

THAILAND

8 – 31 March 2018

MEDIA MONITORING REPORT # 179

ECONOMICS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Myanmar fixes 2018 paddy price at K500, 000 per 100 baskets

Myanmar Times, 8 March 2018

A floor price for paddy has been set at K500, 000 for every 100 baskets of rice for the 2018 paddy harvesting period, the Myanmar Rice Federation announced Tuesday at the Myanmar Rice Federation Stakeholder Forum 2018 in Nay Pyi Taw (One basket weighs 46lb or 20.86kg).



It is the first time Myanmar is setting a floor price for locally harvested rice. All MRF member rice mills, rice traders and agents and private companies will buy rice that meet with designated quality standards, at the new price, the announcement said.

The floor price excludes high-grade rice such as Paw San Hmwe and Ae-Ma-Hta. These varieties of rice will

trade at the prevailing market price of between K700, 000 and more than K1 million per 100 baskets.

The 2018 basic price set by MRF will cover ordinary rice varieties grown by the majority of Myanmar farmers. As rice prices are usually volatile during harvesting periods, a basic floor price has been set to protect farmers against runaway losses.

It is the first time Myanmar is setting an annual floor price for paddy. The move is expected to enhance cooperation between traders and farmers, State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said at the forum.

“Buyers will be able to buy good quality paddy at a fixed price. But there is also fixed quality. Not all rice will be sold at K500, 000,” said Dr Thant Myint, Union Minister for Ministry.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/myanmar-fixes-2018-paddy-price-k500000-100-baskets.html>

Govt Greenlights Electricity Joint Ventures in Mon State, Bago Region

The Irrawaddy, 8 March 2018

YANGON — The Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) has granted permission to two joint

ventures involving foreign partners to supply power to areas not connected to the national grid.

“One is for households in Ye Township, and the other is for the developer of an industrial zone in Bago,” said U Than Aung Kyaw, deputy director-general of the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA), at a press conference on Monday.



The Southern Myanmar Development Co., a Singapore-Thai-Myanmar joint venture, won a contract to supply electricity to villages in Ye Township, Mon State. According to DICA, the 26-billion-kyat project will generate 10 megawatts of electricity daily with a diesel generator. The Singapore and Thai partners each hold 33 percent in the venture, while the local partner holds 34 percent.

I-Land Park Myanmar Co., an 80-20 Singapore-Myanmar venture with initial investment of \$23.18 billion, will supply 19 megawatts to Singapore-backed i-Land Park Myanmar Industrial Zone in Bago Region. It will use a type of fuel to generate electricity, DICA said.

Up to 70 percent of the country’s population, the majority of them living in rural areas, has yet to be connected to the national power grid, DICA said.

According to the 2014 national census, 77.5 percent of the urban population uses electricity, but in rural areas, the percentage is just 14.9 percent.

Link: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/govt-greenlights-electricity-joint-ventures-mon-state-bago-region.html>

Japan pledges \$100,000 for each village building plan

Myanmar Times, 9 March 2018

The Japanese government says it is ready to contribute US\$100,000 (K133.7 million) for each community-centered infrastructure project in villages to help underdeveloped areas of the country.



The money, from Japan’s Official Development Assistance, will be channeled via the Japanese embassy in Yangon, and any village can apply for the funds, which are mainly aimed at building facilities such as health care and training centers, roads and bridges.

“We don’t have many restrictions for project applications, but we will check the applications to see which project is important, and those will be given priority,” Ayano Suzuki, third secretary of the embassy, said on Tuesday.

Many school building projects have been financed by the Japanese embassy, which have directly

benefitted local communities.

The embassy usually funds about 50 projects per year at a cost of \$100,000 for each project.

Most project applications are received from Bago and Ayeyarwady regions.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/japan-pledges-100000-each-village-building-plan.html>

[Company registration fees to halve from April 1, more SMEs expected](#)

Myanmar Times, 14 March 2018

Company registration fees for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) will be halved from K500, 000 to K250, 000 from April 1 onwards, according to a statement issued by the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA) Tuesday.

The latest move comes after DICA, together with the Ministry of Planning and Finance halved company registrations fees for private companies to K500, 000 on June 1, 2016.

