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ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Development Tasks Gaining Momentum in Taninthayi Region

The Global New Light of Myanmar, 9 June 2019

A sea-crossing bridge connecting Kawthoung Township, Taninthayi Region with an island village named Pulone Toneton Village is being built by the Bridge Construction Group – 4 under the Ministry of Construction.



Pulone Tonelon Village, located on an island in the Andaman Sea, consists of more than 1,000 households with a population of over 3,000. The village has abundance of marine products. In the past, residents from Pulone Tonelon Village faced many challenges in health, education, and economic sectors as they had to use motorcycles and boats to travel to Kawthoung through Chaungwa Village which is about 7 miles far from Kawthoung.

Construction of a 2,690 ft. long, 15 ft. wide wooden bridge was completed on 6 December 2004. Now a new sea-crossing concrete bridge is under construction because the wooden bridge was badly damaged by the seawater.

The piles are constructed from reinforcement cement concrete up to hard rock. They took at least two weeks to finish construction of a bored pile and focused on durability of the bridge, said U Nyunt Thein, a civil engineer from the Bridge Construction Group – 4. The new bridge will be 2,400 ft. long, 24 ft. wide and has a three ft. long pedestrian walkway on each side. The clearance of the bridge will be 80 ft. wide and 3 ft. high and the bridge will be constructed mostly from reinforced concrete. Upon completion of the bridge, local people will be able to use the new bridge in all seasons with greater ease.

Construction of the bridge began in August 2017 and the project is slated for completion in 2020. A negotiation is being made with the local government for timely completion of the project. A border road was upgraded by Myeik Public Corporation Limited in Mawtaung Town, Taninthayi Region with the aim of improving the economy and promoting tourism industry, according to U Than Lwin, the project director. “Htonkha-Mawtaung road section has been implemented through BOT system since 2013.

The road is 48 mile-6-furlong long and 24 ft. wide and construction work was completed in February. We will build two tollgates along the road,” he added. Local merchants in Taninthayi Region will be able to export marine products to Mahachai in Thailand, thereby contributing to development of trade and tourism industry between the two countries, he said.

Residents from Mawtaung had to make a one-night stopover if they went to Myeik. Now the road helps local people reach Myeik within 3 hours, facilitating swift flow of goods and reducing transportation charges, said a truck driver who declined to be named.

<http://www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com/development-tasks-gaining-momentum-in-taninthayi-region/>

Over 436,000 Acres of Paddy to be grown Across Kayin State This Monsoon Season

The Global New Light of Myanmar, 9 June 2019

Over 436,000 acres of monsoon paddy are to be cultivated in seven townships in Kayin State this season starting in June, according to the State Department of Agriculture.

The department plans to grow over 249,000 acres of paddy in Hpa-an District, some 157,770 acres in Kawkayeik District, nearly 11,800 acres in Myawady District and 17,412 acres in Phapon District this monsoon season. In Kayin State, farmers usually prepare soil to plant monsoon paddy starting in June. Depending on climate conditions, cultivation of the monsoon paddy is occasionally continued until the end of October.



The Agriculture Department has already shared cultivation techniques with local farmers during talks prior to the wet season, and plans to conduct field demonstrations to educate farmers about the systematic cultivation of seasonal paddy.

Some farmers in Kayin State are now suffering financial losses due to flooding in late July 2018 that damaged over 50,000 acres of paddy fields.

Rice is a major staple food and the main export of Myanmar. The government is making continuous efforts to boost the country's rice production, in anticipation of healthy exports.

<http://www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com/over-436000-acres-of-paddy-to-be-grown-across-kayin-state-this-monsoon-season/>

Basic Education Completion Certificates to be issued this Academic Year

Eleven Myanmar, 18 June 2019

Completion certificates will be issued to those who have reached basic education high school level, even if they did not pass matriculation exam, so that they can attend vocational training courses, said Basic Education Department Director General Ko Lay Win.

The students of this academic year will receive completion certificates when they finish basic education high school level. The completion certificate is also applicable to those who had not pass matriculation exams before

"We are planning to give completion certificates at the end of this academic year. This certificate will be very useful. Those who have not certificates on matriculation passes have difficulty finding a job. So they will receive completion certificates to show they have completed basic education. They can do their job with that certificate," said Ko Lay Win.

