

State Administration Council Information Team

Eighth Media Conference, 27 August 2021

INTRODUCTION

A very good afternoon to you all, ladies and gentlemen, members of the diplomat corps, media friends, government and civil society representatives. I would like to thank you for coming and wish you all good health in these COVID times.

Today's media conference will be held in two parts. The first part will be presentations from myself and U Khin Maung Oo from the Union Election Commission. Then, our foreign guests are kindly invited to ask questions and we will do our best to answer. We will then show the various evidence and documentation we have to our foreign guests. After this, our diplomatic and foreign guests will depart and then in the second part, we will have a question and answer session for our domestic media.

This conference will be in four parts:

- First, the governance reforms laid out by the State Administration Council Chairman and Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at the six-month mark of the State Administration Council government,
- Second, how our fight against COVID-19 pandemic is progressing,
- Third, our efforts to improve security and stability, and
- Fourth, the outcome of investigations into the general elections of 8th November 2020, the annulment of the election results in accordance with prevailing laws, and the tasks that lie ahead.

GOVERNANCE REFORMS

First, the Chairman and Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing laid out the way forward in his address to mark the sixth month tenure of the State Administration Council.

Regarding the Five-Point Road Map and the Nine Policy Objectives of the State Administration Council, the reconstitution of the Union Election Commission and the investigations into the 2020 elections had been completed in July in accordance with the law. The Union Election Commission uncovered massive electoral fraud involving over 11.3 million ballots, and illegal interference in these elections by the National League for Democracy (NLD) party and NLD-led previous government. Based on sound evidence of this fraud, the election results have been annulled.

Next, the Senior General emphasized that work was ongoing on the fifth point of the State Administration Council's Five-Point Road Map – that is the holding of free and fair multi-party democratic elections, and handing over State duties to the winning party in accordance with democratic standards. The Provisional Government plans to complete all tasks by August 2023 and has promised free and fair multi-party democratic elections. To conduct such elections, the basic requirement is security, stability and rule of law. We are undertaking measures to this end.

On August the first, the Planning Committee, which had previously been undertaking the role and functions of the Myanmar government, was transformed into the "Provisional Government of the

Union of Myanmar”. The name indicates that this is not a permanent government and the purpose of this transformation is greater decentralization of decision-making, and greater efficiency and effectiveness of government functions.

COMBATTING COVID-19

My second point relates to the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. As in most other countries across the world, Myanmar is striving to protect, control and manage the COVID delta variant, which we call the third wave COVID. Because of the tremendous combined efforts of the government, the public, civil society and the Tatmadaw (the Myanmar Defence Services), reported new infections among tested cases have declined by 14 percentage points this month. On 23rd July, at the peak of the COVID-18 Delta variant, 41% of tested cases were positive, and this proportion declined to 21% on 26th August. We are aware that this refers only to tested cases, and we are making great efforts to reduce the infection rates further.

The State Administration Council and Government of Myanmar salute and thank the health personnel on the frontlines, civil society and volunteer organizations, the public and the Tatmadaw medical corps for their dedication to fighting the pandemic in the midst of many criticisms and attacks.

Let me now turn to our COVID vaccination program and how it’s progressing. The previous government had signed a contract with the government of India to buy 30 million vaccines. We have already vaccinated a segment of our population using the first 2 million vaccines we bought from India, plus the 1.5 million vaccines donated by India. Understandably, due to its own COVID situation, India cannot yet send us the remaining vaccines. We, like other countries, are in the same situation.

We are striving to vaccinate yet more of our population. The People’s Republic of China has donated 2 million doses of vaccines to us and we’ve purchased another 4 million doses. Two million doses have arrived and we are already vaccinating the population on the basis of 12 priority groups. Within this week we are expecting another two million doses. The remaining doses are on track to arrive. Altogether, we’ve made arrangements to purchase 24 million doses from China. Within this year, we plan to completely vaccinate 50% of our eligible population and of course more, if possible. The government is accelerating efforts to vaccinate and protect as many people as possible. We are also cooperating with friendly countries to produce COVID vaccines within Myanmar. Moreover, we are expecting 2 million doses of vaccines from the Russian Federation this month. Overall, we can say that we are making progress in our COVID vaccination program.

We urge all Myanmar people to protect themselves, their families and their friends by getting vaccinated when their turn comes. Nothing is more important than your health and your family’s health. We urge you not to believe in the myths and rumours that vicious people and ignorant people are circulating about vaccines and vaccination.

This third wave of COVID-19 is far more infectious than previous COVID-19 waves. Also, compared with previous variants, we find that those who are infected suffer far more, with severe symptoms and greater need for oxygen. During the COVID Third Wave, we found deficiencies in hospitals and other health facilities with regard to providing medical oxygen.