The company registration fees have been reduced again to facilitate business and make incorporation of new companies easier. “The main point is to encourage more SMEs to emerge. In addition, new company registrations can also be done online,” said U Than Aung Kyaw Deputy Director General of DICA.

The move also comes after the Union Parliament approved the New Myanmar Companies Law on December 6, 2017, replacing the former 100-year-old Myanmar Companies Act with the aim of improving the ease of doing business, promoting private sector development and modernizing the legal framework for companies in Myanmar.

Currently, DICA is making preparations to implement the new law starting August 1. These include new regulatory notifications, public education and the establishment of a new electronic companies’ registry system.

Notably, “once the electronic registry system starts on August 1, a new company can register itself within just one step. Currently, there are ten steps to company registration,” said DICA director U Myo Min.

Although official figures state that there are about 200,000 SMEs in Myanmar, only 59,000 are registered under DICA.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/company-registration-fees-halve-april-1-more-smes-expected.html>



[Kayah State to find solution for slow economic growth by uplifting SMEs](#)

Burma News International, 14 March 2018



The Kayah State Chief Minister said his government wants to develop the Kayah State, which has slow economic development due to lack of technological development, via the development of small and medium (SME) enterprises.

The State Chief Minister L Phaung Sho said electricity, road and

communications have been improving in the state but the government will focus on the slow development of other economic sectors.

He made the remarks during a workshop on the economic development of small and medium enterprises, which was held at the State Hall in Loikaw, Kayah State on March 12 and 13.

The Kayah State has a low population, enough electricity, and a good potential for tourism development. Sixty-five percent of the businesses are agricultural businesses and rice and maize are the main products of the state.

The Kayah State governmental organizations and the civil society organizations and entrepreneurs from the state attended the workshop.

The director-general and officials from the Directorate of Industrial Supervision and Inspection (headquarters) and other experts discussed the drafting of a roadmap for the Kayah State's SME development during the workshop on March 12 and 13.

Link: <https://www.bnionline.net/en/news/kayah-state-find-solution-slow-economic-growth-uplifting-smes>

[Japan to contribute to insurance, loan and electricity sectors](#)

Mizzima, 16 March 2018

Japan will contribute to the insurance, loan and electricity sectors in Myanmar for its economic development, according to state media quoting a report released by the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI).

Japan's Ambassador to Myanmar Tateshi Higuchi read out a message sent by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe confirming his country's commitment to Myanmar at the Myanmar-Japan Joint Economic Conference.



A delegation, led by Ken Kobayashi, chair of Japan-Myanmar Economic Committee (Keidanren), and 50 Japanese businessmen and the UMFCCI jointly held the 3rd Myanmar-Japan Joint Economic Conference on 13 March at the UMFCCI office.

Link: <http://www.mizzima.com/business-domestic/japan-contribute-insurance-loan-and-electricity-sectors>

[Myanmar Ethnic Entrepreneurs Association formed](#)

Mizzima, 20 March 2018



To encourage ethnic entrepreneurs and sustainable development in their regions, the Myanmar Ethnic Entrepreneurs Association (MEEA) was formed last Saturday at the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI) office in Yangon, according to state media.

MEEA is made up of some 27 ethnic entrepreneurs, including Bamar, Kachin, Kayin, Kayah, Chin, Shan,

Rakhine and Mon ethnic groups.

“The main objective is to encourage ethnic entrepreneurs and develop interaction among them in the underdeveloped areas. MEEA will try to link them with financial institutions,” said U Min Banyar San, vice chairman of Mon State Chamber of Commerce and Industry, who was selected as general secretary of MEEA.

Link: <http://www.mizzima.com/business-domestic/myanmar-ethnic-entrepreneurs-association-formed>

Union Gov't provides over Ks 120 million to Myaing Gyi Ngu IDPs

Karen News, 24 March 2018

The Union Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief, and Resettlement has provided Ks 126.9 million to internally displaced persons (IDPs) who are taking refuge in Myaing Gyi Ngu IDP camp in the Karen State's Hlaingbwe Township.

During the ceremony held at Zweekabin Hall in Hpa-an on March 19, the Department of Social Welfare's director-general Dr. Daw San San Aye said the aids are provided to elderly persons, female head of households, pregnant women and children, and the disabled people from Myaing Gyi Ngu IDP camp.