Those holding completion certificates can join vocational training courses. However, students will receive those certificates only if they had 75 percent school attendance and completed internal exams four times. They must have at least grade C in respective subjects.

Completion certificates will also base on activities in literature, art and library sectors, clean record and sports activities.

In 2018-2019 academic year, 851,524 students took matriculation examination and 267,696 passed it accounting for 31.44 percent.

<https://elevenmyanmar.com/news/basic-education-completion-certificates-to-be-issued-this-academic-year>

Agri-Loans Available to Rice Farmers

The Global New Light of Myanmar, 10 June 2019

With the monsoon rain season in Myanmar, the Agricultural Development Bank has begun disbursing agricultural loans to rice farmers nationwide through its bank branches.



Agricultural loans for cultivating rice in rain-fed fields are disbursed no later than September, and those farmers who have land use Form-7 are eligible to receive loans at an interest rate of 8% per year.

According to statistics, the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation issued form-7 to over 6 million farmers.

Until last year, farmers who inherited farmland from their ancestors, but did not have Form-7 which documents land use rights for cultivation, faced challenges in receiving agricultural loans.

“The old farmland law did not allow for the changing of ownership names of farmland when farmers sold their land to others. But, the new Farmland Law allows farmers to change the ownership name beginning from 1st June. The situation is okay now,” said U Min Sein, Manager of the Agricultural Development Bank of Thanlyin Township.

His bank will disburse loans of K150, 000 per acre to over 4,800 farmers in 28 village-tracts in the township.

Paddy was planted on 7,137 acres of farmland last year and yielded over 5.8 million baskets of paddy.

Farmers obtained loans at an interest rate of K8. However, farmers who failed to pay back their loans within the set time frame are required to pay one kyat per month as a fine.

<http://www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com/agri-loans-available-to-rice-farmers/>

Bilin Township Considered for Ecotourism Development

Eleven Myanmar, 11 June 2019

MAWLAMYAING-Under the sponsorship of National Enlightenment Institute-NEI, a team led by the Mon State Parliament Speaker and the professors from Mawlamyaing University will be looking into Bilin Township where there are many historical places, to develop ecotourism.

Tin Ei, Speaker of Mon State Parliament on June 4th urged helping research works which will provide the development of tourism industry and create job opportunities to the Bilin locals.



“The period of excursion to Bilin Township will be six months. In Bilin Township, we are going to research environ of Bilin River and historical heritage places including Kalartha sanctuary in Bilin Township and to hold paper reading session. In doing so, the tourism industry in Bilin Township will prosper. Bilin Township, linking with Kyaikhto Township where there already are renowned tourist destinations such as Kyaikhtiyoe Pagoda and the world largest sitting Buddha image, has many opportunities for ecotourism development,” said MP Dr Khin Naing Oo from Bilin Constituency.

“In Mon State, there are many places which must be explored for tourism industry. Among the places, Bilin literate Cultural Region should be researched. We, the guides, have to show the historical places being explored by the researchers. The Kyaik Htee Saung Pagoda makes the tourists many felling if they [tourists]

visit the compound of the Pagoda where the influence of the literature attracted the tourists. Photo taking isn't allowed there and if it was, foreigner's tourists will like it. If the tasks will be regularly updated, the tourism industry based on Kyaikhtiyo Pagoda in Mon State will be blooming," said Aung Myo Min, Chairman of Mon State Tourist Guide Association.

<https://elevenmyanmar.com/news/bilin-township-considered-for-ecotourism-development>

Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Inaugurates Myawady-Wawlay Concrete Road in Kawkareik

The Global New Light of Myanmar, 16 June 2019

Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than attended an opening ceremony of Myawady-Wawlay concrete road constructed by Ministry of Construction Department Road, Kawkareik District, Kayin State held at a pandal on the road section yesterday morning.



The ceremony was attended by Union Minister for Construction U Han Zaw, Kayin State Chief Minister Daw Nan Khin Htwe Myint, Kayin State Hluttaw Speaker U Saw Chit Khin and state ministers, Saw Mo Shay of Democratic Kayin Benevolent Army, Hluttaw representatives, heads of department, state, district and township level officials, local ethnic nationals, invited guest and ethnic traditional dance troupes.

