

THAILAND

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MEDIA MONITORING REPORT # 170

ECONOMICS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Ethnic affairs office for Mon State

The Global New Light of Myanmar, 28 August 2017

Ethnic Literature and Culture Department and Ethnic Rights Protection Department of the Ministry of Ethnic Affairs drove stakes to build their director's office of Mon State on Kyaikmaraw road at Min village, Mawlamyine yesterday morning.



The ceremony was attended by Union Minister Naing Thet Lwin, Chief Minister of Mon State Dr Aye Zan, state cabinet members and officials.

An official presented a brief account of the project. The Union minister, the chief minister and officials drove in the stakes.

The special construction group 13 of the Ministry of Construction is building the 48-ft by 60-ft two-storey concrete office.

Kayin and Kayah states and Ayeyawady and Bago regions will also get such offices in the fiscal year 2017-2018.

Link: https://issuu.com/myanmarnewspaper/docs/28_aug_17_gnlm

New Sub-station Expected to Light up Karen State Villages

Karen news, 25 August 2017

Several villages in Karen State may soon be hooked up to the electrical grid once a new sub-station comes online, according to an official from the State Electric Power Enterprise.

"We are trying to distribute power to Myawady, Kawkaeik, Kyondoe, Sukali and Waw Lay Myaing from the 230-kV Mawlamyine power station via the Thin Gan Nyi Naung sub-station, which is 95



percent complete. We are trying to provide 24-hour electricity in Myaing Gyi Ngu within this year,” said U Thein Shwe, a deputy chief engineer at the Karen State Electric Power Enterprise.

Among the 308,000 households in Karen State, more than 45 percent rely on candlelight – a fire hazard – for light. Less than 30% are connected to the national grid, which currently reaches only centralized villages proximate to power stations – like those Hpa-an, Hlaingbwe, Zar Ta Pyin, Thandaunggyi, Thandaunglay, and Bawkali towns.

U Thein Shwe said that will soon change with the Thin Gan Nyi Naung sub-station. He added that plans are also in place to distribute power to Ka Ma Maung and Hpa-pun via Kaw Lon Island. A planned 33/11 kV sub-station would also distribute power to Kya-in Seikkyi Township.

Under the \$5.8 billion National Electrification Project (NEP), the World Bank is subsidizing a solar panel project. The Department of Rural Development sold and installed the reduced-cost panels at 11,442 households in five townships in Kayin State last month.

“The state government and [private companies] have signed contracts to carry out projects for increasing power distribution. If the coal-fired power plant is successfully built in Wut Gyi, then electricity can be provided to many factories and workshops,” said U Tin Myo Oo, the State Hluttaw MP from Kya-in Seikkyi township.

LINK: [HTTP://KARENNEWS.ORG/2017/08/NEW-SUB-STATION-EXPECTED-TO-LIGHT-UP-KAREN-STATE-VILLAGES.HTML/](http://KARENNEWS.ORG/2017/08/NEW-SUB-STATION-EXPECTED-TO-LIGHT-UP-KAREN-STATE-VILLAGES.HTML/)

Mon State to provide compensation for some flood-damaged farmland

Mon News Agency, 28 August 2017

The Mon State government hopes that a windfall of compensation will give a much-needed boost to farmers whose plots were damaged by recent monsoon flooding.



According to Mon State’s Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Transportation, farmers will K50, 000 per acre for flood-damaged farmlands.

Over 17,000 acres of farmland was flooded in Mon State in July, including 4,193 acres that were completely damaged, according to the state ministry’s tally.

“We are trying to provide around K190 million. We will provide K50, 000 per acre, as well as crop

seeds and fertilizers. We are trying to provide this before the end of this month because [the farmers] need to replant the paddies,” said U Tun Htay, Mon State Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Transportation.

The state government will provide around K75 million, with the remainder of the funding sought from the Union Ministry of Agriculture.

The over 4,000 acres of damaged farmland that can expect compensation are spread over Paung, Bilin, and Kyaikto townships under Thaton District, as well as another 62 acres in Kyaikmaraw township.

According to statistics from the department, there are over 690,000 acres of farmlands in Mon State.

Link: <https://monnews.org/2017/08/25/mon-state-to-provide-compensation-for-some-flood-damaged->

[farmland/](#)

Drug rehab group starts education campaign in Kayin State

Burma News International, 25 August 2017

A drug rehabilitation group has launched an educational campaign to promote awareness about their services, and convince youth to kick the habit, or not to start in the first place.

