

POLITICAL MONITOR No. 5

OFFICIAL MEDIA

PARLIAMENTS APPROVES CANDIDATURES FOR PRESIDENT AND VICE-PRESIDENTS

The presidential election process began in Nay Pyi Taw on 10 March, with Htin Kyaw and Dr Sai Mauk Kham being nominated as presidential candidates by the Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) and Chin national MP Henry Van Thio and Khin Aung Myint receiving the nomination of the Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House). The two houses separately voted to confirm Htin Kyaw and Henry Van Thio as candidates for the presidency and vice presidency on 11 March, while military representatives put forth Myint Swe, a former Lt-Gen, as its nominee for vice presidency. When voting at the second day meeting of the Pyithu Hluttaw's presidential electoral college, 274 of 317 representatives voted for Htin Kyaw while votes of 29 representatives went for Dr Sai Mauk Kham. Of 317 votes, 14 were deemed invalid. Similarly, the Amyotha Hluttaw's presidential electoral college voted on a vice-president. Henry Van Thio received 148 votes while Khin Aung Myint won 13 votes. Of 167 votes, 6 were deemed invalid. A group of the presidential electoral college formed with Defense Services personnel Hluttaw representatives have also approved Lt-Gen Myint Swe (Retired) for the vice-president. A list of the names of vice-presidents elected by three groups of the Presidential Electoral College will be put forward to the Speaker of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw.¹

US BUSINESS COMMUNITY ASKS OBAMATO EASE MYANMAR SANCTIONS

To improve ties between Myanmar and the USA, the American Chamber of Commerce Myanmar, the National Foreign Trade Council, the US-ASEAN Business Council, the United States Chambers of Commerce and the United States Council of International Business, has called for the US government to ease sanctions on Myanmar. Members of the US business community supported Obama's engagement in Myanmar thus far, including the lifting of import bans, the easing of finance and investment bans, the opening of a USAID office and extending both the OPIC (Overseas Private Investment Corporation) and the Export-Import Bank support. The letter also pointed to the positive election results in November—in which Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy won a vast majority of parliamentary seats. Vice President Nyan Tun asked the Obama administration to lift the US sanctions on Myanmar at the meeting of Southeast Asian leaders in California in mid-February 2016. Vice President Nyan Tun said that although the US had given economic support to other ASEAN countries, Myanmar had received little developmental assistance due to the sanctions. US sanctions on Myanmar were initiated in 1997 and it was not until 2012 that the United States restored diplomatic ties with Myanmar, one year after current President Thein Sein's quasi-civilian government came to power. Since last year, the Union Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI) has been urging the US government to re-examine the sanctions list and remove some companies and individuals. This, the body argues, would create a level playing field in Myanmar for US companies with otherwise limited business power.²

UPWC DENOUNCES ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW BRIGADE BY KIA

Union Peace-making Working Committee has denounced the establishment of the 6th Brigade by the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), warning that the extended establishment will have a negative effect on the government's peace process. The announcement released on 29 February added that the

¹ The Right Hand Man : Presidential Electoral College elects three vice-presidents –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2016-03-12-red.pdf> (GNLM) 12 March 2016 (p. 1)/
There Can Only Be One: Parliaments nominate presidential candidates –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2016-03-11-red.pdf> (GNLM) 11 March 2016 (p. 1)

² Open the Door to Trade: US Business Community Asks Obama Govt to Ease Myanmar Sanctions –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2016-03-05-red.pdf> (GNLM) 5 March 2016 (p. 1)

establishment does not serve the effort toward internal peace. The KIA has established its new 6th Brigade in Mongbaw Mongkoe and Phaunghsai, which were previously controlled by the Burmese Communist Party (BCP) in northern Shan State, on 26 February 2016. The formation comes while the government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar is implementing a nationwide peace process, which is intended to ensure national reconciliation and national development and bring an end to armed conflicts, said the announcement.³

EU DELEGATION VISITS IDP CAMPS IN KYAUKME

An EU delegation visited camps for the internally displaced persons (IDP) in Kyaukme, northern Shan State on 28 February. The 8-member delegation talked to IDPs there, querying their conditions at the camps established at monasteries. More than 3,500 IDPs in total are sheltering at 20 camps in Kyaukme. Fighting broke out between the Restoration Council of the Shan State/Shan State Army-South and the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) in early February and has driven local villagers from their homes. Local authorities and NGOs are providing them with food and health care services.

