

THAILAND

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PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

Union Gov't, NCA Signatory EAOs hold special meeting

The Global New Light of Myanmar, 16 October 2018

A special meeting between the Union Government and the signatories of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement was held in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday and Chairperson of the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi delivered an address.



The meeting was attended by Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief (Army) Vice-Senior General Soe Win, Union Minister for the Office of the State Counsellor U Kyaw Tint Swe, Chairman of the Peace Commission Dr. Tin Myo Win, Union Attorney-

General U Tun Tun Oo, Secretary of the Peace Commission (Retired) Lt-Gen Khin Zaw Oo, Representative of Pyithu Hluttaw U Aung Soe and Representative of Amyotha Hluttaw U Aung Kyi Nyunt, responsible personnel of the Government and the Tatmadaw, Chairman of the Karen National Union(KNU) Saw Mutu Sae Poe, Vice Chairman Pado Saw Kwe Htoo Win, Chairman of the Restoration Council of Shan State(RCSS) U Yawd Serk, Secretary U Sai Ngin, Patron of Pao National Liberation Organization (PNLO) Khun Okka and Vice Chairman Khun Myint Tun, Chairman of the Chin National Front (CNF) Pu Zing Cung, Vice Chairman Dr. Salai Lian Hmung Sakhong, Vice Chairman of Arakan Liberation Army (ALP) Khaing Soe Naing Aung, Member of the Central Committee Saw Mya Yar Zar Lin, Chairman of All Burma Students' Democratic Front (ABSDF) U Than Ge, Vice Chairman U Myo Win, Chairman of the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA) Saw Moe Shay, Secretary of the Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army-Peace Council (KNU/KNLA-PC) Dr. Naw Kapaw Htoo, Vice Chairman of the New Mon State Party (NMSP) Nai Han Thar and member of the Central Committee of (NMSP) Nai Aung Ma Ngay, Chairman of the Lahu Democratic Union (LDU) Kyar Khun Sar, Secretary Kyar Saw Lamon, representatives of the NCA Signatory Ethnic Armed Organizations and officials.

The second session of the peace talks was held in the afternoon and Vice Chairman of KNU Pado Saw Kwe Htoo Win and Director-General of the Office of the State Counsellor U Zaw Htay acted as advocates.

During the meeting, the peace makers discussed time and procedures and the measures to be

taken for attaining basic principles in forthcoming Union Peace Conference-21st Century Panglong in 2018 and next two conferences in 2019, making the current peace dialogue simple and easy, model to be practised after reaching agreements between leaders at political dialogue, and seeking cooperation matters for inclusiveness of all EAOs who have not yet signed the NCA in peace making process.



The meeting continues today to discuss matters, such as self-determination and non-secession from the Union, adopting principles for establishing a unified Tatmadaw, and general issues.

Link: <http://www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com/union-govt-nca-signatory-eaos-hold-special-meeting/>

Karen armed organizations to hold joint commemoration of 70th Karen Resistance Day

Karen Information Center, 10 October 2018

Four Karen armed organizations will cooperate in holding the 70th anniversary of the Karen National Resistance Day ceremony with a military parade on January 31, the officials said to KIC News.



The leaders of the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA), the Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army – Peace Council (KNU/KNLA – PC), and the Border Guard Forces (BGF) agreed to this during a meeting of the Unity Committee for Karen Armed Groups, which was held at the Karen National Union (KNU) Brigade 7 headquarters on October 8.

“We want to do it. We have the intentions. All the Karen armed [groups] will unite and hold the 70th Karen Resistance Day ceremony together with the military columns from respective brigades and columns from other armed groups,” Padoh Saw Hla Tun, vice secretary (2) of the KNU, said to KIC News.

The KNU headquarters have been chosen as the tentative venue for the 70th Karen National Resistance Day ceremony and the issue has already been submitted to the Central Committee and Ceremony Coordination Committees will be established on each level, Padoh Saw Hla Tun continued.

“We have talked about inviting 40 people per group. We don’t have any problems on our side. We are ready to cooperate whether they demand 40 people or 400 people because we have already prepared enough military manpower to hold our DKBA day,” said Lt-Gen Saw Steel, vice chief of staff of the DKBA.

