

THAILAND

25 June - 15 July 2019

Media Monitoring report # 208

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Bagan Named UNESCO World Heritage Site

Myanmar Times, 7 July 2019

Bagan has been named as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, a quarter of a century after the ancient capital was first nominated.



The recognition by the UN's cultural body will serve to boost demand from both Western and Asian markets, the tourism industry says. But meeting conservation pledges and effective local governance will be critical for the area's future.

"Bagan is a destination which is already popular among tourists and, with this [UNESCO] title, it will further attract visitors from abroad," commented U Aung Htun Lin, Myanmar Tourist Guides Association chair.

However historian and Yangon Heritage Trust chair Thant Myint U suggested that tourism should be part of Bagan's future but not the driving force.

"Bagan is not only a place of sublime beauty, but a place of tremendous historic importance, that was fuelled by an energetic multiculturalism and an openness to the outside world, a place from which we can still draw lessons and inspiration," he told *The Myanmar Times*.

The proposal to list Bagan was approved by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee at a meeting in Baku, Azerbaijan, on Saturday. This marks Myanmar's second entry to the list after World Heritage Status was granted to the ancient Pyu cities of Sri Ksetra, Halin and Beikthano in 2014.

In 1995, the then-military junta nominated Bagan but the application was rejected.

<https://www.mmtimes.com/news/bagan-named-unesco-world-heritage-site.html>

More Cyclone Shelters to be built in Ayeyawaddy Region

Mizzima, 2 July 2019

A total of 57 more cyclone shelters are being built in Myanmar's Ayeyawaddy region in the event of natural disasters, Xinhua reported quoting the region's department of disaster management.

The 57 cyclone shelters under construction cover those in 13 townships, hit by the deadly cyclone Nargis in 2008.



Floods are common in Ayeyawaddy region as the region with plenty of creeks and rivers gets a lot of rain every year.

Weather experts forecast a higher rainfall and flood this year compared with previous years.

<http://www.mizzima.com/article/more-cyclone-shelters-be-built-ayeyawaddy-region>

South Korea to assist Village Treasury Project

Myanmar Times, 25 June 2019

A village treasury project to encourage sound money management practices and saving among Myanmar villagers will be set up with the help of South Korea, said Ye Tint Tun, director general of the Department of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation.



“South Korea will help conduct training courses to improve money management skills,” U Ye Tint Tun said on Thursday. The department and Korean Federation of Community Credit Cooperatives signed an agreement on the project on Monday.

With its success in establishing village treasuries during the period of rehabilitation after the Korean War, South Korea will provide technical support, expertise and safe deposit boxes to Myanmar under the project.

“Their village treasuries were eventually as successful as banks and even gained official recognition,” he said.

About two years ago, about 13 villages set up village treasuries in Myanmar, but they made no progress.

The Village Treasury Establishment Programme, which will be implemented in 110 villages, will raise funds from people’s savings. A village bank committee will keep the money and make loans to villagers at an appropriate interest rate. “It will help people save money,” said U Ye Tint Tun.

To prevent loan defaults, people will have to make weekly or bi-weekly payments to repay a loan. A Village Development Fund will be set up from half of the interest earned, and savers will receive the other half.

Some villages have already tried doing this, but have not had much success due to flawed money management practices. “Rural areas have many honest and active people. The villages could develop faster,” U Ye Tint Tun said.

<https://www.mmtimes.com/news/south-korea-assist-village-treasury-project.html>

GGI Introduces Student Life Insurance Policies

Myanmar Business Today, 8 July 2019

The local insurance company Grand Guardian Insurance (GGI) launched its student life insurance on July 1, 2019. It was jointly designed by GGI and Japan-based Nippon Life Insurance.

Grand Guardian Insurance will provide student life insurance for students between the ages of one and twelve, according to Daw Hnin Sein, the Deputy Chief Executive Officer of GGI.

