

THAILAND

8 February – 5 March 2018

MEDIA MONITORING REPORT # 178

ECONOMICS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

National committee on minimum wage approves Ks4, 800 for daily wages

The Global New Light of Myanmar, 6 March 2018

The national committee on minimum wage decided yesterday to set the average daily wage at Ks4, 800, offering Ks600 per hour.



This decision was made after the fifth meeting for setting the minimum wage, which was held yesterday in Nay Pyi Taw, with attendees such as Union Minister for Labour, Immigration and Population U Thein Swe, and officials and representatives of labourers and employers.

At the meeting, the employers mentioned their difficulties such as insufficient electric power, payment for absence without leave

and overtime payment. Meanwhile, the labourers raised their voices on the possible problems with the fixed minimum wage.

The national committee on minimum wage will continue to submit it to the cabinet. After the proposed minimum wage is approved, the workers will be paid at the set rate. The new, inexperienced workers will be paid not less than 50 per cent of the minimum wages during the three-month training period (before probation period). During the three-month probation period, the labourers will receive 75 per cent of the minimum wages.

Link: <http://www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com/national-committee-minimum-wage-approves-ks4800-daily-wages/>

BPHWT opens rural clinic in remote area lacking healthcare

Burma News International, 5 March 2018

The Backpack Health Worker Team (BPHWT) has opened a rural clinic in No-khwee Village, where healthcare is out of reach, in Paingkyon Township, Hpa-an District in the Karen State on March 3.

The BPHWT's deputy director Nan Snow said No-khwee Village does not receive any healthcare service from the government and local authorities due to difficulties in travelling and lack of clinics in nearby areas to seek medical treatment in case of a



health problem.

Burma Humanitarian Mission funded the required costs for building the clinic and the BPHWT will provide necessary healthcare service.

The clinic is the first clinic opened by the BPHWT after two decades of providing healthcare service.

Link: <https://www.bnionline.net/en/news/bphwt-opens-rural-clinic-remote-area-lacking-healthcare>

300th school built by Nippon Foundation in Shan State

Mizzima, 5 March 2018



The Nippon Foundation has completed its 300th School in Shan State, state media reported on 5 March.

The post-primary school was built under an initiative to construct schools by the Ministry of Border Affairs and the Nippon Foundation.

According to the report, the Nippon Foundation has been providing assistance since 2002 to build or renovate schools and implement projects in the community to raise funds. He said the foundation was planning to expand the project into northern and

southern Shan state and Kayah State to build some 120 schools.

Link: <http://www.mizzima.com/news-domestic/300th-school-built-nippon-foundation-shan-state>

Tourists flock to Kawthoung during summer holidays

The Global New Light of Myanmar, 3 March 2018

Kawthoung, a town in the Taninthayi Region of southernmost Myanmar, has become a tourist hotspot following the gradual development of its marine tourism.

Local and foreign visitors are flocking to the town in large numbers during the summer holidays, said a local tour operator. Kawthoung is an important trading point bordering the Thai border town of Ranong to the east.

Most of the terrain in the area is mountainous. Thanks to the state's new economic policy, investors are eyeing the coastal town with interest, as it has numerous beautiful natural islands for tourism development projects, resulting in an increase in the number of recreation facilities such as resorts and hotels.



Tour operators said the arrival of visitors at home and abroad is increasing each month. Most visitors come to the area for eco-tourism, such as fishing, diving, snorkeling on coral reefs and bird-watching, they added.

In anticipation of developing the country's smokeless industry, community-based tourism projects have been implemented in Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Shan and Chin states, as well as in the Yangon, Mandalay and Magway regions, according to the Hotels and Tourism Ministry.

The ministry is currently promoting cross-border trips as a popular trend, said an official.

Link: <http://www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com/tourists-flock-kawthoung-summer-holidays/>

Direct flights begin between Myeik Airport and Bangkok

Myanmar Times, 26 February 2018



The Bangkok-based airline, New Gen Airways has begun direct flights between the Myeik Airport and Don Mueang International Airport in the Thai capital in cooperation with its local partner Tun Htaik Tin Company, a senior airline official told *The Myanmar Times*.

U Thar Du, New Gen Airways' country manager said the regular flights started on Friday.

New Gen Airways will serve the route three times a week with Boeing 737-400s, which can accommodate up to 150 passengers.

The airfare will cost US\$180 (K240,840) for a return ticket, U Thar Du said.

