

THAILAND

2 – 26 May 2017

MEDIA MONITORING REPORT # 167

ECONOMICS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

[4,800 Taninthayi children to get overseas birth certificates](#)

Eleven Myanmar, 2 May 2017

The Taninthayi Region government has requested the Public Health Department in Nay Pyi Taw issue overseas birth certificates to more than 4,800 children who were born in Thailand.

The immigrant parents gave birth in Thailand and their children are under five years old. The parents have applied for birth certificates at the department.

Dr Kyaw Zayya, head of the regional health department, said: “Formally they are required to apply through the embassy, but no one does that. The children need birth certificates to enjoy their full rights.”

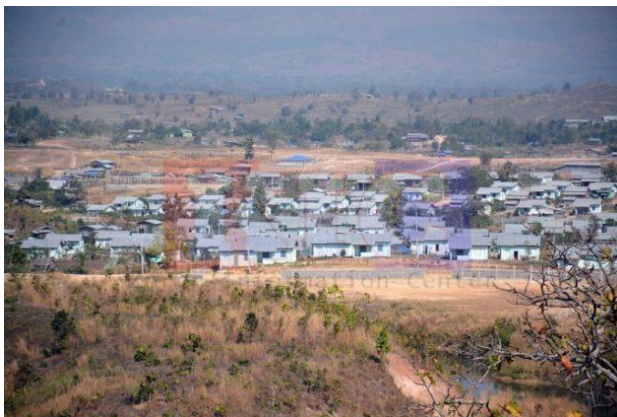
The children are living in 10 townships in the region. A total of 1,803 are in Longlon Township.

Link: <http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/local/9163>

[Solar Power System Set to Light-up Lay Kay Kaw’s New Town Project](#)

Karen News, 26 April 2017

Authorities are holding discussions on using a solar power system in the Lay Kay Kaw new town in Myawaddy Township, Karen State until electricity is available for the settlement development project.



electricity is available.

Lay Kay Kaw new town is situated nine - miles south of Myawaddy town and was built to accommodate conflict affected communities, including displaced villagers, refugees and families’ members of the Karen National Union.

Although the new inhabitants have been provided with housing, there is no electricity. The Karen State government and Japan’s Nippon Foundation have been discussing using a solar power system until

U Soe Hlaing, the Karen State minister for Electricity and Industry told Karen News, “We have to buy electricity from Thailand. At present, we are waiting for a draft bond. As there is no electricity yet, the Ministry of Border Affairs has discussed setting up a solar power system.”

Although there has been promises that the electricity would be running by March, it has not been available. Saw Than Myint, the youth leader of Lay Kay Kaw’s new town, said that if electricity is available, the refugees who live there now could start earning a living.

“Electricity is not available but, we know that the responsible officials have tried. We have heard that a solar power system is going to be set up. If electricity is available, we hope people will be able to start to earn a living.”

Saw Htay Myint Aung, the secretary of the rehabilitation committee, said that 3,200 refugees and family members of the KNU have already been settled in Lay Kay Kaw since February 2017.

Although the living conditions have been good, job opportunities are still few for the refugees.

The Lay Kay Kaw’s new town five-year plan began in June, 2014, after negotiations between the KNU and the Burma Government. The estimated new town area is 1,800 acres out of which 755 acres are to be put into use.

According to the Lay Kay Kaw rehabilitation committee when the planned completion of the new town’s 1,500 houses it has predicted that refugees from the border camps will come back. However, only 650 low-cost houses have been built.

Link: <http://karennews.org/2017/04/solar-power-system-set-to-light-up-lay-kay-kaws-new-town-project.html/>

About Ks2000 billion agricultural loans to be lent in current FY

The Global New Light of Myanmar, 2 May 2017

THE Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation is planning to give around Ks1980 billion in agricultural loans to farmers this fiscal year, its spokesperson said.

These kinds of loans will be disbursed to a target group of farmers beginning this month with a very low interest rate.

Under the ministry’s scheme, rice growers will receive Ks150, 000 per acre of farmland while other crop growers will be lent Ks50, 000 for an acre of land, said U Myo Tint Tun, assistant secretary in the ministry.

Under its lending rules, the ministry will grant agricultural loans for monsoon crops to farmers who have no more than ten acres of paddy. A total of Ks1400 billion was lent to those cultivators at an 8 per cent interest rate last fiscal year to grow monsoon crops.

It was hard for rice growers to meet target profits this year because of untimely weather that occurred in June, July and August. The drop in rice prices seriously affects domestic manufacturers.

