

THAILAND

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PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

Karen Armed Groups Unite, Agree KNU Takes Political Lead

Karen news, 5 March 2016

The meeting held on February 29, 2016 at the Karen National Liberation Army's headquarter in Pa-an District, Karen State is a regular event among the Karen Armed Groups Unity Committee that represents various the KNLA, KNU/KNLA Peace Council, Democratic Karen Benevolent Army, and the recently reformed Democratic Karen Buddhist Army.



General Saw Johnny, the Chief-of-Staff of the KNLA told *Karen News* that the main purpose was unity – to work together.

“We agreed in the meeting that all the Karen armed groups will take part in political issues and will work together in unity. It will be of value only when everyone is involved. We will move forward with what we have agreed on.”

The discussions at the meeting mainly focused on unity and issues that are now causing problems amongst the groups. The groups agreed in principle to work towards a united armed force.

Link: <http://karennews.org/2016/03/karen-armed-groups-unite-agree-knu-takes-political-lead.html/>

NCA signatories to hold summit

Mon News Agency, 16 March 2016

Eight ethnic armed groups that signed a nationwide ceasefire agreement (NCA) with the Thein Sein administration in October last year will convene a summit this month to discuss the possibility of holding peace talks with the new government.

“To meet and negotiate with this incoming government, the leaders of the eight signatory groups are first planning to have a summit. But I do not know [the details] for sure yet. I only know they are still negotiating the plan,” said U Nyo Ohn Myint of the Myanmar Peace Center (MPC).

He added that the groups' leaders would likely meet at the MPC on March 25 or 26.

The current presidential term concludes on March 30 and the new government, headed by the National League of Democracy that swept general elections last year assumes leadership. The summit will come before signatories formally commence work with the NLD towards meeting NCA commitments.



Link: <http://monnews.org/2016/03/16/nca-signatories-hold-summit/>

LAW AND GOVERNANCE

Myanmar parliament elects Htin Kyaw as first civilian president in 53 years

The Guardian, 15 March 2016

Myanmar's parliament has elected Htin Kyaw as the country's first non-military president since the army took power in a 1962 coup.



A close adviser and loyal friend to Aung San Suu Kyi, the 69-year-old was nominated by the National League for Democracy party last week and voted into the presidency by parliament on Tuesday.

A final tally giving Htin Kyaw 360 out of 652 votes was met with applause. The two runners up, military nominee Myint Swe and ethnic minority Chin candidate Henry Van Thio, will become first and second vice-presidents

respectively.

Htin Kyaw went to school in Yangon alongside Aung San Suu Kyi before winning a scholarship to study at university in the UK, and spent four months in jail in 2000 after trying to help the NLD leader travel outside Yangon.

Htin Kyaw is also a senior executive at a charitable foundation named after Aung San Suu Kyi's mother. He is the son of Min Thu Wun, a respected author and poet.

Myint Swe received 213 votes and Henry Van Thio took 79 votes.

Link: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/15/myanmar-parliament-elects-htin-kyaw-as-first-civilian-president-in-53-years>

NCA Signatories, Abstainers Welcome New Leadership

The Irrawaddy, 17 March 2016

Both signatories and non-signatories of Burma's so-called nationwide ceasefire agreement have welcomed the country's new president- and vice presidents-elect.

The United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC), an alliance of nine ethnic groups that have opted out of signing the accord with the outgoing government, described the election as a harbinger of positive developments to come as Burma moves toward peace.

"Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has said before that she will focus on national unity and try to include all [ethnic armed groups] in the NCA [nationwide ceasefire agreement]. I believe this will come true," said UNFC vice chairman Naing Hong Sar.



Kwe Htoo Win, general secretary of the Karen National Union (KNU), told The Irrawaddy that NCA signatories, of whom the KNU is one of the largest, also welcomed the recent election of the president and vice presidents.

Link: <http://www.irrawaddy.com/factiva/nca-signatories-abstainers-welcome-new-leadership.html>

Myanmar's President-Elect Submits Proposal to Shake up Ministries

Radio Free Asia, 17 March 2016

Myanmar's president-elect Htin Kyaw on Thursday submitted a proposal to parliament to reduce the number of government ministries to 21 from 36 and create a new ethnic affairs ministry in keeping with Aung San Suu Kyi's pledge to make government leaner and more inclusive.



The only new ministry will be responsible for ethnic affairs and was created to realize Aung San Suu Kyi's plan for peace and national reconciliation by bringing together diverse ethnic minority groups and ending the fighting between some of the armed ethnic groups and the government army.

The NLD, which will take over the government on April 1, will nominate 18 ministers, while military commander-in-chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, will nominate the remaining three for the ministries of defense, home affairs and border affairs in accordance with Myanmar's constitution, which

was written in 2008 when a military junta governed the country.

