

THAILAND

5 – 17 May 2016

MEDIA MONITORING REPORT # 147

PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

Myanmar Armed Ethnic Groups Talk Peace with Government's New Mediator

Radio Free Asia, 5 May 2016

Eight armed ethnic groups met informally with the Myanmar government's new peace envoy on Wednesday in Yangon to discuss how to advance peace and reform the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC) before upcoming peace talks, the leader of a rebel group who attended the meeting said.

Representatives of the groups, who signed a nationwide cease-fire agreement (NCA) last October, discussed their position on the peace process.



"We held the meeting informally and Dr. Tin Myo Win came unofficially as well," he told RFA's Myanmar Service.

They proposed to Tin Myo Win that the UPDJC be given equal footing in peace negotiations, it said.

They also gave Tin Myo Win a letter addressed to State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi prior to an official NLD meeting

to discuss the peace process on May 10 in the capital Naypyidaw.

Link: <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/myanmar-armed-ethnic-groups-talk-peace-wtih-governments-new-mediator-05052016161519.html>

Six Ethnic Political Parties Apply for UNA Membership

Burma News International, 5 May 2016

The United Nationalities Alliance (UNA) alliance of eight ethnic political parties will accept six more ethnic political parties who have applied for membership said the UNA leader U Khun Htun Oo.

He said: "We will accept the ethnic parties that have applied to become UNA members. The UNA will hold a meeting to approve them. I'm quite certain that they will be accepted because ethnic people need to be strong. Now, the Kachin



people are uniting and the Karen people are uniting, that's why the UNA needs to be strong."

The decision on whether to accept the parties as new members will be taken at a UNA members' meeting on 7 May.

The eight current members of the UNA are: the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD), the Arakan National Party (ANP), the Zomi Congress for Democracy (ZCD), the Karen National Party, the Mon National Party (MNP), the Kachin State National Congress for Democracy (KNDC), the Shan State Kokang Democratic Party (SSKDP), and the Kayan National Party.

The six ethnic political parties applying for UNA membership are: The KSDP, the Arakan Patriot Party, the Chin League for Democracy, the Danu National Progressive Party, the Chin Progressive Party, and the Mro National Democracy Party.

Link: <http://search.sosodesktop.com/search/web?fcoid=417&q=Six+Ethnic+Political+Parties+Apply+for+UNA+Membership>

Peace process must focus on all stakeholders: State Counsellor

The Global New Light of Myanmar, 10 May 2016

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi stressed the need to focus on the participation of all stakeholders who should be involved in every step of the country's national reconciliation and peace process at a coordination meeting on the formation of the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre (NRPC) yesterday.



The meeting was attended by peace negotiator Dr Tin Myo Win, government representatives Union Minister for Border Affairs Lt-Gen Ye Aung and Union Attorney-General U Tun Tun Oo, Tatmadaw representatives Lt-Gen Yar Pyae, Lt-Gen Tun Tun Naung and Lt-Gen Min Naung, Myanmar Peace Centre representatives U Myint Soe, U Khin Zaw Oo

and Dr Min Zaw Oo and other officials.

The participants agreed to form the NRPC in parallel with preparations for the "21st Century Panglong Conference", to focus on the involvement of all stakeholders in every step of preparing for the conference and to hold the second coordination meeting next week.

Link: https://issuu.com/myanmarnewspaper/docs/10_may_16_gnlm

NEW NAME FOR PEACE CENTRE

The Global New Light of Myanmar, 17 May 2016

"Concerning national reconciliation and internal peace, what counts is for all participants to discuss on the basis of what they can give rather than what they would like to take," said State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi at a meeting held at the Presidential Palace yesterday to coordinate matters relating to formation of the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre (NRPC) and preparations for the 21st-Century Panglong Conference.

“In the transformation of the Myanmar Peace Centre (MPC) into the NRPC, the NRPC will become a government organisation under the ministry of the State Counsellor’s Office and it is, therefore, necessary for this organisation to abide by the budgetary regulations as well as civil service regulations,” said Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, adding NRPC will have its head office in Nay Pyi Taw and Yangon MPC will be transformed into Yangon Branch of NRPC.



Regarding convening of the 21st-Century Panglong Conference, a suitable place will be selected, and the NRPC formation process will be led by U Kyaw Tint Swe, said the State Counsellor. A preparatory committee for convening the 21st-Century Panglong Conference will be formed, and a sub-committee will also be formed to coordinate the continuation of discussions with indigenous armed organisations that have already signed the NCA.

Link: https://issuu.com/myanmarnewspaper/docs/17_may_16_gnlm

LAW AND GOVERNANCE

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw approves formation of State Counsellor’s Ministry

The Global New Light of Myanmar, 11 May 2016

THE Pyidaungsu Hluttaw yesterday approved the proposal of President U Htin Kyaw to form a ministry of the State Counsellor.



