

THAILAND

18 – 30 April 2018

MEDIA MONITORING REPORT # 181

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Over 50,000 Myanmar workers went abroad in three months

Eleven Myanmar, 18 April 2018

More than 50,000 Myanmar citizens left their homeland within the past three months to work abroad, according to monthly employment figures released by the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population.

From January to March this year, there were 50,500 workers who left Myanmar in order to work in foreign countries and most went to neighbouring Thailand.

In January 18,119 workers went abroad and 16,988 went to Thailand. There were 15,653 people who left Myanmar in February to work abroad and among them, 15,653 went to Thailand. Likewise, March saw 17,859 people left the country to work abroad and 15,881 went to Thailand.

According to a ministry statement, 60,964 Myanmar citizens were employed in foreign countries in the past three months.

Link: <http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/business/13750>

6,000 Homebuyers Apply for 1,000 Low-Cost Housing Units in Yangon

The Irrawaddy, 19 April 2018

YANGON — More than 6,000 Yangon residents have submitted applications to purchase 1,000-plus low-cost apartments put up for sale by the Yangon regional government, according to the government Public Housing Sale Committee.



The committee is due to meet by the end of this month to determine how the apartments will be allotted. “We’ll discuss to whom to sell the apartments at the meeting,” he said.

The Public Housing Sale Committee received a total of 6,020 application forms—753 from retired civil servants, 1,761

from civil servants, 843 from company staff and 2,663 from the general public.

The committee, which is staffed by regional lawmakers and department heads, will choose the buyers based on a majority decision by the committee members.

The apartments up for sale are in South Dagon, Dagon Seikkan, Thingangyun, Hlaing Tharyar, Shwepyithar and North Okkalapa townships.

Application forms were sold from Feb. 5-20 for 1,000 kyats each, according to the Department of Urban and Housing Development.

Buyers are required to place a down payment of 30 percent of the price of the apartment, and then pay monthly installments for a period of 10 to 15 years.

Link: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/6000-homebuyers-apply-1000-low-cost-housing-units-yangon.html>

International University to Be Built in Naypyitaw

The Irrawaddy, 20 April 2018

NAYPYITAW — Naypyitaw's municipal administration has announced plans for an international university to be built in the capital's diplomatic zone in Dekkhinathiri Township.

The Naypyitaw Development Committee (NPTDC) is awaiting project approval and land allocation in the diplomatic zone by the Foreign Ministry and the President's Office, committee member U Min Thu told The Irrawaddy.

South Korea will fund and provide technical assistance for construction of the university, which is expected to take less than two years, U Min Thu said. The university is expected to open its doors in 2020.



A delegation representing the university's founding committee led by Sung Ki Baik visited NPTDC officials in early March to discuss the project.

The institution will provide instruction in a wide variety of vocational subjects tailored to the needs of the region and local people, U Min Thu said. The name of the university has yet to be decided, he said.

Link: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/international-university-built-naypyitaw.html>

National Health Plan to cover more than 300 townships in five years

Eleven Myanmar, 22 April 2018

Ministry of Health and Sports is implementing the National Health Plan (2017-2021) step by step and plans to cover more than 300 townships during five years.

Under the National Health Plan, the ministry will implement it in 328 townships—75 townships in 2017-2018 fiscal year, 82 in 2018-2019 FY, 83 in 2019-2020 FY and 88 townships in 2020-2021 FY.

According to the basic facts collected in 2015-2016 FY, there were 50 deaths of infant and children under five, per 1,000 live births. The infant mortality rate is relatively high compared to those in neighbouring countries. About 60 per cent of the under-five mortality is infant death. The ministry will pay special attention to infant healthcare as the number of infant deaths during the first 24 hours is the highest.

An official from the National Health Plan said: "This year, the ministry has chosen more than 70 townships to

provide health departments with medicines and medical equipment, to reconstruct rural health departments and branches, carry out repair works and to fill vacant seats. Under the plan, the ministry mainly focuses on infrastructure and human resource development and the supply of medicines and medical equipment.”

Link: <http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/local/13778>

Yangon University accepts online assignments from students

Myanmar Times, 23 April 2018

The Yangon University of Distance Education said that students were able to submit their assignments online starting the first week of April, the first time the procedure has been implemented since it was planned a few years ago.

