

Today popular hair dressing style on Facebook



Photo: Facebook page of presidential office

Mae Loon-

When General U Win Myit went to the 32nd ASEAN Summit in Singapore, a photos of his wife and other state leaders sending him to the airport spread on Facebook. For the first time a picture of a women sending U Win Myit to the airport became the center of attention. It was about the clothing choice of Mr. President's wife, the First Lady.

Next to a very smartly dressed General U Win Myit, the first lady had simply dressed her hair with a comb and put Thanakha on her face. She was wearing a Myanmar jacket with an overlapping flap, and wore a thin veil on her shoulder, she was wearing Burmese fabric Longie and velvet flip flops. Some people loved and some people criticized Daw Cho Cho's fashion. Her dress was criticized as unfashionable, some said the first lady of Myanmar should be dressed properly.

Different people have different ideas of beauty. Some people like her simple style but compared to international fashion some people did not like it. Different people have always had

different views on her fashion. In this case, what we want to discuss is not her sense of style. What we mainly want to discuss is why women face criticism based on their physical appearance when they take a role in leadership.

People think that leaders of the country should be smart and look smart. If female leader's dress nice and smart would they then be free from criticism? No, they are not free from the criticism. For example State Counselor Daw Aung San Su Gyi, who is wise and intelligent, still had to face criticism. Especially her way of dressing, which became a main discussion topic.

A decade ago under the military dictatorship, there was a book that criticized Daw Aung San Su Gyi sense of style to condemn and fight against NLD party which was led by her.

Was it against the military dictatorship? No it was not. Even among politicians, different outlook on policy, counterinsurgency, journalists and ordinary people, if they want to speak against Day Aung San Su Gyi they just point at her outfit.

Based on this view, people might respond that it's common for leaders to face criticism. Men also like to have their own fashion style. For example, bald men cover the bald area with the hair they have with an overcomb, because they know bald heads don't look nice. There are people who like fashion, but say that the society limits male fashion to only shoes, trousers, Longie, Myanmar jacket, watches and rings. However, not many people criticize the fashion of men. If the leader is a man, Myanmar jacket with Longie, coat with trousers is enough and look smart for the society and people do not even talk about it. However, if the leader is a women, they carefully watch the outfit and criticized every detail of it.

"Among the competitors, they might use this point as a main weapon to criticize each other. For example, even wearing

normal Burmese traditional custom, they might want to know how much it is cost, or criticize a woman's outfit if the style does not match with their age, if the fashion is too simple or too old and if it does not look smart."

Criticisms on beauty and fashion are a weapon used to disturb female leaders, but it does not happen with men leader. For women in leadership roles, criticism of their appearance is a serious challenge. Dressing badly is like dropping a drop of poison into a cup of honey.

Ordinary women might see that this kind of criticism as nothing, it does not disturb them. But when they become leaders it becomes more destructive.

With these double standards in society, women leaders dressing style or living style is a constant topic of discussion and hate. It obviously points at the inequality between men and women in the society.

Unfortunately, gender inequality in Myanmar is still a huge challenges for women to reach leadership positions.

An overview on women, particularly women who are leaders should be the same as men in terms of capability. The society's personal prospective should be to avoid judging both men and women on anything other than their leadership qualities.

The society should judge first Lady Daw Cho Cho in the same ways other countries' first ladies are judged – on how would she develop the country in term of social, educational, and other political areas together with Mr. President. Otherwise, if a person is judge based on the physical appearance rather than attitude and abilities, we will not progress as a society.

The question is "what is wrong with First Lady Daw Cho Cho dressing her hair with comb?"

Human trafficking in Chinese Banana Farms



Photo: War Shaung Presiding Monk's
Facebook

“Some came back. Some did not come back”

A group of female workers in the Chinese's banana plantations are facing human trafficking”, said Daw Lay Htet Aye, 36.

Daw Lay Htet Aye who live in Mut Kyate village, Wine Maw township, Kachin state said that young ethnic females, who

went to work at the Chinese banana plantations were sold by the Chinese people into marriages in China. Within four or five years, more than 20 women were trafficked to China to become wives.

Local people said that around 5 years ago, Chinese men who were working in Chinese banana plantations in the Wine Maw township married ethnic Burmese women and brought them back to China to be sold.

Thousands of Chinese banana farms are located in the Wine Maw township, all the way along Ta Law Gyi road, all the way along from Wine Maw township to Lai Zar, Gwae Htu road and Shwe Naung Pin, etc.

