China ‘not confident’ of restarting Myitsone dam

China’s ambassador to Myanmar casts doubt over China Power Investment Corporations ambitions to resume the suspended Myitsone mega-dam in Kachin State but says Chinese companies are being unfairly singled out for criticism in Myanmar.

Chinese turn out to mark Martyrs’ Day at monuments throughout the country on July 19, with Yangon’s Martyrs’ Mausoleum a focal point. Once the official ceremony – attended by Vice President Sai Mauk Kham – was completed the mausoleum was opened to the public and many said it was the first time they had been able to salute the martyrs at the historic site.

A nation remembers its fallen heroes

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Activists say US was planning Na Sa Ka sanctions

Controversial border security force accused of human rights violations was about to be sanctioned by the United States before the government abolished it on July 14, activists in Washington say.

Is it crisis time for the kyat?

Myanmar’s currency has dropped sharply in recent months and is down more than 20 percent since it was floated in April 2012 but there is no reason to panic yet.

Cracks begin to show in UMFFCI after election

Members of the country’s leading business body call for fresh elections at its annual meeting and raise concerns over the organisation’s lack of financial transparency, including “entertainment” expenses incurred in Yangon.

Ghost films rise from the dead

After years hidden under a blanket of censorship, ghost films have emerged to terrify audiences dulled by a steady diet of slap-stick comedy and schlock drama. Mile Post 26 is among the first to take advantage of the relaxation on filmmaking restrictions.
This week's tall drink of water is Kyal Sin Hsaung: part time model, part time student, and full-time beauty. A Burmese Christian, Kyal Sin Hsaung was born in Mawlamyine, went to school in Taungyi, and finally came to Yangon in 2009 to pursue modeling. She has already got two film credits to her name, and in between photo shoots she's a long distance student of zoology at Dagon University set to graduate this fall! Kyal Sin Hsaung is the only daughter of the Deputy Director for the Ministry of Sport, so hands off boys!
Chinese ambassador casts doubt on Myitsone resumption

By Ei Ei Toe Lwin

National Democratic Force member and land rights activist Daw Bauk Ja has been arrested on charges related to the death of a man in 2008, her lawyer said last week.

She was detained by police at her home in the Kachin State capital of Myitkyina on the evening of July 18, said NDP leader U Khin Maung Swe.

Daw Bauk Ja was transferred to the police station in Hpakant township’s Karmine ward the following day, police in Myitkyina said.

“We don’t know the exact details of the case – we just arrested her and handed [her] to Karimine police station last night based on their request,” said a police officer from the Myitkyina district police station.

“We know that police charged her under section 304(a), which relates to causing death by negligence,” he said.

Daw Bauk Ja’s lawyer, U Myit Thwir, said she had been previously been charged under section 304(a) prior to the 2010 general election, in which she stood as a candidate for the Pyithu Hluttaw seat of Hpakant. However, the plaintiff agreed to withdraw the case in 2010, he said.

He said the case related to the death of a man who was treated by Daw Bauk Ja’s sister, who is a doctor in Karmine Ward.

“Daw Bauk Ja used to help her sister and one day a man who had been treated by her died. They accused Daw Bauk Ja and her sister of negligence in the treatment,” he said.

“We are asking [Chinese companies] to adapt to the new situation,” Mr Yang said.

The guidelines show that Chinese companies understand the need to change their practices but the important test will be whether they are adhered to, Mr Yang said the embassy would work to ensure compliance but there is a risk that, however well-intentioned, the guidelines will end up looking like a public relations stunt.

While maintaining a smile throughout the interview, Mr Yang was clearly frustrated over the expectations that Chinese companies single-handedly carry out CSR projects with little or no help from Nay Pyi Taw.

“There are some things that should be the duty of the government but now the investors have to take charge,” Mr Yang said. He cited schools built by China National Petroleum Corporation along the route of the China-Myanmar pipeline as an example. Mr Yang said that after the schools were built the company received complaints from residents that it had not supplied teachers to staff them.

“Teachers are the government’s responsibility,” Mr Yang said. “The Chinese company cannot provide teachers for the schools.”

He said he felt Chinese companies had also been unfairly singled out when working on projects with companies from other countries, while the benefits Myanmar could reap from these projects are rarely reported in the media.

Religious groups protest Bodhgaya bombing

Activists were planning to stage a protest over the bombing at Bodhgaya in northeast India over the weekend in front of Yangon’s High Court building.

“The July 21 anti-violence protest was organised by the Theravada Dhamma Network, which comprises more than 75 Buddhist organisations,” Yang said.

The July 7 bombing wounded two monks. Ten small devices exploded, while three were defused.

Protesters said before the event that they planned to re-cite metta sutras to show loving kindness. Organiser U Myo Myat said the groups wanted to show their opposition to the violence at Bodhgaya and religious conflict generally.

“No place of religious significance should be used as a tool for conflict,” Bodhgaya is not only important for Buddhists but is a part of the world’s heritage and we should safeguard it,” he said.

The protest had originally been scheduled for July 16 outside City Hall but the authorities rejected the application and it was moved to the High Court.

— Cherry Thein

Kachin activist Daw Bauk Ja arrested over 2008 death

Chinese ambassador Yang Houlan with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

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Chinese ambassador Yang Houlan with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

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THE KIO liaison office to reopen

Senior government and Kachin Independence Army officials expected to attend July 23 ceremony in Myitkyina

NOE NOE AUNG

A policeman stands guard on a Meiktila street during an outbreak of violence in March. Photo: AFP

Farmers reject ‘protection’ bill, push for changes

NEO NOE AUNG

AYEKAWATY Region farmer representatives say they are not satisfied with a proposed law that would set minimum prices for agricultural products and will push the Pyundawu Htutaw to make amendments.

The Law on Ensuring the Economic Welfare of Farmers – formerly known as the Farmers’ Protection Law – was drafted by MPs in collaboration with the army, the Kachin Independence Army and business organisations. It is expected to be discussed during the current session of parliament and is anticipated to be passed in the next legislative term.

"When the farmers say they are not satisfied with the law, it means that it does not meet their needs," said U Min Tin, a farmer representative from Ayeyarwady Region.

The law aims to ensure the security of the residents and farmers and to protect them from conflicts.

"When we were making the bill, they didn’t ask real farmers what they need or how they should be protected," U Myo Min Tin said.

"The law is not really effective for real farmers, we can’t agree with it," the farmer said. "Real farmers are the ones who suffer, they are being exposed to violence and not protected."
Fare hikes top list of bus complaints

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The top complaint among Yangon city passengers is that bus conductors asking for fares above the fixed rate, figures from the Yangon Transport Supervisory Committee show. In half of 2013 the committee, which is better known by its Myanmar-language acronym Ma Hta Tha, received 90 complaints from passengers, of whom 30 were concerned conductors asking for extra fares. Yangon’s buses operate with fixed fares but a Ma Hta Tha official conceded that it was common for conductors to ask for extra charges.

“For example, the fixed price is K200, but the bus conductors collected K1000. The most common situation is that they collect K200 instead of K1000” the Ma Hta Tha official said. “Some pretend they are ‘special’ buses to collect higher fares because the maximum fare for a special bus is K300, while for an ordinary bus it is only K200.”

However, the penalty for illegally increasing fares is unlikely to deter dodgy conductors who charged face just K1000 fine, which has to be paid by the bus owner at the 11th Street traffic office.

Commuter Ma Min Ma Hong from Thingangyun township said it was common for conductors to demand fares above the fixed rate but most people do not want to waste time to file a formal complaint.

“I often encounter bus conductors who ask for higher fares, but I’ve never considered complaining” she said. “Some extra fares are the worst, they do it all the time. I try and avoid those buses but sometimes you don’t have any choice. If more passengers complain it will improve.”

The other main complaints concerned the rude behaviour of conductors and dangerous driving.

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POLITICIANS and activists have welcomed President U Thein Sein’s pledge to release all political prisoners by the end of this year. But some fear that genuine efforts to free the prisoners are being hampered by the administration.

The president made the pledge during a public address at the Chatham House think-tank in London on July 15 during his visit to Europe.  (See related report page 6.)

“The president can only carry out his promise after the government has announced the list of those who have been arrested for political reasons,” said U Yae Aung from the Former Political Prisoners group. “However, the most important thing is how the government enforces its commitment.”

Shan Nationalities League for Democracy spokesperson U Sai Laik said he did not think the president would be able to keep his pledge because some political prisoners have been jailed for criminal acts, particularly those involved in anti-government protests.

“For the political prisoners who were charged with criminal offences it will be very difficult to gain their release,” he said. “That’s why all political parties and social organisations should work together to send their lists of political prisoners to the hluttaw. If it doesn’t work, we will also try and get international support.”

A committee formed earlier this year by the government to oversee the release of all political prisoners has been working with civil society organisations and political parties to identify who many are still behind bars. While there is still disagreement over the exact number, it is thought to be about 200 based on the figures provided by various groups, said commit-tee member U Sai Nyo Lwin.

“This does include those who were charged with criminal acts and those who have been arrested recently,” he said.

Former Politicians provided a list of 155 people who are still in prison at the most recent committee meeting, U Yae Aung said, and will submit more names if they come to light.

