

THAILAND

17 – 30 May 2018

MEDIA MONITORING REPORT # 183

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

[New Myaungmya Bridge to open next April](#)

Eleven Myanmar, 17 May 2018

New Myaungmya Bridge is expected to open in April 2019, sources said.



The new bridge began construction from May 1 2017 before the old suspension bridge collapsed and was initially expected to take two years time to finish it. The new bridge's design, drawn by J & M Steel Solution, was altered to finish the bridge early after the old bridge was collapsed on April 1. Now the project is about 20 per cent finished and is expected to open in next April, according to Ayeyawady region government.

“The project is developed by a special group from Road and Bridge Department. A total of 23 out of 40 bored piles are built between RP1 and RP4. We installed two machines to build RP2 and RP3 at the same time. The important things are foundation and bored piles. The work is expected to finish at the end of May. The main frame of the bridge was drawn by J & M Steel Solution and will be sent to the project area after alterations. Five out of nine piles built for a road which approaches the bridge in Myaungmya side have been built and the remaining beams are expected to finish in May. The spun pile foundations of all nine piles in Pathein side are finished,” said Win Htay, Region Minister for Electricity, Transport and Industry.

Locals from Myaungmya and Labutta faced difficulties after Myaungmya suspension bridge collapsed. People are worried about the safety of 29 suspension bridges built similar to the Myaungmya suspension bridge.

Link: <http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/local/13940>

[Kawthaung islands attracts more foreign visitors](#)

Eleven Myanmar, 17 May 2018

Islands in Kawthaung such as Kyat Mauk Island, 115 miles island and Nyaung Oo Phee island famous for diving and adventure trips attract more and more foreign visitors each year.

Last year, over 300,000 international tourists visited Myeik archipelago and brought in Ks.63.3 million according to assistant director of Ministry of Hotels and Tourism (Kawthaung).

According to industry source, international tourists used to neglect Myeik Archipelago but had increasingly gained attention four to five years ago. Due to rising demand, there are new plans underway to accommodate for more trips and tourists. Most foreign visitors hail from Europe and the rest from neighboring Asian countries such as Thailand.

The archipelago was completely off limits to foreign travelers until 1997. It consists of more than 800 Virgin Islands and is part of the Taninthayi Region. All islands are located in the Andaman Sea off the coast of southern Myanmar.

Motorboat tourists from Asia and European nations enjoy visiting Myeik Archipelago for its beautiful landscapes along the coast such as coral reefs, mangroves and a diverse species of birds and aquatic animals and traditional culture, such as the sea-based life of the Salon, also known as the sea gypsies, a seafaring ethnic minority.

Link: <http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/tourism/13938>

Eco-tourism zone to be implemented in Kyaikmaraw tsp

The Global New Light of Myanmar, 18 May 2018

The Mon State government will develop the Hpa Baung limestone cave near Wa Pyan Gone Village, Kyaikmaraw Township, Mon State, as an eco-tourism zone, according to a report in Myawady Daily.

Moreover, a spring in the cave area will also be developed as an eco-tourism site. These will be implemented within this year. The Hpa Baung limestone cave is the largest natural limestone cave in Mon state.

“Many interesting places in this area can be developed as eco-tourism sites. Kyaikmaraw has many such caves. These are conserved by the Archaeology, National Museum and Library Department. We are planning to submit a report to the state government,” said Dr. Min Kyi Win, Mon State Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation.

The Forestry Department also plans to designate Hpa Baung and the surrounding areas extending to 446 acres as a forest reserve.

Recently, a committee led by the State government was formed. The committee has been making field surveys to implement the project.

Link: https://issuu.com/myanmarnewspaper/docs/18_may_18_gnlm

Opening of new Kayah State Hluttaw building in Loikaw, Kayah State

The Global New Light of Myanmar, 20 May 2018

Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than delivered a speech at the opening ceremony of a new Kayah State Hluttaw building held in Loikaw, Kayah State, yesterday morning.

During the ceremony, Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than said the role of the Hluttaw was very important in a democratic system, and the new Kayah State Hluttaw building would showcase the unity and

peace prevailing among local ethnic groups in the region. He noted that it was an honor to see the establishment of a new Hluttaw building, which was joining other landmarks, such as Ngwe Taung Dam, Taung Kwe Pagoda and the Lawpita waterfall.