The immigration department is already setting up equipment and other facilities for the convenience of international travellers at the Myeik airport.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/direct-flights-begin-between-myeik-airport-and-bangkok.html>

USAID funds \$48m project in Southeastern Myanmar

Myanmar Times, 23 February 2018

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) announced a US\$48-million (K64.32 billion) development project in Southeastern Myanmar aimed at improving basic services on Thursday.

Kayah State is the least developed state in Myanmar and has a history of armed conflict between armed ethnic groups and the Tatmadaw.

As part of the US agency's "Advancing Community Empowerment in Southeastern Myanmar" project, four local organizations will use the funds to help increase job opportunities, and improve services in health, education, and water and sanitation, which will strengthen local communities in Kayah State.



The four local organizations - the Karenni Mobile Health Committee, the Kayan New Generation Youth, the Karenni Women's Organization and the Development for Environment-Friendly Agriculture and Rural Life of Myanmar will promote basic services in health, education, livelihoods, sanitation, and hygiene and will help prevent gender-based violence.

Promoting women's leadership and people participation in community governance are the focus of the project, while agricultural and vocational training and enhancing disaster preparedness are aimed at the local community, the USAID statement said.

The aid will help women, children and other communities receive life-saving health care through improved communications among community health service providers, local governments, and other groups, it added.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/usaids-funds-48m-project-southeastern-myanmar.html>

KBZ Bank offers loans to female cultivators in Magwe

Myanmar Times, 23 February 2018

Female agricultural producers will now be eligible for loans from KBZ Bank. KBZ Bank and NGO ActionAid announced on February 15 that they are launching a new partnership which will improve access to finance for female farmers and traders.

Women agricultural producers in Pakokku, Magwe Region, will now be able to apply for loans from KBZ Bank. The project will be piloted over 12 months, with the NGO providing collateral to underwrite the credit, and is expected to help the women unlock their entrepreneurial potential and support their families.

An individual borrower can receive from K1 to K1.5 million worth of loans. The loan will follow an annual payment system with an annual interest rate of 13pc, which will be paid every three months.

"Paying once every three months is required because of the banking policy. However, if the loan cannot be paid back every three months because of bad weather or late harvest, we have made arrangements so that it can be paid back after one year and the total interest is calculated," the banker explained.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/kbz-bank-offers-loans-female-cultivators-magwe.html>

Taninthari River Crossing Bridge being built on Union Highway

Eleven Myanmar, 20 February 2018



MYEIK- over K6 billion is being spent on the Taninthari River Crossing Bridge of the Yangon-Myeik-Kawthaung Union Highway. Construction tasks will be finished in 2020.

Win Khaing, Union Minister of the Electricity and Energy, visited the construction site of Taninthari River Crossing Bridge on February 17h.

"We already start construction of pillars in the middle of river. The bridge will be totaling 1,443.64-ft long and 28.89-ft wide. It is an iron beam type.

We estimated that the public will be able to use the new bridge on March 31, 2020," said Win Aung, who is in charge of Construction Group No.4 of the Taninthari Bridge Project.

Win Aung also said that the cost of the Bridge was over K6 billion. Construction tasks began on August 1st with K3 billion in funds from the Taninthari Government Committee.

Upon completion of the project, it will be vital role for transportation access between Myeik and Kawthaung Townships in Taninthari Region and Myanmar-Thai border areas. It will be able to accommodate loads up to 75 tonnes.

The old bridge is a bali suspension bridge that is over 18 years old. Once the new bridge is finished, locals hope to use the current bridge for tourism purposes.

Link: <http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/local/13452>

Chin State to get small airport

Burma News International, 25 February 2018

Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) International, an international non-governmental organisation, is conducting a geotechnical investigation to construct a small airport in Lailenpi Town in Matupi Township, Mindat District, southern Chin State, state media reported.

This small airport can accommodate high performance short takeoff and landing aircraft, with a seating capacity of 13 people and a length of 800 metres. The small airport will be constructed with some US\$2.2 million provided by MAF.



MAF will support the operations of up to three aircraft depending on demand, after receiving the requisite approval of the government, said Chad Tilley, Country Director of MAF Myanmar.

Link: <https://www.bnionline.net/en/news/chin-state-get-small-airport>

Eight years needed to build Yangon railway station project

Myanmar Times, 21 February 2018

THE US\$2.5 billion Yangon railway station project, which is set to be Myanmar's largest joint venture investment project under the National League for Democracy-led government, will take eight years to complete the construction, according to the winning consortium, which also claims that the work will create 100,000 local construction jobs.