U Sai Laik said his party had provided the names of about 170 people to the committee.

“Those will be people who are not on our list and there are many in ethnic areas and some of them are accused of criminal acts,” he said.

The next meeting of the committee, which is chaired by Minister for the President’s Office, is scheduled for late July.
Hollande urges U Thein Sein to push on with reforms

FRENCH President Francois Hollande urged U Thein Sein to push ahead with reforms and follow through on a vow to release political prisoners during a meeting in Paris on July 17.

U Thein Sein, fresh from a three-day trip to London, was in Europe to meet in Paris on July 17.

The French president praised of political transition and deepened economic reforms launched two years ago.

In a statement, Mr Hollande’s office said the French president had praised the fact that “the opposition is now taking part in the national political debate”.

But he said the government also needed to follow through on U Thein Sein’s promise on July 15 that all prisoners of conscience in Myanmar would be freed by the end of the year.

Mr Hollande “underlined the need to see all prisoners of conscience quickly freed without condition”.

He also expressed France’s concern at “persistent” inter-communal violence in the country.

U Thein Sein shunned the spotlight during his visit to Paris and did not speak to journalists after the meeting with Mr Hollande or after earlier meetings with Prime Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault and the MEDEF employers’ union.

Mr Hollande has made it clear that he believes the Burmese government is on the right track to democratic transition, a view shared by President Barack Obama when he visited in 2012.

He left France on July 18 after visiting the palace of Versailles outside Paris.

An adviser to Mr Hollande said the “historic” visit, the first to Paris by a sitting Myanmar head of state, was aimed at showing Yangon’s “willingness to normalise relations with the international community”.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, the adviser said a number of projects were discussed, including potential French investment in agriculture, water management, transport infrastructure, energy and tourism.

A number of leading rights groups — including the International Federation for Human Rights and Reporters Without Borders — urged Mr Hollande in a joint letter to press U Thein Sein on the human rights situation in his country.

“France must not let itself be guided solely by economic interests (because) major French businesses such as Vinci Bouygues, Total and Orange are in the process of negotiating contracts in Myanmar,” the groups wrote.

In a protest timed with the visit, activists from rights-group Avaaz dressed up as Mr Hollande and U Thein Sein made mock toasts with a bottle of champagne before cardboard graves and a banner reading: “Don’t let Burma become the next Rwanda.”

Trade between France and Myanmar remains at a modest level, with one diplomatic source putting the figure at $18 million euros ($23 million) a year.

French Minister of Foreign Trade Nicole Bricq is scheduled to visit Myanmar later this month. – AFP

President promises to release all prisoners

Hard line will be taken against those fuelling ethnic violence, president says in speech after meeting with British PM David Cameron in London on July 15

President U Thein Sein said on July 15 that all political prisoners would be freed by the end of the year and that a ceasefire with ethnic groups was possible within weeks.

“I guarantee to you that by the end of this year there will be no prisoners of conscience in Myanmar,” U Thein Sein told an audience at the Chatham House think-tank in London.

‘Very possibly over the coming weeks we will have a nationwide ceasefire and the guns will go silent for the first time in 60 years.’

President U Thein Sein

“We are aiming for nothing less than a transition from half a century of military rule and authoritarianism to democracy,” he said.

He was also optimistic about ending decades of conflict that have raged between the government and more than a dozen ethnic groups since the country formally gained independence from Britain in 1948.

Over the coming weeks we will have a nationwide ceasefire and the guns will go silent everywhere in Myanmar for the very first time in over 60 years,” he said.

“Difficult talks will follow and hard compromises will need to be made. But it must be done!”

British Prime Minister David Cameron earlier urged the president to defend human rights during talks.

U Thein Sein promised to take a “zero tolerance approach” to people who “fuel ethnic hatreds” following attacks on the Rohingya Muslim minority in which hundreds of people have been killed.

Welcoming Myanmar leader on the red carpet outside his 10 Downing Street office, Mr Cameron said he was “very pleased” to see U Thein Sein on his “historic visit”.

But Mr Cameron, who last year became the first British prime minister to visit Myanmar, added: “As well as the continuation of your reform process, we are also very keen to see greater action in terms of promoting human rights and dealing with regional conflicts.

“We are particularly concerned about what has happened in Rakhine province and the Rohingya Muslims.”

About a dozen protesters gathered outside Downing Street during U Thein Sein’s visit calling for action to protect the Rohingya.

But Mr Cameron followed the international community’s line on the need for economic development in particular to support reform in Myanmar.

“We believe there are many areas for Britain and your country to cooperate together, diplomacy, in terms of trade and investment, the aid and development relationship and also our growing links in terms of our military,” Cameron said.

Defence Secretary Philip Hammond later met with U Thein Sein, insisting that “reforming the Burmese military and pursuing a sustainable peace process” was key to Myanmar’s progress.

“The focus of our defence engagement will be on developing democratic accountability in a modern armed forces, and we have offered training for the Burmese military to this end,” he added.

Development Secretary Justine Greening later announced £30 million (US$45.2 million) in aid “to provide essential healthcare services, education and humanitarian aid to those affected by conflict.” – AFP

MRCS to give highway police first aid training

SHWE YEE SAW MYINT
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THE Myanmar Red Cross Society has offered to train police officers along the Yangon-Sittwe highway on first aid as part of efforts to reduce the number of deaths on the notoriously perilous road.

The training will be held as soon as the proposal receives approval from the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Daw Ni Ni Moe, manager of the Myanmar Red Cross Society’s ambulance service in Nay Pyi Taw, said the goal was to “preserve lives before [accident victims] arrive at the hospital”.

“Police officers need to have the skills to save people,” she said.

“We are going to train them to deal with injuries and will teach them how to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation,” she said. We will also show them how to use right way to carry a patient.

There are 16 highway police stations along the Yangon-Myitkyina road and police are often the first to arrive on the scene of an accident, she said.

Twelve of the stations will each send two officers to take part in the first training program, she said.

Police Lieutenant Soe Win from the Highway Police said 146 people had been killed and 606 injured in 243 accidents on the highway since May 2012.

BRITISH Prime Minister David Cameron greets U Thein Sein ahead of a meeting at 10 Downing Street in central London on July 15. PHOTO: AFP

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Religious fund raisers arrested in Mandalay

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A Buddhist organisation in Ayeyarwady Region has launched a crackdown on religious fraudsters, while its leader has slammed the state sangha committee for failing to take proper action to protect the image of Buddhism.

The Sangha Gonesaung Yahantaw group has so far uncovered seven fake monks and 30 fundraisers in Maubin township who purported to be associated with famous Buddhist leaders and monasteries to get donations from the public.

The head of organisation, Sayadaw U Weiseita, told The Myanmar Times the program was launched to protect the image of the monastic order.

He said those who dress as monks to beg on the streets were “shameful” for Buddhism.

“True Buddhist monks would never beg because they respect their robes and the Buddha,” he said.

“But some people have no respect for the Buddha ... and are not afraid to cheat using robes and the names of sangha associations. They have no fear of hell.”

He also accused the Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee, also known as the state sangha committee, of ignoring the issue.

“I have tried to stop this cheating for more than 15 years. I urged the head of the sangha association and other officials to take action but they ignored me. I have no idea why they are too busy but I couldn’t stand it any longer so I just did it myself,” he said.

Sayadaw U Weiseita was established on June 8 with the support of the townships to identify more possible cheaters.

He said when the organisation uncovers a fake monk it asks the person to come and show their identification card.

…the Sangha Gonesaung Yahantaw group targets ‘fake’ monks, religious swindlers

THE MYANMAR TIMES JULY 22 - 28, 2013

A THAI monk who was disrobed after a videotaped private jet trip unleashed allegations of improper conduct will face arrest for sex with a minor, authorities said last week.

Wiraphon Sukphon, who is believed to be abroad, is being sought in Thailand on suspicion of having sex with an underage girl around a decade ago while he was a monk, and of fathering a child with her.

A Department of Special Investigation chief Tanti Pengdith said the woman is seeking court action to prove that the former monk is the father of her son, who is now 11.

Thailand’s Criminal Court on July 17 approved an arrest warrant sought by DSIC, MCOT news agency reported.

The defrocked monk is also accused of deceiving the public by advertising seeking donations.

Mr Thaweesat said the DSIC would work with the Foreign Ministry and the Immigration Bureau to bring Mr Wiraphon back to Thailand to be tried, MCOT reported.

The Anti-Money Laundering Office will also be asked to freeze all ill-gotten assets of the ex-monk.

Footage of Wiraphon, 33, and two other monks travelling in a private jet, wearing sunglasses and carrying a Louis Vuitton luxury bag, caused a scandal recently in Thailand.

He has since been investigated on suspicion of an array of offences including tax evasion, drug possession and money-laundering.

Wiraphon as a dicer went by the name Luang Pu Nen Khum to bolster his claims to be the reincarnation of a famous miracle-performing monk. He has 41 bank accounts, according to the DSIC.

“The evidence shows Wiraphon violated Buddhist regulations by having sex with a woman. He ceased to be a monk at that time,” Phra Khu Wacharatthikum of the monastic disciplinary team in the eastern province of Nakhon said on July 13.