The leaders of the DKBA, the KNU/KNLA-PC including the KNLA’s chief of staff Gen Saw Johnny and the Karen Border Guard Forces’ secretary Col Saw Chit Thu and the committee members attended the one-day meeting of the Unity Committee for Karen Armed Groups.

During the meeting, the participants have agreed to assist the KNU in its political efforts to obtain self-determination for the Karen people, cooperate between all groups to have rule of law in the Karen State, set

down a plan to eradicate drugs and gambling dens and carry it out, and close down all logging operations permanently.

The Unity Committee for Karen Armed Groups was established at the KNU/KNLA – PC headquarters in Htokawko on March 28, 2013 with the aim to reunite the divided Karen armed groups.

The KNU has been holding the Karen National Resistance Day ceremony annually for nearly 70 years but this is the first time the Karen armed groups are coming together to hold the ceremony together since 1994.

Link: <https://www.bnionline.net/en/news/karen-armed-organizations-hold-joint-commemoration-70th-karen-resistance-day>

All ethnic armed groups must participate in peace process to build a federal democracy state: KNU

Eleven Myanmar, 8 October 2018

The government needs to create situations for ethnic armed groups that haven't signed nationwide ceasefire agreement (NCA) yet to build a future federal democracy state which is desired by the government, army and ethnic armed groups, according to emergency meeting of Karen National Union (KNU) Central Executive Committee held on October 5 and 6 at its headquarters Lawkhila.

The announcement pointed out the future of democracy and a federal state, which will be built in line with the result of political talks, are agreed in the NCA and required to set principles for common objectives and values.

The obstacles in political process are to accept the army as the only armed forces and not to separate from the nation. The meeting decided to submit the issue to the upcoming summit of ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) which have signed the NCA with the government.



It said that the KNU believed the efforts to obtain basic principles of a federal democracy through 21st Century Panglong Conference, it depended on negotiations and resolutions of the above mentioned obstacles.

The government said they will try to obtain basic principles of a federal democracy by holding the 21st Century Panglong Conference three times next year.

The KNU is involved in the whole peace process and it has announced to overcome obstacles faced in the peace process.

Other ethnic armed groups such as United Wa State Army (UWSA), Kachin Independence Army (KIA/KIO), Shan State Progressive Party (SSPP), National Democratic Alliance Army (NDAA), Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), Arakan Army (AA) and Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) are still making negotiations appropriately with the government to involve in peace process.

Link: <http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/politics/15394>

UNA leaders discuss important points for federal Constitution

Eleven Myanmar, 4 October 2018

The leaders of members of the United Nationalities Alliance (UNA) held discussions on the principles worthy of

being added to federal-designed Constitution if the much-criticized 2008 Constitution is amended for three days in Yangon.

The Principles of Federal Union First Draft were discussed at Royal Golden 9 Mile Hotel in Yangon from October 1 to 3 and it was attended by 37 leaders of UNA's members.

"If the Constitution is amended, principles for federal Union are of great importance. It must be federal-designed Constitution. We are discussing the federal principles that should be included in the Constitution," said Sai Kyaw Nyunt, General Secretary-2 of the SNLD.

The UNA has a plan to keep on drafting the principles and policies after discussing important matters for the country in addition to federal principles.

The UNA will go to the states where there are the political parties of UNA's members and hold discussions with the residents on its stance and attitude as well as federal principles.

There are also political parties of UNA's members at the peace dialogues. These political parties convey the stances and attitudes of the UNA as to federal principles to the peace dialogues, said Sai Kyaw Nyunt.

We are approaching toward the peace process from all angles. Some UNA's members have political parties. Political parties concerned will convey UNA's attitude to the peace dialogues. The ethnics will know how the UNA is standing and the federal-designed Constitution.

The UNA was formed with the SNLD, the ALD, the MNP, the ZCD, the KNC, the KNP, the SSKDP, the KNP, the APP, the MNNDP, the DNDP, the KNP, the CLDP, the CPP, and the SNSP.

Link: <http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/politics/15352>

Myanmar's peace can only be successful when JMC's implementation is effective

Mon News Agency, 3 October 2018

Myanmar's peace process will only become successful when effective implementation is carried out by the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC), the Mon National Liberation Army (MNLA)'s chief of staff Maj-Gen Layi Gakao, who is joining the JMC-U delegation's observation trip to Nepal, said.