Even though local people are against it, on March 17th, Myo Sat Kyal Pwint company bought lands for grazing in Mut Kyate village, Nant Wah village tract, Wine Maw township. The later cleaned the land with bulldozers to establish Chinese run banana plantations. Local people and women have been protesting against this.

The using of land and farms of the villagers which are located one or two miles away from Mut Kyate village were confiscated by the company and made a part of the banana plantation. Whilst the company increased their banana farm, the lives of local people and animals were put in danger and especially, women are made to feel unsafe. So they have to protest, said Daw Lay Htet Aye.

“We women, most of us are against it because if more workers came here, more women from our village will get into trouble. We get into trouble because we have seen what is happening around us. The workers from other areas such as Rakhine, Burmese and other outsiders enter our village and cause trouble to us as women. If the company plants more banana trees they also dig more canals which are not safe for our children. Recently, the children next to our village fell into the canal

and some of them died. Most importantly, women are not secure. Especially for our young daughters, it's very dangerous." Said, Daw Lay Htet Aye.

Many ethnic people throughout Burma including from the Rakhine state, Irrawaddy region, Myaungmya, Patheingyi, Moe Nyin, Ho Pin came to work in these banana farms.

The presiding monk, Ashin Wee Zar Ya Ka from War Shaung village in Wine Maw township said that hundreds of women and children are working in these farms and they face problems such as children unable to study, not enough space to bury the dead body, no proper toilet and many people living in battered huts built around the banana trees where the pesticides are sprayed. He had witnessed these workers' situation.

"The smell of the chemical pesticides and fertilizers was extremely bad. The soils are also despoiled and hard. After the company has planted once, they do not plant again on the same place. They rent another land for planting. When we went there, the smell of the fertilizers were horrible", said the presiding monk.



Photo: War Shaung presiding monk's Facebook

The presiding monk said that the Chinese banana plantation has

planted almost all over the whole Wine Maw township for 8 years already. Over 40 women including young girls and married women from other areas within Wine Maw township such as War Shaung, Nant Wah, Lwel Kyaw and Wai Bar villages have been trafficked to China.

“Here, young girls who passed Grade 10 were working with them as interpreters and some worked as cooks. Chinese old men seduced them with money and brought the girls back to their country, including Shan girls. Even though those Chinese cannot speak any Burmese many girls follow them to China. Some people though that Chinese who come here to sell water melons are rich and that is why they follow them.”

Moreover, because of the Chinese banana plantations, around 10 consequences according to strategy occurred among political, economic, military affairs, social, legalization, human trafficking, drug problem and affairs of maternal and children. Those are also the sign of the failure of Burmese future, as commented the Presiding monk.

“Human extinction. People end their lives in a banana farm. When they grow up they are sold to China. Lands were confiscated. Human were exploited. The main problem is having sycophant among the ethnic. Even among the ethnic people they take advantage of each other” said the presiding Monk.

Moreover, Daw Hseng Naung who is a 60 years old widow from Mut Kyate village said that around the banana farm, they dig the canals which were 5 feet wide, 8 feet deep as fences, and last two years a child age of 4 has drowned in the canal and died. That is their biggest concern.

She said, “In the village, if Chinese came and start a banana plantation, our future will be full of danger. They use various pesticides and fertilizers which could make our lives unsafe. They also dig a deep canal around the banana farm which is twice the height of the people and it is so dangerous

for the children. We cannot let our cow and buffalo go anywhere. Cow, buffalo drowned in those canals and died as well.

Daw Hseng Naung continue said that they destroyed and cut off our trees in an acre land that we have been working on for many years, especially iron wood trees, Cassia trees and Ya-Ma-Nay trees which we have grown for more than 10 years. Cutting them down we would face a life of joblessness. Therefore they have to act against these plantations to keep ownership of their lands.



Photo: War Shaung Presiding Monk's Facebook

She said that they depend on Cassia trees for their income and living. They cut the Cassia trees once in three years to get food, pay children's school fees and use money for family living.

The land is around 2 acres that Daw Lay Htet Aye's family owns and depends on for their living and children's education. It was taken away by Myo Set Kyal Pwint company. As a result they lost their place to stay and became unemployment, that's why they have to fight against the banana plantations.

