

## **Amyotha Hluttaw 23 January, 2015**

### **Recovery plans for environmental degradation explained in Amyotha Hluttaw**

Nay Pyi Taw, 23 Jan — The Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) session here on Friday saw a question arise as to plans for the recovery of environmental degradation caused by some ministries. U Aye Myint Maung, Deputy Minister for Environmental Conservation and Forestry, responded that cautious efforts are underway to minimize serious damage to the environment through supervisions at all levels.

The ministry has instructed mining companies to refill open pits with topsoil from exploration sites and grow perennial trees and shady trees in order to maintain ecosystems. According to the deputy minister, permission for mine closure requires an approval from local governments, which will inspect activities of land remediation and reclamation carried out by extractive companies in areas concerned. “Legal actions are being taken against mine sites being operated without permission,” he said.

As to another question of how PTTEP, a Thai oil company, received permission to drill for oil in the Bayon forest reserve in Magway Region, the deputy minister said that the Thailand’s oil company is carrying out oil drilling in cooperation with the Ministry of Energy for national interests on the basis of mutual benefits. He added the oil firm recompensed over K16,749 million for 4.88 acres of land affected by their project.

The religious conversion bill also came under discussion at the Amyotha Hluttaw session, with an MP from Chin State calling for a deferment of the bill because of its potential for undesirable effects. “Myanmar enjoys human rights and freedom of worship to the full,” he said. An MP from Rakhine State welcomed the bill, saying that it protects freedom of worship and forced religious conversion, and is compatible with human rights.—MNA

**Source: *The Global New Light of Myanmar*, 2015-01-24**