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ECONOMICS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Myanmar Govt to Redistribute Vacant Land

The Irrawaddy, 26 September 2017

The Myanmar government is developing a plan to redistribute vacant or fallow plots of land to rural landless people willing to farm the land.



The Union Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation Dr. Aung Thu told The Irrawaddy on Monday the government had obtained US\$4.19 million from the Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund (LIFT)—a multi-donor fund established in 2009 to improve the lives and prospects of smallholder farmers and landless people in rural Myanmar—for the plan.

“We’ll start the plan within one or two months to provide land to landless people,” Dr. Aung Thu told reporters in Naypyitaw, adding that state and regional governments were already holding meetings.

The minister said authorities in Magwe, Mandalay, and Sagaing regions and Chin State had proposed suitable land for a trial project with LIFT but his ministry had not yet decided where to begin the pilot.

LIFT donors include the United States of America, Britain, Denmark, Australia, France, Ireland, Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden and funds are managed through the UN Office for Project Services (UNFOPS).

Link: <https://burma.irrawaddy.com/news/2017/09/25/143361.html>

Shoe factory creating 300 job opportunities to be opened soon in Myawady Economic Zone

The Global New Light of Myanmar, 28 September 2017

A shoe factory which can create job opportunities for 300 people will be opened soon in Myawady Economic Zone, Myawady Township near the border of Myanmar and Thailand.

This factory is located seven mile away from Myawady Town, where the Myawady Economic Zone was developed in 2013. Total 37 plots of lands for factories had been sold there, but only three factories were able to open so far.

“The said shoe factory was built at the beginning of 2016 to run in cooperation with Thailand under authorized permission of the government. As the factory is completed, workers are being hired now. Approximately 300 workers will be required. Applicants who are good at sewing and speaking Thai language will be preferred. The unskilled Myanmar workers will be trained by 50 skilled workers from Bangkok. The unskilled workers will be paid 120 baht per day and skilled workers will be paid about 150 baht with the additional payment of overtime. Hostels are also arranged for the workers who come from other places. The factory will be opened soon and heavy generators are used for electricity” said Daw Thin Thin Myat, owner of the factory.



“Job application forms are now accepted. Total 50 applicants we have today. Applicants who come from other places also applied. They will be employed if the qualification meets the requirement. The factory will be opened soon, approximately after one month” said Zaw Min Oo, manager of the factory.—Htain Linn Aung

Link: [HTTPS://ISSUU.COM/MYANMARNEWSPAPER/DOCS/28 SEPT 17 GNLM](https://issuu.com/myanmarnewspaper/docs/28_sept_17_gnlm)

Business for Peace Forum Held in Karen State

Karen News, 20 September 2017

Karen State is open for business and ready for investment to pave the way for development, participants at a recent “Business for Peace” forum heard.



The state’s Minister of Planning, Finance and Municipal Affairs U Than Naing said the state is now stable and brimming with business prospects that the government, in collaboration with ethnic armed organizations, is eager to capitalize on.

“When the ethnic armed organizations launched businesses in the past five years, we gave them business opportunities and they carried them out with foreign companies. Now, business persons from the ceasefire organizations have established companies with us and all the taxes will flow into the state without flowing overseas,” said U Than

Naing.

He added that as new companies are established in the state, more job opportunities will be created for the local population. State officials have previously expressed concern over “brain drain” with a sizeable portion of the working aged population heading over the border for more lucrative and readily available jobs in Thailand.

The September 14 “Business for Peace” event, held in Hpa-an, attracted around 500 attendees, including members of the Kayin State government, the Pa-O National Liberation Organization, Karen armed organizations, non-governmental organizations and local administrators.

Link: <http://karennews.org/2017/09/business-for-peace-forum-held-in-karen-state.html/>

Open Hluttaw launches mobile app for parliamentary oversight

Frontier Myanmar, 22 September 2017

YANGON — A local NGO has launched a new app aiming to give Myanmar’s public greater accountability over its elected representatives.

The Open Hluttaw app, developed by Myanma Fifth Estate with funding from the Dutch embassy, provides biographies of Union lawmakers, along with their committee responsibilities and contact details.

Available in English and Burmese, MFE program officer Naw Susan Hilary said at the app’s public launch on Tuesday that Open Hluttaw would allow greater contact between MPs and their constituents than had previously been possible.

