

# Promoting digital literacy and combatting fake news

**T**HANKS to modern technology, virtually everyone has access to information free of charge. The number of people who use digital platforms has also increased. But due to a lack of digital literacy, the number people who properly take advantage of the digital platform for information is still low.

During the period from the beginning of the transition to digital literacy to date, we deliberately carried news and articles in our state-owned media about risks from improper use of digital technology and have educated the people.

To educate the people on digital literacy and to promote proper use of digital technology, talks have been held nationwide. Awareness about digital literacy has been raised to educate everyone, from schoolchildren to adults.

What is happening daily in the world today is that with improper understanding about digital literacy, fake news is spreading for personal interest and harming the interests of others.

To avoid fake news which targets youths with low rationalization power due to weaknesses in reading, the state-run media has covered crimes caused by fake news in the world. Talks on digital literacy are being conducted by the township Information and Public Relations departments of the Ministry of Information at schools nationwide.

Knowledge on digital literacy is posted online on the website and Facebook page of the Ministry of Information.

Starting from 19 December, 2016, the State Government granted permission to media personnel, including local and foreign journalists, to gather news in Rakhine State freely. Up to now, there are 18 local media agencies and 35 international news agencies that have collected news in Rakhine state a total of 16 times. They could meet locals and freely question the people from the IDP camps.

Cooperation is needed to prevent cross-border crimes and the spread of fake news, which can lead to conflicts. The Ministry of Information has made concerted efforts to share true news and avoid online fake news by creating the [www.moi.gov.mm](http://www.moi.gov.mm) website, the MOI Web portal Myanmar on Facebook and Myanmar Digital News on Facebook, in Myanmar and English versions.

# Myanmar has potential to be Asia's maritime hub

By Khin Maung Myint

**T**HE geographic location of Myanmar places her in a very strategic position. Many centuries ago, this fact was recognised and proven to be correct. If one would bother to study the world atlas, they are bound to realise that our country is right at the centre of the Asian continent. It is bordered by two of the most populous and fastest developing countries — China and India — and the well-developed country of Thailand. If properly managed, we could develop our country into an important gateway connecting East Asia and Southeast Asia to South Asia and farther afield, which will be much beneficial to our economic and geopolitical status.

Looking back in time, it can be found that since the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, the British East India Company, the trading powerhouse of those days, was very interested in creating a trading route through Burma to the landlocked Chinese province of Yunnan. They sought the permission of the Burmese King to explore a possible land route through Burma to Yunnan. Their endeavour met failure as the members of that expedition were massacred by the rebels in Yunnan.

During the British colonial days in 1937, just before the war between the British and the Japanese broke out, a strategic motorway — the world renowned Burma Road — was constructed between Burma and China. That road served as the main lifeline for the Chinese Nationalist Army, which was resisting the Japanese occupation during the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945). Military equipment, arms, ammunition, vehicles and other supplies needed for the war effort were transported via that road by the United States of America to aid the Chinese Nationalist Army.

When Burma was occupied by the Japanese, the allied military authorities decided to build another supply route, which led to the birth of the famous Ledo Road, originating from a place called Ledo in northeastern India, cutting through the mountainous and densely forested Hukong Valley in northern Burma to link up with the existing Burma Road inside China. Since then, Burma was widely recognised as the backdoor to China.

Here it would be interesting to learn the experts' and analysts' views on the interconnection of Bangladesh, Myanmar and Yunnan. According to them, these three regions' interconnection has a long history in both human and environmental terms. The variety and complexity of pathways, corridors, and networks of livelihood-making, commerce, religions, political systems, and ethno-linguistic families have become ever highlighted in colonial encounters, changing political systems, inter-ethnic flows of natural resources and human labour, and academic research. The works of scholars and analysts all attest to the deep entanglement of the three regions and their wider connectivity with the eastern Himalayas, Southwest China, Southeast Asia, and South Asia. The transregionality and bordered connectivity of each of the three regions have simultaneously taken place in the modern era since its advent in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Today, with China rapidly developing, their demand for oil from the Middle East and gas from our offshore gas fields are becoming increasingly high. They had already established a deep seaport at Kyaukpyu and gas and fuel pipelines were already in place. These facilities will aid in the smooth flow of their exports and imports of fuel and other necessary commodities from the Middle East and Western countries. India too has intentions of utilizing Sittway as their seaport of convenience for export and import businesses of her landlocked northeastern provinces. Thus Myanmar is becoming more valuable for those two countries.

