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Contents	Page
Patriotic Pride from U Latt's Novel, "Sabae Bin"	1-4
Kyu Kyu Thin	1 7
Creation of characters in Kantkaw a novel of Linkar Yi Kyaw <i>Khin San Wint</i>	5-9
Author Khin Khin Htoo's Creative Skill of Writing a Story "Ku Kuu" Kyin Thar Myint	10-15
A Stylistic Analysis of the poem "the road not taken" by Robert Frost Nyo Me Kyaw Swa	16-22
The Effectiveness of Critical Thinking on Students in Classroom <i>Amy Thet</i>	22-26
Making Education Accessible: an investigation of an integrated English teaching-learning system in first year online class at Yangon University of Distance Education Ei Shwe Cin Pyone	26-33
A Geographical Study on Spatial Distribution Pattern of Health Care Centres in Sanchaung Township	33-39
Myo Myo Khine, Win Pa Pa Myo, Min Oo, Kaythi Soe	20.45
A Study of Crop-Climate Relationship in Hlegu Township	39-45
Win Pa Pa Myo, Myo Myo Khine How to Organize Data for Presentation	46-50
Yee Yee Myint, Myint Myint Win	40-30
A Geographical Study on Open University in New Zealand	50-54
Myint Myint Win, Yee Yee Myint	
Royal Administrative Practices in Konbaung Period (1752-1885) <i>Yin Yin Nwe</i>	54-60
Pyidawtha Programme (1952-1960)	60-69
Zaw Naing Myint	00-09
The Role of Saya San in Myanmar Politics (1930-1931)	70-76
Hlaing Hlaing Nyunt	
A Study of the Floral Arabesque Patterns in Myanmar Traditional Paintings	76-81
Hla Hla Nwe	00.04
A Study on Job Stress of Office Staff from Yangon University of Distance Education Khin Ya Mone, Ma Aye, Theint Thiri Zan	82-86
A study on the job satisfaction of the teaching staff in Yangon University of Distance Education	86-91
Theint Thiri Zan, Thiri Hlaing, Ma Aye A study on the work motivation of the teaching staff in Yangon University of Distance Education	91-96
Ma Aye, Khin Ya Mone, Theint Thiri Zan	
A study of Aristotle's Golden mean Nwe Nwe Oo	97-101
A Study of Legal Thought of John Austin	102-109
Aye Aye Cho	
A study of the concept of "good will" in Kantian philosophy from the Myanmar philosophical thought	109-115
Moe Aye Theint	
The Term " <i>Pāragū</i> " in the Buddhist Scriptures Theingi Cho	115-121
Arāda's Teaching from the Buddhacarita	122-126
Pa Pa Aung	
The Merit of Donating Four Material Requisites Marlar Oo	126-131
The Benefits of Workers under the Workmen's Compensation Act in Myanmar	131-135
Khin Mar Thein	151 155