The online assignments are apparently aimed at the convenience of students who live far away from the school and to solve the problem of students who do not receive assignment papers after enrolment.

In previous years, distance education students received assignment papers after they registered for the academic year and they needed to write their assignments on the paper that was given to them by the university.

Accepting assignments online is the first time it would be implemented by the university, so students are a bit apprehensive about the procedure.

Based on the online instructions, students first need to download their assignment questions according to their specialisation.

They must write in their own handwriting the answers to the assignments, which can then be scanned and sent via email and Google Drive. They can also take a photo of their assignments or change it to PDF format before submitting the assignments.

A student who wants to submit assignments via email may scan or take at least 60 papers per semester, and they must be sent assignments twice in an academic year.

Latest data from the university released Friday showed that one out of three students in the programme have sent their assignments online. One out of three has been sent assignments online.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/yangon-university-accepts-online-assignments-students.html>

MPU cards, Visa and Master Card credit cards to be enabled under YPS

Myanmar Times, 25 April 2018



Bank account holders will be able to use their ATM cards as prepaid cards under the Yangon Payment Services (YPS) scheme, said Yangon Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein.

The Yangon Regional Government is currently in the process of awarding the contract to implement YPS to one of two companies: Anypay Payment Services or Asia Starmar Transport Intelligent Co.

After it decides on the right company for the job, preparations will be made for ATM and credit cards issued by the 23 local banks to be enabled under YPS, which is envisaged to be a single card payments system in Yangon.

The aim is to enable card holders to use a single card for all cash transactions, including taking public transport and making payments in restaurants and supermarkets as well as withdrawing cash at the ATM.

“Existing cards, including ATM cards under the Myanmar Payment Union (MPU) and Visa and MasterCard credit cards, will be enabled under YPS,” U Phyo Min Thein told The Myanmar Times at a press conference last week.

U Phyo Min Thein said fees would be involved when using MPU cards or credit cards under YPS.

“To launch this system, we will need an appropriate fee rate which is convenient and affordable for all. So, we decided to award the contract to a separate company that is able to implement the system with the right fee,” the Chief Minister said.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/mpu-cards-visa-and-mastercard-credit-cards-be-enabled-under-yps.html>

Myanmar receives health funds from UN, foreign organizations

Eleven Myanmar, 25 April 2018

YANGON- United Nations and foreign social welfare organizations including World Health Organization (WHO) had already donated about US\$400 million to Myanmar’s Healthcare Sector during incumbent government taking office, according to the Ministry of Health and Sports.

Moreover, 128 Research organizations and foreign universities provided skilled aid for Myanmar health related activities.

Myanmar also signed MOUs with 67 international Non-Governmental Organizations aiming to implement healthcare projects.

International Monetary Fund (IMF) through United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and Save the Children will be funding US\$ 247.89 million and US\$ 90.89 million for elimination of HIV, TB and Malaria diseases starting from 2018 to 2020.



The IMF pledged that they would provide a total of US\$321.44 million to Myanmar for elimination of HIV, TB and Malaria diseases from 2018 to 2020.

Moreover, Gavi (Vaccine Alliance) will be providing US\$60 million for extension of vaccine programs and installation of equipments in Myanmar’s cold chain system within two years.

Likewise, UNICEF will launch five-year project in Rakhine, Kachin and Chin states aiming to safeguard Child Rights and to uplift health, education and nourishment.

Link: <http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/local/13805>

Labourers to receive wage hike

Mizzima, 27 April 2018



The Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population is trying to ensure that labourers are paid the revised minimum wages from May onwards, state media reported quoting a recent report in Myawady Daily.

The minimum wage is fixed every two years. In 2015, a daily minimum wage of Ks3, 600 was set for eight working hours. Prior to the approval of the proposed minimum wage of Ks4, 800, labourers will keep receiving wages of Ks3, 600.

We will make efforts to implement the revised minimum wage in May. Earlier, we targeted to

achieve this last month, said U Myo Aung, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population.