"As everyone knows about Myanmar's ongoing peace process, the 21st Century Panglong can't move forward. Obstacles have existed for a long time now. The JMC had weaknesses in implementing its tasks because the sound of gunfire hasn't stopped in the NCA signatories' areas. There are still clashes with the government army (Tatmadaw) in the Shan and Karen [states]," Maj-Gen Layi Gakao, who is also head of the New Mon State Party (NMSP)'s military affairs and member of the Union-level Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC-U), said to the Mon News Agency.

The 15-member delegation of the JMC-U, led by chair Lt-Gen Yar Pyae, arrived in Nepal on October 1 to observe the country's peace process for seven days under the arrangement of the Norwegian embassy.

“Nepal’s peace process is different from our country but there are many things to emulate [from Nepal]. However, we can’t copy someone else’s peace process and build it here. The government including the Tatmadaw and we, the ethnic armed organizations, need to build it with our own abilities and our own model in order for peace to succeed in our country,” said Maj-Gen Layi Gakao.

He continued that he learned about how the Nepalese government and the rebel forces have engaged in disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) in Nepal and only the security sector reform (SSR) is found in the peace processes across the world and lack of time restriction is a weakness in the existing nationwide ceasefire agreement.

The JMC delegation met with the Nepalese Vice President, Minister of Foreign Affairs, government officials and individuals who were involved in Nepali’s peace process yesterday (October 2) and explained their experiences.

According to the Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Committee’s Facebook page, the JMC-U observation delegation consists of 15 members, including chair Lt-Gen Yar Pyae, vice-chair Sai Myo Thant, the Union Minister of Border Affairs Lt-Gen Ye Aung and Rev. Saw Matthew Aye.

A total of 18 people including JMC-U delegation and technical support staff went on a similar peace observation trip to Norway from August 24 to 30, according to the JMC.

Link: <http://monnews.org/2018/10/04/myanmars-peace-can-only-be-successful-when-jmcs-implementation-is-effective/>

LAND AND PROPERTY

Ninety-nine percent of complaints to Karen State Gov’t are land issues

Karen Information Center, 15 October 2018

Land issues make up 99 percent of the complaints lodged by the public to the Karen State government’s Guarantees, Pledges, Undertakings Vetting, Complaints, and Pleas Committee within this year, the committee’s chair U Saw Hla Myint said.

“Farmland makes up 99 percent. [We] received at least five to ten cases each month. The rest is only one or two [complaints],” he said to KIC News on October 12.

The land complaints include issues with the military, the government, ethnic armed organizations, and companies.

Besides working for the government’s guarantees, pledges, and undertakings, the committee also has to hold hearings, give reviews, and do field inspections based on the complaints lodged by the public and give recommendations on the findings and transfer them to the government.

The complaint committee has received 99 complaints from January to July this year and it has finished working on four complaints, transferred eight complaints to respective departments and is working on 87 complaints.



The government's Guarantees, Pledges, Undertakings Vetting, Complaints, and Pleas Committee was established in February 2016 to solve public sufferings.

Link: <https://www.bnionline.net/en/news/ninety-nine-percent-complaints-karen-state-govt-are-land-issues>

Military Returns Land It Seized in Rakhine State

The Irrawaddy, 15 October 2018

NAYPYITAW—The Myanmar Army, also known as the Tatmadaw, has returned over 300 acres of land it previously confiscated on the grounds of the food security of Tatmadaw troops in Rakhine State's Ann Township.



“The Tatmadaw has left 300.18 acres of land and handed it over to the government. The government gave temporary permits [for farming] to its original owners. So far, the Tatmadaw has returned over 500 acres of lands for which temporary permits were issued,” Ann Township lawmaker of Rakhine State Parliament U Khin Maung Htay told The Irrawaddy.

According to Myanmar's farmland laws, when confiscated lands are returned, the original owners do not immediately get Form 7, which is the ownership certificate. Instead, they get Form 3, which is a

temporary permit for farming. They get Form 7 only if they can present documents in support of their ownership.

The Tatmadaw's handing back of land was marked by a ceremony held in Ann Township on Thursday which was attended by Vice-President Henry Van Thio, who is also the chairman of the Central Committee for Rescrutinizing Confiscated Farmlands and Other Lands, alongside permanent secretary of the defense ministry Brig-Gen Aung Kyaw Hoe.