Twenty-six pregnant women, 910 children under the age of five, 174 elderly people above the age of 60, and seven disabled people from Myaing Gyi Ngu IDP camp receive Ks 100,000 each and 76 mothers who are leading the households receive Ks 200,000 each.

A total of 4,616 disabled people from across the Karen State have been given Ks 100,000 each and wheelchairs.

A total of Ks 588.5 million have been provided during the ceremony.

This is the first time the Union Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief, and Resettlement has provided aids to the IDPs, elderly persons, female head of households, pregnant women and children, and the disabled people in the Karen State.

Link: <http://karennews.org/2018/03/union-govt-provides-over-ks-120-million-to-myaing-gyi-ngu-idps/>

Ma Mya Dam benefiting public

Global New Light of Myanmar, 26 March 2018



THE Ma Mya Dam in Myanaung, Ayeyawady Region, is providing power to the nearby rural areas, in addition to irrigation water to the public, according to construction division 9 of the Irrigation and Water Utilization Management Department.

Staff Officer U Khin Maung Than of the division said, “In the past, farmers had to rely on rain water for cultivation. The dam can provide

water for summer paddy and additional water for monsoon paddy. The dam is

benefiting the public in three ways. It prevents floods during the rainy season, provides water for summer paddy and generates power for the nearby villages.”

The construction of the dam on Ma Mya Creek began in the 2001-2002 fiscal year (FY) and was completed in 2007. It has the capacity to irrigate some 8,369 acres, and arrangements have been made to supply water to 4,369 acres in Myanaung Township and 4,000 acres in Ingapu Township. The dam began supplying water for summer paddy in the 2005-2006 FY.

An engineer U Zeya Thein of Construction Division 9 said, “We are working to provide more than 1,000 nearby homes with electricity from two 250-kilowatt turbines.

Arrangements are being made to supply power to Wingaba, Nyaungkhon and Kanbe villages. The dam irrigated 1,530 acres of summer paddy in Myanaung and Ingapu townships, against the target of 1,490 acres.

Link: https://issuu.com/myanmarnewspaper/docs/26_mar_18_gnlm

Myanmar, Thailand jointly launch free healthcare programme in Kayah State

The Global New Light of Myanmar, 27 March 2018

DEAF persons in Kayah State received free medical treatment under a Myanmar- Thailand joint programme titled “Ear Surgery Mobile Unit”, according to a source from the Information and Public Relations Department.

The programme, jointly organized by the Ministry of Health and Sports of Myanmar and the Ministry of Public Health of Thailand and Royal Thai Embassy in Yangon to mark the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries was launched at a 500-bed People’s Hospital in Loikaw, the capital of Kayah State yesterday morning.



At the ceremony, Kayah Myanmar, Thailand jointly launch free healthcare programme in Kayah State State Minister for Security and Border Affairs Col

Myint Wai extended greetings before Ambassador of Thailand to Myanmar Mr. Jukr Boon-Long gave a speech. Afterwards, Medical Superintendent of the hospital Dr. Ye Myint Aung spoke words of thanks and had a documentary photo taken together with those present.

The Kayah State Chief Justice, the Deputy Speaker of Kayah State Hluttaw, Kayah State cabinet members, Kayah State Advocate-General, Kayah State Auditor-General and the guests gave words of encouragement to the patients who are receiving medical checkup and treatment at the hospital.

Around 400 deaf people have already enlisted in the programme that runs until 28 March.

A Thai mobile medical team led by Dr. Soontom Antarasen from Bangkok’s Rajavithi Hospital provided the local people with free healthcare services for the first time in Kayah State in cooperation with the surgeons from Yangon’s University of Medicine.

Link: https://issuu.com/myanmarnewspaper/docs/27_mar_18_gnlm

Concrete road inaugurated, bridge opened to traffic in Kayin State

The Global New Light of Myanmar, 27 March 2018

A new concrete section on Kyain Seikgyi-Chaungzon Road in Kyain Seikgyi Township, Kayin State was put into service yesterday morning.