In his opening speech to the event Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker Mahn Win Khaing Than said the Myawady-

Wawlay road opened today was previously just an earth road and was now being upgraded to a concrete and tar road. Myawady-Wawlay road situated on the western bank of Thaungyin River and on the eastern side of Dawna Mountain range is an important road for border area development. The road was constructed along the Thai-Myanmar border and is a very important road for locals living in the area as well as being a road on which local products can flow easily and smoothly in a short time frame to develop trade. The State had allocated and permitted funds to upgrade the Myawady-Wawlay Road as a concrete road with an aim to develop the basic infrastructure in Kayin State and develop the socio-economic situation of the local ethnic nationals.

Next Union Minister for Construction U Han Zaw explained that the 44 miles 7 furlong long Myawady-Wawlay road opened today connects Myawady town and Wawlaymyaing town. In the past only about 12 miles was tarred while the remaining 32 miles 7 furlong was just an earth road. Starting from fiscal year 2016-2017 to fiscal year 2019-2020, State capital fund Ks 8,807.04 million was used to construct 18 ft. wide concrete road. The road had 51 concrete bridges that were under 50 ft. long and one concrete bridge above 180 ft. long. The road also had 64 concrete culverts. The aim was to upgrade existing roads and bridges in Myanmar to ASEAN Class III level 18 ft. wide concrete/asphalt road by 2030. Although Myawady-Wawlay road was a town connecting road, it was situated along the Thai-Myanmar border and is an important road for trade. As Kayin State had achieved close to 100 percent peace, Ministry of Construction was able to construct and upgrade roads and bridges. The locals are urged to maintain the road constructed with state fund so that trade can be conducted with ease said the Union Minister.

<http://www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com/amyotha-hluttaw-speaker-inaugurates-myawady-wawlay-concrete-road-in-kawkareik/>

Five Areas to be designated National Geology Parks

Myanmar Times, 14 June 2019

Five locations in the country will be designated national geology parks, in Mandalay Region, Shan State, Kachin State, Kayin State, and Sagaing Region, said U Than Tun of the Myanmar Geosciences Society, the head of the project.

The sites include Popa Mountain in Mandalay's Kyaukpadaung Township, Inn Daw Gyi Lake in Kachin, Inle

Lake in southern Shan, Twin Taung in Sagaing, and Mount Zwegabin in Kayin. An organising committee will announce Popa Mountain as a national geology park at the end of this year.

"We'll start with Popa Mountain, but we'll eventually expand the scheme to five places. We've already done the research. A management committee was formed for Popa Mountain's national geology park. Most of its members are locals.



"We've submitted a budget, but we haven't got it yet," U Than Tun said.

The Popa Mountain UNESCO and National Geology Park Committee was formed last month to systematically conserve natural resources around Mount Popa.

"After Popa, we will carry out the project in Bagan, because the ancient cultural heritage of Bagan is linked with the geological heritage of Popa. If we combine them in a Geo Park, they will be famous throughout the world. We are discussing this with the experts. The work will conform to the criteria of UNESCO," U Than Tun said.

These five places named national geology parks will display geological features, buildings, fossils, ancient religious beliefs, and the lifestyles of ancient people at the site.

"There are only a few differences between qualifying as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and as a Geo Park. We can keep operating if it doesn't affect the environment and if there are geological features. We've made signs to educate local people," U Than Tun said.

<https://www.mmtimes.com/news/five-areas-be-designated-national-geology-parks.html>

Interest in Retail, Wholesale Sector Continues Unabated

Myanmar Times, 18 June 2019

Two years after the Myanmar Investment Commission's announcement, the Ministry of Commerce (MOC) has permitted nine wholly foreign retail and wholesale providers to operate in the country. These include investors from Japan, Thailand, US, Singapore, and the Netherlands.



The nine non-Myanmar companies are able to secure a green light from the authorities since the government moved to partially open up the retail and wholesale market two years ago. The Myanmar Investment Commission issued the List of Restricted Activities No. 15/2017 in April 2017, which allowed foreign businesses to invest in retail and wholesale without restriction. It then took the commerce ministry over one year to follow up with a Directive.