The Myanmar Drug Addicts Rehabilitation Association (Central) launched the education program on August 23, with a talk in Kya-in Seikkyi Township in Kayin (Karen) State. Around 500 people attended.

“[Drugs] only bring negative consequences so we have come to hold this educational talk to raise awareness among the people who are related [to drug users] or are close to [the drug community],” U San Shein, chair of association, told KIC News.



The KNU arrested and charged over 200 drug users and dealers under the anti-drug law, and destroyed over 5,000 methamphetamine tablets last year, according to officials from KNU's Win Yaw branch.

Link: <http://www.bnionline.net/news/karen-state/item/3418-drug-rehab-group-starts-education-campaign-in-kayin-state.html>

New care centre for children with autism to open in Mawlamyine

The Global New Light of Myanmar, 22 August 2017

A SPECIAL care centre for children with autism is due to open in Mawlamyine, the capital of Mon State, in early 2018, according to the Myanmar Autism Association.

“There are approximately about 30 children suffering from autism in the town,” said U Kyaw Swa Aung, one of the centre organisers. “The move aims to improve the lives of those children by providing specialised care through this centre. Children under the age of ten years will be allowed to stay at the centre.”

The new centre will cost Ks240 million in funds contributed by local residents. The three-storey facility will include trained autism and child development experts. U Thike Tun, the father of an autistic child, said he welcomes the establishment of the training centre and believes it can help autistic children improve their lives.

According to an international study, one in 68 children worldwide has an autism spectrum disorder, and 67 million people live with autism globally.

Autism, a neurodevelopment disorder often becomes evident during childhood and include impaired communication and restricted and repetitive behavior.

Link: https://issuu.com/myanmarnewspaper/docs/22_aug_17_gnlm

Policy to tap energy of youth in national development effort

Myanmar Times, 25 August 2017

The government and representatives will draw up a national youth policy aimed at tapping the boundless energy of the country's young people in national development, officials said on Wednesday.

Senior government officials and youth representatives are meeting on August 24 and 25 in Nay Pyi Taw to discuss a draft policy based on the consolidated proposals gathered after a nationwide year-long consultation, according to Koe Thura Soe, a member of the Myanmar national youth policy drafting committee.

But Koe Thura Soe said there is a proposal by the union minister of the Home Affairs Ministry to limit the highest age at 30-years-old.

The draft also outlined the involvement of youth in politics, economics, literature and culture, research, as well as in science and technology.

It also outlined procedures and systems for youths to participate in natural resources and environmental protection, law and order, gender equality, human rights and international relations.

The draft policy also included the establishment of the committee for youth affairs as the key implementing arm of the youth policy. It will involve member of unions, regions and states governments, civil society groups, experts and youth organizations.

According to the draft proposal, the union, region and state governments would allocate budget for the implementation of the program.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/policy-tap-energy-youth-national-development-effort.html>

Government to open vocational training schools for dropouts in Yangon

Myanmar Times, 15 August 2017

The Yangon government and the Ministry of Education will start collaboration in running vocational training schools in the region to help youth dropouts find gainful employment, Yangon Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein said.

"Children who drop out from school will finally have a chance to get access to education that they can afford," U Phyo Min Thein said on August 12 at the opening of a non-formal education school at Basic Education High School No. 2 Hlaing Tharyar.

"They can get job opportunities and also be the skilled labour for the country, so we need to offer vocational training to the children from the non-formal education school. We will collaborate with the ministry of education to upgrade the vocational the situation," he said.

The non-formal education program started in 2008-2009 academic year in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, the Myanmar Literacy Resource Center, UNICEF, other donors.

The program provides an opportunity for children for children who dropped out of school.

There are a total of 59 vocational training centres located in various government technical institutes and technical high schools throughout the country, but these can only accommodate 20,000 students each year due

to insufficient workshops.

In addition to these vocational training centres, the MOE also gives short-term vocational training courses in cooperation with the private sector.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/national-news/yangon/27263-government-to-open-vocational-training-schools-for-dropouts-in-yangon.html>

Human Rights Program Launches in High Schools

The Irrawaddy, 24 August 2017

YANGON – A human rights training program has launched for thousands of high-school students in 73 public schools in Bago Region, according to U Aung Myo Kyaw of the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP).