Contents	Page
Study on the Humanitarian Intervention under International Law	136-141
Nu Nu Win	150 111
A Study on the Quality of Fried Edible Oil (Palm Oil)	142-148
Thazin Lwin, Myo Pa Pa Oo, Nyi Nyi	
New Ceramer Coating Based on Titanium-resorcinol Copolymer with Blown Seed Oils	149-156
Yu Yu Myo, Nwe Ni Win, Thazin Win	
A Study on Antioxidant Activity of Edible Green Leaves of Brassica Juncea Linn. (Mom-Hnyin-Sein)	156-161
Ohmar Ko, Thuzar Win, Hnin Yee Lwin	
Microcontroller controlled four-digit timer	161-166
Lei Lei Aung, Myo Nandar Mon, Khin Phyu Win, Moh Moh	
Study On Current-Voltage Characteristics of Znte Electroplated Film Under Illumination	166-172
Myo Nandar Mon, Thi Thi Win, Lei Lei Aung, Moh Moh	
Effect of Heat Treatment on Optical Properties of Cd-doped ZnO Thin Film	173-175
Su Thaw Tar Wint, Myo Myint Aung, Moh Moh	
Radon concentration in soil samples from different layers of the underground of Bago University	176-180
campus	
Thi Thi Win, Myo Nandar Mon, Aye Aye Khine, Moh Moh	101 107
A Study on Weakly Preopen and Weakly Preclosed Functions	181-187
Kaythi Khine, Nang Moe Moe Sam, Su Mya Sandy	107 102
Functions and Their Graphical Representation	187-193
Ohmar Myint, Moe Moe San, Zar Chi Saint Saint Aung	193-198
Trilinear and Quadrilinear Forms <i>Wai Wai Tun, Aye Aye Maw</i>	195-198
Prevalence and bionomics of <i>Aedes aegypti</i> (Linnaeus, 1762) larvae in high risk areas of	198-204
Pazundaung Township, Yangon Region	170-204
Tin Mar Yi Htun	
Comparative study of helminthes parasitic eggs and larvae in goat from Magway Township	205-213
Nilar Win, Myat Thandar Swe, Thinzar Wint	
Endoparasites of anurans from north Dagon and Kamayut Townships	213-218
Pa Pa Han, Thuzar Moe, Phyo Ma Ma Lin, Aye Aye Maw	
Investigation of some invertebrates in Taungthaman Lake, Amarapura Township, Mandalay	219-225
Division	
Khin Than Htwe, Kathy Myint, Thin Thin Swe, Aye Kyi	
Antimicrobial activity of Dolichandrone spathacea (l.f.) k. Schum. Flowers	226-231
Moet Moet Khine, Tin Tin Nwe, Win Win Shwe, Mya Mya Win	
Five Selected Wild Medicinal Plants and Theirs' Uses	232-237
Mya Mya Win, Moet Moet Khine, Win Win Shwe	
The Comparison of the Yield from Non-Grafted and Grafted of Five Plants of Family Solanaceae	238-244
Win Win Shwe, Moet Moet Khine, Mya Mya win	
Silk Fabrics Factories in Amarapura	245-251
Win Thida, Ni Ni Win, Yu Lae Khaing	
A study on production of rubber in Myanmar (1996 - 97 to 2017- 2018)	251-257
Tin Tin Mya, Ni Ni Win, Thinzar Aung	
A Study on Factors Affecting the Exclusive Breastfeeding of Mothers in PYA-PON District	258-265
Khin Mar Kyi, May Zin Tun	066 070
A Study on the Health Status and Physical Fitness of Elderly People at Home for the Aged (University of Status) Vangan	266-273
(Hninzigone), Yangon Hain Latt. Pyga Phys Kyaw	
Hein Latt, Pyae Phyo Kyaw A Study on Mortality and Fertility levels of Myanmar and its Neighbouring Countries	273-280
Ni Ni Win, Thinn Thinn Aung, Thinzar Aung	215-200

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Pyidawtha Programme (1952-1960)

Zaw Naing Myint^{*}

Abstract

The eight-year Pyidawtha plan, 1952-60, added more details, especially in relating capital investment and official organization to future output. The mandate of the Pyidawtha Conference was ratified by Parliament in the fall of 1952. It was agreed that all targets should be fulfilled by 1960. The economic and social goods of the eight-year plan were clearly stated and well publicized. The Pyidawtha Plan was aimed simply at bringing local communities into the development effort. Besides devoting more attention to problems of social welfare, it was concerned with the task of governmental structure and responsibility at the local level. Local communities were encouraged to supplement the Government's allotment with voluntary contributions of cash, labour or materials. This concern manifested itself in the plan for the Devolution of Powers and Democratization of Local Administration for the 10,000 village tracts and 200 townships comprising the 40 districts of the village, township, ward, and urban councils. The Plan called for the simultaneous and coordinated development of the country in all major fields of economic and social activity.

Keywords: Long-term Programme, Economic and Social Development

Introduction

The Pyidawtha welfare state programme, which was projected by the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL) Government leaders in August, 1952. The crux of the programme was the projection of an eight-year plan of capital investment in industry. In the Pyidawtha programme economic and engineering survey of Myanmar by the Knappen, Tippetts, and Abbott (KTA) Engineering Company and the Robert R. Nathan Associates was being given. But the KTA report was based on best conditions incapable of immediate realization. An ambitious programme of agricultural improvement demanded urgently simply to provide a higher real income for the majority of the cultivators. The rapid development of other segments of the economy such as mining, industry, transportation were required more workers.