ARAKAN ARMY OFFICER ARRESTED WITH GUNS, DRUGS IN YANGON

Local security forces on 6 February searched a suspicious vehicle near Victor International School in Tamwe Township, Yangon and arrested a man later identified as Aung Myat Kyaw from the Arakan Army (AA) together with a 9mm pistol and 14 bullets. Further investigation revealed that Aung Myat Kyaw rented a house together with Wai Tha Tun in North Dagon Township. The warranted search of the house resulted in the confiscation of 42 pieces of military equipment, 80 camouflage backpacks, 70 army-green bags and 60 straps, five pairs of night-vision binoculars, 21 walkie-talkies, nine compasses, one GPS device, 89 army-green groundsheets, plastic-explosives and a vehicle licence plate. The search of Wai Tha Tun's house in North Okkalapa led to the seizure of 330,800 stimulant pills, for which they were also charged. On 10 February, explosive materials, including 9 AK cartridges, thousands of rounds of heavy machine gun ammunition, dynamite, smoke bombs and detonators were found in the house the two men rented 6 months ago in Hlaingthaya Township. Further investigations led to the exposure of 6 RPG launchers and shells, 70 cartridges, 45 TNT blocks, 254 detonators and other explosive materials hidden in a building near the prawn farm belonging to the Arakan Army in Rambree Township, Rakhine State. The culprits admitted that they had transported weapons and ammunitions to Sittwe 14 times in the past two years and that the Arakan Army is involved in illegal drug dealings in order to purchase weapons. Lt-Col Aung Myat Kyaw of the Arakan Army served under Brig-Gen Tun Myat Naing, Chief of Staff of the Arakan Army. The AA's Chief of Staff was reported to have married the daughter of San Kyaw Hla of the Arakan National Party.⁴

CARTER CENTER RELEASES MYANMAR POST-ELECTION STATEMENT

The Carter Center in a statement released on 29 February, praised Myanmar's Union Election Commission in its handling of post-election complaints in a transparent manner and urged the country's new government to address legal and structural issues to make it easier for candidates and citizens to pursue complaints in future elections and to further increase the transparency of the tabulation of results. 45 complaints were lodged with the election commission. The cost of filing a complaint—including the cost of traveling to Nay Pyi Taw for a hearing—discouraged some candidates and parties from registering complaints. To date, the election commission has issued a judgment in only two cases. (The lack of deadlines for deciding cases limits the potential for an effective remedy.) The Center's observers remained in Myanmar after the 8 November election to monitor post-election day developments, including the tabulation of results, the dispute-resolution process and the seating

³ UPWC denounces establishment of newbrigade by KIA –

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2016-03-01-red.pdf> (GNLM) 1 March 2016 (p. 1)

⁴ How to Fund a War: Arakan Army officer arrested with guns, drugs in Yangon –

http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/29_Feb_16_gnlm.pdf (GNLM) 29 February 2016 (p. 1)

of the new government. In most areas the observers visited, tabulation was conducted in a transparent and professional manner. However, results forms were not always made available for public scrutiny in a timely manner, and in several instances, observers were denied access or were restricted in their ability to observe effectively. The Carter Center offered the following recommendations to the Union Election Commission :

- As possible, minimize additional costs for complainants, including the relocation of hearings to states and regions where appropriate.
- Ensure that cases are heard without delay to minimise the impact on the rights of the complainants and defendants.
- Make decisions available on the UEC website for public review in a timely manner.
- For future elections, the tabulation process should provide for the public availability of all results forms as soon as they are completed to ensure independent verification of results. The process of tabulating results should be fully accessible to accredited observers.