“If someone wants to complain about an issue in their constituency, he or she can easily use our app and find out how to contact their representative,” she said.



The app was designed by local IT firm Sundew Myanmar, whose previous work in the government realm includes the development of a voter registration system for the Union Election Commission in 2015.

“Most people in Myanmar are not familiar with even using emails. But they are familiar with mobile apps and that’s why we used this platform,” said Ma Khin Myat Noe, Sundew Myanmar’s vice president and cofounder.

“The big challenge is lack of reliable data sources. The parliaments couldn’t provide that much [at the moment], so based on the data provided by Open Myanmar Initiative, we had to do the research ourselves.”

While many IT startups in Myanmar are struggling to find a client base, audience demand for government related apps is strong. The Open Hluttaw app has been downloaded more than 1,000 times since its Tuesday launch.

Link: <https://frontiermyanmar.net/en/open-hluttaw-launches-mobile-app-for-parliamentary-oversight>

Mon State chief minister says govt is ready to assist Mon national schools

Mon News Agency, 14 September 2017



A Mon State MP has called for boosting government support and funding for Mon national schools.

During the September 11 Hluttaw session, MP U Aung Naing Oo said ethnic language classes are not satisfactorily supported at the moment as the schools, which are independently operated outside of the government system, lack the needed infrastructure and teaching materials for lessons in Mon, Kayin and PaO literature.

Mon national schools are run by the New Mon State Party's Mon National Education Committee (MNEC). A handful of "mixed" schools, are co-managed with the government.

Officials from the MNEC said that at the moment, they are scraping by with funds from donors.

The MNEC has requested school funds, school textbooks, stationery, and textbooks for the 2017-2018 academic year, but has only received textbooks, exercise books and school uniforms so far, according to Min Aung Zay, head of the MNEC.

According to the MNEC, there are 133 Mon national schools with over 170,000 students and nearly 800 teachers in the 2017-2018 academic year.

In response to the concerns raised in the State Hluttaw, Mon State Chief Minister U Aye Zan said that his government stands ready to provide assistance to Mon national schools – but advised them to official submit a request for the support they need.

Link <https://monnews.org/2017/09/13/mon-state-chief-minister-says-govt-is-ready-to-assist-mon-national-schools/>

Mon State Govt Donates Karen Costumes, Instruments to Universities

Karen News, 20 September 2017

In effort to bolster Karen traditions, the Mon State government has donated dance costumes and instruments to five universities, an official said.

The Karen literature and culture committees at Mawlamyine University, Mon State's Technological University, the University of Computer Studies, the Government Technical Institute and the Agriculture Institute each received K1.5million-worth of Karen costumes and traditional musical instruments, according to Saw Aung Myint Khine, Mon State's Karen Affairs Minister. The K7.5 million was allotted from the state government's budget he said.

Universities have cultural groups for Karen ceremonies on special days and for state-level government ceremonies," he told Karen News on September 18. "Some universities have difficulty renting Karen don costumes and musical instruments. [So] 40 Karen don costumes and a set of traditional musical instruments have been donated to each of the five universities."



The Mon State government has also provided K15 million for a Karen New Year's Day ceremony, K60 million for the Karen Literature and Culture Committees' graduation ceremonies and K16 million for a traditional Karen wrist-tying ceremony.

Link <http://karennews.org/2017/09/mon-state-govt-donates-karen-costumes-instruments-to-universities.html/>

Local NGO to launch literacy, public health projects next month

Myanmar Times, 12 September 2017

A Local non-government organisation will launch literacy and public health programs from October to December 2017, said a senior executive of the group.

The Literacy and Regional Development Service Association will conduct its programs for rural people in the nine townships: Yangon, Ayeyarwady, Magwe, Thanintharyi, Sagaing and Bago, according to U Myo Thant, the president of the organisation.

“Literacy campaign is a media program for rural people and urban students.

Illiteracy is a major problem facing Myanmar’s new civilian-led government as it works to modernise the country’s long-neglected education system.

There are 2.7 million children between 5 and 16 years old who do not attend schools or dropped-out from school and 3.5 million children over 15 years are illiterate, according to the Ministry of Education.

The Department of Alternative Education was established in October 2016 under the Ministry of Education. It was introduced as a new department for the new government period.

The department had been working on the Alternative Education Policy Framework since December 2016.

