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## Myanmar Highlights

25 September 2013

- As reported in Myanmar Times, DICA Administration and Accounts Director U Linn Htut reports recruitment plans for a 40% staff increase (to more than 200) in order to handle an expected increase in business and investment activity for overseas and local companies. A director of the agency Daw San San Myint noted, “this is the first recruitment effort, and it won’t be enough to keep up with the current volume of work.” The agency is also slated to open new offices in Mandalay and “other areas where investment and business activity is highest”.

- Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation urged action on land use complaints – of almost 4 million acres of agricultural lands, more than one-quarter have not yet been developed. The Ministry and Thura U Shwe Mann see these lands as critical to value-added production and economic well-being for rural farmers and their communities, and a possible focus for overseas investments and exports.

- For this year’s tourism High Season, in addition to new crops of strawberries, coffee and vineyards, and new events such as the Balloon Festival, Pyin Oo Lwin is looking to increase its historical tourism market. Government tenders have been let to private companies for refurbishment of three famous colonial-era boutique hotels --- Croxton (Gandamar Myaing), Craddock Court (Nan Myaing), and Candacraig (Thiri Myaing). Thiri Myaing was built in 1904 as a “chummyery” for the Bombay/Burmah Trading Company and Eric Blair – later known as George Orwell stayed there.

- New Light of Myanmar notes - the Ministry of Finance announced a tax collection goal for 2013/2014 of US\$2.3 billion, or almost double the previous collection target. Expert observers noted that funds are essential for infrastructure and education projects to aid economic development initiatives.

Recent reforms have increased collections dramatically especially within regulated industries such as large banking, construction and retail entities, headed by Kanbawza Bank. Further reforms, encouragement and monitoring will increase collections from smaller and mid-sized companies as Myanmar increases participation in the global economy.

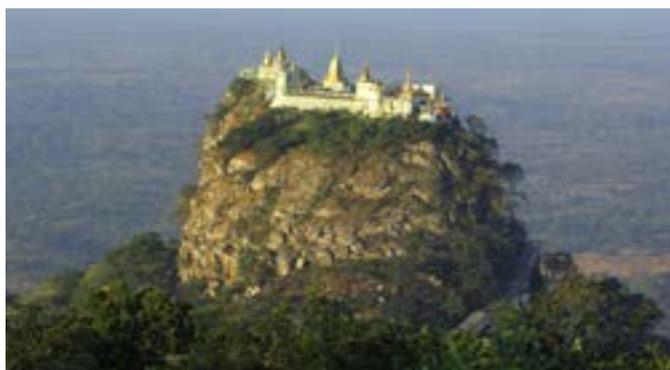
- AusAID, BCF, World Bank, several UN agencies and many other private companies are increasing staffing, both local and expatriate. Competition will be keen for qualified candidates, especially with the onset of the 2013 tourist season - most notable is 800 jobs offered across a broad spectrum of tourism-related jobs for Novotel Hotel and MGallery (Naypyitaw). In related news, tiny Luxembourg will provide US\$6.67 million for job training prioritized in the Tourism Master Plan with assistance by ADB. U Thet Toe Lwin, Deputy Chairman of UMTA, said service levels are improving, but concern remains for dealing with the expected increase in visitor traffic this year. He said, “Hotel staff, tour guides, bus drivers --- all need more access to training opportunities”. Industry officials note that this includes administrators, hotel managers, back-of-the-house training for reservations, POS and cashiering, and a host of technological services and equipment.

- Shwegu Thitsar reports more job-training news, Myanmar’s Maritime University has signed an agreement with Sweden’s World Maritime University for e-learning and hands-on training through scholarships to enhance Myanmar’s participation in the maritime education sector. As estimated 18,000 to 25,000 Myanmar seamen are highly skilled maritime workers in the engine decks of the oil and gas tanker industries, automobile transport, cargo and cruise ships around the world. Many of them return after their contracts to start small businesses or work in Myanmar’s growing industrial sector

- Facebook page – Gamlang Razi Eastern Himalayan mountaineering challenges and opportunities in Chin State? A joint Myanmar/USA Expedition, funded by Htoo Foundation and other major sponsors, has solved part of the question of South East Asia’s highest mountain ... hitherto, Mt. Khakaborazi has held pride of place, estimated by the Survey of India at 5,887m (1922) and 5,881m (1925) . The expedition’s leaders used modern GPS technology for their recent ascent of Mt. Gamlang Razi – now pegged at 5,870m, up from a historical estimate of 5,850m. Other technological measurements over the years have grown or shrunk both mountains, leading to the need for more data and evaluation. To add to the excitement is the obvious comparison for ecotourism and mountaineering activities in the remote villages of Chin State, similar to the stir created in the Central Himalayas’ Namche Bazaar of the 1970s and 80s. Expedition photographer Eric Daft described the Chin, Kachin, Tibetan and even Pygmy villages of the region as “one of the least travelled areas on the planet.”

## Natural Resources update

- Alstom (France) is establishing a representative office in Myanmar with an eye towards Myanmar’s emerging hydropower interests.
- U Ken Tun, CEO of Parami Group, on current on-shore/offshore block tenders, questions the policy of requiring local companies to partner with international investment for on-shore/shallow-water blocks, but denies local involvement in off-shore blocks. He notes the growth opportunities for Myanmar companies to develop expertise for the more challenging deep-water projects, and the opportunities for more competition and professional skills, as well as enhanced revenues to meet Myanmar’s infrastructure and development needs. At present, Myanmar companies compete in the service and logistics sectors to supply the oil and gas industries, but there could in fact be direct and indirect enhancements as part of a long-range plan.



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