Unlike other types of life insurance, this insurance is a type of savings insurance. It will enable parents to secure the education of their children in case of the



parents' death, or of a situation where they develop a chronic disease that renders them unable to earn a living.

The insurance policy must be purchased using the name of one parent or a legal guardian between the ages of 18 and 55. The insurance term is 8-19 years, with a premium running 5-16 years.

The minimum premium is K1 million per month, with a maximum of K100 million per month. As an alternative to monthly installments, payments can be made on a quarterly basis, twice per year, or annually in a lump sum.

If a parent, or the child in question, dies of a disease undisclosed at the time of applying for the insurance, or commits suicide during the first year of insurance, then the client will not receive the benefits of the policy.

On the other hand, if a parent dies or is disabled due to an accident, the client will not need to pay the premium any more; the company will pay the insurance benefits once per annum for four successive years when the child turns 17.

The insurer is going to hold awareness-raising campaigns at schools in order to promote education life insurance; other insurers in Myanmar are also planning to introduce education life insurance policies.

<https://www.mmbiztoday.com/articles/ggi-introduces-student-life-insurance-policies>

Japanese Companies Plan to Build 1000-MW Powerplant in Myanmar

Myanmar Business Today, 8 July 2019

According to U Zaw Min Win, Chairman of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI), Japanese companies are planning to build a new power project in Myanmar that will be capable of producing 1,000 megawatts (MW) of electricity per year.

“Investment in electricity production is really overdue,” he said at a regular meeting between local business leaders and the Vice President of Myanmar. “There are some companies, including U.S. companies that met us and said that they wanted to invest in Myanmar’s electricity sector. We heard that Japan has plans to build this 1,000-megawatt plant in Myanmar.”

Investments like these can improve Myanmar’s power sector which, in turn, will encourage people to make further investments and boost productivity in the manufacturing sector, he added. Moreover, the UMFCCI is working with the government to facilitate the investments.

U Soe Win, the Union Minister of the Ministry of Planning and Finance, said: “We are planning to use more of our budget for infrastructure and electricity, both of which are necessary elements that investors consider when making a decision on investment.”

Myanmar’s daily electricity consumption is increasing at a breathtaking pace: in 2015, it was 2,350 MW; in 2016, that rose to 2,670 MW; in 2017, it rose again to 2,900 MW; in 2018, it came up to 3,300 MW. Currently, it stands at 3,700 MW. That is an increase of nearly 60% in daily electricity consumption from 2015 to 2019, a span of only four years.

Based on this trend in electricity consumption, according to the Ministry of Electricity and Energy, it is clear that Myanmar needs high-capacity electrical powerplants in order to meet demand.

As we pointed out in an article in last week’s paper, the Ministry of Electricity and Energy has raised electricity rates with the goal of increasing income from electricity distribution, so that it can, in turn, use that money to help improve power generation and distribution.

<https://www.mmbiztoday.com/articles/japanese-companies-plan-build-1000-mw-powerplant-myanmar>

Kayah State to get US\$50 Million Metal Refinery

Myanmar Times, 15 July 2019

A Myanmar-China joint venture will be building a metal refinery worth US\$50 million located in Myanmar's eastern Kayah State's capital of Loikaw.



The Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA) said in a statement that the joint venture, Global South Industrial Company (GSIC), was granted permission to build the refinery in Loikaw's industrial zone.

DICA said the US\$50 million investment will also see up to 500 jobs created in the refinery, which will be used to refine tin-tungsten and wolfram.

GSIC operates tin-tungsten mining near the Kayah State-Shan State border, which would be

transported to the new site to be refined once it's operational and then be exported mainly to China, the Kayah State DICA secretary Daw May Myo Zaw said.

She added that the refinery will add value to the mining operations in the state as refined metals were more valuable and fetch higher prices than raw ones. "The state government is supportive of this project," Daw May Myo Zaw said.