Since its creation, the Department of Alternative Education has conducted literacy campaign in all townships of Kayah State and Southern Shan State. The campaign covered over 3500 people from Kayah State and about 20,000 from Southern Shan State.

Link <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/local-ngo-launch-literacy-public-health-projects-next-month.html>

Nineteen Auxiliary Midwives in Karen State Complete Training

Karen News, 10 September 2017

Nineteen new auxiliary midwives have completed their training and will bolster rural health teams in an aim to reduce maternal mortality in Karen State.



The 19 trainees were presented certificates at an inaugural ceremony on September 6. These auxiliary midwives are the sixth batch to complete the seven-month training held by the Backpack Health Worker Team (BPHWT), the Phalon Education Development Unit (PEDU).

Complications from childbirth and pregnancy are a leading cause of death for women in Burma. The country has the second-high maternal mortality rate in the region, behind Laos.

Countrywide, an average of 282 women die per 100,000 births, according to data from the 2014 census. One in three births in Burma is not attended by a healthcare professional, and access to emergency services, especially in more remote areas, remains low to non-existent.

The training covers neonatal, antenatal and delivery healthcare services. The most recent training was held from November 1 to August 31, with three months of theory lessons and four months of practical training.

The training completion ceremony was held at the Taung Kalay Monastic School in Hpa-an township, Karen State.

Link <http://karennews.org/2017/09/nineteen-auxiliary-midwives-in-karen-state-complete-training.html/>

Government to boost ID card process

Myanmar Times, 8 September 2017

The government will try to hasten the issuance of national identity cards to middle and high schools in the Yangon Region, said U Zaw Aye Maung, Minister of Labour, Immigration and Population, and Rakhine ethnic affairs.

Minister U Zaw Aye Maung said that as of August 24, the ministry had issued national identity cards to only 5000 students.

He said that every June and July of the school year, the ministry goes to different schools and issues the national identity card before the end of academic year.

“To all citizens, I want to ask you to present the required documents to relevant departments so that the identity cards would be issued within a few days,” he said.



“If not, there will be more delay. If citizens provide all the documents but the department is reluctant to issue clearance, they can inform us and we will help,” he added.

According to Myanmar Citizen law, every citizen of Myanmar 10 years and older, must register with the Labour, Immigration and Population department and get national identity cards.

Link <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/government-boost-id-card-process.html>

Teachers to be trained for children with special needs

Myanmar Times, 8 September 2017

To improve education prospects for children with intellectual disabilities, Myanmar Special Education Association (MSES) will train nearly 1000 teachers about special needs' children.

The Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, the University of Wolverhampton (UK) and the charity We Love All Things will cooperate with Myanmar Special Education Association to deliver 13 training sessions for teachers across Myanmar, except in Mandalay and Nay Pyi Taw.

The training will invite teachers from the social welfare department, the basic education department and CSO, and parents. Each session will welcome 50 to 70 persons. They will take place over three months, and will finish in December.

“We will train the teachers about children with special needs: autism, Down’s syndrome, polio and others. We will talk about how to manage these children through both theoretical and

practical approach,” said U L Zau Dim, National Coordinator for Myanmar Special Needs Education Teachers’ Training.

Currently, only 40 public and private schools across the country provide trained teachers for children with special needs. The vast majority of those teachers are located in Yangon and Mandalay.

Over 2.3 million people have some form of disability. According to a 2010 nationwide report from the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, 53 percent of people with disabilities do not have access to education while only 2pc hold bachelor’s degrees.

“There are many difficulties for children with intellectual disabilities to access education. One of the main reasons is the lack of understanding in teachers’ method, so we offer to train teachers. Although there are some special schools, most of them are located in Yangon and Mandalay. According to the 2014 Census, there are many children with special needs who are left out in Myanmar,” he added.

Link <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/teachers-be-trained-children-special-needs.html>

Census Data Explained at Town Hall Meeting in Hpa-an

Karen News, 6 September 2017

Two years after the 2014 census was conducted, government officials are just getting around to explaining the point of all those questions that members of the public were made to answer.



On August 31 and September 1, officials from the Ministry of Immigration and Population met with Karen State local representatives and residents at a town hall information session in Hpa-an.

The two-day discussion on the census was attended by about 100 participants, including department representatives from Hpa-an township, UN representatives, village administrators and local residents.