Also, the Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker, the Kayah State Chief Minister, the State Hluttaw Speaker and Deputy Speaker opened the new Hluttaw building by cutting the ceremonial ribbon.

Link: https://issuu.com/myanmarnewspaper/docs/20_may_18_gnlm



Kayin teacher shortage halts school upgrade

Myanmar Times, 21 May 2018

The Kayin State government has suspended its plan to upgrade sub-high schools to full high schools due to a shortage of teachers, the chief minister said.

Chief Minister Daw Nan Khin Htwe Myint said that although the government can upgrade the infrastructure of these schools to make them into full high schools, she would not push through with the plan due to lack of qualified staff.

“Well trained teachers are essential in improving schools,” she said.

There are 75 high schools and 70 sub-high schools in Kayin, including 24 in Hpa-an. According to the Ministry of Education, 5099 schools have been upgraded across the country, including 13 high schools, 43 middle schools, 66 primary schools, and a handful of sub-schools in Kayin.

The upgrade plan includes deploying more teachers.

Of more than 13,000 students who sat the matriculation exam in Kayin during the 2015-2016 academic year, about 3700 passed, or 27.2 percent, compared to the national average of 29.9pc.

Hlaingbwe Township had the highest passing rate, followed by Kya-in Seikkyi and Hpa-an townships.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/kayin-teacher-shortage-halts-school-upgrade.html>

Mon Entrepreneurs Association Organizing Committee established

Mon News Agency, 21 May 2018

A 19-member Mon Entrepreneurs Association Organizing Committee was established with Mon entrepreneurs from Mon and Kayin states, Tanintharyi Region, and Mon people living in Thailand and overseas at the



Ramanya Hotel in Mawlamyine, Mon State on May 15.

“We wish to do this for a long time now. We saw this issue while we were working in the private sector. There will be benefits if ethnic Mon people can establish an association in the business sector and set down and implement a national economic strategy,” said Nai Tun Lwin, a Mon entrepreneur from the Ethnic Entrepreneurs Association.

The Mon Entrepreneurs Association Organizing Committee will connect with entrepreneurs and establish the Mon Entrepreneurs Association within 18 months, he added.

The Mon Entrepreneurs Association will first establish two groups – the first group will be based in the Mon and Kayin states and Tanintharyi Region and the second group will be based in Yangon, Bago, and Mandalay regions. A central-level Mon Entrepreneurs Association will also be established, according to Myanmar Ethnic Entrepreneurs Association’s secretary Min Banyar Sann.

The Myanmar Ethnic Entrepreneurs Association has been established under the guidance of the Union Ethnic Affairs Ministry and respective ethnic people have been trying to establish sub-associations.

Link: <http://monnews.org/2018/05/21/mon-entrepreneurs-association-organizing-committee-established/>

Curriculum amended for Standard 2 in upcoming academic year

Mon News Agency, 21 May 2018

Amendments have been made to nine subjects in the curriculum of Standard 2 in the 2018-2019 academic year, according to the Mon State Department of Basic Education’s deputy director Daw Naw Tin Hla.

“There are nine subjects. Everything has been amended using the CCA (child-centered approach) including the teaching methods, appearance, and evaluation to make it better than the previous system,” Daw Naw Tin Hla told the Mon News Agency.

Children will be able to develop their critical thinking skills and learn how to cooperate with the teachers under this new curriculum.



Standard 2 teachers will have to attend training in respective states, districts, townships, and school groups.

JICA and the Education Research Bureau cooperated in drafting the new curriculum after reviewing the old curriculum, according to the Mon State Education Department.

Link: <http://monnews.org/2018/05/21/curriculum-amended-for-standard-2-in-upcoming-academic-year/>

Hong Kong paper manufacturing company to invest in Bago

Mizzima, 21 May 2018



A Hong Kong listed company is seeking to construct a paper production plant in Myanmar's southern Bago region, Xinhua reported on 21 May quoting state media.

Chairman of Lee & Man Paper Manufacturing limited, which is a Hong Kong-listed Chinese private papermaking company, told Bago Region Chief Minister U Win Thein that the company will use the waste from the production plant to generate electricity for the plant itself.