Therefore, the ministry announced that it would extend the repayment period for disaster-hit growers who said it would be difficult to return their loans to the government during the target repayment period.



The yearly prices of 100 baskets of rice are usually between Ks400, 000 and Ks600, 000. The prices have declined to Ks350, 000 this harvest time.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation is working to promote the country's agriculture industry under its five-year development plan. The major aim of the project is to improve socio-economic status of rural community by promoting involvement of farmers operating small-and-medium-scaled agribusiness.

Link: <http://www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com/about-ks2000-billion-agricultural-loans-to-be-lent-in-current-fy/>

After months of controversy, “General Aung San Bridge” quietly opens

Mon News Agency, 29 April 2017

Under the cover of early morning darkness on April 27, authorities in Mon State affixed signs bearing the name General Aung San to the bridge and opened it to traffic, ending one chapter in a simmering dispute over ethnic rights in Myanmar (Burma). But even as authorities tried to put the controversy behind them, opponents promised to continue their fight.



General Aung San Bridge (Bilugyun) Workers affixed the sign, which read “General Aung San Bridge (Bilugyun)” on the Mawlamyine side of the bridge at about 4:30am, and an identical sign on the Chaungzone side by 6:00am. The government had delayed several scheduled opening ceremonies and made no announcement of the impending opening, apparently hoping to avoid further protest.

The only warning for the opening came in a 9:30pm Facebook post on the night of April 26 from the Mon State Chief Minister Dr. Aye Zan, who wrote, “the public will be able to cross the General Aung San Bridge (Bilugyun) tomorrow from 5am to 10pm. May Mon State develop and the public find peace of mind.”

Protests against the bridge have been spearheaded by a group called the Committee of Public Movement for Thanlwin Bridge, which has vowed to continue its campaign despite the opening of the bridge.

“We are planning to meet to discuss how to continue our work. We have already sent an open letter to the international community and continue to collect petition signatures urging the government to honor the original name of the bridge, the Thanlwin Bridge (Chaungzon),” said Min Aung Mon, a member of the committee.

The committee began collecting signatures on April 13 and by April 25 had over 120,000. Most are from Mon State, though the issue has resonated with other minority ethnic groups and activists, especially in Kayin (Karen) State and Bago and Yangon (Rangoon) regions. The group plans to submit the petition to the Union Government in Naypyitaw.

On March 19 more than 20,000 people joined a protest in the Mon State capital Mawlamyine (Moulmein) lead by the Committee of Public Movement for Thanlwin Bridge (Chaungzon). In Early April, 14 political parties

issued a statement opposing the name, arguing that it hurt national solidarity and efforts to reconcile a country that has known decades of conflict.

Link: <https://monnews.org/2017/04/28/after-months-of-controversy-general-aung-san-bridge-quietly-opens/>

Learning access through digital education project implemented

Myanmar Times, 3 May 2017

A digital education project will be implemented in 120 monastic education schools nationwide aimed at underprivileged children from remote areas.

The project will take three years, from 2017 to 2019, and will be carried out in phases for 40 schools annually.

Telenor Myanmar, an international mobile communications provider, and Monastic Education Development Group (MEDG), a community-based organisation that supports the improvement of monastic education across the country, launched the project.

MEDG chair Sayadaw U Nayaka said, “Through this digital education project, many students can access learning. Although the investment for this project is very high, many children can have access to education simultaneously.”

Special technical classrooms are being designed and built in selected monastic schools with Telenor’s technical and financial support.

For six days a week, two hours a day, children will be able to learn from ‘live’ lessons broadcast to the classrooms which are equipped with video conferencing facilities.

The live lessons are virtually delivered via a studio based at the Phaung Daw Oo Monastic School conducted by in-studio teachers who are well-trained in non-formal education methods.

The pilot project was started five months ago in 5 monastic schools while 20 schools have been earmarked to start in August. Another 15 schools would be added before the end of this year.

Children will also have access to e-learning applications with time-flexibility and given motivational learning materials based on the government curriculum that will help them pass the Grade 5 primary equivalency examination.

The project hopes to reach out to at least 1000 children who do not have the opportunity of attending school by the end of this year.

The Digital Education Project, along with the Myanmar Mobile Education Project (MYME), is part of Telenor’s Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives in Myanmar, providing non-formal education to underprivileged children.

Link: <http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/yangon/25828-learning-access-through-digital-education-project-implemented.html>

Over Ks58 billion to be spent to supply electricity to rural areas

The Global New Light of Myanmar, 4 May 2017

Over Ks58 billion will be spent to supply electricity to 1,233 villages in the 2017-2018 fiscal year, said U Khant Zaw, the Director-General from Department of Rural Development.

