

Junta meets mediator on Kachin's proposal

Mizzima News (www.mizzima.com)

September 5, 2007 - In an ostensible move to broker peace with the Kachin Independence Organization, the Burmese military junta had summoned the Kachin peace mediator to Naypyitaw for discussions on the KIO's 19-point proposal submitted at the recently concluded National Convention.

The junta summoned Saboi Jum, a Kachin reverend and former secretary of the Kachin Baptist Convention, to Naypyitaw on August 14 to discuss the proposals.

Speaking to Mizzima, Saboi Jum confirmed his visit to Burma's new jungle capital in Naypyitaw and said, "We had discussions and negotiations on the KIO's 19-point proposal and I carried the message to the KIO in Laiza."

He, however, declined to identify the military officials he met in Naypyitaw.

Saboi Jum, who played a key role in the KIO- junta ceasefire deal in February 1994, said following his visit to Naypyitaw, he made a trip to KIO headquarters at Laiza, on the Sino-Burma border, on August 17.

The KIO, however, denied discussing the matter as its delegation to the National Convention is due back home, he added.

With the KIO delegation to the National Convention returning home this week, he will pay another visit to Laiza for further talks with the KIO officials as the mediator, he said.

"The 19-point proposal is what we have been demanding and we will continue to demand but in a peaceful way through negotiations," said Saboi Jum.

The KIO delegation attending the junta's constitutional drafting convention, which was wound up on Monday, submitted a 19-point proposal in July. However, the junta turned a blind eye to the proposals which were not discussed at the convention.

Among the crucial clauses, the KIO in the proposal suggested naming the armed forces in Burma, including all ethnic nationalities, as the 'Federal Armed Force' and demanded a federal system of government, where the autonomy of the states and the rights of ethnic nationalities will be guaranteed.

Critics however, have said that the junta following the conclusion of the National Convention, will demand that the ethnic ceasefire groups abandon armed conflict and join them as political parties representing their respective ethnic groups.

U Mya Maung, a Sino-Burma border based military analyst, earlier told Mizzima, "The junta is mounting pressure on the ceasefire groups, and it will be clear once the National Convention is over as to what their exact motive is."

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