Link: <http://www.mizzima.com/business-domestic/labourers-receive-wage-hike>

Salary hike for all government employees to start from April

Mizzima, 30 April 2018

Ministry of Planning and Finance issued a notification dated April 29 which says salaries of all government employees including military personnel will be hiked in accordance with their time pay scale starting from April 30 payday.

The notification signed by Union Minister of Planning and Finance Ministry Kyaw Win says, “The benefits under this notification entitled to government employees including military personnel shall be enjoyed starting from April 2018 pay.”

Permanent Secretary Tun Tun Naing of Planning and Finance Ministry confirmed this news to Mizzima saying, “Military personnel are also government employees, so they are entitled to the benefits under this notification. And the pay hike for pensioners is included in paragraph 4 of this notification.”



This notification further says, “The hike for pensioners, fixed salary staff appointed by the department concerned, daily wage, a monthly stipend for experts, honorarium for professionals will be announced later with separate notification.”

The resolution was made at a cabinet meeting 7/2018 held on April 25.

But government employees and staff of Foreign Ministry who are serving in foreign lands must continue to draw the salary at the existing pay scale in foreign currency and are entitled to the new pay scale when they arrive back Myanmar, the notification says.

In his Myanmar Lunar New Year address to people, President Win Myint said salaries of government staff

would be hiked by 20% and staff of gazetted officers' rank would be hiked by 10%.

Link: <http://www.mizzima.com/news-domestic/salary-hike-all-government-employees-start-april>

LAW ANG GOVERNANCE

Government pardons nearly 8500 prisoners, including student activists' killer

Myanmar Times, 19 April 2018

The Presidential Office announced on Tuesday that 8541 prisoners, including 51 foreigners, were released from prisons across the country.



According to the AAPP (Assistance Association for Political Prisoners) only 36 of those freed were political prisoners.

Only one female was among those released by decree of Myanmar President U Win Myint on Tuesday, to mark Myanmar New Year's Day. Most of the inmates released were those imprisoned under drug-related cases. They numbered over 6000.

The release of political prisoners was a priority of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy when it took power from a pro-military government in March 2016. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is the country's de facto leader, holding the specially created post of state counsellor. Constitutional rules prohibit her from serving as president because her two children are British, as was her late husband.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/government-pardons-nearly-8500-prisoners-including-student-activists-killer.html>

UEC instructs concerned sub-UECs to care for compiling voter lists

Eleven Myanmar, 23 April 2018

The Union Election Commission has instructed respective concerned sub-UECs to care for compiling voter lists for 12 vacant constituencies to be fielded in the by-elections to be held during 2018, Myint Naing, Member of UEC, said.

The by-elections will be held during 2018 and a date for the by-elections to be held has not been announced yet.

"Instructions have been made to start compiling voter lists. After the announcement of the date of the by-elections, we will have to give information about the voter lists at the designated vacant constituencies. The schedule will appear," said Myint Naing.

The voter lists in every family will be announced



before the by-election, Aung Kyaw Moe said.

“We have 10 vacant constituencies for the by-elections. Two constituencies have further appeared and they are Myingyan and Tamwe. If there are no disasters, the by-elections will be held in every vacant constituency. We have now 12 vacant constituencies. We will announce the number of vacant constituencies and the date for the election,” Myint Naing, Member of UEC, said.

Link: <http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/politics/13781>

Draft Health and Occupational Safety Law submitted to Hluttaw

Myanmar Times, 27 April 2018

The draft of the Health and Occupational Safety Law written by the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population has been submitted to the Hluttaw, said Minister U Thein Swe.



The bill will be discussed in the coming Hluttaw session, he said at the Workplace Safety and Health Seminar on Wednesday.

“It depends on the Hluttaw to approve it. It could take a long time to approve if the Hluttaw has other matters to deal with,” he said.

Once the law has been approved, inspectors for workplace safety can be appointed and a department can give instructions for workplace safety measures.

Once the law is passed, more effective work will be carried out on educating workers and employers

on safety, conducting inspections, and providing assistance, he said.

