Second regular session of first Amyotha Hluttaw continues for 39th day
Three questions answered, one proposal withdrawn, one bill approved

NAY PYI TAW, 24 Oct-The second regular session of the first Amyotha Hluttaw continued for 39th day at Amyotha Hluttaw Hall in Hluttaw Building here today, attended by Speaker of Amyotha Hluttaw U Khin Aung Myint and 208 Amyotha Hluttaw representatives.

U P Maung Soe of Kayah State Constituency No (1) asked whether there is a plan to build annexe of patient ward in Loikaw General Hospital. Union Minister for Health Dr Pe Thet Khin replied that his ministry is building new hospitals, upgrading existing hospitals either in term of adding beds or construct-ing extended buildings in response to demands, opening new special health care departments, and building efficient organizational structure. For extension of Loikaw General Hospital, the Ministry of Health will act upon proposal of the department concerned in accordance with priority list when the State grant fund.

Deputy Minister for Agriculture and Irrigation U Khin Zaw replied to queries of two representatives about agriculture and irrigation.

Regarding the question of U Swe Aung of Yangon Region Constituency No (12) about if there is a plan to enact a law on using land free of charge for villagers, with a view to contributing to conservation of resources around villages, livelihood of rural folks and poverty alleviation, the deputy minister replied that Section 37 (a) of the Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar says "The Union is the ultimate owner of all lands and all natural resources above and below the ground, above and beneath the water and in the atmosphere in the Union," and the Section 40 of Farmland Privatization Act 1953 states "The President, whatever said in other existing laws and this Act, has the right to manage alluvial land, village communal land and cultivable virgin land that can be used at the State's will, in accordance with by-laws promulgated by this Act.

Pastures and village communal are to be maintained undamaged except the President or the authorities appointed by the President issue other orders." According to Notification No 32/88 of former Agriculture and Forestry Ministry dated 30-12-1988, in practicing the rights concerning farmland management works, region and state level authorities were authorized to direct and supervise in conserving pastures, and village communal land and township level authorities were authorized to direct and supervise in conserving village communal land, ward/village-tract level authorities were authorized to preserve village communal land.

Fulfilling the basic needs of people was prescribed in Myanma Forest Policy adopted in 1995 for implementation of forest works. Rural residents are allowed to take limited forest preducts required for household, agriculture and fishery use from reserve forests in accordance with forest law and by-laws.

Currently, measures are taken to reduce risks of environmental degradation to minimum level in improving economy, social affairs, health, and education of rural regions, with a view to sustainability of bio-diversity.

Locals are allowed to establish communal forests in reserve forests with a view to contributing to fulfilling basic needs of local people. With a view to provision of fire woods and forest products to be used in household, agriculture and fishery to rural people, the State has arranged one household to grow three teak plants and 20 hardwood plants and one village to set up an acre of village-owned wood plantations annually since 2008- 2009 so that rural people do not need to go to distant places for wood and easily take woods near homes and villages.

Comprehensive and accurate laws, by-laws and instructions on forestry were prescribed in the 30-year national forest sector master plan for rural people in extracting forest products for personal and commercial use.

Law on permission of foreign fishing trawlers for fishing, fishery law, Myanmar sea-water fishery law, Myanmar fresh-water fishery law, all of which were enacted over 20 years ago, describe that Fisheries Department is levy reasonable tax on workers employed in fishery, without posing burden to them. Sixteen kinds of fresh-water fishing equipment and six kinds of sea-water fishing equipment are exempted from taxes for rural people.

License fee for fish-breeding in 1250 square feet fish pond is exempted for a household's consumption. Region/ State governments can manage communal fishing ponds in accordance with needs of regions concerned.

Legislation for free fishing is to be carried out by the region or state Hluttaw and government as the tax for fishing is to be collected by the region or state authority in accordance with the Article 188 and 254 of the constitution.

The Union Government, union ministers and region and state governments concerned would coordinate to manage the work in accordance with the existing laws while conserving the natural resources.

Dr Khin Shwe of Yangon Region constituency No. 9 asked whether there is a plan to repair the 5-mile long Khattiya Yekyaw Creek and 6-mile long drainage channel between Yedwingon and Tamartakaw villages in Twantay Township to prevent floods.

The Union Minister replied that three sluice gates are used to control overflow water in the rainy season and to store drinking water in summer season in Shwemuyin in Twantay Township. Yekyaw Creek links the Toe and Panhlaing rivers and the river's five-mile section between Khattiya and Tu villages and near the Panhlaing River has been silted up. The Panhlaing River has also been silted up and the fresh water can be flowed through the Toe River. However, being located away from the Yekyaw Creek, the creek could be silted up again.

Therefore, it is required to calculate cost and advantage for dredging the creek and still, there is no current plan to carry out the work.

The drainage channel between Yedwingon and Tamartakaw villages is six miles long and 15 to 10 feet wide and about four and half feet in depth. If the drainage channel is dredged, it would be helpful to store fresh water for planting rice in summer season and to control water in rainy season. The plan for dredging the drain have not yet drawn in the 2010-2011 budget year and detailed assessment would be made to the plan and would be included in the priority list depending on the budget allocation. The proposal to provide fuel and costs for the project by Dr Khin Shwe and heavy machinery by the government would be submitted to the ministry, he said.

U J Yaw Wu of Kachin State constituency No 12, U Ye Myint of Bago Region constituency No 4 and U San Pyai of Kachin State constituency No 7 discussed the proposal to urge the Union Government to supervise the win-win cooperation between farmers and companies not to loose farming rights of farmers submitted by U Swe Aung of Yangon Region constituency No 12.