The Pyidawtha Conference also attempted to promote popular interest and participation in the endeavor by permitting a large measure of local initiative and self-help. The programme included long-term and short-term plans for land nationalization plus plans for agricultural expansion and diversification. These policies would be extended to the people of the hill areas as well. Other items covered public health provisions, public aid to housing, detailed plans for developing transportation and communications, vocational including adult education projects continuing up through the professional levels.

The Establishment of the Development Programme

The Pyidawtha Conference of 1952 was one of the notable events in history of Myanmar. More than 1,000 delegates attended. They were members of Parliament and party organizations, government officials, and private citizens. It was agreed that all targets should be fulfilled by 1960. A few projects were scheduled for completion by 1963. The government

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enacted legislation to carry out the plan; otherwise it was proceeded by executive action. The mandate of the Pyidawtha Conference was ratified by Parliament in the fall of 1952, and subsequent parliamentary budget sessions had the opportunity, to pass on various phases of the plan.¹ The conference also made a gesture towards a development programme for those hill areas which even within the Myanmar context were considered underdeveloped areas. Finally, it approved a plan for the democratization of the colonial type of local administration which still prevailed. The conference was a major effort by the government to mobilize its key officials and mass organizations in support of its forthcoming development effort. The mass organizations represented were the AFPFL, the nationalist coalition, and the All Burma Peasants' Organization (ABPO), the units of which extended parallel to those of the government from the center in Yangon (Rangoon) down to the village level.¹

Prime Minister U Nu said that to be able to carry out the plan, we would need to use eight years and Ks. 750 crore. The Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League(AFPFL) government, with the aid of the United States Economic Cooperation Administration(ECA), engaged American economists and engineers to make an economic and engineering survey of the nation and help draw up an eight-year plan.² Pyidawtha means, literally, "happy land". U Nu has explained the term as follows:

"Pyidawtha, which is our common goal, is one (a land) which not only possesses good roads, good railway, good bridges, good houses and abundant production, but one which also does away completely with the evil system of class exploitation, of crimes, of disease, of retrogression, of ignoramuses and of exploitation".³

The eight-year plan of Pyidawtha Conference in 1952 was basic on the natural resources and its potentialities of Myanmar which were cooperative analysis of the American engineering associations such as Knappen, Tippetts, and Abbett(KTA), Pierce Management Limited and Nathan Associates. The eight-year plan was based on the comprehensive report (840 pages) which had stated about the production sector and social welfare work. This plan hoped that to progress the 78 per cent of Gross National Product(GNP), the 62 per cent of productivity per head and the 52 per cent of each consumer. Each sector in the plan drew in detail.⁴ These sectors were such as follows:

1. agriculture, 2. irrigation, 3. ports and waterways, 4. railways, 5. airways, 6. power, 7. telecommunications, 8. industries, 9. minerals, 10. forestry.⁵

The KTA plan sought to double GNP between 1951 and 1960. This meant a 31 per cent increase over the prewar Gross Domestic Product (GDP), or a rate of growth of about four per cent year. The plan called for investment from both the public and private sectors. Rising prices and failure to meet the targets forced the government to turn to foreign loans and aid as sources for capital formation. Between 1951 and 1956, no more than 10 per cent of new capital was expended in agriculture and irrigation, while industry, power, and transportation claimed approximately 20 per cent of capita funds. A fall in the price of rice meant there was no financial surplus to fund the plan, and Myanmar was forced to engage in deficit financing and

¹Frank N. Trager, *Burma from Kingdom to Republic*, New York, 1966, p.154 (Hereafter cited as Trager, *From Kingdom to Republic*)

¹ Louis J.Walinsky, *Economic Development in Burma 1951-1960*, New York, 1962, p.97-98 (Hereafter cited as Walinsky, *Economic Development*)

² Kyaw Win, *jrefrmEdkifiHa&;avhvmqef;ppfcsuf (Analysis of Myanmar Politics (1948-1988)*, Yangon, Monyway Press, 2012, p.119