“The human rights introduction program is starting in the schools of our town under an agreement of the government and the education ministry in Pyay,” said Daw Mar Mar Zin, Bago’s Pyay Township Education Officer.



AAPP’s two-hour curriculum introduces the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child with cartoons, videos, talks and insights from human rights educators and activists.

Anywhere from 100 to 700 students will join the training sessions at each school. The program

began on Aug. 1 and will conclude on Sept. 30. AAPP will visit the Taung Gyi and Monywa districts to check on the progress of participants and instructors.

The Program was conducted in eight state schools in Yangon Region and three state schools in Bago in 2016. The program has been expanded widely, from 11 to 72 schools, with the permission of the region’s chief minister and education ministry this year.

Although it has been agreed that a new curriculum will be written collaboratively between the government, the Myanmar education research bureau and experts from Unicef, the Japan International Cooperation Agency and the Asian Development Bank, the implementation process has been delayed, reportedly due to government transactions.

Link: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/human-rights-program-launches-high-schools.html>

Myanmar emphasis on ecotourism

TTR Weekly, 31 July 2017

YANGON, 31 July 2017: Myanmar’s Ministry of Hotels and Tourism will focus on ecotourism in an attempt to increase visitors to the country.

Ecotourism and community-based tourism are now strong marketing trends used to attract tourists and Myanmar has already considerable experience in homestay and community-linked tourism.

Myanmar currently has 21 ecotourism sites, which include 16 existing sites and a handful of underdeveloped ones, as well as 13 community-based tourism projects in Sagaing, Mandalay, Magwe, and Yangon regions and Shan, Karenni and Kachin states.

Marine tourism is also opening up on the Myeik archipelago. The country is now promoting the archipelago, which lies in the far south of the country. The area is emerging as an attractive destination for travellers who have already visited Mandalay, Bagan and Yangon.



Myanmar will open a new ecotourism site, near Oaktwin and Pauk Khaung townships, in the Bago Yoma forest later this year according to Irrawaddy media.

Link: <http://www.ttrweekly.com/site/2017/07/myanmar-emphasis-on-ecotourism/>

Ethnic Health Workers Complete Approved Government and Karen Health Training

Karen News, 11 August 2017

Ethnic health workers have been awarded government recognized certificates after a joint training held by government and Karen health departments in Hlaingbwe Township, Karen State.



The 31 trainees who completed the seven-month maternal child and reproductive health course provided by Karen Department of Health and Welfare (KDHW) and government Health department were awarded certificates on August 8 at the General administration office of Hlaingbwe Town.

Trainers on the course included resource persons from the government health department of Hlaingbwe, KDHW, Thai-Burma-border-based health organizations such as Mae Tao Clinic, Burma Medical

Association (BMA), IRC-PIE and CPI – the training started on January, 2017.

The health workers who completed the course came from ethnic health organizations such as KDHW, Back Pack Health Workers Team, Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA), Border Guard Force (BGF), and Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army – Peace Council (PC). The training course ran for 7 months – 3 months for 15 theoretical knowledge and 4 months for 14 subjects of practical experience.

Karen Department of Health and Welfare is one of the 14 departments run by the Karen National Union (KNU) and have been working with government health departments on health projects since the ceasefire agreement.

Link: <http://karennews.org/2017/08/ethnic-health-workers-complete-approved-government-and-karen-health-training.html/>

Mon schoolchildren to get computer savvy

DVB, 2 August 2017

Mon State Department of Basic Education has announced that eight state schools in the region have introduced tablets in their classrooms, and that it is looking to expand the programme to include more high schools in the future.

“Here in Mon state, eight schools have each been allocated 99 personal computers,” said Tun Myint Oo, an administrative officer at the regional Department of Basic Education. “Training [for teachers] on how to integrate tablets into classrooms is now underway at one high school in Thanbyuzayat. The tablets will be used in 7th, 8th and 9th grade classrooms. Older students at the matriculation stage will also be given access to the computers in their classes.”

He added: “UNESCO has offered funding to this programme for two years, after which time the Department to Education will continue supporting it.”



One high school in each of Bilin and Thanbyuzayat townships and two schools in Paung, Chaungzon and Kyaikmayaw townships were chosen as pilots for the scheme in Mon State.

Since the programme was initiated in the 2016-17 school year, some 31 schools across Burma have introduced tablets into their classrooms.

