

THAILAND

1 – 14 April 2018

MEDIA MONITORING REPORT # 180

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

[AYA Bank launches home loan plans](#)

Myanmar Times, 1 April 2018

Myanmar's second largest bank has announced that it would provide loans for 4000 residences.



AYA Bank made the announcement on March 30 at a meeting with the media at its office in Yangon. Any Myanmar citizen who is 20 years of age and older with stable and reasonable income can apply for a loan.

"Our aim is mainly for the employees to own a house or apartment worth from K200 lakhs to K1200 lakhs," said the managing director of AYA Bank, U Myint Zaw.

The loan programs require minimum 30 per cent down payment and 13 per cent interest rate. Customers can enjoy loan tenor period up to 15 years, he added.

As AYA Bank has always been a trusted partner to people, we aim to help the country's economy and construction sector by developing the opportunities for people making their dreamed residences affordable, U Myint Zaw said.

U Myint Zaw said the loan plan would extend to other major cities like Mandalay and Mawlamyine if this plan is successful.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/aya-bank-launches-home-loan-plans.html>

[News media training schools to be opened](#)

Myanmar Times, 2 April 2018

The Government is planning to open news media training schools to produce quality journalists of international standard, according to Deputy Minister for Information U Aung Hla Tun.

The Ministry of Information is closely cooperating with international and local media organisations, including UNESCO, to train journalists, he said.

To train journalists, the ministry has been cooperating with schools such as the Myanmar

Journalism Institute and Myanmar Media Development Centre, he said.

However, issuing journalist registration cards is the responsibility of media organisations and news houses, he added.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/news-media-training-schools-be-opened.html>

Programme to lower dropout rate attracts 75,000 students in 10 years

Myanmar Times, 3 April 2018

A Total of 75,000 students attended the Non Formal Primary Education (NFPE) programme over the past 10 years, according to the Myanmar Literacy Resource Centre (MLRC).

The free education programme provides an opportunity for children who do not have access to education to attend classes outside of public schools.

The Ministry of Education, MLRC, UNICEF, UNESCO and other organisations and donors collaborated to shape the programme, which started in the 2008-09 academic year.

The programme targets children from 10 to 14 years old who have no access to education. It gives them a chance to re-join school to finish basic education. The programme takes two years to complete.

"After completing the NFPE, children can access formal education in a government school. Thus, the NFPE is an equivalency education programme. It benefits children as it offers a second chance for children to attend school," said U Than Oo, chair of the MLRC.

Although 75,000 students attended the programme within the past ten years, according to the 2014 census, 2.7 million children from five to 16 years old do not attend school or drop out before they finish primary school. There are an estimated 3.5 million people over 15 years old who are illiterate in Myanmar.

A reason for dropping out is that some children work in factories or other jobs to help their family earn money, said U Tin Nyo.

In the 2017-2018 academic year, the NFPE programme is being conducted in 93 townships nationwide, and nearly 70 of its students took the matriculation exam.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/programme-lower-dropout-rate-attracts-75000-students-10-years.html>

Ministry mulls more protection for local, foreign fishery workers

Myanmar Times, 9 April 2018

The government is hopeful that enactment of a marine fisheries law will better protect Myanmar citizens who are working in foreign fisheries, especially in Thailand, from exploitation by employers, a senior official said.

Union Minister for Labour, Immigration and Population U Thein Swe said the Myanmar Marine Fisheries Law that is being drafted will include provisions related to local and migrant fishery workers.

“The Department of Fisheries is writing the law. Matters related to fishery workers are going to be included so they can get protection from rules and regulations in the law,” the union minister said in a recent workshop on the law held in Nay Pyi Taw.

Currently, the Myanmar Fisheries Federation is in discussion with relevant departments and organisations to ensure more protection for fishery workers abroad.

A total of 41,125 Myanmar fishermen are working in Thailand, another 45,400 are employed in fishery-related industries, and 58,741 in marine product factories.



The Department of Fisheries is expected to submit the law to the Amyotha Hluttaw during the next session, according to U Win Myint, secretary of the Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries Development Committee of the parliament.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/ministry-mulls-more-protection-local-foreign-fishery-workers.html>

Fifty teachers to be used for uplifting ethnic literature, culture

Burma News International, 10 April 2018

Fifty teachers from various localities will be trained from April 8 to 12 to uplift Kayah literature and culture, according to the Kayah Literature and Culture Committee’s secretary Khu Peh Nyoe Reh.



