

THAILAND

18 – 31 July 2018

MEDIA MONITORING REPORT # 187

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Japan to Fund \$77M Neuro, Cardio Hospital in Yangon

The Irrawaddy, 18 July 2018

A new hospital specializing in neuro and cardio care will be built in Yangon capable of carrying out advanced heart disease and neurosurgical operations thanks to an 8.66 billion yen (\$76.6 million) grant from Japan.



The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), which is providing the grant, announced on Wednesday that a ceremony officially launching the New Yangon Specialist Hospital project would be held on Friday.

The seven-story hospital will be built at the corner of Pyay and Min Ye Kyaw

Swar roads in downtown Yangon, in the vicinity of Yangon General Hospital, one of the country's top referral hospitals. The hospital is currently being designed by a consultant hired by the Ministry of Health and Sport. Construction is expected to begin in February.

Link: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/japan-fund-77m-neuro-cardio-hospital-yangon.html>

Agri-sector to receive boost

Myanmar Times, 20 July 2018

A Total budget of over K 3.134 trillion will be invested in the Myanmar Agricultural Development Strategy (ADS) in the coming five years, until 2023, according to the report of Ministry of Agricultural Livestock and Irrigation (MOALI).

The strategy covers productivity, competitiveness and governance. Annual budget allocations are K490 billion in 2018-19, K580 billion in 2019-20, K670 billion in 2020-21, K700 in 2021-22 and K680 billion in 2022-23.

52.7pc will be used for productivity, covering projects for irrigation, water resources, research, education, crop cultivation, livestock and fisheries, resilience to climate change. 33pc will be used for improving competitiveness, such as rural infrastructure, community development, value chain development and food safety. For good governance, 10.6pc of total investment will be allocated. Governance will cover planning, coordination, communication and policy making.

The ministry's budget for agriculture will be K6.154 trillion (US\$4.5 billion).

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/agri-sector-receive-boost.html>

Projects being drawn to establish agri-zones in Mandalay, Nay Pyi Taw

Eleven Myanmar, 20 July 2018

Projects are being drawn to establish agricultural zones in Mandalay and Nay Pyi Taw in order to manufacture agro-based products and finished goods, according to the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation.

In Myanmar's agricultural development strategy and investment programme, the ministry has pledged to establish such agricultural zones in the agricultural assistance plan stage (2) of Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS).

The zones will be equipped with machinery generating electricity from biogas and water treatment plants.

The programme says such projects should be prioritised in the areas bordering China and Thailand where border economic development projects are going on. As the second priority, the programme calls for wholesale markets in upper Myanmar such as Mandalay and Nay Pyi Taw.

A wholesale market is now under construction in Mandalay and plans are underway to build another in Nay Pyi Taw.

Link: <http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/business/14363>

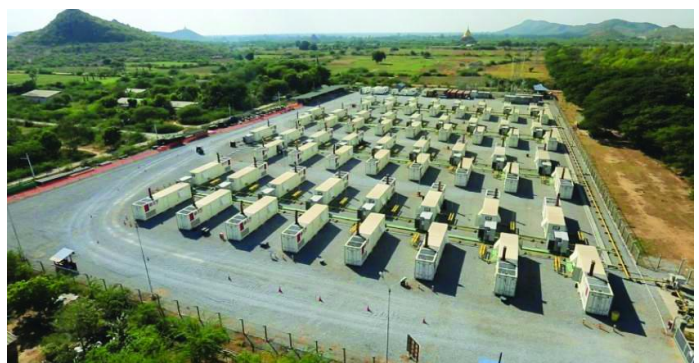
All Villages in Mandalay to be connected to Electricity in Next Five Years

Myanmar Business Today, 23 July 2018

All villages in Mandalay are expected to get access to electricity by 2022-2023, U Zarni Aung, Mandalay Regional Minister for Electricity, Energy and Construction, said at the press conference on Regional Government's efforts on reform in second year in the office held at MCDC meeting room.