According to the 2014 census, Hpa-an township has a population of 421,575. Kayin State’s economically productive population between the ages of 15 and 64 is significantly lower compared to the Union average (60.7 percent compared to the Union’s 67 percent). Kayin State had the second highest unemployment rate recorded (7.5%), after Rakhine State (10.4%).

According to the officials from the Department of Immigration and Population, similar census awareness-raising sessions will be held throughout Kayin State.

Link <http://karennews.org/2017/09/census-data-explained-at-town-hall-meeting-in-hpa-an.html/>

Japan helps draft master plan for development of Tanintharyi region

Eleven Myanmar, 9 September 2017

The Tanintharyi Region government has drafted a master development plan with the help of Japan, said Tanintharyi Region Chief Minister Dr Le Le Maw on September 8.

The master plan will prioritize the marine, education and mining sectors.

“I have requested that Japanese people draw the master plan twice. Now they are drafting the master plan for the development of Tanintharyi Region. The master plan mainly focuses on the Myeik region. The region has invaluable fish resources and mining. I don’t want to hear the news about instability in the Myeik region. It is not an easy task. I don’t want the cancellation of the project due to terrorism. So we are responsible for it. I would like to urge all of you to make cooperation carefully.”



“Breeding is the top priority,” she added.

Foreign investments in the region are still weak. Foreign investors are still monitoring the situation, so the government is working to show them that investments in the area can be profitable.

Experts and entrepreneurs from Japan conducted a study on oysters, clams, mollusks and other shellfish in the Myeik *Archipelago* and other islands.

Link <http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/business/11552>

Kayin farmers to get training, equipment

Myanmar Times, 30 August 2017

The Kayin State agricultural department will provide technical support and farm tools to farmers, as it urged them to plant in vacant lots in their vicinity, said an official.

The soil from vacant lands would be tested in the laboratories so it would match with the crop to be planted, said U Win Hlaing Oo, chief officer of Kayin State Agriculture Department.

The department will also provide farmers with high quality seeds to be planted, he added.

“The vacant lands in the whole of Kayin State are between 50,000 acres and 60,000 acres but the farmers are reluctant to plant because of high production cost,” U win Hlaing Oo told *The Myanmar Times*.

In Kayin State, an acre of paddy field can produce from 100 baskets to 120 baskets of paddy. But the farmers only could plant in small scales. The rate of paddy producing is fixed 70 baskets per acre on the average.

U Saw Myint Oo, minister of Kayin State Agriculture Department, has introduced a pilot program to help farmers in Tadar U village, Loon Nya village, Kha Nane Do village and Kaw Sa Loon village.

“We will use young seedlings in wide spacing methods and will provide harvesting machines,” minister U Saw Myint Oo said when he met with farmers.

Kayin State received enough rain this year and also expected to get good rate of paddy production, U Win Hlaing Oo said.

Monsoon paddy will be planted in 43, 4900 acres in four districts with an expected average output of producing 30,577,819 baskets. Corn will be planted in 51,100 acres with a projected output of 4,542,790 baskets. Maize

will be planted on 2700 acres in a vacant lot and 24,570,000 tonnes are expected.

Monsoon beans will be planted in 5500 acres with an estimated production of 233,750 baskets, sesame to be planted in 3500 acres with an expected harvest of 37,800 baskets, according to 2017-2018 fiscal year plan of the state agriculture department.

Link <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/kayin-farmers-get-training-equipment.html>

Activists, administrators urge Mon State govt to manage local beach ahead of peak tourism season

Burma News International, 14 September 2017

Before the crowds begin descending on the sea shore this coming dry season, local activists are calling on the government to help manage tourism and tourism infrastructure at a Mon State beach.



Kabyar Wa Beach in southern Ye township has become an increasingly popular destination, especially for domestic tourism, according to local tour operators. In response to the visitor influx, beachside shops and restaurants have cropped up, as have boat and motorcycle rental shops. Trash has become an increasing environmental concern.

“[The beach] has received many visitors. Even though it has become more developed, it’s still not systematically managed yet. The traditional [shops] of the local residents are in disorder,” said U Aung Naing Win, secretary of Ye township’s social services office.

“The state government should start to manage the beach before peak season in order to keep it clean,” he added.