At the ceremony, Union Minister for Construction U Han Zaw, Chief Minister of Kayin State Daw Nang Khin Htwe Myint, Chief Minister of Mon State Dr. Aye Zan, Kayin State Minister for Environmental Conservation, Mining, Forestry and Road Transport U Saw Pyi Tha and the Director-General of the Road Department U Ohn Lwin formally opened the new concrete road section.

The 40 mile and 5 furlong long newly inaugurated road was 18 ft wide and 8 inches thick and was constructed at a cost of more than Ks. 12 billion from the state budget in the fiscal year 2017- 2018.

The road connecting Kyain Seikgyi Township and Phayathonezu Town linking with Thanbyuzayet- Phayathonezu Road and Mudon-Myawady Road plays a crucial role in Kayin State. As peace and stability is restored in Kayin State, the road becomes an important corridor for the development of the economy, trade and the social interaction between Myanmar and Thailand.

Makkatha Bridge on Kyain Seikgyi-Chaungzon Road was also opened to traffic. Speaker of Kayin State Hluttaw U Saw Chit Khin, Kayin State Minister for Environmental Conservation, Mining, Forestry and Road Transport U Saw Pyi Tha, the Deputy Director-General of the Bridge Department U Aung Myat Oo, Kayin State Hluttaw Representative U Tin Myo Oo and U Saw Mya Aye, a local resident cut the ribbon to open the new bridge.

Afterwards, Union Minister U Han Zaw, Chief Minister of Kayin State Daw Nang Khin Htwe Myint and Chief Minister of Mon State Dr. Aye Zan pressed a button to open the signboard of the bridge and sprinkled scented water on it. The 240 ft long and 24 ft wide bridge has three foot width walkways on each side and was built mostly from concrete, the price tag for the bridge Ks. 900 million.

The newly opened bridge is expected to help facilitate better flow of commodities produced in the region to other parts throughout the country, thereby contributing to improving the livelihood and living standard of the local people and generating job opportunities for them.

Link: https://issuu.com/myanmarnewspaper/docs/27_mar_18_gnlm

Ayeyawady Region development project to be launched this year

The Global New Light of Myanmar, 28 March 2018

PHASE 1 of the Ayeyawady Region development project will be implemented by the end of this year, according to a report in Myawady Daily on Tuesday.

U Ye Linn, executive committee member of Myanmar Construction Entrepreneurs Federation, said the project would be implemented in a region that is a two-hour drive from commercial hub Yangon.

In the initial stage, a new highway plan will be executed in the project area later this year, and phase 1 is expected to be finalized before 2020.

The development projects will include a smart city, an international airport, economic zones, housing complexes and industrial facilities. Negotiations are on with local and foreign companies before implementing the project.

For the time being, the feasibility study of the highway project is being conducted by a South Korean company, and it is some 70 per cent complete.

The total cost of the project is estimated to be more than US\$200 billion.

Link: https://issuu.com/myanmarnewspaper/docs/28_mar_18_gnlm

Parliament OKs \$144.54 million loan to improve Dawei road

Myanmar Times, 28 March 2018

Parliament has approved a 4.5 billion baht (US\$144.54 million/K192.72 billion) loan from Thailand to upgrade the Dawei-Hteekee Road, which will connect Dawei Special Economic Zone to the kingdom.

The loan, from the Neighboring Countries Economic Development Cooperation Agency under Thailand's Ministry of Finance, was approved by the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (parliament bicameral assembly) on Monday.

The project area will include some areas controlled by the armed ethnic group Karen National Union No. 4 Brigade, so the Tanintharyi regional government has been instructed to meet with officers of the KNU before the project starts.

The project will build the south economic road in the Mahar Mekong region, going through Vung Tan in Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam, Phnom Penh and Siem Reap in Cambodia, and Bangkok and Kanchanaburi, Thailand, and connecting with Dawei.

This project will benefit not only tourism development but also social economic development.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/parliament-oks-14454-million-loan-improve-dawei-road.html>

Thailand, Myanmar to open Friendship Bridge 2 in May

Myanmar Times, 28 March 2018

The Thailand-Myanmar Friendship Bridge 2 is expected to open in May to facilitate cross-border transport of goods over the Thaungyin River in Myawady, Kayin State, Deputy Minister for Construction U Kyaw Lin said.