“There are workplace accidents yearly. We are managing to reduce the numbers of accidents. If an accident happens in a worksite area, we go and examine it. We study why it happened and we look for repairs or ways to take action immediately. It needs to be carried out continuously,” said U Thein Swe.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/draft-health-and-occupational-safety-law-submitted-hluttaw.html>

PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

Political issues informally discussed

Eleven Myanmar, 21 April 2018

The government peace commission and ethnic NCA signatories informally met and discussed political issues at the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre (NRPC) in Nay Pyi Taw on April 20, said Colonel Khun Okkar, Patron of PaO National Liberation Organization (PNLO).

Present on the occasion were Dr Tin Myo Win, Chairman of Government Peace Commission and other responsible persons from the government side and the ethnic delegation led by Phado Saw Kywe Htoo Win,

Vice-Chairman of Karen National Union.

“Union Attorney-General Tun Tun Oo, Dr Tin Myo Win, and Lt-Gen Khin Zaw Oo (Retired) from the government side and Lt-Gen Min Naung and Lt-Gen Tin Maung Win from the military side are taking part in the informal meeting. Although the meeting is informal, both government and military sides pay attention to it. For this, I am very satisfied,” said Colonel Khun Okkar, Patron of PaO National Liberation Organization (PNLO).

The informal meeting is bringing lots of help to the peace process. It will be in favourable condition for the success in peace process, Colonel Khun Okkar added.



The informal meeting will last for two days. On April 21, security issue will be spotlighted. Phado Roger Khin, defence in-charge of the KNU from ethnic side will participate in the discussion of security issue, Colonel Khun Okkar said.

Link: <http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/politics/13774>

Tatmadaw Using Ceasefire to Gain Upper Hand, KNLA Deputy Chief Says

The Irrawaddy, 24 April 2018

Ethnic Karen need to adapt to new threats from the Myanmar Army (or Tatmadaw), according to the deputy chief of the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), who accused the Tatmadaw of violating the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA).



In an interview with the Karen Information Center, General Baw Kyaw Heh said the Myanmar Army had exploited the ceasefire in order to infiltrate areas under the control of the KNLA's Brigade 5.

“I want to urge our ethnic Karen to look back to our past, our history, our identity, and our political experiences. We need to change our ideology. We need to prepare and bravely confront what we have to face. There are

challenges we can avoid, but there are those we cannot. If we act, we will definitely secure our rights,” the general said.

Under the terms of the NCA, signatories agree not to reinforce troops, create new battalions, engage in major troop movements, or transport supplies to battalions.

However, Gen Baw Kyaw Heh said, the Tatmadaw had not only done these things, but had in fact deployed and moved more troops since the agreement was signed.

He said the Tatmadaw had launched an operation against the KNLA's Brigade 5. This was not a conventional operation, he said, adding that the Tatmadaw had a plan to attack the KNLA and he was concerned about this.

Military tensions remain high between the KNLA's Brigade 5 and the Tatmadaw, following repeated clashes

recently. About 2,000 Karen IDP have fled villages in Brigade 5-controlled areas.

The last round of proposed peace talks between the KNLA and the Tatmadaw collapsed when the latter's condition that the commander of Brigade 5 join the talks was not met.

EOs have lost trust in the Myanmar Army, according to the observers, many of who now believe the process has stalled amid Tatmadaw offensives against the Kachin, Ta'ang National Liberation Army, Karen, and other armed groups.

However, neither the EAOs nor the Tatmadaw seek to abandon the peace process entirely, Maung Maung Soe said, adding that some of the EAOs still plan to attend the upcoming Panglong peace conference.

"It is important that peaceful solutions can be found at this conference. If not, the peace process will be set back," he said.

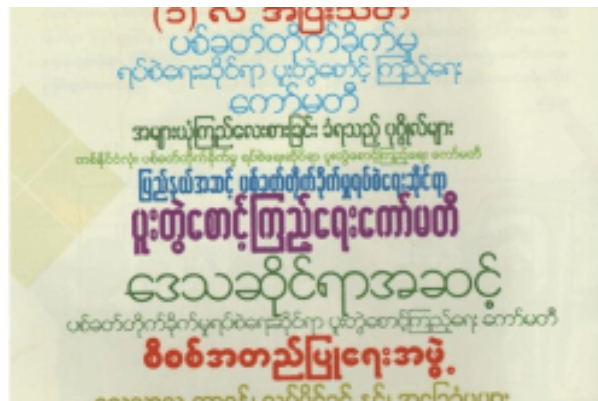
Link: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/tatmadaw-using-ceasefire-to-gain-upper-hand-knla-deputy-chief-says.html>

NMSP unable to establish JMC-S

Mon News Agency, 25 April 2018

The New Mon State Party (NMSP) has been unable to establish the State-level Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC-S) even though it signed the nationwide ceasefire agreement (NCA) two and a half months ago, according to NMSP's vice-chair Nai Hong Sar.