Temporary farming permits for 300.18 acres of land were handed to 41 original owners. The lands had been confiscated by No. 373 Light Infantry Battalion of the Western Command.

The land cannot be used for farming immediately—embankments need to be repaired and farmland reestablished as the battalion used the land for breeding fish and prawns, said lawmaker U Khin Maung Htay.

Link: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/military-returns-land-seized-rakhine-state.html>

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Loans to help farmers with crops to be increased

Myanmar Times, 23 October 2018

The state-owned Myanmar Agriculture Development Bank (MADB) is increasing the amount in crop loans it

provides to farmers to help them cover the cost of production from K50,000 per acre to K100,000 per acre, the Ministry of Planning and Finance (MOPF) said in a statement yesterday.

MADB provides loans for crops such as rice, various kinds of beans, cotton, and corn to help farmers cover some of the costs to grow crops for the harvesting season.

In 2016, the bank increased the loans it provided to rice farmers from K100, 000 per acre to K150, 000

Last year, loans for other crops were raised to K50, 000 per acre from K20, 000.



“The government has a long-term goal to help farmers and agri-businesses to develop with improved financing and we are now doing more than in the past to provide financial support to the agriculture sector,” MOPF Deputy Minister U Maung Maung Win said at a talk about financing support for the agriculture sector and small- and medium-sized enterprises earlier this month.

According to the bank, it released K1.600 trillion in loans to farmers from 2015 to 2016. This increased to K1.7 trillion last year.

So far this year, the bank has provided loans totaling K1.3 trillion to some two million farmers. Loans are provided to farmers according to the growing seasons in the country.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/loans-help-farmers-crops-be-increased.html>

MRTV, four ethnic media outlets agree to cooperate in news sector

Khonumthung News, 22 October 2018

Myanmar Radio and Television (MRTV) and four ethnic media outlets signed an agreement at the MRTV office in Naypyidaw on October 18 to cooperate in the news sector.



These four ethnic media outlets are Khonumthung, the Than Lwin Times, Narinjara, and the Kantarawaddy Times, which are also members of Burma News International (BNI). MRTV will buy news relating to state parliaments, ethnic culture, development, education, and health and broadcast them on MRTV Web Portal.

“It’s difficult for us to survive among ethnic media. To be frank, we are publishing the news on Facebook and our website without earning any money. But, the MRTV is buying our news now so we will receive fee and some profits to a certain extent,” said U Philip Soe Naing, managing editor of Khonumthung News Group.

This project is funded by Germany-based DW Akademie and nine media outlets have also cooperated with MRTV earlier this year. Now, 13 media outlets are cooperating with MRTV.

Link: <https://www.bnionline.net/en/news/mrtv-four-ethnic-media-outlets-agree-cooperate-news-sector>

Govt readies additional supply of electricity to meet demand

Myanmar Times, 22 October 2018

Arrangements have been made to prepare sufficient electricity to meet rising demand next year, according to the Ministry of Electricity and Energy (MOEE).

The rate of increase in electricity consumption typically rises by 15 percent per year on average. This fiscal year though, demand is expected to increase by 19pc. As such, the MOEE is aiming to raise supply to 3700 megawatts during the period, from 3400MW this year.

U Soe Myint, deputy permanent secretary of electricity at the MOEE, warned though, that some projects may still be delayed, depending on the availability of funds. The ministry is expected to spend K578 billion in next year, which includes international aid.

Myanmar generates most of its energy through gas and hydropower plants. As construction of several hydropower projects is still ongoing, additional energy requirements for the fiscal year will be supplied by three gas-fired power plants, said U Khin Maung Win, managing director of the Electric Power Generation Enterprise (EPGE).

These include the 225MW combined-cycle Sembcorp Myingyan gas plant, which commenced operations this month, a second gas plant producing 90MW of energy in Myingyan as well as a 145MW plant in Belin, Kyaukse.

Meanwhile, construction of transmission lines, substations and distribution lines to transmit the energy generated to the national grid will need to be accelerated.