“The authorities can now carry out their duties, the monks have ended their role in the issue,” he added.

That monks have been hit by a series of scandals, with local media reporting cases of drug-taking, drinking, gambling and visiting prostitutes.

More than 30 Thai monks were defrocked earlier this month for use of the illegal drug methamphetamine.

– AFP

Some people ... are not afraid to cheat using robes and the names of sangha associations. They have no fear of hell.’

Sayadaw U Weiseita
Founder, Sangha Gonesaung Yahantaw

Sangha Gonesaung Yahantaw members will cooperate with members of other religious groups in nearby townships to identify more possible suspects.

“I will strengthen the networks within Ayeyarwady Region after Wao on July 22,” he said.

He said laws for protecting Buddhism were generally weak and not properly enforced. “It is not official to found a Buddhist organisation except under the sangha association but many have emerged, including our own. We are not legal ... but we have to do it because the authorities are not willing to do their job,” he said.

A monk with two of the men detained for fraudulently collecting donations. Photo: Si Thu Lwin
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Despite a new name, farmer bill cops flak

Farmers want a minimum rice price – and MPs want to give it to them. But economists have warned that a new bill could saddlege the government with huge debts

A PROPOSED law that would set minimum prices for key agricultural products has drawn fire from economists, as the parliament last week invited members of the public to give feedback on the draft.

The draft Law on Enhancing the Economic Welfare of Farmers – originally called the Farmer Protection Law – has generated significant debate in recent weeks, with the 88 Generation also speaking out against it.

Unlike nearly all other pieces of legislation submitted over the past two years, which have been drafted by government ministries, this bill was written by MPs with advice from legal experts. The process has been spearheaded by Thura U Shwe Mann and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, with the lower house speaker personally sitting in on the eight meetings held to formulate the bill.

On July 14 state-run newspapers invited members of the public to submit “complaints” about the bill in person to the Pyithu Hluttaw Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries Development Committee in Nay Pyi Taw by July 18.

Judging by public comments on the law to date, there is likely to be quite a queue.

Hlutaw representatives’ first foray into drafting legislation from scratch has attracted criticism from a number of prominent economists, who have compared it to Thailand’s disastrous rice purchasing program, which has seen the government accumulate 17 million tonnes and decimate its export potential. They have also drawn parallels with failed programs under Myanmar’s socialist and military regimes.

Presidential adviser U Myint, a former senior economist with the United Nations, released a critique on July 6 warning that the price setting in the bill could lead to “large debts and massive budget deficits”.

“Administratively set prices for farm products and other basic necessities over the past half century has been one of the reasons that ruined the Myanmar economy,” he said.

“The hluttaw will need to come up with better arguments why what has not worked for the past 50 years will work now.”

U Myint
Presidential adviser on economics

Under the law, minimum prices would be set by an Agriculture Marketing Committee (AMC) with approval from the hluttaw, “financing requirements” – and losses on purchases – “met out of the government’s financial resources”.

U Myint said the committee “faces an extremely difficult task. Its chances of success are... very slim”, particularly given the acute capacity shortages in the bureaucracy.

He also questioned whether MPs were pushing the minimum price because it has been requested by farmers, who make up an important voting bloc.

“Farmers are fond of this arrangement and show their satisfaction by voting for the political party that helps set up such a scheme. However, although politically attractive, the guaranteed minimum rice price scheme has some highly undesirable side effects.”

Meanwhile, another prominent economist, U Hla Myint, warned in an article published in the state-run New Light of Myanmar on July 12 that the program “would result in a large rise in costs to the government when the scheme comes into operation” because the AMC “would likely be buying rice above world prices”.

This could lead to wage rises that would “undoubtedly undermine the promising start Myanmar has made in the export of labour-intensive manufactured products”. If wages did not rise, however, the policy would “aggravate the poverty of the poorest section of the population in the country”, said U Hla Myint, a former rector of the economics faculty at Yangon University and lecturer at Oxford.

Some in the agriculture sector, however, insist that the minimum price is needed – and can even work.

“Without a guaranteed price, how can they pay back their money? If the price goes down [farmers] will lose everything,” said U Soe Tun, general secretary of the Myanmar Rice Federation, which has been involved in the drafting of the bill.

“Production costs in Myanmar are higher and higher every year... but rice prices in international and world markets are lower and lower every year. How can the farmers survive? That’s why [the minimum price is important].”

U Soe Tun said the draft was initially called the Farmer Protection Law but MPs had agreed at the last minute to change its name because “protection” was too broad.

He conceded that the bill was likely driven by political concerns.

“If U Shwe Mann said he only sat in on meetings for that law, not other laws. MPs are writing a lot of laws but emphasised only the farmer empowerment law. I’m not sure about their idea but from our side we no want to get something for the farmers, that’s all,” U Soe Tun said.

“The draft is not perfect... nothing is 100 per cent perfect. Something’s better than nothing and in the parliament the MPs will discuss more points.”

Myanmar already has a number of land and agriculture laws, however, and there are concerns that the new legislation could complicate their implementation.

In its submission on the draft law, the Food Security Working Group, a network of NGOs working on agriculture-related issues, said that instead of creating a new law, “the first priority should be to revise and improve laws which are already on the statute books to ensure that the rights of smallholder farmers are adequately protected”.

“If these and other laws are adequately revised... there is likely to be no need for the drafting of any other law for the protection of farmers’ rights,” it said.

Both U Myint and U Hla Myint said lawmakers concerned with the welfare of farmers would be better advised to focus on reducing transaction costs.

U Hla Myint said reforms of Myanmar’s transport, marketing and credit systems would require “extensive reorganisation and institutional changes (and) may take time to show results”. If successful, however, they would not only benefit farmers but also the country at large.

“They may not have the populist appeal of a minimum guaranteed rice price policy claiming to raise the price of rice paid to the farmers at a stroke of the pen,” he said. “But if successfully carried out... these policies would facilitate the expansion [of] market transactions and stimulate economic growth.”

Fake degrees land 21 Myanmar in jail

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TWENTY-ONE Myanmar nationals have been jailed in Singapore for using fake academic documents to apply for jobs. Singapore’s Ministry of Manpower said last week.

A total of 25 foreign workers pleaded guilty to the charge on July 16, of whom 20 received a four-week jail term. The remaining five were fined S$5000 but could not pay the fine so received 20-day jail terms, the ministry said in a statement.

Twenty-four of the 25 acquired the forged documents in their home country that were then used between May and August 2012 to get work passes and jobs in the operations, sales and retail sectors.

The 25 individuals were investigated after the ministry verified with the institutions purportedly issued the certificates that they were forged.

“All the accused did not possess university degree qualifications and the forged academic certificates were knowingly used to mislead [the ministry] into issuing them with the work passes,” the statement said.

In 2012, the ministry prosecuted 43 people for similar offences.

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A farmer works in a field in Ayeyarwady Region last month.

Photo: Kaung Hmi
Farmers accuse Htoo Group plantation of seizing water supply

FARMERS from five villages of Pyin Oo Lwin township have accused an agriculture company owned by Htoo Group of monopolising water sources for its orange orchard.

They have told The Myanmar Times that the strength of a mountain stream, known as Chaungmagyi, that is the main water source for the area has dropped dramatically because the company is pumping water to a dam, which is used to irrigate the orchard.

"Now we don't even have enough water to plant our paddy," said U Maung Shwe, a farmer from middle Pinlane village.

"We requested that they give us more water but they didn't do anything. We've also complained about it to the township administration but nothing has happened. Even though we own farmland, we can't grow anything," he said.

U Mya Than from eastern Pinlane village said the water flow had slowed since Htoo Group of Myanmar National Human Rights Commission and Parliament have accused the company of interfering with their water supply.

"Our farmland is in the hills. We are poor and can't afford to buy water pumps so we can't irrigate the crops when the water level of the creek is so low," said U Tin Win, a farmer from Pinlane Thayyae village.

"We don't even have enough water to plant our paddy," said U Maung Shwe, a farmer from Pinlane village.

"Our farmland is in the hills. We are poor and can't afford to buy water pumps so we can't irrigate the crops when the water level of the creek is so low," said U Tin Win, a farmer from Pinlane Thayyae village.

"We don't even have enough water to plant our paddy," said U Maung Shwe, a farmer from Pinlane village.

Gay rights group to file complaint over abuse

A GAY rights network says it will submit complaint letters to the human rights commission and parliament over allegations that police abused a group of transsexuals in Mandalay.

Yi Lay Po, a dancer from the Moe Kyo Nat Xoe Dance Group, said he and nine others were detained in a cell with 10 police officers and physically assaulted during the examination process.

"They made fun of us when they forced us to take off our clothes. They touched our chests, one by one. They told us to dance. They deliberately humiliated us. They also questioned us with sexually abusive words," he said.

The incident occurred on July 6 and 7 when plain clothes police detained a number of transsexuals gathered near Mandalay's moat.

"The police caught us and put us in a truck just after 7pm. They forcibly handcuffed and they kicked our backs, cheeks and chests. They said sexually offensive words to us. These are human rights violations and we are arranging to submit a complaint about the police force's inhumane actions to the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission," said Myat Noe.