Link: <http://www.dvb.no/news/mon-schoolchildren-to-get-computer-savvy/76695>

LAW AND GOVERNANCE

Amyotha Hluttaw amends Telecommunications Law, but contentious section 66(d) survives

Myanmar Times, 4 August 2017

The Amyotha Hluttaw passed the bill amending the Telecommunications Law as revised by the Bill Committee on Wednesday but took no action on calls to abolish the controversial section 66(d), said Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than.

The committee’s revisions included making charges brought under section 80(a) cognizable cases; requiring Ministry of Transport and Communications approval to prosecute under the law; making offenses bailable under section 66(a) (b) and (d); and limiting complaints filed under section 66(d) to those directly affected or their representatives.

Five MPs proposed abolishing section 66(d), but the proposal was rejected in a vote, and the bill as revised by the committee was passed.

The continued existence of section 66(d) is not in line with the people’s desires, according to U Ye Htut, MP from Sagaing’s constituency No.5.

If section 66(d) was repealed, government leaders would have to worry about more uncontrolled criticism online, he said.

“[The amendment bill] has been approved, but it is not much different from the one submitted by the ministry. I think they didn’t want to discuss it from the very beginning because they didn’t release the bill beforehand. This is not sincere. The system was also complex. They were systematically preparing to approve it since last night,” said U Ye Htut.

The ministry submitted the bill to the Amyotha Hluttaw on July 13, and 14 MPs debated it on July 25.

LINK: [HTTPS://WWW.MMTIMES.COM/NATIONAL-NEWS/NAY-PYI-TAW/27089-AMYOTHA-HLUTTAW-AMENDS-TELECOMMUNICATIONS-LAW-BUT-CONTENTIOUS-SECTION-66-D-SURVIVES.HTML](https://www.mmtimes.com/national-news/nay-pyi-taw/27089-AMYOTHA-HLUTTAW-AMENDS-TELECOMMUNICATIONS-LAW-BUT-CONTENTIOUS-SECTION-66-D-SURVIVES.HTML)

PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

Ceasefire between UNFC, govt remains distant dream

Myanmar Times, 18 August 2017

It has been 14 months since the Unified Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC) – an umbrella organization of five ethnic armed groups – and the government started ceasefire negotiations but a deal remains a distant dream.



The UNFC, through its negotiating arm Delegation for Political Negotiations (DPN), proposed eight points that it believes would rectify the weaknesses of the current Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) signed by the government of other ethnic armed groups, but the recommendations have not been acted upon.

Further delaying the negotiations are disagreements between the Tatmadaw and the government on some of the proposals put forward by the UNFC, especially on political and military issues. Among these was defining the role of an international ceasefire monitors.

If the government and Tatmadaw can’t agree on these issues in next round of talks, it is not likely that a ceasefire agreement can be reached.

Over the past 14 months, there were six formal meetings and 10 informal meetings between the two sides’ delegation, with the last negotiations held in Yangon on August 10 and 11.

Little was achieved during the talks.

The four points of UNFC which were agreed by both sides at the August 11 meeting were: for the government and Tatmadaw to announce a nationwide ceasefire; to establish a democratic and federal nation which would have full guarantee to have a democracy that was aligned with the Panglong spirit, equal national rights, and right for self-implementation; to have participation of representatives from groups that were at each level of political discussions, from legal political parties, ethnic representatives, and other essential representatives to be present at related sectors; and to draw up laws and a constitution that would be based upon the decisions made at the 21st Century Panglong Conference.

Government representative and Head of Peace Commission Dr Tin Myo Win encouraged the UNFC to sign the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) and attend the conference before the Third Union Peace Conference-21st Century Panglong Conference.

“The State Counsellor also believes that the representatives here will also be able to attend the upcoming Third Panglong Conference together. I believe that it can be accomplished if everyone cooperates. I would encourage everyone to help in building the Federal Democracy Union which everyone has been hoping for,” he said.

The eight demands of UNFC will be negotiated before coming 21st Century Panglong and he believes UNFC members will be able to participate in peace process, said Peace Commission representative U Zaw Htay.

“It is not difficult for us to sign. If the eight points are settled, we will sign,” said U Twan Zaw, expressing hope that the Tatmadaw and the NLD government would be able to come up with a common stance on the UNFC proposals.

