

Consideration must be taken for export of groundnut, sesame and sunflowers at a time when there is local demand for edible oil while striving for production of more edible oil crops.

**Constant monitoring to be made on technique guaranty of projects which require financial assistance, durability of supplied items and technological transfers
[Amyotha Hluttaw day 20]**

NAY PYI TAW, 6 Aug-Amyotha Hluttaw continued its meeting for the 20th day at the Amyotha Hluttaw Hall in the Hluttaw Complex here today, attended by 206 representatives including U Khin Aung Myint, Speaker of Amyotha Hluttaw.

During the meeting, two representatives raised questions related to the commerce sector and Deputy Minister for Commerce Dr Pwint Hsan replied the questions.

U Thein Win of Sagaing Region constituency No. 9 asked if there is a plan to issue individual trading card, when the trading would be permitted and whether there is a plan to relax on import of restricted goods, whether there is a plan to introduce a tax system to control import of goods instead of restricting them and whether there is a plan to inspect the food that should not be consumed by people and release information to let the people in border areas know it.

The deputy minister replied that issuing export and import license cards has been suspended since 2002 due to weak in organization set up and scrutinizing of the individual owned businesses. Permission has been sought to issue the Individual Trading Card with the aim of trading goods from border areas and national races legally and the individual card system would be introduced in accordance with rules and regulations once the ministry got the permission, he said.

Regarding the second question of relaxation on import of restricted goods, the deputy minister said out of goods that have been banned by the ministry, seasoning powder, soft drinks, biscuits, canned food and fruits and dried noodles with FDA recommendation are allowed to be imported through shipment and border check-points in accordance with rules and regulations.

Besides, in an attempt to satisfy local consumption and demand, some fruits are allowed to be imported and some are allowed only in the season when such kinds of fruits are harvested in the country. Some goods are restricted not to be imported as part of efforts for giving protection to local agro businesses. Such kind of restriction has practiced not only in Myanmar but also in other countries. To give protection to the interests of the country, some goods would be restricted not to be imported. Meanwhile, to fulfill the local demand, the ministry would relax the ban over some restricted goods from foreign countries, the deputy minister said.

Regarding the question No. 3 of whether there is a plan to introduce a tax system to control import of goods instead of restricting them, the deputy minister replied that the ministry has collected tax in accordance with rules and regulations over goods which imported legally while seized and arrested illegal goods and smugglers. In an attempt to control some goods, the ministry has increased the trade tax from eight per cent to 100 per cent over the goods.

Regarding the question No. 4 of whether there is a plan to inspect the food that should not be consumed by the people and release information to let the people in border areas know it, the deputy minister replied that ministries concerned, state/region planning and commerce ministers, local authorities, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry and state/region chambers of commerce are working together to prevent the smuggling of foods, drugs and palm oil which should not be consumed by the people and to take actions against the smugglers.

As part of efforts for raising awareness among the people in border areas, the ministry has drawn the programme and has started conducting awareness workshops and seminars monthly in states and regions.

Regarding the illegally imported edible oil that should not be consumed by the people, measures are being taken by state/region governments, the Custom Department, Myanmar Police Force and the General Administration Department while awareness against the illegally imported edible oil has been raised through media.

U Khin Maung Yi of Ayeyawady Region constituency No 6 asked whether there is a plan to lay down a policy that would be effective in the long-run and to issue laws and rules, orders and instructions regarding the import of vehicles and issuing license to the illegally imported motorcycles.

Deputy Minister Dr Pwint Hsan replied that in other countries, old vehicles are abolished when they are expired their licenses. However, in Myanmar, owners of old vehicles are allowed to swap their vehicles for new ones so that they cannot loss. In the future, any one can buy cars at show rooms.

The Union Government Office issued the notification No 45/2011 on 28 October, 2011, announcing the organizing the supervisory committee on import of vehicles, and the committee have taken measures step by step for import of cars by eligible consumers including companies, those who are working in foreign countries, sailors and those who have foreign currency accounts. Besides, permission has been granted to open sales centres to sell the vehicles by consignment system.

For convenience in public transportation, the Ministry of Commerce has given a green light to import taxis, city buses and trucks freely and is working in coordination with the Ministry of Finance and Revenue and Ministry of Rail Transportation to be able to lower the registration fees for the vehicles.

The above policy is the new one which would take effect in the long-run and enacted in accordance with rules and regulations to satisfy the demands of the people. The new policy has hit the minority but benefited the majority and improve the image of the country.

Regarding the issuing of license to illegally imported motorcycles, the deputy minister replied that the ministry had carried out programmes for issuing licenses to unlicensed motor cycles for seven times from 1999 to 2010. For the remaining mortorcycles, the ministry has issued licenses to them from 5 June to 4 October, 2012, for the eighth time and the order to take actions against the unlicensed motorcycles would taken effect as from 4 October, 2012.