"The actions of the police are also not in line with section 347 of the 2008 constitution, which says that no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment. "The actions of the police are also not in line with section 347 of the 2008 constitution, which says that no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment. The police had acted above our level of the creek is so low," said U Tin Win, a farmer from Pinlane Thayyae village.

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"Our farmland is in the hills. We are poor and can't afford to buy water pumps so we can't irrigate the crops when the water level of the creek is so low," said U Tin Win, a farmer from Pinlane Thayyae village.

"We don't even have enough water to plant our paddy," said U Maung Shwe, a farmer from Pinlane village.

"Once the company has pumped up all it needs, the farm is unable to grow coffee at the site."

He said the company will dig an artificial well in its plantation to reduce its reliance on the creek and the company will support local farmers as much as it can.

"We have to take action against everyone - not only gays - if they bother members of the public. We are not a targetting the gay community specifically," he said. — Translated by Zar Zar Soe
Artists to hold peace festival

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ARTISTS from a number of high-profile entertainment associations plan to hold a peace festival in Yangon in late July.

Organisations that will contribute to the festival include the Myanmar Writers Association, Myanmar Motion Picture Association, Myanmar Theatrical Organisation and the Myanmar Music Association.

“We feel that genuine peace is the top priority that needs to be solved in our country,” said U Thura, a co-founder of the Myanmar Writers Association.

“We don’t want to pass the impact of war over the next generation,” he said at a press conference last week. “We want to end the war. So we decided to yell out ‘peace’ with the same voice at the festival.”

The festival will be held at the Thwanna Stadium on July 27 and 28. Artists will show the horrors of war through a Myanmar traditional opera performance to be conducted by Nan Win, a famous dancer.

Director Kyaw Zaw Lin plans to conduct a drama titled Moe Yoe Zor Pho (Innocent Victim of a Fight) and said that he wants to show the plight of those who have been forced to flee their homes because of conflict.

“Other performances will be provided by singer Mar Mar Aye, who will sing a Myanmar classic focusing on peace, while Iron Cross singers Lay Phyu and Ah Nge, as well as ethnic singers L Lun War, L Sai Zi and others, will sing peace tunes,” he said.

A spokesperson for Myanmar Peace Center said it welcomed the festival and believed it could encourage the peace process. The centre plans to provide support for the event, said program director U Aung Naung Oo.

He said the government, Tatmadaw and parliament members have been working hard to bring about peace but it also requires “the people’s participation and cooperation.”

Artists will establish a peace fund at a bank to allow everyone to donate to those affected by conflict. Further details will be announced at the festival, Zaganar said.

“We won’t touch the money. We will establish the fund at the bank and we will declare the account number to everyone so they can donate.”

Comedian Zaganar speaks at a press conference on July 18. Photo: Ko Taik

Japanese experts help to keep preserve historic buildings

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ONE of Japan’s most esteemed universities plans to lend its expertise and resources to the architectural community’s efforts to preserve treasured historical sites.

Officials from Kyoto University and the Association of Myanmar Architects’ Mandalay branch signed a memorandum of understanding at a seminar on July 15 formalising cooperation in preserving cultural sites. Experts from Kyoto University discussed plans to research the ancient city of Iwa, which is south of Mandalay on the Irrawaddy River.

Kyoto University has also established a scholarship program for Myanmar architecture graduates who are interested in heritage preservation.

The agreement was signed at an Architecture Heritage and Technology Exchange seminar held at Sedona Hotel in Mandalay.

The event was attended by more than 180 people, including officials from Kyoto University, the Department of Archaeology, National Museum and Library and Association of Myanmar Architects.

― Translated by Zar Zar Soe

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RESIDENTS from five villages in Magew Region’s Chank township have accused the village administrator of forcing them to clear a stream in area.

The villagers, from Salay village-tract, said the township administrator on July 5 threatened to fine each household K1000 unless they provided one worker to clear the stream, which was needed for a hydropower project, said U Thwin, from Alal village.

“The stream has been cleared twice this year already to help irrigate farmlands,” he said, adding that on previous occasions the villagers had volunteered. “But now the administrator has threatened that unless we do it we won’t get any water. It’s hard work and we start at 7am and finish at noon.”

“He asked people to clear obstructions and dig out sandbanks,” Ye Tint, a resident of Salay village-tract.

Ye Tint denied that he had forced any body to work and only wanted to help develop the community.

“I explained carefully to the farmers who rely on the irrigation project that their paddies will not get sufficient water if the stream is blocked. I asked them and asked for the stream to be cleared. I didn’t force anybody to do anything,” he said.

“I did not say that I would issue a fine of K1000 to any household that did not supply a labourer.”

― Translated by Zar Zar Soe

Magwe residents complain of forced labour

‘The administrator has threatened that unless we [clear the stream] we won’t get any water.’

U Thwin
Resident of Alal village
Best Western plans further expansion after NPT opening

ZAW WIN THAN

BEST Western, the world’s largest hotel chain, has signed an agreement to open its second hotel in Myanmar. The project will see the company cooperate with Eden Palace Company to open what it is billing as the first five-star luxury hotel in Nay Pyi Taw.

Best Western’s vice president, who was in Yangon last week for the signing ceremony, said his company also has its eye on a third property in Yangon’s Chinatown area. It also plans to eventually open hotels in Mandalay and the tourism hotspot of Bagan.

‘There are not enough international hotels – so that’s why we are here.’

Glenn deSouza
Vice president, Best Western

Glenn de Souza, Best Western’s vice president of international operations for Asia and Middle East, told The Myanmar Times on July 18 that the company saw plenty of opportunities in Myanmar, particularly in Yangon.

“I think the quality of hotels in Yangon is a little bit old and I think they have been here for a long time … There is enough business - corporate business and tourism - for more foreign or international hotels to come into Myanmar in general.”

Now that sanctions have been lifted, Mr de Souza said it was the right time for Best Western and other hotel chains to expand their presence.

“Being an American hotel, we are glad that the sanctions were lifted and we see Myanmar as a country with a lot of opportunities for the tourism business,” he said.

The 265-room hotel in Nay Pyi Taw will become the first internationally branded hotel in the capital and is scheduled to open in the second quarter of 2016.

Eden Palace chairman U Tin Htwe said Nay Pyi Taw did not have enough high-end hotels - so that’s why

“…there is an influx [of visitors] but there are not enough international hotels - so that’s why we are here,” he said.

It is Best Western International’s second foray into Myanmar’s hotel sector. In the last two months, the company signed an agreement to manage Green Hill Hotel in Yangon in early May. It will take over management in September.

Best Western has also reached a deal with the owner of Green Hill to manage a 100-room “upscale” hotel in Chinatown, Mr de Souza said.

He said he expects the project will take another six to eight months to complete, he said.

“So we will have one midscale and one upscale [hotel] with the same owner in Yangon,” Mr de Souza told The Myanmar Times. “We also want to be in Bagan and Mandalay as well, but we want to go slowly.”

Best Western International has hotels in more than 100 countries and Mr de Souza said the company would provide its Myanmar employees with training opportunities in management and service to help improve standards in the sector.

“We stay in a lot of hotels in Myanmar and I think the staff is wonderful and they speak in English and have a great attitude,” he said. “We want to train them and we want to make them work more professionally in what they do.”

The festival takes place in Taungbyone village, in Mandalay Region’s Madaya township, in the week leading up to the full moon of Wagaung, which this year will be August 14 to 21. Held to honour the nat (animist spirit) brothers Min Gyi and Min Lay, it draws tens of thousands of pilgrims from across the country.

The festival’s trustees last week auctioned off the rights to nine income-generating aspects of the festival including collecting store rental at the “big” and “small” market, and collecting electricity and water supply fees – and raised K80 million (about US$82,000).

However, this was significantly down on last year – the first time in 15 years that trustees had conducted such an auction – when companies paid K300 million. Many of last year’s winning bidders are thought to have lost money during the event.

The auction was conducted at the Madaya Township General Administration Department office on July 15, said U Sann Yu Aung, vice president of the board of trustees.

While he would not reveal how much was paid for each of the nine auctions, it was down by more than one-third, with many who normally attend the festival boycotting the price hike.

Vendors said they were pleased trustees had introduced the fee cap.

“The results were not as high as last year,” U Thant Zaw said, the Madaya Township General Administration Department office. “There was strong competition in last year’s auction but less so this year.”

One reason is that we said the winning bidders could not collect more than K150,000 for a 5-foot-wide stall,” U Sann Yu Aung said.

Accordingly, the winning bidders offered just K20 million for the small market and K17 million for the big market, down from K140 million and K130 million respectively last year.

Last year’s auction winners subsequently raised stall rental fees to as much as K500,000, up from just K50,000 in 2011. As a result the number of vendors at the festival was down by more than one-third, with many who normally attend the festival boycotting the price hike.

Vendors said they were pleased trustees had introduced the fee cap.

“Based on the size of the winning bids I think they will charge about K500,000 for a stall rather than the maximum of K150,000,” vendor U Aung said on July 15.

Similar limits have been put in place on other services: the winner of the electricity supply auction cannot charge more than K700 for a 4-foot-long light, after vendors complained that the K1850 charged last year was too high.