“We have requested three places – Mon and Kayin [states] and Tanintharyi [Region]. There are many Mon people in the Kayin State and Tanintharyi [Region] and many of our troops are active there. We won’t accept it if they only gave us the Mon State,” said Nai Hong Sar.



According to the ceasefire agreement signed by the former military junta and the NMSP in 1995 and the bilateral ceasefire agreement signed during former U Thein Sein administration in 2012, the NMSP's wing, the Mon National Liberation Army (MNLA), has been allowed to setup bases in Kyainseikgyi Township (Innkhwa) for Brigade 1, Kawkareik Township (near Minn Ywar Village) for Brigade 4, and near Payathonzu (Ba Lei Don Fite base) for Brigade 5 in the Kayin State, and Yepyu Township for Brigade 2 in the Tanintharyi Region. The Brigade 6's base is located near Prachup Province at the Thai border in the east of Myeik in Tanintharyi Region.

“JMC is for ceasefire monitoring. There are many Mon people in the Tanintharyi and the Kayin State, where the NMSP is active, so the NMSP needs to be involved in the JMC-S in the Tanintharyi Region as well as the one in the Kayin State. Only then, can the NMSP assist and protect the Mon people on ceasefire issue,” the NMSP’s central executive committee member Nai San Hlaing told the Mon News Agency.

The NMSP's vice-chair said his organization has refused to take part in the Mon State JMC-S since it has not been allowed to participate in the JMC-S in the Kayin State and the Tanintharyi Region and it has submitted its demand to the government's Peace Commission over this issue.

U Aung Thu Nyein, director of training at the Institute of Strategy and Policy, commented that the current government and the Peace Commission have not interfered and mediated in the issues between the Tatmadaw

and ethnic armed organizations that have signed the NCA.

He added that the Tatmadaw does not seem to want to give credit to the National League for Democracy (NLD) government in making the peace process successful.

The Karen National Union (KNU) has established JMC-S in Kayin and Mon states and Tanintharyi and Bago regions after signing the NCA.

Link: <http://monnews.org/2018/04/25/nmsp-unable-to-establish-jmc-s/>

KNPP, Gov't Agree to Further Peace Negotiations

The Irrawaddy, 27 April 2018

CHIANG MAI, Thailand – Formal peace talks between the government and the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) have made progress, with the two sides agreeing to create a mechanism for further negotiations as well as discussing military affairs, negotiators said on Friday.



The government and KNPP met for formal talks for two days on April 26-27 in Loikaw, the capital of Kayah (Karenni) state, and agreed on the implementation of bilateral terms through regular discussions at the state level.

U Kyaw Tint Swe, minister of the Office of the State Counselor and vice chairman of the National Reconciliation and Peace Center (NRPC), led the government delegation

accompanied by Peace Commission chairman Dr. Tin Myo Win, along with commission members and advisers. The talks were also joined by Lieutenant-General Than Tun Oo, the commander of the Defense Ministry's No. 2 Bureau of Special Operations; Kayah State chief minister L Paung Sho; and Kayah State Security and Border Affairs Minister Colonel Myint Wai.

The KNPP's Peace Negotiation Committee was led by General Bee Htoo, who was accompanied by eight committee members. Absent was Khu Oo Reh, the KNPP's vice chairman and its key peace negotiator, due to the ill health of his father.

According to a joint statement issued on Friday after the formal talks, the two sides "agreed to further talks so that the KNPP can sign the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement [NCA] as soon as possible."