Because the Chinese have planted banana trees everywhere, there is nowhere local people could find frogs, fishes and vegetable to eat. Finally they just have to work in the banana

to earn living.

People from Myitkyina and Wine Maw township came and bought the firewood there in their place and they sold out two or three cars of firewood so it covers their children school fee and their living expenses. A car of firewood could get more than 100,000 Kyat.

Daw Lay Htet Aye said that in March 13, the trees in the garden, such as teak, iron tree, Cassia trees which make money for the family were removed by bulldozer which made them very upset.

“They removed everything in our garden land. Only a bamboo grove left because we prevented for it unduly. The company act like it is mandatory to sell our land to them. We need these two acres of firewood land for our children school fee. Not every house can use electricity. They said that we can work on daily wages but we cannot go every day. We have children to take care of, so if we have this firewood land then we could cover for food by working on farm. Now, we are so upset that we do not have the firewood land.” Said, Daw Lay Htet Aye.

People who work in banana farm get different wages, women get (4500) Kyat and Men get (5000) kyat per a day.

In the past years, the company said that they bought the land of the local people just to look after the cows and goats and the local people could find the firewood as much as they can. But now, they paid the compensation around eight hundred thousand to twelve hundred thousand per an acre of land to do the banana plantation. This is what the locals are against said Daw Lay Htet Aye.

The fertilizers and pesticides used for the banana farm are very strong and they wash the used materials in the stream near there. Cows and buffalo died by drinking that water, said local resident of Mut Kyate village, Sayar John Phoung Daung Zae.



Photo: War Shaung Presiding Monk's Facebook

The owner of the Myo Set Kyal Pwint company is known as Director Saung Lann Yainn Chan but he worked for the Chinese, said local people.

In July 8 2018, Nant Wah local people sent the objection letter to Kachin's State Prime Minister through U Naw Li; the representative of state Hlut Taw from the Wine Maw township, but they did not take any action and the company is still digging the local peoples' land by bulldozer that's why Nant Wah local people continue to fight.

"We submitted the objections letter to the Prime Minister, and the general administration department and Department of land records checked to company once on 11 February, but there was no responsible person so they asked to follow up with the office. A week later, we got the forest and land records. There was no notice that we even submitted the objections letter to the State Prime Minister. That is why we the local people have to stand for ourselves and against the banana farms."

There are also banana plantations at the place which is a little further from the Mut Kyate village. There the use of chemical fertilizer caused several consequences, such as fish dying in the river, and buffalo and cows dying after drinking the water in the river.

It has been 8 years already that Chinese banana farms were grown in Shwe Nyaung Pin, Sann Phar, Man Winn and Gway Htu from Wine Maw township. Now, Myo Set Kyal Pwint company is digging more than (350) acres of land for additional banana plantation in Mut Kyate village, Nant Wah village tract, Wine Maw township. Recently, they have finished digging 200 acres of land and are ready to plant the banana trees there. Because of that the local people have to protest said Sayar John John Phoung Daung Zae.

Nang Kham Ying from Shan women network affirmed that women from the area near the banana farms were facing human trafficking to China.

She said, "Using pesticides and fertilizers could cause the abortion of pregnant women. It could be side effect to pregnant women. It is really dangerous work. They did not consider for the long-term. Because of lack of job opportunity, most people have to work for Chinese which makes me unhappy."

Since 2010, Chinese banana plantations have been working on those aforesaid areas and it's been about 7 to 8 years already. In 2017, the banana plantations were also grown in the Shwe-Nyaung-Pin military bases area. After 8 years of banana plantation, it effects social, economic, environmental and women were threatening by trafficking which all proves what presiding monk War Shaung has said.

"There are different ways of human trafficking. There is the common way of human trafficking, which is happening in other areas and another way is persuading with money slowly. In here, our Kachin women and Shan women were paid twenty thousand or twenty-five thousands of Chinese money. The main thing is that they use the women just for giving birth to babies. They try to marry women from here and later on resell them to other men. Kachin and Shan were effected under that structure. They also persuaded the Shan leaders with money to

take away their women as well. They cheated the local people and brought them back to China."

Women's Response to President U Win Myint's New Year Greeting



Author- Mae Loon

On the occasion of Myanmar New Year, the newly elected President U Win Myint gave a greetings and good wishes speech to his people. He mentioned promoting Human Rights, strengthening the judiciary sector, combatting corruption, combatting narcotic drugs, and uplifting of the socio-economic life of farmers. He also mentioned the need to reduce central control to make preparations for the Federal Union administrative system. Right after his speech comes out we saw a lot of feedback regarding his promises to the citizen. Among all the feedback, Hi Burma wants to collect feedback and opinions of the female activist and leaders.