Taungbyone festival trustees introduce cap on stall fees

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ORGANISERS of the famous Taungbyone nat festival have set a cap on how much companies can charge stall-holders for space, after high rental fees resulted in many vendors boycotting last year’s event.

The festival takes place in Taungbyone village, in Mandalay Region’s Madaya township, in the week leading up to the full moon of Wagaung, which this year will be August 14 to 21. Held to honour the nat (animist spirit) brothers Min Gyi and Min Lay, it draws tens of thousands of pilgrims from across the country.

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A nat kadaw, or spirit medium, at the Taungbyone nat festival in 2012. Photo: Phyoe Wai Kyaw

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News 13

RAINY SEASON PROMO!! 2013

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Martyrs’ Day marked with a difference

NAN TIN HTWE

“SALUTÉ the fallen leaders,” a voice intoned through a loud-speaker, as members of the crowd bowed their heads.

A few seconds later they were dismissed — “After your salute, please leave for the next visitors,” the loud-speaker announced — and a new group arrived at Yangon’s Martyrs’ Mausoleum on July 19.

Some were black 8888 Uprising 25th Anniversary T-shirts, while others held black and red flags with a peacock motif. The youngest were just a few years old, while others were in their 60s and 70s.

At 10.37am, the clouds darkened and rain began to fall. Ko Kyaw Kyaw Win, 20, stood and saluted in the rain in front of the mausoleum, which was built to honour the national heroes assassinated in 1947, including General Aung San, Man Ba Khaing, U Aung Myat and U Raing.

“I feel happy and sad,” he said, as the rain fell on his face and hair. “Seeing the flowers makes me sad and reminds me about General Aung San. He is the independence father and was assassinated by bad people,” he said.

The seventh-grader said this is what his parents had taught him. “I never learned [about Martyrs’ Day] at school,” he said.

His father, U Ko Lay, who was clad in black to show his sadness, said he believed that it was important to teach children about their country’s history. “If we don’t teach our children, how will they know?” he said. “We hand over this knowledge to our kids. And I want our kids to hand it on to the next generation,” his wife, also dressed in black, added.

“Every Myanmar citizen should come here. In my heart, I feel sorrow. In the past, people didn’t come because of fear,” said 30-year-old monk Ashin Mandala.

“But I want young people to take General Aung San as their role model.”

Ashin Mandala

what happened in the past.

Ko Kyaw Kyaw Win arrived in Yangon 20 days ago, from Kayin State, to work on a construction site.

“My friends are busy so I came alone. This is my first time here and I want to come again.”

As is custom, the official event took place in the morning, with Vice President Sai Mauk Kham paying his respects along with other senior members of the government, family members of the deceased and representatives of prominent political and social organizations.

But for the first time in decades, the president attended after the ceremony with family members of the martyrs, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. State television also broadcast programs about General Aung San’s life, from his early days as a cadet to the signing of the Pinlewe Agreement and the funeral of the martyr.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi told MRTV she appreciated the manner in which the government had made this day, particularly the presence of the vice president.

She said the day was an opportunity to learn from the lives of the martyrs.

“For example, why our country has become what it is today and what mistakes we have made. We need to remember them,” she said.

What last week made clear is that Myanmar has changed dramatically in recent years — and so has the way it marks Martyrs’ Day. However, it is not a radical break with the past — more a return to how the martyrs were previously honoured.

In 2011, the government lifted restrictions on visiting the mausoleum and last week’s crowds were the largest in decades. People of all religions, ethnicities and political persuasions poured in to salute their leaders and for many, like Ko Kyaw Kyaw Win from Kayin, it was their first visit.

Wearing an orange T-shirt with pictures of General Aung San and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, 12-year-old Mg Saw Pyae Sone was one of the youngest visitors. “I know General Aung San. He is the independence father and was assassinated by bad people,” he said.

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His father, U Ko Lay, who was clad in black to show his sadness, said he believed that it was important to teach children about their country’s history. “If we don’t teach our children, how will they know?” he said. “We hand over this knowledge to our kids. And I want our kids to hand it on to the next generation,” his wife, also dressed in black, added.

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“But I want young people to take General Aung San as their role model.”

For many, General Aung San was the focus of their visit to the mausoleum. However, the group of martyrs also included a Shan opportunist, Sao San, Sao Bum Hmam, Kayin leader Mahn Ba Khawng and U Razak, a Muslim.

Ko Moses, 28, said his visit reminded him that in General Aung San Myanmar lost a rare leader capable of crossing ethnic divides.

“It makes me wonder if he had lived things would be different,” the Kayan national from Demawso township in Kayah State said as he visited Martyrs’ Mausoleum.

“He was respected by the ethnic groups and build good relationships with them. He promised federalism but his promises were not kept after his death... If you don’t keep your words, no one will believe you.”

Myanmarese political challeng- es are not behind it, a point that those who were during the past have made.

“Burmese people are good at the things they should not do. They are not good at reform... but are good at fighting each other,” he said.

“Burmese people want to give up if they think they will fail at something. We need to change this mindset. If we start something, we have to finish it...”

HUNDREDS of people last week took part in the largest Martyrs’ Day march in Pyin- mana since 1989.

Organisers did not get permission for the July 19 march and there were concerns prior to the event that participants could face charges under section 18 of the peaceful procession law.

However, officials agreed to let the event go ahead without formal permis- sion. About 500 people marched through the streets and paid respect to the martyrs at the town’s statue of General Aung San. At 10.37am, two minutes silence was observed, a siren was sounded and then the national anthem sung.

“I was so happy when I heard that we were allowed to march on Martyrs’ Day without applying for permission,” said Daw Khin Win, a National League for Democ- racy member from Pyinmana town- ship who was jailed for seven years for leading the 1989 march.

“I’d like to say thank you to the new government because it allowed us to cel- ebrate Martyrs’ Day like this. If the state really wants to hear words of thanks from its people then I think it should fulfil our desire and sound a siren at 10.37am on July 19 in coming years,” she said.

Security forces and government of- ficials watched the marchers closely as they proceeded to the bronze statue, on the northern bank of Mingalay Shan Lake, but confirmed they would not take action against those involved.

“The government wants to take action, lay wreaths and in front of the statue: We won’t bother them and we won’t take action,” a policeman stationed near the statue told The Myanmar Times.

Ko Myo Tay Zau Maung, a poet from Pyinmana, said the government’s deci- sion to allow people to mark Martyrs’ Day freely represented “a new chapter” in the country’s transition.

“A group of NLD youth sang the na- tional anthem and another young group from Pyinmana sounded the siren... I’m happy and I welcome this move,” he said.

Translated by Thiri Min Htun

SPECIAL REPORT: MARTYRS’ DAY

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Translated by Thiri Min Htun
Residents upbeat after Paunglaung dam relocation

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MORE than 15,000 villagers from southern Shan State’s Paunglaung township who have been relocated for a 140-megawatt hydroelectric project say they are happy in their new homes and positive about the future.

Twenty-three villages, housing nearly 4,000 households, were relocated since April this year to make way for the Upper Paunglaung hydropower project, said Ministry of Electric Power official Ko Soe Min, who is in charge of the project.

“The residents have integrated into their new villages, even though they only moved in a few months ago,” he told The Myanmar Times on July 12.

“Most villagers did not want to leave their old homes but are pleased with the new location,” he said.

The relocated villages are from Hteinpin and Thapyae-kone village tracts.

“In the beginning, we did not want to move,” said Ko Kyi Win from Hteinpin village tract. “But we had no choice because we could not stay where we were because it’s part of the floodplain. Now our villages are connected to each other and we’re closer. We believe the settlement will grow into a large town in future.”

Villagers were paid compensation of between K930,000 and K6.2 million depending on the settlement will grow into a large town in future.

“The government paid K300,000 an acre for farmland for three years” he said. “We will also create fields for cultivation in the new villages.”

Residents from the villagers of Yaysoe, Sesonekneygi, Lonekal and Talinema, which were outside the floodplain, also chose to relocate to the new site, Shan State’s minister for electricity and industry said.

“The villages were moved to the new settlements because we wanted them to live together,” said minister Sai Tun Yin.

“We shifted here in April this year,” said Ko San Oo from Hteinpin. “We are getting used our life here, although some of the older people are sad because they lost farmland they had cultivated for many years.”

Farmers used to grow groundnut (peanut), paddy and turmeric in their former tracts. U Myint Oo, deputy director of the Ministry of Electric Power, said the government would only start filling the dam at the end of monsoon season so that crops under cultivation are not destroyed.

The Upper Paunglaung project was launched in 2006 and is expected to come online in May 2014.

According to Burma Rivers Network, construction and design of the Upper Paunglaung Dam is being overseen by Swiss company A F Colenco, while Yunnan Machinery Export Company, which was involved in the Lower Paunglaung Dam, will provide US$80 million of machinery and equipment. British and German firms are also involved in the project.

Photo: Pyae Thet Phyoe

Health campaign targets Rakhine

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MORE than 5000 households in Rakhine State are being educated on maternal and child health this month as part of a UN program to improve family health practices by addressing women directly, UNICEF said last week.