The names of the ministers will be announced after March 20, said NLD spokesman Zaw Myint Maung.

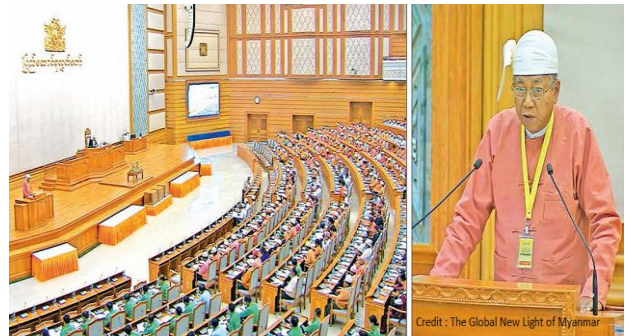
Link: <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/myanmars-president-elect-submits-proposal-to-shake-up-ministries-03172016160330.html>

Myanmar parliament approves nominees of cabinet members

Xinhua, 24 March 2016

Myanmar's Union Parliament on Thursday approved 18 nominees of ministers, including Aung San Suu Kyi, submitted by President-elect U Htin Kyaw to run 21 government ministries.

Nominees of ministers are: Aung San Suu Kyi (Foreign Affairs, Education, Electric Power and Energy, President's Office Minister); Thura Aung Ko (Religious Affairs and Culture Minister); Aung Thu (Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation Minister); Khin Maung Cho (Minister for Industry); Kyaw Win (Planning and Finance Minister); Dr. Myint Htwe (Health Minister); Nai Thet Lwin (Ethnic Affairs Minister); Ohn Maung (Hotels and Tourism Minister); Ohn Win (Resource and Environmental Conservation Minister); Pe Myint (Information Minister); Than Myint (Commerce Minister); Thant Zin Maung (Transportation and Telecommunications Minister); Thein Swe (Minister for Labor and Immigration); Win Khaing (Construction Minister); Win Myat Aye (Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Minister); Lt-Gen Kyaw Swe (Home Affairs Minister); Lt-Gen Sein Win (Defense Minister); and Lt-Gen Ye Aung (Border Affairs Minister).



Link: http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-03/24/c_135219418.htm
<http://www.irrawaddy.com/factiva/meet-burmas-next-cabinet.html>

ECONOMIC AND DEVELOPMENT

Japan planning \$885m aid offer to next govt

Frontier Myanmar, 8 March 2016

Japan is preparing to offer more than US\$885 million in loans and grants to Myanmar after a request from the incoming government, according to a report in the Japan Times.



Monday's report quoted a government source who said the Abe government hoped to compile a detailed plan by the middle of the year to facilitate a boost in its official development assistance program in Myanmar, soon after the National League for Democracy government takes power in April.

The disbursements are expected to focus on improving electricity generation and transport networks in the Yangon area, according to the *Japan Times*.

In 2013, Japan provided Myanmar with \$681 million in aid disbursements for communications, water supply, infrastructure and health projects, along with a further \$1.7 billion in debt relief, according to the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Link: <http://frontiermyanmar.net/en/business/japan-planning-885m-aid-offer-next-govt>

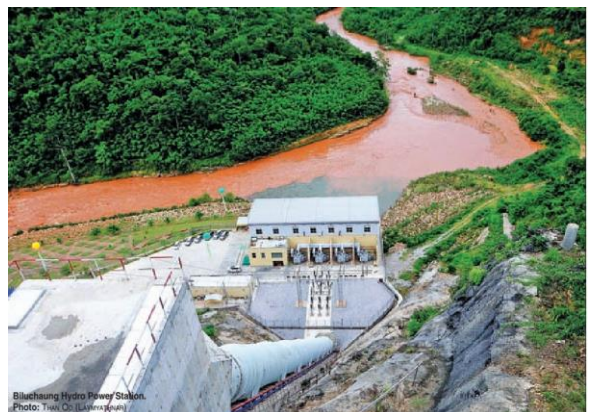
Biluchaung Hydropower Station returns to full energy output

The Global New Light of Myanmar, 3 March 2016

THE 54-year-old Biluchaung Hydropower Station in Kayah State is back in operation, restoring its original strength of generating 168 megawatts following completion of its all-round rehabilitation project.

Myanmar has a total of 5,235 megawatts of electricity from hydropower plants, natural gas-fired power plants, diesel-fired power plants and coal-fired power plants in 2015-2016, up 1822 megawatts from 3413 megawatts in 2010-2011 over the past five years, seeing 34 per cent electric power coverage across the country.

