Suu Kyi meets NCA groups for preliminary peace talks

- By DVB | 24 January 2017

Burma's State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi arrives for talks with PPST delegates in Naypyidaw on 24 January 2017. (PHOTO: State Counsellor's Office)

Burma's State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi has held a meeting with representatives of the various ethnic armed groups that are signatories to the country's **Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement** (NCA).
According to a government report, Suu Kyi met with the ethnic groups' Peace Process Steering Team (PPST) this morning in the capital, Naypyidaw, where talks focused on issues related to the peace process.

Monday's agenda s included discussions on: the ongoing conflict between Burmese government forces and ethnic armies in northern Burma; examining ways of bringing non-NCA signatories on board; and recent incidents between the Burmese army and ceasefire groups.

Though it was not specifically alluded to in the State Counsellor's report, the latter discussion was likely related to recent clashes between government forces and the Shan State Army- South. Last week the Shan group reported that one of its patrols had been ambushed by a Burmese army unit in the Shan State district of Loilem. A spokesman for the group said that such skirmishes have erupted frequently due to a lack of proper territory demarcation.
Suu Kyi reportedly told the PPST delegation, led by the Karen National Union's Mutu Say Poe, that she was optimist that a nationwide peace can be achieved despite recent setbacks. She said her government is continuing negotiations with armed groups that have not signed the ceasefire accord.

The Burmese pro-democracy leader, a previous Nobel Peace Prize laureate, reportedly said that she remains confident that these negotiations will eventually lead to a solution, and stressed that delays in the peace process will ultimately prolong people's suffering across the country.

She urged the NCA-signatory groups to undertake development work in their respective regions, which will allow their people to enjoy the benefits of peace, as well as increase each ethnic population's trust in the peace process.

Suu Kyi was accompanied at this morning's meeting by the National Peace and Reconciliation Centre's deputy-chairpersons Kyaw Tint Swe and Tin Myo Win, and National Security Advisor Thaung Tun. The ethnic delegation included Pa-O National Liberation Organisation chief Khun Okker and the All-Burma Students Democratic Force's Than Khe.

Although the NCA was a product of the previous ruling government, which enjoyed a strong military majority in parliament, the torch of the peace process has now been passed to the hands of Suu Kyi and her democratically elected National League for Democracy (NLD) party. However, many observers have noted that the military retains much power in Naypyidaw, and is not subject to the NLD's demands.
While peace has returned to many parts of eastern Burma for the first time in decades, the people of Kachin and Shan states continue to suffer from the effects of territorial clashes, not just between the Burmese military and local ethnic armies, but sometimes between ethnic groups themselves.

http://www.dvb.no/news/suu-kyi-meets-nca-groups-preliminary-peace-talks/73733