The decision came about at the parliament yesterday with the unanimous approval of attending MPs.

The ministry will become the 22nd ministry in the cabinet of the new government.

President U Htin Kyaw said in his proposal to form the ministry of the state counselor on 4 May that it is a measure intended to speed up the government’s efforts at national reconciliation, internal peace, national development and the rule of law.

The constitution vests the president with the power to designate ministries as necessary and make changes and additions to the number of ministries with the approval of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw.

The new government took office on 1 April with 21 ministries run by 18 ministers, cutting the number down from the previous government’s 36.

Link: https://issuu.com/myanmarnewspaper/docs/11_may_16_gnlm

ECONOMIC AND DEVELOPMENT

Regional-based tourism earmarked for southern Myanmar villages

The Global New Light of Myanmar, 7 May 2016

ELEVEN villages from Myanmar's southern coastal region of Tanintharyi will conduct regional based tourism enterprises, according to the office of the Department of Hotels and Tourism.

The project, which has currently been submitted to union level government, will be implemented during the current 2016-17 fiscal year, it is known.

"Regional-based tourism is like a type of foreign investment. But, it must be conducted by local residents as it plays on regional development. It's to allow for residents to become self-reliant. The Department of Hotels and Tourism will oversee the whole project." said U Naing Win, director of the Department of Hotels and Tourism for Tanintharyi Region.



Traditional ethnic housing will be built in the eleven villages to accommodate tourists, while programs will be provided on traditional food, handicrafts and ethnic lifestyle and the environment which tourists will be able to study. There will be enterprises run by local residents themselves.

Any profits made will of course be split fifty-fifty between entrepreneurs and those local residents." continued U Naing Win.

The villages that will provide region-based tourism are located in Dawei district: San Hlan, Nyaw Pyin, Metta and Hsinphyutaing; Myeik district: Uyinthaungkan, Donenyaunghmaing, Donekamarkyaung, Dahun; and Kawthaung district: Makyonega, Nyaungwi and Gyalan.

Link: <http://globalnewlightofmyanmar.com/regional-based-tourism-earmarked-for-southern-myanmar-villages/>

New Tourism Plan Highlights Local Communities

The Irrawaddy, May 5, 2016



RANGOON — Burma's Hotels and Tourism Ministry will emphasize development of community-based tourism as one of the first priorities in its 100-day policy, according to an official statement issued by the ministry earlier this week.

The policy includes a three-pronged strategy for the country's fast-growing tourism industry—to expand community-based tourism (CBT), build the capacity of the tourism human resources pool and develop existing popular destinations, as well as promoting less frequented locales. The ministry has pledged to

begin implementing the plan within the first 100 days of the new National League for Democracy (NLD) administration.

The CBT development plan includes six main pilot projects to be carried out at different destinations around the country: Kachin State's Indawgyi Lake area; the townships of Loikaw and Thandaunggyi in Karenni and Karen states, respectively; the Pa-O self-administered zone in Shan State; Magwe Division's Myaing Township; and in Mandalay Division, the Mingun area and Kyauk Myaung village, according to the statement.

The projects aim to empower local communities by helping to establish village-level guesthouses and package tours, enhancing visitor management mechanisms, and highlighting foreign language skills so that guides can attract tourists to local activities such as trekking, bird watching and environmental conservation, the statement says.

"Local communities can truly benefit from CBT as it directly engages the lowest levels of the community," Myint Htwe, director of the ministry's public relations and information department told The Irrawaddy.

Link: <http://www.irrawaddy.com/burma/new-tourism-plan-highlights-local-communities.html>

Access to water initiatives in Kayin State to be tendered

The Global New Light of Myanmar, 16 May 2016

TENDERS are to be called during the current 2016-17 fiscal year for the implementation of water access projects in 38 villages across Kayin State that are experience drinking water shortages, according to the state's Department of Rural Development.

Bids for an estimated budget of over K519 million (US\$444,350) worth of tenders will be called for the digging of artesian wells, earthen lakes and other projects for the use of underground water reserves in a bid to allow for long-term, sufficient supplies of drinking water to an area of the country that has seen an annual decline in its drinking water reserves.

"We're currently providing assistance to those Kayin State villages suffering from El Niño-induced drinking water shortages. Also, under the new government's 100-day project initiative, we will call tenders for all seven townships in the state during the 2016-17 fiscal year for water availability projects," said U Nay Oo, head of the Kayin State Department of Rural Development.



Water availability projects will be implemented in a total of 38 villages: five in Hpa-an Township, seven in Hlaingbwe Township, six in Kawkareik Township, four in Myawady Township, five in Kya-in-Seikkyi Township, eight in Thandaunggyi Township and three in Papun Township.