He said the production plant requires 3.4 million square-meters of area and will send 3,000 local residents of Bago to attend a one-year training course in China as part of the investment.

Link: <http://www.mizzima.com/business-domestic/hong-kong-paper-manufacturing-company-invest-bago>

LNG Project Awaits Consent from Gov't, Locals to Install Power Lines Across Two Townships in Karen State

Karen News, 21 May 2018

Total will install overhead power transmission lines across two townships in the Karen State to transmit power from the LNG (liquefied natural gas) power plant in Kanbauk area of Yebyu Township in the Tanintharyi Region to a 500 kV substation in the Bago Region, according to project officials.

The project officials met with local residents in Kan Thar Oo Hall in Hpa-an on May 15 to inform the public about Kanbauk electricity project and seek their opinions.

“We have submitted a proposal concerning the project in 2017. At the same time, we have also submitted the project to the Department of Environmental Conservation to conduct EIA/SIA surveys. We have received an instruction to continue [our works],” Dr Aung Zaw Win, head of the project and public relations department under Total, told Karen News.



The project will transmit power from the Tanintharyi Region to the Bago Region via overhead power transmission lines and the power transmission lines will pass over Mon and Karen states including Hpa-an and Kyain-seikgyi townships in the Karen State.

Under the overhead power transmission line project, 149 towers will be built in the Tanintharyi Region, 239 towers in the Karen State, 641 towers in the Mon State, and 128 towers in the Bago Region and electricity produced from the project will be sold to Myanmar Electric Power Enterprise (MEPE).

The project will pass over the villages near Kha Lel, Ta Khun Taing, Kyon Kha Wun, and Hpa Yar Ngar Su areas and Zar Tha Pyin area in Hpa-an Township in the Karen State.

Link: <http://karennews.org/2018/05/Ing-project-awaits-consent-from-govt-locals-to-install-power-lines-across-two-townships-in-karen-state/>

Government to lower eligibility age for pension payments to 85

Myanmar Times, 22 May 2018

The Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, which is responsible for the care of the elderly, plans to lower the age for senior citizens who are eligible to receive social pensions to 85 years old starting in October.



At present the ministry has provided quarterly payments for seniors 90 years old and above since the start of the 2017-2018 fiscal year.

The ministry has submitted its budget request for the 2018-2019 fiscal year including funding the pensions of 140,000 senior citizens who are 85 years old and over, said Daw San San Aye, director general of the Social Welfare Department.

According to the 2014 census, there are 231,026 senior citizens who are 85 years old and over.

The pension will pay a qualifying senior K10, 000 per month. In the previous fiscal year, over 50,000 elderly who are 90 years old and over applied for social pensions, according to the Department of Social Welfare.

The government said those interested to apply for social pensions need to submit national registration cards and household member lists.

But there are some elderly people living in nursing homes who have no national registration cards or household member lists.

According to the 2015-2016 projections about older people in Myanmar, there are 4.75 million seniors, or 9.06 percent of the country's 51 million people.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/government-lower-eligibility-age-pension-payments-85.html>

Yangon extends circular road construction for booming investments

Eleven Myanmar, 22 May 2018

YANGON- Construction of new circular roads is being extended in the whole Yangon Region to boost investments in outskirt areas, says U Than, Joint Secretary of Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC).

“The current population of 5.2 million will be increasing to over 10 million by 2040 because Yangon will become a “Mega City”. As more and more of the population moves into Yangon, especially there will be developments along Circular Railroad,” said U Than.

Moreover, Yangon Region Investment Committee is now discussing about establishment of industrial zones in Yangon Region with China and South Korea, according to the pre-press conference of Yangon Investment Forum 2018 held in Cooperative Business Centre on May 2nd.

“China and Korea are keen to build industrial zones in Yangon Region. So, they met with the Yangon Region Investment Committee and inquired about this,” said Myo Khaing, Joint Secretary of Yangon Region Investment Committee.

At present, the Yangon Region Investment Committee is trying to get permission for foreign Investments worth of US\$ 5 million within one and half month's period.