“Evidence shows that a significant reduction in maternal, newborn and child-related disease and death can be achieved through simple, low-cost, high impact intervention aimed at changing the behaviour and practices of individuals and families alike,” Yosi Echeverry Burckhardt, head of the UNICEF field office in Sittwe, said in a statement.

The campaign, a partnership between UNICEF and the Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association, will cover rural, urban and camp communities in Sittwe and Mrauk Oo townships and is expected to reach about 37,000 people in 100 villages, UNICEF said.

The initiative, called “Seven Things This Year”, will also train IDP camp leaders to ensure internally displaced people share in the benefits of the campaign.

The initiative has already held sessions in Mandalay and Tanintharyi regions and Mon and Kayin states in June 2012.

The number of villages in Rakhine State targeted in a UNICEF health campaign.

Topics will include exclusive breastfeeding and complementary feeding for infants; proper nutrition for pregnant and lactating mothers; immunisation for children; usage of insecticide-treated bed-nets; better hand-washing practices; increased feeding and fluid intake for sick children, and seeking outside care.

The initiative is aimed at changing the behaviour and practices of individuals and families alike, Echeverry Burckhardt said.

“Achieved through simple, low-cost, high impact intervention aimed at changing the behaviour and practices of individuals and families alike.”

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Hurdles to meeting new WHO guidelines on HIV

Government and NGOs are already unable to provide anti-retroviral treatment to all of those who qualify under earlier, less stringent WHO guidelines because of financial and capacity constraints.
### BRIEFS

**Mandalay zone fees switch to kyat**

Entrance fees at Mandalay’s historical sites have been changed from dollars to kyat, the tourist guide association said.

The price of the ticket, which permits entrance to more than 10 archaeological sites in and around Mandalay, was changed from US$10 to K10,000 on July 15, said U Ye Myint Tun, the head of the Mandalay branch of the Myanmar Tourist Guide Association.

The change was not widely announced and U Ye Myint Tun said he was concerned some visitors would be caught out without enough money to pay the entrance fee. He said the authorities should have given more notice of the change.

– Shwe War Lwin, translated by Zar Zar Soe

**Missing women found**

A man has been arrested on charges of burglary after a July 14 hotel bust turned up two missing women who fled with him and an accomplice from Kachin State to Shan State, police in Taunggyi said.

“We arrested the accused for theft while also finding two missing women,” said Police Captain Myint Win. The women – a teacher aged 23 and an 18-year-old student at a boarding school where the two worked – were reported missing by their families on July 6.

Doctors expected the 23-year-old singer “may wake up this evening or tomorrow”, U Ye Myint Aung said. So Tay’s fans and relatives were upset that reports he had died were spreading through social media.

Because of these incorrect reports, his father didn’t come to see his son [at the hospital]”, U Ye Myint Aung said. “He’s still crying - he can’t believe his son might recover, after he thought he was dead.”

– Translated by Zar Zar Soe

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**Entrance fees at Mandalay’s historical sites have been changed**

a) Entry fees for tourists visiting three ancient monuments in the Mandalay region were changed last week.

b) The price was changed from US$10 to K10,000.

c) Authorities said the change would apply to over 10 historical sites.

– Shwe War Lwin, translated by Zar Zar Soe
Mandalay police foil two alleged human traffickers

TAHN MAING SOE
thmaingsoe@gmail.com

Two people have been arrested and charged with human trafficking after police thwarted an attempt to lure a young woman from Mandalay Region to Bhamo in Kachin State.

The alleged traffickers, police said, convinced the young woman to make the trip by promising her a well-paying job but intended to make her a prostitute.

Major Phay Thein Kyaw from the Anti-Trafficking Unit in Mandalay Region said police made the arrest on May 9.

Two people have been charged under section 24 of the anti-human trafficking law.

We were informed by the ward administrator and C. Muya Tharisi township (Mandalay) that a woman, staying in a lodging house was persuading a woman in his ward to leave the city so she could get a job in Bhamo,” Mai Phay Thein Kyaw said.

“They planned to leave ... by bus.”

Police stopped the bus on a checkpoint on the way to Bhamo.

“When we checked that bus, we found the trafficker and the victim,” he said.

Police said the woman arrested while traveling with the alleged victim was a for- mer prostitute who regularly tried to lure young women to Bhamo.

Is Myanmar’s currency in crisis?

REZA CHOWDHURY

The dramatic fall in the value of the kyat in recent months has raised alarms and left many baffled. The irony is that it was not so long ago a strong kyat caused exporters and those with earnings in foreign currencies to gripe. Apparently neither a strong nor a weak kyat is pleasing and it is not an easy task to keep people on both sides happy. Nonetheless, wide fluctuations in exchange rates erode confidence and harm growth, something Myanmar cannot afford.

Meanwhile, some of the most important questions remain largely unanswered. What factors contributed to this devaluation? What is the future of the kyat? And what are the policy implications?

The central bank should possess sufficient reserves to intervene should it decide to do so.

A search of local and international media offers some insights into why the kyat might have fallen so dramatically since it was floated in April 2012. While there is plenty of speculation, there are few concrete answers. One of the most commonly cited reasons is the construction boom and surge in imports, both of which drive demand for the dollar. Some also attribute the decline of the kyat to falling gold prices, while others blame currency speculation and hoarding of the dollar, something many in Myanmar are accustomed to.

Perhaps any of these, or all in combination, could have contributed to the fall in the kyat. However, one still needs to scrutinise the economic reasoning behind these drivers to address the potential policy implications and the future of the kyat.

What determines exchange rates? An exchange rate, like the price of any asset, is determined by its demand and supply. This generally applies to all currencies. Exchange rate regimes do not remain fixed forever and even values of currencies that are supposedly “fixed” could change – and usually during currency crises, such as Thailand in 1997.

Demand for kyat primarily comes from exports and from those purchasing kyat-denominated assets. Apparently, demand for dollars primarily comes from imports. Did the import-driven dollar demand contribute to the decline of the kyat? The short answer seems to be yes. International Monetary Fund (IMF) data indicates that Myanmar’s current account – which is the difference between imports and exports for Myanmar because its service sector is negligible – was mostly balanced in 1990 and 2010. However, while exports grew in 2011 and 2012, imports grew much faster, causing the country to have current account deficits of 4.2 percent of gross domestic product and 4.5 percent respectively. The expected current account deficit for 2013-14 are 5.3 percent and 5.8 percent.

Economic theory dictates that exchange rates are self-correcting. A weak local currency promotes exports while reducing imports. Stronger export would increase demand for kyat and given sufficient time this should eventually change the course of the kyat’s decline. Nonetheless, it is possible for countries – one prominent example is the United States – to run persistently large current account deficits as long as these deficits can be financed by other types of capital inflows, mainly from foreign investments. Myanmar currently does not have active financial markets so its foreign investment mostly takes the form of investment in real assets. If Myanmar’s case, the flow from foreign investments exceed the deficit resulting from imports. A recent IMF report indicates that “international reserves will continue rising as foreign direct investment outflows out- weigh a widening current account deficit”. Given prospective foreign investors’ interest in Myanmar it is perceivable that this situation will continue into the foreseeable future.

In other words, the central bank should possess sufficient reserves to intervene should it decide to do so.

How serious is Myanmar’s current account deficit? It is not unusual for emerging economies to run large current account deficits as great openness and the drive for economic growth accelerates imports. Comparison can be drawn to some neighbours that have similar development patterns make one suspect that the recent decline in the kyat could be solely attributed to the trade deficits.

One more avenue worth exploring is the budget deficit. Budget deficits cause the governments to borrow – or worse, print – money. This increases the money supply, which in turn creates inflation and reduces the value of the currency. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) indicates that Myanmar’s budget deficit for 2012 is 6.4 percent of GDP. An active and liquid government bond market (a mechanism for government borrowing) does not exist in Myanmar so a large deficit would undoubtedly put pressure on the value of the kyat. Instituting a more autonomous central bank would calm fears on this part.

How does Myanmar fare compared to its peers? ADB data indicate that Cambodia’s fiscal deficit as of 2012 is 5.2 percent of GDP. The numbers are -5.6 percent and -5.3 percent for Laos and Vietnam respectively.

Another reason cited is declining gold prices. During times of uncertainties, gold serves as a hedge against inflation and an alternative form of investment. Gold is also considered a safe haven when the banking system is fragile and other investment opportunities are scare. It is useful to recall that Myanmar has lowered savings rate since the beginning of the period and property prices have fallen. The decline in gold prices, gold has become an attractive investment. Internationally gold is priced in US dollars and its value has declined by more than 20 percent in the past year. Large-scale speculative purchases of gold increase the demand for dollars and when the dollar strengthens, the kyat suffers.

While it is not easy to predict the movement in gold prices, it is unlikely that this...
Is Myanmar's currency in crisis?

The kyat. However, the effect of the slowdown in China will also affect Myanmar's economy and the drastic fall in Chinese investment in Myanmar. A recent IMF report indicates that extreme volatilities cannot be avoided with some floating exchange rate regimes. For countries that are dependent on foreign trade – and have fragile economies and banking systems – extreme volatilities can be a threat to stability. One final question remains: Is the kyat in crisis? It might serve as a defence mechanism. However, this might add pressure on the kyat. While gold prices are volatile and are beyond the control of the local central bank, low inflation could still serve as a defence mechanism. A recent IMF report indicates that the expected inflation in Myanmar is 5.5pc for the fiscal year 2015-16. This can be considered low by Myanmar’s historical standards. As financial reforms strengthen Myanmar's financial institutions and financial markets are further developed, investment would gradually shift away from gold.

