
POLITICAL MONITOR NO.18

OFFICIAL MEDIA

ETHNIC LEADERS SUMMIT HELD IN LAIZA

The four-day summit of the Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT) of the ethnic leaders was held at Laiza Headquarters of the Kachin Independence Organization on from 25-28 July. Leaders of the 16-member NCCT held the conference to discuss the second draft of a single-text nationwide ceasefire agreement, with talks focusing on outstanding points of contention between the government and ethnic groups.

The meeting adopted the 10-point decision which mainly involves call for building genuine federal union system in the country and removal of hindrance to political dialogue. The decision also involves demand for convening a union peace conference as the highest level if political dialogue is to be held.

The ethnic summit was attended by the 16 NCCT member groups and was later joined by the UN Special Adviser for Myanmar Vijay Namibia and the Assistant Representative Tang Ying from the Office of Special Envoy for Asian Affairs of the Chinese Foreign Ministry who attended as observers. The NCCT also met with non-NCCT members including the Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS), All Burma Students' Democratic Front (ABSDF) and an ethnic Naga rebel group (National Socialist Council of Nagaland – Kaplan) to share the results of their discussion on the ceasefire's second draft.

Over 100 representatives and leaders from KIO, KNU, KNPP, NMSP, SSPP, MNDAA, DKBA, KNU/KNLA Peace Council, WNO, LDU, ANC, AA, PNLO, PSLF, CNF, and ALP attended the four-day summit held in Laiza's Padang Hall.¹

UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ARRIVES IN MYANMAR

Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar Yang-hee Lee and party arrived in Yangon on 16 July to begin an official visit. The Special Rapporteur held meetings with government ministers, the Attorney-General, Chief Justice, Parliamentary Chairpersons, and Chairman of the Election Commission. During her talks with government officials, the UN Special Rapporteur discussed on-going peace talks with ethnic armed groups, forced labour and torture, vocational training at refugee shelters, cooperation with UN organizations and INGOs in development and stability measures, protection of women, children and disabled people, and rights and benefits between employers and employees. Ms Lee and party also visited Rakhine, Mandalay Regions and Kachin State and visited relief camps for those who had been affected by recent communal clashes and those who had been displaced by the clashes between government forces and Kachin

¹ NCCT meets in Laiza –

<http://www.moi.gov.mm/npe/newspaper-journal/content/25/07/2014/id-11600> (NLM) 26 July 2014 (p. 1) /

Ethnic Leaders Wrap Up Second Day of Summit in Laiza –

<http://kachinlandnews.com/?p=24605> (KNL) 26 July 2014/

Ethnic Leaders Enter Third Day of Summit –

<http://kachinlandnews.com/?p=24613> (KNL) 28 July 2014/

Myanmar ethnic summit agrees on 10 points for peace deal with gov't –

<http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/xinhua-news-agency/140729/myanmar-ethnic-summit-agrees-10-points-peace-deal-govt> (Xinhua/Global Post) 29 July 2014/

Ethnic Ceasefire Team Concludes Laiza Summit –

<http://www.irrawaddy.org/burma/ethnic-ceasefire-team-concludes-laiza-summit.html> (Irrawaddy) 30 July 2014

Independence Army (KIA). The UN Special Rapporteur also visited the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission and the Insein Central Prison, where officials gave briefings.²

MYANMAR FM ATTENDS 20TH ASEAN-EU MINISTERIAL MEETING

Minister for Foreign Affairs Wunna Maung Lwin attended the 20th ASEAN-EU Ministerial Meeting held in Brussels, from 22 to 25 July. The meeting reviewed the ASEAN-EU enhanced partnership; implementation of the ASEAN-EU, Bandar Seri Begawan Plan of Action (2013-2017); ASEAN-EU Connectivity and the future direction of ASEAN-EU relations with particular emphasis on elevating the ASEAN-EU enhanced partnership to a strategic level. The meeting further deliberated on East Asian Regional infrastructure; regional and international issues of mutual concern and interest; ASEAN-EU maritime cooperation and security; climate change and disaster management and cooperation on counter-terrorism and combating transnational crime. Union Minister led the discussion on developments in ASEAN with special emphasis on the regional cooperation toward the realization of ASEAN Community by 2015; progress in the three ASEAN Community Pillars as well as Myanmar's priorities under its chairmanship of ASEAN in 2014. Minister Lwin also gave briefing on the on-going developments in Myanmar and held separate meetings with foreign ministers from European countries. A decision to hold the 21st ASEAN-EU Ministerial Meeting in Bangkok, Thailand was taken at the meeting.³

UNHCR SUPPORTS MYANMAR REFUGEES IN THAILAND

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is now helping Myanmar refugees in Thailand by taking part in a repatriation scheme by the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO), according to reports Myanmar refugees in the Kingdom were organized into three groups as part of a programme to send them home, according to a report by the Bangkok Post, quoting a Thai military source. The combined team consisting of the military, the Mae Fah Luang Foundation and the office of UNHCR has been conducting interviews with as many as 130,000 Myanmar refugees in all nine camps nationwide.