Both sides agreed to the creation of a local monitoring team, reestablishing liaison offices at both the state and Union levels, and regular negotiations at the state level on troop movements of both armed forces, according to the statement.

Although the KNPP has not yet committed to signing the NCA, U Hla Maung Shwe told The Irrawaddy on Friday that "We were able to explain the current process to the KNPP leaders. They accepted when we explained what the government can currently do best to implement the terms of the bilateral agreements. Also we will fully implement those things that the government can do."

Link: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/knpp-govt-agree-to-further-peace-negotiations.html>

KNLA and Tatmadaw Clash near Site of Planned Hatgyi Dam

The Irrawaddy, 27 April 2018

A clash broke out yesterday between the Myanmar Army and the Karen National Liberation Army in territory held by the KNLA near the site of the planned Hatgyi Dam project in the Mae Tha Wor area, according to Karen sources.

The KNLA reported that two Myanmar Army soldiers were wounded when a landmine was detonated, but this could not be confirmed at press time. The KNLA said it suffered no casualties.



Padoh Mann Mann, a KNLA leader, told The Irrawaddy today that the fighting erupted at noon when the Myanmar Army entered an area held by KNLA Brigade 7.

The Myanmar Army says it wants to rebuild an old road in an area held by KNLA Brigade 5, however the KNLA is opposed to the project as it believes that the road is being restored to serve military purposes.

Some 2,000 Karen IDPs from at least five villages have fled from the fighting in Papun District since it broke out last month. They continue to hide in the jungle as they do not feel it is safe to return to their homes.

Despite the ceasefire, fighting has broken out sporadically between KNLA units and the Tatmadaw and many ethnic Karen are not happy with the current peace deal with the central government.

Under the NCA, the Myanmar Army needs to seek permission before entering KNLA-controlled areas or to undertake local development projects. According to the KNLA's Facebook page, the Tatmadaw did not inform the KNLA when they entered the area where the fighting broke out yesterday.

Link: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/knla-tatmadaw-clash-near-site-planned-hatgyi-dam.html>

OTHERS

Exclusive Interview: Myanmar's transport and infrastructure chief

GovInsider Asia, 20 April 2018



Yangon-Mandalay railway line was once the country's backbone, but now buses and cheap flights dominate, with trains carrying only 10% of intercity demand.

Myanmar's largest city banned motorbikes in 2003, making it fertile ground for building affordable and reliable public transport. For the first time in its modern history, the country is developing a long-term plan for public transport, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Transport and Communications, U Win Khant, tells GovInsider.

Myanmar's rail infrastructure has fallen into despair due to a lack of maintenance. "Rail lines are under-invested," U Win Khant notes. The

The country is working with the Japanese Government and Asian Development Bank (ADB) on projects to improve infrastructure and management of the public transport. “It’s a clear priority of the government to revitalise and modernise their railway system, so that in the long term they have a significant role in the transport sector,” says Adrien Veron-Okamoto, Transport Specialist, ADB.

The 600km Yangon-Mandalay line is being renewed with a US\$232 million loan from Japan. The upgrade will cut the rail journey from 24 hours to about nine hours, when completed in 2021-22, making it the country’s “biggest success” in public transport, the permanent secretary says,

Yangon’s motorbike ban creates demand for cheap and convenient public transport – but the city’s ageing bus and rail services mean that car ownership could increase by ten times if unchecked. Already, travel times have doubled or tripled, and public transport operators have lost up to 65% of the market.

While Yangon’s rail lines are being renewed, the city’s bus services have already been upgraded. In 2017, the government purchased over a thousand new Chinese buses and reorganised 300 privately-run lines into 79 planned routes. For the first time, commuters have regular timetables, fares and routes, and drivers a reliable salary.

Unlike Yangon, the country’s second city Mandalay is a quintessential motorbike city, posing a very different challenge to civil servants. Here, public transport has a “very small market share” to start with, and is largely informal, Veron-Okamoto says. Thanks to a grid layout, the city has “plenty of capacity and little congestion”, but if left unchecked, could be “on its way to becoming similar to, for instance, Vietnamese cities”, he adds.

Link: <https://govinsider.asia/connected-gov/myanmar-public-transport-u-win-khant-railways/>

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