The training is given to primary teachers who can teach Kayah literature in line with five points of the curriculum, namely mother tongue, traditional culture and customs, famous Saophas from the Kayah area, staff rules and regulations and ethics, and ICT (computer and internet skills).

The state government will assist in uplifting the ethnic literature and culture sector by allocating budgets for ethnic literature and culture in the

upcoming 2019-2020 fiscal year, according to Khu Peh Nyoe Reh.

Pyithu Hluttaw MP Dr. Khin Si Thu said the public, the government, and the Hluttaw need to harmoniously support the preservation of literature and culture.

“This literature is like human resources. We need to understand that no one will know about it and trust it if we don’t preserve it,” said Dr. Khin Si Thu.

Link: <https://www.bnionline.net/en/news/fifty-teachers-be-used-uplifting-ethnic-literature-culture>

Over 45 Japanese companies invest in Thilawa SEZ

Eleven Myanmar, 11 April 2018

Japanese firms have invested most in productivity sector in Thilawa Special Economic Zone and the number has reached over 45, according to the zone management committee.

Businesses from 17 countries are investing in the zone and out of 89 factories approved, 39 are said to be running.

Till March in 2017-2018 fiscal year, a total investment of about US\$400 million had come to Thilawa SEZ under the special economic zone law, according to Directorate of Investment and Company Administration.

Upon completion of the Thilawa SEZ project in Yangon Region, it is expected that about 150 foreign companies will be investing about US\$1.7 billion, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

Link: <http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/business/13734>

Over 50 multipurpose shelters to build in Ayeyawady region in this year

Eleven Myanmar, 11 April 2018

The government is planning to build over 50 multipurpose shelters in Ayeyawady region in this year, said Director Myat Moe Thwin from Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement.

“We have natural disaster fund to build the cyclone shelters. They will be used as cyclone shelters during disaster and used as schools and buildings for social occasions at other times,” she said.

The location of the shelters will be proportioned with the number of population. They will be different sizes and types depended on the population number, she said.

“The lower part of the shelter will be used for animals and upper part is for people. We stored food, drinking water, buoyant aids, water tanks, generators and fuel tanks at the shelters in line with international criteria,” she said.



According to assessment made in 2012, there are more than 3,000 cyclone shelters built by the government and other organizations in the region but they are not enough, she added.

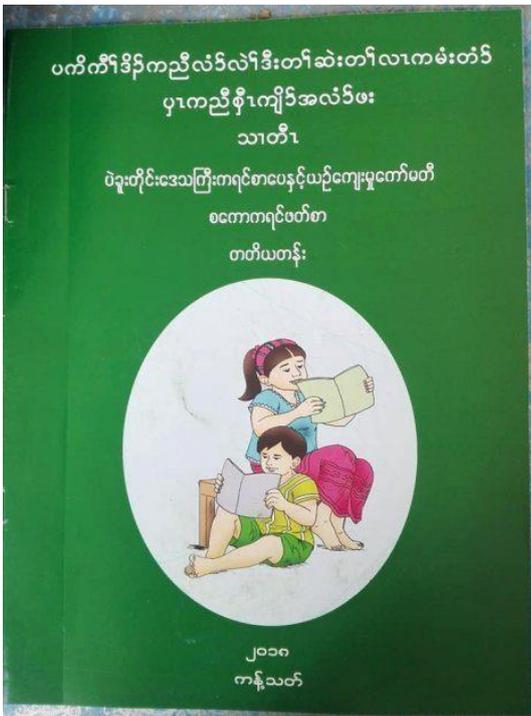
The ministry is planning to build 57 multipurpose cyclone shelters in Ayeyawady region, 26 multipurpose cyclone shelters in Rakhine State, one multipurpose cyclone shelter in Chin and Shan states respectively in 2018 using K 15 billion from national disaster management fund.

Link: <http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/local/13735>

Karen Language Teaching Moves up to Grade 4 in Pago Region Schools

Karen News, 12 April 2018

Karen Students attending government schools in the Pago (Pegu) region will be taught Karen language subject up to Grade 4 in 2018-19 academic year. In the previous academic year, the Karen language, as a subject was taught only up to grade 3 students.



Saw Augustine Khu, Communication Officer of the Pago Karen Literacy and Culture Committee, told *Karen News*, that it is an important step that Karen Language would be taught to students as a subject in government primary schools at grade 4 in Pago region.

Saw Augustine Khu said the Regional literacy and culture committee led a training course for Karen Subject teachers in Pago region from March 26th to 31st at Boe Tu Bible School in Taung Tar Kone of InnTaGaw Township to introduce Grade 4 Karen Subject textbooks.

