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Myanmar Highlights

4 December 2013

• The Myanmar Ministry of Information has announced that the BBC - along with three other international news agencies - has been given permission to open a news bureau in Myanmar. For decades the BBC has been banned from reporting from Myanmar, although during that period it remained one of the key sources of information for Myanmar-speaking audiences, both inside and outside the country. Announcing this weekend's decision, Deputy Minister of Information U Ye Htut acknowledged the BBC as a "model" for its standard of journalism. (From *BBC Online* 2 December 2013)



• On 20 November 2013 the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (**UMFCCI**) hosted a Myanmar- Mongolia Business Forum and Business Networking Workshop. Attendees participated in discussions on the current economic climates, government policy, development, investment and environmental issues in both countries. (From *New Light of Myanmar* 21 November 2013)

• On 15 November 2013 DBS Group Holdings Ltd (**DBS**) opened a representative office in Yangon. The Singapore-based bank will provide advisory services to Singaporean companies conducting business in Myanmar and Myanmar companies investing overseas. The services DBS intends to offer include credit facilities, trade finance, cash management and treasury advice. (From *Myanmar Times* 25 November 2013)

• Prolonged discussions between the government and telecoms operators Telenor and Ooredoo have delayed the telecommunication companies' operations schedules. The passing of the Telecommunications Law and the issue of licences have taken longer than expected. Telenor expects to secure its operating licence by the end of 2013. Telenor had planned to commence operations in Myanmar by mid-2014, although the delay in the licensing process now means services will not launch until at least August 2014. Telenor plan to open approximately 100,000 retail shops around Myanmar during its first five years of operations. (From *Myanmar Times* 25 November 2013)

• The European Investment Bank (**EIB**) will lend €30-100 million (US\$40-134 million) a year to small and medium enterprises (**SMEs**) in Myanmar through local banks. On 15 November 2013, the EIB and the Central Bank of Myanmar (**CBM**) signed an initial agreement on financial cooperation. According to CBM vice president U Set Aung, the CBM and EIB will sign a framework agreement in February 2014 in relation to the provision of funds to selected local banks. Detailed lending procedures will be set out in the framework agreement. The EIB will also provide technical assistance in relation to the development of the financial sector and will focus on infrastructure, transport, energy, and environment related projects. (From *Myanmar Times* 25 November 2013)

- The Myanmar government plans to issue new rules implementing the 2012 Foreign Investment Law. According to Daw Mya Sandar, deputy director of the Business Promotion Section of the Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development the changes, which are likely to be introduced in December 2013 or early in 2014, will focus on sectors in which foreign investment is currently restricted. The current implementing rules create five categories for business sectors, ranging from those that allow 100% foreign ownership to those in which foreign investment is prohibited. Other categories allow investment as a joint venture with a local partner. It is believed that pursuant to the amended rules some sectors previously closed to foreign participation, or in which foreign participation was limited to joint-ventures, will be opened up. (From *Myanmar Times* 2 December 2013)
- Myanmar's Ministry of Health is believed to be drawing up regulations which will permit foreign hospital operators to open facilities in Myanmar either independently or through joint ventures. Mr. Chatree Duangnet, Chief Operating Officer of Bangkok Dusit Medical Services Pcl (**Dusit Medical**), Thailand's largest private hospital group sees Myanmar as the company's "first priority for foreign investment" but that Dusit Medical was waiting for the government to make the investment laws clearer. According to the Myanmar Health Minister Pe Thet Khin cooperation between the government and private sector will be key in achieving universal coverage. Myanmar's health care system has not yet recovered from years of limited investment. In 2000 the World Health Organization ranked Myanmar second-last out of 191 countries surveyed. (From *Reuters* 2 December 2013)
- The Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (**MOGE**) has announced it has received bids from thirty companies including both major private international and state-owned oil and gas companies, in response to Myanmar's recent offshore licensing round. Bidders included Daewoo, PTTEP, TOTAL, Unocal Myanmar Offshore (Chevron), GAIL India, ONGC and Petronas among others. Companies had the option of bidding for up to three of eleven shallow water blocks and nineteen deep water blocks. Ten companies have submitted bids for three blocks. The 11 shallow water blocks offered in the round comprise three blocks in the Rakhine Offshore Area, three in the Moattama Offshore Area and five in the Tanintharyi Offshore Area. Of the 19 deep water blocks, 12 are in the Rakhine area, three in Moattama and five in Tanintharyi. (From *Platts.com* 28 November 2013)



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