So far, 2,742 villages out of 4,807 villages in Mandalay Region have access to electricity and the rest are expected to have access to electricity by 2022-2023.

"We have built six 66-KV electrical substations and thirteen 33-KV electrical substations as well as upgrading 5 to 10 substations in two years. So we have built 19 electrical substations, upgraded 15 substations and extended the power grid by 93.24 miles," U Zarni Aung said.



The union government's aim is to have over 60,000 villages connected to electricity by 2030.

The Government is committed to adopting a systematic plan in which they will build backup power grids to enhance electric supply to guarantee there are no power outages even if there is an outage.

Mandalay region's electricity consumption is around 550 Megawatt per years and estimated to go up to 630 megawatts. The Regional government said that usage is up to K 9 billion per year.

Link: <https://www.mmbiztoday.com/articles/all-villages-mandalay-be-connected-electricity-next-five-years>

Govt to streamline free healthcare for poor people

Myanmar Times, 23 July 2018

The government will streamline free basic healthcare for poor people under the National Health Plan, a senior official said.

The Ministry of Health and Sports is implementing the plan, which started last year and will continue until 2021.

Dr Thant Sin Htoo, the plan's programme manager, said officials are determining the types of healthcare services that it can provide free of charge to the poor. To improve the government healthcare system, authorities need to limit the free services as they are not sustainable. An average of 150 types of services is expected to be included in the basic package to be provided for free at hospitals and health centres starting in 2020, according to the ministry.

There are four needs – health infrastructure, human resources, drugs and medical supplies, and funding – to ensure better healthcare services.

According to the plan's implementation monitoring unit, 800 health centres and clinics have been renovated in the past year.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/govt-streamline-free-healthcare-poor-people.html>

President Predicts Myanmar's Economic Growth to be Over 7 Percent Next Year

Myanmar Business Today, 23 July 2018

President U Win Myint said at the National Planning Commission meeting, that Myanmar GDP growth is expected to be 7.6 percent in 2018-2019 Fiscal Year because of increased foreign investment inflow, improved mid-term loan to businesses and strong potential of SMEs' growth.



Reviewing 2017-2018 Fiscal Year, increased export of agricultural products, more foreign investment flowed into manufacturing sector and improved transportation and tourism, telecommunication and financial service made GDP grow to 6.5 percent.

“Since the six month transitional fiscal year and the rainy season, there will be limitation in crops and grains milling in manufacturing as well as in construction sector. But the government expects GDP growth to be 7.2 percent in this six month fiscal years,” Daw Aung San Su Kyi said at National Planning Commission meeting in January.

Myanmar's economic growth is 5.9 percent in 2016-2017 and 6.4 percent in 2017-2018 fiscal year and it will increase to 6.8 percent in 2018-2019 fiscal year, World Bank Group estimated.

Link: <https://www.mmbiztoday.com/articles/president-predicts-myanmar-s-economic-growth-be-over-7-percent-next-year>

Experts urge accreditation plan for private schools

Myanmar Times, 23 July 2018

To strengthen Myanmar's private schools, an accreditation system is needed that recognises different kinds of private schools, education experts said at a seminar that discussed a draft law on private education on Saturday.

U Kyaw Moe Tun, executive director of Parami Institute of Liberal Arts & Sciences, said agencies need to study international systems of accreditation to boost private education in Myanmar.

"Our country has a lot of ethnicity; so many types of private schools are found in ethnic areas. How to accredit these kinds of schools? We have to follow international practices to build a suitable accreditation system," he added.

To build an accreditation system for the private education sector, a law is needed. The National Education Law was enacted in September 2014 and amended in June 2015. The Ministry of Education has drafted bills for basic, higher, technical and vocational and private education that are still undergoing review before submission to parliament. The government organised the National Accreditation and Quality Assurance Committee to improve the quality of education in the country, but it does not include private institutions, said U Aung Kyaw San, managing director of Crown Education, an education consulting firm. "There are a lot of private training centres for accounting and engineering but the draft law does not mention how to control the quality of these kinds of institutions," he said.