³ Walinsky, *Economic Development*, p-96

⁴ Sein Win Sein, OD; Ek(U Nu of Burma), Yangon, Thin Lei Win Press, 2014, p.178-179

⁵ Ko Ko Lay, *ArmhpD;yGm;a&;orkdif;(History of Burma Economy)*, Yangon, Nan Tha Zin Press, 2017, p.178 (Hereafter cited as Ko Ko Lay, *History of Burma Economy*)

the expenditure of foreign exchange reserves built up during the boom years.¹The KTA report was based on optimum conditions incapable of immediate realization. To the governmental problem of restoring the minimal governmental essentials of policing, courts, tax collections, and postal service were added innumerableadditional functions attendant on planned economic development.²

Among the ten programs adopted unanimously by the Pyidawtha Conference, the key programme was that which embodied the targets for increased investment and national output recommended in the KTA. Preliminary Report and the immediate investment program recommended by the KTA. The resolution adopted on this programme and the supporting speech presented by U Kyaw Myint, the Minister for Industry and Mines were sober and restrained in tone. It was noted that the many practical difficulties involved in carrying out any development program, the country's limitations in technical personnel and other resources.³Pyudawtha programme was divided roughly into four kinds. These are as follows:

1. plan for new life, 2. plans for national economy, 3. plan for administrative development, 4. plan for public welfare.⁴

However, a steady weakening of world rice prices began, and gradually caused mounting difficulties for Myanmar in June 1953. Myanmar had to reduce her prices very heavily, even those regulated under long-term agreements. Welfare State programme, was set forth at the Pyidawtha Conference in August 1952, was entering its most expensive phase, her monetary reserves were rapidly meltingaway. Bythe middle of 1955 they had fallen to one-third of what they had been two years earlier. In November 1954 Myanmar concluded a barter deal with China. Japan was also willing to increase her purchases of Myanmar rice. In Pyidawtha programme, themost significant step towards finding the money to finance was the reparationsagreement concluded by Myanmar with Japan in September 1954.⁵Though the overall national accounts for 1959-60 showed an improvement over those for the base years, Myanmar failed to achieve the projected one-third increase per capital output and consumption climbed during the period 1952-1960, but never exceeded 87 per cent of the prewar level. The population of Myanmar, estimated at just under 21 million in 1960, increased at the rate of 1.3 per cent a year.⁶



Figure 1. Major Fields of Economics Development Source: Pyidawtha (The New Burma) pg.20

Major Segments of the Economic Development Programme Agriculture

The objectives of the agricultural could be stated quite simply. These objectives were to increase the total level of agricultural production, to diversify agricultural production, to raise

¹ Josef Silverstein, *Burma: Military Rule and the Politics of Stagnation*, New York, Cornell University Press, 1977, p.152 (Hereafter cited as Silverstein, *Military Rule*)

² John F. Cady, A History of Modern Burma, New York, Cornell University Press, 1958, p.617

³ Walinsky, *Economic Development*, p.97

⁴ Ko Ko Lay, *History of Burma Economy*, p.179-180

⁵ D.G.E. Hall, *Burma*, London, Hutchison House, 1950, p.183-184

⁶ Trager, From Kingdom to Republic, p.158, 162

the export of agricultural products, to increase returns to farmers from the sale of their products, to ensure to farmers a more stable and equitable share of the national income. To accomplish the objectives of the programme would be required whole series of activities. All of the activities must be carefully coordinated with each other. Many of the steps that were planned could not succeed without the active, personal collaboration of millions of farmers and farm workers.¹

Water resources for the agricultural life of Myanmar were abundant but mostly wasted because of the very heavy rainfall during the monsoon seasons. Much of rainwater runs off without benefit to the soil or was inadequately stored. The loss in land utilization during the dry season by fallow, land was an important factor in the economy of the country. This loss could be eliminated by providing up-stream storage in large reservoirs from which water could be released to provide adequate irrigation throughout the year. Irrigation projects providing up-stream storage of water in large reservoirs would eliminate crop failures due to lack of water. Increased use of water, therefore, must be accompanied by the adoption of improved farming practices, such as the use of better seeds, crop rotation, improved cultivation methods, and development of a double-crop system. As testing-grounds for the long-term revolution in agriculture, the government plans to establish demonstration farms to provide practical testing-grounds for agricultural economics and engineering, to make accurate cost determinations on the basis of actual experiences, and to serve as active training centres for future modern farmers.²