The Central Transport Development Consortium (CTDC) has been selected as the preferred bidder to redevelop the 25.7 hectares (63.5 acre) prime site around Yangon Central Railway Station in the city centre of Myanmar's commercial capital. Another consortium involving Singapore-listed Yoma Strategic Holdings and Myanmar-listed First Myanmar Investment also applied for tender.

CTDC was selected among the 18 participants from 14 countries that applied for the EOI (Expression of Interest). The tender process took nearly three years to complete.

This railway station project is expected to be Myanmar's largest joint venture investment project to date under the National League for Democracy-led government, bringing an estimated \$2.5 billion investment to the intersection between downtown Yangon and the Aung San Stadium. The consortium estimates that the project

will create 100,000 jobs for local construction workers.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/eight-years-needed-build-yangon-railway-station-project.html>

US project helps Myanmar dry zone development

Burma News International, 15 February 2018

The U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) US\$70-million Shae Thot – or The Way Forward – project is ending in March having reduced maternal and child mortality, improved food security, increased access to safe water and advanced hygiene, and strengthened community institutions in Myanmar's central Dry Zone and Kayah State.

US AID announced on February 15 that the project had made progress.

"Shae Thot has helped thousands of communities and hundreds of thousands of people," said USAID

Mission Directo Teresa McGhie. "The project's scope has been significant – working with people to live healthier, more productive lives, and empowering villages to achieve communal goals. This is why USAID is so proud of Shae Thot's success."



Shae Thot, led by Pact, has worked in more than 2,800 villages across 23 Dry Zone and Kayah State townships since 2011. It has reached 1.34 million people through its health work, improving children's health and nutrition, providing mobile-clinic services to thousands, increasing the percentage of women giving birth with skilled midwives in attendance, and providing hygiene education to stop the spread of disease.

Through U.S. assistance, more than 644,000 people now have improved access to potable water.

Link: <https://www.bnionline.net/en/news/us-project-helps-myanmar-dry-zone-development>

Italian company to provide purification system for Mandalay water supply project

Frontier Myanmar, 8 February 2018

An Italian leader in sustainable technology has been selected to provide water purification equipment for a project to upgrade the supply in Mandalay's Pyigyitagon Township, it said in a news release on February 6.



Milan-based De Nora Water Technologies said it will be supplying an electro chlorination system for the project, which will benefit about 60,000 households in the township on Mandalay city's southern outskirts.

The water supply in the township is being upgraded under an agreement signed in September 2016 by Japan's Tobishima Corporation and the government worth ¥1.797 billion, (about US\$16.5 million at current exchange rates).

Work on the project, involving the installation of new pipes, wells, tanks, pumps and water meters, began in October and is due to be completed in July. The project

is being supported by Japan's overseas aid agency, JICA.

De Nora said its electro chlorination system offers a safer alternative to the traditional gas chlorination method, which involves the use of hazardous chemicals such as high-pressure chlorine.

Link: <https://frontiermyanmar.net/en/mandalay-de-nora-purification-system-water-supply-project>

Boosting the country's agriculture

Global New Light of Myanmar, 22 February 2018

The agricultural sector is the backbone of Myanmar's economy. The country's economic development depends mainly on agricultural productivity, which sets goals for the all-round development programmes.

Agricultural goods are one of largest export commodities, and the most important sector for the country's economy. The agriculture sector contributes to 20.1 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), or about Ks11, 357.41 billion.

In Myanmar, the majority of the country's population lives in rural areas due to the dependence on farmland and forests for their livelihoods in agriculture, which is an important growth engine of rural development.

The ASEAN Free Trade (AFTA) is a trade bloc agreement by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations supporting local manufacturing in all ASEAN countries.

Myanmar has signed a number of Memoranda of Understanding to expand bilateral trade with those countries.

Myanmar has opened border trade points with neighboring countries including India, Thailand and China, and is aimed at opening more trade points to further enhance the trading with these countries. Efforts are being made for the sustainable economic plans, which are targeted at developing a market-oriented economy in Myanmar. Plans are also underway to strengthen farming production, enhance food security, increase exports and improve the living standards of the rural population, which depend on farming as the first and key source of income. Moreover, the government is reforming the laws and policies governing the country's agriculture sector to meet the set targets under the economic plan.