Link: <http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/business/13961>



'Business for Peace' Model Utilized in Nationwide Peacebuilding

The Irrawaddy, 22 May 2018

CHIANG MAI, Thailand — Myanmar's 'business for peace' model, an initiative to support sustainable peace and development started last year, has been in progress, said economics professor Dr. Aung Tun Thet.



He said this at an international workshop in Chiang Mai, Thailand, on May 19 aimed at promoting peacebuilding. The workshop was organized by Payap University's Institute for Religion, Culture and Peace and the World Fair Trade Organization, Asia.

He told The Irrawaddy that the model is carrying on successfully, as signatories of the nationwide ceasefire agreement (NCA) are participating.

The government is also trying hard to bring in foreign investment. These investments would help with regional rehabilitation and building stable, strong and genuine peace in those areas, he said.

“Foreign investors are worried about safety in the ceasefire areas,” he said. “I have talked with many companies from Thailand and Singapore. There are opportunities in those regions if we can persuade them to invest.”

Dr. Aung Tun Thet is a member of the government Peace Commission. He said that business-related discussions have been held among the NCA signatories.

“We are now developing business opportunities for the Pa-O; in Tanintharyi with the Karen National Union and also in Karenni State (where the non-signatory armed group the KNPP is involved in peace negotiations).

The Payap University workshop incorporated several topics: the peace process, refugees and internally displaced persons situated along the Thailand-Myanmar border, public policy and social enterprise for peacebuilding, and fair trade practices.

Link: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/business-peace-model-utilized-nationwide-peacebuilding.html>

Ministry of Construction commits to four mega projects in 2018

Myanmar Times, 23 May 2018

The Department of Urban and Housing Development under the Ministry of Construction yesterday announced its commitment to implementing four mega infrastructure projects in Mandalay and Yangon regions.



In Mandalay, the MOC has shortlisted six companies, one of which will be selected as Master Developer of the New Mandalay Resort City, which will be developed in Pyin Oo Lwin.

The 9,893 acre project will be developed in three phases. Phase 1 will include an IT facility, convention centre, schools and a commercial zone comprising malls and banks.

Phase 2 will be divided into several zones for developing sectors such as industry and tourism. The third phase will comprise housing options, a golf course as well as hotel and even agriculture zones.

A Master Developer is expected to be selected by the end of this month. “This project will be developed in phases as it is huge project. We will discuss the timeline, additional investments and other details with the Master Developer,” Daw Moe Thida, deputy director at the Department of Urban and Housing Development, told The Myanmar Times.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/ministry-construction-commits-four-mega-projects-2018.html>

Domestic natural gas to be made available by 2023: MOEE

Myanmar Times, 23 May 2018

Larger volumes of natural gas will be available from Myanmar’s onshore and offshore gas fields within the next five years, yielding fresh opportunities for international oil and gas firms to invest in the sector, said U Win Khaing, Union Minister for Electricity and Energy (MOEE).

“Gas production will be a priority for the government over the next few years. However, we do not have the capital or the technology to do so. We need to cooperate with international oil and gas firms to produce the gas and in doing so make it available for the country as soon as possible,” he said.

The government is planning to import LNG to fill an existing shortage of electricity in Myanmar. Over the next two years, it has promised to double the current supply of electricity to 6,000 megawatts using LNG.

The ministry is trying to make gas available in addition to electricity and transportation to ten economic zones in future as the phase 1, he informed energy circle.

“LNG will not only benefit the electricity sector but also create export opportunities, helping to narrow the trade deficit,” U Win Khaing said.



Because of the high conversion costs involved though, LNG becomes a less viable alternative over the longer term. “As such, our target is make domestic natural gas available from 2023 onwards. It will take next four or five years if we start exploration and production (E&P) work now,” U Win Khaing said.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/domestic-natural-gas-be-made-available-2023-moe.html>

[Bago Region set for industrial zones](#)

Mizzima, 26 May 2018

Local government in southern Myanmar's Bago Region has renewed calls for development, mentioning Chinese and South Korean investors pushing for increased access to industrial zones.



“No land has been set aside for the industrial zones in Bago Region, but the government has defined industrial areas,” Bago Region minister for planning and finance Nyunt Shwe said, according to an article published May 19 in Global New Light of Myanmar.