To supply electricity to the villages, the government will provide Ks11.06 billion, while the remaining amount of Ks47.76 billion will be granted by the World Bank. The electricity supplying project is expected to be completed in June, 2018.

“To start the project as soon as possible, we invited tenders starting on 27 February 2017. The tender was opened on 27 April. We are now making arrangements to enter into a contract with the selected company. We will start to check the sample before installations starting in October,” said U Khant Zaw.

Home solar power systems will be supplied to 95,639 houses in 1,298 villages in 127 townships, while small scale electric power lines will be installed in 5,184 houses in 34 villages.

The department will also supply electricity to public buildings such as schools, health care centres, religious buildings and street lamp posts.

Link: https://issuu.com/myanmarnewspaper/docs/4_may_17_gnlm

Agricultural service centres to be established in 33 places within four years

The Global New Light of Myanmar, 4 May 2017

Agricultural service centres will be established in 33 sites in states and regions within four years, said an official from the Myanmar Rice Federation (MRF).

The agricultural service centre will be set up with an aim to provide services to local farmers and to develop the farming sector and rice sector.

“We have already requested that private companies provide loans to implement the project in 33 places”, said U Ye Min Aung, the general secretary from MRF. The agricultural service centres will distribute pedigree seeds for local farmers, build gowns for storing crops and rice drying machines in the post-harvest period, provide transplanting machines, tractors and harvesting and threshing machines, implement a contract farming system, distribute and sell fertilizer, rice milling and generations of electricity from rice husks. The agricultural service centres will be set up with the open tender system. An estimated cost of the project is US\$12.148 million. A total of 33 projects will cost US\$400.884 million.



Link: https://issuu.com/myanmarnewspaper/docs/4_may_17_gnlm

5 kinds of monsoon crops to be planted in Kayin State

Myanmar Times, 11 May 2017

In developing the farming sector in Kayin State, it is estimated that five kinds of monsoon crops will be grown in the state, according to an estimation of agricultural projects for 2017-18 fiscal year.

The state head office of the Department of Agriculture announced that these five monsoon crops will be grown in Hpa-an, Hlaingbwe, Thandaunggyi, Hpapun, Kawkareik, Kya-In Seikkyi and Myawady townships.

Kayin State's Agriculture Department head U Win Hlaing Oo said that there would be educational programs for the farmers so that they can produce good, quality crops and learn how to use the fertilizers systematically.

"The farmers need to use fertilizers in the right way to produce good quality crops. We will educate them on the techniques not only at state level but also in districts and townships. We will mainly plant monsoon paddy, maize, corns, monsoon peanuts and sesame in the rainy season," he told the *The Myanmar Times*.

In the coming rainy season, the estimated amount in seven districts is that monsoon paddy will be grown on 434,900 acres (estimation) with a production rate of 30,555,819 baskets, maize on 51,100 acres and production rate 4,542,790 baskets, corn on 2700 acres and production rate 24,570,000 baskets, monsoon peanuts on 5500 acres and production rate 233,750 baskets and sesame on 3500 acres and production rate 37,800 baskets, according to a projection list for the 2017-18 fiscal year by the Department of Agriculture.

Kayin State Hluttaw Speaker U Saw Chit Khin said that the GAP protocol forum, held on April 24, outlines the procedures for proper use of pesticides and the avoidance of dangerous infections.

"We need to educate farmers not to use insecticides, to obey the rules and to produce good quality and marketable crops as well as to plant yam tuber widely," he said.

Link: <http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/mandalay-upper-myanmar/25934-5-kinds-of-monsoon-crops-to-be-planted-in-kayin-state.html>

Immunization clinics available in 98 hospitals

Myanmar Times, 8 May 2017

Hospital-based immunization clinics have been opened in 98 hospitals, which have 100 beds or more throughout the regions and states starting in the month of May.



Dr Myint Htwe, Union Minister for the Ministry of Health and Sports (MOHS) said hospital-based immunization program is one of the priorities of his ministry.

Speaking at the launching ceremony of the program at Yangon Children's Hospital on Friday (May 5), he said that "some hospitals such as this one and Yangon Central Women Hospital had been providing routine immunization programs in the past.

"Now, 98 other hospitals have introduced the immunization clinics to enable people to be immunized

and get vaccines."

Dr Myint Htwe said that the MOHS would ensure everyone gets the proper immunization protection by cooperating with regional authorities and residents, by educating parents on the benefits, and opening up such clinics as well as improving facilities at these centres.

