

POLITICAL MONITOR NO. 10

OFFICIAL MEDIA

KAYIN NATIONAL UNION (KNU) OPENS LIAISON OFFICE

The Karen National Union (KNU) officially opened 2 liaisons offices in Kyaukkyi, Toungoo District, Bago Region and in Myeik/Dawei District and Brigade-4 in Dawei, Taninthayi Region on 9 & 11 April respectively in the presence of senior government ministers, KNU leaders and other officials. Those present included Union-Level Peace Making Group leader Minister for Railways U Aung and members of the Bago state regional government, as well as Union-level Peace-Making Group, U Zaw Min, officials from the Taninthayi Regional government. The KNU was represented by Secretary-General Naw Sipporah Sein and General Saw Mutu Say Poe, Chairman of KNU Myeik/Dawei District Member of KNU Central Standing Committee Pado Saw Kwe Htoo Win and other KNU members.

Peace talks at the State/Regional level were also held on 11 April, between the Taninthayi regional government and the KNU and the two sides discussed perpetuation of the ceasefire as well as the continued opening of liaison offices.¹

REGIONAL GOVERNMENT HOLDS PEACE TALKS WITH NAGA GROUP NSCN-K

Under an arrangement with the Union level peacemaking group, a 5-member peace-making group from the Sagaing Region held peace talks on 9 April with the Naga group National Socialist Council of Nagaland - Khaplang (NSCN (K)) led by Y Wantin Naga made peace talks in Khamti, Sagaing Region. The delegates from both sides had a cordial discussion and signed a 5-point preliminary peace agreement which included coordination for travelling with arms and continued talks between the two sides at the Union level.

The 5-points of the preliminary peace agreement are:

1. To stop fighting between the Tatmadaw and the NSCN (K) as of 9 April, 2012.
2. To open liaison office of the NSCN (K) at Khamti agreed by both sides for discussions, liaison and talks.
3. To coordinate in advance for travelling with arms beyond the places agreed by both sides during the ceasefire.
4. To allow the NSCN (K) to travel freely in the country without arms during the period of ceasefire.
5. To hold continued discussions between the peace-making group of Union government and the NSCN (K) peace-making group for peace and stability and development of Naga region, at both side-agreed place and time.²

Unofficial

The NSCN-K, led by S. S. Khaplang, has about 500 soldiers and operates in the Naga mountain range and in northern Lahe and Nanyun townships in Sagaing Region. Its armed group, the NSCN, was formed on 30 January 1980, to gain freedom for the Naga people and to achieve a union between Naga living in the northeast states of India and the Sagaing Region in Burma. In 1988, the NSCN split into two fractions; the NSCN-K led by S. S. Khaplang, and the NSCN-IM, led by Isak Chisi Swu and

¹ Kayin National Union-KNU opens Liaison Office in Kyaukkyi of Toungoo District - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-04-11-OP.pdf> (NLM) 11 April 2012 (p. 1) / Kayin National Union (KNU) opens Liaison Office for Myeik/Dawei District, Brigade-4 - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-04-12-op-1st-red.pdf> (NLM) 12 April 2012 (p. 1)

² Sagaing Region peace-making group holds peace talks with NSCN (K) - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-04-12-op-1st-red.pdf> (NLM) 12 April 2012 (p. 16)

Thuingaleng Muivah. The NSCN-K is based in Burma; the NSCN-IM is based in India. In April 28, 2011, the NSCN-K signed a cease-fire agreement with the Indian government. The agreement is scheduled to be extended before 28 April. According to the 2008 Constitution, the Leshi, Lahe and Nanyun townships in Sagaing Region are described as a Naga Self-Administered Zone. Since 2010, the NSCN-K and the Burmese government have not engaged in armed clashes.³

UNION-LEVEL PEACE MAKING GROUP HOLDS TALKS WITH NMSP

Peace talks between the Union level peace-making group and New Mon State Party (NMSP) peace-making group were held at Mon State Government Office in Mawlamyine on 12 April 2012. The two sides discussed matters related to the nationwide ceasefire, perpetuation of the ceasefire agreement with New Mon State Party, regional development and social, education, health and economic affairs, the release of political prisoners from the NMSP and other armed groups as well as continued holding of Union level peace talks. The government side was represented by Union government ministers and the NMSP was represented by Joint General-Secretary (1) Nai Aung Min.⁴

BRITISH PRIME MINISTER CAMERON MAKES LANDMARK BURMA VISIT

British Prime Minister David Cameron arrived in Burma on 13 April for an official visit - the first by a leader of the British government in over sixty years, which comes at a time when bilateral relations have been at an all-time low. He met President Thein Sein in Nay Pyi Taw, where they discussed matters relating to promoting friendly ties and cooperation between the two countries, and tasks for sector-wise cooperation in progress of internal politics and peace process and development of a socio economy in a cordial manner.

