtaw townships and met the local people and presented them with relief aid.²

UNOFFICIAL MEDIA

CNF MEETS LEADERS FROM ETHNIC PARTIES

The peace committee of the Chin National Front (CNF) and ethnic party leaders met for the first time in Yangon, on 10 December. At the meeting, CNF leaders met members from the Chin National Party (CNP), Chin Progressive Party (CPP), the Shan the National Democratic Party (SNDP), All Mon Democratic Party (AMDP), Phalon-Sawaw Democratic Party (PSDP) and Rakhine Nationalities Progressive Party (RNPP). Discussions were focused on the finer points of the agreement signed between the CNF and government arrived during the second phase of union level peace talks held from 7-9 December.

Pu Zin Cung, General-Secretary of CNF, said, "This kind of meeting will help in the unity of Chin people and we are grateful for establishing the Ashu Chin National Party." Similarly, General-Secretary of Ashu Chin National Party, U Aung Min Hlai said that preparations are being made for the upcoming 2015 election in 20 townships and expressed thanks to the CNF in arranging the meeting.

The Shan National Democratic Party leader Sao Than Myint said, "The news of ethnic people's expectation has arrived now. It has been established that a bridge of trust is being built between the new Government and ethnic armed groups. So now is the time for our ethnic parties and armed groups to unite."

All Mon Democratic Party leader, Naing Hla Mon said that the federal system and equality are very essential for unity in Myanmar. The leader of RNPP added that the central administration should move slowly as there is chaos in Rakhine state. CNF leaders also held meetings with ambassador of UK and US as well as NLD leaders U Tin Oo, U Win Tin and U Win Shwe.³

ETHNIC NATIONALITIES ALLIANCE TO HOLD OFF FURTHER TALKS WITH GOV'T THIS YEAR

The United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC) will hold off from sitting down to talks with the government until next year. According to a UNFC spokesperson, the group still needs more time to prepare, while government negotiators are currently occupied with addressing the ongoing fallout caused by the assault on protesters at the Lapandantaung Copper Mine in late November. "It seems that U Aung Min has been in a tight corner with public protests regarding the Lapandantaung situation and we have been busy here too," said UNFC spokesperson Nai Hongsa. The two sides have discussed holding their next round of talks in Cambodia and later talks in Japan, which would be sponsored by the Nippon Foundation. The UNFC's spokesperson Nai Hongsa in speaking to the

² Exaggerating Rakhine conflict as a "genocide" is totally contrary to the truth Diplomats supports efforts of government for restoring peace and stability in Rakhine State –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-12-09.pdf> (NLM) 9 December 2012 (p. 1 & 9)/

Vice-President Dr Sai Mauk Kham inspects regional development and rehabilitation tasks in Rakhine State –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs14/NLM2012-12-09.pdf> (NLM) 9 December 2012 (p. 9)

³ CNF meets ethnic party leaders for the first time -

<http://www.khonumthung.org/?p=1196> (Khonumthung) 11 December 2012

media, said that the group proposed the idea to the government's chief peace negotiator U Aung Min, while he was visiting Thailand in November. However, the minister insisted on holding the talks in Burma. "U Aung Min said it won't be very convenient [for the government] to hold talks outside of the country and suggested we go inside the country instead," said Nai Hongsa. The UNFC and Aung Min's peace negotiators have held previous talks that were mediated by Japan's Nippon Foundation, but have yet to engage in formal talks. The UNFC was formed in February 2011 with six core member ethnic groups and six associate ethnic groups totaling 12 ethnic groups including the Karen National Union, New Mon State Party, Kachin Independence Organization, Karenni National Progressive Party and the Chin National Front.⁴

NLD NEEDS PUBLIC SUPPORT, SAYS AUNG SAN SUU KYI

In a recent visit to her father's hometown of Natmauk in Magwe Region, leader of the National League for Democracy (NLD) Aung San Suu Kyi urged party members to work for the interest of the party. In a speech made to locals in Natmauk on 8 December, Suu Kyi said "those who are scrambling for a chair that does not exist will get into trouble if there is a chair." She warned that the people should learn to control political parties and not believe whatever politicians say, adding that they are "ordinary human beings". "Our party members are not totally impeccable," she added. If NLD members do something wrong, the people have the right to criticize but should do so "with goodwill and sympathy", she said.