Currently, it is permitted to teach Karen language as a subject in primary level (Grade 3), and according to Pago Regional Literacy and Culture Committee, they would publish the Grade 4 Karen Textbooks, even though the Ministry of Education has not said anything regarding publishing of the textbooks for Grade 4 Karen Subject.

Since 2004, Sgaw Karen was taught in government school in Nyaunglebin Township, Pago Region. Currently, the Karen Subject is taught in almost all townships inside the region and

Grade 4 Karen Subject will be added this coming academic year.

Link: <http://karennews.org/2018/04/karen-language-teaching-moves-up-to-grade-4-in-pago-region-schools/>

Ethnic Affairs Ministry receives below one percent budget

Burma News International, 10 April 2018

Despite a pledge made by the new government to prioritize peace and ethnic affairs, the Ministry of Ethnic Affairs ranks at the bottom of the budget list.

The Ministry of Ethnic Affairs has been authorized to assist in ethnic literature, culture, traditional customs, and drafting of curricula for ethnic literature.

The Ministry of Ethnic Affairs was only allocated 0.2 percent of the union budget for the 2017-2018 fiscal year and it only receives Ks 54.845 million in the Kayah State’s budget, ranking among the bottom of the list.



The Road Department receives the highest budget allocation with Ks 19 billion followed by the Municipal Department with Ks 6.037 billion in the Kayah State.

Since the ministry is not authorized to carry out the development of ethnic people, it only receives the least amount of budget.

Link: <https://www.bnionline.net/en/news/ethnic-affairs-ministry-receives-below-one-percent-budget>

Fishery degree programme set up as pilot project at Yangon University

Myanmar Times, 11 April 2018

A bachelor's degree in fishery will be launched in the coming academic year at Yangon University, an official of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation told *The Myanmar Times*.

"We decided to offer bachelor degree courses related to fishery for the next academic year. The Hluttaw approved the proposal for classes at the higher education level. The undergraduate programme will take place at Yangon University," the official said on Monday.

The proposal was approved by the Hluttaw in August and the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation made the arrangements to open the university.

Although the Amyotha Hluttaw approved the opening of the university, the project cannot be implemented yet, prompting the bachelor's degree fishery course to be set up at Yangon University as a pilot project.

The Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation and the Myanmar Fishery Federation designed the curriculum after the proposal was approved by the Amyotha Hluttaw, and the ministries met at the end of March to finalise it.

Earning a fishery bachelor's degree (B.Sc Fishery) is expected to take four years, but this has yet to be confirmed, according to the ministry.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/fishery-degree-programme-set-pilot-project-yangon-university.html>

Myanmar creating new destinations to attract tourists

Mizzima, 14 April 2018

Myanmar's Hotels and Tourism Ministry is striving to promote tourism by developing new modes of tourism and creating new tourist destinations.



The ministry has permitted about 1,628 hotels and guest houses with some 65,470 rooms to operate as of March 31, official Global New Light of Myanmar reported.

The ministry is also striving to promote eco-tourism, cultural tourism and community-based tourism in resource-rich areas, including historical landscapes, rivers, lakes, beaches, islands and forests.

The country's Mandalay, Yangon, Bagan, Inle, Kayin and Mon state, Myeik archaeology, Chin

Hills and beaches such as Chaungtha, Ngwe Saung are famous for its tourist attractions.

At present, the ministry has established eco-tourism sites and community-based tourism spots including Thandaunggyi in Kayin state, Pa-O community-involved tourism in Shan state, the Kayah Cultural Community Tour, community-based tourism with dolphins along Ayeyarwady river, the Phoe Kyar elephant camp, Popa

Mountain National Park, Indawgyi Wildlife sanctuary and others.

Link: <http://www.mizzima.com/business-domestic/myanmar-creating-new-destinations-attract-tourists>

LAW AND GOVERNANCE

Law drafted to save underground water

Myanmar Times, 6 April 2018

A Law for the conservation of Myanmar's underground water resources has been drafted and is hoped to be enacted in the near future, said U Ba Shwe, an adviser to the Ministry of Construction and the National Water Resources Committee.

"We have been working on developing this law since 2014 with government departments and experts, led by the ministry's Urban and Housing Development Department, and we are on the seventh draft of the law. It will be sent to the cabinet and to the Hluttaw.

If the Hluttaw reviewing committee thinks the law is OK, it will call for public suggestions. I hope it will be soon," he said on Sunday. Experts are concerned about groundwater pumping, especially in Yangon, where speedy urbanisation has occurred in a delta area that is at risk of salt intruding on freshwater resources.