They include Mycare Unicharm Co, Otsuka Pharmaceutical, DKSH, Toyota Tsusho, Unilever, Mega Lifesciences and NTT Com Myanmar, which is the latest entity to receive an MOC permit.

The products offered range from baby products and cosmetics to beverages like Pocari Sweat.

Meanwhile, five joint ventures between Thai, Japanese, Dutch and Singaporean firms and local investors have also received permits to operate. Among them are Pacific Andaman (SEA), AEON Orange, Asahi Loi Hein, Unilever EAC Myanmar and Wilmar Myanmar Edible Oils.

The new firms will join an industry with just four local operators: City Mart Holdings, Myanmar Agribusiness Public Corporation, Myanmar R F S Company, and NCX Myanmar.

Many investors come and discussed retail and wholesale business in our office. Also, Myanmar Investment Commission has received interests and some proposals from foreign investors to invest in the domestic market. Continually, the Commission will allow them by the rema of related ministry and under Myanmar Investment Law, said U Thant Sin Lwin, Acting Director General of the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration.

<https://www.mmtimes.com/news/interest-retail-wholesale-sector-continues-unabated.html>

Digital Economy Association to License Online Shops

Myanmar Business Today, 19 June 2019

The Ministry of Commerce and the Union Federation of Commerce and Industry will be forming a new organization. It will be called the Digital Economy Association, and its purpose will be to handle disputes over products sold online.

Why is this necessary? Online shops are very popular among people who want to start their own businesses, and the number of online shops in Myanmar has increased rapidly in recent years.

Additionally, online shops on Facebook are selling various consumer items, ranging from handicrafts and antiques to electronic products and vehicles. People in Myanmar now seem to accept Facebook as the best platform to reach out to consumers, and to establish a digital presence as a seller.

However, there are cases in which consumer rights have been violated. Furthermore, because the industry is wholly unregulated, some online shops now offer smuggled products with lower prices than when they are sold by official traders and importers, according to an official from the Myanmar Retailers Association.

All of this is nothing but a recipe for trouble, both for buyers who could easily be scammed, and for licensed traders and importers. For these reasons, the government is taking action to draft the E-Commerce Law, which will regulate e-commerce in Myanmar.

An official from the Consumers Protection Department said: “It is better to have a law regulating the industry, in order to protect consumers.”

The new Digital Economy Association will list online shopping businesses, and help them officially register. The ministry is now in talks with other government agencies to register online shopping businesses.

<https://www.mmbiztoday.com/articles/digital-economy-association-license-online-shops>

China’s Chilli Pepper Demand Rising

Myanmar Times, 20 June 2019

Myanmar’s chilli pepper exports have sharply risen over the past two years as a result of high demand from China, said Department of Consumer Affairs’ deputy director general U Aung Maun on Monday.

“We’ve expect the chilli export volume to be 30,000 to 40,000 tonnes by September 30, the end of the Financial year. We have already earned US\$21 million from more than 23,000 tonnes exported in the current Fiscal year, while only a few tonnes were exported in previous years,” he said.





Currently, local dried chilli powder makers are having trouble finding raw ingredients as the bulk of the crop is being exported to China. Chilli farmers are also rushing to find seedlings, pushing prices up.

“There is a surplus of more than 50,000 tonnes of chilli, and half of this is being exported to China. Among Myanmar’s 57 kinds of export crops, chilli peppers are in 18th place. In tropical regions, it takes only one month for chilli to mature. There are farmers who can attain yields of between 12,800 kilograms and 16,000kg per acre, so they have a chance to enjoy healthy profits if they can ensure good quality,” he said.

According to the department’s statistics, 1348 tonnes of fresh chili pepper and 6300 tonnes of dried chili pepper were exported to China in the 2016-17 fiscal year. The figures for the 2017-18 fiscal year were 5479 tonnes of fresh chili pepper and over 3000 tonnes of dried chili.

So far this fiscal year, 14,934 tonnes of fresh chili and 23,400 tonnes of dried chili peppers have been exported to China.

<https://www.mmtimes.com/news/chinas-chilli-pepper-demand-rising.html>

LAND AND PROPERTY

Over 600,000 Acres of Available Land in Mandalay

Myanmar Business Today, 17 June 2019

There is 627,149 acres of unoccupied land in Mandalay, the land is available for local and foreign investments, Dr. Zaw Myint Maung, Chief Minister of Mandalay Region, said at Mandalay International Trade Fair & Business Forum 2019.

