

Pay heed to weather warnings to prevent loss of life and property

THE Meteorology and Hydrology Department has warned that a low-pressure weather system forming over the northwest portion of the Bay of Bengal is persisting, which could trigger a major storm over the Andaman Sea and the Bay of Bengal.

The weather bureau advised the people who live near the riverbank and low-lying areas at Thabaung Township to take precautionary measures, as the water level of the Ngawun River in the Ayeyawady delta is expected to reach its danger level over the next two days.

This is also alerting us that we are now in the monsoon season, which often brings disasters such as flooding, lightning strikes, and landslides, which are not new to our country. The monsoon-related disasters cause loss of lives and properties, and wreak havoc to our infrastructure of roads, bridges and irrigation facilities.

People, on their part, are urged to keep a close watch on weather updates and warnings during the rainy season. It pays to be prepared.

The disaster management committees in regions and states are carrying out prevention work in terms of infrastructure development and public awareness.

The Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement has adopted a policy to assist the people in withstanding natural disasters, and cooperation is very important in making this a reality.

Although the ministry is low in manpower with limited financial resources, the entire ministry is ready to respond quickly to disasters and its efforts to minimise casualties in monsoon-related disasters is highly appreciated. It is true that we cannot completely predict disasters, but early preparedness can help mitigate the damage.

The weather bureau has been providing weather updates to the public in a timely manner through state-run radio, television and newspapers.

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Preliminary measures to mitigate risk of natural disasters

By Su Thet Hmu
(Mayangon)

EVERY country in the globe is projected to experience the effects of climate change, with some countries expected to be harder hit than others.

Myanmar is one of those countries that may be more adversely affected.

According to meteorologists, Myanmar is the second-most-vulnerable country in the world to the effects of climate change. The first adverse effect is that farmers and other cultivators have experienced altered growing seasons due to climate change. Secondly, Myanmar has experienced a scarcity of drinking water. The third effect is the changes in rainfall patterns and the abundance of this rainfall, which can result in flash flooding during the monsoon season.

In 2018, Myanmar will face flash floods which can cause damage in several parts of the country. People who live in the delta area of the Ayeyawady Region suffer from severe floods every year.

Cyclone Nargis devastated Myanmar in May 2008, with an estimated death toll of about 138,737, together with Ks10.7 trillion in losses. Nargis was the worst natural disaster in the re-

corded history of Myanmar.

The effects of flooding have continued since Cyclone Nargis.

According to a report released by the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation, some 1,400,000 acres of farmland destroyed due to flooding in July and August 2015. Out of these, at least 140,000 acres of rice fields, rice being a staple food in Myanmar, were affected by the floods. Out of the 14 states

and regions in Myanmar, severe flooding regularly affects 12 of them, often resulting in severe damage. The seasonal floods in July and August last year affected 153,535 people in Magway Region, which is regarded as the worst impacted area in Myanmar. Out of 79 townships, seven people were killed and a total of 318,120 households were transferred to temporary relief camps, according to the Min-

istry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement. There was a red-alert cyclone which entered Rakhine State on 29 May. Heavy rain and subsequent flooding occurred in the coastland through the town of An, in Rakhine State, and throughout upper and lower Myanmar.

Heavy rain poured down in Mon State without interruption from 16 June, causing floodwaters to flow into the wards. The water rose to nearly six feet. As water quickly flowed into the wards, 42 relief camps had to be opened for 8,263 people. Flooding occurred in Rakhine State, southern Shan State, Magway, Sagaing, Bago and Ayeyawady regions, while landslides occurred in Mogoke, northern Shan State and Chin State.

At least 10 people were killed on 22 June after monsoon rains caused flooding and landslides in Phakant Township, Kachin State.

According to the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, there were about 44,000 people who were affected by flooding, and at least 18 people from across the country died as a result of the flooding.

Flood-hit country

Myanmar is among the 15 most flood-hit countries in the world due to the effects of climate change.

All the people have to face the menace of flooding, landslides and other disasters. This results in loss of property, health hazards, loss of farmlands and emotional problems.

How can Myanmar mitigate the impact of natural disasters?

"We can tackle these problems by dividing it into two sectors: rural and urban. If we do it in the rural area, it would be easier due to the lack of major infrastructure. It is easy for us to dig ditches in order to increase water flow along the way.