The state newspaper Global New Light of Myanmar said that as an agro-base country, water utilization for agricultural sector stands for 90% while industry and domestic use is only about 10% of the total water use.

The total utilization of the nation's water resources is only about 5 percent of the potential, it said

Experts said current groundwater use in the country has not reached critical levels, but the issue should be considered to plan for the future.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/law-drafted-save-underground-water.html>

PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

2nd Mon Political Conference to be held in the first week of May

Burma News International, 3 April 2018

The Second Mon Political Conference will be convened in the first week of May to obtain approval for the constitution of the Mon national representative party.

During a public conference of the Mon National Party Implementation Group held in Inn Din Village on March



30, Nai Ta La Nyi said: “Arrangements have been made to hold the Second Mon Political Conference in the first week of May.”

The previous Mon Political Conference set down a three-month time frame to draft the constitution and letters have been sent to Mon political parties to invite them to join the implementation of the Mon national representative party.

The 21-member implementation group and 19-member supervisory group were established during the First Mon Political Conference to establish the Mon national representative political party.

The First Mon Political Conference was held at the Sasana 2500 Building in Taung Yoe Tan, Mawlamyine on January 13-14.

Link: <https://www.bnionline.net/en/news/2nd-mon-political-conference-be-held-first-week-may>

OTHERS

[EU calls on Myanmar Government to take action against landmine use](#)

Burma News International, 4 April 2018

On the occasion of today's International Mine Awareness Day, the Ambassadors of the European Union and its Member States have called on the Government of Myanmar to take action against the use of landmines in order to better protect the high number of civilians living in mine contaminated areas in Myanmar.

According to the statement, “Landmines are harming and killing people in many conflict affected areas around the world – even long after a conflict ends. Most of the time, landmines primarily affect the most vulnerable: children, civilians fleeing ongoing conflict or farmers in rural areas who have no choice but to enter mine contaminated areas in order to gain livelihoods and feed their families. Mines and explosive remnants of war are not only a serious threat to the safety, health and lives of civilians, but also a cause for increased poverty levels and a significant impediment for socio-economic development in the affected areas.



In Myanmar, nine out of the fourteen states and regions are considered to be contaminated with landmines and explosive remnants of war. Reports of new use of landmines in 2017 in conflict affected areas in Kachin, Shan and Rakhine state are a serious cause for concern.

The Government therefore needs to take urgent action against the use of landmines and we strongly encourage Myanmar to join the Ottawa Convention banning the use of landmines. With a view to better protect the civilian population we also call on the Government and ethnic leaders to support mine clearance

operations wherever possible. The European Union offers its full support in advancing Mine Risk Education across the country and stands ready to assist mine clearance operations.”

Link: <https://www.bnionline.net/en/news/eu-calls-myanmar-government-take-action-against-landmine-use>

[Kayin residents fear coal plant may go ahead](#)

Myanmar Times, 9 April 2018

Kayin State residents expressed concern the construction of a coal power plant in their area might continue despite the decision of the Union government to reject the project.

Saw Nay Lin Htun, a resident of Hpa-an, said the state government might overrule the decision of Union government and decide to push through with the project.

“Although the project has been declared cancelled at the Union level this remains unclear at state level,” he said. “Public access to information on the project remains limited, and land has recently been purchased by TTCL (Toyo Thai Power Myanmar Co Ltd) in the project area. “

On March 14, Union Minister of Electricity and Energy U Win Khaing announced at a news conference that the Myanmar government will not grant permission for the proposed 1,280-megawatt coal power plant in Hpa-an.

“We are very happy and appreciate the announcement of the Union minister that this project has been cancelled. Despite our happiness at the result, we remain cautious, Saw Aung Than Htwe said. A total of 131 local organisations and residents signed the open letter and made three requests to the Union Government: to cancel all proposed and suspended coal-fired power plants, to pass a national moratorium on coal power plants, and to promote and regulate the implementation of sustainable renewable energy projects.

In April 2017, the Kayin State government (KSG) and TTCL signed a memorandum of understanding to conduct a feasibility study for the proposed Hpa-An coal plant. In June 2017, 42 Kayin State-based civil society organisations and 130 other CSOs issued a statement opposing the project.

The proposed project site was on the Thanlwin River. Local civil society groups collected around 2980 signatures from Kayin State residents who opposed the project and submitted them to the Karen State chief minister.

Link: <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/kayin-residents-fear-coal-plant-may-go-ahead.html>

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