Prime Minister Cameron also held separate meetings with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and ethnic representatives during his one day visit. After his meeting with the NLD leader, he held a press conference and also visited the War Cemetery in Yangon.⁵

Cameron welcomed the prospect of change taking place in Burma, but added that it was important to respond with caution and care. The changes unfolding in the country need to be irreversible, saying that it right to suspend sanctions as a gesture of acknowledgement to the measures being undertaken by President Thein and his government, but not to lift them and not include the arms embargo. He also welcomed the release of political prisoners, but urged more to be released and also congratulated Aung San Suu Kyi on being elected as Member of Parliament in the recent by-elections on 1 April 2012.⁶

³ Naga rebels prepare for peace talks with Burmese government - <http://mizzima.com/news/regional/6968-naga-rebels-prepare-for-peace-talks-with-burmese-government.html> (Mizzima) 19 April 2012

NSCN-K expels its supremo SS Khaplang -

<http://e-pao.net/GP.asp?src=12..080611.jun11> (E-Pao) 7 June 2011

For more information, please also see: [Report: Life under Military Rule: Human Rights Violations of Nagas in Burma – Naga Youth Organisation \(NYO\) - October 2010](#)

⁴ Perpetuation of peace discussed with KNU / Union level peace-making group holds talks with New Mon State Party - <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-04-13.pdf> (NLM) 13 April 2012 (p. 2)

⁵ President U Thein Sein receives British Prime Minister Rt. Hon. Mr. David Cameron -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-04-14-op-75.pdf> (NLM) 14 April 2012 (p. 1 & 8) /

British Prime Minister Rt. Hon. Mr. David Cameron arrives Yangon -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-04-14-op-75.pdf> (NLM) 14 April 2012 (p. 8)

⁶ Press conference given by Prime Minister David Cameron and Aung San Suu Kyi in Burma -

<http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/transcript-aung-san-suu-kyi-press-conference/> (The official website of the British Prime Minister) 13 April 2012

US SENATOR WEBB MAKES 3rd OFFICIAL VISIT

Senator Jim (James Henry) Webb led a US delegation for a 3-day official visit to Burma. The visit is the third by Senator Webb and who is current Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs. He met Burmese President Thein Sein in Nay Pyi Taw on 9 April 2012, as well as both the Speakers of the Upper and Lower Houses and exchanged views on promoting friendly relations between parliamentary bodies of the two countries. Upper House Speaker U Khin Aung Myint explained the undertakings of Hluttaws (parliaments) and the successful holdings of the recent by-elections as well as the on-going reforms.⁷

ARAKAN LEAGUE FOR DEMOCRACY (ALD) ALLOWED TO RE-ESTABLISH AS POLITICAL PARTY

The Arakan League for Democracy (ALD), the winning party of the 1990 election in Arakan State, was reportedly granted leave to stand as a political party by the Myanmar Union Election Commission on 6 April. State-run media stated that the ALD had been granted permission to establish itself as a political party as its application had been accepted by the election commission.⁸

Unofficial

The ALD was forcibly abolished as an official political party by the military regime in 1991. ALD Chairman U Thar Ban said that his party would work for the future development of politics and society in Arakan (*Rakhine*) State and to restore democracy, equality, and autonomy in the union. He also said the ALD will sustain its previous coordination with other ethnic political parties including the National League for Democracy and also cooperate with other local Rakhine political parties. RNDP Secretary U Oo Hla Saw said he is pleased that the ALD is officially approved again to stand as a political party. "The ALD is the only party that has been serving our Arakanese national people to the best of its ability since 1988. When asked of the RNDP's policy on relations with other local parties, U Hla Saw said, "We hold the policy on the emergence of a strong Arakanese political party that will represent the whole of Arakanese nationalities in 2015. That is why we are ready to work with any other political parties in our Arakan State. We also have plans to work together with the ALD after forming joint committees for the suffering and problems facing our Arakan State, which are resulted from forcible land confiscations, unruly oppression, and human rights violations as well as from the gas pipeline constructions."