Although the long-range agricultural development plan was bold and far-reaching, the government did not intend to rush into extensive projects without adequate information through testing. To this end the people must expand their research and laboratory facilities. Among the outstanding subjects for research and experimentation were the questions of developing suitable crops other than rice for the delta regions; methods of hillside agriculture that would prevent soil erosion; the introduction of new crops and new crop varieties. An important reason for the low income of farmers had been the outrageous share of the total value of agriculture production. The Government of Myanmar had taken steps to correct these conditions through rent controls, land nationalization, formation of cooperatives, establishment of State and cooperative markets, and the development of an adequate and reasonable system of agricultural credit to provide farmers with both investment and operating loans. The individual farmer did not get his full share of the central market price for his product. Usually ignorant of conditions outside the immediate area of his own land, he was in a poor bargaining position in selling his product to traders.³

Forestry and Fishing

Before the war, Myanmarw*as* the world's leading source of teak wood, but extraction of teak and other woods has been disrupted seriously for over a decade, duefirst to war and then to insurgency and dacoity. Restoration and expansion of forestry and the development of industries based on forest products would be contributed significantly to theEconomic Development Programme. While 400,000 tons normally was the maximum yield consistent with good conservation practice, the very low rate of cutting during the past decade would make it permissible to exceed that level for a period of ten years or so. Experimental use of mechanical equipment was to supplement the traditional use of trained elephants for logging teak and other woods. Improvement in transport facilities wasto provide a continuous and uninterrupted flow from forest to sawmill. It involved adequate arrangements for the rafting of

¹ Report from the Government of the Union of Burma, Pyidawtha: the New Burma, London, Hazell Watson and Viney Ltd. Printing, 1954, p.35-36 (Hereafter cited as RGUB, Pyidawtha)

² RGUB, *Pyidawtha*, pp.37, 39, 42-43

³ Ibid, pp.43-44, 46

logs as part of other plans for river and stream utilization, arrangements for proper handling equipment, and possibly the construction of access roads.¹

In a nation with a long sea coast, fish and fish products should be contributed important and inexpensive food values to the national diet. It was estimated the average consumption of fish and fish products throughout Myanmar did not exceed 24 pounds per year. Myanmar imported over 10,000 tons of fish and fish products annually at a cost of K 25 million. The lack of facilities for freezing, processing, storing, and transporting sea-food, results in prices that were much too high. Economic development plans for the New Myanmar included systematic development of the fishing and fish products industries. The establishment of the Moatama (Martaban) Fishing Company with Japanese and Myanmar capital represented the first stage in this programme. Additional projects included the building of a fishing fleet and the construction of a tuna cannery, a fish-meal and fish-oil plant, and three cold-storage plants at Yangon.²

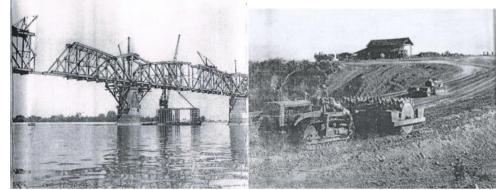


Figure 2. Inwa Bridge Under Reconstruction Figure 3. Mechanized Road Construction, Mingaladon, Yangon Source: Pyidawtha (The New Burma) pg. 58, 61

Transportation

It was difficult to discuss transportation without reference to geography. The principal geographic factors influencing Myanmar transportation system were that the mountain chains and rivers run roughly north and south, making transverse communication difficult by ground. In the great delta region, stream crossings were so numerous that road and rail transport was virtually impossible; and that the mountainous terrain along the boundaries of the country made overland communication with the neighbours extremely difficult. The objectives of the transport development programme were to provide adequate, cheap, and rapid transportation by the most efficient means available for both goods and passengers.³