However, U Khin Maung Win said more delays can be expected at this stage. “If there are financial difficulties or objections from the community in the process of constructing the supporting infrastructure such as power stations, substations and distribution lines, it will lead to delays,” he said.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/govt-readies-additional-supply-electricity-meet-demand.html>

GDJV companies group introduces project in Dawei

The Global New Light of Myanmar, 21 October 2018

Greenfield Dawei Japan Village-GDJV consortium held a ceremony to introduce its project, in conjunction with Japanese traditional cultural ceremony at the DDPC of the Royal Palace Hall in Dawei yesterday.

The ceremony was opened with the Japanese traditional drumming and Taninthayi Region Chief Minister Dr. Lei Lei Maw delivered an opening address.

In his opening remark, the Chief Minister underlined the Dawei Special Economic Zone for the development the Taninthayi Region.

“This project will be commenced in the open season and plans are under way to repair Htee Kee Road, as a result, the region



will be developed soon,” said the Chief Minister.

GDJV (Greenfield Dawei Japan Village) is a Japanese companies group that included many types of building construction techniques, and the leading of the group is Greenfield Economy Geopolitical Research Institute.

The Dawei Special Economic Zone (SEZ), in cooperation with Myanmar, Thailand and Japan, is one of the main SEZs in Southeast Asian region.

Then Vietnamese Ambassador to Myanmar, First Secretary of Royal Embassy of Cambodia to Myanmar, vice chairman of Kanchanpuri District of Thailand, Commercial Counselor from Viet Nam Embassy in Myanmar and Chairman of Yangon International Hotel made their introductions. Afterwards Chairman of Regional Hotelier Association U Kyaw Win expressed his thanks at the ceremony.

Also attend at the ceremony were Regional Chief Minister and ministers, Deputy Speaker of the Regional Hluttaw, regional chief justice, Hluttaw representatives, departmental heads of the region, Japanese business personnel, Chairman and members of Kanchanpuri District Merchants Association, members of the Merchants Association from Myeik and Dawei, officials and invited guests.

Link: <http://www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com/gdjv-companies-group-introduces-project-in-dawei/>

Kayin reaches out to citizens with new budget

Myanmar Times, 17 October 2018

The regional budget for Kayin State was announced at the Karen State Budget Transparency Forum as part of a series of efforts by sub-regional governments to provide transparency to its citizens, with support from The Asia Foundation (TAF).

Held on October 11 in Hpa-An, attendees included representatives from NGOs, civil society organisations, ethnic minority political parties and other stakeholders.

TAF's Citizen's Budget report presents important budget information through easy-to-understand text and visualisations. For example, the document explains the overall macroeconomic performance of the Kayin government, breakdown of revenue and expenditure, and provides information on where taxes are spent.

“During the dictatorship, for 50 years, the government and its citizens were far apart,” said U Zaw Min Htut from TAF.

“Budget transparency allows [us] to transition more smoothly to democracy by giving strength to state regions and consequently decentralising power,” he added.

This is the third and final step of workshops that The Asia Foundation provided in an effort to improve literacy and awareness of citizens regarding financial matters.

Nowadays, states enjoy a degree of freedom in planning their budget. But for this past six months, only six percent of Kayin's state revenues have remained within the region.

As Kayin serves as a point of trade between Myawaddy border and Mae Sot, and a tourist destination, many believe that the Union government should allocate more funds to the area.

Out of all the industries, construction will receive most of the state allocation, in part because many Karen people suffer neglect due to their remoteness and poor road connections. Years of fighting, floods and an overall lack of funds have left the state underdeveloped.

The construction sector is of such importance that the government is keen to invite construction firms to attend future workshops in order to collaborate with municipal institutions.

In the future, if they receive enough funding, many people would like to see the money being invested in tourism to attract both domestic and international tourists. But for now, the state is left to itself to build much-needed infrastructure.

In rural areas of Karen state, a normal citizen can be taxed two or three times just in a span of two miles by different entities.

In addition to this, there's also the taxes and fees collected by entities such as Karen National Union (KNU) which acts as a government, with its own jurisdictions, education and taxation policy, in territories along the border with Thailand.

On a national level, budgeting and auditing go through an intricate bureaucratic process.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/kayin-reaches-out-citizens-new-budget.html>

New beaches explored in Ayeyawady Region

Eleven Myanmar, 10 October 2018

HINTHADA- The government is now exploring untouched beaches in Ayeyawady Region with the aim to bolster the booming tourism industry.