According to the reports, most of the Myanmar refugees who want to return home are elderly people; those who were born and raised in Thailand want to stay there; and some others want to resettle in third countries. "After talking to all refugees, we divided them into three groups covering those who want to return to Myanmar, the group that wants to stay in Thailand and the group that wants to resettle in third countries," the source said, adding the United States and some European countries expressed readiness to accept a yet unconfirmed numbers of refugees. The UNHCR is making plans to provide land and financial support to the refugees, who want to return home, according to the report.

Although the National Council for Peace and Order adopted a plan to close all refugee camps in the Kingdom after removing them, the authorities will now focus on humanitarian standards and the refugees' repatriation preferences under UNHCR monitoring of the operation. Some NGOs said that insufficient infrastructure will be a problem for the returnees in rebuilding their lives in their home land. Another report also said that Thailand's Labour Department will open six one-stop service

² UN Special Rapporteur on Myanmar arrives in Yangon – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs18/NLM2014-07-17-red.pdf> (NLM) 17 July 2014 (p. 3)/
UN special rapporteur meets heads of IFG and MNHRC – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs18/NLM2014-07-18-red.pdf> (NLM) 18 July 2014 (p. 1 & 2)/
UN special rapporteur clarifies human rights awareness campaigns to Myanmar officials – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs19/NLM2014-07-25-red.pdf> (NLM) 25 July 2014 (p. 3)/
UN special rapporteur meets union ministers – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs19/NLM2014-07-26-red.pdf> (NLM) 26 July 2014 (p. 3)/
Home Affairs Union Minister meets UN Special Rapporteur – <http://www.moi.gov.mm/npe/newspaper-journal/content/27/07/2014/id-11636> (NLM) 27 July 2014 (p. 3)

³ Union FM attends 20th ASEAN-EU Ministerial Meeting – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs19/NLM2014-07-26-red.pdf> (NLM) 26 July 2014 (p. 3)

centres in Bangkok Tuesday for registrations of all migrant workers in the country. Thai authorities estimate that each centre is expected to register at least 1,000 migrant workers, with each of the centres operating until August 14. An estimated number of 2 million Myanmar migrant workers are working in Thailand.⁴

HLUTTAW SESSIONS – Highlights

Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) sessions

The 10th Regular Session of the First Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) held its 29th day meeting on 15 July. At the session the following issues were raised and discussed:

- MP Sai Um Hsai Mai from Kehsi Township submitted an urgent proposal calling for the Union Government to halt military operations in Kehsi Township, Loilem District, Shan State. Sai Um Hsai Mai said **clashes were responsible for the displacement of civilians, who are now taking refuge in nearby monasteries. Over 200 people have been displaced and among them Buddhist monks.** Deputy Minister for Defence Maj-Gen Kyaw Nyunt explained that **the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services has always strived for regional peace and stability, expressing his understanding that civilians are innocent victims of clashes between government forces and armed groups in areas lacking peace. He also pledged prompt action by watching the incident in question closely.**⁵

The 10th Regular Session of the First Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) held its 35th day meeting on 25 July. At the session the following issues were raised and discussed:

- MP Aung Zin from Pazundaung Constituency submitted a proposal calling for the adoption of a suitable electoral system for lower house elections. Regarding the proposal, MP Daw Dwe Bu of Ingyanyan Constituency said that **the proportional representation system was a good electoral system to build a democracy and federal state.** She pointed out that **the parliament would be stronger as the system allowed all political parties to secure seats at the parliament and the check-and-balance system would be more effective. She concluded that the electoral system was good for ethnic groups and would contribute to a better future.** MP Nyan Swe Win from Kyaukgyi Constituency said that **the electoral system had been adopted in over 90 countries around the world and the system would contribute to an inclusive process in national reconciliation and democratization.** Similarly Representative Thein Tun Oo of Amarapura supported the proposal and urged the session to form a committee or commission to draft a bill for adoption of the electoral system.⁶