U Kyaw Lin told the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (parliament) on Monday that Thailand shouldered the cost of constructing the bridge.

With the bridge construction, border control facilities are also being built at the Thai and Myanmar border, he said.

Built under the Cross-Border Transport Agreement that Myanmar signed in 1992, the bridge is aimed at facilitating transport of people and goods and vehicle travel among the six member countries of the Greater Mekong sub-region: Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam and China.

He added that the Thai-Myanmar Friendship Bridge 2 will allow people, vehicles and goods to enter Myawady border town and continue travelling to Pha-an, Yangon and Patheingyi.

Myanmar citizens can also travel freely to Greater Mekong sub-region countries through Thailand, according to

Deputy Minister U Kyaw Lin.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/thailand-myanmar-open-friendship-bridge-2-may.html>

Mon State Gov't allocate Ks 100 million budget for Mon affairs

Burma News International, 31 March 2018

The Mon State government has allocated Ks 100 million special budget for Mon affairs and Ks 250 million for Bamar, Kayin, and Pa-O affairs in the Mon State, according to the Mon State Hluttaw Deputy Speaker Dr. Aung Naing Oo.

“They (the government) make the allocations based on the existence of an ethnic affairs minister. There’s no minister for the Mon people. Is that why they are not included in the allocation? We discussed that [the budget] can be included even if there is no [minister for Mon affairs]. That’s why they included Ks 100 million for the Mon people. Now, they will provide Ks 350 million for ethnic affairs from the state budget in line with the law,” said Dr. Aung Naing Oo.



He continued that the allocated budget of Ks 100 million includes normal expense and it will be provided every year. The budget will be evenly divided to support special ceremonies of the Mon people, Mon literature and culture, and the Mon national school.

Although the Mon State Hluttaw has urged the state government to appoint a minister to oversee Mon affairs, the state chief minister said he will personally oversee it.

The Mon State Chief Minister will provide Ks 50 million from the state development budget to the All Mon Region Mon Literature and Culture Association, which is giving summer classes on Mon literature.

The Mon State government has also provided Ks 50 million to the 71st Mon National Day Organizing (Central).

Link: <https://www.bnionline.net/en/news/mon-state-govt-allocate-ks-100-million-budget-mon-affairs>

LAW AND GOVERNANCE

Myanmar President Htin Kyaw resigns

Mizzima, 21 March 2018



Myanmar’s President Htin Kyaw has resigned his position this morning saying he wanted to take a rest from his current work.

A committee led by the State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi will choose the new President, said NLD spokesperson Monywa Aung Shin.

A new President will be appointed within seven days in accordance with the

section 73 (b) of the Constitution, according to a short statement issued by the President Office.

According to the Constitution, the vice President (1) Myint Swe will serve as the Acting President within the seven days.

The statement of the President Office did not give any details of the reason of the resignation, but the NLD spokesperson Monywa Aung Shin says, “The main problem is his health.”

Link: <http://www.mizzima.com/news-domestic/myanmar-president-htin-kyaw-resigns>

U T Khun Myat elected as speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw

Myanmar Times, 22 March 2018 (NO)

Incumbent Pyithu Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U T Khun Myat has been elected Thursday morning as the new speaker of the Lower House following the resignation of U Win Myint who is expected to become the country's next president.

The Pyithu Hluttaw has also elected U Tun Aung better known by his name as U Tun Tun Hein as deputy speaker.

U Win Myint resigned from his post on Wednesday immediately after President U Htin Kyaw announced his resignation over poor health, fuelling speculations he would become the country's next president.

U T Khun Myat and U Tun Tun Hein were both contenders to fill up the speakership of Pyithu Hluttaw.



After the voting, U T Khun Myat was elected as speaker with 280 votes, the maximum among the candidates. However, the votes against him were 124.

U T Khun Myat, lawmaker representing Kutkhai township of Shan state, is a close ally of former speaker Thura U Shwe Mann and stands as an independent member of parliament. He resigned last year from opposition Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP).

U Tun Tun Hein, a central executive committee member of the ruling party, represents Nawngcho Township in Shan state.