Located just 45-minutes outside of Ye town, Kabyar Wa Beach is increasingly eyed as the next Ngwesaung or Ngapali. Aurum Company Limited from Yangon has even entered into discussions over a proposed US\$12 million beach resort, although negotiations with the previous government were reportedly waylaid by a land ownership dispute.

Local officials say they are doing what they can to try to preserve the beach, but have called for backup from the government.

Link <http://www.bnionline.net/news/mon-state/item/3485-activists-administrators-urge-mon-state-govt-to-manage-local-beach-ahead-of-peak-tourism-season.html>

PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

Govt Urges UNFC to Cooperate with Peace Process

The Irrawaddy, 25 September 2017

CHIANG MAI, Thailand — The government's Peace Commission on Monday urged the ethnic bloc of nationwide ceasefire agreement (NCA) non-signatories the United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC) to cooperate with the government to achieve peace in the country.

Peace Commission members and the UNFC's delegation for political negotiation (DPN) met for informal talks in Chiang Mai, northern Thailand on Monday, with Peace Commission member U Aung Soe and DPN head Khu Oo Reh making opening remarks.



Monday's meeting follows the sixth round of formal talks between the two parties in Yangon last month. Talks have been delayed due to the illness of Peace Commission chair Dr. Tin Myo Win and instability in Rakhine State since Aug. 25.

Khu Oo Reh said the UNFC had the same will to continue talks and understood the delay due to unavoidable causes.

Talks covered the DPN's nine-point proposal to signing the NCA, the seventh round of formal talks, and the possibility of high-level meetings between the government and UNFC leaders.

The DPN did not join the last session of peace conference in May.

U Aung Soe said the government is collaborating with all relevant stakeholders, including the government, parliament, the Tatmadaw, ethnic armed organizations, and political parties, on the amendments of the political dialogue framework in order to convene the third session of the peace conference.

Link <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/govt-urges-unfc-cooperate-peace-process.html>

Karen State Opens First Local-level JMC Office in Hpapun

Karen News, 4 September 2017

Supporting the nuts and bolts of implementing the peace process, a local-level committee was formed with an office in Hpapun township, Karen State officially opened on August 30.



This is the first local-level Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Committee to get to work. The eight-member committee includes three representatives from the government, three from ethnic armed organizations and two from the community. The Hpapun office is overseen by the Karen State-level Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Committee, which was launched in June 2016.

"As priority was given to opening state-level offices, the local-level office has only now been opened now," said Daw Nan Say Awar, a civilian representative on the state's JMC.

According to the state JMC members, there are plans to establish more local offices in Taungoo, Dawei,

Kawkareik, and Kya-in Seikkyi.

The opening ceremony of the first local office was attended by Major General Myo Win, commander of the Tatmadaw's Southeastern Command, Karen State Minister of Security and Border Affairs Colonel Myo Min Naung, the Karen State police chief, Union-level JMC vice chair Matthew Aye, Karen State's JMC vice chair Colonel Saw Phaw Do and other state-level officials.

Link <http://karennews.org/2017/09/karen-state-opens-first-local-level-jmc-office-in-hpapun.html/>

OTHERS

Thailand Requests Upgrading Three Pagodas Pass to an Official, Permanent Border Crossing

Karen News, 4 September 2017

Thailand has asked Myanmar to upgrade a high traffic border checkpoint in Karen State that was closed in July due to flooding. They also requested the border be officially upgraded as a permanent trade crossing.

The request was lodged on August 30 during the first meeting of the Thailand-Myanmar Township Border Committee, according to U Myo Naing, an administrator in Payathonzu, also known as Three Pagodas Pass.

Myanmar sealed off the border after road expansion and construction of a drainage ditch on the Thai side caused water to pour into downtown Payathonzu. After negotiations on July 26, the border was reopened to commuters, but local residents say it's still partially closed.



The border crossing has been limited to unofficial, small trade and daily commuters due to a territorial feud, though locals say goods smuggling through the crossing is rampant.

Thailand proposed upgrading the temporary border crossing to a permanent one in 1999 and again in 2002, but Myanmar did not accept the outstanding disagreements about territory.

Myanmar requested their Thai counterparts to call off the construction that had led to the July flooding and to take down a restroom built on Myanmar territory.

Link <http://karennews.org/2017/09/thailand-requests-upgrading-three-pagodas-pass-to-an-official-permanent-border-crossing.html/>

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

Links: Thailand-Myanmar Cross Border Web Portal: www.commonservice.info

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