Link: <http://www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com/boosting-countrys-agriculture/>



LAW AND GOVERNANCE

New United Karen Party's Registration Accepted by Union Election Commission

Karen News, 2 March 2018



In an effort to unify all Karen political parties, the first three Karen State based parties came together to form the Karen National Democratic Party (KNDP). The Union Election Commission had approved the party's registration.

Party officials said on February 25th that they got the go ahead from the

UEC after the three old parties were dissolved in order to form this new united party.

The UEC announced its approval on February 22nd stating that the newly founded KNDP party is now a registered political party with the registration number 108, according to Political Party Registration Act, section 9.

KNDP unites three Karen parties – Karen Democratic Party (KDP), Karen State Democracy and Development Party (KSDDP) and the United Karen National Democratic Party (UKNDP).

Link: <http://karennews.org/2018/03/new-united-karen-partys-registration-accepted-by-union-election-commission/>

PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

Government and Karenni to hold fresh NCA talks

Myanmar Times, 5 March 2018

The government and the armed ethnic group Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) have agreed to hold another round of talks on Wednesday to discuss the group's signing of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), a government spokesman told *The Myanmar Times*.

"We've agreed to meet next week for negotiation about peace. We don't have restrictions on which topic would be discussed but we will hold discussions based on points they would present," said U Aung Soe, spokesman of the government's Peace Commission.

The KNPP said its decision on whether or not to sign the NCA would depend on the outcome of the Tatmadaw (military) investigation of the killing of its members in December 2017, allegedly by government troops.

Before Wednesday's meeting, the KNPP will hold preliminary discussions within the party to ensure it is prepared with its own agenda when it meets with the government, said Khu Nye Reh.

On December 19 last year KNPP members manning a checkpoint on a highway in Kayah State stopped a convoy of Tatmadaw soldiers.

An argument ensued between the two groups and the Tatmadaw arrested four KNPP members and one local resident. The next day three of those arrested and the civilian were found dead. One KNPP member was able to escape.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/government-and-karenni-hold-fresh-nca-talks.html>

Public needs to know code of conduct, says Mon Border/Security Minister

Karen News, 22 February 2018

The public needs to be aware of the code of conduct that must be observed by both the Tatmadaw and the ethnic armed group[s] during the ceasefire period, according to Col. Win Naing Oo, Mon State Minister of Security and Border.

He said this remark at the recent meeting between the State-level Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Committee (JMC-S) and the public, held in Ah-bit Village, Mudon Township, Mon State on February 19.

“They should not create burdens to the public. They shouldn’t arrest people, collect extortion money and taxes, force them to do labor, and seize lands and buildings belonging to the public. The public needs to be aware of the code of conduct that must be observed by both armies,” said Col. Win Naing Oo.

He told the public to report to the JMCS-S via telephone or letter if armed organizations collect taxes for cars, motorbikes, and rubber plantations, and the JMC-S would handle them.



Thirteen members of the Mon State JMC-S including its vice-chair Naw Sar Htoo, Col. Win Naing Oo, Col. Saw Joseph from the Karen National Union (KNU) Brigade 6 and Major Saw Sal Nay Htoo from the Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army – Peace Council (KNU/KNLA – PC) explained the JMC-S procedures during the public meeting, which attracted around 300 local residents.

The Mon State JMC-S has been holding regular public meetings and the meeting in Ah-bit Village was the 12th public meeting.

Link: <https://www.bnionline.net/en/news/public-needs-know-code-conduct-says-mon-bordersecurity-minister>

New Karen Police Office Opens by Destroying Speed Pills and Opium

Karen News, 2 March 2018

Karen Police burned confiscated methamphetamine tablets and opium in its attempts to fight illicit drug use. The Karen National Police Force (KNPF) under the Interior Department of the Karen National Union in Doo Pla Ya District, destroyed thousands of methamphetamine tablets (Ya Ma) and opium in an attempt to decrease the use of drugs in the area.



Pol. Major Saw Moo Kaw Soe, deputy head of the Doo Pla Ya District police force spoke to *Karen News* about their office.

“The aim of opening this office is for us to establish rule of law, help create peace and to fight drug use. That’s why we are burning these drugs in front of witnesses.”

The 16th KNU Congress made a decision to reform the KNPF in all its seven administered areas including Doo Tha Htoo, Taungoo, Nyuang Lebin, Megui/Tavoy, Mutraw, Doo Pla Ya and Pa-An Districts. The KNPF office in Doo Pla Ya district is the first one out of the seven to open.