At present, the development of tourism industry has given first priority to the Gaw Yan Gyi Island and Shwe Thaung Yan Beach.

“In the past, the visitors went to Shwe Thaung Yan Township by boat. At that time, a businessman built a hotel in Shwe Thaung Yan and it was named as Shwe Thaung Yan. Now, the construction of a bridge has been completely finished. In recent days, the Regional Minister arrived at the bridge while inspecting works done to spruce up the environment around the beach. The tar-paved road is being built on the concrete bridge. Upon

completion of the road, visitors from Chaungtha Beach can easily go to the Shwe Thaung Yan Beach as transportation is now accessible... Businesses had already invested in real estate there. The Shwe Thaung Yan Beach will be overtaking the Chaungtha Beach's popularity soon,” said Zaw Lin Tun, Deputy Director of Hotel and Tourism department in Ayeyawady Region.

“Mainly, we need electricity. Currently, Chaungtha and Ngwesaung Beaches do not enjoy full access to electricity. However, plans are underway to supply electricity in Ngwesaung Beach. In doing so, Chaungtha and Ngwesaung will get full electrification because both beaches are connected. There is no electricity in Ngayoke Kaung Township due to lack of access to the national grid. The regional government committee is now planning to provide easy transportation access as well. Upon completion of the tar roads, electrification will come with it. It isn't easy to establish all round development,” said Zaw Lin Tun.

With the aim to fulfill the demands of the tourism industry at the beaches in Ayeyawady Region, relevant ministers together with departmental heads and MPs had planned to implement tourism development projects.

Link: <http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/tourism/15414>

Mon State set to issue licences for salt farming

Myanmar Times, 5 October 2018

The Mon State government will issue licences for salt farming through the Salt Industry Department, an official said.

U Khin Soe of the department said the date of the licence release will be decided at a meeting of the department today.

“Applicants have to bring their land ownership document No. 7 and land record 105 to apply for the license. They also need the recommendation of the salt supervision inspection group and village ward officer,” he said.

As of October 1, 87 applications for the licence had been received. The application period was from July 15 to September 15, and late applicants face a fine of K300 (US20 cents) per day.

But he said the decline of salt prices and greater competition from Thailand and China are big challenges facing salt farmers. According to the department, there are 76 salt farms in the state covering over 3000 acres. Over 23,985 tonnes of salt were produced in Mon last year, half of which was approved for export by the department.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/mon-state-set-issue-licences-salt-farming.html>

Registration given to elderly in Kyaukgi Township for ease in issuing social pension

Eleven Myanmar, 8 October 2018

For ease in issuing social pension to elderlies living within Mon Region in Kyaukgi Township, Taungoo District, members of parliament from Kyaukgi Township and officials from Immigration Department made a field trip on October 6.

“The government previously gave out social pension to 90 years old citizens. But now, it is being given to elderly persons of 85 years of age. Besides, ID cards belonging to the elderly people have been mostly destroyed or unreadable over the years. Therefore, to be able to smooth and convenient in issuing social pensions to elderly people, we visited homes of the elders one after another and gave out new ID cards. With the aim of easily obtaining their rightful social pensions while they are still alive, we are making home trips in order to issue the ID cards,” said Nyi Zaw Htat, official from Kyaukgi Township Immigration Department.

Besides issuing ID cards to elders, ID cards were also issued to 176 students from Mon basic high school. The government is drafting effective strategies to provide better support for the elderly in cooperation with civil organizations just like in developed countries.

The social pension is the first government-sponsored monthly cash transfer programme for the elderly and is part of the 2014 state-level elderly protection strategy. According to the 2015-2016 projections about older people in Myanmar, there are 4.75 million seniors, or 9.06 percent of the country’s 51 million people.

Link: <http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/local/15396>

Paving the Way for Further Development in Southern Shan State

Myanmar Business Today, 10 October 2018

German Parliament Members attended the opening ceremony of Baw Ning-Thayetpu road (KLW II) under Rural Development Programme Phase II & III at Kalaw Township, Southern Shan State.