On April 20, the Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) allowed foreigners to make full capital investment in Myanmar, enabling them to own and operate schools teaching curriculums recommended by the Ministry of Education or international educational programmes.

They will be able to invest in basic education, technical, vocational and training, higher education, subject-based, and private schools designated by the ministry, according to the MIC notification 7/2018.

Daw Thu Thu Mar, secretary of the National Network for Education Reform, noted that the draft law did not provide common standards among the different regions and ethnic areas, which have different standards of education value and quality.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/experts-urge-accreditation-plan-private-schools.html>

Education infrastructure budget cut to help teachers

Myanmar Times, 24 July 2018

The budget for school infrastructure projects has been cut so that teachers can have the pay increase that President U Win Myint promised shortly after he was sworn into office in March, Education Deputy Minister U Win Maw Tun said.

"The cut was made according to the law. It is not because we don't have enough money or we are broke. The tenders are not suspended," he said at a ceremony marking the end of Telenor Myanmar's summer technology and internet courses in Nay Pyi Taw at the weekend.

He said there was no additional allocation in the ministry's six-month budget to fund the pay rise, so project expenditures had to be reduced.

However, the reduced amount will be restored in the 2018-2019 budget starting in September, he said.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/education-infrastructure-budget-cut-help-teachers.html>

Mall operator, Thai healthcare group launch Yangon hospital on high demand

Myanmar Times, 24 July 2018

Myanmar mall operator Ga Mone Pwint Co has teamed up with Thailand's Thonburi Healthcare Group to start a new facility, Ar Yu International Hospital, in Yangon, where demand for high quality standards of healthcare is rising fast.

The new US\$70 million hospital, which will open in mid August, is the first such project in Yangon for both Ga Mone Pwint and Thonburi. "Ar Yu will function as a general hospital but we will also have cardiologists and neurologists on board," said Dr Nway Nu Wai, business development manager at Ar Yu International Hospital.

The move also arrives at a time when local living standards are improving, bringing about higher demand for quality healthcare.

"From previous surveys, we understand that the majority of Myanmar people are more comfortable seeking medication from the local drug store or at private clinics than consult with specialists at big hospitals with modern diagnostic equipment," said Dr Watson Aphiwatanakoon, CEO of Ar Yu International Hospital.

Now, more realise the need for proper and timely diagnosis and the risks involved in delaying hospital treatment. As such, the new hospital will target patients who would otherwise seek medical treatment abroad.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/mall-operator-thai-healthcare-group-launch-yangon-hospital-high-demand.html>



Plan foresees telecoms for remote areas

Myanmar Times, 25 July 2018

Plans are being made to provide basic telecommunications service in remote areas of Myanmar, said U Kyaw Myo, deputy minister of Transport and Communications. The country's telecom operators will pay into the fund, said U Kyaw Myo, and the fund will pay for the expansion to remote areas, based on a priority system.

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A draft bill for the Universal Service Strategy, which will be paid for by the fund, has been reviewed by the Attorney General's Office and was submitted to a meeting of parliament's Security, Peace, Stability and Rule of Law Working Committee.

The ministry will hold public hearings so that citizens can comment on the procedures, directives, and policies of the project. Also, the public will be able to leave comments on the ministry's website, U Kyaw Myo said.

The Universal Service Strategy can be downloaded in both English and Myanmar languages on the website, he added.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/plan-foresees-telecoms-remote-areas.html>

Technical institute to be built in South Dagon

Myanmar Times, 26 July 2018

A project to build a technical school in South Dagon Township, Yangon Region, has been approved and its funding will be included in next year's budget request, a regional legislator has said.

U Aye Naing, who represents South Dagon in the Pyithu Hluttaw (lower house), said the vocational school would give young people the skills they need to get jobs in the township's four industrial zones. "Skilled youths would have more job opportunities," he said. He added that construction of the school, which would be located on 14 acres at the intersection of Hlawgar Road and Gayunar Road in the township's 15th Ward, would begin at the end of this year if the hluttaw approves the budget.

