

**To be able to apply full capacity of dams completed by the former government, irrigation systems yet to be built, dilapidated facilities, and dams and canal systems needing repair will continued to be implemented in order of priority with added momentum. Projects to be implemented for agricultural development in long term national interest will be reviewed in the interests of the people in light of all-round and farsightedness assessment**

NAY PYI TAW, 16 Feb-Union Minister for Agriculture and Irrigation U Myint Hlaing replied to the proposal on river water pumping projects, dams and reservoir projects being implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation submitted by Pyithu Hluttaw representative U Thurein Zaw of Kawkareik Constituency, matters related to the message sent to the President by the Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw dated 3-2-2012 and the speech on agriculture sector delivered on 7-2-2012 by the Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw at today's session of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw.

The translation of the clarification is as follows:-

May the esteemed Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, all Hluttaw representatives and special invited guests be physical and mental well-being.

I, Union Minister for Agriculture and Irrigation, would like to reply to the proposal submitted by Hluttaw representative U Thurein Zaw of Kawkareik Constituency on urging the Union government, in the interest of the entire people, to take action on suggestions of the Pyithu Hluttaw Public Accounts Committee on the findings of the Union Auditor-General over the river water pumping projects, dams and diversion weirs built by the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation as the suggestions are crucial issues for the people and urged Pyidaungsu Hluttaw to approve it.

Mr. Speaker,

As the facts in the message dated 3-2- 2012 sent by Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw Thura U Shwe Mann to the President and matters related to the agricultural sector included in the speech delivered at the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw by Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw Thura U Shwe Mann were related to the proposal submitted by Hluttaw representative U Thurein Zaw, the President gave instruction to me on behalf of himself to reply to the proposal of U Thurein Zaw, the facts included in the message of Thura U Shwe Mann and his speech in the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw. Thus, I would like to seek permission for replying to the above-mentioned matters.

I would like to reply that repairing works will be carried out through current plan, short- and long-term plans with positive attitude, emphasizing the submissions of respective Hluttaw representatives. The necessary tasks to be repaired have been undertaken in the time of the existing new government, and examples will be presented in respective sectors to clearly observe progress of tasks.

Mr. Speaker and Hluttaw representatives, On 30-3-2011 when the new government took its assumption of State power, the President delivered an address that “now, it has laid sound foundations to build a peaceful, modern and developed nation.

Thus, the people elected us to continuously build the more peace and more developed nation by applying the sound foundations constructed by the Tatmadaw government.

In order to accomplish the demanding duties, our new government will lay down new policies and programmes according to the objective conditions of the nation.”

We all are to build the Union to achieve greater unity and development in conformity with the current situation with genuine goodwill based on sound foundations in unity and harmony facilitated by the previous government though it had faced difficulties and sanctions.

With regard to the proposal of U Thurein Zaw and discussions of Hluttaw representatives, I would like to clarify my explanation that it should strive for gaining greater development with positive attitude over the sound foundations built by the leaders of previous government with farsightedness so as to serve the long-term interest of the citizens and build socioeconomic infrastructures of farmers and local people.

The previous government built many dams and river water pumping projects with the aim of effectively utilizing the land resources in our agro-based country and sufficiently using water resources though it faced economic sanctions and financial and technological difficulties. Thus, we all are to strive for continuously implementing the ongoing projects in respective sectors as a good example for new generations.

As global countries are facing climate change day by day, the dams were constructed for storage of water from rivers and creeks to be able to use fresh water for consumption and agricultural purpose in addition to prevention against floods and bank erosion.

For example, Kyaybinet Dam was built in Kanbalu Township of Sagaing Region to protect Shwebo-Myitkyina railroad against annual floods and Ma Mya Dam in Myanaung Township of Ayeyawady Region to prevent floods at Patheingyi-Monywa Road and railroads.

