Introduction

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INTRODUCTION

Myanmar may well be considered the last frontier in Asia. However there is great potential for it to grow and develop given the generous resources available to it.

As the country with one of the largest landmass in South- East Asia, there is plenty of arable land tenable yet, still unutilized for farming. Although Myanmar is predominantly an agricultural country, most of the farms are small-scale by individual farmers. The government has implemented a campaign for the large Myanmar businesses to take part in agriculture, namely large-scale farms where they have been granted land as large as several thousands of acres for developing this purpose.

The many rivers and waterways provide irrigation for farming in many areas, while also providing a means of transportation in areas where there is no infrastructure such as roads, bridges, rail or airports.

Myanmar has a population of approximately 47 million people providing a large and ready pool of workers. Of these, approximately 60% are employed in the agricultural sector.

In addition, the country has a long coastline which supports a healthy fishing and seafood industry, large primary forests containing probably the last natural teak forest in the world, oil and natural gas, gems such as jade, rubies and sapphires, and minerals such as gold, copper and tin.

All these natural resources form the basis of the industrialization development of Myanmar. One of the obstacles that would impede the rapid development of industrialization would be the lack of infrastructure support in the country, namely, electricity/ energy, telecommunications and transportation.

To be fair, the government is paving the way for improving the infrastructure and steps have been taken to rectify this. Roads, highways and bridges are being built to connect the areas that are currently inaccessible. Although strictly controlled and carried out with great trepida-

tion, there has been an effort in the past 2 years to improve communications, such as providing e-mail services and talks of eventually allowing Internet to be made available. The government has even started a "Cybertech Village" in an attempt to modernize, yet it is not time for high tech industries as the infrastructure presently is still insufficient.

To optimize the industrialization process in the present economic climate in Myanmar, it may be best to concentrate on labour intensive industries based particularly, on agricultural raw materials that are available in the country.

This volume concentrates mainly on the development of agricultural-based industries in Myanmar.

The first chapter is dedicated to the Myanmar Entrepreneur. As all businesses, unless state-owned, begin with the entrepreneur, this paper examines the evolution of the Myanmar entrepreneur over the years and discusses their prospects and challenges.

In the second chapter, agro-based industries are discussed as a whole while the sugar industry is studied in greater depth in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 looks into the use of agricultural machines and their impact on the agricultural sector in Myanmar.

This book also looks into 2 other types of industries, namely the automotive and media industries, that are not directly related to agriculture to give the reader some insights into other thriving businesses in Myanmar and that allows the reader to make some comparisons with the agriculture-based industries for himself.

Chapter 7 and Chapter 8 are devoted to reviewing the industries in 2 industrialized areas, Yangon and Monywa, which have been designated "Industrial Zones".

It must be emphasized that there is insufficient documentation and a serious lack of statistical data available. Therefore, some of the information in the papers may not have been substantiated with statistical evidence.

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