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Myanmar Highlights

4 November 2013

- On behalf of the Myanmar Government, Deputy Minister for National Planning and Economic Development, Dr Daw Khin San Yi and Japanese Ambassador to Myanmar, Mr. Mikio Numata, exchanged notes totaling Yen 5.4 billion for economic development projects including Central Bank ICT systems, disaster management equipment, and improvements to TV and broadcast equipment. The total of development aid from Japan this year is Yen 23.58 billion, or USD 2.4 billion. The Japanese ambassador said that Japan provides ongoing support to Myanmar's reform process and helps to implement infrastructure projects for socio-economic development. (From *The New Light Of Myanmar*, 26 October 2013)

- In the lead-up to the South East Asia Games in December 2013, the Myanmar government has proposed bilateral visa exemptions for all ASEAN member countries by the end of November that would enable regional ASEAN citizens to visit Myanmar visa free for up to 14 days. These agreements will enable as many people as possible to attend the South East Asian Games, an official said. Thailand and Myanmar are expected to sign a visa exemption agreement during the upcoming meeting between Thein Sein, the President of Myanmar, and Yingluck Shinawatra, the Prime Minister of Thailand. Border crossings are not included under the exemption. Myanmar recently signed a visa exemption agreement with Vietnam that took effect in October. Myanmar is also negotiating an agreement with the Philippines, which is expected to be finalized shortly, according to U Aung Htoo, deputy director general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs ASEAN Affairs Department. Mr. Aung Htoo also stated that Myanmar hopes to reach agreements on visa exemptions with all other ASEAN member countries in order to achieve the 2006 ASEAN Framework agreement on visa exemption. (From *Myanmar Times*, 28 October 2013)

- The US Chamber of Commerce opened an office in Myanmar on 31 October 2013, with at least 25 companies already signed up as members. American business people are particularly interested to invest in natural resources, consumer goods manufacturing, infrastructure development for electricity production and distribution, road construction, agriculture and service industries such as banking and insurance, according to Mr. Eric Rose, a trade expert who made a presentation to the United States Trade Representative. (From *Myanmar Times*, 28 October 2013)



• The University of Medicine, Yangon, and an international team of participants announced the successful completion by 19 candidates of the first Diploma Examination in Emergency Medicine, conducted by a joint panel of international and Myanmar examiners. The programme includes the University of Medicine, Yangon, the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine, the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, and the International Federation for Emergency Medicine. Organisers noted that this is the important first step towards the establishment of an Emergency Medicine Training Center in Myanmar. The diploma examination was a two part written and oral test similar to that of the University of Medicine's traditional examination. However the oral examination consisted of two components (oral structured clinical and skills exams) with a structured marking system that is new for Myanmar physicians. Following graduation, the emergency physicians will be appointed to serve in Yangon General and Nay Pyi Taw at the newly refurbished emergency departments. They will also participate in providing emergency care at the South East Asia Games in December. The second Diploma Course for Emergency Medicine will start in February 2014. (From joint press release, 18 October 2013)

• Denmark's Carlsberg Group broke ground on a US\$50 million brewery in Bago on 22 October 2013. Carlsberg will be the first European brewer to produce beer in Myanmar. Set to become operational by 2014, the brewery is being built on 54 acres of land about 50 kilometers (31 miles) north of Yangon in Bago Region. Carlsberg is not the only brewer with plans to enter the market. In May, Heineken announced that it would build a US\$60 million brewery near Yangon that would also become operational by 2014. Heineken is partnering with Alliance Brewery Co., Ltd. on that deal (From *Myanmar Times*, 28 October 2013)

• Myanmar's exporters stand to benefit from duty-free access to the United States by the end of the year under the US Generalized System of Preferences, experts say. The US Department of Commerce said it is reviewing Myanmar's improved labour rights and property laws in line with the international standards provided by foreign institutions. U Manung Maung Lay, vice president of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry said US companies by August this year had invested about US\$243 million in Myanmar. He said "We hope there will more investment next year as Myanmar would like to be reinstated to the US GSP list by the end of this year." (From *Myanmar Times*, 28 October 2013)



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