The Center commends the UEC on its post-election review and recommends that the Union legislature place reform of election laws, including the improvement of the post-election dispute system and campaign finance regulation, on the 2016 legislative agenda.⁵

PYITHU HLUTTAW (Lower House) Sessions Highlights

The Second Pyithu Hluttaw at its 14th Day session approved the renaming of the **Farmer, Worker and Youth Affairs Committee** as the **Farmer and Worker Affairs Committee** and announced the abolition of the **Pyithu Hluttaw Legal Affairs and Special Cases Assessment Committee**.⁶

The Second Pyithu Hluttaw's first regular session continued its 15th Day with **the presentation of a report on the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC) meeting**. The Chairman of the Pyithu Hluttaw Ethnic Affairs and Internal Peace-making Committee Khun Maung Thaug, who took part in the 5th UPDJC meeting, presented a report to the Parliament, calling for government to seize the moment for peace. The chairman also suggested that the UPDJC should be formed with parliamentarians – 3 from the Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) and 2 from the Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) - in the time of the next government.⁷

UNOFFICIAL MEDIA

SHAN COALITION MEETING CUT SHORT UNDER MILITARY PRESSURE

The three-day annual meeting of the Committee for the Shan State Unity (CSSU) ended after only one day on 4 March due to pressure from the local military in Rangoon. The committee is a coalition of ethnic armed groups, political parties and civil society organizations, aimed to explore strategies that would advance collaboration and unity within Shan State's diverse communities. The Shan leaders meeting held in Rangoon on 3 March had planned to continue the meeting over the following two days at the Summit Parkview Hotel. The spokesperson of the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD) Sai Leik, -said that the managers of both hotels were pressured by the authorities against hosting the event. Members of a local Military Affairs Security Team requested Sai Leik to allow them into the meeting to listen to the proceedings on 3 March ; the request was refused. "As we did

⁵ Carter Center Releases Myanmar Post-Election Statement –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2016-03-01-red.pdf> (GNLM) 1 March 2016 (p. 2)

⁶ Second Pyithu Hluttaw abolishes special cases assessment committee –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2016-03-08-red.pdf> (GNLM) 8 March 2016 (p. 2)

⁷ Second Pyithu Hluttaw session continues –
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/GNLM2016-03-09-red.pdf> (GNLM) 9 March 2016 (p. 2)

not let them in, they asked whether we had permission from the local authorities [for this meeting],” Sai Leik said. “We did not need to ask for [permission] as it is an annual meeting of the committee, but I went to the Yangon western district office for the permission late Thursday afternoon. The chief did not dare to sign the paper, neither accepting nor rejecting the scheduling of the meeting, and also not giving any reasons,” he explained. Two of the CSSU members are the Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army-South (RCSS/SSA-S) and the Shan State Progress Party/Shan State Army-North (SSPP/SSA-N) ; the former was removed from Burma’s List of Unlawful Organizations last year after signing a so-called nationwide ceasefire agreement (NCA) with the government, but the latter was not a signatory to the pact. Col Sai La of the RCSS/SSA-S, said that the meeting was legal according to the text of the nationwide ceasefire agreement as long as it centered on talks concerning national politics, which he said that it did. At the meeting, the Chairman of the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD) Khun Tun Oo was named as the Committee’s alternative chairman and will replace the current Chairman Lieutenant-General Ywet Sit of the Restoration Council of Shan State [RCSS]. The committee was formed in 2013 with the chair rotating alphabetically. Its first annual meeting was held in Chiang Mai, Thailand.⁸

