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The unilateral cease fire ordered by the Army ends today and there is as yet no sign whether the ceasefire will be further extended by the Army.

For the first time, there were fewer incidents of fighting between Tatmadaw and the Arakan Army in June. However an incident near Sittwe port and the destruction of construction materials of an Indian project for Kaladan Bridge should be of concern to India.

The Chinese are now back in their attempts to revive the Myitsone dam but the local leaders do not seem to be convinced!

It is now learnt that Sheikh Hasina in her visit to China in the first week of July is likely to press China to intervene and persuade Myanmar to start taking back Rohingya refugees.

Will the Unilateral Ceasefire be Extended by the Myanmar Army?

The unilateral ceasefire ordered by the Tatmadaw (except in Western Command in Rakhine State) ends today. The first cease fire was from December 21, 2018 to April 30 2019 and the second one extended at the behest of China was between April 30, 2019 to June 30 2019. There is no information as yet whether the Chinese would move again for another extension as they should as most of the conflict areas are on the Chinese border.

An indication that the Army would not like to extend the cease fire was given by Maj. Gen. Soe Naing Oo Chairman of the Tatmadaw True

(?) information team. He said that it is questionable whether the ethnic groups in the five command areas where the Army has announced ceasefire really want to make peace.” He added that the reason for the cease fire was for coordinating and negotiating with the ethnic armed groups that have yet to sign the cease fire. In this, both sides were responsible as the Government team led by NRPC were not active enough to pursue their objectives, while the ethnic groups wanted to pursue a different agenda.

Meanwhile fighting has already erupted in the declared cease fire area on 21st June when the insurgents belonging to the TNLA of Northern Alliance clashed with the Tatmadaw in the villages near Kutkai City. A large number of people have already fled the villages and reached the city.

It looked that the Tatmadaw in declaring ceasefire was more intent on crushing the Arakan Army in the Western Command area utilizing the additional forces released during ceasefire. But this has not happened. Though the number of incidents had come down, there are no signs of fighting abating in Rakhine area in the near future. People’s support to the Arakan Army has increased as a result of Army’s excesses towards the civilians in the area!

Though the Tatmadaw has disowned it, internet facilities in both Rakhine and Chin states have been closed by the civilian authorities. The civilian authorities do not stop such facilities at their own will and it is said that the Army does want the public to know the nature and the extent of fighting and ensuing casualties. Some criminal cases have also been taken up in the court and journalists who have provided details of fighting in the Rakhine are being threatened with arrests and prosecution!

There was a case of alleged torching of building materials meant for the Kaladan river bridge as part of the Indian project by the Arakan Army. A Naval tug boat was fired upon with rockets in Sittwe Port thus bringing the fighting uncomfortably close to the Indian projects!

Efforts to Revive Myitsone Project:

Another major attempt was made by China to revive the Myitsone project. A Group of Chinese experts backed by China’s State Power Investment Corporation (SPIC) visited the Parliament in Kachin State and tried to convince the members that they need not worry that the dam would collapse in the event of an earthquake and that there is no reason either to worry about the destruction of region’s bio diversity or other potential environmental impacts due to the mega dam project. They took the services of a French Seismologist in the group to explain to the Parliamentarians that the earth quake fault is inactive. The experts said that the dam will be built on a very strong foundation that will not collapse and would also take care not to harm the bio diversity of the area.

The site is less than 100 Kms from the major Sagaing Fault and many experts have said that if an earthquake occurs there will be severe structural and ecological implications.

Environmentalists have also warned that the dam site has some of the highest levels of bio diversity in the world. Many of the cultural relics of the Kachins will also get submerged.

The team tried to convince that the dam is of benefit to the local people when it is known that 90 percent of the power produced will go to Yunnan in China! Besides how can the bio diversity be preserved when the whole area will be submerged under water permanently!

At any rate, the Kachin Parliamentarians do not seem to have been convinced.

Bangladesh wants China to Intervene in Rohingya Issue:

Prime Minister Shiekh Hasina is due to visit China to attend the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum at Dalian China in the first week of July. She will be in Beijing on July 4th and 5th and will be meeting the Chinese President and the Prime Minister. Hasina is expected to brief the Chinese leaders of the Rohingya problem and request China to prod Myanmar to take back 740,000 refugees staying in camps in Bangladesh since 2017. Though Bangladesh and Myanmar had signed a repatriation deal in 2017, not a single refugee has gone back so far.

The Foreign Minister of Bangladesh told the Parliament earlier that if they cannot send the refugees back, the country's security and stability will be hampered.

The Foreign Minister of Bangladesh Abdul Momeen had also sought China's help to take back the refugees- at least those who are on the verified list.

With the disturbed conditions in Rakhine State in the fighting between the Myanmar Army and the Arakan Army, Myanmar has an additional excuse in not taking back any of the Rohingya refugees for the present!

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