If we can exploit the present situations and opportunities open to us, I'm confident that our country could become one of the important maritime hubs in the region as stated in the title of this article. It may seem too ambitious or very wishful thinking, but I have concrete reasons to believe thus.

The deductions which I'm about to make are based on the past and present or prevailing situations. Since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Strait of Malacca has been the main shipping channel between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. The strait provides a thoroughfare for ships plying between the Americas and the Oceania



to the east and the Middle East and Europe to the west and plays an important role as the main trading route between the East and West until today. However, with the ever increasing volumes of traffic passing through and the ships getting larger in size, the capacity that the strait can handle is nearing the saturation point. As the ships get bigger in size, their draughts have also increased significantly. Their deeper draughts are becoming restrictions for some large oil tankers and container ships, as there are shallow places along the strait obstructing their passage. This necessitates detours to avoid passing through the strait, which extends their voyages by over a thousand nautical miles. That is costing the shipping industries much more and wasting time. Also, the piracy inside the strait is of great concern to shipping.

For that reason, some large maritime nations to the east, namely China and Japan, are finding alternative means to solve those problems. China wanted to revive the old dream of digging a canal across the Kra Isthmus in Southern Thailand. Japan wants to construct a pipeline to transfer oil brought by their large tankers from the Middle East — to be pumped from the Andaman Sea on the western side, to the empty tankers waiting in the Gulf of Thailand on the eastern side of the Kra Isthmus. These are to avoid passing through the Malacca Strait, which would save them time, money and also safe from the pirates, who terrorize ships passing through that strait.

Of the two ideas mentioned above, I'm of the very strong opinion that the digging of a canal has the least chance of being implemented. My reasoning is: the idea of digging a canal across that isthmus originated in 17<sup>th</sup> century Siam, about two centuries before the Suez Canal came into being. It was the brainchild of the then King of Siam, who approached a French engineer, who visited there, with his idea. The French engineer convinced him that it wouldn't be possible, as the engineering technology wasn't very much advanced in those days. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century another Siamese prince came up with that idea again, but it never materialised. Then in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, after the British annexed Burma, the British East India Company planned to implement that project, but later dropped it to avoid undermining Singapore, which they had already developed into a flourishing seaport.

After such long delays in the past since the idea was first conceived, it can be deduced that it has no chance of being implemented now. The reason must be the cons outweigh the pros for constructing such a canal there. Although the residents of that area wanted the canal proposed by China as part of their Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to be built, the government of Thailand is reluctant to comply for security reasons. They are wary of the fact that the canal would cut off those restive provinces from the rest of the country and would be difficult to keep control over those cut away provinces and would

also further the divide between the local populace.

The maritime nations to the east will try to find other alternatives to bypass the Malacca Strait to transport their exports and imports safely and efficiently. At such a time, we should try to exploit this opportune situation. We should try to upgrade our existing port facilities and construct more modern seaports that would be capable of handling large volumes of cargo flows through our country to their respective country of destination. In doing so, the pending Dawei Deep Seaport Project would be the best candidate for development. Taking into consideration the fact that Japan and India had teamed up to counter the Chinese initiative, the BRI, and are giving priority to the construction of the Asian Highways, serious studies should be made, how we could cash in on that project. As one of them will start from Viet Nam passing through Laos, Cambodia, Thailand and Myanmar to India and thence up to Turkey and another route will be from Indonesia through Singapore, Malaysia and link up with the first one inside Thailand, the Asian Highway would benefit the Dawei Seaport greatly. The cargoes bound for or out of the Far East and the ASEAN neighbours would be more rapidly transported through that seaport by the overland route that would reach up to Danang Seaport in Viet Nam.

At this juncture, I would like to highlight the importance of the Dawei Deep Seaport. As the large merchant ships will want to

avoid passing through the Malacca Strait, and with the impending completion of the Asian Highway, the Dawei Seaport will be an alternative they are looking for. It will get the lion's share of the cargo bound to and fro between the Far East — Japan, Korea, Hong Kong and Chinese Taipei — and also some of our ASEAN neighbours and the European and Middle Eastern countries to transit through Dawei Seaport. To my knowledge, Thailand has already constructed many miles of road that would serve as part of the Asian Highways. At present a new motorway is under construction to link Bangkok and the Kanchanaburi Province, which borders with Myanmar and is not far from the Dawei Seaport. As I had recently stayed at one of the construction sites of that motorway, I noticed the importance and priority they placed on the construction of that road, which I presume was intended to be linked to the future Dawei Seaport.