Each mode of transport had distinctive characteristics. Railroads were suited best for long hauls of a reasonably constant volume of traffic. Waterways should provide the cheapest form of transportation. Road transport affords maximum flexibility of routes and schedules. Airways offer speed and the most practical access to areas cut off by difficult terrain. At the end of the Second World War, the railways of Myanmar had ceased to exist as a transport system. No single section of Myanmar railways has escaped heavy damage from war and insurrection. Before the war Myanmar had 2,058 miles of railroad lines in operation. Myanmar had six major ports such as Yangon (Rangoon), Sittway (Akyab), Pathein (Bassein), Mawlamyaing (Moulmein), Dawei (Tavoy), and Meik (Mergui). Yangon, the most important capital which was handled 85% of the foreign trade and 44% of the coastal commerce, and

¹ RGUB, *Pyidawtha*, pp.49-51

² Ibid, p. 52

³ Ibid, pp. 54-55

served as the principal terminus for the riverine commerce of the great Ayeyarwaddy River and delta systems.¹

In the economics of transportation, waterborne commerce should be the cheapest method of shipping bulky products over long distances. Riverine transportation was badly smashed during the war. Out of more than 600 craft of all types and sizes of the pre-war fleet of the Ayerawaddy Flotilla Company. To rehabilitate the inland waterways facilities, the Inland Water Transport Board is engaged in a 10-year programme of construction, as the first step of which a three-year interim goal has been established. In June 1952, however, the president established the Union of Myanmar Shipping Board and authorized it to operate shipping services along the coasts of Myanmar and between Myanmar and India. The Board promptly acquired and rebuilt the S.S Pyidawtha which had operated on regular service between Yangon and Sittway.²

Telecommunications

During the Second World War telecommunications system was almost completely destroyed. After restoration of services as good, or nearly as good, as those existing before the war, the insurgency proved almost as devastating as the war itself, and still causes serious gaps and frequent interruption of communication services; and the Myanmarnization of telephone, telegraph, and radio services also created temporary difficulties till new staff could be trained. Myanmar must set about the development of a modern communications system capable of handling efficiently the heavy burden of communications in a busy and expanding economy.³ **Power Development**

Electric power was a central factor in the entire Development Programme. Some highlights of the programme were the following:

Power developments were being planned for multiple purposes for industry, for irrigation and for many municipal and household uses. Major projects for the immediate future involve three large hydro-electric generating plants near Bago, at Saingdin falls and at Balu Chaung and a generating plant at Kalaywa.⁴

Bago(Pegu) hydroelectric project was 40 miles upstream from Bago on the Bago River, just above the village of Taikkyi. The valley is narrow at this point, and a dam could be built to store water without flooding villages or rice lands. The main objective of this project is to supply low-cost power to the Yangon-Hinthada area, in which were living some 3,000,000 people. It is estimated that, despite the present high cost of electricity, the demand in this area was increasing at a rate of more than 30% per year.⁵ Balu Chaung power project was on the Baluchaung, near Loikaw, inthe Kayah State. Power from this development would be transmitted as far south as Yangon, since the Bago hydroelectric project alone was not expected to meet the growing needs of the metropolitan area. Saingdin falls project was at Saingdin falls on the Saingdin River about 50 miles north of Sittway and 10 miles east of Buthidaung. The falls were 6 miles upstream from the junction of the Saingdin and Mayyu Rivers. The aim of this project was to supply low-cost hydroelectric power for domestic and industrial use in an area. Kalaywa mine power project was to provide power for the proposed coal mine at Kalaywa and for surrounding communities.⁶ **Minerals**

RGUB, Pyidawtha, pp. 57-58

² Ibid, pp. 63-65

³ Ibid, p.71

⁴ Ibid, p.72

⁵ Ibid, p.75

Ibid. pp.75-77

Myanmar had never produced solid fuel; so all of the coal requirements imported principally from India. The coal seams from near Kalaywa were supplied most of the needs of country and provided fuel and power for the development of a major industrial area in Central Myanmar. The product of the zinc mines has, in the past, been shipped abroad in the form of ore. Construction of a plant within Myanmar to reduce zinc-bearing ores to zinc metal is being considered in order to determine its economic feasibility and desirability. Petroleum industry, which before the war supplied the needs of Myanmar and employed large numbers of men. For the future development of mineral resources, the Government prepared an extensive programme of methodical exploration, testing and development throughout the nation.¹