The ALD was established on 27 September 1989 in Rangoon based upon the Arakan National Union that was born in Arakan State during the nationwide democracy uprising in 1988, and was registered with the election commission of the time on 2 October 1989. The party won 11 seats in Arakan State in the 1990 election, but the result was never recognized and the party was forcibly abolished by the then Burmese military regime in 1991.⁹

⁷ President U Thein Sein receives US Senator Mr. James Henry Webb and party -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-04-10-op.pdf> (NLM) 10 April 2012 (p. 1) /

Press Releases: Senator Jim Webb's Trip to Japan, Thailand, Burma -

<http://webb.senate.gov/newsroom/pressreleases/2012-04-13-01.cfm> (US Senator Webb's Official Website) 13 April 2012 /

Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker U Khin Aung Myint meets US Senator Mr. James Henry Webb and party -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-04-10-op.pdf> (NLM) 10 April 2012 (p. 16) /

Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann receives US Senator Mr. James Henry Webb and party -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-04-10-op.pdf> (NLM) 10 April 2012 (p. 16)

⁸ RLDP granted formation -

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs13/NLM2012-04-07.pdf> (NLM) 7 April 2012 (p. 2)

⁹ ALD Allowed to Re-Establish as Political Party -

<http://www.narinjara.com/main/index.php/ald-allowed-to-re-establish-as-political-party> (Narinjara) 11 April 2012

UNOFFICIAL MEDIA

ETHNIC REPRESENTATIVES MEET BRITISH PRIME MINISTER CAMERON

Representatives from Chin, Kachin, Shan, Karen and Rohingya ethnic groups met British Prime Minister David Cameron in Rangoon on 13 April. The Rohingya representative Abu Taher (Central Executive member & Head of Political Bureau and Research and Development of National Democratic Party for Development (NDPD)) highlighted recent social, economic and political problems (including ongoing human rights violations) that Rohingya face in northern Arakan State. He noted that the Rohingya are excluded from the list of (135) ethnic groups under the 1982 Myanmar Citizenship Law, and also presented Cameron an official letter on behalf of the NDPD.¹⁰

BURMESE PRESIDENT MEETS KNU LEADERS

The Karen National Union's peace talk delegation held an informal 2-hour closed-door meeting with President U Thein Sein in Nay Pyi Taw on 7 April. KNU General-Secretary Naw Zipporah Sein said that the KNU raised the issue of implementing a nationwide ceasefire and that the President also requested the KNU leadership to play a role in encouraging other ethnic groups to make peace with the government. "U Thein Sein has not yet agreed for our call for a nationwide ceasefire", she said "but he agreed the making of peace for the whole country is important.". She added that she had asked the President when the government would stop labeling the KNU and its armed wing the Karen National Liberation Army as illegal. She said that "He responded that he [the government] will work step-by-step until the [peace talks] process improves, but he did not promise when the KNU will be welcomed as an legitimate force in Burma politics." The KNU members present included Saw Htoo Htoo Lay, General Mu Tu Say Poe, Saw Roger Khin, and Saw Ta Doh Moo.¹¹

PRESIDENT MEETS NLD LEADER AUNG SAN SUU KYI IN NAY PYI TAW

President Thein Sein and opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi met in Nay Pyi Taw on 11 April, which was the second meeting between them since the President took office in March 2011. Upon her return to Rangoon, Suu Kyi told reporters the meeting was "good," but she declined to comment on the topics discussed. NLD spokesman Nyan Win said that the talks involved democratization and the peace process with the ethnic groups as well as parliamentary affairs. During their first meeting in August 2011, Suu Kyi and Thein Sein had "frank and friendly discussions" to "find ways and means of cooperation," according to an official statement at that time. Suu Kyi told reporters she believed Thein Sein was sincere and "genuinely wishes for democratic reforms." Suu Kyi was elected a member of the Lower House in the 1 April by-election. The adjourned 3rd session of the Parliament will resume on 23 April.¹²