LINK: [HTTPS://WWW.MMTIMES.COM/NATIONAL-NEWS/YANGON/27318-CEASEFIRE-BETWEEN-UNFC-GOVERNMENT-REMAINS-DISTANT-DREAM.HTML](https://www.mmtimes.com/national-news/yangon/27318-ceasefire-between-unfc-government-remains-distant-dream.html)

Mon Party Mulls Joining Myanmar Government's Peace Pact

Radio Free Asia, 23 August 2017

An ethnic Mon group is considering signing the Myanmar government's nationwide cease-fire accord before the next round of peace conference negotiations, an official from the organization said on Wednesday.

The New Mon State Party (NMSP) will decide before the third session of the 21st-century Panglong Conference, said Nai Win Hla, a member of the central executive committee of the New Mon State Party (NMSP).

Nai Win Hla said that he and NMSP deputy secretary General Zweya have met with Mon State Chief Minister Aye Zan to discuss the matter.

NMSP leaders asked Aye Zan to give them three months to decide whether to sign the accord, because the group is trying to persuade other members of the United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC) to sign the NCA, he said.



The NMSP also requested that Aye Zan support its call for the Mon language to be included on the state school curriculum and provide financial assistance to teachers. It also questioned the presence of Myanmar army soldiers in Mawlamyine district in southeastern Myanmar's Mon state.

“We agreed, but we have to talk about this issue with the Union minister,” Aye Zan said, referring to Nai Thet Lwin, the central government's minister for ethnic affairs.

Link: <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/mon-party-mulls-joining-myanmar-governments-peace-pact-08232017154118.html>

KNU talks post-ceasefire peace process with KNPP

Karen News, 9 August 2017



Amid efforts to entice more ethnic armed groups into the fold of the nationwide ceasefire agreement, the Karen National Union shared its peace process experiences with the Karenni National Progressive Party at a meeting in Thailand last week.

Khu Hte Bu, a central committee member of the KNPP, said the aim of the meeting was to hear about the experiences of signatory ethnic armed organizations, especially in terms of carrying out the peace process and implementing the NCA.

Over 30 people, including leaders of the KNPP's central committee, heads of districts and departments and representatives of Karenni civil

society organizations attended the meeting, which was held from August 1 to 3.

KNU joint secretary P'doh Saw Hla Tun attended the meeting on the second and third day. "The KNPP wanted to know about how the peace process is being implemented by the KNU," said P'doh Saw Hla Tun.

During the meeting, he discussed the various peace process mechanisms, including, the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC), and addressed issues relating to the Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Committee (JMC) and the national-level political dialogues.

This was the first time the central committee leaders of the KNU and the KNPP met to exchange views on the peace process.

Link: <http://karennews.org/2017/08/knu-talks-post-ceasefire-peace-process-with-knpp.html/>

OTHERS

WHO: H1N1 outbreak not alarming

Myanmar Times, 31 July 2017

The World Health Organization said the H1N1 outbreak in Myanmar has not reached an alarming state as the government has taken proactive steps to contain the spread of the disease.

"It's not really necessary to feel overly afraid of the influenza," said Dr Stephen Paul Jost, WHO country representative in Myanmar told *The Myanmar Times* at the University of Public Health in Yangon on July 30.

He said that ministry's response and surveillance is up-to-date and government is collaborating with WHO and relevant partners to combat the outbreak that was announced by the Ministry Health and Sports on July 24.

He added that WHO will provide technical support including, disease guideline, case management, training and surveillance for H1N1 infection.

Union Minister Dr Myint Htwe of Ministry of Health and Sports said they are prepared to control the outbreak.

“We are analyzing the disease 24 hours. The virus is mostly found in Chin State, Bago region, Yangon Region and Ayeyarwady Region. Yangon and Ayeyarwady Region should be aware,” he said.



He added that they have planned to provide vaccine to hospitals and will monitor not only H1N1 but also H5N1.

According to the ministry’s latest update as of July 30, 187 suspected patients had been tested nationwide and 51 patients confirmed with H1N1 positive and 10 people died between July 21 and 30.

“We have managed ventilators, medicines and hospitals in Strand Road to decontaminate the suspected patients. We have also made instructions on how to treat suspected patients if enlisted,” he said.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/national-news/27021-who-h1n1-outbreak-not-alarming.html>

The content of the UNHCR Thailand Media Monitoring Reports does not reflect the official view or opinion of the UNHCR.

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