Industrial Development

About 43,000 permanent employees out of a labour force of more than 8,000,000 were believed to be employed in the manufacturing plants. There is no doubt that a substantial programme of industrial development was needed urgently in Myanmar to create employment for the growing population, to reduce the dependency on other countries for goods that could be produced economically in the country, to make larger quantities of more varied products available to the people at reasonable prices, and to strengthen the national defence. steady industrialization was essential to the realization of the vision of the New Myanmar. Industrialization was inevitably a gradual process in which industries grow in logical relationship to other industries with which they were interdependent; and in relation to the availability of raw materials, labour, management, power, transport, and capital. With the necessary qualifications, the Development Programme of Myanmar included substantial and rapid progress in the field of industry.²

One of the basic steps of the entire industrialization programme was the decision to build a steel-products plant in the Yangon area. Some 40,000 tons of steel products were imported. All pharmaceuticals and drugs used in Myanmar had to be imported, and costed annually approximately K20 million. A contract had been concluded with a British firm to build and manage these facilities for the Government. The industrialization scheme for the Greater Yangon Area included a number of projects to begin or expand domestic manufacture of these materials.³

Small Scale Industries

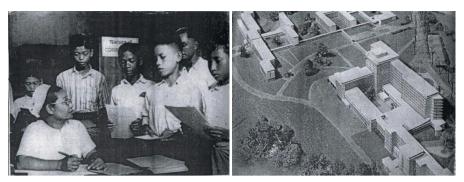
The Cottage Industries Office had started a programme of technical aid to small scale industry. Definite plans had been prepared and a start had been made to carry out programmes for improvement in textile printing, silk reeling,silk weaving and dyeing, pottery, handmade paper, sugar refining, and condensed milk industries. The Government also intended to extend credit facilities to small scale industry and to assist in other ways. However, the greatest promise for steady improvement in cottage and small scale industry lay in the formation of cooperatives for bulk purchasing, marketing, financing, standardization and the introduction of new techniques.⁴

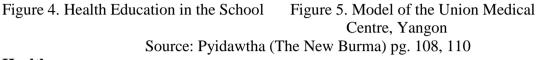
¹ RGUB, *Pyidawtha*, pp. 80-81

² Ibid, pp. 84-85

³ Ibid, pp.93-94

⁴ Ibid, pp.104-105





Health

The objectives of the health programme were to ensure full health for the people, to lower the mortality rate, to reduce deaths in childbirth, to minimize infant mortality and to wipe out epidemic and endemic diseases. The health programme had been carefully formulated with the above objectives in mind. Great attention had been given to all aspects of national health improvement, with appropriate emphasis on prevention of ill health, as well as on necessary curative measures. In the preventive part of the health programme, the government would stress health education, environmental sanitation, prevention of disease, and nutrition. Hospitals would be built all over the country. By 1960, 401 hospitals with 18,318 beds were planned to be in service. Major hospitals in the country were to be expanded and modernized. Specialists would be made available at Kyaukpyu, Magway, Pathein, Mawlamyaing, and Mandalay.¹

Education

The objectives of the education programme were to provide a basic education for all, to educate the country's youth to lead healthier, happier, and more useful lives, to train the country's youth for good citizenship and the democratic way of life, to wipe out illiteracy among the nation's adults, to introduce vocational and technical education, to grant scholarships to young men and women of promise to continue their education. A primary school in every village was a major target. More middle and high schools would be opened as quickly as possible. Special high schools offering training in industry and agriculture would be introduced for the first time into education system. The Government Technical Institute at Insein would be expanded. An agricultural institute would be established at Pyinmana. A Rangers College was to be opened at Maymyo. Throughout the educational process, as before, each child would receive a general education. In addition, however, practical education would be added. Thus, in the primary school, children would be taught general science, handicrafts, animal husbandry, and gardening. In the middle school, special courses would include industrial arts, commerce, domestic science, agriculture, and animal husbandry. In the high school, the pupils would study premedical courses, commerce, agriculture and animal husbandry, domestic science, and industrial arts.²