This refinery represents the second such investment in the state after Myanmar Golden Bonanza Company received permission to build a refinery. Five companies have collaborations with Kayah State's No.2 Mining Enterprise, a state-owned company, with GSIC among them. A total of 400 tonnes has been produced from October 2018 to June 2019.

A Dutch animal-feed supplier, Royal De Heus, represents the only wholly-owned foreign investment in the state with a pig farm in Loikaw. Local investment mainly focuses on the travel and tourism industry. A report last year by the state noted that there were opportunities for investments in the extractive industries, particularly refineries, targeting the export markets.

<https://www.mmtimes.com/news/kayah-state-get-us50-million-metal-refinery.html>

Denmark to Provide K1.13 Billion Loan for Myanmar SMEs

Myanmar Business Today, 8 July 2019

Myo Sandar Denmark's Responsible Business Fund (RBF) will provide its fourth loan, of kr5 million (\$755,925 USD, or K1.13 billion), for the development of small- to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Myanmar. The RBF, which is part of the Danish Development Denmark's Responsible Business Fund (RBF) will provide its fourth loan, of kr5 million (\$755,925 USD, or K1.13 billion), for the development of small- to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Myanmar.

The RBF, which is part of the Danish Development Assistance to Myanmar, started in September 2017 with the specific goal of rendering assistance to SMEs in this country.

Local SMEs that would like assistance can apply for a grant from the fund between July 1 and July 22 of this year.

SMEs working in fields such as wastewater treatment projects in Yangon, energy efficiency projects in other states and regions, water use efficiency and recycling, occupational safety and health (OSH), food safety, managerial and supervisory skills, or practical and technical skills may apply for grants.

The RBF will provide 50 percent of the project cost (up to K50 million) for energy efficiency, water use efficiency and recycling projects. It will provide up to 80 percent of project costs (up to K40 million) for

occupational, safety and health, food safety, managerial and supervisory skill, and practical and technical skill projects.

Myanmar is trying to help local SMEs to develop and thrive by providing loans. Currently, the government has already provided K30 billion (\$19.9 million US) in loans, and K7.393 billion (\$4.9 million US) in credit guarantee insurance (CGI) loans. Meanwhile, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has provided ¥20 billion (\$185.5 million US, or K279.5 billion) in loans, the Myanmar Economic Bank a further K200 billion (\$132.7 million US), and Germany's Cooperation for International Cooperation (GIZ) some €15.3 million (\$17.2 US, or K26 billion).

Currently, there are over 73,000 SMEs registered under the Ministry of Industry, and around 90 percent of the enterprises in Myanmar are categorized as small- to medium-sized.

Applications for grants must be filed in person at Building B, 10th floor, room 07, Shwe Hintar Condo, Shwe Hintar Road, Hlaing Townships, and Yangon.

<https://www.mmbiztoday.com/articles/denmark-provide-k113-billion-loan-myanmar-smes>

LAW AND GOVERNANCE

Election Commission Vows to help People Cast Votes in Conflict Zones

Myanmar Times, 4 July 2019

The Union Election Commission has said it will find a way to help all voters in Myanmar's conflict zones to exercise their voting right.

"We have collected data in war-affected areas, including northern Rakhine State, to find out where help is needed," said U Myint Naing, member of the commission.

He said they are making preparations so that war refugees, migrant workers and people in unstable areas can vote in the 2020 election.

A voter list will be compiled throughout the country from July to September.

More than 40,000 people have been displaced by six months of fighting in northern Rakhine, the Arakan Army announced on June 8.



Rakhine parties fielding candidates in the election are worried that it will be postponed due to instability, said U Myo Kyaw, general secretary of the Rakhine branch of the ruling National League for Democracy.

In the 2015 election, voting was cancelled in almost 40 townships across the nation due to instability, according to the commission.

<https://www.mmtimes.com/news/election-commission-vows-help-people-cast-votes-conflict-zones.html>

Moe Moe Suu Kyi Nominated As Immigration and HR Minister

Myanmar Times, 2 July 2019

Yangon Region government Chief Minister nominated Moe Moe Suu Kyi as the minister in the newly created Immigration and Human Resources Ministry.