Kodukwe Dam, Salu Dam and Shwelaung Dam in Bago Region is under construction to prevent annual floods in Bago, Kawa and Thanatpin townships, to contribute towards greening 30-mile radius Yangon and irrigate the salty farmlands in dry zones for gradually declining its salty rates. As such, it should emphasize advantages of Pyaungpya Dam, Khetlan Dam and Zeedaw Dam in Natogyi Township of Mandalay Region for serving current and long-term interests of the new generations.

Thanks to river water pumping projects, the local people who suffered scarcity of drinking water and dryness are not enjoying the fruits of water supply. That is why it should place special emphasis on construction of irrigation facilities with genuine goodwill without depending on economic point of view.

The responsible persons of the previous government built the dams and river water pumping projects with the aim of creating job opportunities for the local people without depending on cost effectiveness. They set aim to conserve weather and environments in dry zones and to solve scarcity of drinking water and social life of local people to some extent.

Nowadays, there is over 7000 million of global population. The global countries face higher food and water demands daily.

Moreover, all the countries are taking care of food and water difficulties due to climate change and natural disasters such as storms, earthquakes, heavy rains and floods, dryness and outbreak of fire.

By reviewing the problems in natural disasters that affected some townships in Bago and Ayeyawady Regions, Rakhine State, Yangon and Mandalay Regions in the events of cyclonic storm Nargis in 2008, storm Giri in 2010 and heavy rains in 2011, special emphasis is to be placed on prevention against natural disasters and ensuring food security.

The government assigned duties to the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation with firm decisions to undertake the tasks.

Being an agro-based nation, over 30 per cent of GDP of the nation is depending on the agriculture sector. Thus, it is necessary to put investment in agriculture sector for its development so as to strengthen the immune of the nation.

Annual reduction of two per cent poverty rate of the nation to be able to decline 26 per cent to 16 per cent in 2015 as a UN Millennium Development Goals totally depends on development of agricultural production and socio-economic development of rural farmers.

While the global countries are facing shortage of food due to climate change, the people of the nation do not need to worry about difficulties thanks to dams and river water pumping projects implemented by the State leaders with farsightedness and food sufficiency through cultivation of summer paddy, double and mixed cropping patterns.

We all are to strive for ensuring food security of 100 million population of the nation that will increase in coming a few years.

Investment in agricultural sector will generate plenty of “job opportunities” and will help farmers more income from a series of seasonal crops. Investment should be made with a firm belief on transition of the country’s agricultural sector from irrigation system, dependent on the weather, to Sustainable Agricultural Development.

Understanding the new government’s financial difficulties to take measures for fulfilling region-wise requirements in over 10 months and its attempt to address the issue, the Hluttaw representatives need to realize the reality of the new government which have to complete projects handed down by the previous government to become Total Solution.

Regarding agriculture sector, I would like to give you some examples of Total Solution. For example, the whole Commodity Supply Chain for rice- dam project/river water pumping station project, canal system, land reclamation, providing training for scientific cultivation, distribution of agricultural machinery and quality fertilizers, production of marketable quality strains, developing model plantations, harvesting with less wastage/drying, milling at advanced rice mill, packaging marketable rice and marketing, selling at good price, and enabling farmers fetch reasonable market price-has to be completed.

Investment of the government in dam projects and river water pumping station projects will bear fruits if they are completed as Total Solution and they will help increase per capita income of farmers and development agricultural produce of the State.

The entire people should cooperate in implementing the projects till they become Total Solutions with one voice for development of the country based of that of the agricultural sector.

The river water pumping station projects of the previous government were aimed at distributing irrigation water for regional food sufficiency and creating more job opportunities for local people. Simultaneously, it set the targets to distribute potable water and improve living standards of local people in arid zones. If there is insufficiency of electricity and of irrigation water for paddy, farmers may have the right to grow marketable crops suited with the region. According to market economy, they should have the right to grow the crops of their own choice.