This is because prior preparations in the health sector were inadequate. During the time of the previous government, medical oxygen was needed mainly for patients in intensive care units (ICUs), and medical oxygen needs were filled largely by private manufacturers, especially those in Yangon and Mandalay. So public hospitals did not have adequate facilities or infrastructure for the production of medical oxygen. On top of this, political agitation and riot instigation led to crowds, which in turn led to more rapid spread of the disease.

The provisional government resolved this in a short time. We imported compressed liquid oxygen supplies from neighboring countries, we supported medical oxygen production from public, Tatmadaw, and private sector oxygen plants, and we set up new production facilities for medical oxygen. Now, although we can say that we are meeting the needs so far for medical oxygen, 30% of the oxygen being supplied is from imported liquid oxygen. In the long term, hospitals at the national, regional, township levels will need to meet requirements for medical oxygen through local production. This was emphasized by Prime Minister and Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at the meeting on COVID-19 management held on 16 August 2021.

On behalf of the government of Myanmar, I would like to extend our thanks and appreciation to all those contributing to Myanmar's medical oxygen needs, to various civil society organizations, public and Tatmadaw production facilities, private sector facilities and especially to our neighbors China and Thailand for arranging the rapid delivery of compressed liquid oxygen supplies in such a short time. Here, may I quote Prime Minister and Senior General Min Aung Hlaing's own words:

Quote: I believe that those who are helping us in this period are actually saving the lives so many Myanmar citizens. I thank the countries helping us and our citizens working with us to save lives. Unquote

Friendly countries and organizations are helping us in COVID-19 management with donations of medical supplies and equipment. On 19th August, the Minister of Health of the Kingdom of Cambodia H.E. Mam Bun Heng came himself to Myanmar to donate cash, relief funds and medical supplies to Myanmar to assist Myanmar in its fight against Covid-19. In addition, Cambodia is also providing cash to Myanmar through the ASEAN coordinating center for humanitarian assistance. On 20 August 2021, we received the second batch of COVID-19 equipment, medicines and other supplies donated by the Indian government. We highly appreciate the generous contributions from these friendly countries as a token of friendship and solidarity for the peoples of Myanmar.

We also appreciate the efforts, donations and collaboration of various Myanmar organizations and associations in the fight against COVID-19. Nothing more important than human lives. The country's education and workforce depend on the health of the people. The health of the public is our number one priority. To make a significant dent in disease transmission, we are striving to protect and to cure people, meet medical needs, enhance the public's health knowledge, and accelerate the vaccination of all those on the priority list.

Together with public health education campaigns, we started implementing nationwide stay-at-home measures starting from 17 July, in connection with public holidays planned for the following week for the Full Moon Day of Waso. These measures contributed to a reduction of 20 percentage points in the proportion of tested cases that were confirmed. Emergency planning and coordination meetings are being led at the national level by the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister to ensure an effective and pragmatic response, together with the distribution of 12 million masks by military planes and helicopters.

from 17th July to 26th August 2021, during this COVID crisis, we were able to systematically repatriate 12,248 migrant workers from neighboring countries, among which 242 workers were found to be COVID-positive and provided with systematic treatment. We organized the orderly return of migrants confirmed to be COVID-free back to their home towns.

We also implemented measures to assure the uninterrupted supply of essential medical supplies. Taxes were reduced on medical supplies that are on the approved list of the Myanmar Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the concerned ministries facilitated the import and distribution of these FDA-approved essential medical supplies via trade zones, airports and seaports. During this third wave of COVID-19, the relevant authorities conducted inspections of pharmaceutical and medical equipment warehouses in order to prevent hoarding and price gouging by profiteers in this time of hardship for our citizens. As a result, 10 companies are being further investigated. Additionally, in this difficult period, we are promoting mobile markets on wheels where citizens can buy essential food items at fair prices. Regional authorities are working with the Myanmar Chamber of Commerce for Pharmaceutical & Medical Devices to ensure the sale of anti-COVID-19 drugs and supplies to the public at a fair prices. These prices are posted publicly.

The ethnic armed organizations (EAO) contacted us in connection with COVID control operations, and as a result, we are also vaccinating the communities living in areas under the control of EAOs, as they are also our citizens and our people. The government will not exclude anyone from its health outreach operations.

EFFORTS TO SABOTAGE MYANMAR'S COVID-19 CONTROL EFFORTS

On the other hand, it is sad to see that some groups are deliberately trying to damage and attack our COVID control efforts.