CLASHES REPORTED BETWEEN GOVT TROOPS, TNLA IN NAMHSAN TOWNSHIP

Fighting broke out in Namhsan Township, northern Shan State, on 28 February between the Burma Army and the Ta’ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), according to the latter group. The TNLA reported that hundreds of Burma Army troops had been deployed to areas of northern Shan State where the Ta’ang armed force operates. On Sunday, two separate clashes were reported in the Namhsan area, with the TNLA claiming five Burma Army soldiers were killed. “One clash broke out in the morning for one hour and the second clash at noon,” said a report from the armed group, which did not cite casualties on the TNLA side. Fresh fighting between the two sides broke out in Kyaukme Township on 29 February, according to the TNLA. The Burma Army has reportedly called on both SSA (Ywet Sit) group and TNLA to return to their “designated” territories, according to an article in the state-run Global New Light of Myanmar on 24 February, quoting the Defense Ministry, asserting that army operations were underway in Shan State. Burma Army troops have been operating across several townships in northern Shan State, according to the TNLA’s general secretary Tar Bong Kyaw, including Kyaukme, Kutkai, Namtu, Manton, Namhsan and Mongmit Townships. The TNLA has repeatedly accused the SSA-S of cooperating with the Burma Army—allegations refuted by the Shan force.

“They helped the RCSS to fight us,” said Tar Bong Kyaw, referring to the SSA-S by their political wing, the Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS). “But when a lot of fighting broke out and many people had to leave from the area, [government] troops came into our area claiming to maintain peace.” “There is a political transition in our country and we will try to avoid fighting as much as we can,” he added.⁹

NYI PU GETS RAKHINE CHIEF MINISTER NOD

MP Nyi Pu from the National League for Democracy (NLD) has been nominated as the chief minister for Rakhine State, said NLD central executive committee member Win Htein on 4 March, in defiance of the wishes of the dominant party in the state. “Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has already nominated Nyi

⁸ Shan Coalition Meeting Cut Short Under Military Pressure – <http://www.irrawaddy.com/burma/shan-coalition-meeting-cut-short-under-military-pressure.html> (the Irrawaddy) 4 March 2016/

Shan committee picks new 'alternative' leader – <http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/politics/shan-committee-picks-new-alternative-leader> (Eleven Myanmar) 4 March 2016

⁹ Clashes Reported Between Govt Troops, TNLA in Namhsan Township – <http://www.irrawaddy.com/burma/clashes-reported-between-govt-troops-tnla-in-namhsan-township.html> (the Irrawaddy) 29 February 2016

Pu as the Chief Minister for Rakhine State. It is in accordance with the Constitution as our party won the election. But there are other parties [in the state]. Members of other parties and qualified people were also under consideration for the post. This is the same for other states. We consider not only NLD members but also other party's members," said Win Htein. Nyi Pu is also a member of the Executive Committee and secured a seat for Rakhine State's Gwa constituency no.2 in the November election. The NLD secured just 8 seats in Rakhine State's parliament. The Arakan National Party (ANP) took most seats in the state and has a strong majority and said it would act in opposition if it was not allowed to choose the chief minister. "It's the right of the party which won a landslide victory nationwide. They can do what they desire. We can do nothing about it," said general secretary Tun Aung Kyaw from the ANP on 2 March. The Constitution states that the Chief Minister nominated by the President can only be rejected by a state or regional parliament if it can be proved the nominee does not meet the required qualifications.¹⁰

MON STATE GOV'T URGES NMSP TO INK NCA

Mon State Chief Minister Ohn Myint has urged New Mon State Party (NMSP) leaders to sign the nationwide ceasefire agreement (NCA) during an informal meeting between the Mon State Government and NMSP executives held on 28 February. NMSP's Home Affairs Officer in-charge Nai Win Hla said, "the state government requested to hold an informal meeting and encouraged us to sign the NCA," said Nai Win Hla, in an interview with MNA. The NMSP was represented by NMSP Chair Nai Htaw Mon, Nai Win Hla, Central Executive Committee member Nai Hongsar Bhonekhine and Lieutenant Colonel M Seik Chan. The government side was led by Chief Minister Ohn Myint, State Security and Border Affairs Minister Colonel Win Naing Oo, [newly appointed] State Hluttaw Chairwoman Daw Tin Ei and Zaw Lin Htun, Secretary of State Government. Following the meeting with the State government, the NMSP leaders met with Major General Myo Win, commander of Southeast Command. "The matter of the NCA inking depends on the upcoming [new] government. If we want to sign it, it will be signed," said Nai Win Hla. Nai Win Hla added that the NMSP refused to sign the NCA because other ethnic armed organizations were not invited to the NCA inking. Although the NMSP accepted the NCA points, it decided against the signing due to the union government's continued business-as-usual efforts. Late September in 2015, Chief Minister Aung Min met with NMSP Chairman Nai Htaw Mon in Thanbyuzayat Town and at the meeting the government Minister urged us to ink the NCA. However, the NMSP refused to sign on the grounds that the government excluded the other six ethnic armed groups to the NCA inking. The NMSP, an ethnic armed group in southern Burma, has remained a non-signatory to the NCA. However, it is yet to engage in armed conflict with the Tatmdaw troops as fighting in other parts of the country rage on.¹¹