Yangon Region government Chief Minister Phyo Min Thein nominated her name at Region legislative assembly session convened on July 1.



Yangon Region assembly legislator Than Naing Oo from Pabedan constituency (1) said that this new ministry would handle citizenship cases regarding immigration affairs, a training school for workers and placement for workers.

“Even with citizens, some are not recognized as citizen though they are Myanmar nationals. There are many people who don’t have national IDs and other documents, some don’t have household registration etc.,” he said.

Moe Moe Suu Kyi is from Mayangon constituency (2) and is currently serving as secretary of the Government’s Guarantees, Pledges and Undertaking Vetting and Parliament Rights Affairs Committee in Yangon Legislative Assembly.

Confirmation of the nomination will be made at Yangon Region Legislative Assembly session.

<http://www.mizzima.com/article/moe-moe-suu-kyi-nominated-immigration-and-hr-minister>

New party will compete in Elections across the Nation

Myanmar Times, 28 June 2019

The Union Betterment Party, led by Thura U Shwe Mann, will compete in the 2020 general elections in all townships across the country.

The party, which was set up about two months ago and now has about 100,000 members, will compete in some states at the request of ethnic people, according to Thura U Shwe Mann.

“We have strong belief we can win. It will be up to the people to choose the right person from the right party,” he said.

Thura U Shwe Mann awarded party membership certificates and answered questions at a meeting with township elders, social organisations, and people who were interested in joining the party in Mandalay Region on Thursday.

His party now has offices in all states and regions, except Magwe Region, Thura U Shwe Mann said.

Regardless of race or religion, any citizen can join the party. No membership fee is charged, and members are permitted to leave the party whenever they want, he said.

Thura U Shwe Mann served for 45 years in the Tatmadaw (military) and was chair and deputy chair of the Union Solidarity Party for about four years. Under the current government, he chaired the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw’s (Assembly of the Union’s) Legal Affairs and Special Cases Assessment Commission.

<https://www.mmmtimes.com/news/new-party-will-compete-elections-across-nation.html>



President, Union Ministers do not need to quit their Jobs for Election: UEC

Eleven Myanmar, 25 June 2019

The President and Union Ministers do not need to resign from their posts if they want to compete in the 2020 Election, said Myint Naing, members of the Union Election Commission (UEC) yesterday.

On June 24, the UEC met political parties and those involved in the electoral sector, at the election sub-commission office in Yangon Region.

“According to Section 7 (b) of the Union Government Law, the President and Union Ministers don’t need to quit their jobs if they want to run for a seat in the election. They can start their canvassing campaigns as soon as the UEC announces the Election Day. In the 2015 election, the ministers and vice-president conducted their canvassing campaigns without resigning from their jobs. It is enshrined in the law,” Myint Naing added.

“Most of ministers ran for the seats in the 2015 Election without quitting their posts. As far as I know, former vice-President Sai Mauk Kham, former vice-President Nyan Tun and MP Myint Maung are among them. Some were re-elected. For instance, Tin Naing Thein and Than Htay resigned from their posts to perform the party’s duties, but to run for the election,” he added.

The UEC has not fixed the election date yet and announced the by-elections in 2017 and 2018 six months ahead, he said.

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi who is also the chair of the NLD and President U Win Myint who is vice-chair of the NLD, will run for the seats in the 2020 Election, said Dr. Myo Nyunt, the spokesperson of the ruling National League for Democracy (NLD) on June 8.

<https://elevenmyanmar.com/news/president-union-ministers-do-not-need-to-quit-their-jobs-for-election-uec>

Mon Unity Party Allowed to be registered as Official Political Party

Mizzima, 13 July 2019

The Union Election Commission (UEC) issued an announcement about the registration of the Mon Unity Party (MUP) which sees the merger of two powerful regional parties in Mon State to be registered as official political party.