The move aimed at helping those bought illegally imported motorcycles to be legal and to eliminate the illegal import of motorcycles in an attempt to prove protection to those who are producing motorcycles at home. To get the license, owners of the motorcycles have to pay 5 per cent of the value of the motorcycle for the tax and 5 per cent for the trade tax. Meanwhile, in an attempt not to hit the home-made motorcycle market, the trade tax for home-made motorcycles is charged only 3 per cent and the trade tax for import of raw materials is allowed to be paid when finished products are one sale.

Long-term policies will be adopted for import and production of vehicles and motorcycles, issuance of licences at home, investment, use, requirement of infrastructures, transport, local and international markets and law, rules, orders and directives will be issued.

With regard to the question asking whether there is a plan to disburse agricultural loans to farmers and loans for odd-job people without interests by U Thet Naing Oo of Bago Region Constituency No 6, Deputy Minister for Agriculture and Irrigation U Khin Zaw replied the Myanma Agricultural Development Bank under the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation disburses bank loans to farmers for cultivation of crops in time. Therefore, the farmers are to repay loans to the bank with prescribed interest.

The interest rates are reduced from 17 per cent over K 100 in the past to 15 per cent as of September 2011, 13 per cent beginning January 2012 and 8.5 per cent starting from 1 April 2012. Thus, K 100 loan must be repaid with K 0.71 interest. For undertaking the tasks in line with the financial rules, there is no plan to disburse agricultural loans to farmers without interest.

As to the question asking whether there is a plan to disburse loans for odd-job people without interests, the microfinance service plan is being implemented in dry zone, deltaic zone and Shan State zone. The amount of loan is K 50,000 in minimum and K 500,000 in maximum. Loans for business are set at 30 per cent and social loans at 24 per cent per year. Except the interest, any profit and costs are not collected over the loans.

The Ministry of Cooperatives has constituted 252 cooperative societies in 66 townships and disbursed K 30,000 each to all members of the cooperative societies.

The ministry has received K 697.089 million repayments from the lenders. Once more loan is disbursed to the societies that had completed repayments. Thus, the State or other organizations cannot disburse loans without interest.

With regard to the question asking whether there is a plan to provide educative talks on use of folio pesticides at farms due to very dangerous by Dr Tin Shwe of Yangon Region Constituency No 6, the deputy minister replied that the pesticide user course and Farmer Field School and fruit production course in regions and states are being conducted for enabling the farmers to systematically use pesticides.

From 2012-2013 to date, a total of 1883 training courses have been provided to 117,182 farmers and staff.

The Pesticide Law was promulgated on 11 May 1990 and the Pesticide Registration Board constituted on 25 February 1992.

Rules and regulations on pesticides have been clarified in regions and states, and the authorities inspected the pesticides. However, inappropriate pesticides penetrate into the market through various ways and means due to competitive imports and distribution.

Hluttaw representatives are urged to join hands with the authorities to expose those who distribute inappropriate pesticides to the market, and region and state governments to take action against the inappropriate pesticide distributors. The ministry undertakes educative works on danger of pesticides through media.

He continued his clarification for the question asking whether there is a plan to repair spillway, sluice gate and embankment of Padaukpin Dam for its durability in Hseung Village of Meiktila by U Soe Aung of Mandalay Region Constituency No. 11. He said that Padaukpin Dam is a diversion weir being maintained by the village. It has 2400 feet long and 16 feet high embankment irrigating 164 acres of farmlands. Due to frequently breakdown of the embankment, the dam was repaired in 2009 and 2012.

The fund will be demanded from the Union government in 2013-2014 fiscal year for maintenance of the dam, and the proposal will be submitted to the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw after receiving the approval.

Dr Tin Shwe of Yangon Region Constituency No 6 asked a question whether there is plan to produce adequate volume of edible oil crops through concerted efforts of Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, Ministry of Commerce and UMFCCI. The deputy minister replied that groundnut oil and sesame oil are essential for consumption in Myanmar in addition to sunflower oil, mustard oil and niger oil. As part of efforts to satisfy edible oil demand, palm oil and vegetable oils are imported.

Supervision is being made for systematic import of palm oil meeting set standards.

As illegal imported edible oils can harm health of the people, information has been given to the people through newspapers and journals not to consume the above-mentioned oils. Moreover, warnings about edible oil and other foodstuff harmful to the people will be issued.