Dr Htar Htar Lin, deputy director of the program at the Department of Public Health, said that about 80 percent to 90pc of the population has been immunized but between 10 and 20pc are still missed out.

“Children who missed the immunization are from conflict and remote areas as well as those from migrant families in suburban areas,” she said.

Every child under the age of five can take the vaccines in hospitals if they miss out during routine operations of the immunization program, she said.

The MOHS provides 10 types of vaccines during the routine immunization program for children under five.

Link: <http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/yangon/25885-immunization-clinics-available-in-98-hospitals.html>

All Ye Township will have electricity within 18 months, says Mon Chief Minister

Mon News Agency, 13 May 2017

Ye Township, the last area of Mon State that does not get regular electrical service, will be connected to a private electric grid by November 2018. The Mon Chief Minister, Dr. Aye Zan, announced the timetable at a meeting with Ye Township residents on Friday.

Yesterday’s meeting was attended by the chief minister and members of his government, the speaker of the Mon State parliament (Hluttaw) Daw Tin Ei, Ye Township representatives, staff from local departments and Ye Township residents.

“Today is the 12th of May 2017, and by the 12th of May 2018, about 15 villages in northern Ye Township will have electricity. Within 18 months every town and village in the township will have electricity,” the chief minister said.

One Ye city resident, U Than Soe, thought the electricity could make life safer and easier.



“I have nothing more to say about electricity because the minister has already said that we will be getting it soon. Once we have electricity, though, I’d like for them to install lamps on the electrical poles near highways,” he said.

He added that there are often accidents on the highway, because there are no streetlights to illuminate the road.

While residents welcomed the news that they would soon have access to electricity, some chafed at the high price tag. Because the power is being offered by a private company, rates will be 210 or 220 kyats per unit of electricity, more than six times as high that offered by the government elsewhere in the state.

“We would rather be getting electricity from the government, and get the same rate that other townships get. They get electricity at 35 kyats per unit and we would like to have the same,” said Daw Sa Kyi, a Ye city resident.

Residents in Ye city, and Abaw, Duyar, Zee Phyu Taung and Asin villages currently receive electricity from a company called Myat Thura Htun, which charges 400 kyats per unit. The Mon State parliament will allow two additional companies, Bedok Construction & Engineering Co. Ltd and The Southeast General Energy and Power Co. Ltd (SEGEP), to distribute electricity in the Township.

When asked when the government might offer public electrical service at the lower rate enjoyed in other townships, the chief minister said he could not guess.

Link: <https://monnews.org/2017/05/13/all-ye-township-will-have-electricity-within-18-months-says-mon-chief-minister/>

LAND AND PROPERTY

Burma Army to Remove Landmines in Karen State

The Irrawaddy, 8 May 2017

The Burma Army will remove landmines in Karen State following an agreement with the Karen National Union (KNU), according to Col Wunna Aung, spokesperson for the Burma Army and member of the Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Committee (JMC).



After the KNU and the JMC discussed the military codes of conduct for the project at a three-day meeting in Rangoon last week, Col Wunna Aung said on Friday “both sides want mines to be cleared, but we will need to build trust.”

A timescale for the operations had not yet been decided, he said, though demining in ethnic Karen conflict areas was part of the nationwide ceasefire agreement (NCA) signed by the Burma Army and the KNU’s armed wing the Karen

National Liberation Army (KNLA) in 2015.

“Demining is for the people; we will demine near public roads and schools,” he said, adding that the Burma Army had agreed not to demine near KNLA bases but that exact locations had not yet been agreed.

“If the international community will provide technical assistance, the Tatmadaw [Burma Army] will undertake the operations,” he said.

According to Col Wunna Aung there are three areas in the country with landmines—in Karen and Shan states and Bago Division. The Burma Army will eventually demine all of these areas, he said.

Contrary to Col Wunna Aung’s Friday suggestion that many of the landmines to be removed were placed by ethnic armed groups, KNU vice chairperson Kwe Htoo Win told The Irrawaddy that his group only placed landmines in conflict areas, not in areas used by the public.

Negotiating Burma Army movement in KNU-controlled areas would need to be handled delicately, he said.

Kwe Htoo Win said the process will take time and that the public needed to be educated about the demining project before it was launched.

Saw Alex Htoo, a CSO leader in Karen State, said demining at the current time would “too early and premature.” While demining might appeal “on the surface,” he said, deeper political issues need to be explored so that such activities can be successful.