Padoh Zipporah Sein (Former Voice President of The Karen National Union)

Padoh Zipporah Sein (Former Vice President of The Karen National Union):

Overall, the president speech is good. According to his speech, I think people/citizen may have more expectations. Especially what he mentioned in his speech that he really considers the wellbeing of people/citizens. He mainly focus on the civil service personnel, students and farmers. When we look back at the whole thing these are the important sectors that need to improve in a country. Of course that is not a new thing, but in a country like Burma as we are not like other country, the President mentioned this in his speech. But, we expected to hear about peace in the country and about ethnic affairs. I feel sorry that he did not mention these two issues.

As he is a new elected President on the Myanmar, I want to hear how the peace process will go on but he did not mention it. If we look from the ethnic people's perspective, as President his promise and his future plans do not include the ethic people in the country. From my personal perspective, since the current fighting is going on especially in Hpa-Pon Karen State and also in Shan and Kachin States, he should say

something about this ongoing fighting. He needs to talk how peace processes will continue, but as he did not, I feel a big concern.



Mi Sue Pwint (Member of Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee – UPDJC)

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I have concern that the government wouldn't give up on the peace process and national reconciliation, nor lose the enthusiastic about these things. But overall, his new year speech reflected the real situation of people and he might be able to approach people from the ground. Stability and change are both important and how much of success it will be depends on how much the people in the country can go along with it.



Daw Kha Kha (LHEO
Training Coordinator)

Daw Kha Kha (LHEO Training Coordinator):

I am happy to hear the President mentioned workers in his speech. If we want have a strong system of social security then the government has many things systematically. Such make the worker aware of their rights for social security, hospitals, quick response for the social security and the workers need to be able to hold the social security in their hand. And in order to have secure livelihood for the worker, the daily cost(expense) must be in balance with the income. If the commodity prices increase excessively then the worker's can not survive.



Daw Tin Tin Nyo- Policy Board
Member of Women League's of
Burma

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Burma:**

Regarding to the "law", there should be specific provisions on women and female children. In Judicial system, aside from impartial and effectiveness, we need Justice personal who are understanding of gender-sensitivity and ready to stand up for it. It needs to get into this judicial system anyhow.

While dealing with rape or domestic violence cases, the police often handle them wrong. Such as made fun of the women or act like not really respect the women. These are the things that need to change. If the Judges, lawyers, Polices do not act appropriate ways, then the survivor of violence will not try to seek justice from legal channels. If it ends up in these ways, then the wish of the President that he want to shore up with the judicial sector will face with barriers and delayed.

As the Mr. President mentioned about the involvement of people with authority and their efforts to interfere, it is really good if he can take action on it. Regarding to the "people with authority" not only targeting specific people but should refer to "anyone". If the case is committing by the people with arms, seeking for truth should be also impartial.



Naw Ohn Hla- (Democracy and Peace Women Network)

Naw Ohn Hla- (Democracy and Peace Women Network):

In U Thein Sein's government a farmland management body was formed to solve the farmland problems and later on the land administration system came out but it did not really solve the problems. Finally U Thein Seinon lost the election in 2015 and NLD took over the government. Later on U Htin Kyaw established order 15/16/ and 14/16 to help solve the farmers and their land problems but instead of solving the problem it become confusing during 2 years of NLD government. The farmers face more difficulty. Now again U Win Myint's government mentioned farmers and I wish he can implement according to what he said. If he doesn't follow what he said, or elected government are the same as previous, then the people will lose hope.

I warmly welcome President U Win Myint to his appointment and his speech but it should be realistic in implementation. In the previous President, he said the land must return back to the landowner but in realistic the landowning law made worse. The law passed in the time that he took the position as the speakers of State and Region Hluttaw. So I want to remind him, now he is a President of the country and if he wants to do for the farmers he has to change the landowning law.