In the past, the State allowed to export white sesame and black sesame. As of 9 August 2011, export of groundnut, red sesame, brown sesame, groundnut oil and sesame oil are allowed. Thus, cultivation of groundnut increases. Likewise, farmers from Magway, Mandalay and Sagaing Regions extend their cultivation of edible oil crops. Arrangements are being made for formation of Myanmar Edible Oil Millers' Association for milling groundnut and sesame meeting set standard.

With the assistance of the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, UMFCCI will organize cultivation of high yield groundnut strains in Bago and Ayeyawady Regions.

The ministry put 8.03 million acres of land under edible oil crops in 2011-2012 and 331,767 acres under oil palm. At present, a total of 102,445 acres of oil palm plantation produces 52566 metric tons per year. As groundnut and sesame seeds are exported, production of edible oil can decline. Thus, it still needs to raise production of palm oil.

At present, efforts are being made to shift from growing current edible oil crops to growing special high yield quality edible oil crops. It is required to take into consideration the export of ground nut, sesame and sunflowers at a time when there is local demand for edible oil while striving for production of more edible oil crops.

In an effort to produce more edible oil crops for local demand, all levels of activities are to be launched through private investments. Likewise, necessary steps are to be fully taken in the processing coconut oil into refined oil.

Next, member of Amyotha Hluttaw Bill Committee Daw Nan Ni Ni Aye read out the report of the Bill Committee as to natural disasters management bill.

Afterwards, the Speaker of Amyotha Hluttaw approved the natural disasters management bill para by para.

Next, Deputy Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement U Phone Swe tabled natural disaster management bill for approval, and U Aung Myint Thein of Kayin State Constituency No 9 seconded the bill.

The Hluttaw decided to approve the bill.

After that, Secretary U San Tun of Amyotha Hluttaw Bill Committee read out the report of the Bill Committee as to the State Crops Marketing Board Acts Revoking Bill.

Deputy Minister for Commerce Dr Pwint Hsan tabled the to the State Crops Marketing Board Acts Revoking Bill for approval, and U Tun Zaw (a) Ko Pauk of Bago Region Constituency No 12 seconded the bill.

The Hluttaw decided to approve the bill.

Afterwards, U Sai Kyaw Zaw Than of Shan State Constituency No 2, U Khet Htein Nan of Kachin State Constituency No 1, U Khin Maung Yi of Ayeyawady Region Constituency No 6, Dr Khin Shwe of Yangon Region Constituency-9, U Aung Kyi Nyunt of Magway Region Constituency-4, Dr Myint Kyi of Yangon Region Constituency-8 and U Soe Myint of Magway Region Constituency-6 in discussion over the proposal calling for the Union Government to hire independent consultant engineers in major projects of the State being undertaken through local and foreign investments for long-term interest submitted by U Myo Myint of Mandalay Region Constituency-6, saying that at present the world nations are interested in making investments in Myanmar; that in that regard any joint

venture needs to bring about mutual benefits to the most possible degree; that in view of some ministries' procedures it is found that they have not monitored the field trips, data collection and designing but they only end up with the recommendation of the investment companies; that when the concession period (eg, 30, 40, 50 years) comes to an end, it is important to be able to maintain the running conditions.

Although foreign investments are to be welcomed, it is to be based on Win Win policy to ensure mutual benefits in the longterm interest. Constant monitoring is to be made on technique guaranty of projects which require financial assistance, durability of supplied items and technological transfers.

Taking advantages of weaknesses of the country's technology, if they build factories, airports, hotels, dams and reservoirs, gas pipelines, deep water ports, power stations, roads and bridges with substandards the country will be at a loss by the end of the operation period.

There used to be severe consequences of the wrong projects. In that sense, experts are indispensable to ensure least damage to natural resources and environment and gain high profits. Moreover, transparency is also required and without it, it is hard to safeguard the national interest.

Regarding the proposal, Deputy Minister for National Planning and Economic Development Dr Kan Zaw suggested that the relevant ministry should make a thorough calculation on benefits before signing an agreement. Legal actions are required for the nation if terms and references of the agreement are not met.

In the time of the previous government, there was a restriction for the ministries over the hiring of consultant engineers due to economic sanctions. But at present, there are a series of technological assistance and economic cooperation from international community. In the process, some projects started hiring the consultant engineers.

In addition, the Planning Commission with the President as chairman has been formed under Order No. 28/2012 of the President Office of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar for economic development of the State. The Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry is hiring consultants to avoid environmental degradation in establishing the special economic zone. In future also, systematic steps are being taken to avoid environmental degradation and ensure correct investment proposed figures and emerging benefits.

The proposal was decided to approve through votes.

The session ended at 3.50 pm and the 21st day session will continue at 10 am on 7 August.

At today's session, six questions were asked and answered, two bills approved, and one proposal was discussed and passed.

Source: NLM 2012-08-07