

## THAILAND

28 March – 17 April 2016

### MEDIA MONITORING REPORT # 145

#### PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

##### NCA Signatories Form Team to Steer Future Peace Process

Irrawaddy News, 28 March 2016

Signatories to Burma's so-called nationwide ceasefire agreement (NCA) have formed a new group to engage in the peace process with the incoming National League for Democracy (NLD) government.



The eight non-state armed groups that signed the NCA with outgoing President Thein Sein's government met at a summit in Chiang Mai, Thailand, and formed the Ethnic Armed Organizations Peace Process Steering Team (EAO PPST) on Saturday. The team intends to provide leadership for the eight signatories during future peace talks.

The Karen National Union (KNU) chairman, Gen. Mutu Say Poe, will act as the team leader; Lt-Gen Yawd Serk, chairman of the Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS), will serve as his deputy; and leaders of the NCA signatory groups will join the team as members.

Link: <http://www.irrawaddy.com/burma/nca-signatories-form-team-to-steer-future-peace-process.html>

##### Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Committee To Extend Mandate

Irrawaddy News, 1 April 2016

Since the November 2015 formation of the JMC, both the Burma Army and the ethnic NCA signatories have closely monitored the ceasefire areas covered by the agreement, which was signed by the government and eight of the country's more than 20 non-state armed groups in October.

The complaints reported to the JMC involve many incidents of extortion and some gunfights, and have largely been filed by the Burma Army against ethnic armed groups, and vice-versa, according to staff from the once government-backed Myanmar Peace Center (MPC). Yet locals have also filed some complaints against both sides.

Dr. Min Zaw Oo, the director of Ceasefire Negotiation and Implementation—a department which receives support from the MPC—and one the 26 members of the Union-level JMC, said that while the JMC has been able to resolve dozens of



complaints, more terms of reference (ToRs) need to be drafted which would provide unbiased ways of addressing the problems which are brought forward.

While it appears that the MPC—a relic of the former Thein Sein government—might soon close, JMC staff will continue their work for the next three months, their mandate extended in this interim period as Burma settles in to new national leadership.

Two more state or regional JMCs will soon be formed in Karen and Mon states, also in areas where the KNU is active.

Link: <http://www.irrawaddy.com/burma/joint-ceasefire-monitoring-committee-to-extend-mandate.html>

## LAW AND GOVERNANCE

### U Htin Kyaw takes oath of office and asks for patience

Myanmar Times, 30 March 2016

U Htin Kyaw took the oath of office in parliament this morning, becoming Myanmar's first elected president from a non-military background for 54 years. In his first address, televised across the country, he asked for patience.

He was sworn in before the Union parliament, taking his oath in unison with his two vice presidents – former general U Myint Swe and ethnic Chin Christian Henry Van Thio.

In a surprisingly perfunctory inaugural address, President U Htin Kyaw pledged his government would work towards establishing a constitution that would guarantee a federal democracy and “the lifting up of people's lives”.



The government would also strive for “national reconciliation” and achieving peace, he said. The president and vice presidents pledged to be “faithful to the people of the republic of the union of Myanmar”.

Link: <http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/19729-u-htin-kyaw-takes-oath-of-office.html>

### Myanmar drops charges against nearly 200 political activists

The Guardian, 10 April 2016

Myanmar authorities have dropped charges against nearly 200 political activists since Aung San Suu Kyi pledged to fight for their freedom, a senior police officer has said.



The cases were dismissed on Friday, following Suu Kyi's announcement the day before that she was working with her new civilian-led administration to secure the release of scores of political prisoners languishing in Myanmar's jails.

Those freed on Friday included dozens of student activists in central Tharrawaddy who had been locked up for more than a year over an education demonstration they organised in March 2015.

Link: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/apr/10/myanmar-drops-charges-against-nearly-200-political-activists>

### Myanmar's President Htin Kyaw pardons more political prisoners, journalists

ABC News, 17 April 2016

Myanmar President Htin Kyaw has pardoned dozens more political prisoners on the country's traditional New Year, according to a watchdog group and a senior official, as his fledgling civilian-led administration seeks to cast off the shackles of military rule.

The order, signed by the President on Saturday, said the pardon of 83 prisoners was aimed at "national reconciliation and peace of mind" as part of celebrations of the Myanmar New Year.

The new Government, which is steered by veteran democracy activist Aung San Suu Kyi, has vowed to prioritise freeing the scores of political prisoners jailed by the country's former military leaders.



Link: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-04-17/myanmar-president-pardons-more-political-prisoners-journalists/7333222>

### Aung San Suu Kyi becomes Myanmar state counselor: spokesman

Xinhua, 6 April 2016

Myanmar Minister of Foreign Affairs cum Minister of the President's Office Aung San Suu Kyi has become the country's State Counselor in accordance with the state counselor bill, passed by both Houses and signed by

President U Htin Kyaw Wednesday, according to U Zaw Htay, spokesman of the President's Office.



Both of the Houses of Nationalities (Upper House) and House of Representatives (Lower House) approved the bill without amendment by the majority of the MPs amid strong objection by the minority of non-elected military MPs.

The state counselor bill calling for appointment of Aung San Suu Kyi by name as the state counselor in the cabinet was first submitted to the Upper House last Thursday and was approved by the House by vote 137-68.

The bill is aimed at ensuring a multi-party democratic system, a market-oriented economic system, a federal union, peace and development in the country.

Link: [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-04/06/c\\_135256048.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-04/06/c_135256048.htm)

## CENSUS AND ELECTION

### Myanmar approves formation of new election commission

Xinhua, 28 March 2016

Myanmar's Union Parliament Monday approved the formation of a five-member new Union Election Commission to handle affairs of the next general election five years later.

Proposed by the president-elect U Htin Kyaw, the new union election commission is headed by U Hla Thein, with U Aung Myint, U Soe Ye, U Tun Khin and U Hla Tint as members.



The last union election commission, chaired by U Tin Aye for the 2015 general election, was formed by U Thein Sein's government. In the presidential election after the general election on Nov. 8, 2015, U Htin Kyaw of the National League for Democracy (NLD) won the presidency, while U Myint Swe of the military was elected as the first vice president and U Henry Van Thio of the NLD, the second vice president.

Link: [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-03/28/c\\_135229735.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-03/28/c_135229735.htm)

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