

Fourth day of the fifth session of second Pyithu Hluttaw

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During 2016-2017 FY there were 626 tax payers conducting mobile phone sale business and income tax Ks 675.629 million and commercial tax Ks 1,488.268 million was collected. In order not to lose tax, it is important to coordinate and exchange information within related departments. From 2011-2012 FY to 2016-2017 FY 9,289 units of illegally imported mobile phone worth Ks 1,293.56 million were detained at airports and border posts.

Arrangements were made to reduce the tax burden of the people in purchasing mobile phones in the market and importing from abroad. Reviews were conducted to keep the prices of mobile phone low and relevant departments co-

ordinated to ensure that the country is not losing the tax and duties it ought to get.

Furthermore, Deputy Minister U Maung Maung Win answered to questions by U Kyaw Htay of Leshi constituency and U Bo Gyi of Chauk constituency questions on upgrading Myanmar Economic Bank branch and complete utilization of expenditures.

During the day's meeting, matters relating to transfer and reassigning of hluttaw committee members, confirming the substitutions and reforming, submission of Public Accounts Committee annual reports were also conducted. The fifth day of the fifth session of the second Pyithu Hluttaw will be continued on 29 May 2017. —Myanmar News Agency ■

Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker attends the ceremony of national education strategy of Ministry of Education

PYITHU HLUTTAW Speaker U Win Myint attended the ceremony of national education strategy of Ministry of Education (2016-2021) and promoting the educational challenges, promoting the learning opportunities and quality of education at the building of Hluttaw in Thab-

insaung hall yesterday afternoon.

Also present at the ceremony were Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker U Win Myint, Deputy Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw U T Khun Myat, Union Minister for Education Dr Myo Thein Gyi and other officials. —Myanmar News Agency ■



U Win Myint. PHOTO: MNA

170,000 WY-stimulants seized in Maungtaw

THE ownerless stimulant pills were seized near Kanyinchaung shore mangrove forest in Maungtaw Township yesterday morning.

While the Tatmadaw (Navy) forces were conducting regular

inspections in Maungtaw Township, they found suspicious objects near Kanyinchaung shore mangrove at about 9:00am and upon further inspection discovered and seized ownerless 170,000 WY/R-stimulant pills

worth in estimated Ks 3400 million.

The police are taking investigation into the case to arrest those who involved in the drug trafficking.—Myanmar News Agency ■

Myanmar's Outlook on China's OBOR in the context of ASEAN

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Unlike Myanmar and Vietnam, both Laos and Cambodia have no territorial disputes with China and have strong economic ties, which have benefited their trade and investment. When Laos, as non-claimant state on South China Sea (SCS) chaired ASEAN Summit in 2016, she officially made no opportunity to put on SCS agenda at the Summit. Cambodia becomes the friendliest country of China in ASEAN especially after taking Chair of 2012 ASEAN Summit and failure to release a joint communiqué on South China Sea. The connectivity under Belt and Road Initiative can contribute Laos from landlocked to land link, which will boost her economy and tourism. Both Laos and Cambodia are positive towards BRI but on the other hand, their concern is the financial matters for their projects, which can grab from the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB).

Although CLMV welcome and support OBOR, there remains concern about China on using OBOR as carrot and stick approach. The workshop hosted by Myanmar Institute of Strategic and International Studies in October 2016 came up with the recommendation with a mechanism of multilateralism among the CLMV to overcome the asymmetric relationship between China and CLMV. While most CLMV have no option for maneuvering Chinese OBOR, Myanmar has geostrategic advantages from which she could play either active diplomacy in multilateral relations or economic

benefits as well.

Regarding the proposed 21st century Maritime Silk Road, Myanmar considered that the route can play an important role in the development of the country by bringing new economic opportunities for Myanmar and its people. Myanmar is regarded as a newly emerging destination for businesses on account of its strategic geographical location. It is located on the cross road of China's Go West Policy on the one hand and India's Look East Policy on the other. Similarly, Myanmar is important for China's landlocked southwestern provinces market access to Bangladesh and India through transit trade instead of China's eastern coast.

Myanmar is always aware of changes and development in China that brings both positive and negative implications for Myanmar. Myanmar-China relations went sour after Myanmar's democratization and reforms were undertaken in 2011. Several factors which has been a crucial matters are suspension of China's state-owned investment of CNCP in Myitsone dam hydropower project, local people opinion on gas pipeline project which runs from Rakhine to Yunnan, severe environmental degradation in copper mine project in Monywa, land grabbing in many areas of Myanmar, illegal trading of jade in Northern Kachin and Chinese people influx into Mandalay areas. Besides, the railway project linking Kunming to Myanmar's Rakhine coast was cancelled in 2014 by Myanmar railway ministry due to the strategic reason such as this railway will give China access to

the Indian Ocean.

However, after the 2015 election, China-Myanmar relations were restructured with the State Counsellor's visit to China in September 2016. This visit paved the way for signing the implementation of two infrastructure development projects: one for electrification in Myingyan Township of Mandalay Region and another for highway project that runs from Shwe Li-Mandalay-Nay Pyi Taw-Mon State, which is under the framework of Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). China and Myanmar also reached an agreement to open a cross-border pipeline into southeast China during the state visit of President U Htin Kyaw to China in April this year.

Myanmar's position on China's OBOR can also be observed by the State Counsellor's visit to Beijing to attend the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in May 2017. She put an important emphasis on closer people-to-people bond, a peaceful and stable neighbourhood based on mutual understanding and respects are the basic principle for the success of the OBOR.

Even though Myanmar government is willing to embrace the OBOR, there remains the question of local people anxieties on Chinese investments. The Special Economic Zone that was given to China in 2015 in the Rakhine state may have major geostrategic, political and socio-economic implications that Myanmar cannot ignore. In this context, Myanmar needs to consider the best approach to engage with

China in order to maximize synergies. In response to public anxieties, the Chinese government is using media like Xinhua News Agency as a campaigning tool for better understanding of OBOR by compiling the data, which includes questionnaires on OBOR. China needs to pay attention to the feedback of these questionnaires in implementing the OBOR.

China has reiterated from time to time that cooperation under Belt and Road Initiative will be a "win-win" situation for both China and her counterpart countries. It is hope that China will attempt to guarantee its neighbour for common and mutual development in the future by paying attention to the perspective from Myanmar as well as from other ASEAN member countries.

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- * Abstract from the article "Assessing EU and ASEAN's Outlook on China's OBOR" which is posted on the Myanmar Institute of Strategic and International Studies website.