One overlooked aspect is the impact of the slowdown in the Chinese economy and the drastic fall in Chinese investment in Myanmar.

Min Thu Maung is an assistant professor of Finance in the Department of Finance and Management Science at the University of Saskatchewan, Canada. Reza Chowdhury is an assistant professor and chair in the Department of Finance and Banking at the University of Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

Min Thu Maung

Yamoon Phu Thit

The number of recorded dengue infections this year has soared past 8000, with 16 confirmed deaths, a Ministry of Health official said last week.

Mon and Kayin states and Yangon Region have had the highest rates of infection, said Dr Ni Ni Aye, the deputy director of the Dengue Department, which comes under the ministry's Disease Control Unit.

This year is likely to be worse than 2010, when more than 16,000 cases and 100 deaths were recorded, she said on July 17.

Mon State has had the highest number of infections with 2468, followed by Yangon Region with 1743 cases and Kayin State with 1716 cases, she said.

Most of the recorded infections have been in children five to nine years old. However, cases have also been recorded in people over 65 years old.

Yangon Children's Hospital has admitted more than 1800 children, with seven deaths, hospital superintendent Dr Than Htay said. Neither Dr Than Htay nor Dr Ni Ni Aye could explain why the children's hospital had seen more cases than the Ministry of Health's figure for all of Yangon Region.

The true number of infections is likely to be much higher, as those who present at hospitals normally have severe infections, including dengue haemorrhagic fever.

Dr Than Htay said there was a higher prevalence of dengue haemorrhagic fever than in previous years, with 207 cases, or about 11.5 per cent of all dengue cases.

Dengue is the viral infection transmitted by the bite of the Aedes mosquito and is most common from June to August, when the mosquitoes breed. Mosquitoes become infected when they bite a person with the dengue virus in their blood. The infection cannot be spread directly from one person to another. The symptoms of dengue are a high fever, skin rash, severe headache, severe pain behind the eyes, vomiting, mild bleeding from the nose or gums and bruising.

More severe symptoms of the potentially fatal dengue haemorrhagic fever include decreased appetite, severe vomiting, tiny spots of blood on the skin and a shock-like state.

To cope with this year's epidemic, public hospitals have been providing free medicine and treatment to those with serious cases, Dr Than Htay said.

"We don't want unnecessary deaths because patients cannot afford to come to hospitals. I would like to inform people they should come to the hospital at once [if they have dengue fever symptoms]. We offer free medicine and treatment," he said. "People should be careful about any signs of illness during rainy season as it could be dengue fever."

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Journal to cover the rights stuff

Until recently the Journal of Human Rights and Democracy would have been an unlikely addition to Myanmar's publishing scene. However, its founders are set on tackling the country's toughest issues, starting first with transitional justice.

Editor-in-charge Nyunt Win explains the concept behind the journal and the editorial team's plans for future issues

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How did the Journal of Human Rights and Democracy come about?

Some of my old friends and I have been working on this project for more than a year. We think now is the best time to promote key concepts about liberal democracy and human rights because we have more space to write. Myanmar has a huge vacuum in this kind of literature.

We also publish books… on a variety of topics related to human rights, democracy and culture[that] focus on the theories, concepts and case studies [but] the journal focuses on the current political transition and the way it is moving. The first issue was mainly about transitional justice, the second which [will be released later this month] will be about ethnic conflict and peace building in Myanmar, the third issue will be a review of the 2008 constitution and the fourth will focus on freedom of speech.

How do you assess the human rights conditions in Myanmar at present and what is the level of awareness about human rights issues among ordinary people?

As the result of about 50 years of direct or indirect military rule, human rights problems in Myanmar have reached a [critical] stage. Previous regimes not only systematically violated the human rights of the people but they also systematically blocked all channels for people to [protect] their rights. Books about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights were banned and being caught with one could mean at least seven years in jail. Over the past 50 years, human rights violations and a culture of impunity for the perpetrators became firmly rooted in all social strata. People did not know that their rights were being violated and those who did could not do anything to seek justice. Only now can we start to educate all stakeholders about human rights concepts.

But has the situation improved under the current government?

Human rights violations have not completely stopped since the "civilian" government took power in 2011. A significant proportion of the population is still facing widespread violations, including intimidation from the authorities, the loss of land and property rights, alleged rapes and sexual harassment, persecution, discrimination and marginalisation of minority ethnic and religious groups; blockade of access to justice; influence of the executive and their cronies on the judiciary; and exploitation of labour and poor work conditions.

The promulgation of laws on freedom of assembly and expression mean we have seen improvements in exercising our basic human rights but there are still strings attached, such as Article 18 of the peaceful protest law. Rights activists are still often detained, jailed or intimidated, albeit to a lesser degree compared to [the] era. The human rights crisis is worst in areas affected by the armed conflict. Local populations fear both parties and fall prey to human rights violations by both sides.

What feedback did you get following the launch in May?

The feedback has been generally good. Many of the audience are impressed by the quality of our essays, the layout design and the print quality. There are a few who say the content is a little “dense” to read. This maybe because our target audience is those who are actively involved in or trying to get involved in the political process or, at least, interested in it.

I didn’t see any advertisements in the journal – how do you cover the costs of publishing?

We get funding from Norwegian People’s Aid, one of Norway’s two official aid agencies. We plan to expand our organisation to also include a training centre in the future and we are seeking support from international donors or aid agencies for this training. In the future we will phase out the [donor] funding and try to transform [our publishing house] MKS into a social enterprise.

As the editor-in-charge, what role do you play in putting the publication together?

Most articles are contributed by members of the editorial team. We also print contributions by freelance writers and scholars, both local and international. Most outside contributors are from within our social network. We set the cover theme for the first issue, decide on the layout and content and make assignments among the staff editors… and outside contributors. … Also, when we come across a good piece of analysis or research that is relevant to the topic of an issue, we contact the original author and ask for permission to print their work.

How many copies did you print for the first issue?

The print run for the first issue was about 1000 copies but we’ll double it for the second issue. The cover price is K1500 but as an advocacy organisation we also give complimentary copies to MPs, party members, related NGOs and our friends. We also distribute free copies at events, such as talks at the [Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry].

Have freedom of expression and the media industry generally in Myanmar improved?

The media industry in Myanmar still needs to learn more about professionalism, I think. This does not mean the local media has to follow the Western media in copy and style processes. We must learn from the best but must have a local language and presentation [of topics] but we have to set our own editorial agenda.

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Govt to open aged care centre

The Yangon centre, at 64 Kahar Aye Pagoda Road, has been completely renovated in the past three months. U Aung Tun Khine said, with facilities for 50 and a possibility of further extensions if necessary. Another centre is also being planned for Mandalay.

The centres will be funded by the government and private donors, and services will be free.

"We hope the centre becomes a gathering place for the aged and helps those old people who feel lonely," U Aung Tun Khine said.

The centre plans to offer programs in physical fitness, psychological health and nutrition, with more activities becoming available with additional funding. The centre will also develop more services as required.

"There will be doctors who will consult with them about their physical and psychological problems," U Aung Tun Khine said.

Myanmar has an estimated 5 million elderly people and the number aged above 60 nearly quadrupled between 1950 and 2012, according to a 2022 survey conducted jointly by the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, Help Age International and the United Nations Population Fund.

One quarter of the country’s population is projected to be aged 60 or older by 2030.

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Graphic Designer

The Yangon Times has a vacancy for an experienced graphic designer to work with our Art Directors on special projects. You must be a highly creative designer with a unique artistic vision, skilled in drawing and illustration, and also a competent computer operator with first-class skills in Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator, Adobe InDesign.

Must have previous experience and be able to work well in a high-pressure, deadline-driven environment. (Locals only.) Send CV, cover letter and samples of previous work by Friday, 30 August, 2013.

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The Yangon Times

Editor-in-charge, Journal of Human Rights and Democracy

U Nyunt Win
In Malaysia, Zam’s the man

ROGER MITTON

ON July 13, a 40-day Rama
dan ceasefire was announced
teen the National Revolu-
tionary Front, the main insur-
gent movement in southern
Thailand, and the central gov-
ernment in Bangkok.

The landmark pact was
brokered by Malaysia, and the
media carried a photograph
of one of its key negotia-
tors, a security official called
Zamzamin Hashim.

The next day picture puz-
zled me at first, but then the
unmystifying was that

ers at the Bukit Aman police
had reported that thered been about 100 break-ins at
the homes of diplomats in
Kuala Lumpur over the previ-
ous two years.

Partly as a result of this
crime spree, Malaysia had
been designated as a “hard-
ship post” by many foreign
ministries, including those of
the United Kingdom and oth-
er European countries.

My story, headlined “Hard
ship post Kuala Lumpur”, caused
a furor.

The Malaysian authorities,
and the police in particular,
went ballistic and not only de-
nied its veracity but viewed it
as an insult to their national
pride and competence.