“Firstly, [the Tatmadaw] needs to solve the military code of conduct. Secondly, they need to establish borders for their controlled territory,” he said. “It seems to me that the Tatmadaw jumped steps. While they could not solve these first two points, they jumped to another step.”

“I do not see that the Tatmadaw has genuine concern for this project. Their actions may cause problems,” he added.

Link: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/burma-army-remove-landmines-karen-state.html>

PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

Peace Commission, DPN to meet again before May 24

Myanmar Times, 2 May 2017

The Peace Commission and the Delegation for Political Negotiation (DPN), representing seven ethnic armed groups, will meet in the second week of May, before the second round of the 21st-Century Panglong Conference, scheduled for May 24.

The commission had met to discuss a nine-point proposal by the negotiating body of the United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC), the coalition representing the armed groups, last week in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

During the talks, U Aung Kyi, a member of the peace commission said the DPN had proposed some changes to the agreed terms that were discussed at the Yangon meeting on March 3.

“They are a bit different from the previous version of the proposals in terms of terminology and wording that we negotiated with the DPN,” he said.

However, he did not elaborate on what the proposed changes that the DPN had made or the number of changes proposed during the talks held on April 28.

While the meeting minutes would be discussed at the UNFC leadership meeting, U Aung Kyi said the peace commission and the DPN would meet again in May to continue negotiations before the second 21st-Century Panglong Conference.

Officials from the DPN were not reachable for comments yesterday.

Last year, the DPN had proposed nine points to be agreed by the government in order for a Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) to be signed.

Negotiations on the points started in earlier March in Yangon after DPN leaders met with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, chair of National Reconciliation and Peace Centre in Nay Pyi Taw.

After negotiations earlier in March, the peace commission and the DPN agreed to the nine points “in general” but two of the proposals were referred to relevant peace bodies for further negotiations.

Link : <http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/25810-peace-commission-dpn-to-meet-again-before-may-24.html>

Fifth Meeting Held between Govt and UNFC Peace Delegations

The Irrawaddy, 29 April 2017

CHIANG MAI, Thailand – The government held the fifth round of formal peace talks with the United Nationalities Federal Council’s (UNFC) delegation for political negotiation (DPN) in northern Thailand on Friday.

The bloc members discussed the signing of the nationwide ceasefire agreement (NCA), in the follow-up to a March 3 meeting in Rangoon, where the negotiators agreed “in principle” to the DPN’s nine-point proposal that would precede the signing of the accord. They also discussed their positions on joining the upcoming session of the Union Peace Conference on May 24.



The government’s delegation was led by Peace Commission chairman Dr. Tin Myo Win and accompanied by the commission’s secretary U Khin Zaw Oo, its adviser U Aung Kyi, and member U Aung Soe—who is also a Lower House lawmaker—and supporting staff.

The DPN’s delegation was led by its head Khu Oo Reh, who is the secretary of the UNFC, and the vice chair of the Karenni Nationalities Progressive Party (KNPP). He was accompanied by representatives of all of the DPN’s six other members organizations, including the Kachin Independence Organization/Army (KIO/KIA) and the Shan State Progress Party/Shan State Army-North (SSPP/SSA-N).

Leaders of both delegations highlighted in their opening remarks the need to adopt a “people first” approach in order to end decades of civil war and to build trust.

In his opening speech, Dr. Tin Myo Win emphasized the need to reach a solution through negotiation, in order to fulfill the public’s expectations in building peace and federalism.

After the meeting, he said, “both sides have built further trust.”

“Politically, we made a lot of progress,” Dr. Tin Myo Win told The Irrawaddy, adding that they had discussed details concerning the DPN’s nine-point proposal.

Friday’s meeting is “a step toward the next meetings,” said Khu Oo Reh after their talk.

In addition to attending the peace talks under the UNFC bloc, two of its members—the KIO and SSPP—also took part in meetings led by the United Wa State Army (UWSA) twice in February and April in Panghsang, the Wa Self-Administered Division. In the talks, armed groups based in northeastern Burma rejected the NCA and called for it to be replaced with a new pact.

Link: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/fifth-meeting-held-between-govt-and-unfc-peace-delegations.html>

NCA does not allow non-signatories to attend peace conference, says UPDJC vice chair

Eleven Myanmar, 2 May 2017

According to the decision of the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC) and the provision of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), those armed groups which have yet to sign the agreement will not be allowed to attend the second Union Peace Conference.

The government and ethnic armed groups alike have decided to hold the conference for the second time on May 24. During the conference, the results from the national political talks held on ethnic and regional bases will be discussed.