The road was constructed as part of the Rural Development Programme (RDP) funded by the German Financial Cooperation via KfW. Germany is the first partner of Myanmar to support a programme of rural roads construction. So far, the German Government has committed EUR 29 million grant funds under this programme and additional EUR 10 million grant funds after the flooding in 2015 to develop rural areas by upgrading and constructing rural roads and bridges.



Head of Parliament Member's group, Mr. Kekeritz, emphasized in his speech the value of rural roads, "Products can be traded more easily, children can go to school regularly and medical care can be accessed easier. Transport costs will drop, and, despite heavy rains, the road will be usable all year long. Meaning that the joint programme will improve the concrete living conditions in the Shan State and at the same time will have a substantial impact on the economic development of the country."

The programme has been implemented within the framework of German Financial Cooperation via KfW Development Bank by the Department of Rural Roads Development (DRRD) of the Ministry Construction. The programme comprises rural roads of more than 160 km, which will benefit about 50,000 people living close to the roads.

Additionally, the DRRD is trained in road maintenance, planning, procurement and supervision to deepen essential capacities for the successful handling of road construction projects.

Link: <https://www.mmbiztoday.com/articles/paving-way-further-development-southern-shan-state>

Five-year project targets persons with vision impairment nationwide

The Global New Light of Myanmar, 14 October 2018

Yangon Region government is currently implementing a five-year project from 2017 to 2021 to help people who are blind and visually impaired on a national scale, said U Naing Ngan Lynn, Yangon Region Minister for Social Affairs at the celebration event of the World Sight Day held on 11 October at the National Eye Bank of the Yangon Eye Hospital.



"The national project aims to offer necessary cares to persons with vision disabilities throughout the nation between 2017 and 2021, raising helping hands for the target population", U Naing Ngan Lynn said. He told the gathering that the most common eye diseases in Myanmar are cataract, glaucoma, poor eyesight, injuries, eye diseases caused by diabetes and hypertension. The cataract is responsible for about 60 % of the total eye problems. Thus, providing effective care and treatment for cataract is expected to protect people from vision loss.

Moreover, there are about 350 eye specialists in Myanmar, providing eye cares and the ratio of eye patients and doctors is 150,000 to 1. Continuous efforts have yearly been made by the authorities so as to achieve universal coverage in primary eye care, including offering eye care at schools, field trips to cure rural people with eye diseases and giving primary eye care trainings, he added.

With the permission of the Ministry of Health, the Yangon Eye Hospital continues to make field trips to offer eye care to people in need in cooperation with related ministries and well-wishers. In their field trips in the last year, eye specialists offered free surgical and medical treatment to people in Danubyu, Labutta, Gyobingauk, Moenyo and Sittway towns. To offer better eye care to local patients, the hospital made collaboration with international bodies from Japan, Singapore, Australia, the U.S. and the Netherlands.

Link: <http://www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com/five-year-project-targets-persons-with-vision-impairment-nationwide/>

Action Plan for Women's Rights and Needs to be implemented in Mon State

The Irrawaddy, 15 October 2018

MAWLAMYINE, Mon State—Women from Mon State calling for their rights and needs in peace and development will soon have their concerns developed into an action plan, Myanmar's Minister of Pa-O Ethnic Affairs Daw San Wint Khine said.

Mon State has seen an increasing number of rape cases against minors aged 16 years old and below, according to local women's rights groups. Yet, the rights activists stressed, in many incidents, the rapists aren't punished as they are not taken to court because instead the case is settled through negotiation, often involving compensation.

During the discussions late last year, women also demanded sexual and reproductive health awareness programs and training at community level, Minister Daw San Wint Khine said.



In discussing the issue of economic challenges, women voiced demands for guarantees of equal [daily] wages between men and women, as well as to enact laws guaranteeing women's safety in the workplace.

In education, women called for an end to the practice of assessing male and female students' matriculation exam scores differently for university acceptance and to open training centers for orphaned, homeless and vulnerable youth.

A 30 percent quota of women in village administration was also demanded for the women's participation in leadership.

The needs and priorities identified by the women regarding peace and development in their state were presented to the Union government this year and they are awaiting approval to develop an action plan, she said. Many young girls have been forced to drop out school and go to neighboring countries to work to support their families, she said, adding that this can consequently be connected with trafficking cases, forced marriage and adolescent pregnancy.