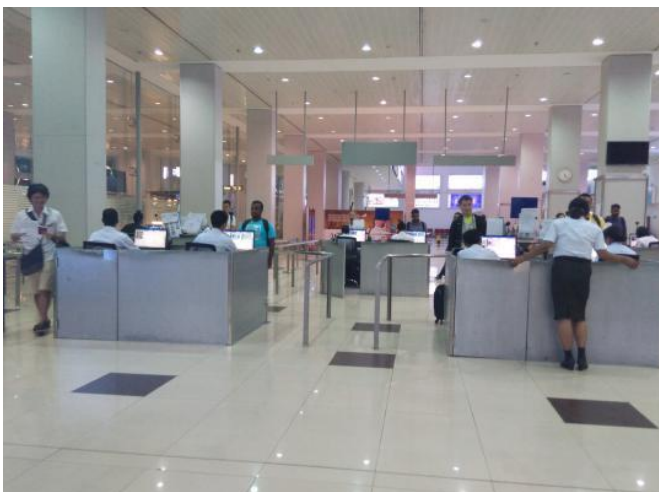
U Myo Thein Gyi said the regional government would draft a master plan to build classrooms, workshop areas, dorms and servants quarters at the school.

Once the land is formally donated to the Department of Technology and Vocational Training, the budget for the building, staff and teaching materials would be requested for each fiscal year.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/technical-institute-be-built-south-dagon.html>

Myanmar to allow visa free for tourists from Japan and South Korea

Eleven Myanmar, 26 July 2018



Myanmar is planning to allow visa free for tourists from Japan and South Korea with a one-year trial period starting from October 1 and Chinese tourists including Hong Kong and Macao can visit Myanmar with visa on arrival in the same period, according to Ministry of Hotel and Tourism.

"It should be done as tourism industry is declined. I think it will be improved again as there are direct flights from those countries," said Vice Chairman Khin Aung Tun of Myanmar Tourism Federation.

Tourists from Japan, South Korea and China need to

present US\$1,000 as show money at the airport and Chinese tourists have to pay US\$50 as a fee for visa on arrival.

“We are welcomed about the free visa but presenting US\$1,000 should not be because people usually bring credit cards nowadays. If four family members visit our country, they will not bring US\$1,000 each. The adjustment should be made for that,” said the vice chairman.

Link: <http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/local/14408>

Local and foreign investments create nearly 16,000 new jobs

Eleven Myanmar, 28 July 2018

In late May and June, local and foreign investments created nearly 16,000 new jobs, according to the Directorate of Investment and Companies Administration.

Foreign investments created 8,866 jobs in May and 4,415 in June while citizen investments created 1,766 jobs in May and 993 in June.

During two months, the industry sector saw the highest foreign investment with over US\$ 254 million, followed by other service sector with over US\$ 71 million, according to Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC).

During the minibudget period (April to September), citizen investments granted by the MIC amounted to Ks-30084.902 million in May and Ks-35596.090 million in June.

During two months, the jobs created by FDI for locals are: 40 in farming sector, 12940 in industry sector, 18 in hotels and tourism sector and 283 in other service sector.

Link: <http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/business/14414>

Myanmar President calls for increased momentum in reform

Mizzima, 30 July 2018

Myanmar President U Win Myint has called for raising momentum of reform in line with the global trend, stressing that the reform needs to be conducted in a timely manner toward building a democratic and federal union, Xinhua reported quoting state media.

He urged the administrative, legislative and judicial sectors to implement both mental and physical security of the people as well as development, stability and peace of the country in addition to freedom, justice and equality in a democratic system.

He emphasized the need for the administration to support rule of law and do according to law to serve the people and protect the people and human rights.