"Our UPDJC has decided that according to the NCA provisions, the NCA must be signed to attend the conference. Otherwise, they cannot attend it. To change or amend such a rule, we have not discussed it - but if they have a plan to achieve real peace, there might be a change" said Thu Wai.

Five months after taking office, the National League for Democracy-led government called the first Union Peace Conference. It was attended by both signatories and non-signatories, except Taaung National Liberation Army, Arakan Army and Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (Kokang group).

UPDJC officials said the first conference could only deal with political papers submitted by various organizations. They added that hopefully, the upcoming conference could reach a certain decision.

The UPDJC vice chairman said he saw no encouraging signs in the peace process but more concerted efforts would be made.

"We really want peace. There have been two governments - under the first government, only eight armed groups signed the NCA. (Under the ruling government) another other group has not signed it. This is not an encouraging sign. From this conference, we have to make a further effort to achieve peace," commented Thu Wai.

However, Zaw Htay, director general of the State Counsellor Office, after the joint implementation coordination meeting for NCA (JICM) on May 24 said the report that non-signatories are banned from attending the conference is not true.

The participation of those non-signatories will be discussed at the meeting of UPDJC to be held on May 12, he added.

Link: <http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/politics/9137>

JMC-U Chairman urges NCA signatories to avoid engagements before Panglong Conference

Mizzima, 4 May 2017

Union-level Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC-U) Chairman Lt. Gen. Yar Pyae urged NCA signatory ethnic armed organizations not to have engagements among them because the 21st Panglong Conference was drawing close.



Lt. Gen. Yar Pyae said, “If they have suspicions among them, they should be settled amicably at the grassroots level and if they cannot settle at this lower level, there should be direct negotiation between them. In this way, there will be no problems which cannot be settled.”

He was speaking at the opening address of the 10th regular meeting of Union-level Joint Monitoring Committee which was held on May 3 at National Reconciliation and Peace Centre (NRPC) in Shweli

Road, Yangon.

“I’d like to urge our JMC members to see this as a priority during this period,” he said.

He added that face-to-face negotiations could resolve suspicions among NCA signatories.

Link: <http://www.mizzima.com/news-domestic/jmc-u-chairman-urges-nca-signatories-avoid-engagements-panglong-conference>

Karen groups tries to promote public awareness about federalism

Burma News International, 2 May 2017

A Karen organization is trying to engage the public on federalism through grass roots consultations.

“Everyone agrees that a federal system will be practiced. The public, starting from the grass roots level, needs to understand what a federal system is. We don’t want only the views of the KNU and the political parties to dominate the direction of the federal process. We also want to include the public’s voice. We want to let them know that genuine peace can only be realized when the nation is rebuilt with a federal system,” said Saw Kyaw Swar, secretary of the Karen Affairs Committee (KAC).



The KAC held a workshop about federalism and democracy in Hpa-an on April 27. Around 110 people, including religious leaders and village administrators, as well as members of the Karen National Union (KNU), the National League for Democracy, the Karen Human Rights Group and the Karen State Civil Society Organization Network, attended.

Representatives from each Karen organization presented their perspectives on what federalism in Myanmar might look like.

Saw La Haw Htoo, a KNU representative, said, “This [kind of consultation] is beneficial for people who already understand the federal system as well as for those who don’t yet understand it. Frequent meetings have also enabled us to keep in touch with Karen organizations and their concerns.”

Another, similar workshop on federalism and democracy will be held at a statewide meeting in June, according to KAC. The views presented at this state-level consultation will then be collected and shared with hluttaw representatives, political parties and ethnic armed groups active in Kayin.

Link: <http://www.bnionline.net/news/karen-state/item/2975-karen-groups-tries-to-promote-public-awareness-about-federalism.html>

KNPP Concludes Congress, Re-Elects Chairperson

The Irrawaddy, 11 May 2016

The Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP)—an ethnic armed group fighting for self-determination—concluded its weeklong congress on Thursday at its headquarters in the Karenni State-Thai border area, and reelected its current chairperson Khun Abel Tweed.



The KNPP had a bilateral ceasefire agreement with the previous government in 2012, but have not have signed the nationwide ceasefire agreement (NCA). The organization is currently in talks with the National League for Democracy government's peace negotiators under the ethnic armed alliance the United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC), of which it is a member.

Around 200 KNPP representatives joined the congress from May 3-11, and voted in the new

members of the central committee, including the chairperson.

The KNPP hold its congress every four years, during which, its members listen to reports of the organization's progress and activities, and elects new leadership. The issues involved in this year's congress centered on the peace process, drug eradication and rehabilitation, and programs for women and youth.

