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MPA teamed up with Starhigh Asia Pacific for the Navigability of the Yangon River

Myanmar Port Authority (MPA) and Starhigh Asia Pacific Pte., Ltd. planned to dredge for the inner bar known as Monkey Point near the Yangon Port. On 30th April 2015, they partnered in order to dredge the sediment and debris from the bottom of a body of water which are common in waterways like channels and harbors. Dredging of the Yangon River will improve navigability for ships and reduce traffic near the port as the river was previously too shallow, and vessels were only able to enter and exit during high tide. The project started on 30th March and was completed on 10th April. They extended the Yangon River depth by 1.5 meters, from 3.5 meters to 5.0 meters to be navigable. "We recognized that the dredging of the river was a greater opportunity to give back to the MPA and to the people of Myanmar," said U Phone Khine Shwe, General Manager, Starhigh Asia Pacific Pte., Ltd. "As an act of goodwill, we offered to undertake this project at our own cost. With the improvement of the Yangon River, we'll firstly be able to solve the traffic problem."

"The project will also support the economic

development of the country, as more ships will be able to enter and exit the port, increasing the rate of business in the country," he added. Along the Yangon River, there are many container terminals located which added to the necessity of the project. The

deepening of the river will not only allow for more vessels, it will also allow for vessels requiring deeper water depths to pass through.

Starhigh has already executed river engineering and channeling projects in Maw-

lamyine and Dawei over the past few years. In Singapore, Starhigh is undertaking the Jurong Island West Extension project. Starhigh plans to expand into marine construction in the future.



Myanmar's rice export tops two million tons



Myanmar's rice exports to China have risen steadily despite Beijing officially banning shipments of rice from Myanmar in 2014, according to the Myanmar Rice Federation. Myanmar's rice exports will top 2 million tons this year with the resumption of official shipments in

May. MRF Joint Secretary Dr. Soe Tun said, "We expect to export around 2 million tons of rice in 2015-2016 fiscal year and 3,000 tons of rice will be delivered to China next month. Myanmar exported about 1.8 million tons of rice, including 400,000 tons of broken rice, in 2014-2015 fiscal year, up

from 1.27 million in 2013-2014 fiscal year and 1.46 million in fiscal year 2012-2013." "Last year's export volume was the highest in 50 years, earning US \$644 million," he added.

In 2014, the government of China requests Myanmar to make a trade contract on a

guarantee of rice milling quality. China is the largest rice exports market for Myanmar and most of the rice exports to China are grown in the Ayeyarwady Delta. Though China restricted importing rice from Myanmar, it is legal in Myanmar to export rice to China. In the early days of this year, members of Myanmar Rice Federation and Ministry of Commerce negotiated with the responsible party in order to export rice officially to China from Myanmar.

The United States was one of the 64 countries to import rice from Myanmar in the previous fiscal year. "A total of 17 tons of Paw Hsan Hmwe, fragrant aroma rice, was exported to the US market," Dr Soe Tun said. Myanmar exported around 900,000 tons to China a year earlier. Myanmar rice exports to Africa were down, while demand from Europe was up last year. Rice shipments to Japan totaled only 6,000 tons in the last fiscal year.

Last year earnings from Myanmar rice exports is \$644 million which is an increase from \$460 million the previous year and \$544 million in fiscal 2012-2013. Ministry of commerce announced that Myanmar exports rice to China, Japan, and other countries in Asia, Europe and Africa.

According to the country's agricultural data, Myanmar produces 14 million tons of rice yearly, with domestic consumption accounting for 12 million tons. With around 7 million paddy growers, Myanmar has some 16 million acres of farmland for monsoon paddy cultivation and 3 million for summer paddy cultivation.

Fruits Export

A Juicy Proposition

Shalini Mitra



The aroma is incredible and sniffing them is a treat in itself. If you are a mango lover, you know what I am talking about. Sein Ta Lone mangoes

from Myanmar are known for its superior and distinct fragrance and anyone and everyone who has tasted it once never forgets its deliciousness. Myanmar's Sein Ta Lone (meaning Diamond Solitaire) mango seems to have become a rage not only with the locals but with the foreigners, as well. No wonder the famous and most popular mango variety is in high demand in other Asian markets including China and Singapore. The Myanmar Fruit and Vegetable Producers and Exporters Association's chairman, Soe Than Min Din, outlined that the export of mangoes to Singapore has increased significantly after the trade links with China have been established once again. Fresh mangoes are mainly exported to China by border trade and to Singapore by overseas trade.

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Till a few years back, it was cultivated only in the hilly region, but now the experts are researching the ground to plant it in other regions as well.

In Myanmar, about 300 varieties and 20 kinds of mango species are grown. Some known ones are Machitsu, Yingwe, Pannswe, Thone-lone-tataung, and so on. But Sein-talone is the best in taste which is not available in any other country. Given the increasing demand, more and more people have started growing Sein Ta Lone mangoes. Till a few years back, it was cultivated only in the hilly region, but now the experts are researching the ground to plant it in other regions as well. “We have sent 3 tonnes

of mangoes to Singapore and Malaysia and will be exporting more depending on our capacity till the season ends,” says Kim Young, an employee of a fruit exporting company.