“If you want to make investments in Mandalay, we will make it easier for you and find the land you need. We want to make Mandalay the second biggest driving force for the country's economic development,” he added.

Pledged that he will help investors who are to invest in Mandalay’s five investment project zones, and will help make investments easier and efficient for them.



The aforementioned five investment project zones are Myotha Industrial City project, New Mandalay Resort City project, Amarapura City project, Yedagontaung City project and New Star Light Group project.

There are a number of private and public partnership projects in the Mandalay region and the regional Government will soon invite tender applications for other projects which will create investment opportunities, the chief minister said.

There are five inland trade routes including ASEAN trade roads that provide access to neighboring countries such as China, India and Thailand, all trade routes pass through the Mandalay region.

The Mandalay region has approved seven foreign direct investments so far during this fiscal year, these investments are estimated to create jobs for 2,127 workers. There are an additional 14 local investments expected to create 3,775 jobs.

From October 2018 to early May 2019, the Mandalay region received \$2.54 billion in foreign direct investments, \$1.15 billion of which went to transportation and communications, and \$665 million to the industrial sector, the remaining \$274 million have gone into other service sectors.

<https://www.mmbiztoday.com/articles/over-600000-acres-available-land-mandalay>

LAW AND GOVERNANCE

State Counsellor And President will run in 2020 Elections: NLD Official

Myanmar Times, 12 June 2019

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and President U Win Myint will run in the 2020 elections, National League for Democracy spokesperson U Myo Nyunt told a party executive committee meeting in Nay Pyi Taw on Saturday.

“We will contest the 2020 election because we want to continue serving the country,” he said.

The State Counsellor and the president will have the right to canvass in their constituencies but will need to resign their cabinet positions if they want to conduct a nationwide campaign.

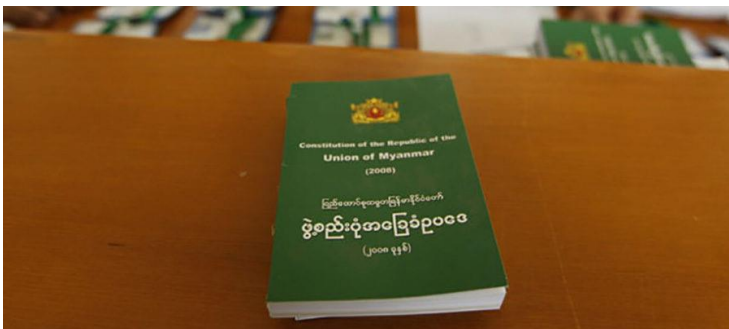
The NLD will make sure that the election is free and fair and will try to win votes without resorting to corruption, said U Myo Nyunt.

<https://www.mmtimes.com/news/state-counsellor-and-president-will-run-2020-elections-nld-official.html>

Parliament’s Constitution Amendment Panel Completes Review of Charter

The Irrawaddy, 14 June 2019

YANGON—The Union Parliament’s Charter Amendment Committee on Thursday completed reviewing the entire Constitution for possible amendments. It will submit a report on its findings to Parliament next month.



Committee secretary U Myat Nyana Soe, who is also an Upper House lawmaker for the ruling National League for Democracy (NLD), said the report recommends that various provisions of the Constitution be repealed, amended, added to, or retained.

Comprising 45 representatives of political parties and the military, the panel reviewed all 15 chapters of the Constitution, along with five additional schedules relating to tax

collection, the state and regional legislatures, self-administered regions and other topics, U Myat Nyana Soe said.

The committee secretary said the details of the committee’s findings would be made public when they are submitted to Parliament, which is in recess. It is prohibited to disclose the details of the committee’s meeting.

The article is one of the most controversial in the Constitution, as it effectively gives the military a veto over any proposed changes.

“Not surprisingly, juridical experts have pronounced that the Myanmar Constitution is about the most rigid in the world today,” Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said.

Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD) lawmaker U Sai Thiha Kyaw told The Irrawaddy on Friday that the party proposed changes to almost all clauses of the Constitution at the committee’s meetings.