Doo Pla Ya District level have been dealing with cases that include illicit drugs, murder, rape, theft and civil lawsuit cases. All cases were handled according to the KNU’s judiciary system. At the moment, there are over 40 prisoners in the district’s jail.

Link: <http://karennews.org/2018/03/new-karen-police-office-opens-by-destroying-speed-pills-and-opium/>

Union Peace Conference to be held in April or May

Mizzima, 1 March 2018

The Union Peace Conference-21st Century Panglong will be held in late April or early May, according to the 7th Joint Implementation Coordination Meeting (JICM) on the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement held in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday, state media reported.

The decision was made at the meeting held at the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre in Nay Pyi Taw, which began with a greeting by State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. In her speech, the State Counsellor, in her capacity as the Chair of the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre, called on participants to dare to dream for a peaceful federal Union, the report said.



Link: <http://www.mizzima.com/news-domestic/union-peace-conference-be-held-april-or-may>

Two ethnic groups rejoin UNFC

Myanmar Times, 27 February 2018

The United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC) said Sunday it had accepted the Chin National Front (CNF) and Kachin National Organisation (KNO) back into its fold.

According to a statement issued by the council, the decision was made at the UNFC meeting from over the weekend in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Although it was agreed in principle, it needs final approval from a UNFC emergency conference in July.

The CNF is one of the signatories of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement.

Currently, the UNFC only has four members – the New Mon State Party, Karenni National Progressive Party, Lahu Democratic Union and Arakan National Council. The NMSP and LDU signed the ceasefire agreement on February 13.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/two-ethnic-groups-rejoin-unfc.html>

Behind the scenes of Shan National Day at Loi Tai Leng

Mizzima, 17 February 2018

Every year the Restoration Council of Shan State Shan State Army (RCSS/SSA) holds a massive celebration for Shan National Day on 7 February at their mountaintop headquarters at Loi Tai Leng in Shan State, Myanmar, close to the Thai border.



The event, which attracts Shan people from all across Shan State and Myanmar, appears to be a mixture of a vast country fair and military parade, but it is a bit more than that.

It is also an opportunity for the RCSS/SSA to show off their troops, show that they have the support of not only many regular Shan people but also the other ethnic armed organisations (EAOs) who send representatives and from countries

such as Switzerland, Italy, New Zealand and Turkey who all officially sent staff from their Yangon embassies. They also invite journalists who get the rare opportunity to meet and talk to senior RCSS/SSA members all in the same place.

The RCSS/SSA, also known as the Shan State Army-South (SSA-S) has become the biggest Shan EAO.

The RCSS/SSA signed a state level ceasefire with the government in 2011 followed by a union level ceasefire in 2012. Despite this, their troops still regularly clashed with government troops. In 2015 the RCSS/SSA were one of the eight groups that signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA). Since then they have still been fighting with government forces, but less frequently.

The RCSS/SSA never reveal how many troops they have, but the latest (2016) Myanmar Peace Monitor estimates that they have over 8,000 soldiers.

But, when asked about fighting between the Tatmadaw and the RCSS/SSA Yawd Serk put the blame firmly with the Tatmadaw and said that they had broken the ceasefire. When asked if he thought the attacks were accidentally carried out by mid-ranking officers or whether there had been orders to attack the RSS/SSA he emphatically said that he believed that it was an order from the top. He clarified by saying that he believed the decision to attack the RCSS/SSA had come directly from Min Aung Hlaing, the Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief, adding that he did not believe that the army sincerely wanted the peace process to succeed.

Link: <https://www.bnionline.net/en/news/behind-scenes-shan-national-day-loi-tai-leng>

Only NCA can guarantee farewell to arms, says C-in-C

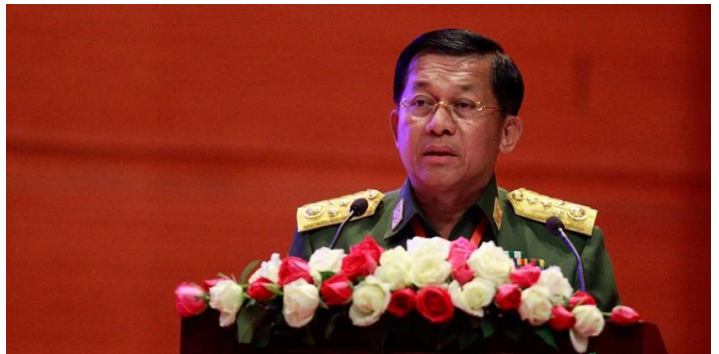
Burma News International, 15 February 2018

Tatmadaw (Defence Services) Commander-in-Chief Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing said that only the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) could give the best guarantee for giving up armed struggle in the country.