When asked about details of future industrial zone developments, recently sacked Bago Region minister Kyaw Min San told Mizzima that he was unaware of any specifics.

According to Global New Light of Myanmar, current Bago Region minister Nyunt Shwe said, “If industrial zones are developed, our region will also develop, and it can create job opportunities for the local people.”

Link: <http://www.mizzima.com/business-domestic/bago-region-set-industrial-zones>

Yangon aims for 100% school enrollment

Myanmar Times, 29 May 2018

The Yangon government will ensure that every school-aged child will have access to education this year because economic development will be a big challenge for the country if these children are not educated.

U Phyo Min Thein, Yangon Region chief minister, said there is still a lot to do to ensure that all school-aged children have access to education. He said the Yangon government encourages all children to attend non-formal schools or vocational-training schools to improve their lives.

“All children must enroll for the coming academic year. If children can’t access education in their township, we will provide education in other ways,” he added.

Every year, school enrollment week is from May 25 to 31. The Ministry of Education calls on the public to cooperate with the enrollment of children and to fight against dropouts.

If children do not participate in school enrollment week we will follow up to find out their reasons for failing to enroll, said Daw Khin Mar Swe, deputy director general of the regional education office.

The office plans to visit the home SOF children who fail to enroll one week after the enrollment period. The education office calls on parents and township and ward administrators to cooperate in the programme.

“If there is any problem regarding family income, we will invite them to join non-formal schools, opened by the Alternative Education Department after school. Children who cannot attend high school after middle school will be enrolled in vocational training schools,” she added.

According to 2014 census data, 2.7 million children from five to 16 years old do not attend school or drop out before finishing the primary level.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/yangon-aims-100-school-enrollment.html>



Karen State needs to recruit over 1,000 teachers after upgrading schools

Burma News International, 29 May 2018

Over 1,000 teachers need to be recruited after the Ministry of Education upgraded 261 government schools in the Karen (Kayin) State within this month, according to the state education officer U Soe Myint.

Nine high schools, ten high school branches, 53 middle schools, 21 middle school branches, 31 post-primary schools, 99 primary schools, and 38 primary school branches have been upgraded within this month



“Opportunities have been given to the children to continue their education by upgrading the schools. They have the opportunity to continue learning secondary education after [the schools] have been upgraded as high school branches. Around 1,000 primary school teachers and 200 high school teachers are needed after the school upgrades. This arrangement has been made for students to continue their education without a pause,” U Soe Myint told KIC News on

May 25.

The state education society pointed out that the state's education college and pre-service primary school teacher training institute cannot produce enough teachers as only around 600 teachers graduate every year. The state is also facing a shortage of high school teachers as only a low number of them have been produced from education colleges.

According to officials from the state education department, the department has submitted to the Department of Basic Education about the need to recruit 1,200 teachers for the government schools within the state.

The Karen State has 1,770 schools and it is facing teacher shortage every year. Some schools are still recruiting local village residents as teachers, according to local residents.

Link: <https://www.bnionline.net/en/news/karen-state-needs-recruit-over-1000-teachers-after-upgrading-schools>

Low-Interest Loan Project for Female Farmers is Raising Hopes

The Irrawaddy, 29 May 2018

With the chance to store her harvest and wait for higher prices, Ma Zin Mar Khaing is hoping her family will earn more money this year than in years past.

Before, she could not wait for higher market prices and had to sell her crops to traders and brokers right after harvest in order to repay the loans her family owed.

Like many other families in Hlae Chaung Pauk village, in Magwe Region's Pakokku Township, Ma Zin Mar Khaing's family had to take out loans from local money lenders with interest rates of up to 100 percent to run its farm, which grows chilies, peanuts, beans and corn.



In late 2017, however, she was one of 124 female farmers from five villages in Pakokku who received a total of 80 million kyats (\$59,000) in loans with annual terms courtesy of a pilot project being run by KBZ Bank and ActionAid.

The project provides loans of up to 1 million kyats per person, the exact amount determined by the size of the farm.

Ma Zin Mar Khaing received a 500,000 kyats loan with an annual interest rate of 13 percent in December.

The project aims to improve access to finance for female farmers.

