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Public conference to focus on Myanmar's women empowerment

The Nation

In an effort to boost women's participation in Myanmar's transition to civilian government, the Australian-Myanmar Chamber of Commerce (A-MCC) will hold its first seminar on women empowerment titled "Women in Business & Leadership Development Conference" in Yangon tomorrow in partnership with the Myanmar Women's Entrepreneurs Association (MWEA).

Verity Lomax, chief executive officer of A-MCC, said in an exclusive interview that the event would bring together more than 300 leading businesspeople from Australia and Myanmar to share knowledge, expertise, and personal stories that inspire and empower aspiring female entrepreneurs and leaders.

"Our purpose is to bring together women and men, Australians and Myanmar people, to share their knowledge and experience about business and leadership. It is the opportunity for those people to learn how to grow business, how to expense their businesses, ... and how to expense on [grow as] an individual in terms of leadership skills," she said.

"Everybody takes away something different for themselves. Perhaps they become inspired by Myanmar women who have success stories.

"Perhaps they learn about how to create an innovative marketing strategy. Perhaps they learn about how to have a stronger voice in their work so that they can become a leader themselves," she said.

"There are many women leaders already in Myanmar. I have no doubt there will be even more. I hope that attendees can find someone who could be a role model for themselves and connect with other successful businesswomen to try doing their own business in Myanmar."

The conference serves as a platform to discuss the important role that women play in business in Myanmar, present opportunities for women across a wide range of industries and organisations, and equip them with skills and practical advice to succeed as entrepreneurs, innovators, mentors, and managers.

Attendees will have a unique opportunity to listen to seasoned business professionals and experts who will share their stories, skills and expertise.

Topics include success stories of start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises, understanding philanthropy and corporate social responsibility, developing innovative marketing strategies, attracting great talent and developing a family-friendly workplace, and empowerment in the workplace.

Before the public conference, the A-MCC will host a gala dinner on May 13 today, launched by Australian Ambassador to Myanmar Nicholas Coppel. The US\$75 (Bt2,650) ticket for the event will support women attending the conference tomorrow.

The conference fee alone is affordable - 10,000 kyat (Bt300) per person. Lomax expects more female attendees than men, although men are expected to be part of the dialogue around the importance of women in business.

"At this critical stage in Myanmar's transformation, women can be in the forefront of positive change and contribute significantly to long-term economic development. Supporting and empowering women in business globally makes good economic sense.

"As the fastest-growing economy in the world, opportunities for women in business in Myanmar are expanding rapidly. Women's participation and voice in Myanmar's transition can not only fuel economic growth, but accelerate momentum of development in every sector, which enables the nation to attain its goals faster," she said.

Lomax said she was very happy to work with MWEA, and did not hesitate to laud the association's cooperation.

"We need to partner with a strong women's group like MWEA. We need to be guided by them in terms of appropriate messages, the speakers, the format, and the language and so on. So they are partners in deciding speakers, panellists, the format, and they also supply some of the moderators.

"It has been a really important part of MWEA and most importantly promoting the event. They have an incredible network and they are trying to encourage many women to attend the conference. They also have a big network we can use," she said.