MUP spokesman Nai San Tin said that the party had received letter sent by election commission by email and they would continue all formalities to be carried out for party registration in accordance with the Electoral Law and Party Registration Law.

“We have already done all necessary work at township-level by about 80 percent. Now we are working on presenting the party membership list and putting up party signboards at party offices,” Nai San Tin said.

As per the Party Registration Law, the party allowed to be registered as a political party must submit the list of at

least 1,000 memberships within 90 days from the date of permission granted by the UEC.

All Mon Democracy Party, Mon National Party and those who are interested in Mon politics jointly applied to the UEC in December 2018 to be formed under the new name as the Mon Unity Party by merging these two political parties.

Mon Unity Party will be a powerful party in Mon State with membership of nearly 100,000 and they will contest in the 2020 general elections. Their main rival parties will be the National League for Democracy (NLD) party and the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP).

<http://www.mizzima.com/article/mon-unity-party-allowed-be-registered-official-political-party>

Taking politics out of power

Frontier Myanmar, 6 July 2019

The government's decision to raise electricity prices is commendable, but creating an independent regulator would take politics out of the country's power supply.

This is not a government known for making brave political decisions. But on June 25, it announced a much-

needed increase in electricity prices, for both households and businesses. The new pricing came into effect on July 1.

In reality, the government didn't have much choice. Electricity subsidies are already close to US\$500 million a year and threatening to balloon out of control. Still, to announce an increase of this size relatively close to an election was commendable.

The price hike will hurt many middle-income households. Those using the relatively modest sum of 200 units (a unit being one kilowatt hour) a month will see their bill rise from K7,500 to K17,550. The era of dirt-cheap power is over.

But there's a bigger picture. Less than 50 percent of households in Myanmar have access to power from the national grid. Those connected to the grid are, with few exceptions, better off financially than those who are not. That means the subsidies have been going to the wealthiest households in the country. Not only that: the subsidies have made it more difficult for the government to expand access to electricity.

This is inherently unfair and only reinforces economic inequality.

Inevitably, there have been some criticism and protests in the wake of the announcement. The government needs to hold the line; to back down now would be a disaster.

The government has already moved in this direction. Three days after the new pricing was announced, the Electric Power Generation Enterprise issued a tender for five emergency power contracts, totalling 1,040 megawatts. Three of these will be powered by imported liquefied natural gas. These will be expensive to operate and would have been catastrophic for the budget bottom line if prices had not increased.

To avoid repeating this mistake, power prices will need to be adjusted on a more regular basis. Further increases will almost certainly be necessary in the years ahead. But, like the current one, future governments will inevitably be reluctant to raise prices for fear of losing votes.

An independent regulator that monitors the cost of supply and changes prices accordingly would take much of the politics out of the equation.

Yes, the government of the day would lose control over prices. But it would also not have to take responsibility for the regulator's decisions.

<https://frontiermyanmar.net/en/taking-politics-out-of-power>

PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

Government Meets KNU in Informal Talks

Mizzima, 10 July 2019



The government's Peace Commission and Karan National Union (KNU) met for informal talks on July 9 at National Reconciliation and Peace Centre (NRPC) in Shweli Road, Yangon.

The KNU team was led by KNU Joint Secretary (1) Saw Sar Bway and the members are Naw Dah Dah, Saw Eh Kalu Shwe Oo, Saw Nay Tha Bar Lay, Mahn Ba Tun and Naw May Oo.

Previously KNU delegations used to be led by top leaders of KNU Vice-Chairman, General Secretary Etc. but this time this team is led by Joint Secretary (1) Saw Sar Bway and led KNU delegation for the first time.

Ministry of State Counsellor Director General Zaw Htay said that they discussed restarting official meetings regarding the peace process.

“We could not do our work as we have arguments in terminology. It will take time if Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs) cannot decide on terminology, interpretation and understanding,” Zaw Htay added.