In conclusion, I would like to suggest that we should study the prospects of taking advantage of the prevailing situations discussed above. Based on those findings, we should make plans to implement projects to upgrade our existing seaports and build new modern port facilities to cope with the volume of shipping that would definitely be diverted to us, away from the Malacca Strait, in the near future.

The most immediate action to be taken will be to find ways and means to expedite the implementation of the Dawei Deep Seaport and the Special Economic Zone Project, which would surely be a success. These facilities would create job opportunities for our citizens, generate tariffs, duties, taxes and incomes that would boost our economy and set our country on course for rapid and robust developments.

The plan to install an oil pipeline across the Kra Isthmus will not have much impact on the Dawei Seaport, but if the Kra Canal should become a reality it could have certain extent or effect on it. However, I'm skeptical that it would ever materialise. With the Kyaukpyu Seaport operated by the Chinese certain to be included in the BRI, we stand to benefit from that too. Thus, I'm quite confident our country has great potential to become the maritime hub of Asia. ■

## Flood Bulletin

(Issued at 14:00 hrs MST on 22-7-2018)  
Flood condition of Thanlwin River

According to the 13:30 hrs MST observation today, the water level of Thanlwin River has exceeded by about (1½) feet at Hpaan, above its danger level. It may continue to rise about (1½) feet during the next (1) day and may remain above its danger level.

## Advisory

It is especially advised to the people who settle near the river banks and low lying areas in Hpa-an Township, to take precaution measure.

## Myanmar Daily Weather Report

(Issued at 7:00 pm Sunday, 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 2018)

**BAY INFERENCE:** Monsoon is strong over the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal.

**SPECIAL FEATURES:** According to the observations at (18:30) MST today, the tropical depression over the South China Sea (Gulf of Tonkin) almost stationary and it is centered at about (210)miles South of Nanning(China). It is forecast to move slowly to Eastwards.

**FORECAST VALID UNTIL AFTERNOON OF THE 23<sup>rd</sup> JULY, 2018:** Rain or thundershowers will be scattered in Magway Region and Northern Shan State and fairly widespread in Lower Sagaing and Mandalay regions and widespread in the remaining Regions and States with regionally heavy falls in Kayin State and isolated heavy falls in Bago and Yangon Regions, Rakhine and Mon States. Degree of certainty is (100%).

**STATE OF THE SEA:** Squalls with moderate to rough seas are likely at times off and along Myanmar Coasts. Surface wind speed in squalls may reach (35-40)mph Wave height will be about (8 -13)feet off and along Myanmar Coasts.

**OUTLOOK FOR SUBSEQUENT TWO DAYS:** Strong monsoon over the Andaman Sea and South Bay of Bengal.

**FORECAST FOR NAY PYI TAW AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 23<sup>rd</sup> JULY, 2018:** One or two rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

**FORECAST FOR YANGON AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 23<sup>rd</sup> JULY, 2018:** Some rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

**FORECAST FOR MANDALAY AND NEIGHBOURING AREA FOR 23<sup>rd</sup> JULY, 2018:** Isolated rain or thundershowers. Degree of certainty is (100%).

## Invitation to young writers for Sunday section

**The Global New Light of Myanmar** is accepting submissions of poetry, opinion, articles, essays and short stories from young people for its weekly Sunday Next Generation Platform. Interested candidates can send their work to the **Global New Light of Myanmar** at No. 150, Nga Htat Kyee Pagoda Road, Bahan Township, Yangon or by email to [dce@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com](mailto:dce@globalnewlightofmyanmar.com) with the following information: (1) Sector you wish to be included in (poetry, opinion, etc.), (2) Own name and (if different) your penname, (3) Your level of education, (4) Name of your School/ College/University, (5) A written note of declaration that the submitted piece is your original work and has not been submitted to any other news or magazine publishing houses, (6) A color photo of the submitter, (7) Copy of your NRC card, (8) Contact information (email address, mobile number, etc.). — **Editorial Department, The Global New Light of Myanmar news office**