

Commerce Minister responds to query about transport of rice to Shan State (North)

NAY PYI TAW, 22 March – Amyotha Hluttaw Representative U Tun Kyaw of Shan State Constituency-10 put a question about transportation of rice at today's Amyotha Hluttaw session.

Minister for Commerce U Tin Naing Thein responded to the question saying his question was found to be the same as that of Pyithu Hluttaw Representative U Ye Tun (a) U Min Tun of Hsipaw Township Constituency and it was already answered on 11-3-2001.

Regarding the fact that 16th Mile Checkpoint between Mandalay and PyinOoLwin is imposing a restriction on transport of rice to Shan State (North) and coordination is necessary to do so, the camp is not be opened with the aim of restricting the flow of commodities. It is opened for security reasons to check arms, ammunitions, explosives and narcotic drugs. In the past, 16th Mile Checkpoint prioritized security and later on, measures had to be taken to check whether restricted items were carried or not as there had been cases of carrying illegal goods. The camp seized illegal general goods worth K 93.90 million, narcotic drugs worth K 698.40 million and jewellery worth K 2.40 million in 2009-2010 fiscal year; illegal general goods worth K 57.79 million, drugs worth K 70 million and jewellery worth K 1.80 million in 2010-2011 fiscal year. As for the seizure of smuggled goods by the checkpoints along Mandalay-Lashio-Muse Road, general goods worth K 2328.96 million, drugs worth K 940.43 million and jewellery worth K 452.10 million were confiscated in 2009-2010 financial year; and general goods worth K 4482.49 million, drugs worth K 213.02 million and jewellery worth K 3086.44 million in 2010-2011 financial year.

Permission has been given to transport local foodstuff for the people of the townships of Shan State (North). But for transportation of crops such as rice, beans and pulses and wheat that are likely to be smuggled out, they can be transported only after being checked by the camp whether they have been approved or not. It is learned that for the people of Shan State (North), rice merchants are distributing about 20000 bags of rice a month and rice merchants associations from states and regions and rice merchants distributed 280960 bags of rice for the year 2010.

It is not necessary to offer bribes to any checkpoints, including 16th Mile Camp, for distribution and transportation of rice by merchants and if there is any bribery case, complaint can be lodged for taking action.

In the past, rice was distributed to Laukkai and other regions after seeking approval from the said camp. Now again, permission is being granted to do so for townships in need of rice.

Concerning the matter of profit loss because of failure to transport rice from one region to another and purchase of rice from black market by the local people at high price, the minister clarified that in the past Ayeyawady Region alone was regarded as the granary of Myanmar.

Thanks to the guidance of the Head of State and efforts of local authorities and peasants, Bago Region, Sagaing Region and Rakhine State have enjoyed rice sufficiency as well as surpluses. The government is also encouraging boosting production of rice in other states and regions requiring rice. Now, the whole nation produces 12 million tons of rice and the amount of rice distributed to the regions by major rice producing regions is only 1.2 million tons, accounting for one-tenths of the nation's total rice production. So, that amount cannot affect the peasants of rice producing townships. It seems that there is no cases of buying rice from black market as rice shops in every town and market are selling their rice normally and openly. It is necessary for regions with rice sufficiency to boost production and for regions with insufficient rice to make efforts for self-sufficiency. Then, the nation will restore the status of becoming the largest rice exporter of the world. Some nations have offered to grow and produce rice by hiring some land in Myanmar although they are able to produce enough for their self-sufficiency. When reviewing those points, it is required of the people to work hard with national outlook.

As to the matter of the hilly region people's loss of forest resources, climate change and difficulty in water course due to slash-and-burn agriculture, it can be found that Yunnan Province including Xishuangbanna region like the hilly region of U Tun Kyaw are growing coffee, tea and rubber. Such long-term cultivation can earn more income and maintain more fertile soil than slash-and-burn farming.

It is therefore needed to work for changes and developments.

Regarding the matter of harming morality of staff from checkpoints and bribery cases, the minister said checkpoints are opened to inspect arms, explosives and drugs for security of the lives and property of the people. But there were some cases in which smugglers offered bribes to staff in order to smuggle out their illegal goods and some cases in which some corrupt staff took bribes from merchants.

Such cases are being exposed and under investigation and action is being taken. So, the people are urged to cooperate in eliminating smuggling and bribery by informing authorities concerned about such cause if there is any.

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