Link: <HTTPS://WWW.MMTIMES.COM/NEWS/U-T-KHUN-MYAT-ELECTED-SPEAKER-PYITHU-HLUTTAW.HTML>

Parliament proclaims U Win Myint as new Myanmar president

Myanmar Times, 28 March 2018

The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw announced U Win Myint as the new president of Myanmar after securing more than two thirds of the votes cast in the parliament during Wednesday's elections.

U Win Myint garnered 403 votes out of the total of 636 votes cast in the polls. His closest rival U Myint Swe followed with a little over 200 votes and U Henry Van Thio, the third candidate, securing less than 20 votes.



The overwhelming vote for U Win Myint showed a lot of members of the parliament both from the ruling National League for Democracy (NLD) and from the other parties have strong confidence in his leadership.

U Myint Swe, who garnered a total of 221 votes, will remain as the country’s First Vice President and U Henry Van Thio, who secured 18 votes, will retain his previous position as Vice President (2).

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, along with some union ministers, attended the election as

observer.

U Win Myint replaces U Htin Kyaw who resigned last week amid rumours that he is in poor-health.

A lawyer by profession, U Win Myint is a member of the ruling National League for Democracy (NLD), which was swept into power in 2016 ending decades of military rule.

President-elect U Win Myint is expected to reshuffle and energise the government, which has been receiving flak over slow implementation of political and economic reforms, as well as mounting criticism from the international community for its handling of the Rakhine crisis.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/third-update-parliament-proclaims-u-win-myint-new-myanmar-president.html>

LAND AND PROPERTY

Tatmadaw releases over 200 acres of grabbed land

Burma New International, 12 March 2018

The Ministry of Defence has released 209 acres of land, which were seized by Loikaw-based 250th Infantry Battalion and No. 7 Military Hospital over five years ago.

The 250th Infantry Battalion seized 194 acres while No. 7 Military Hospital seized 15 acres. The seized lands were returned to the State with the letter dated August 16, 2017 from the Central Committee for Re-scrutinizing Confiscated Farmlands and Other Lands.

The Ministry of Home Affairs designated these lands as government-managed lands and returned them back to the original farmers.



The released lands have been officially transferred to the farmers by issuing temporary form (3) for the right to use farmland and giving compensations for the farmlands that have been seized for the railway station.

The Kayah State Chief Minister U L. Phaung Sho said the released lands have been returned to the farmers after they were scrutinized by successive committees.

Khu Oo Reh from Myaynigone Village said only a small amount of seized lands have been returned and they will

continue to make demands for the release of the remaining lands.

Link: <https://www.bnionline.net/en/news/tatmadaw-releases-over-200-acres-grabbed-land>

Confiscated land returned to farmers

Mizzima, 16 March 2018



The Myanmar government has returned some 385 acres (156 hectares) of land out of 1,081 acres, confiscated by the Ministry of Defence, to 82 farmers in Tachileik, the country's eastern Shan state, Xinhua reported.

Other 696 acres of such land have also been given back to the Shan state government.

Second Vice President U Henry Van Thio, who is also Chairman of the Central Committee for Scrutinizing Confiscated Farmlands, stressed the importance of improving the living standard of farmers and finding

markets for agricultural products after the return of the confiscated land to farmers who make up 70 percent of the country's rural population.

Link: <http://www.mizzima.com/news-domestic/confiscated-land-returned-farmers>

Over 400 farmers get land compensation in Shwegyin Tsp

The Global New Light of Myanmar, 28 March 2018

A ceremony to present compensation to the farmers was held at the meeting room of the General Administration Department in Shwegyin Township, Bago Region yesterday morning.

At the ceremony, Bago Region Minister for Electricity and Road Transport U Than Win made an opening speech. Afterwards, Bago Region Minister for Kayin Ethnic Affairs Daw Naw Pwal Sae explained matters relating to land compensation before a local farmer spoke words of thanks.

The Department of Hydropower Implementation under the Ministry of Electricity and Energy asked for compensation from the Union Government in the fiscal year 2017-2018 for local people whose farmlands were confiscated when construction of Shwegyin Dam began in 2002. During the ceremony, Ks. 1211.053 million of compensation for more than 2,681 acres of farmland were given to 439 people from 115 households from two villages.