He was speaking at the NCA signing ceremony of the New Mon State Party (NMSP) and Lahu Democratic Union (LDU) held in Naypyitaw on February 13.

He said, “I’d like to say only NCA is the best guarantee for detaching the obsession and attachment to armed struggle which has been there for over 60-70 years.”

He added that signing NCA was the only way of resolving political issues peacefully.



He further said, “Some feel that signing NCA is not giving in to the government and Tatmadaw while others have ill-feeling about it. I’d like to say to all ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) not to have such skepticism, distrust and anxiety about the NCA.”

Ten EAOs including NMSP and LDU have signed the NCA so far.

Link: <https://www.bnionline.net/en/news/only-nca-can-guarantee-farewell-arms-says-c-c>

OTHERS

[A skirmish occurs between NMSP and Karen armed group over detention of Mon villagers](#)

Burma News International, 5 March 2018

A Karen armed group and the New Mon State Party (NMSP) clashed in the NMSP-controlled area after the Karen armed group detained Mon villagers in Yebyu Township, Tanintharyi Region on Sunday (March 4) morning.



The clash broke out in the area around Phayar-Taung, which is in the east of Ah-le-sa-khan Village in Yebyu Township.

“A Karen armed group detained the people who came back from working in the plantation and those that work outside the village. We are monitoring the situation because we are

worried over the villagers being harmed. A skirmish broke out for 30 minutes when we went to clear them this morning,” an official from the NMSP said on condition of anonymity.

The NMSP official told the Mon News Agency that the skirmish took place around 8:30 am on Sunday after the Karen armed group detained 27 plantation workers who were returning to their village on Saturday evening.

A bullet grazed the left malleolus of the NMSP’s auxiliary soldier during the skirmish but his condition is not serious. All the detained villagers have been released in the afternoon, according to the NMSP.

The NMSP was unable to contact the Karen National Union (KNU) liaison office in Dawei to inquire about this issue.

The New Mon State News Bulletin reported that the NMSP arrested a worker and seized one M-79 arm and AK-47 rifle when it went to clear a Kayin armed illegal logging gang led by Phoe Ti in Kamar Chaung Hpyar in Yebyu Township on February 24.

The NMSP also detained an illegal logging gang and seized machines and elephants used in logging and handed 32 Karen loggers to the KNU in January.

Logging has been banned in the NMSP-controlled areas ever since the areas were marked in line with the agreements with the government in 1995 and 2012.

Link: <https://www.bnionline.net/en/news/skirmish-occurs-between-nmsp-and-karen-armed-group-over-detention-mon-villagers>

[Anti-Corruption Commission Hands List of 12 Suspects to Police](#)

The Irrawaddy, 22 February 2018

YANGON— in the latest move to tackle the country’s deep-rooted corruption problem, the new anti-graft commission handed over to the police a list of 12 fugitives wanted on corruption charges, most of whom worked in the law-enforcement sector. The list, which includes two judges, a lawyer, a public prosecutor, the head of a police station, and two administrators, was published on the Myanmar Police Force website and

Facebook page on Wednesday.

U Han Nyunt, a member of the anti-corruption commission, said the agency would now turn the cases over to the Ministry of Home Affairs, which has the power to issue arrest warrants for the suspects, as the 12 were on the run and they had been publicly identified.



The police force's announcement stated that the charges were brought against the 12 under Articles 56, 57 and 63 of the anti-corruption law and called for public cooperation.

The charges carry up to 10 years' imprisonment for taking bribes while holding a political post or being in position of competent authority.

The anti-corruption commission was formed in February 2014 under the previous U Thein Sein government to enforce the 2013 anti-corruption law. It was on Nov. 23, 2017 with 11 members and chaired by retired minister of information U Aung Kyi.

Between then and the end of last month, the new commission has received a total 949 cases.