KNU LEADERS MEET AUNG SAN SUU KYI

The Karen National Union peace talk delegation met with NLD leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi for 2 hours in Rangoon on 8 April. They discussed the on-going peace talks with government and how to achieve genuine peace in the country through cooperation. Naw Zipporah Sein said discussions were about getting all citizens of Burma involved in politics. "We agreed that national peace building has to be related to allowing all citizens and all ethnic people to participate and for the

¹⁰ Ethnic's representatives including Rohingya meet British Prime Minister, David Cameron - http://www.kaladanpress.org/v3/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3628:ethnics-representatives-including-rohingya-meet-british-prime-minister-david-cameron&catid=149:april-2012&Itemid=2 (Kaladan) 15 April 2012

¹¹ KNU ask President Thein Sein for a nationwide ceasefire - <http://karennews.org/2012/04/knu-ask-president-thein-sein-for-a-nationwide-ceasefire.html/> (KIC) 8 April 2012.

¹² Suu Kyi, Thein Sein meet in Naypyitaw - <http://www.mizzima.com/news/inside-burma/6939-suu-kyi-thein-sein-meet-in-naypyitaw.html> (Mizzima) 11 April 2012

government to be responsible.” Aung San Suu Kyi stressed that the “rule of law’, “national peace” and “amendment of the constitution” are the 3 main topics that are needed for a national peace building process and national reconciliation.¹³

NLD REOPENS PARTY OFFICES IN CHIN STATE

The offices of the National League for Democracy (NLD) in Chin state are being re-opened to rejuvenate the party in Burmese politics after being suppressed under military rule. The reopened offices are in Teddim, Ton Zang, Falam, Mindat, Kanpetlet, Than Tlang, Hakha, Matupi and Rih, sub-town in Falam, Chin state. The party is trying to reopen its office in Paletwa Town of Southern Chin state and the members of the NLD there are gearing up to open their office, according to Chin State NLD Chairman Pu Van Lian. Political activities of the Chin state NLD came to a standstill in 2003, but now the Chin state NLD is being rejuvenated after the central NLD became involved in Burmese parliamentary politics. “We are organizing youths in the region of Matupi Township to take interest in our movement. But only a few Hakha youths are working for our party as most have left the town and some are busy with their jobs. A prayer programme was conducted by the Chin state NLD yesterday in Hakha to celebrate the landslide victory of NLD in the Burmese by election held by the Burmese government. The most representative seats were won and four constituencies were won by Chin state NLD in the 1990 Burmese general elections in 13 constituencies in the state.¹⁴

ANALYSIS

The recent visits by British Prime Minister David Cameron and US Senator Jim Webb can be seen as acknowledgement by the international community towards the reforms being undertaken President Thein Sein and his government since taking office in March 2011. The victory for the National League for Democracy (NLD) winning the majority of seats in the recent by-elections could also have provided a form of reassurance and paved the way for PM Cameron to make the one-day official visit to Nay Pyi Taw. For many, the visit by one of the regime’s harshest critics from the west was extraordinary. On his first visit to the country, Cameron has even gone further by suggesting that some of the restrictive measures imposed on Burma should be removed. What will the EU and its partners decide remains to be seen.

While the international front has taken centre stage, domestic issues have not been left far behind. The recent meetings held in Nay Pyi Taw between the President, Aung San Suu Kyi and the KNU are crucial steps in paving the way for the much talked-about “tripartite dialogue” becoming a reality. While one meeting or even two may not be sufficient to bring such results, each and every meeting should be seen as steps in the right direction and therefor it is crucial not only for the government but the NLD and KNU to contribute in expanding the negotiation table to a much wider audience. This step to initiate talks or include other stakeholders will have to be taken if there is to be peace and stability in the country.

¹³ KNU and NLD’s Suu Kyi share common ground on national peace building - <http://karennews.org/2012/04/knu-and-nlds-suu-kyi-share-common-ground-on-national-peace-building.html/> (KIC) 9 April 2012

¹⁴ NLD reopens party offices in Chin state - <http://khonumthung.org/?p=765> (Khonumthung) 11 April 2012