Ma Cherry Soe from Mon Women's Network said that after the action plan is drafted, she hopes it will address gender-based discrimination and violence in the state which women face in their day-to-day lives.

Link: <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/action-plan-womens-rights-needs-implemented-mon-state.html>

Thirteen more townships to benefit from development programme

Myanmar Times, 16 October 2018

Development projects in 13 townships will be funded with surplus money from the Community Driven Development project managed by the Myanmar government and World Bank, said U Khant Zaw, director general of the Rural Development Department.

"There are extra funds, so we are arranging to extend the projects to 13 townships," he said during a discussion of the CDD held recently. Since 2013, more than 12,000 villages in 63 townships have benefited from CDD projects.

"As a result, 7.1 million households have reaped the fruits of development," said U Aung Thu, minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation.

CDD builds or repairs basic infrastructure in villages. Through the projects, more than 8000 miles of village roads and more than 3400 school buildings have been built, more than 3200 potable water systems have been installed, and more than 1400 villages have received electricity. CDD projects focus on ethnic minorities.

Twenty of the 63 townships where projects are being implemented are in conflict areas.

Public inspection results show that over 95 percent of the villagers are happy with the projects.

CDD has funding of US\$532 million, including a US\$400 million loan from the World Bank, US\$80 million in assistance from the bank, US\$22 million in loans from Italy and US\$30 million from the Myanmar government.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/thirteen-more-townships-benefit-development-programme.html>

LAW AND GOVERNANCE

Chin State has over 30,000 eligible voters for by-election

Khonumthung News, 9 October 2018

Matupi and Kanpetlet townships have 30,055 eligible voters for the by-election in the Chin State, according to the Chin State Election Commission.



The Chin State Election Commission's secretary U Linn Kyaw said the voters' lists have been posted in respective townships since October 1 and Matupi Township has 17,604 eligible voters and Kanpetlet Township has 12,451 eligible voters.

"The Ward and Village Election Commission and polling station groups will supervise and provide assistance [to the voters] so that the eligible voters can voter secretly and freely without

losing their rights on the Election Day," said U Linn Kyaw.

The Election Commission has started giving trainings to the Ward and Village Election Commissions from Kanpetlet and Matupi townships since September 27 so that they can raise awareness among the constituents.

The Chin National Democratic Party (CNDP), the Chin Progressive Party (CPP), the National League for Democracy (NLD), and the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) will run in Kanpetlet while the Chin League for Democracy (CLD) and the NLD will run in Matupi during the by-election.

Link: <https://www.bnionline.net/en/news/chin-state-has-over-30000-eligible-voters-election>

OTHERS

Skirmish breaks out between KNPP, Tatmadaw

Kantarawaddy Times, 22 October 2018

A skirmish broke out between the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) and the Tatmadaw in Nan Kit Village of Hpaswang Township in the Kayah State on Saturday morning (October 20).

“We have our men there. They have to do their work. There is a gate they’ve to take care. According to our men, they (the Tatmadaw) went around our gate without asking for permission. As I’ve already said, they have to do their duty if they (the Tatmadaw) failed to report. They have to do their work,” U Nye Reh, who runs the KNPP’s liaison office in Loikaw, said to the Kantarawaddy Times.

On condition of anonymity, a local resident told the Kantarawaddy Times that the Tatmadaw entered the KNPP-controlled area in Hpasawng Township on October 19 without informing the KNPP.

“A force of 20 military troops entered the KNPP-controlled area [on October 19] after walking around Nan Kit gate. They were active [on October 20] after reinforcing their troops. They said they were going to Man Ta Lel in Hpasawng town. I don’t know the number of force in detail. The military shouldn’t do such kind of action that harms peace while they keep talking about peace,” he said.

U Nye Reh said both sides have agreed in the union-level ceasefire agreement to notify each other before travelling for business or informal purposes but the Tatmadaw often travels without informing the KNPP.

Mutual trust is the predominant factor while the KNPP is striving to sign the nationwide ceasefire agreement (NCA) and it will be difficult to trust the Tatmadaw if it often behaves like this, he continued.

“Based on the current situation, we know who is trying to shatter trust and how it started. They shouldn’t do this and there should be mutual respect during the trust-building period,” he added.

Link: <https://www.bnionline.net/en/news/skirmish-breaks-out-between-knpp-tatmadaw>



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