Because of constraints including a lack of bargaining power within the family and collateral such as land titles often registered in a man's name, women have a harder time than men in accessing formal financial services.

U Soe Tin Maung Zaw, senior general manager of KBZ's loans department, said the project would be expanded based on the results of the first 12 months.

Link: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/business/low-interest-loan-project-female-farmers-raising-hopes.html>

Kayah State Chief Minister invites investment primarily in tourism sector

Burma News International, 30 May 2018

The Kayah State Chief Minister U L Phaung Sho has urged investors to invest primarily in the tourism sector, which has many opportunities in the Kayah State.



“In the hotel and tourism sector, it's not enough to only increase the number of hotels. Priority must be given to developing the tourism sector as well,” the chief minister said in his opening address to the Kayah State Investment Forum, which was held at the State Hall in Loikaw, Kayah State on May 26.

He said the Kayah State government will provide necessary support under its authority to the investors.

“If one really wants to make an investment, we will cooperate with might and main within the state government's authority to receive mutual benefits and prevent damages,” he assured.

The state government revealed investment opportunities relating to the agricultural, mining, manufacturing, banking, and hotel and tourism sector during the forum.

He told the forum that he wants to give more support to selling natural resources as value added finished products instead of raw materials.

The Kayah State Investment Forum was attended by the State Chief Minister U L Phaung Sho, the Deputy Minister of Planning and Finance U Maung Maung Win, ministers of the Kayah State government, ambassadors and officials from foreign embassies, Hluttaw representatives, company owners and industrialists, political parties, peace organizations, private banks from Loikaw, local and foreign experts, international organizations, department officials, and business owners.

Link: <https://www.bnionline.net/en/news/kayah-state-chief-minister-invites-investment-primarily-tourism-sector>

Kayah state-level officials discuss regional development matters with KNPP

Eleven Myanmar, 30 May 2018

The officials of Kayah state-level discussed regional development matters with Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP), which is supposed to sign NCA soon at the meeting hall of Kayah State Government on May 29, said Loikaw Relations In-charge Khu Hnae Rel.

The meeting mainly focused on regional development matters, said Loikaw Relations In-charge Khu Hnae Rel.

At the meeting, the KNPP outlined difficulties in health and education as well as development matters. The government said that they could act within their capacity in accord with rules and regulations. The agreed points in the previous government were also discussed. Both sides discussed for enabling KNPP backpack health workers to carry medical supplies.



The Peace Commission and the KNPP planned to hold an informal meeting in Chiang Mai, Thailand on May 12, but it did not come true.

Link: <http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/politics/14024>

LAW AND GOVERNANCE

Korea helps Myanmar launch new legal database system

The Korea Herald, 30 May 2018

Korea's Legislation Ministry shared its technology to launch a new legal database access system in Myanmar, the ministry said on Tuesday.



On May 24, Myanmar launched Myanmar Law Information System which allows people to search the country's legal information via computer and mobile applications. Korea's Ministry of Legislature cooperated with Myanmar government to establish the system, first developed here and called the National Law Information Center of Republic of Korea.

Legislation Minister Kim Oe-sook visited Myanmar from May 22 to 24, to attend the launching event of the MLIS, hosted by Myanmar's Union Attorney General's Office.

“I’m glad South Korea has played a role in helping Myanmar’s drive to open their legal system to the public in a transparent manner to bring about fundamental changes to the society,” Kim said at the event held at Naypyidaw, Myanmar on May 24.

The new system has transferred all legal information stipulated on paper into an electronic format. It allows easy access to some 5,000 files of legal data, which include the country’s Constitution, regulations, judicial precedents, past treaties and municipal ordinances, for everyone who has a computer or a mobile application. While all the data is compiled in Burmese, 375 bills are also available in English.

The attorney general also said training on how to use the system will be available to officials of Myanmar’s central administrative agencies and 14 state governments.

It will provide technical support for the next one year, and train the officials of Myanmar government so that they can operate the system on their own, it added.

Link: <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20180529000697>

LAND AND PROPERTY

More than 4,900 acres returned to farmers in Sagaing Region

The Global New Light of Myanmar, 17 May 2018

Confiscated land was relinquished and returned to its original owners at a ceremony yesterday in Kanbalu Sagaing Region, the third such event in recent weeks. A total of 4,932 acres of confiscated land was returned to 528 farmers, marking the third-highest return of confiscated land among all states and regions, said Vice President U Henry Van Thio, the Chairman of the Central Committee for Reviewing Confiscated Farmlands and Other Lands.