Previously, due to threats and instigations by members of the NLD Party and extremists among NLD supporters, some doctors and medical personnel walked off their jobs, abandoning their patients to join the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM). This was an attempt to sabotage Myanmar's public health system. Fortunately we have been able to reopen various hospitals and health facilities, thanks to the efforts of brave health staff who did not join the CDM and health staff from the Tatmadaw Medical Corps.

And now, extremists in the NLD Party, and the terrorist organizations under the names of National Unity Government (NUG) and People's Defense Forces (PDF) are circulating fake news on social media to disrupt the COVID control operations. Worse, these groups are now physically carrying out violent terrorist acts. For example:

- In Amarapura, Mandalay Region, the PDF attacked and killed one woman and injured three people who were conducting public education activities and distributing preventive health supplies, as part of a volunteer organization.
- In North Okkalapa Hospital, Yangon Region, the medical oxygen supply pipelines for the intensive care unit were deliberately destroyed.

- On 1st August 2021, COVID vaccinations were being conducted in the office of Ward number 1 Administrator, Mayangone Township, Yangon Region. A group calling themselves PDF came and disrupted the vaccinations by carrying out hand grenade attacks.
- On 3rd August 2021, in Hpè Khone town, Kayah State, terrorists attacked a vaccination station with a time bombs, killing one policeman and injuring one volunteer. Terrorists also attacked COVID checkpoints on the roads.
- On 15th August 2021, in Palè town of Sagaing Region, a local voluntary organization was conducting a meeting to discuss the filling-up of compressed oxygen cylinders for COVID patients and other health services, when terrorists attacked the meeting with grenades.

There have been more than 10 such terrorist attacks, and to attack those providing health services and conducting COVID-control measures is a low and evil thing to do; so evil that it is unheard of. I call on the public to unite and oppose such terrorists.

IMPROVING SECURITY AND STABILITY

On my third point, I would like to highlight certain aspects of our work to improve security and stability, about which some media and organizations have issued false reports.

The first incident relates to Kin Ma village in Pauk Township, Magway Region. On 15th June 2021, armed terrorists burned down the village, destroying about 100 of the 225 houses in that village. On 15th June, members of the Myanmar Police and security forces were on patrol, when at about 11 o'clock in the morning, the police patrol was attacked just outside the village close to the village signpost by a group of terrorists who were on the hill near the village with small arms, grenades and IEDs. The security forces defended themselves and fired back upon which the terrorist group retreated. The security forces followed to search the hill, and at 11:50 AM, there was another engagement on that hill, and again at 12 noon. While the security forces were still searching the hill to flush out the remaining terrorists, they saw that Kin Ma village was burning. Together with newly arrived police reinforcements, the security personnel entered the village and tried to put out the fire. From two houses that were burning, they rescued two elderly women over 80 years old and carried them to a safe place.

Upon investigation, we found that at 2:50 PM, about 40 terrorists had set fire to the house of a villager who did not support them. The house was facing the village high school. The fire spread to the other houses. One media outlet that has been declared illegal in Myanmar falsified this incident and reported that security forces had set first to the village. CNN and Reuters news agency reported these fake news as real. We issued timely news on what had really happened, and broadcast to the public the confessions of one terrorist and one of their supporters.

In spite of this, we regret that the United States Embassy and the British Embassy issued declarations falsely accusing our security forces of burning down Kin Ma village, and we noted that these false accusations were issued to coincide with the closed door briefing of the Security Council and the UN General Assembly on 18th June 2021. With regard to the declaration by these embassies, I would like to make a point. Myanmar Ambassadors representing Myanmar abroad have to make sure that they read the official announcements, news, and quotes issued by the governments of those countries. In Myanmar, this government issues the news about what is truly happening. Despite this, these two

embassies have made false accusations, without any attempt to investigate the truth, and this raises questions of their motives.

In connection with the Kin Ma fire, we have already issued the testimony of eye witnesses as to what really happened. Here, please allow me to show you the proof of what really happened and show you how unscrupulous media, together with some embassies who are misleading the Myanmar public, have twisted the truth and are lying to the international community and the Myanmar public.

On the 2nd of August 2021, security forces arrested some people who were supporting the PDF terrorists in Kin Ma Village. These people knew all that had happened in Kin Ma in June, and they had been involved in the incident. I invite you to look at their expressions and make your own judgement. They now regret what they have done and they wish to share their experience with the public to discourage such actions in future.