WOMEN HOLD DIALOGUE ON PEACE PROCESS INCLUSION

As part of a push to include more women in Burma's peace process, members of the Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process (AGIPP) and civil society leaders held a three-day strategic dialogue meeting in Chiang Mai from 27 to 29 February. The meeting entitled "More Women in the Peace Process Equals Sustainable Peace in Myanmar," was attended by parliamentarians, peace facilitators or female representatives from ethnic armed groups. Dialogue facilitator Nang Raw Zahkung, who is the deputy director of the Nyein (Shalom) Foundation and a steering committee member of AGIPP, said that the meeting in northern Thailand "aimed to share the views of the women in the peace process" and to develop "a collective approach to mobilize for the inclusion of more women." Drafted in late 2015, soon after the country's so-called nationwide ceasefire agreement, the draft framework for political dialogue promoted a 30 percent quota for women's inclusion in future

¹⁰ Nyi Pu gets Rakhine chief minister nod –

<http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/politics/nyi-pu-gets-rakhine-chief-minister-nod> (Eleven Myanmar) 5 March 2016

¹¹ Mon State Gov't urges NMSP to ink NCA –

<http://monnews.org/2016/03/01/mon-state-govt-urges-nmsp-to-ink-nca/> (IIMNA) 1 March 2016

peace talks. “We aim for our representation to reach this 30 percent quota, as now there is not yet such a proportion,” said Nang Raw Zakhung. Doi Bu, a former upper house lawmaker from Kachin State’s Unity and Democracy Party (UDPKS), said that women need to be ready to take part in the process. “Even though women are more than half of the population, we tend to think of staying behind, mostly in the political arena and the peace building process,” she explained. “In addition, men also need to be reminded to be inclusive of women’s participation, as they are the decision makers, even sometimes making decisions to let their wives, peers or daughters to go to such a meeting.” Nang Phyu Lin, the current chair of the AGIPP, said that “it is very encouraging that more women in some states, such as Shan [State], are also participating in the joint ceasefire monitoring team.” She said that recommendations from the women’s strategic dialogue would be shared to the stakeholders in the Union Peace Conference. But, for the nationwide effort, the general consensus is that there remains much work to be done. “We must be interested not only in family affairs, but also in the community and in ethnic affairs,” Nang Phyu Lin said. “We must participate from the community level on up ; without the representation at the community level, we cannot be at the high decision making level.” The women’s dialogue on gender inclusion was also joined by foreign researchers and experts on the issues of gender quotas and gender content in peace processes and ceasefires. During the session, women also met with leaders of the ethnic armed alliance the United Nationalities Federal Council. AGIPP, a network of the 8 women’s groups, has been actively advocating on the topic since 2015.¹²

WOMEN’S LEAGUE OF BURMA CALLS ON NLD GOVT FOR FRESH START WITH PEACE PROCESS

The Women’s League of Burma (WLB) has called on the incoming National League for Democracy-led government, and donors, to start afresh with the process to bring peace to the ethnic states. According to a press release, the WLB is gravely concerned at the recent fighting in northern Shan State between the Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS) and the Ta’ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), which has displaced over 5,000 civilians and is cleaving ethnic rifts among communities which have co-existed peacefully for generations. It is no coincidence that this fighting broke out shortly after the signing of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) in October 2015. RCSS was one of only 8 Ethnic Armed Organizations(EAOs) which signed. Most did not sign because of the non-inclusive nature of the agreement. The TNLA was one of the groups which Naypyidaw refused to accept as a signatory. Naypyidaw’s insistence on excluding certain armed groups from the NCA was a patent divide and rule strategy, which is now playing itself out in northern Shan State, according to the press release. In fact, the non-inclusive nature of the NCA had doomed it to failure from the outset. Yet, with the support of the international community, Naypyidaw has been allowed to continue with the charade of its “peace process”, which has served no one’s interests except its own.