“But we don’t have high expectations [for the proposed changes],” he said.

<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/parliaments-constitution-amendment-panel-completes-review-charter.html>

PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

NCA Signatories Meet in Chiang Mai to Discuss Peace Process

Network Media Group, 8 June 2019

Representatives of 10 ethnic armed organizations gather for three days of talks aimed at ending the deadlock in Burma’s peace process.

Representatives of 10 ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) that have signed Burma’s Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) gathered in the northern Thai city of Chiang Mai on Wednesday for three days of talks aimed at addressing issues that have stalled the country’s peace process.

The meeting, which follows up on the first session of the fourth summit of NCA-signatory EAOs, held in Chiang Mai on May 14-18, will also look at ways to strengthen implementation of the NCA, according to attendees.

“We will collect common views on implementation of the peace process and discuss how to overcome issues that have stood in the way of progress. Then we will discuss how to strengthen implementation of the NCA, including bilateral agreements,” Comrade Myo Win, the vice-chairman of the All Burma Students’ Democratic Front (ABSDF), told NMG.

According to Yebaw Myo Win, participants in the talks will seek common ground through a meeting of the working committee, which will have one representative from each of the 10 NCA-signatory groups.

After the three-day talks end tomorrow, another meeting will be held on Saturday to discuss whether to transform the PPST into a new body, the Peace Process Consultative Meeting, as proposed by the Karen National Union (KNU).

<https://www.bnionline.net/en/news/nca-signatories-meet-chiang-mai-discuss-peace-process>

Join Peace Process, Don’t Complain from Outside: Senior Govt Negotiator

The Irrawaddy, 14 June 2019

YANGON—When it comes to the peace process, it is better to come inside the house and start a debate than shouting and stoning the house from outside, said U Khin Zaw Oo, a member of the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC) secretariat.

The secretariat held an informal meeting on Thursday and Friday at the National Reconciliation and Peace Center (NRPC) in Yangon to try to find solutions to break the impasse in the country’s peace process.

Speaking at the meeting, U Khin Zaw Oo, who is also the secretary of the government’s Peace Commission, called on all concerned groups to continue to work within the peace process, instead of complaining about it from the outside.



“It is important that everyone comes inside and discusses [the issues] frankly,” he said, seemingly frustrated at some ethnic armed groups’ decision to stay away from peace talks.

The Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS), a signatory to the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), announced in November the suspension of its participation in formal meetings of the Joint Ceasefire

Monitoring Committee (JMC) at various levels.

The move came a month after another NCA signatory, the Karen National Union (KNU), announced the suspension of its participation in the talks.

The suspensions followed disagreements at a meeting between the 10 NCA signatories and the Myanmar Military (or Tatmadaw) on Oct. 15-16 over the latter's insistence on a single military for the country, and its demand that ethnic groups forgo the right to seek secession from the Union.

Though the formal UPDJC meetings are supposed to be held monthly according to the NCA, nearly a year elapsed between the previous one and the ongoing meeting in Yangon.

U Khin Zaw Oo called for frank discussions on obstacles to the Union Peace Conference.

<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/join-peace-process-dont-complain-outside-senior-govt-negotiator.html>

45 members of KKO (Breakaway) Return to Legal Fold in Hpa-an

The Global New Light of Myanmar, 23 June 2019

45 members of the KKO (Breakaway) group returned to the legal fold bringing their arms and ammunition at a Tatmadaw column on 22 June morning.



Led by Maung Myint, the 45-member troop of KKO (Breakaway) contacted the Tatmadaw column through Mizine Mountain Sayadaw Bhaddanta Sandarvara on 21 June while the Tatmadaw troops were conducting security operations in the mountain following one engagement with the group and two landmines attacks, according to the Office of the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services.

Officials concerned has provided necessary aids to them.

The engagement happened while the Tatmadaw troops were conducting demining in the Mt. Mizine after a villager identified as Saw Nya Min from Tokeyki Village, Mizine Village-tract, Hpa-an Township, stepped on an improvised explosive device planted by KKO (Breakaway) on 18 June on his way to collect jengkol fruits.

<http://www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com/45-members-of-kko-breakaway-return-to-legal-fold-in-hpa-an/>

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