HLUTTAW SESSIONS – Highlights

Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) sessions

The 10th Regular Session of the First Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) held its 29th day meeting on 18 July. At the session, the following issues and questions were raised and discussed:

- Khet Htein Nan of Constituency 1 in Kachin State called **on the Union Government to recognize the efforts of peacemakers in the on-going peace process and that support be given to continue its efforts till genuine peace is achieved.** In his response, Union Minister Aung Min said **the government has entered a ceasefire agreement with 14 of 16 ethnic**

⁴ UNHCR supports Myanmar refugees in Thailand – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs18/NLM2014-07-15-red.pdf> (NLM) 15 July 2014 (p. 1 & 2)/ UNHCR to help voluntary repatriation of Myanmar refugees in Thailand – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs18/NLM2014-07-17-red.pdf> (NLM) 17 July 2014 (p. 2)

⁵ Union Government urged to halt military operations in Shan State – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs18/NLM2014-07-16-red.pdf> (NLM) 16 July 2014 (p. 3)

⁶ PR system debated at Lower House – <http://www.moi.gov.mm/npe/newspaper-journal/content/25/07/2014/id-11600> (NLM) 26 July 2014 (p. 1)

armed groups, adding that the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) of the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO), one of the remaining two ethnic armed groups, has now reached a truce with the government and also pledged their continued peace-making efforts.⁷

The 10th Regular Session of the First Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) held its 31st day meeting on 21 July. At the session, the following issues and questions were raised and discussed:

- MP Dr Myint Kyi of Yangon Constituency No. 8 asked if there is a plan to build nuclear reactors for research purposes in the country. Minister for Science and Technology Dr Ko Ko Oo stated that Myanmar is carrying out tasks for human resources development in nuclear technology and will build nuclear reactors when the required infrastructure has been built. Dr Ko Ko Oo said that although the use of nuclear energy is supposed to be dangerous, correct application of it can be beneficial as the technology can be applied in various fields including health, agriculture, livestock breeding etc. The union minister added that it is necessary to build a nuclear reactor in order to conduct nuclear researches more effectively but the government at present is still trying to implement measures for protection against nuclear radiation, drafting laws for non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, building infrastructure for nuclear technology and development of human resources in nuclear technology. He concluded that Myanmar might build nuclear reactors for research purposes at an appropriate time.⁸

The 10th Regular Session of the First Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) held its 36th day meeting on 28 July. At the session, the following issues and questions were raised and discussed:

- A military MP representative submitted a proposal urging the union government to combat the practice of cultivation, trafficking and abuse of opium with the participation of the people. The military MP stated that cultivation of opium poppy had risen since 2006 as economic sanctions imposed by the international community has created poverty. In addition, the military representative said cultivation of opium poppy was a bad legacy of colonialists who permitted poppy cultivation in Shan and Kachin States during the colonial period. Although successive governments after the independence from the British have tried to eliminate poppy cultivation as a national cause, it still persists, he added. Impact of the economic sanctions was not visible in urban areas, but in rural areas, with farmers forced to resort to poppy cultivation as it was easy money. Another military MP representative suggested that a solution must be found concerning the increase in cultivation, trafficking and abuse of opium, despite successive governments' strategies, projects and operations to root out the practice. The Upper House session approved the proposal.⁹

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Union Parliament) sessions

The 10th Regular Session of the First Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Union Parliament) held its 9th day meeting on 16 July. During the session, the following issues were raised and discussed;

- Union Minister for Labour, Employment and Social Security U Aye Myint briefed the session and stated that at the 102th Conference of the International Labour Organization held in Geneva on 13 July 2013 Myanmar declared it would implement the ILO convention 182,

⁷ Government should recognize national peacemakers and continue its effort till peace prevails: Kachin MP – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs18/NLM2014-07-18-red.pdf> (NLM) 18 July 2014 (p. 3)

⁸ Myanmar eyes nuclear reactors for research purposes: Union Minister for Science and Technology – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs19/NLM2014-07-22-red.pdf> (NLM) 22 July 2014 (p. 3)