The WLB says it is time for the charade to stop. Now that a new NLD-led government is about to take office, it must begin afresh with the peace process. A first step to building trust must be for the Tatmadaw to immediately stop its military offensives and pull back its troops from conflict areas. After that, all armed resistance groups, without exception, must be included in talks. The WLB says the new government should also recognize that Naypyidaw’s pillaging of the resources in the ethnic areas is fuelling conflict. It must impose a moratorium on large-scale extraction projects, including hydropower dams, until there is genuine federal reform, allowing ethnic communities decision-making over resources in their areas. “Finally, we urge international donors not to cling onto the failed

¹² Women Hold Dialogue on Peace Process Inclusion – <http://www.irrawaddy.com/burma/women-hold-dialogue-on-peace-process-inclusion.html> (the Irrawaddy) 29 February 2016

NCA, but to start afresh in supporting a new peace-building model that does not simply serve the one-sided interests of the Tatmadaw and their cronies in Myanmar,” the release says.¹³

KAREN ARMED GROUPS UNITE, AGREE KNU TAKES POLITICAL LEAD

A recent meeting between different Karen armed groups reached a decision that the Karen National Union is to lead the groups political agenda. The meeting held on February 29, 2016 at the Karen National Liberation Army’s headquarter in Pa-an District, Karen State is a regular event among the Karen Armed Groups Unity Committee that represents various the KNLA, KNU/KNLA Peace Council, Democratic Karen Benevolent Army, and the recently reformed Democratic Karen Buddhist Army. General Saw Johnny, the Chief-of-Staff of the KNLA said that the main purpose was unity – to work together. “We agreed in the meeting that all the Karen armed groups will take part in political issues and will work together in unity. It will be of value only when everyone is involved. We will move forward with what we have agreed on.”

The discussions at the meeting mainly focused on unity and issues that are now causing problems amongst the groups. The groups agreed in principle to work towards a united armed force. Major Saw San Aung, from the recently reformed Democratic Kayin Buddhist Army, said, “Our group was reformed due to the circumstances. We reformed our group, not to fight back against our mother organization [KNU]. Some people misunderstood our position, so we explained it at this meeting. We are happy to see these signs of unity, but there are still many things that need to be done – we need to be patient and take our time.”

The Karen Armed Group Unity Committee was formed in May 28, 2013 with representatives from the different Karen armed groups including KNU, DKBA, Karen Border Guard Force, KNU/KNLA-Peace Council, Karen Peace Force and Padoh Aung San’s led Payar Gon Karen peace group. 40 officials and representatives from the Karen armed groups attended the meeting. The Karen BGF and some other representatives from smaller groups did not attend.¹⁴

ANP MOVES AGAINST DISSENTERS

The Arakan National Party has taken a tough response to dissenters within its ranks with those who broke with the party’s official policy of opposing the incoming National League for Democracy government. Rumbblings of discontent within the ANP – which was formed out of the merger of 2 Rakhine parties in 2014 – have exploded into the open, threatening to split the most successful ethnic minority party to emerge from Myanmar’s elections last November, possibly to the benefit of the NLD. The ANP announced on 7 March that its disciplinary committee had formed a group to investigate an unauthorised press conference held on 6 March by some senior party members who rejected the official party policy of serving in opposition to the NLD. The 5-member investigation team is to report its findings to the ANP’s Central Executive Committee, which is due to meet in Sittwe from 12 to 13 March. Phoe Min, a member of the investigation team, said that the leadership committee would then decide whether to take punitive action.