Her comments come amid complaints from the party's lower ranks over arrangements for a national party assembly, with some accusing other members of using "undemocratic" methods to secure positions of authority. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi vowed that problems and weaknesses in the party would be repaired with the support and encouragement of the people. "We will advance if people constructively criticize and help us to improve things."

The party's Pyithu Hluttaw representative for Ottarathiri constituency in Mandalay U Min Thu, said some problems had appeared because the party had been seeking new members since November 2011, when it decided to contest the by-elections held in April. He said that the disputes over the convening of the assembly were as much an opportunity as a challenge for the party. "Internal problems will arise because the party assembly is being convened in a democratic way in a country that has been without democracy for about 60 years. But we see that we have chance to train people in democratic practices," he said. Doubts and disagreements should be solved through negotiation and dialogue, he said.⁵

PARLIAMENTARY COMMISSION INVESTIGATES LAND CONFISCATION IN RAKHINE STATE

The Land Investigation Commission formed by the Union Parliament recently visited Rakhine State to conduct investigations on land confiscation. The group was led by Colonel Saw Shwe, and included MP U Ohn Tin of the National assembly and Lower House MPs U Ba Shin of Kyaukpru and U Phe Than as members. U Phe Than a legislator from Mraybon as well as a member of the commission said, "We investigated seven cases of farm confiscations in Kyaukpru Township on 7 December, which included land confiscated by the military intelligence, the LIB-542 and the Danyawady Naval Station and the farms confiscated by entrepreneurs on Madae Island in the township. He also stated that the team would continue to investigate four cases in Thandwe and three cases in Gwa after completing the cases in Kyaukpru.

Compensation of 12 Kyat's per acre have been reimbursed to farmers by the order of the home ministry as well as the lands in township, which have been confiscated by the military intelligence, in

⁴ Ethnic nationalities alliance to hold off with further gov't talks this year – <http://www.dvb.no/news/ethnic-nationalities-alliance-to-hold-off-with-further-gov%E2%80%99t-talks/25259> (DVB) 14 December 2012

⁵ NLD needs public support, says Aung San Suu Kyi – <http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/3559-nld-needs-public-support-says-aung-san-suu-kyi.html> (Myanmar Times) 14 December 2012

Kyaukprou Township, said U Phe Than. The farmers in the township are also said to be suffering from great difficulties as the army has stopped the renting of its confiscated farms to them for cultivations this year even though it rented the farms to them in the past years. This is the second time that land seizure cases have been undertaken in the Rakhine State, with the first investigation being conducted last September in Ponnakyaun, Kyauktaw, Mraybon and Minbya townships. According to MP U Phe Than, the commission is to present its findings to the Union Parliament after which the government will give its decision in resolving the matter.⁶

ANALYSIS

Aung San Suu Kyi's message in addressing locals and NLD members in Natmauk to work for the party's interest and to avoid putting self-interests first are early indications that disunity is slowly creeping into the ranks of the party. The focus of attention has been centered on the holding of ward, village and township assemblies ahead of the party's first national assembly later this year, but has been marred by the undemocratic nature of the selection process. The NLD leadership while acknowledging the existence of mutiny within the ranks is slowly emerging has not been successful in resolving the matter. And therefore, if the NLD is to be considered as the main opposition party to succeed in the 2015 elections it will first and foremost need to get its house in order by resolving the on-going crisis in a democratic manner.

The government on its part while trying to move ahead with reforms and bring peace to the country, has successfully concluded the second round of peace talks with the Chin National Front (CNF). The talks once again reflect the importance of dialogue in building trust between the government and CNF without which national reconciliation cannot be achieved. While the government and respective armed ethnic groups are engaged in peace talks, a key factor not to be overlooked is the involvement and inclusion of civil society and community based organizations in the peace process. And therefore, under such circumstances and if there is to be genuine peace, the government will not only need to take on board the interests of the ethnic armed groups but also that of civil society, communities and local peoples throughout the entire country.

⁶ Union commission investigates 14 more cases of land confiscation in Arakan – <http://www.narinjara.com/main/index.php/union-commission-investigates-14-more-cases-of-land-confiscation-in-arakan/> (Narinjara) 10 December 2012