Daw Khin Ohmar- Policy Board member, Burmese Women's Union

Daw Khin Ohmar- Policy Board member, Burmese Women's Union:

His speech established a plan on how he is going to lead during his Presidency. His speech is good. Including the promise to amend the constitution...but how the government is going to do this and what is the home affair and army's role, how they are going to coordinate... we have to keep on watching. There is a very important thing that he miss to mention in his speech and that is "Peace". Or maybe a possibility that there is a divide responsible/role between President and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Does that mean Daw Aung San Suu Kyi takes a role for Peace? If this way, what is the plan for Peace process and what is the goal? Especially it will be good if she can speak out about what will be done for the people who flee from fighting. Especially there was on going fighting in Kachin state and people who flee from the fighting were blocked and could not received humanitarian aid while the Buddhists are

enjoying it's new year Thin Gyan water festival. It will be really nice if Daw Aung San Suu Kyi can mention how she is going to help displace persons from fighting.



Naw Hser Hser-Joint General Secretary I of WLB

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Regarding his speech, it is good to hear. Even though his speech does not cover for the whole country, at least he point out the main and current problems that he wants to change. Mainly he focus on the country's development parts. But, in practice the issues of fighting in ethnic areas, IDPs and those fleeing from fighting were not considered. Another one, from the women's justice point according to my experience I don't think even the President has the power to do something about the sexual violence committed by the Burmese army in our ethnic areas. Looking at this I do not have that much trust. But since he mentioned developing people's livelihood or Political reform, I want to see the reform and change in general. We have to keep on and watch whether he is able to do or not, he will do or he will not.

Especially he mentioned the cooperation with CBO's and CSO's ...

So we have to wait and see that how much CBO's and CSO's will have a channel to support for the future federal union. My perspective is not only talk but I want to see the practical.



Cherry Zahau (Human Rights Activist)

Cherry Zahau (Human Rights Activist):

It is really good that the president gave a speech to the people on the Buddhism New Year's Day. Regarding Human Rights, he mentioned a lot but he did not include how to prevent Human Rights violations and what should be done for Human Rights protection. For example, U win Myint did not dismiss the laws, specifically the obstacles such as political and civil rights of citizen while he was the taking the position as a Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw . He did not amend it. There is a question that even he did not amend during his time of the Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw and how he is going to change right now as the president. In the same way, when we look back the things he had done during the past 2 years, the role of the speakers of State and Region Hluttaw were really limited in his term. As the Central control, he directly guided and lead the State and Region Hluttaw. So.. the second question came out that will he make a change on those things

immediately right after he becomes president? The another bothering thing to me is, he mentioned people for those “who works for Human Rights must also give respect to the dignity of other”. This kind of words is a word that come from the HRs activities who always stand up for those who have been violated.

So.. what does he means for this quote? For example, does he want to refer to the situation in Rakhaing State? In Rakhaing state, the Rohingya are not accepted by our country. Does he mean that the world criticizes that Rohingya are not treated like humans in Burma? Human Rights are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of colour, religion, etc. As human rights activists, we have to stand up for any actions or things against inhumane behaviors. An interesting point is that although he mentioned about Human Rights, but there's still ongoing fighting in Burma especially in ethnic areas. The people from Kachin state do not get the right to life and to live in safety which are referred to as basic human rights as. He did not say anything regarding those. Also did not mention anything about human right violation in Rakhing state which is well-known by the world. I guess as a Burmese people, they don't think really deeply to the situation but they will only satisfy with what the President speak out even it is only in a word, and he well known on this as well. That is only the outer surface. It is a doubtful thing that how he will be working on human rights even he did not highlight and talking about the real situation and the human rights violation in Kachin, Rakhaing state and other areas in the country.

A high school female teacher from Mon State:

In the past two years term of government, the country is in debt and I do not hope the salary will increase. In previous government they increase often and by the month of April we are waiting for a new salary. Since March, we were waiting for salary even though the commodity prices getting higher and higher but we still live on low wages. I did not hope that

this term government would be able to increase the salary in 2 years.

Anyhow I am happy to hear these good news. Some people blame that the increased amount is very small amount proportionally to the commodity prices. For me I do not think in that way. I want to thank them for what they give. The president's speech encouraged the civil service personnel. The increased amount is not that much, may be 30,000 kyat. However this amount will improve the situation for us. For me I can not survive only with my salary. I have to teach extra to cover my expense. I really like when he mentioned building housing for civil service personal and it will be great if we receive health care as well. As teachers, we need health care after we finish our service. The pension money is only 100,000 kyat and we can not survive. If the government provides a house then we do not need to worry about where we are going to stay after finishing our service.