First, I would like to show a young woman from this village, called Ma Thinzar Tun, who was attending third year classes at the University of Nursing in Yangon. You can hear in her own voice what the true events were, and how she was told to tell this lie. You will also see how she herself made improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and how some foreign media falsely reported on the news of their arrest that security forces had arrested a volunteer health organization who had been helping villagers displaced by armed conflict. Yet Thinzar Tun was carrying materials for making IEDs. Next, I would like to show the testimony of Sithu Lwin. He is not from Kin Ma Village but is from Madayar. He will testify how local villagers ran into the IEDs (improvised explosive devices) set up by PDF members, and how scared the villagers are scared of the PDF. The third testimony comes from Aung Chit Phyo, PDF member, Kin Ma Village, who was arrested together with Ma Thinzar Tun and Ko Sithu Lwin.

After hearing what really happened from these people, it can be seen that unscrupulous media and some foreign embassies are disseminating fake news with the intent of dividing the country's people and misleading the international community by inventing falsehoods about Myanmar.

The second incident shows how the terrorist teams called PDF murdered a village administrator and how the extremists from the NLD controlled the operations. On 3rd August 2021, terrorists stabbed and killed the village administrator from Sin Dat Village in Sagaing Region. On 20th August, three people were arrested for the murder. The people who had directed the murder and paid the killers kyats 5 lakhs (a little over 300 US dollars) were NLD core members. One was the NLD Administrator from the previous government and another was NLD member. You will now see testimony from one of this group.

Another incident took place at building number 16, 44th Street, Botahtaung township, Yangon Region. Our security forces obtained information that explosives and other bomb making materials were hidden there so they went to check. They arrested 2 men and 1 woman and found 16 grenades and other explosive materials. When they entered the building to search 5 people jumped off the top floor. The fall killed 2 people and injured 3. The injured are now being treated in our military hospital.

As usual, unethical media invented fake news. They celebrated these young people as heroes without even bothering to find out what they had done. Yet, the same day, we issued the real facts with the confessions of two people who were arrested. The young man called Kaung Min Thant who

managed to evade capture was interviewed by the local media, which then hid the truth and issued fake news, even insinuating that the security forces had molested the girl who had jumped to her death. We will now show a testimony video of Ma Poe Kyawt Kyawt Khant who was arrested that day.

In the more recent arrests of terrorist groups, we notice that young women are part of these groups, especially in cities like Yangon. They are usually unmarried, living together with young men and sometimes pregnant. We also notice that they may be more susceptible to manipulation by unscrupulous politicians, as they feel more strongly about things. Moreover, several of these young people are into using drugs. I mention this to raise the awareness of parents what may happen to their daughters and sons when they join these groups.

Look at these young people. Unscrupulous politicians and destructive media have incited them to violence and the wrong path. Totally without empathy, for they would never do this to their own sons and daughters. Such instigators are using online media to mislead our young people and our trusting public into wrong ways of thinking.

Some ethnic armed organizations are providing military training as well as weapons to the organizations that call themselves NUG, Committee Representing Pyithu Hluttaw (CRPH) and PDF. On 22nd June 2021, security forces entered two houses in Chan Mya Tharzi Township in Mandalay Region, where PDF members were reported to be using. In the fight to enter and search the house, 8 PDF members were killed and the security forces captured 8 weapons, 50 grenades and also IEDs. Two of the dead men were from the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) with the rank of lieutenant, going by the name of Tu Phoe and Ko Shine, who were leading the terrorist acts.

On 23rd June 2021, Moe Tein and four other members of Mandalay PDF were captured while they were transporting weapons and explosives. Among these were 114 different guns, 100,000 different rounds, 499 grenades, 1,473 40-mm grenades and various explosive ordnance. They had attended terrorist training at KIA headquarters. On 19th June, they were carrying all these weapons and ammunition provided by the KIA from Mansi in Kachin State, along the Nga-Oh – Thabeikkyin Road into Mandalay when they were caught.

Similarly, on 8th August 2021, 80 bombs and related explosive devices were caught in Madayar Township, Mandalay Region. On 4th August, security forces captured Thet Htar Hnaung from Mohnyin NLD, who was caught with evidence that she had been supplying KIA Brigade 8. Information from these and other arrests led to the construction of links as shown in the diagram. This network of terrorists, who are attacking and killing civilians, includes Phyu Phyu Thin from CRPH, Tin Aye and Min Swe Naing from NUG, Kyaw Swar Win from the Katha Township NLD party, and also members of the Moe Hnyin Township NLD party. The CRPH and NUG, now declared as terrorist organizations for such activities, were set up by NLD officials.