Link: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/anti-corruption-commission-hands-list-12-suspects-police.html>

Ending Debt Bondage is Key to Eradicating Child Labor, Says ILO

The Irrawaddy, 23 February 2018

YANGON-Myanmar needs to eliminate the practice of bonded labour and develop a social protection program in order to tackle the problem of illegal child labor, which has ensnared more than 1.2 million children aged 5-17, according to the International Labour Organization.



These children work an average of 51 hours per week, with most of them toiling in the agriculture, forestry and fishing industries (60.5%), followed by the manufacturing (12%), trade (11.1 %) and other services sectors (5%).

The practice of bonded labour impacts a lot of low-wage workers in Myanmar, especially children employed in other uncategorized services such as in small enterprises run as family businesses, as domestic workers, and in beauty and massage parlors.

As Myanmar also does not have social protection programs in place, it is yet another hurdle to eliminating the problem of child labor, the ILO official said.

Link: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/ending-debt-bondage-key-eradicating-child-labor-says-ilo.html>

Karen Group Doubles Up on Young Leader Award for 10th Anniversary

The Irrawaddy, 21 February 2018

YANGON — Two Karen have won the Padoh Mahn Sha Young Leader Award for 2017 for their contributions to their community by the Phan Foundation, established in memory of slain Karen leader Padoh Mahn Sha Lah Phan.

The award comes with a \$2,000 grant — paid for with public donations — to support the winner's work. Recipients must report back to the foundation on how they have used the money, which must be spent in line with UK charity laws.



Both recipients — Saw Than Kyaw Soe, also known as Saw Eh Tho, and Naw Hser Hser — told The Irrawaddy that the award was recognition of their commitment, passion and contributions to the advancement of both their peers and the next generation.

The awards will be presented to the winners on April 5 in Htantapin Township, Pegu Region.

Link: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/karen-group-doubles-young-leader-award-10th-anniversary.html>

Dawei SEZ is for the few, not the many

The Myanmar Times, 22 February 2018

A few elites will benefit from reviving Dawei SEZ, but what about the rest? Civil society organizations demand authorities to halt the controversial Dawei project and rethink.



CIVIL society organizations have demanded the authorities to reconsider the plans to revive the controversial Dawei Special Economic Zone (SEZ). They argued that a site-wide environment impact assessment must be carried out and all past problems must be “fully and completely” resolved before the project resumes.

The SEZ has been accused of grave human rights violations including forced evictions, a lack of transparency and environmental disruption as the land lease contract for its initial phase is expected to be signed before April.

Furthermore, the legality of the Environment Impact Assessments (EIAs) is questioned while experts say that the project has destroyed farmlands, polluted rivers and is threatening the lands and livelihoods of communities.

The SEZ in Tanintharyi Region, which is divided into two phases, is one of the three SEZs in Myanmar -- the other two being Thilawa SEZ in southern Yangon and Kyaukphyu SEZ in Rakhine.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/dawei-sez-few-not-many.html>

Belt and Road road corridors put half of Myanmar's population at risk

Myanmar Times, 21 February 2018

The Belt and Road Initiative puts Myanmar's natural capital and the lives and livelihoods of 24 million people - half of the country's population - at risk, according to a report from World Wide Fund for Nature in Myanmar.

Road projects proposed as part of China's Belt and Road Initiative would provide transport infrastructure to areas of the Ayeyarwady River Basin and surrounding mountain areas, which are home to approximately 24 million people – almost half of Myanmar's national population. These people rely on natural capital, including forests, rivers, land and biodiversity, for a range of benefits, such as potable water and natural disaster mitigation.



We must better take into account information about the environment, when roads and other projects are planned and designed. - Sai Nay Won Myint, WWF

“There is a risk that benefits of BRI road projects could be replaced by substantial social, environmental and economic costs, if roads are constructed in ways that fragments the ecosystems, endangers wildlife, or contributes to deforestation, landslides, and pollution. Through better planning and design, these risks can be avoided and mitigated,” Hanna Helsing, green economy programme and policy manager at WWF-Myanmar commented. The report, released last month, seeks to provide a rapid assessment of Belt and Road-related opportunities and risks for Myanmar in terms of natural capital impacts and dependencies.

Vicky Bowman, director of Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business, said that issues could be avoided if infrastructure projects are planned and designed in line with Myanmar's EIA framework, with assessments carried out in a manner which meets the standards of the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and World Bank, including undertaking meaningful consultation and revisions to prevent, reduce and mitigate impacts.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/belt-and-road-road-corridors-put-half-myanmars-population-risk.html>

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