They discussed that the State can confiscate farmland by giving compensation to farmers and should take care of farmers not to loose their farming rights. The State should also provided assistance to farmers to promote their living standard. The rice production makes up 42.5% of the GDP and 14.5 % of export value.

The population of farmers makes up 72 % of the total population and 63 % of workers of the country. Rice production value should meet the population growth of the country and shoud not cause deficiency at home.

Though rice companies are allowed to work in the farming sector, they have no rights to seize farmland of farmers. Therefore, they seconded the proposal, they said.

Deputy Minister for Agriculture and Irrigation U Khin Zaw discussed that assessment would be made to facts and figures related to the proposal and to reply of the Yangon Region government and would reply the proposal after assessing the findings.

He continued to say that during the time of previous government, under the Article 39 of the 1953 Land Nationalization Act, Yangon Division Law and Order Restoration Council allowed the Department of Human Settlement and Housing Department to use altogether 69,937 acres of farmland in three townships in Dagon Myothit to build housings of Dagon Myothit in the 1989- 1990 year.

It is found that existing model special agricultural zone-1 is located in the area chosen to build Yangon Station under the urban project and the existing model special agricultural zone-2 is located in the Dagon Myothit (South) and Dagon Seikkan townships, and still, the farmland are not yet used fro the urban project.

Before the urban project in the 2008-2009 fiscal year, a total of 943 farmers had planted rice on 6584 acres of rain-fed fields. During the visit of the then Prime Minister in July, 2008, he directed to establish special agricultural zones in the plots in the three townships for the urban project and Yangon Division Peace and Development Council had allowed companies in September, 2008, to implement the mechanized farming system. A total of 9873 acres of farmland in the special zone 1 and 2 were allotted to 16 companies.

Under the supervisory of the local authority, Department of Human Settlement and Housing Settlement had given compensatory payment to 1085 farmers at the rate of K20,000 per acre for 7505 acres in the mechanized farming special zone, reaching total amount of compensatory payment K151 million. Huts and monasteries in the zone have been moved to the area of the urban project and roads have been constructed in the area.

Companies provided K 208.2 million to farmers for 4875 acres of farmland at the rate of K 25000, K 40000 and K 50000 per acre, K 58.6 million for construction of new schools, totaling K 266.8 million.

The companies built over 467000-ft inlet channel and over 372000-ft outlet channel and reclaimed 6063 acres of land. Power cables and transformers have been installed in each plot of companies for pumping water and water pumps are being used.

Machinery is used in growing paddy. A total of 88 tractors, 13 mini tractors, 59 power tillers, 44 transplanters, 10 harvesters, 19 mini harvesters, 11 reapers, 27 threshing machines and 116 water pumps are being used in trial run.

Before the emergence of model special zone, the paddy yield in 2007-2008 from 1878 acres is 145238 baskets at the rate of 77.34 baskets per acre and that in 2008-2009 from 6584 acres of monsoon paddy plantation is 388326 baskets at the rate of 58.98 baskets per acre.

Since the establishment of model special zone in summer paddy season of 2008-2009, per acre yield was improved.

In 2010-2011, the paddy yield from 6950 acres of monsoon paddy plantation is 475590 baskets at the rate of 68.43 baskets per acre and that from 6244 acres of summer paddy plantation is 517784 baskets

at the rate of 84.44 baskets per acre. Altogether 366 acres have been put under monsoon paddy, which had not been reclaimed before the establishment of model mechanized zone in 2008-2009.

It is learnt that local people have turned from contenting conventional farming to enjoying increased family incomes and improved living standards as company entrepreneurs practically implement the transformation with machinery, capital, technologies and inputs.

Sixteen companies involved in transformation into mechanized farming. Some devoted huge investment to the process, but some are not. So, they are urged to pick up the pace to reach the level of modern mechanized faring model agricultural special zone as originally envisaged.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation and Yangon Region Government will jointly define a fixed period to implement the transformation in accord with original objectives and regulations by asking the attitude of company entrepreneurs with permits to run Dagon Myothit farms by Yangon Region Government and conducting survey of practical implementation.

The companies which do not adhere to the directive will be exposed and asked them to return their permits. The companies which may actually implement the aims and objectives of the modern mechanized farming model agricultural special zone will be granted permits.

By handing over permits to the companies which will actually undertake the implementation, local people will enjoy more job opportunities and make more incomes and profits than they earn now.

Farmland Law which will systematically define farmland ownership is being drafted. Upon completion, issues of farmland ownership and profits around the country will be settled, explained the deputy minister.

According to the explanation of the Deputy Minister for Agriculture and Irrigation, it is learnt that the farmlands are nationalized under Farmland Nationalization Law for Urban Development, 16 companies are allowed to establish special agricultural zones on the lands as no urban development tasks have not implemented on the lands and the case is not loss of farming right. The Hluttaw decided to put the proposal of U Swe Aung on record as he demanded to put his proposal on record while asked to withdraw the proposal.

Member of Amyotha Hluttaw Bill Committee U Zaw Myint Pe read out and explained report of bill committee on suggestions of Hluttaw representatives with chapter-wise and paragraph-wise amendment, insertion, omission and deletion on Ward and Village-tract Administration Bill approved and sent by Pyithu Hluttaw.

The Hluttaw approved amendment, insertion, omission and deletion of Amyotha Hluttaw on Ward and Village-tract Administration Bill paragraph-wise.

The 39th day second regular session of first Amyotha Hluttaw concluded at 1.45 pm and the 40th day session continues on 25 October.

At today's session, three questions were raised and answered, one proposal was withdrawn and one bill was approved.

Source: NLM 2011-10-25