They were built with a huge fund and targeted for supplying irrigation water to paddy plantations. If the sufficient irrigation water cannot be supplied for paddy following insufficiency of electricity, lack of concrete lining systems and pipeline systems, marketable crops will be allowed to choose to grow.

According to 2011 statistics, the government had to use K 23490 per acre as it levied only K 9000 for irrigation. It had to use K 1147.09 million for 48833 acres of farmlands. It still has to collect K 929.175 million for irrigation from farmers. Plans which will be convenient for them will be laid down. They will be allowed to grow marketable crops State-wise/Region-wise.

As proposed by Public Accounts Committee, river water pumping station projects distributing under 2000 acres of farmlands will be handed over to Regions and States in 2012-2013 fiscal year. After

necessary measures have been taken for thorough transfer of projects, they will be handed over. There are 270 river water pumping station projects irrigating under 2000 acres in States and Regions to hand over.

Only Shwe Hlan Bo river water pumping station project in Sinkaing Township of Mandalay Region is under way although there were 41 ongoing river water pumping station project. These 40 projects have been suspended for 2012-2013 fiscal year with no budget allotted to them.

One of special river water pumping station project Hsimigon (3) Ayeyawady river water pumping station project in Myingyan Township of Mandalay Region has also been suspended. Only when technical assistances and foreign investment are acquired, will it be resumed. The suspension is decided by cabinet meeting.

Out of 237 completed dams/diversion weirs included in the suggestion of the Pyithu Hluttaw Public Accounts Committee, there are 39 facilities meeting or exceeding the target, 50 facilities irrigating 50-90 per cent of target and 93 facilities irrigating under 50 per cent of target.

Dams which do not meet the target because irrigation systems have to be completed, which distribute low per cent of target in light of assessment on targeted area and actual irrigating area, of which dilapidated irrigation systems need repairing, which are ravaged by Malar cyclone, Nargis cyclone and Giri cyclone and can irrigate under 50 per cent of target will be repaired in order of priority.

65 dams/diversion weirs which are stated to be dams which cannot supply irrigation water includes 41 dams constructed for distributing potable water, greening the region and supplying water to factories in arid zones, 10 supporting dams which are built to help existing dams store more water and prevent from dangers, three diversion weirs to help existing dams distribute irrigation water, three dams of which irrigation systems have yet to be finished, one dam for preserving ancient cultural heritage, and seven sluice gates built for preventing from flood and salt water in monsoon and summer and store and distribute fresh water in summer.

It is planned to improve performance of completed dams/diversion weirs and implement ongoing dams/diversion weirs projects to meet set standards.

Plan to grow paddy once a year sufficiently to produce staple food of the country and to cultivate other crops of their own choice by farmers has been made clear in cabinet meetings and State-/Region-level agricultural meeting presided over by the Union minister. It is fundamental right of the farmers to grow marketable and suitable crops of their own choice in areas with scarcity of irrigation water.

It may be first-hand knowledge of Hluttaw representatives from arid zones in middle Myanmar that the good-will of the government to fulfill the actual will of the people is “no money and gold, but water”, and how river water pumping station projects contributed much to tackle daily difficulties of people to access drinking water for themselves and cattle.

To be able to apply full capacity of dams completed by the former government, irrigation systems yet to be built, dilapidated facilities, and dams and canal systems needing repair will continued to be implemented in order of priority with added momentum.

If there is new projects to be implemented, it will be reported to the Hluttaw through the cabinet in light of procedure of international standard assessment.

Mr Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker and Hluttaw Representatives, On behalf of the President, Union Minister for Agriculture and Irrigation has made brief clarification.

Handed down by the former government, projects which have to be implemented for agricultural development in sustainable national interest will be reviewed and considered in the interests of the people in light of all-round and farsightedness assessment on the reality with genuine good-will.

I would like to wind up my clarification by informing that the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation will continue to work on confirmed instructions of the government on the Hluttaw's decision to continue implementing by the government.-MNA

***Source: NLM 2012-02-17***