The Vice President said departments, companies, and private businesses are allotted property and easement for their projects that involve building roads, infrastructure, and plantations, but the military for various reasons confiscated farmland, resulting in losses for the people.

He said relevant organizations have been setting policies, conducting reviews, and returning the confiscated lands to their original owners. The Vice President said Deputy Ministers from the union level have formed four teams to scrutinize confiscated land and are conducting field reviews on the state and regional levels. He said the Union Government was working to establish contract farming for farmers to grow, package and trade their produce.



The Vice President urged local residents to register their vacant and virgin land at their respective state or regional Vacant, Fallow and Virgin Lands Management Committee. He said that if their lands were registered, when agricultural production becomes stable, their lands could be converted into farmland, according to Farmland Law.

Link: https://issuu.com/myanmarnewspaper/docs/17_may_18_gnlm

PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

Ceasefire signatories not ready for third peace conference

Eleven Myanmar, 21 May 2018

The ethnic armed groups that are signatories to the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) are not ready yet for the third round of the 21st Century Panglong Conference despite the government and political parties' plan to hold it at the end of this month, said Zaw Htay, director general from the Ministry of State Counsellor Office.

A meeting took place between government representatives and NCA signatories at the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre in Nay Pyi Taw on May 18 and 19 to discuss the holding of the third peace conference as scheduled, but compromise could not be reached.

"The government for its part had prepared for the upcoming peace conference this month. The political parties had also prepared. EAOs (ethnic armed organisations) told us they would reply after an informal meeting. So, we discussed the matter at the informal meeting. But they are not ready yet. So we will not be able to hold the conference by the end of this month," said Zaw Htay.

The 21st Century Panglong Conference also known as the Union Peace Conference is due to take place two times a year. However, it has not been held since the second round over one year ago.

Link: <http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/politics/13954>

Tatmadaw, KNU yet to set date for meeting

Myanmar Times, 22 May 2018

Commanders of the Tatmadaw (military) and Karen National Union (KNU) in conflict-torn Hpapun Township in Kayin State have yet to set a date for a meeting that will put an end to the fighting in the area despite the government halting road construction that the armed ethnic group strongly opposed.

Commander-in-chief for Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing ordered the halt of the road construction in Ler Mu Plaw and Kay Bu villages of Hpapun after meeting with KNU chief General Saw Mutu Say Poe in Nay Pyi Taw on Thursday.

The resumption of the road project in March triggered clashes between the KNU's armed wing, the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), and the Tatmadaw that displaced over 5000 villagers in the area.

"We planned to meet the brigade leaders from the Tatmadaw and KNU/KNLA, but the date has not been set and we are still discussing it," said U Shwe Khar, general secretary of the military's Joint Monitoring Ceasefire (JMC-U) committee.

The KNU signed ceasefire agreements with the national and state governments in 2012, the Deed of Commitment for Peace and National Reconciliation in 2015, and the NCA in 2015.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/tatmadaw-knu-yet-set-date-meeting.html>

[Govt sets sights on June for peace conference](#)

DVB, 24 May 2018

The Burmese government is aiming to hold the third round of the Union Peace Conference in June, according to State Counsellor's Office Director-General Zaw Htay.

Speaking at a press conference in Naypyidaw yesterday, Zaw Htay said that during informal talks with representatives of the EAOs (Ethnic Armed Organisations) on 28–30 May, government delegates will raise the prospect of resuming peace talks, widely dubbed the 21st Century Panglong Conference.

“We have scheduled two rounds of informal talks on political and security matters with the EAOs for 28, 29 and 30 May, and hope to have a chance to propose resuming the conference, preferably in June,” said Zaw Htay.



“We don't have an exact date in mind yet, but we will try to make it happen in June.”

Government delegates last sat with representatives of the ethnic groups in November when it was agreed to hold the third round of the Union Peace Conference at the beginning of 2018. However, the plan did not materialise.