⁹ Economic sanctions lead to increase in cultivation of opium poppy: defence services personnel representative – <http://www.moi.gov.mm/npe/newspaper-journal/content/29/07/2014/id-11736> (NLM) 29 July 2014 (p. 3)

the union minister added. Myanmar joined the ILO in 1948 and has agreed to implement 19 conventions of the organization. According to the convention, the worst forms of child labour includes slavery or similar practices such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict; the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances; the use, procuring or offering of a child for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties and work which is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children. In addition, Myanmar will also be responsible to rehabilitate the abused children by providing free education and creating appropriate environment for them and that Convention 182 of the International Labour Organization concerning the prohibition and immediate action for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour would come into force starting from 18 December 2014;

- The session also discussed amendments of anti-corruption bill, implementation of commitments in ASEAN framework agreement on services and generation of electricity.¹⁰

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PYITHU HLUTTAW APPROVES PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH MINISTRY OF ETHNIC AFFAIRS

The Pyithu Hluttaw has approved a draft bill submitted by its National Races Affairs and Peace Making Committee that provides for the creation of a Ministry of Ethnic Affairs. The draft Protection for Minority Rights bill, aimed at protecting the rights of indigenous minorities, was approved on 22 July.

"This draft emphasises the social rights of the ethnic minority people and the creation of a ministry will mean we will be able to progress the affairs of ethnic people at Union level," Sai Bo Aung (Shan Nationalities Democratic Party, Muse Township, Shan State), told the Pyithu Hluttaw.

An MP from Kachin State said that once the law was enacted it would enable the list of ethnic minority groups to be corrected. Daw Dwe Bu (Unity and Democracy Party of Kachin State, Injyangang Township) also said it would help minority groups such as the Kachin to achieve equality with the majority Bamar. "This will help us to establish peace," she said. A proposal tabled in the Amyotha Hluttaw in March 2013 to establish a Ministry for Ethnic Affairs was defeated by 88 votes to 76.¹¹

MANDALAY STUDENTS DEMAND RIGHT TO TAKE PART IN POLITICS

Dozens of students have protested outside Mandalay's Yadanarpon University demanding that the National Education Bill passed by the Pyithu Hluttaw on 16 March be abolished. If it is signed into law it would formalise a long-standing policy banning students from supporting or being involved in a political activity that leads to "unrest." Students also demonstrated against a clause in the bill that prohibits ethnic minority languages from being taught. About 40 student union members from Yadanarpon University, Mandalay Technological University and Kyaukse Technological University marched along the perimeter of the university campus and past three of its gates.

¹⁰ ILO Convention on Elimination of Worst Forms of Child Labour to come into force in Myanmar in December – <http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs18/NLM2014-07-17-red.pdf> (NLM) 17 July 2014 (p. 3)

¹¹ Pyithu Hluttaw approves proposal to establish Ministry of Ethnic Affairs – <http://mizzima.com/mizzima-news/myanmar/item/11878-pyithu-hluttaw-approves-proposal-to-establish-ministry-of-ethnic-affairs> (Mizzima) 24 July 2014

University officials locked the gates to prevent the demonstrators entering the campus and notices opposing the education bill that were stuck on the perimeter wall were removed by the officials within minutes. When asked, one tutor who was taking photos of the protest declined to explain what he was doing.

“We’ve expressed disapproval with this bill because it was not drafted in accord with democracy. Students know they are being oppressed and the authorities should also know that students would rebel against it if they are going to be pressed down more and more. We don’t accept the law and it needs to be abolished,” said Ko Nyan Htein Lin, a member of the student union organising committee at Yadanarpon University. He said that while other students had shown an interest in the protest only a few had joined in.

“There is less participation by students. But we don’t blame them because students have been oppressed since the 88 uprising. We will make speeches twice a week on why we are opposing the law and try to draw their attention to be joined with us more,” he said. One student, who asked not to be named, said he didn’t know what the protest was about. “I don’t know why they are doing it but I felt there is a good intention in their activities and they are doing it for all students. Maybe I will join with them when I can find out what their cause is.”¹²

ETHNIC REPRESENTATIVES PROTEST PR SYSTEM BY BEING ABSENT FROM THE PARLIAMENT

Ethnic representatives have protested Proportional Representation (PR) system by being absent from the parliament for the first time. The ethnic representatives decided not to attend the parliament on July 24 because MP Aung Zin from National Democratic Force (NDF) is submitted a proposal about PR system in the parliament.

About 30 representatives didn’t attend the parliament session. Among them, 18 members from Shan Nationalities Democratic party, six members from Rakhine National party, three members from All Mon Region Democracy party, one member from Phalon-Sawaw Democratic Party, representatives from other parties are included.

