

## **Pyithu Hluttaw 6 February, 2015**

### **Strategic EIA to be conducted at hydropower dams on Thanlwin River**

Nay Pyi Taw, 6 Feb— Feasibility tests are being conducted at five project sites for dams on the Thanlwin River, Deputy Minister for Electric Power U Maw Tha Htway told the Pyithu Hluttaw session on Friday. The deputy minister was responding to the question whether the ministry has a plan to conduct strategic environmental impact assessment and to use IWRM comprehensive water resource management system at six dam projects on the Thanlwin River.

The environmental impact assessment and social impact assessment for Kunlong Hydropower Project, which is located at the upper reach of the river, have been conducted and a central body of the ministry led by a deputy minister and regional level committees have been formed to monitor field inspection of the reports, according to the deputy minister.

Local people have been informed about the project and negotiations for compensations have been held, the deputy minister added. The deputy minister said that the ministry will cooperate with other ministries to conduct strategic environmental impact assessment for the other four projects and arrangements are under way to conduct such EIA with technicians from STUCKY AS consultant firm from Switzerland.

Then, Representative U Phyo Min Thein submitted the motion calling for the union government to take measures for freedom of news coverage for the media with accountability and responsibility in accordance with the law.

Concerning the motion, Deputy Minister for Information U Pike Htway said that the government has relaxed the restrictions on the media step by step by allowing the media to publish without prior censorship since 20 August 2012 while private newspapers, which were never permitted in the past, are now publishing their dailies. He added as the other restrictions were also eased, a total of 396 journals, 324 magazines, 936 general publications, 27 private newspapers have been permitted until January 2015. Out of them, 220 journals, 128 magazines and 12 newspapers are still in circulation while some of them have been allowed to publish their periodicals in languages of ethnic national races and some foreign languages including English and Japanese, according to the deputy minister.

The deputy minister also said the freedom of the media should come together with responsibility and accountability and it is natural for the media to wish for higher standards of media freedom in accordance with Article 19 of the Human Rights Declaration but the media is also required to abide by Article 29 of the declaration. Fairness is a prerequisite for a democracy and it is necessary for the media to be ethical and to abide by the law by exercising freedom in a responsible and accountable manner.

The government has a plan to cooperate with the press council for development of media, effectiveness of measures of the press council on ethical issues and effectiveness of news release of the government, the deputy minister added. The Ministry of Information and the press council is now cooperating for rules of the media law, the deputy minister said.

The deputy minister said that the media has been permitted to cover news in accordance with the Media Law and legal action will not be taken against journalists if they abide by the law and ethic code of the press council. The session voted against the motion. --MNA

**Source: *The Global New Light of Myanmar*, 2015-02-07**