

Misuse of universal service funds in Myanmar

Posted by [Rohan Samarajiva](#) on June 12, 2020 / [0 Comments](#)

One can debate the pros and cons of SIM registration. It is difficult to argue that SIMs should be treated differently from cars, which can also be used for good and ill. Cars are therefore registered in ways that associate a natural or legal person with the device.

Yet, as our colleague Htaike Htaike Aung points out below, there can be no justification for the abuse of funds built up from a 2 percent tax on telecom users to support a SIM database, that has nothing to do with the stated objectives of the universal service fund.

According to the strategy paper seen by The Myanmar Times, the fund is intended for developing infrastructure and digital literacy training programmes, connecting people in commercially non-viable areas and implementing projects for minorities, persons with disabilities and poor people. Biometrics projects are not included.

The 2013 Telecommunications Law says that the fund should be used for the universal service plans to expand telecom infrastructure and services in the underserved areas.

“The ministry is definitely using it outside of the scope of what the Universal Service Fund is traditionally used for,” commented Daw Htaike Htaike Aung, executive director of Myanmar ICT for Development Organisation (MIDO), a civil society organisation.

She said it opens the door to political interventions in the future and risks ineffective utilisation and management of the fund.

Comments are closed.

Personal Data Protection Act passed: What will it mean?

Data protection is considered an esoteric subject, but affects the entirety of the modern economy, ranging from a home-based cake supplier who maintains a list of customers, their preferences and contacts, to a multinational insurance company.

Senior Research Fellow appointed as Member of Thai National Broadcasting & Telecom Commission

Pirongrong Ramasoota, Senior Research Fellow who served on the Board of Communication Policy Research south for many years including a term as Vice Chair, has been confirmed by the Senate of Thailand to serve as a member of the seven-member Board of the Thai regulatory body responsible for spectrum, telecom and electronic broadcasting. A scholar who has given weight both to the conduct of well-designed research and to taking research findings to the policy process, Pirongrong exemplifies the kind of policy intellectual LIRNEasia was seeking to develop through CPRsouth.

Digital connectivity as an enabling factor in Asian resurgence

There is little debate about Asia’s increasing economic and political significance. The COVID-19 pandemic that originated in the Asian land mass has retarded, but not reversed, the progress made in taking millions out of poverty and in moving the centre of gravity of the world economy back to Asia, where it was until the 16th century.

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