EP-1 Minister answers question about electricity generation, power supply projects

NAY PYI TAW, 24 March – Amyotha Hluttaw representative U Khin Maung Yi of Ayeyawady Region Constituency-6 raised a question at today’s Pyidaungsu Hluttaw session. He said it is learnt that at the confluence of the Ayeyawady River, the largest hydropower project with 6000 megawatts of installation power is being implemented. It is also found in news that a number of hydropower projects are being implemented at Maykha-Maylikha basin, Thanlwin, Chindwin, Sittoung and Rakhine State. So, he added he believed Myanmar will enjoy adequate electricity in a few years. He would like to know about electricity generation and power supply projects in detail, he said.

The farmers and people of Ayeyawady Region engage in agricultural, economic and social affairs relying on the Ayeyawady River. He is concerned that Ayeyawady Myitsone project may affect the areas along the downstream of the river. This is why he wanted to know what kind of loss and damage the project might cause. And if so, he asked what measures would be taken and how the people would have to prepare.

In response, Minister for Electric Power No. 1 U Zaw Min said as for the first question, the ministry is mainly responsible for implementing power supply projects in order to generate electricity. When the Tatmadaw government started assuming State duties in 1988, there were two hydropower stations and seven gas-fired power stations totalling nine with 529 megawatts of generating capacity in Myanmar. Now, the country has 16 hydropower plants, one coal-fired power plant and 14 gas-fired power plants totalling 31 with 3285 megawatts of generating capacity. Therefore, more 22 stations have been built with more 2756 megawatts of generating capacity. The government has been implementing a 30-year long-term strategic power project since 2001. Large-scale projects usually take five to ten years to complete due to complicated technology, geological conditions, mechanical requirements and budgets. However, with the projects being implemented on a yearly basis, a project or more are completed every year.

With the aim of generating more electricity in a short time, the government is implementing the projects in three ways – projects implemented by related ministries, projects implemented companies of national entrepreneurs and projects jointly implemented by ministries and foreign companies by inviting foreign investments. There are altogether 68 projects with 45568 megawatts of generating capacity being undertaken— 15 by EP-1 Ministry, nine by national entrepreneurs and 44 by joint-venture. These projects will significantly increase electricity generation of the nation.

Concerning the second question, the minister said the issues of natural environment and relocation are considered as a special matter. At the site of Myitsone project, there are 91 inches of annual rainfall. The average flow of water to the river is 128.52 million acre feet per year. The dam to be constructed is of concrete face rock-fill type with 4300 feet in length, 458 feet in height and 9.788 million acre feet of water storage capacity.
The amount of storage is 7.6 percent of the flow into the river. So, 92.4 percent of the flow will keep flowing to the river. The water stored in Myitsone Dam will flow to the Ayeyawady River through a drain when generators start running. Thus, agricultural, economic and social matters relying on the river will not have any effects. When there is less water flowing to rivers as they are dammed, especially in the hot season, the amount of flowing sea water increase and agricultural works can be affected. As Myitsone Dam is a hydropower project, generator will be running in the hot season and the water from the drain will regularly flow into the river. When electricity is generated upon completion of the project, the water level of Ayeyawady River will rise 1.5 to 2 feet even in summer. That is why the flow of salt water can be prevented more and watercourse will be better.

Therefore, the project cannot produce any negative effects at all, the minister concluded.

Source: NLM 2011-03-25