The ceremony was also attended by the lawmakers, the Deputy Director General from the Department of Hydropower Implementation, township level departmental officials, guests and local people.

Link: https://issuu.com/myanmarnewspaper/docs/28_mar_18_gnlm

PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

KNU and NMSP agree to temporary ceasefire

Myanmar Times, 14 March 2018 (No)

The Karen National Union (KNU) and the New Mon State Party agreed to a temporary truce during a meeting on Tuesday in Phaya Thone Hsu Township in Kayin State.

Naing Win Hla, a central committee member of NMSP, said the two sides agreed to stop hostilities while looking for a solution to resolve the problem.

“There is a complex misunderstanding between the KNU and NMSP that triggered the clashes, but the conflict was not part of a plan,” he said.

Mon State Security and Border Affairs Minister Col Win Naing Oo, added that the truce was temporary and more talks are required to put an end to the fighting between the two armed ethnic groups.

Clashes between the NMSP and KNU, which are both signatories to the government-initiated Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement, have been ongoing for several months, and the latest hostilities erupted on March 4 in Yebyu Township, Tanintharyi Region.

Subsequent clashes between the two sides occurred on March 5 in Mudon Township, Mon State.

There were no reported deaths resulting from the clashes, but there were reports of injuries on both sides. Over 100 families were forced to flee their homes to escape the violence.

The NMSP signed the NCA in February, while the KNLA – the armed wing of the Karen National Union (KNU) – has been a signatory of the NCA since October 2015.

“We can’t provide details of today’s meeting, but we agreed to stop clashes until we meet again,” said Pado Saw Tardo Hmu, general secretary of the KNU. “We have not set the date yet for the next meeting.”

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/knu-and-nmsp-agree-temporary-ceasefire.html>

Phalon-Sawaw Party decides not to run within Karen State in 2020 Election

Burma News International, 15 March 2018

The Phalon-Sawaw Democratic Party (PSDP) will not compete in the Karen State in the 2020 General Election.

Although the PSDP will not contest in the Karen State, it will only have the Karen National Democratic Party (KNDP), a newly merged party of three Karen parties, run in the state, Saw Kyi Linn continued.

According to the announcements of the Union Election Commission, a political party may be automatically abolished if it does not run in at least three constituencies so the PSDP will run in the areas outside the Karen State such as the Mon State, according to the officials from the party.



Although the PSDP has not joined the Karen political parties in the establishment of the KNDP, some hard-core members of the party have resigned and joined the KNDP.

Former members of the PSDP took the majority of the seats including the chairman position during the election of the KNDP’s new 15-member central executive committee after six former PSDP members were elected on

March 12.

Currently, there are four official Karen political parties, namely the KNDP and the PSDP in the Karen State, the Karen People's Party (KPP) in Yangon, and the Karen National Party (KNP) in the Ayeyarwaddy Region. The officials of the parties said they will hold meetings to avoid running in the same constituencies in the upcoming election.

The PSDP was established in 2010 and it won six seats in the 2010 Election – three seats in the Amyotha Hluttaw, two seats in the Pyithu Hluttaw, and four seats in the State Hluttaw. Although it ran in the 2015 Election, it did not win any seats.

Link: <https://www.bnionline.net/en/news/phalon-sawaw-party-decides-not-run-within-karen-state-2020-election>

Mon Party Still Struggling to Hold Public Meetings Even After Ceasefire Deal

The Irrawaddy, 20 March 2018

The New Mon State Party (NMSP) says it is still finding it hard to hold public consultations with ethnic Mon people as part of its national-level political dialogue more than a month after it signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) with the government.



The national-level political dialogue is a mandatory step of the NCA, in which regional stakeholders gather at large, public consultations to give suggestions and recommendations that are then shared at the Union Peace Conference, also called the 21st Century Panglong.

The NMSP said it had to cancel five preliminary public meetings across Mon State

on March 10 after the Myanmar Army, or Tatmadaw, refused to allow more than 30 people join each event.

On March 12, MNTV reported that Peace Commission Secretary U Khin Zaw Oo said the commission and Tatmadaw had reached an agreement to let the NMSP hold its public meetings.

The NMSP says it still plans to hold its national-level dialogue on April 6-9 in Mon State's Ye Township and is asking the union government for permission to hold the smaller preliminary meetings with as many guests as it wants.