¹ RGUB, *Pyidawtha*, pp. 107-109

² Ibid, pp. 113-115



Figure 6. A Four- Storey Housing Unit in Yinkinmyo, Yangon Source: Pyidawtha (The New Burma) pg. 120

Housing

The objectives of the housing programme were to fulfill the national need for residential and public housing, to promote town and country planning, to increase the supply of construction materials. The Government was being assumed responsibility for building decent houses for the people. These homes would be either sold on the hire-purchase system or rented for moderate sums. The immediate aim was to construct thousands of housing units in 15 towns, including Yangon. Because of its great population and its role as the capital of the Union, a large part of the public building construction would be in Yangon. Proposed for the city were:

1. A six-storey office building on Strand Road, 2. A broadcasting station on Pyay (Prome) Road,3. The nine-storey Union Medical Centre at Shwegondaing, 4. A four-storey, five-block Baho Market between Bogyoke and Theingyi bazaars; Bogale, Nyaungbinlay, and two other markets, 5.Two Labour Welfare Centres at Ahlone and Botataung, 6. Myanmar Translation Society Building on Merchant at 37th Street,7. Government offices including Parliament Building, Supreme Court, the Prime Minister's Office, and Labour House.¹

Social Welfare

For the uplift of the rural communities Government would begin the community development projects in areas with 20,000 to 30,000 people. Health teams would tackle the problem of disease; education teams would open schools; construction teams would make roads, dig wells, and build schools; economic development teams would help bring more income to the community. The various government departments whose assistance was valuable to the community development projects would work together for the welfare of the whole community. Community Centres would provide informal meeting places for all kinds of educational and recreational activities. To stimulate and receive money gifts for the use of private voluntary social welfare agencies, a Community Chest would be encouraged. The Community Chest would apportion the receipts among the private agencies according to their needs.²

Outcome of the Programme

The KTA plan was set aside and a new four-year plan was drawn up in 1956 for implementation a year later. It recognized that the government could not undertake responsibility for everything that needed to be done; there, cooperative societies and the private sector were expected to share more fully in Myanmar development. This did not mean total freedom for private entrepreneurs; they were to be encouraged to contribute under the direction of the state.³The slogan of Pyidawtha was seldom used after 1958, but by 1960, the Pyidawtha programme had made a contribution to Myanmar greater than was revealed by statistics. It had

¹ RGUB, *Pyidawtha*, pp. 118-120

² Ibid, p. 125

³ Silverstein, *Military Rule*, p.153

improvements for the property they farmed.²

reached the people and their leaders in the cities.¹Efforts were made to increase agricultural production, but short-term credit was insufficient, fertilizer was expensive and in short supply, and irrigation was mainly a means to prevent economic disaster from a failed monsoon. Because the state owned all land, peasants did not have the incentive to invest in infrastructure

Conclusion

According to the Pyidawtha programme, there were large and comprehensive plans. The barriers to the achievement of the Pyidawtha welfare state were associated with some ingrained social and cultural habits not capable of easy adjustment. The hydroelectric project in the Kayah State (Karenni) required several years for completion and preparations for the utilization of electric power were well advanced by 1956. Agriculture, the chief sector of the economy, in which a single export crop, rice, provided about 80 per cent of earned foreign exchange. The government set forth ambitious programs for land reclamation through irrigation and improvement of waterways and water control, for setting up new systems of land tenure and reasonable credit facilities. These, together with government monopolies in the export of rice, rubber, cotton, and teak, and expansion of government agricultural research and extension services, were central features of the Agricultural and Rural Development five-year plan, one part of the Pyidawtha programme. The economic and social goals of the eight-year plan were clearly stated and well publicized. Allowing for population growth, this would provide about a 9 per cent increase in per capita consumption. It would require an investment over the eight-year period of kyats 750 crores of public and private capital.

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¹ Trager, From Kingdom to Republic, p.165

² David I. Steinberg, *Burma/Myanmar: What Everyone Needs to Know*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2010, p.53