The deliciousness and sweet fragrance of Myanmar's mangoes have lured South Koreans, as well. So far, South Korea was importing mangoes from The Philippines and Vietnam, but since the fruit has become very popular in the country, it has decided to allow mango imports from Myanmar very soon.

Mango is not the only fruit that Myanmar is exporting to its neighbours but watermelons and muskmelons are equally in demand. Myanmar is rich with tropical fruit resources such as mango, banana, pine-apple, strawberry, durian, mangosteen, papaya, tamarind, and coconut. Other commonly grown deciduous fruits such as the damson plum, Japanese apricot and persimmon are also exported, albeit not in large numbers. Plum and Japanese apricot are usually produced and preserved and used as dehydrated and salted preparations, locally

Myanmar's fruit exports hit US\$23 million within the first two months of the fiscal year of 2013-14, according to the Ministry of Commerce. Among the exported fruits, watermelons and mangoes are the most popular. Over 70,000 tonnes of watermelons and 14,000 tonnes of mangoes were exported mainly to China and Singapore. Malaysia and Thailand are two new export markets. Besides, Myanmar has started participating in international fruit festivals around the world.

"Seedless watermelons have been traded to China through the border for five years. We earlier attempted to export them with air shipment, but failed to do so due to the fruits' weight. Now, we have started sea shipments to Singapore," says Young. "This is more profitable than trading watermelons through the border."

The reason for the demand of Myanmar watermelons abroad is that they are big, juicy and sweet. Despite the popular belief that watermelon is made up of only water and sugar, watermelon is actually considered a nutrient dense food, a food that provides a high amount of vitamins, minerals and antioxidants for a low amount of calories.

Myanmar watermelons and musk melons have become a hot product in the domestic Chinese fruit market. In Wanding in China, a ton of Myanmar muskmelons is priced at 18,000 Yuan in a fruit wholesale market. "At that price you can buy a ton of mahogany in the local area" dealers in fruits exports say. Trucks from Myanmar and the mainland fill the wholesale markets with fruits, affecting the traffic at Wanding. This clearly shows the booming agricultural cooperation along



the China-Myanmar border. Water melons are grown from October to January in Myanmar.

The border of the Ruili region in northeastern Myanmar has a lot of land but with a few people.

The soil of this region is fertile and there is

abundant rainfall and sunshine. The conditions are very suitable for growing tropical fruits. Therefore, the watermelons and musk melons produced here are big, juicy, sweet, and have been very popular in the domestic fruit market. Around the late 80's and early 90's, mainland fruit growers started leasing land to plant watermelons to sell

them in the mainland. As city construction began to develop, the original small Ruiwan area of agricultural land began to get crowded. So the fruit growing local farmers began to go out of China, near the border to Myanmar and plant fruits there.

With the arrival of Chinese farmers bringing



in capital and technology to Myanmar, the original large areas of wasteland have now begun to produce economic benefits to the local people. Many Myanmar locals who at first started to work for Chinese growers and planted melons, have now have learned how to use the land, invest capital and how to be partners. Currently, there are nearly a thousand Chinese farmers in Myanmar engaged in traditional agricultural planting who after harvest sell the products in the China market.

Myanmar commerce authorities have urged farmers in the country to expand export of fruits to boost foreign exchange earnings, particularly the export of mango, watermelon and musk melon. Previously these fruits were harvested three months in a year but now it's a year round process which is a clear proof of Myanmar's fruits' growing demand across its borders.

Myanmar to reach US\$ 6 billion FDI in 2015-2016 fiscal year

Myanmar government has set out 20 year FDI Promotion plan and beaten its targets since fiscal year 2012-2013. For the fiscal year 2015-2016, Myanmar targets US \$6 billion in FDI and expects to exceed it as previous years. The country's FDI is positive that in the fiscal year 2014-2015, the government's initial target was US\$ 4 billion and later increased it to US\$ 5 billion then received \$8.01 billion. So for this year, US \$6 billion is initial target which may be amended as last year. The director-general of the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration and secretary-general of the Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC), U Aung Nang Oo said, "Most of the foreign companies are based in Singapore. So Singapore based companies stand the highest ranking in FDI Myanmar and actually, foreign investors include the companies from around the world." Myanmar's economic growth rate is expected to exceed 8 percent annually in the next few years.

Compared to 2009-2010, when the FDI amount was only \$329.6 million; foreign investment in Myanmar has significantly increased. Under the guidance of Myanmar



Investment Commission (MIC), foreign investors can now lease state-owned land and private properties, transfer ownership of businesses and transfer money with fewer restrictions. In the earlier months of 2015, MIC has processed licenses for investment in various sectors. It has licensed 77 local

and foreign firms, including those in the oil and gas industry, transportation and communications, manufacturing, the real estate sector, hospitality, agricultural business and mining and power.

In the fiscal year 2014-2015, among the foreign investors, Singapore based companies

are at the highest ranking with investments of US\$ 4.2 billion while United Kingdom companies have invested US \$850 million taking second place. Chinese companies have invested US\$ 516 million, occupying the third place.