“Our National Brotherhood Federation made an announcement. We will not attend the parliament when the PR system is discussed. It is a way of showing disapproved. We have about 30 representatives,” said MP Khin Saw Wai from Rakhine National Party. “We are against the PR system. We made protest by press conference. And we submitted a letter to the speaker. But now it has been brought to discuss in the parliament. It is no use listening which is not met with requirements. We will not win if we vote against the system. That’s why we decided not to present at the parliament. Total 18 members from our party didn’t attend,” said Sai Hla Kyaw from Shan Nationalities Democratic party. Although 42 representatives including Aung San Suu Kyi opposed the PR system, it has been decided to continue the discussion in parliament.

The PR system has four types: Party List system, Mix Member Proportional System, Mix Member Proportional Majority System and Single Transferable Vote System. If PR system is continued to use, they will make protests in states. The ethnics rejected it completely and cannot accept if the system is used in not only upper house but also in states and regions, National Brotherhood Federation revealed.¹³

¹² Mandalay students demand right to take part in politics – <http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/11143-mandalay-student-demand-right-to-take-part-in-politics.html> (Myanmar Times) 25 July 2014

¹³ Ethnic representatives protest PR system by being absent from the parliament – http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=6937:ethnic-representatives-protest-pr-system-by-being-absent-from-the-parliament&catid=32:politics&Itemid=354 (Eleven News Media) 25 July 2014

GOVT, ORGS AND PARTIES ATTEND ELECTIONEERING CONFERENCE

A conference discussing Myanmar's forthcoming elections was held in Yangon on 20 July, bringing together government officials, political parties, specialists and civil society organisations. The event was organised by the International Republican Institute and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, and saw a turnout of over 150 local and foreign organisations. The conference discussed regional and international electoral procedures, in order to find one most suited Myanmar's current situation before the 2014 by-election and 2015 general election.

Tin Aye, the chairperson of Myanmar's electoral commission, delegations from the opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) and other minority ethnic parties were also present. "From my experience, we provided by-laws and guidelines eight months earlier the general election back in 2010. As the preparation period was short, there were flaws in voter training at the grassroots level. Frankly, the 2010 general election was held amidst setbacks in rules and relations," said Tin Aye. He acknowledged that the current political atmosphere is a product of the 2008 Constitution and 2010 General Election. "I and the election commission have committed to deliver the integrity of the coming elections by hook or by crook," the commissioner pledged.

Currently parliament is discussing how to change the law to accommodate a proportional representation voting system despite strong opposition. A commission has been tasked with researching how to implement this model without complicating it too much, as well as drafting a new electoral law and bylaws in line with the current constitution.

At the same time, the opposition NLD and the 88 Generation Peace and Open Society have been on a nation-wide campaign to seek public support for amending the 2008 military-drafted charter. The current constitution maintains a 25 per cent military presence in the legislature and bans Aung San Suu Kyi from running for president next year.

A recent announcement by the Union Election Commission banned anyone but a contesting candidate from campaigning in any one particular constituency. Many saw this as an attempt to divide the opposition and evidence of its partisan, pro-government leanings. "There are some controversies in the recent election's proclamations. We have complained about these. However, the chairperson's promises are quite encouraging as he says he guaranteed a free and fair election," said NLD representative Aung Moe Nyo.¹⁴

ETHNIC MPS JOIN PEACE DISCUSSIONS

Ethnic members of parliament from constituencies in areas of conflict met with Myanmar Peace Centre (MPC) representatives in Naypyidaw on 21 July. Head of the MPC, Union Minister Aung Min led a discussion about the role of ethnic MPs in the peace process. "As preparations are underway to start work on the third-draft of the nationwide ceasefire agreement in the beginning of August, the role of the parliament and MPs is becoming more important," said MPC member Hla Maung Shwe. "We wanted to have a mutual discussion with them on the peace process." The meeting marked the first time that MPs from ethnic areas of conflict have been involved in the peace discussions.

A lower house MP from Karen State, Nan Say Awa said she has always wanted to be a part of the peace process and is glad the MPC is now including them in discussions. "The MPC explained the current developments of the peace process to us. They said MPs would also be able to sign the national-level ceasefire agreement and that they are working to implement this as soon as possible.

¹⁴ Govt, orgs and parties attend electioneering conference – http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=6883:govt-orgs-and-parties-attend-electioneering-conference&catid=32:politics&Itemid=354 (Eleven News Media) 22 July 2014

We asked questions and were able to learn about the process so far, for which we are happy,” she said. Nan Say Awa went on to say that she hopes similar meetings involving ethnic MPs would take place in the future.