Link: <http://www.mizzima.com/news-domestic/myanmar-president-calls-increased-momentum-reform>



Work on Yangon Elevated Expressway to Begin Next Year, Says Minister

The Irrawaddy, 30 July 2018

Naypyitaw—Construction of the Yangon Elevated Expressway project will begin next year and should be completed within three years, Deputy Construction Minister U Kyaw Lin said on Monday. Fifty-three companies from 12 countries including Myanmar have expressed interest in the project. The ministry will invite requests for proposals in December and the later select the tender winner.



Though the Construction Ministry said it would not use state funds to build the elevated road, it is likely it will have to take out international loans to fulfill its obligations to the project as it is a public-private partnership, said Lower House lawmaker U Aung Hline Win of Mingalardon Township.

“Usually, an elevated expressway costs around US\$10 million, or around 14 billion kyats, per mile. It is such a huge amount, and it is not easy,” said U Aung Hline Win.

When complete, the 47.5 kilometer-long elevated expressway will connect downtown Yangon, Yangon Port, Yangon International Airport, Mingalardon Industrial Zone and Yangon-Mandalay Highway.

Link: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/work-yangon-elevated-expressway-begin-next-year-says-minister.html>

Industrial Sector Receives Many FDI's

Myanmar Business Today, 30 July 2018

The Industrial sector is very important to development of the country. The Industry is geared largely to the processing of agricultural, mineral, and forest products. More than half of the Myanmar industrial production is accounted for by the public sector.

Within each fiscal year there is a considerable growth within this sector, and already this sector is leading the race and has received more foreign direct investment (FDI's) than any other sector. The industrial sector received over \$437 million FDI's, within the first two months of this six-month transition fiscal year. This positive development, is a result of the change within the fiscal year format.

17 out of the 22 foreign investments in May and June went to the industrial sector, and the rest went in to the hotel and tourism sector, other service sectors, and agricultural sectors. All of which creates over 13,000 job opportunities for local, and foreign workers.

K41,754 million, out of the total local investments went to the industrial sector, according to the data provided from MIC.



The Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC), a government-appointed body under the Ministry of Planning, and Finance that appraises domestic investment proposals in Myanmar, also approved 23 local investments worth K65,680 million. All within the same period which in turn will create over 2,700 additional job opportunities.

Link: <https://www.mmbiztoday.com/articles/industrial-sector-receives-many-fdi-s>

Ethnic Entrepreneurs to Set Up a Public Company

Myanmar Business Today, 30 July 2018

In order to connect ethnic entrepreneurs with local, and foreign enterprises for technology and investments, a public company will be set up.



The plan to form a public company was announced at the launching event of the association, held on July 20. The association will help ethnic entrepreneurs in exhibiting products at international expos, and finding new overseas markets. This is in order to make traditional foods, and consumer products of ethnic areas that have international market access.

“The company will be formed within 18 months, calling for different conference and executives for the company, who will be elected as part of a bottom-up system. The sole aim of this association is to bring in and introduce more up and coming ethnic entrepreneurs. There are in fact some ethnic entrepreneurs now, but very few,” U Min Ba Nyar San, General Secretary of Myanmar Ethnic Entrepreneurs Association, announced.

Currently, the association is formed with 27 members, based on 135 different ethnicities in the country, with the aim of bring up entrepreneurs from remote and undeveloped areas.

The association is organizing an expedition of food and consumer products from ethnic areas, this will be hosted by the association on Union Day. U Min Ba Nyar San said “the association has plans to expand the association to ethnic, remote and under developed areas, in addition to Yangon, Mandalay and Nay Pyi Daw. To meet the regional, and state chief ministers the association will be focusing on particular regions, in order to help ethnic entrepreneurs.”

“When you are handling political issues, you can’t do it with just economic support. Likewise, it would also be difficult for you to run businesses without help from the government. So, we need to consider these two counter dependent factors. This association is not just an ordinary business association—it’s, in fact, an association related to the peace process of the country,” Pro Dr. Aung Tun Thet, Patron of the association, said.