On May 17-18, central committee members will meet to assign responsibilities to each member and to discuss their future plans and activities. They will also appoint the secretariat team, Gen Be Htoo said.

The KNPP's former vice chairman Khu Oo Reh—also the head of the UNFC's peace negotiation team—was elected as a member of the permanent central committee.

The KNPP has said it would follow the NCA's prescribed path, if the government agrees to the UNFC's nine-point proposal on the matter.

Link: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/knpp-concludes-congress-re-elects-chairperson.html>

New Mon State Party to Sign Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement

The Irrawaddy, 12 May 2017

MOULMEIN — the central executive committee (CEC) meeting of the New Mon State Party (NMSP) agreed to sign the nationwide ceasefire agreement (NCA), but will only sign together with other ethnic armed groups, CEC member Nai Win Hla told press on Friday.

“What I can say definitely is we’d sign it,” he said. “But it is difficult to predict for others as they are still holding meetings.”

“We learnt that the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), and the Wa National Organization (WNO) will resign [from the United Nationalities Federal Council]. So, they are unlikely to sign,” he told press.



Nai Win Hla said other groups—including the Shan State Progressive Party (SSPP), the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP), the Arakan National Council (ANC), and the Lahu Democratic Union (LDU)—may sign.

The decision to sign the NCA was reached at the regular CEC meeting of the NMSP, held from April 23 to May 8. Nai Win Hla said NMSP had yet to meet with other groups likely to sign the NCA to announce a date for the group signing.

Dr Sui Khar, assistant general secretary 1 of the Chin National Front (CNF), an NCA signatory, said the NMSP signing would contribute to the peace process because both the government and the military prefer adhering to NCA in their approach.

“If they are involved, the peace discussion will be wider both in terms of race and region in the peace process. It will bring benefits to groups which have not yet joined the peace process,” said Dr Sui Khar.

Deputy Speaker of Mon State Parliament Dr Aung Naing Oo told The Irrawaddy that he is not pleased with certain provisions in the NCA, but hoped that a solution can be found through political dialogue.

“Signing is not the end of the journey, but it is the first step, and if they can get to the next step which is political dialogue, a better way may emerge for all of us,” said Dr Aung Naing Oo. “I view [NMSP’s decision to sign NCA] as a good prospect.”

NMSP signed a truce with the then ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) in 1995, but the truce broke in 2010. It signed state and Union level ceasefire agreement with the former President U Thein Sein’s government in February 2012.

Link: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/128581.html>

Ethnic States Win Right to Draft Constitutions

The Irrawaddy, 12 May 2017

NAYPYIDAW — Burma’s seven ethnic states have won the right to draft their own constitutions, an unprecedented breakthrough in their fight for equality and self-determination, according to the leader of an armed ethnic group.



draft the state constitution.”

After the Friday morning meeting of the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC), Col. Hkun Okkar of the Pa-O National Liberation Organization (PNLO) told reporters “the government has acknowledged the right to self-determination for the state as we are allowed to

“We were able to agree that we could draft our own state constitutions, which has never been done in Burmese history,” he said. “The states under the Union have never had such rights as to draft their own constitutions, but we have earned it today.”

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, who leads the UPDJC, joined the meeting on Friday. On May 7-9, the UPDJC held a working committee meeting and a secretariats meeting on May 9-11.

The meeting on Friday approved the basic principles covering political, economic, social, security, and land and environment sectors.

The UPDJC has so far agreed to six of seven principles of the federal Union to be negotiated in the second round of the 21st Century Panglong peace conference to begin on May 24. These principles are: sovereignty, the practice of sovereignty, equality, self-determination, federal Union principles, and a multi-party democratic system.

It was decided the seventh principle—the relationship between religion and politics—needed to be discussed further.

UPDJC participants had to agree that their state constitutions do not contradict the Union’s military-drafted 2008 Constitution, which would take precedence in any possible disputes.

Pado Saw Kwe Htoo Win, vice chairman of the Karen National Union (KNU), said in his opening speech: “I am delighted to say that we, the ethnic minorities, could draft a constitution for our state and region. It is a step forward as in the composition of the federal union and I am thankful.”

The state parliaments, governments, and courts will come under the state constitutions, whose authority will be protected from Union government interference.

“If the mandates are unclear, our country could not develop any further. If the state’s mandates are clear, the Union level governance cannot revoke it,” said Col. Hkun Okkar, referring to a time when his group asked the Shan state government to regrow trees, but the state told them to ask the Union’s forestry ministry.