<http://mizzima.com/article/government-meets-knu-informal-talks>

Ceasefire to be extended

Mizzima, 1 July 2019

The Myanmar military has issued a statement, extending the unilateral ceasefire till 31 August in order to aid the peace process, state media reported.

On 21 December, 2018, the Tatmadaw announced its decision to cease all military operations in the Northern Command, North-Eastern Command, Eastern Command, Eastern Central Command, and Triangle Region Command till 30 April, and it had later extended the ceasefire till 30 June, to help implement the peace process, according to the statement.



“It has been found that consecutive peace negotiations could be held during the ceasefire period. Therefore, it is hereby announced that the Tatmadaw will extend its ceasefire period till 31 August in keeping with the expectations of the local ethnic people for peace, and so that all organizations involved in the peace process have the confidence to take it forward, with greater efforts,”

“It has been found that consecutive peace negotiations could be held during the ceasefire period. Therefore, it is hereby announced that the Tatmadaw will extend its ceasefire period till 31 August in keeping with the expectations of the local ethnic people for peace, and so that all organizations involved in the peace process have the confidence to take it forward, with greater efforts,”

<https://www.bnionline.net/en/news/ceasefire-be-extended>

NDAA ready to sign ceasefire act: Spokesperson

Eleven Myanmar, 1 July 2019

They are ready to sign the nationwide ceasefire agreement (NCA) if all ethnic armed groups, which haven't signed the NCA yet, are ready to sign it, said Khan Maung, spokesperson of the National Democratic Alliance Army (NDAA) on June 30.

He replied to a question raised by journalists whether the NDAA plans to sign the NCA at a ceremony to mark the 30th anniversary of peacemaking at the Special region 4 of Shan State.

“We are not against the NCA and we hold firmly about all ethnic armed groups to sign the NCA. If all ethnic armed groups were to sign it, we will sign it. If we sign it and some ethnic armed groups don't sign it, they will misunderstand us,” said Khan Maung.

Sai Lin, Chairman of the NDAA said in an opening speech at the ceremony that they will walk towards eternal peace through political dialogue to sign the NCA with 21st Century Panglong Conference spirit.

“We will walk towards eternal peace through political dialogue to sign the NCA with 21st Century Panglong Conference spirit. We will think about situations from our forces to participate in peace process to have guarantee for peace in the area,” said Sai Lin.

Moreover, the political objective of the NDAA is not to secede from the union but self-autonomy in their area, said Khan Maung.

“The government set Mongla, Silu and Nantpan areas as Special Region 4 of Shan State since National Conference was held in 1993. We asked the government to be recognized it as self-autonomy since 1993,” he said.

The NDAA signed ceasefire agreement with the military chief in June and September 1989.

It also signed union and state level peace agreement with Union Peace Implementation Committee on September 7 2011, on October 9, 2011 and on December 27, 2011.

<https://elevenmyanmar.com/news/ndaa-ready-to-sign-ceasefire-act-spokesperson>

OTHERS

Myanmar continues to receive verified Myanmar nationals from Thailand

The Global New Light of Myanmar, 4 July 2019



As the third day of repatriation of the fourth batch of Myanmar Nationals from Thailand on 3 July 2019, (14) verified Myanmar nationals from Umpien Camp, (94) from Mae La Camp and (11) from Ma La Ohn Camp were warmly welcomed by Myanmar officials at Kyauk Lone Gyi camp in Myawady Township through the Myanmar – Thai Friendship Bridge (1).

Members of the Repatriation Committees of Kayin State, Mon State and Bago Regional Governments, Minister Counsellor and Embassy Officials from the Embassy of Myanmar in Bangkok also attended the hand-over ceremonies.

Through the bilateral arrangement between the Governments of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and the Kingdom of Thailand, the fourth batch of (310) verified Myanmar nationals from Thailand were well received at the Myanmar-Thai border gates from 1 to 3 July 2019.

<http://www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com/myanmar-continues-to-receive-verified-myanmar-nationals-from-thailand-2/>

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

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