Link: <https://www.mmbiztoday.com/articles/ethnic-entrepreneurs-set-public-company>

89 firms from 17 countries invest in Thilawa SEZ

Eleven Myanmar, 30 July 2018

Eighty nine companies from 17 countries are investing in Thilawa Special Economic Zone, and construction of Zone-B infrastructure will be completed this year, according to a Cost of Doing Business in Myanmar report.

Thilawa SEZ is located on 2,400 hectares of land, 14 miles southeast of Yangon city.

So far, over US\$1.374 billion has been invested Zone-A. Zone-B is under construction and Japan and Singapore are the largest investors, according to Thilawa SEZ Management Committee.

"Permits have been issued to 93 businesses with a total investment of US\$1.374 billion at the zone. Those businesses are for both Zone-A and Zone-B. Seven are from Zone-B," said Cho Cho Win, vice chairperson (2) of the management committee.

She said Japan alone had 48 companies investing in the zone.

According to Directorate of Investment and Company Administration, over US\$401 million came in investment to Thilawa SEZ in the previous 2017-2018 fiscal year, and Japan and Singapore accounted for over 60 percent. Eleven firms invested in industrial sector at the zone accounting for about 82 percent of the total investment last year.

Link: <http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/business/14427>

Eleven-story four-star hotel under construction in Loikaw

Kantarawaddy Times, 31 July 2018

The project period is from December 2017 to December 2019 and the hotel is expected to open in 2020.

Ye Htut Kyaw Company, which operates Mawchi lead mine, is the main investor of the hotel, which will become the biggest hotel in the Karenni State.

"Only Ye Htut Kyaw's name has been included in the list of shareholders. I don't know which local/foreign investors are included," said U Linn Zaw Htut.



The hotel will offer 80 rooms and can accommodate 200 guests at the same time. It will also offer a hall that can hold up to 600 guests.

The Karenni State has received more private investment in the hotels and tourism industry within this year. There are 18 hotels and 384 rooms in Loikaw up to 2017.

Link: <https://www.bnionline.net/en/news/eleven-story-four-star-hotel-under-construction-loikaw>

LAND AND PROPERTY

Confiscated land returned by military

Mizzima, 19 July 2018

Myanmar's military said Wednesday that it has been returning to its rightful owners all unused lands it confiscated for decades from farmers, according to a RFA report a day after a damning report by a human rights group said the country's civilian government had largely failed to deliver on a pledge to seek justice for those whose property was taken.

"Some of the military-confiscated lands were not used," Colonel Zaw Min Tun from the information department at the office of military commander-in-chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing told RFA's Myanmar Service.

The armed forces have transferred the unused land to a government team that includes Myanmar Vice President Myint Swe, Zaw Min Tun said.

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

PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

Ethnic armed groups plan to hold ethnic conference ahead of fourth Union Peace Conference

Eleven Myanmar, 23 July 2018

Plans are underway to call an ethnic conference inclusive of all ethnic armed groups before the fourth round of the Union Peace Conference also known as the 21st Century Panglong Conference, according to sources ethnic armed group sources.

The ethnic conference was first planned in July or August this year, but the plan failed as the third round of the peace conference took place this month.

"I think we will have two stages. The first stage is for the ethnic armed groups which are signatories to the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA). Second, all the ethnic armed groups must participate. It would happen before the fourth peace conference," said Dr Salai Lian Hmung Sakhong, vice chairman of the Chin National Front, an NCA signatory.

All the signatories are planning to discuss difficulties they are facing and ways to find solution during the ethnic conference. There are also plans for non-signatories to seek ways to sign the NCA.

Previously, the ethnic conference was planned in Chiang Mai, Thailand. But now, no exact place has been mentioned.

Link: <http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/politics/14381>

MNP, AMDP finalize merger, elect Nai Tin Aung as chair of new party

Mon News Agency, 24 July 2018

The Mon National Party (MNP) and the All Mon Region Democracy Party (AMDP) have agreed to merge during the meeting held at the AMRDP office in Mawlamyine on July 21 and elected Nai Tin Aung as the chair of the new party.