The ANP’s CEC decided in January to oppose the NLD at the Rakhine State and national level after Aung San Suu Kyi’s victorious party rebuffed ANP calls to be given the position of Chief Minister in the state or a share of executive power. The ANP emerged as the single largest party in Rakhine’s state parliament last November but just short of an overall majority. On 6 March members of the former

¹³ Women’s League of Burma calls on NLD govt for fresh start with peace process – <http://www.mizzima.com/news-domestic/women%E2%80%99s-league-burma-calls-nld-govt-fresh-start-peace-process> (Mizzima) 5 March 2016

¹⁴ Karen Armed Groups Unite, Agree KNU Takes Political Lead – <http://karennews.org/2016/03/karen-armed-groups-unite-agree-knu-takes-political-lead.html/> (Karen News) 5 Karen News

Arakan League for Democracy (ALD), which merged with the Rakhine Nationalities Development Party (RNDP) to form the ANP two years ago, held a press conference in Yangon to announce that they would not try to block the NLD. Zaw Min of the ALD faction, which formerly enjoyed close ties with the NLD, said antagonism against the NLD was not in the interests of Rakhine State. Fragmentation of the ANP is likely to be welcomed by the NLD recently confirmed its intentions to appoint one of its members, Nyi Pu, as the state's chief minister, in effect heading a minority government in Rakhine.

The nationalist ANP strongly defends the interests of the Buddhist Rakhine majority in the state, which was torn apart by communal violence in 2012, resulting in the military-backed government's policy of segregating the stateless Muslim minority. Members of the international community engaged in Rakhine had been alarmed at the prospect of an ANP-led state government. Taking a hard line, the ANP said the 6 members who held the press conference did not have permission from the Central Executive Committee and had broken party policy as well as rules and regulations. Phoe Min said the investigation group intended to get answers to its questions on 11 March and that it was up to the leadership committee to decide next steps. "The decision rests on the CEC. I can't say what kind of decision will come out," he added. CEC member Myo Kyaw, who took part in the Yangon declaration, warned the ANP that punitive moves would risk splitting the party, with the ALD faction breaking away. "We aimed for unity and negotiations between us," he said of the ANP's bi-party background. "If we cannot manage through negotiations then the state of the party will become one-sided," he added. He also said he had not received notification of the probe. But ANP Secretary Tun Aung Kyaw said the organisers of the press conference should not have aired internal party problems in public. The effect was to spread the impression among party supporters that the ANP was splitting, with the possible result of damaging its reputation, he added. The investigation team would look into the background of the press conference, he said. "We can say how we will penalise them only after the CEC meeting and we will follow party policy on this," Tun Aung Kyaw said. The ALD faction complained that the former RNDP members – widely seen as the dominant bloc within the party – strong-armed the January decision to work against the NLD without unanimous approval.¹⁵

ANALYSIS

Myanmar's nomination of the candidates for President and Vice-Presidents has been completed with two NLD representatives and one from the Tatmadaw. While the process can be seen as straight forward the nomination of the Tatmadaw representative Myint Swe has drawn criticism due to his close ties with the former military leader Senior General Than Shwe. However, the Tatmadaw on its part has the right to choose whoever it wants. Whatever the case maybe, the three candidates will need to work with one another as well as with the parliaments if the country's new found democratic institutions are to fulfil the aspirations of the people. While expectations of the newly elected NLD government is high, it is also important for the public at large to understand the basic principles of democracy. And to that end, the government will need to take the lead to implement educational programmes and initiatives to educate the citizens of their rights as well as their duties. This task coupled with promoting political, economic, social changes and other major challenges including national reconciliation and ending decades of conflicts will not be easy and smooth. How the NLD led government will handle and resolve these issues remains to be seen but will need to seek the support of all stakeholders involved if its tenure in office is to be successful.

¹⁵ ANP moves against dissenters – <http://www.mmmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/yangon/19349-anp-moves-against-dissenters.html> (Myanmar Times) 8 March 2016