On the topic of self-determination, the Burma Army requested to add the words “no secession” from the Union. The meetings participant’s said “no secession” shared the same meaning as “non-disintegration” of the Union.

The meeting agreed the Burma Army would continue upholding its position of protecting the “three main national causes”—non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of national solidarity and perpetuation of sovereignty.

“When we can build a federal union that fully guarantees national equality and self-determination, no one will leave the Union—even under force,” said Col. Hkun Okkar.

He said the new name of the country could be the Federal Union of Burma and the Burma Army could still be called the Union Tatmadaw to avoid any issues with it being named the Federal Army.

Burma’s ethnic states are Kachin, Karen, Arakan, Mon, Shan, Chin, and Karenni.

Link: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/ethnic-states-win-right-draft-constitutions.html>

[Kachin, Wa armies cut ties to UNFC](#)

DVB, 9 May 2017

The Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) and the Wa National Organization (WNO) have withdrawn from the United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC), a formerly seven-member coalition of ethnic armed groups that have yet to sign Burma's Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement.

The KIO submitted to the UNFC a letter of resignation signed by its secretary, La Nan, and dated 29 April, Pa-O National Liberation Organization (PNLO) patron Colonel Khun Okkar told *DVB*.

"The KIO Secretary La Nan signed the letter and withdrew KIO membership from the UNFC so as not to be a hindrance for other organizations in the UNFC, which will probably join the National Ceasefire Agreement [NCA]. This is probably one of the reasons behind the decision," he said.

"The other thing is the KIO wants to give up its involvement in the NCA [framework for peace talks] as well as in the Wa armed groups alliance," Khun Okkar added, referring to a relatively new grouping of ethnic armed organizations led by the powerful United Wa State Army (UWSA).

"It is possible that the KIO plans to take a different approach to talks with the government and to stand alone in further discussions. It might have been difficult for the KIO to engage with the Wa grouping."

Likewise, the WNO reportedly drew up a letter withdrawing from the UNFC earlier this month.

In the letter, the WNO cited some reasons for pulling out of the alliance, including that it has been having more difficulty collaborating with the UNFC than in the earlier days of its membership. There are also discussions about forming an umbrella grouping of Wa organizations, tentatively to be named the Wa National League, with the WNO exodus from the UNFC partly in preparation for the league's establishment.

As of Monday, the UNFC had not made an official announcement regarding the matter, nor had the KIO or WNO offered formal comment.

Maung Maung Soe, an ethnic affairs analyst, told *DVB*, "Although the KIO is resigning from the UNFC, it is not certain whether the remaining UNFC members will sign the NCA."

"Not a single organization has signed the NCA after 15 October 2015, when eight organizations and [their respective] armed groups signed the NCA," he added.

Countering Khun Okkar's assertion, Maung Maung Soe said it was "unlikely" that the UNFC's remaining members would sign the NCA. He cited the various "dilemmas" facing the groups, including a decision by the Shan State Progressive Party (SSPP) to join a February summit of the UWSA-led ethnic armed grouping, which has renounced the accord.

The latest developments in a series of shifting alliances and posturing among Burma's ethnic armed groups come as the government prepares to host the second round of the 21st Century Panglong Conference. The high-level peace talks are the National League for Democracy's signature foray into the peace process, but its framework has been largely carried over from that of the previous government and requires ethnic armed groups to sign the NCA if they are to be eligible to participate fully.



The government has announced that the five-day conference will convene on 24 May.

With the KIO and WNO backing out, the five remaining UNFC members are the SSPP, the New Mon State Party (NMSP), the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP), the Lahu Democratic Union (LDU) and the Arakan National Council (ANC).

Link: <http://www.dvb.no/news/kachin-wa-armies-cut-ties-unfc/75426>

Union Peace Conference achieves agreement on the majority of points in five sectors

Mizzima , 26 May 2017

The Union Peace Conference— 21st Century Panglong (second session) discussed position papers in five sectors and reached agreement for the majority of the points in the five sectors, state media reported on 26 May.



Agreed upon were 41 points of facts related to the political, economic, social, land and environment sectors, reached by representatives of the government, Hluttaw, the Tatmadaw, ethnic armed organizations and political parties, according to the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC) Secretariat.

Positive results also came out from the remaining four sectors, said the representatives at the press conference. The results will be submitted to the final-day meeting of the Union Peace Conference-

21st Century Panglong (second session) on 28th May, the report said.

Link: <http://www.mizzima.com/news-domestic/union-peace-conference-achieves-agreement-majority-points-five-sectors>