As for urban areas, they need to improve the drainage system, with the cooperation of residents in the area. That can also be called a master plan. Another point is that people themselves have to change their behaviours so that the water can flow freely into the drain. People should have enough knowledge to know how to avoid blocking the water flow in the drainage ditches.

When we construct new

satellite towns, it is of great importance to take into consideration urban design in accordance with geographical features and climate conditions," said meteorologist U Chit Kyaw.

Why does flooding occur?

Regarding the occurrences of flooding, we can see that there are three main causes of flooding: (1) the growth of urban population, (2) careless farming methods, and (3) deforestation. One of the main causes is that soil cannot properly absorb water on the ground. By dint of incorrect cultivation methods, flooding can occur and deforestation can lead to flooding. There is also concern that climate change will increase the frequency and intensity of weather-related disasters.

For the past six decades, people have had to suffer devastation and casualties caused by deforestation and natural disasters such as cyclones, flooding, landslides, and droughts. It's time for us to take preliminary measures in order to mitigate the impending natural disasters and climate change, which can happen regardless of place, time and class of people in the world. These natural hazards can pose a threat to our society. The risk from natural disasters, while it cannot be eliminated, can, in some cases, be understood in such a way that we can minimise the hazard to humans, and thus minimise the risks. It is of vital importance to disseminate educative talks on natural disasters, and to carry out the risk mitigation measures among the public so that we can create a society that can respond to natural disasters as quickly as possible. ■

Translated by
Win Ko Ko Aung



Overtaken trees litter a street in Yangon on 4 May, 2008 after tropical cyclone Nargis tore through swathes of the country, battering buildings, sinking boats and causing unknown casualties. PHOTO: AFP

Technical Working Group to implement the Memorandum of Understanding convened its second meeting

AS a follow up to the first meeting held on 11 July 2018, the Technical Working Group (TWG), comprising representatives from the Ministry of the Office of the State Counsellor, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement and the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Manpower and representatives from the UNDP and UNHCR Yangon Offices, met in Nay Pyi Taw on 18 July 2018. The Technical Working Group deliberated on its initial visit to Butheetaung and Maungtaung Township in Rakhine State.

During the first meeting, both sides exchanged views on the proposed Work Plan initiated by the UNDP and UNHCR as well as the visit of the Technical Working Group to the region in order to select the pilot village tracts from the proposed 31 village tracts under Butheetaung, Maungtaung and Rathetaung Townships in Northern Rakhine State.

In line with the proposed Work Plan, both sides will effectively implement the MoU based on the 3 month and 6 month programmes. The Work Plan includes, among others, initiatives to promote sustained socio-economic development, health, education and to create conducive environment to further enhance harmony and coexistence among the communities in northern Rakhine State.

Myanmar welcomed the visits of Mr. Indrika Ratwatte, Director, Regional Bureau for Asia and Pacific, UNHCR to Myanmar in early July and Mr. Haoliang Xu, Assistant Secretary-General and UNDP Assistant Administrator and Director of the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific recently. Myanmar side also discussed with them on the implementation of the MoU.

The Technical Working Group will visit the northern Rakhine State from 21 to 23 July 2018.—MNA



Rainfall to increase in Rakhine coastal area, says weather bureau

RAINFALL is expected to increase in Rakhine coastal areas in the next two days, as the low pressure area over the North-west Bay of Bengal still persists and it may further intensify into a depression during the next 48 hours, according to the Myanmar Daily Weather Report issued by the Department of Meteorology and Hydrology (DMH) yesterday.

The monsoon is vigorous over the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal.

According to the DMH's observation yesterday, the water level of Ngawun River at Thabaung is observed at some half a foot below the danger level and may

reach the danger level during the next two days.

The weather bureau has warned people who live near the riverbank and low-lying areas at Thabaung Township to take precautionary measures.

There will be rain or thunder-showers in Nay Pyi Taw, Yangon, Mandalay and neighboring areas. The degree of certainty is 100 per cent.

Occasional squalls with rough seas will be experienced off and along the Myanmar coast. Surface wind speed in squalls may reach 40 mph. The wave's height will be some 9-14 feet off and along the Myanmar coast.—GNLM ■