Link: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/mon-party-still-struggling-hold-public-meetings-even-ceasefire-deal.html>

Tatmadaw, KNU pledge to address current tensions

Democratic Voice of Burma, 23 March 2018

Military tensions between Burmese government forces and the Karen National Union (KNU) will be addressed at talks next week, both sides agreed at a preliminary meeting hosted yesterday by the Joint Monitoring

Committee (JMC) in Hpapun, northern Karen State.

KNU representative Maj-Gen Saw Isaac Poe said, “In an attempt to diffuse tensions, our negotiation team will be prepared for talks with Tatmadaw counterparts in Bago on 29-30 March.”

Isaac Poe said that that a crucial issue to be discussed would be a road construction project the Burmese military is operating between the villages of Lel Mu Plaw and Kay Bu.

“There is a dispute over whether this road construction project should proceed,” he said. “Many local villagers have been compelled to abandon their homes due to the influx of Burmese soldiers in the area.”



Hundreds of villagers staged a protest on 19 March, calling for the Tatmadaw to withdraw its forces, alleging that they had been deployed under the pretext of executing a road construction project in Luthaw, Hpapun district, when in fact their motives were territorial.

Link: <http://www.dvb.no/news/tatmadaw-knu-pledge-address-current-tensions/80302>

OTHERS

[“We Want Peace, Not Dams...” – 1000’s of Villagers Protest Proposed Salween Dams in Karen State](#)

Karen News, 18 March 2018

Villagers in the Northern District of Karen State on the Thai-Burma border gathered along the Salween River for the International Day of Action for Rivers and Against Dams.



On March 14, the Karen River Network organized event to call for “No Dams” near the Ei Tu Hta internally displaced peoples’ camp on the banks of the Salween River in Mutraw (Papun) district that is controlled by the Karen National Union.

Saw Lar Nay Wah, secretary of the Karen Student Network Group, a member of the Karen River Network who took part in the protest, told *Karen News* that the environment should be protected for future generations.

The protest organizers said that building a dam not only destroyed the natural beauty of the river but also destroyed the livelihood and of lives of local people. Villagers and environmental activists don’t want the negative consequences of the dam, and have held protests annually so that their voices will be heard by authorities.

The protest was attended by members of the Karen River Network, officials from KNU Mutraw District, environmental activists from Thailand, displaced people from Ei Tu Hta camp, students and villagers from six neighbouring villages.

Saw Paul Sein Htwa, directory of the Karen Environmental and Social Action Network (KESAN) pointed out in his speech that villagers wanted and needed peace and they did not want dams.

Link: <http://karennews.org/2018/03/we-want-peace-not-dams-1000s-of-villagers-protest-proposed-salween-dams-in-karen-state/>

[Karen Women’s Organization Receives Women of Change Awards from U.S. Embassy](#)

Karen News, 24 March 2018

The Karen Women’s Organization (KWO) has received this year’s ‘Women of Change Award’ from the U.S. Embassy in Myanmar on March 22 evening.

On behalf of their organization, Naw Wah Khu Shee and Naw Say Say from the KWO’s central standing committee attended the reward ceremony at the U.S. Ambassador’s home on Pyay Road in Yangon.



Over 50 guests including the award winners and last year’s award winners attended the award ceremony.

“This award gives the Karen Women Organization strength to continue our stand on human rights. Equality, uprightness, and human rights are important for not only Karen women but also everyone. That’s why I’m very happy that we have been given this award as recognition for our right stand on human rights,” Naw Wah Khu Shee told Karen News.

Dr Thet Thet Mu, deputy director general of Health Information at the Ministry of Health and Sports who conducted the health survey, and Daw Aye Thinzar Maung, executive committee member of the Myanmar Federation for Persons with Disabilities (MFPD) have also received the Women of Change Awards together with the KWO.

Speaking to Karen News, the U.S. Ambassador said the award ceremony is held to honour women and women’s organizations from diverse areas across the country for giving voice to women in the health sector, disability rights, and the peace process.

Link: <http://karennews.org/2018/03/karen-womens-organization-receives-women-of-change-awards-from-u-s-embassy/>

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