**Pyidaungsu Hluttaw discusses utilisation of loans**

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(MYANMAR NEWS AGENCY)

The 17th-day meeting of the seventh session of the second Pyidaungsu Hluttaw was held at the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw meeting hall in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday morning. Dr. Myat Nyana Soe, secretary of the Joint Bill Committee, read the report on the committee's follow-up findings and comments on the 2018 Union Tax Bill. Apart from the clauses and sub-clauses that need to be amended, the amendments proposed by the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw representatives were discussed by the Joint Bill Committee, Public Accounts Joint Committee and the related departments and organisations. It was agreed that the Hluttaw should agree to the initial comments made by the Joint Bill Committee.

The Joint Bill Committee had discussed in depth and agreed on the 2018 Union Tax Bill, with the Hluttaw representatives, providing suggestions to the Public Accounts Joint Committee, Pyidaungsu Hluttaw's Legal Affairs and Special Cases Assessment Commission, related ministries and organisations. Therefore, the Hluttaw should agree to the initial amendments and the follow-up amendments proposed by the Joint Bill Committee and approve the bill, he said.

The Joint Bill Committee then submitted a motion for the Hluttaw to approve the bill, section by section, and after the Hluttaw approved the bill, the approval was announced to the Hluttaw.

Next, Deputy Minister for Planning and Finance U Maung Maung Win tabled a motion for the Hluttaw to approve the entire bill, and after the Hluttaw approved the entire bill, the approval being announced by Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker Mah Win Khang Than.

Later, 14 Hluttaw representatives discussed the 87.091-billion Japanese yen loan from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to be provided to the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation, Ministry of Construction and Ministry of Transport and Communications. In his discussion, U Khin Cho of Hlaingthwe constituency said the aim of the loan was to develop the agricultural sector, improve the transport sector, and develop lives and reduce poverty of the people living in rural areas. He sought details about the current utilisation of dam water, plans to upgrade it with the loan, and thus, the resulting increase in agricultural productivity and the GDP.

The Ministry of Construction is building bridges and roads through a contract system, and plans should be in place so that black-listed companies (and people) are not part of the works. On the Ministry of Transport and Communications utilising the loan, he suggested the ministry must study the additional services it can provide and the income it can earn through the upgrade of the railways, coaches and locomotives.

U Tun Wei of Paunggyi constituency pledged his support, suggesting that the loan utilisation plan of the Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation Ministry for the dam would benefit some 70,000 households. Although he supported the loan for the Ministry of Transport and Communications to upgrade the Yangon-Mandalay rail line, he noted that Myanmar Railways was a state-owned enterprise that was incurring losses every year and, thus, it should ensure the loan is not wasted. In his discussion, U Tin Tun Naing of Seikyki Rhanuangtou constituency said he was neither objecting to the projects nor ignoring the benefits that could be accrued from the projects. However, the calculation and estimation of the benefits should be clearly explained. The return on investment, according to the explanation provided by the Deputy Minister for agriculture, livestock and irrigation, is very good, but it was too good to be true, he noted.

There is no objection to purchasing essential machinery with the loan, but the expenses for the machinery and equipment should be explained in detail, he said.

Similarly, Dr. Tin Tin Win of the Bago Region constituency (5), U Aung Thike of Seikphu constituency, U Kyaw Aung Lwin of Sedoktara constituency, Daw Yin Min Hlaing of Gangaw constituency, Dr. Win Myint of Bago Region constituency (11), U Sein Win of Maubin constituency, Dr. Win Aung of KhinU constituency, U Win Aung of Tabayin constituency, U Tun Win of Kyunhla constituency, U Hla San of Magway Region constituency (1) and U Win Aung of Sagaing Region constituency (3) also discussed the loan.

An announcement will be made later on holding the 18th-day meeting of the seventh session of the second Pyidaungsu Hluttaw.

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**MNHRC issues statement on peaceful assembly law**

**Following is the unofficial translation of the statement released by MNHRC.**

The Myanmar National Human Rights Commission has released a statement concerning the amendment of the Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Law.

The Amyotha Hluttaw, by a majority vote, approved the Bill of Amendment of the Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Law on 7 March 2018, and it will be discussed in the Pyithu Hluttaw soon.

The statement acknowledges that the general public is opposed to the amendments being made, which is said to be in opposition to democracy.

Critics say the amendments would place further restrictions on the right to protest and assemble. Opponents also claim the changes are overly broad and could be exploited to stifle political dissent.

The statement cites the UDHR (Union Declaration of Human Rights) – Article 19, “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of borders.” Article 20, “Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association. No one may be compelled to belong to an association”, and Article 29, second paragraph, “In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.”

It also cites ICCPR (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights) – Article 19, “Everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice.”