“The merger of the two parties has been finalized. The main agreement was to distribute the duties within the party, establish a 100-member central committee with 50 people from each party, and elect a 44-member central executive [committee] with 22 people from each party. We will approve the party’s name within this month. Afterwards, we will hold a ceremony to mark the merger of the two parties and hold a central committee meeting,” said Nai Layih Tamarh, joint secretary (1) of the new party.



A five-member delegation led by Nai Kyan Yit has been assigned to hold official meetings with political forces and respective persons to include the scattered forces in the new party. Dr Aung Naing Oo, spokesperson of the 21-member Mon National Representative Party Organizing Committee, said a five-member delegation from the organizing committee met with five delegates from the two parties on July 6 and proposed to merge with the two parties and select a new name for the political party after getting consent from all three sides.

We told them to do the merger of the three groups within a month. They said they will respond to us. I believe the response should be given immediately,” he said.

According to the agreement, the two parties have elected Nai Tin Aung as chair, Nai Hla Aung as vice-chair (1), Nai Ngwe Thein as vice-chair (2), Nai Chan Toi as vice-chair (3), Dr Min Nwe Soe as general secretary, Nai Layih Tamarh as joint secretary (1), Nai San Tin as joint secretary (2), Nai Soe Myint as joint secretary (3), Nai Than Shwe as joint secretary (4), and Dr Min Kyi Win as joint secretary (5) for the new party.

Link: <https://www.bnionline.net/en/news/mnp-amdp-finalize-merger-elect-nai-tin-aung-chair-new-party>

Govt Peace Commission starts meetings with armed ethnic groups

Myanmar Times, 25 July 2018

The government has begun informal meetings with armed ethnic groups as agreed at the third round of the 21st Century Panglong Peace Conference.

The government’s Peace Commission held separate meetings with the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO) and the Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army (RCSS/SSA) in Chiang Mai, Thailand, days after the end of the conference on July 16. The meetings aimed to enhance trust between the government and armed ethnic groups through the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), said representatives who attended the meeting on Friday.

The commission was led at the meeting by its secretary, retired Lieutenant General Khin Zaw Oo and the KIO was led by its chairman, General N' Ban La, while the RCSS/SSA was led by its leader, General Yawd Serk.

Although the RCSS has signed the NCA, its fighters recently clashed with government forces.

The commission first met with KIO leaders and then with the RCSS/SSA to discuss how to reduce fighting and to review union-level agreements.

The discussion between the commission and the KIO's General N' Ban La on Friday had good results, but they will not be made public, said KIO spokesman U Daung Kha. The KIO attended the third Panglong conference as a member of the Federal Political Negotiation and Consultative Committee (FPNCC).

The commission said that discussions will continue after the conference because it is the only way to build trust and attain peace. "We will meet separately and in groups, but we will not disclose some information for security reasons," said commission vice president U Thein Zaw.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/govt-peace-commission-starts-meetings-armed-ethnic-groups.html>

LAW AND GOVERNANCE

UEC to release by-election candidate lists in August

Eleven Myanmar, 28 July 2018

Union Election Commission (UEC) will release the lists of candidates who will compete in the upcoming by-election scheduled on November 3, on August 6, said the UEC's member Myint Naing.

There are 69 candidates from 24 political parties, including seven independent candidates, according to the UEC.

"All candidates are qualified for the by-election. The lists of candidates will be announced at respective sub-commission offices," Myint Naing who is also a spokesperson of the UEC added.

The UEC announced the lists of eligible voters for by-election from July 9 to 22 for the first time. In October, the UEC will announce eligible voter lists for 14 days for the second time. Till now, no complaint has been received about the release of voter lists, according to the UEC.

Link: <http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/politics/14412>

OTHERS

Skirmish breaks out in KNU Brigade 5 area amid 21st Century Panglong Conference

Karen News, 18 July 2018

A skirmish erupted between the Tatmadaw and the Karen National Union (KNU) in the area controlled by the KNU Brigade 5 in Hpapun (Mu Traw) District in the Karen State on July 12 while the third session of the Union Peace Conference (21st Century Panglong) is being held in Naypyidaw.



The Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) Brigade 5 commander Brig Gen Saw Mu Heh confirmed that the skirmish broke out near Khay Pu under Lu Thaw Township in the KNU's Mu Traw District, where military tensions rose over road construction issue in early March, and one person died from the Tatmadaw's side.

"[The skirmish] took place due to the breach of the territory. One person died. A short [fight] broke out at 9:40 am. It was

their fault. We fired because they violated our rule. We wouldn't shoot if they didn't violate it," he told Karen News on July 15.

Brig Gen Saw Mu Heh continued that the KNU has established a 100-yard limit in all territorial boundaries after signing a ceasefire with the government and the skirmish is unlikely to create a bigger issue between the Tatmadaw and the KNU.

The Tatmadaw and the KNLA clashed in early March after the Tatmadaw entered the KNU-controlled area to repair the old road between Khay Pu and Ler Mu Plaw. Over 2,300 residents of 16 villages within the vicinity of the road were forced to flee for their lives and they are still unable to return home.

The KNU signed the nationwide ceasefire agreement (NCA) together with seven ethnic armed organizations under the previous U Thein Sein administration on October 15, 2015.

Twenty-nine KNU delegates are attending the third session of the Union Peace Conference (21st Century Panglong) in Naypyidaw from July 11 to 16.

Link: <http://karennews.org/2018/07/skirmish-breaks-out-in-knu-brigade-5-area-amid-21st-century-panglong-conference/>

Floods affect Mon, Kayin, Taninthayi and Bago

Eleven Myanmar, 31 July 2018

Basic commodities prices have increased in flood-stricken Mon and Kayin states as well as Taninthayi and Bago regions, sources said.

Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement claim that there are 25,050 people from 5,302 family households at 67 flood relief camps in Kayin State, 5,895 people from 1,156 family households at 22 flood relief camps in Taninthai region, 15,884 people from 3,695 family households at 50 flood relief camps in Mon State and 71,898 people from 15,316 family households at 157 flood relief camps in Bago region.

Thanlwin Bridge (Hpa-an) was also shut down



temporarily as water level in Thanlwin River increases to record-breaking levels, sending commodities prices rocketing upwards in Hpa-an.

Aung Ko Ko, Deputy Director of Department of Meteorology and Hydrology of Kayin State said water level in Thanlwin River reached to 938 centimeters, which is two centimeters above its danger level, on July 30.

Thiri Yadanar, MP of Belin Constituency said medicines and drinking water are needed in Belin Township as heavy downpour of rain and water from mountain streams worsen floods in the township.

According to a water level forecast on July 30, water level in Belin River reached 1,043 centimeters which is 21 centimeters above its danger level. Floods in some areas of the township seceded on July 30 and travellers were able to traverse Yangon-Mawlamyaing expressway which has been closed since July 26, announced Mon State government.

Floods also occurred in Thaton and Kyaikmaraw townships.

A total of 27,294 people are temporarily taking shelter at 33 relief camps in Bago. Bago Flood Relief Committee distributed food, edible oil and instant noodles enough for three days. Kayin State government has opened 51 flood relief camps in five townships and about 15,000 flood victims are taken shelter there.

More flood victims are expected as water level in Thanlwin River climbs above its danger level.

There are 9,873 people from 1,945 family households in 16 flood relief camps in Hpa-an Township, 2,503 people from 466 family households in 16 flood relief camps in Hlinebwe Township, 973 people from 207 family households in 6 flood relief camps in Kawkareik Township, 1,145 people from 257 family households in 3 flood relief camps in Kyainseikkyi Township and 1,692 people from 361 family households in 11 flood relief camps in Phapun Township.

A total of 145 schools in Mon State were temporarily closed on July 22 and will be reopened on August 1, according to the office of the state education department.

Link: <http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/local/14437>

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