The Union Peace Conference or 21st Century Panglong Conference commenced in August 2016. During the second round of talks in May 2017, delegates signed 37 adopted principles into the Union Accord for Peace.

Link: <http://dvbno.ga/news/govt-sets-sights-on-june-for-peace-conference/80964>

[Gov't troops start withdrawing from Hpapun District, Kayin State](#)

Mizzima, 26 May 2018



Karen National Union (KNU) spokesman Maj. Gen. Saw Issac Phoe told Mizzima that the government troops stationed in Hpapun District for road building work had started to withdraw from the area.

KNU top delegation led by Chairman Saw Mutu Say Phoe met with Tatmadaw (Defence Services) C-in-C Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing on May 17 in Nay Pyi Taw and then under the agreement reached at this meeting, the government troops are withdrawing from this area.

Maj. Gen. Saw Issac Phoe said, “They seem to be withdrawing gradually but the vehicles in Laemupalaw are still there. And then some troops are still

stationed there. I think these troops will withdraw too soon but I learn that they will not withdraw at the moment though some troops have already withdrawn.”

Maj. Gen. Saw Issac Phoe said regarding this matter, “We heard that some villagers had returned to their homes but I don’t know yet in detail.”

The Tatmadaw temporarily suspended road building in Hpapun District and it is learned that they would resume this work only after obtaining an understanding with the local people.

Link: <http://www.mizzima.com/news-domestic/gov%E2%80%99t-troops-start-withdrawing-hpapun-district-kayin-state>

OTHERS

Development of Kayin industrial zones delayed by speculative investors

Myanmar Times, 23 May 2018

Development of Hpa-An Industrial Zone, Kayin State, has been slow to take off because some developers have failed to make progress on developing the zones, said U Soe Hlaing, Kayin State Electricity and Industrial Minister.

“There are some buyers who have purchased land within the industrial zone for speculation purposes and not for development. Consequently, genuine investors have not been able to buy certain plots of land which may be more strategic for their business,” said U Soe Hlaing.

He added that the necessary infrastructure needed to conduct operations within the zone have already been set up. “Roads, electricity and land space are already provided at the industrial zone but development has not started because the current land owners are holding the land to speculate on price and not for development,” he said.

Kayin State is among the states in which industrial zones enjoy benefits such as tax waivers for up to seven years.

Hpa-an Industrial Zone was established since 2014 across 969 acres of land. So far, investors from Hong Kong and Thailand have opened factories manufacturing plywood and bamboo goods at the zone. Many garment firms also operate factories in the area.

“We will now sell land to genuine investors. If these investors do not develop the project within a specified timeframe, we will take back the land,” he added.

The Kayin regional government will also up efforts to raise water and electricity supplies to meet the needs of firms operating within the industrial zones. “Investors will come if we are able to sufficiently meet their needs,” said U Soe Hlaing.

Hpa-an isn’t the only industrial zone facing delays due to land speculation issues. A second industrial zone in Myawaddy, Kayin State, is also facing similar problems. There are currently just four factories operating at the Myawaddy zone.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/development-kayin-industrial-zones-delayed-speculative-investors.html>

Ministry sets aside K48M for Ayeyarwady conservation

Myanmar Times, 24 May 2018

The Ministry of Transport and Communications has appropriated K47.77 million (US\$35349) for the conservation of the Ayeyarwady River, said Deputy Minister U Kyaw Myo. The appropriated amount will be used within three years at each priority stage from the 2018-19 fiscal year to the 2020-21 fiscal year, he told the Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) on Monday.

U Kyaw Myo said that out of the 1211 kilometres of the Ayeyarwady River – from Bamaw city in Kachin State to Nyaung Tone Township in Ayeyarwady Region – 465kms do not require conservation, while there is ongoing conservation work on a 57-km stretch of the river.

He added that 689kms of the river need conservation work.

“There are 25 places that have to be conserved. It is estimated that it will cost around K47 million. The plan has been drawn up to carry out work in prioritised locations within three years,” U Thet Hlaing Win, director of the Directorate of Water Resources and Improvement of River Systems, said at a news conference.

Due to the high cost of conserving the river, conservation work is being done slowly.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/ministry-sets-aside-k48m-ayeyarwady-conservation.html>

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