The Kayin State Department of Rural Development began carrying out access to water initiatives as part of the new government's 100-day initiative on April 8 to a total of 15 villages in Hpaan Township that were deemed to be at risk of experiencing water shortages. As of 9 May, over half of the initiatives have been carried out.

Link: https://issuu.com/myanmarnewspaper/docs/16_may_16_gnlm

Taninthayi UCS allocates K1.08 billion for loans in 2016-17

The Global New Light of Myanmar, 16 May 2016

THE Union of Co-operative Syndicates (UCS) for Myanmar's southern Taninthayi Region will allocate K1.08 billion (US\$924,658) for loans during the 2016-17 fiscal year, according to a regional syndicate. The value of the loan fund has been confirmed by the regional government.



"Credit will be lent to members the UCS. We'll issue loans according to set levels of individual syndicates," said U Kyaw Moe Tint, UCS officer for Taninthayi Region.

Those who want must first form a basic UCS at the village level with a system of collective responsibility that does not require collateral to be given in exchange for credit. A maximum of K100, 000 can be borrowed per individual under this system.

"Ten per cent of money lent to members is collected as a kind of money saved for them by the syndicate. The objective of such an approach is to save more when borrowing increases. A membership fee of K5, 000 is required to become a UCS member. This sum will then be repaid at the end of year to members after calculating profit," said U Kyaw Moe Tint.

A total of K3.8 billion (\$3,253,425) was lent between 2011-15 by the Taninthayi Region UCS, while loans are issued once every six months and repaid six months later. In terms of the allocation of credit within Taninthayi Region this fiscal year, the amount for 28 associations of UCS in Dawei District, which comprises 1,757 association members, is K291.6 million; K634 million for 78 associations of UCS in Myeik District, comprises 4,061 members; and K157.42 million for 15 associations of UCS in Kawthoung District, comprises 1,194 members.

Link: https://issuu.com/myanmarnewspaper/docs/16_may_16_gnlm

New Thai-Myanmar border trade zone nears completion

FRONTIER MYANMAR, 6 May 2016

A fifth trade zone on the Thai-Myanmar border is set to open later this year, according to state media. The zone at Mae Se in Kayah State is still under construction, but the project manager told *Global New Light of Myanmar* that work was nearly complete.

In June 2015, the *Myanmar Times* reported that a border crossing would be opened between Mae Se and Mae Hong Son in Thailand by the end of the year.

Officials said at the time that the crossing would boost tourism and regional development. When it opens, the immigration department will issue seven-day border passes to those entering



Myanmar, the report said.

Myanmar has four border crossings with Thailand, at Myawady-Mae Sot, Tachileik-Mae Sai, Kawthoung-Ranong and Htee Khee-Phu Nam Ron.

Link: <http://frontiermyanmar.net/en/business/new-thai-myanmar-border-trade-zone-nears-completion>

LAND AND PROPERTY

New Bodies Formed on Land Disputes, Other Pressing Matters

The Irrawaddy, 9 May 2016

RANGOON — Burma's President Htin Kyaw has formed nine new committees and commissions, including a National Planning Commission, over which he will preside, and a committee to oversee the country's protracted land disputes, chaired by the ethnic Chin Vice President Henry Van Thio.



According to a statement from the President's Office, the National Planning Commission was formed on Thursday to scrutinize state projects and joint ventures with the private sector, assessing project feasibility, implementation and the prevention of budgetary waste. It can also make suggestions and issue approvals or rejections on projects proposed by ministries and local governments.

Chaired by the president, the commission includes Burma's two vice presidents, all 20 Union-level ministers, the attorney-general, accountant-general, and the chief ministers of all 14 states and

divisions.

Among the new bodies, the new National League for Democracy (NLD) government also formed a Central Review Committee on Confiscated Farmlands and Other Lands on Thursday to address Burma's complex legacy of land confiscation and the dispossession of impoverished farmers.

The committee is tasked with monitoring state and divisional governments' handling of land disputes, and enabling the return of land to dispossessed farmers from government ministries, state-owned enterprises and private companies. The President's Office announcement urged that further land acquisition be postponed until disputes are settled in accordance with the law, noting that the issue of land rights was a priority for the new government.

Link: <http://www.irrawaddy.com/burma/new-bodies-formed-on-land-disputes-other-pressing-matters.html>

The content of the UNHCR Thailand Media Monitoring Reports does not reflect the official view or opinion of the UNHCR.

Links: Thailand-Myanmar Cross Border Web Portal: www.commonservice.info

Facebook: www.facebook.com/commonservice
www.facebook.com/commonserviceburmese
www.facebook.com/commonservicekaren