Those so-called PDF terrorists who set up mines and carry out bombing attacks are being trained by some ethnic armed organizations in terrorist tactics. Each time these PDF terrorists are captured, their supervisors and financial supporters are NLD party members. The Board shows the links with NLD. The Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) has been providing terrorist training and weapons to PDF members at a camp near Naung Soe Lay Village, Naung Cho Township. These armed terrorists then come back and are planning to carry out their destructive tasks in Mandalay and Sagaing regions. The weapons we have caught and the location of the training camp for terrorists are

shown here. Among the EAOs not all, but only some brigades are conducting such terrorist tactics against civilians. For example, in KIA, Brigade 3 and Brigade 8, and within Karen National Union (KNU) only Brigade 5 are supporting the terrorists.

As for us, we are keeping the door open for peace negotiations. In both the State Administration Council Road Map and the Nine Policy Objectives, we have prioritized the implementation of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA). Prime Minister Senior General Min Aung Hlaing himself said at the three years' anniversary of the NCA on 15th October 2018, “ *Nothing is more important than peace. If peace is desired, then actions have to reflect this desire for peace.*”

Whether or not EAOs have signed the NCA or not, they should follow the path to multi-party democracy. Providing training and weapons to the PDF terrorists, forcing them to stay with the EAOs, capturing those who run away and torturing them, and killing innocent civilians in the areas under their control – these are acts that are against peace. Only when the whole country is at peace, will it be possible to hold truly free and fair elections. We would therefore caution the EAOs not to support the PDF terrorists.

The government and our security forces are working to ensure peace and stability, and security for all citizens. Citizens who wish only to have stability and security have increased collaboration with the government in this endeavor. This is the main reason why across the country, more and more terrorists have been captured together with their weapons and ammunition.

From early to mid-August, we arrested a PDF group who had been conducting terrorist strikes in Yangon region. They had been taking orders from former NLD State and Region Hluttaw Representative Zeyar Thaw and NUG member Myat Min Thu. The group captured included 3 terrorists from Thingan Kyun, 6 from San Chaung, 11 from Hlaing Tharyar, 7 from Dagon Port, 5 from Htantabin, 6 from Kunchan Gone, altogether 38 terrorists. With them, we also captured 5 guns, 309 rounds, 25 homemade guns, 3 grenades, 81 IEDs and associated explosive materials. They had been moving across Yangon region making terrorist attacks 17 times.

In the fourth week of August, following up the connection with a terrorist we had captured at La Yeik Cho guest house in Dagon Myothit (Port) township, we captured 22 terrorists, together with 8 guns, over 200 rounds, mines, IED, and WY methamphetamine drugs. They had been responsible for four explosions, and for the attacks against Ward Administrator and other innocent civilians, which in some cases had led to death. We will soon issue updates on this group.

Our counter-terrorism efforts during the period 1st February to 26th August 2021 are highlighted by the following:

- In Yangon Region alone, terrorists carried out 619 bomb attacks; of these, we identified the perpetrators of 211 attacks, and have captured 322 terrorists. The terrorist attacks killed 84 innocent civilians, and we identified the killers concerned in 27 cases and have captured 59 of those responsible. We have uncovered and seized weapons, explosives and ammunition in 116 separate incidents, captured 199 of those responsible, and captured 58 weapons, 2,975 rounds and various explosive materials.
- Over the same period in Mandalay Region, terrorists carried out 467 bomb attacks; of these, we identified the perpetrators of 216 attacks, and have captured 74 terrorists. The terrorist attacks killed 126 innocent civilians, and we identified the killers concerned in 25 cases and have captured 68 of those responsible. In this region, we have also uncovered and seized

weapons, explosives and ammunition in 118 incidents, captured 156 of the associated gun traffickers and terrorists, and captured 938 weapons, 34,351 rounds and various explosive materials.

In a few places in the country, terrorist acts and insurgencies are still taking place, but on a reduced scale compared to before.

Myanmar is striving to become a disciplined multi-party democracy, which has already been guaranteed firmly by the State Administration Council and the Government. We will never deviate from this path. The State Administration Council only took control of state power because of the massive election frauds and the ensuing emergency situation. We have already promised multi-party democratic elections. Our government will implement its duties strictly according to the 2008 Constitution and prevailing laws. Our security forces are also conducting operations only against those who are trying to destroy national stability and security with terrorist acts.

During this COVID period, nearly every country has seen its economic growth slow down or go into decline. We are making efforts to mitigate the impact of the pandemic and implement measures for economic recovery. Myanmar is largely a rural agricultural country and as such, we are giving special attention to this sector, including the promotion of agricultural exports. The demand for other products may have declined but not for food, feed, and other agricultural products, which help people to fill their essential needs. We believe that the country's strength lies within the country. To this end, we have set up a separate Ministry of Cooperatives and Rural Development. Overall, we will work together with the people to set the country on the path to economic recovery.