According to sources, all townships in Kayah State have electricity. The last Maese Township was electrified as of 2015-2016 FY. During this fiscal year; electricity has reached 41 of 114 villages while works are underway to electrify the remaining 73 villages in Kayah State where 142 of 511 villages enjoy electricity.



According to the Ministry of Electric Power, the number of villages with access to electricity will total 256 at the end of this fiscal year in the state which is expected to see 90 per cent electric power coverage in the years to come.

Link: https://issuu.com/myanmarnewspaper/docs/3_mar_16_gnlm

Kayah State the focus at world travel fair

Myanmar Times, 9 March 2016

Myanmar Tourism Marketing will unveil community-based tourism in Kayah State as the country's latest tourist offering at the International Travel Trade Show (ITB) Berlin, the world's largest tourism fair, with promotional events scheduled from today through to March 11.



The promotion is part of a three-year US\$1.9 million project that has so far focused on two villages in the state. Supported by the Netherlands Fund Trust, it got under way in June 2014 and is being implemented by the International Trade Centre (ITC) and the Union of Myanmar Travel Association in cooperation with the ministries of hotels and tourism and commerce.

"The ITC is mainly providing technique and training for local people," said U Nay Moe Aung, managing director of travel company 9 Generation Force.

Hta Nee La Leh is an ethnic Kayan village close to the scenic 7 Lakes, while Pan Pet village tract is home to members of the Padaung ethnic group, which is famous for its women who wear bronze neck coils.

It also noted that developing destinations like Kayah State would help to relieve strain on more popular tourist areas, such as Yangon, Bagan and Inle Lake, and support the long-term development of the tourism industry.

Link: <http://www.mmmtimes.com/index.php/lifestyle/travel/19372-kayah-state-the-focus-at-world-travel-fair.html>

Myanmar army releases 46 underage recruits: U.N.

Reuters, 14 March 2016

Myanmar's military released 46 children and young people from service, the United Nations said in a statement on Monday, in its first discharge of underage recruits this year.

The army has released 745 underage recruits since signing up to a joint action plan with the U.N. in June 2012 to end the use of children in the military.

After handing power to a semi-civilian government in 2011, the military has taken some steps toward professionalizing its forces. That includes the release of soldiers recruited under the age of 18.

"The children and young people discharged will benefit from reintegration programs to help them re-start their lives and seize new opportunities for their own development and participation in the life of the country," the U.N. said.

Link: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-military-children-idUSKCNOWGORY>

JPN grants US\$739,262 for four schools, one road construction

The Global New Light of Myanmar, 23 March 2016

Japanese Ambassador Mr. Tateshi HIGUCHI and chairpersons of the committees from the states and regions concerned signed the grant contracts for five projects on 17 March.

Under these contracts, Japan's Grant Assistance for Grass-roots Human Security Projects (GGP) Scheme will provide a total of US\$739,262 to four projects for building schools and one project for upgrading one village road.

Under the grant scheme, the Japanese would fund US\$94,713 to construction Ein Du Kindergarten in Hpa-an Township, Kayin State with); US\$231,077 to construction of Pin He Village Basic Education Branch Middle School in Mohnyin Township, Kachin State; US\$204,235 to Construction of Hnaring Village Basic Education High School in Tan Ta Lang Township, Chin State; US\$111,178 to upgrading of Tha Yet Pin Kwin-Gyo Gone Village Road in Einme Township, Ayeyarwady Region and US\$98,059 to construction of Boe U Sein Village Basic Education High School in Waw Township, Bago Region.



The Government of Japan has assisted 770 various grass-roots projects in Myanmar under the GGP scheme since 1993: the number consisting of 365 education projects, 195 healthcare projects, 138 public welfare and environment projects, 37 infrastructure projects and 35 other projects.

Link: <http://globalnewlightofmyanmar.com/jpn-grants-us739262-for-four-schools-one-road-construction/>

New Industrial Zone in Mon State to open this month

The Global New Light of Myanmar, 16 March 2016

THE Kyauktan Industrial Zone Implementation Committee has announced that the Kyauktan Industrial Zone, located in Mon State, will officially be opened on 26 March.



Construction on the industrial zone project began in 2014. It was led by the Mon State Development Committee under a directive from the Mon State government, but it was privately funded. A total of 59 investors from around the country have purchased land in the industrial zone, which covers 254 acres.

The industrial zone features a variety of different business enterprises, including zinc, barbed wire, ready-mix cement, food and drink production, textiles, gold purification, ice factories, shoe production facilities, furniture enterprise, plastic enterprises, cool seafood storage and car accessory businesses.

Link: <http://globalnewlightofmyanmar.com/new-industrial-zone-in-mon-state-to-open-this-month-2/>

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