Around 40 MPs from conflict zones in Kachin, Shan and Karen states joined the meeting and they expressed gratitude that they were finally being included in peace discussions. The meeting comes ahead of ceasefire talks between ethnic groups and government peace negotiators in the Kachin Independence Organisation’s headquarters, Laiza in Kachin State on 24 July.¹⁵

RESUME FIGHTING BETWEEN BURMA ARMY AND SHAN STATE ARMY-NORTH AFFECTS SIX VILLAGES

Resumed fighting from July 20 till July 21, 2014 between Burma Army Battalion 248 and Shan State Army-North (SSA-N) Brigade 72 in Kehsi Township, southern Shan State, has displaced people from six villages.

According to Sai Harn, a Shan youth who assisted the displaced villagers, the six villages include Parnng Jay, Wan Kyawng, Par Teap, Wan Kwarn, Parnng Mong and Parnng Mike Kay, in Kehsi Township. Sai Harn could not confirm the number of newly displaced villagers.

Since tension mounted in early July, hundreds of people have been seeking shelter at Wan Wap temple. The newly displaced villagers could not be able to seek refuge at Wan Wap due to the Burma Army operations in the surrounding area.

According to Sao Sai Kaw a retired SSA officer, the Burma Army wanted to occupy at Ta Pa Sawng in central Shan State because they were trying to cut off the connection between Shan State Army-North and Shan State Army-South.

Shan State Progress Party/Shan State Army-North General Secretary Sao Khun Seng said: “Before we reached a ceasefire, we built a bridge for the benefit of the people, and then the Burma Army burned down the bridge. After we signed a ceasefire, we rebuilt the bridge for the transportation of the people. For the security of the bridge, we set up our base there. We were told to move out, but this is our motherland, so how can we abandon it?”¹⁶

RAKHINE PARTY CALLS FOR FOUR-WAY MEETING

Dr Aye Maung from the Rakhine Nationalities Development Party has called for a four-way summit to discuss amending the 2008 constitution. His call follows numerous requests from the National League for Democracy to convene a meeting between Aung San Suu Kyi, President Thein Sein, Parliamentary Speaker Thura Shwe Mann and Senior General Min Aung Hlaing. “Asking four figures to hold a meeting is meant for the good of the country. The current constitution cannot give full rights to citizens. For that reason, the only way is a four-party meeting to seek the solutions,” said Dr Aye Maung. He added that Senior General Min Aung Hlaing plays a leading role in constitutional reform as he can adjust how many seats the army can keep in parliament. “Now is an opportune moment for the four figures to meet. It is for the good of the country,” continued Dr Aye Maung.

Ethnic parties as well as the National League for Democracy have been vocal in their opposition to a proposal to introduce a system proportional representation ahead of next year’s election. “Our ethnics totally reject a system of proportional representation. We have discussed not to practice the

¹⁵ Ethnic MPs join peace discussions – <http://english.dvb.no/dvb-video/ethnic-mps-join-peace-discussions-burma-myanmar/42628> (DVB) 21 July 2014

¹⁶ Resume fighting between Burma Army and Shan State Army-North affects six villages – http://www.english.panglong.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5879:resume-fighting-between-burma-army-andshan-state-army-north-affects-six-villages&catid=86:war&Itemid=284(S.H.A.N.) 22 July 2014

proportional representation. If so, protests will be launched starting from Shan State and then Rakhine and Mon States,” said Dr Aye Maung.¹⁷

ANALYSIS

The ethnic leaders’ summit in Laiza once again reflects the importance and need for peace if indeed the on-going democratic reforms are to succeed. The NCCT has thus far yet to deliver on the long-promised nation-wide cease-fire, key players including - the government, military, parliament and main opposition party are now also focussed more on the 2015 elections than the national reconciliation process. The moves to amend parts of the existing Constitution, introduce proportional representation as well as removing of military representatives from parliament maybe justified but they should not be done at the expense of the achieving peace. Continued aggression and offensives by government troops in Shan and Kachin States will need to cease, if the NCA is to be meaningful and sustainable the armed forces of both the government and ethnic armed organisations will need to make compromises on key issues such as territorial control and economic interests in the interest of the country and people.

¹⁷ Rakhine party calls for four-way meeting – http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=6764:rakhine-party-calls-for-four-way-meeting&catid=32:politics&Itemid=354 (Eleven News Media) 14 July 2014