



The Little Known Snow-Land Of Myanmar
U Sai Aung Tun

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Would any body believe that there exists a snow-land in a tropical country like Myanmar? Well, sure it does. There is a place in the northernmost region of Myanmar surrounded by ranges of snow-capped mountains. If one flies from Myitkyina, the capital of Kachin State, for about 220 miles north, one will come to a small town called Putao. Putao, is a beautiful remote town in northern Myanmar. Situated between 26° 42' and 27° 55' North Latitude and between 96° 53' East Longitude it has an area 2105.559 square miles and about 1347494 acres with a population of 59565.

The Putao Township's boundaries touch with Machambaw in the east, Sombrabum in the South, Ta Naing in the west and Inida in the North. Putao is a horse-shoe shaped township with a large area of fertile plain suitable for cultivation of various crops. It is surrounded by snow-capped ranges of beautiful mountains from north to south. It stands at a height of 1374.4 feet above sea level, and winter lasts longer than summer. But sometimes it is subject to frequent and drastic changes of weather. Rainfall varies from 127.32" to 84.7" and the warmest period is from June to August with a temperature of about 36.8 Degree Centigrade. The coldest period starts from November and lasts until February with a temperature of 03.8 Centigrade.

The national races, live together harmoniously; there are, Ra Wan, Lisu, Tai Hkamti, Jingh-Paw, Myanmar, Chinese, Lahu, Kayin, Indian and Rakhine. Freedom of worship is guaranteed to all and there are those who embrace Christianity, Buddhism, Islam., Hinduism and even animism.

Legends have it that Putao was established by an old pious Hkamti Shan called Pu Taung. He led the Tai ethnic group to settle in this area and establish a village named after him. As non-Hkamti people could not pronounce it properly that it came to be known as Putao to the British and Pu-Tar-O to Myanmar. In days gone by the whole of this region was known as Hkamti Long which is also a Hkamti Shan word which literally means "Great Place of Gold." "Hkam" is gold "Ti" is place and "Long" great.

Putao is also well-known, for its old fort which was built under the British rule. When Hkamti Long area was brought under British administration, Mr.W.A. Hertz was assigned to Putao as the first Resident of the British Government. The fort was named "Fort Hertz" in honour of him. The construction of the fort started from the base of a mountain range on the north side of Putao and stretched up along the upward slope to the highest point of the range. If a visitor standing on the summit looks down at the base of the fort, he will see a vast area of picturesque cultivated paddy fields with a number of creeks, streams and rivulets zizagging across the fertile plain and finally merging into a big river called Nam Kiao. At the Site of the fort one can still see some vestiges of the past such as old military barracks, some rusty armouries, and an old bungalow. But now the place has been taken over by the government for the Myanmar Police Force of Putao township. Around the departments as Putao has now become the capital of the region. The Hkamti Long area is very rich in natural resources both under and above ground. These resources are still waiting to be exploited.

The Government has now launched a programme of an all-round development for the people of this region. New roads are being constructed and old ones repaired for better communication with the neighbouring townships. To upgrade the educational standard of the national races of this area, the Ministry of Education has opened 89 schools, two High Schools, five Middle Schools and eighty two primary schools. Two hospitals have been built to meet the health needs of the people, one in Putao itself and the other in Mulashidee. Eleven dispensaries have been established in various villages near Putao. Cultivable lands are being expanded and paddy cultivation is encouraged to meet the needs of the growing population. A fund and loan programme to help the farmers has also been introduced by the government. Agricultural and farm equipment and tractors of different sizes have also been provided to help boost the production of paddy. Gradual introduction of mechanized farming methods has also been undertaken to help promote better yields of crops. Poultry farming is being promoted and citrus farming has been expanded rapidly not only to meet the demands of the local consumers but also for the people in all parts of Myanmar. New dams and irrigation canals have been constructed to conserve the water that might be needed for cultivation in the new areas.

At the moment Putao is accessible only by air and for better landing facilities the air field is being extended and a new terminal has been built to meet the growing number of air travelers. A motor road connects Myitkyina and Putao, but it will have to be carefully maintained to withstand frequent landslides and erosion caused by heavy rains.

However, there will soon come a time when tourists and visitors will be able to go to Putao for recreation and to gaze at the scenic evergreen forests of the area and the stunning beauty of the snow-capped mountains. These snow-clad peaks with vast potentials are standing there, waiting to welcome the investors who will be able to turn this little known snow-land of Myanmar into a well-known winter resort which will include in the chain of eco-tourist attractions now popularly stretching across the globe.