Within days, my office and
apartment were raided. “We
don’t let us in we’ll just ar
rest you now,” said one of the
officers.

Soon afterwards, with-
out any lawyer allowed to be
present, I was subjected to
intense interrogation for
three days by senior offic-
ers at the Bukit Aman police
headquarters.

It culminated in a torrid
clash with the infamous As-
sistant Commissioner Ramli
Yuooof, notorious for being
present when the former

Malaysian Deputy PM Anwar
Ibrahim was given a black eye.

Fortunately, my story was
rock solid and a stream of an-
gry diplomats came forward
to support me so the case was
dropped.

Years later, when lunch-
ing with Zam and reading
about ongoing robberies in
KL, I naturally felt a wry
sense of validation, coupled
with surprise that it was still
happening.

Today, another nine years
on, one would surely think the
problem has been solved and
that diplomat can feel safe in
KL. Think again.

Two weeks ago, burglars
razeacked the home of Sports
Minister Khairy Jamaluddin
in Bukit Damansara, a district
favoured by foreign missions
in the Malaysian capital.

The homes of diplomats
and other prominent figures,
including the sister of DPM
Mahyuddin Yassin, were also
bogued over the past two
months.

It seems clear that Malay-
sia needs a root-and-branch
review of its police force,

overseen by smart and dispas-
sionate assessors like Zam,
otherwise it will never shed
that shameful “hardship” tag.

Granting even a sliver of
autonomy to any province is
viewed by the controlling es-
tablishment as the thin end of
the wedge. “Not on our watch”
has been every government’s
mantra.

But instead of getting
bogged down in that Uster-
like quagmire, consider an-
other ironic aspect of last
week’s news that also involved
Malaysia.

Back in 2004, when I
lunched with Zam, it was
reported that Malaysia had
set up a special police unit
to protect “high risk” diplo-
mats after a slew of threats
and attacks against foreign
missions.

The item intrigued me be-
cause seven years earlier Id
written about such attacks
and had reported that thered been about 100 break-ins at
the homes of diplomats in
Kuala Lumpur over the previ-
ous two years.

Within days, my office and
apartment were raided. “We
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that shameful “hardship” tag.
Backlash growing over ‘cron'

Members of the country’s largest business federation plans to drum up international support for their bid to overturn a controversial vote that selected a ‘crony’ to lead them.

MYAT NYEIN AYE
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SU PHYO WIN
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The protest against the first democratically elected federation at the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry is expanding into calls for greater transparency at the country’s largest business association, following its annual general meeting on July 13 at which a fresh row erupted over the federation’s financial report for the fiscal year ending in March.

The 12 association members who publicly opposed approving the report – by standing up from their seats and defiantly raising an arm – say they were speaking for most of the hundreds of people who attended the meeting. They also say they represent a silent majority at the 7,000-member federation, one that is fed up with the lack of transparency, cronism, corruption and misallocation of funds they allege permeates it.

They said that they had not been given an opportunity to examine the financial report for the last fiscal year before they were asked to approve it at the annual general meeting.

Members of the federation also told The Myanmar Times that the executives who run it have been misallocating funds to pay for lavish lifestyles, including questionable entertainment expenditures in Yangon and trips accompanying President Thein Sein to foreign capitals.

They say they are taking their protest against the lack of transparency international, asking business chambers and associations in Europe and Asia to support their call for a new vote to select the federation’s executive and central executive committees.

“Myanmar is becoming democratic, so I will not accept cheating or bias in an election at a state-registered organisation like the federation,” said U Tin Maung Sint, a member of the Myanmar Rice Federation’s central executive committee. “If U Win Aung is elected president again in the next election, I will warmly welcome him as our president if the election is conducted fairly,” he added, referring to the federation’s president, who was reinstalled to his post for three years following the controversial June 10 vote.

U Win Aung is on a blacklist that prevents American companies and individuals from doing business with him or his many companies due to his links to the former military regime.

Federation members allege that the June election was rigged. They say it was designed to return incumbents who had previously been appointed by the government to their posts, and they have questioned a computer glitch that resulted in ballots being counted by hand until 3am the day after the vote.

U Tin Maung Sint said federation members by email,” he said.

They posted the statements on the federation’s website and sent it to all members. “We posted the statements on the federation’s website and sent it to all members by email,” he said.

Federation members, however, said they have not received the emails and that they are still unable to locate the report on the federation’s website.

U Khin Hlaing said he could not approve the financial report because he did not know its content. “We don’t want free and fair elections and a transparent federation,” he said. “It is not an issue of personalities. The system is not working properly.”

U Khin Hlaing, chairman of Zawtika International – a company that makes religious attire – was not among those who initially called for a new vote, but on July 13 he objected to the way the financial report was approved.

“I am not calling for new elections. I just want central executive committee members to provide clear statements on last year’s finances to every member of the federation,” he said.

However, he added that he had questions about the vote that returned U Win Aung to his post, and called for an “investigation of the process.”

The President’s Office and parliament appear to have washed their hands of the matter, federation members said. “We sent a protest letter to the President’s Office on June 21 and to the blattaw on July 10 [to protest against the election], but there has been no response,” U Tin Maung Sint said.

A federation spokesperson refuted allegations the financial report was approved before members could see it, saying it had been audited externally and disseminated to federation members. “We posted the statements on the federation’s website and sent it to all members by email,” he said.

Federation members, however, said they have not received the emails and that they are still unable to locate the report on the federation’s website.

U Khin Hlaing said he could not approve the financial report because he did not know its content. “We don’t know all the details clearly. That’s why we can’t endorse it. If we endorsed the report without knowing what was in it we would be stupid. We want to check the audited report,” he said.

Despite the furore at the annual general meeting, the financial report was approved after Commerce Minister U Win Myint formally announced it.

U Win Aung – who has been blacklisted for alleged assistance given by him and his Dagon group of companies to the former military regime – said he would meet with his critics.

“I accept that members are saying they are dissatisfied,” he said. He also thanked the protesters for bringing attention to the federation’s ‘weak points.’

U Win Aung said it was time for federation members to put the election dispute behind them. “The election is
New banking taskforce set up

**MYANMAR and the UK have created a taskforce to support the development of Myanmar’s financial services sector, the governments of two countries announced during President Thein Sein’s visit to London last week.**

The taskforce will comprise officials from government ministries and agencies, and executives from financial and professional services firms, said a July 16 statement from government agency UK Trade and Investment.

Standard Chartered Bank and the UK government will co-chair the taskforce along with Myanmar government officials and banking executives.

According to the statement the taskforce will assist Myanmar’s financial and regulatory reforms by helping the domestic industry develop new types of loans and credit, advise on the sector’s regulatory framework and assist the development of human resources.

**UK Minister for Trade and Invest-ment Stephen Green said the taskforce will deliver “practical support and assistance to President TheinSein’s government on the development of a fully functioning financial services sector.”**

Lord Green added that financial services have the potential “to be a transformative sector in this reform process” by “unlocking capital and investment”.

“IT is a sector in which the UK is a world leader and I am confident that British business can play an important role in supporting President Thein Sein and his government in achieving the economic reform they are striving for,” he said.

Standard Chartered Group executive director Mike Bees said the taskforce will help “boost knowledge and expertise in the area of financial services”.

It will meet for the first time in October, when London’s mayor visits Myanmar. – The Myanmar Times

**MEMBERS of the Association of South-east Asian Nations are engaged in a corporate tax cut “war” to spur economic development, but some analysts warn this could be counterproductive.**

Following Thailand and Myanmar, which have already made big cuts to their corporate tax rates, Vietnam recently passed a law to gradually lower the tax rate from next year.

In June, the Vietnamese National Assembly cut the national’s corporate tax from the current 25 percent to 22 percent in January 2014, and to 20 percent in January 2016. The government is even considering a plan to bring it down to 10 percent in the future, which would put it almost on par with the lowest rate among ASEAN member countries, Singapore’s 17pc.

The tax cut coincided with construction of our new plant. It’s going to smooth out our business operation,” said Hidota Masuda, president of MHI Aerospace Vietnam, a subsidiary of Japan-based Mitsubishi Heavy Industries.

Construction of the new factory is to begin this month. As the firm had based its business plan on a 20pc tax rate, “shaving 3pc off the tax we have to pay will benefit us greatly,” Mr Masuda said.

Thailand lowered its corporate tax rate from 30pc in 2011, reaching 20pc in January. Myanmar cut its corporate tax rate from 30pc to 25pc last year.

Thailand also gives preferential treatment to companies in certain business categories, allowing them to pay no corporate tax for up to eight years. The incentive has attracted a large number of companies with foreign capital. Myanmar’s labour costs are about half of those in Vietnam, making it a strong attraction, Mr Green said.

“Vietnam has a strong sense of crisis because it has fallen behind countries like Thailand in attracting foreign companies. The country may have needed to lower its corporate tax rate to Thailand’s level,” said an official at the Japanese Office of the Japan External Trade Organisation.

However, lowering the corporate tax rate during an economic slowdown can be a double-edged sword. Vietnam’s governmental finances depend heavily on tax revenues from foreign-invested capital companies. If the tax-cut policy fails to attract enough such companies, it could aggravate the government’s fiscal situation.

If countries in difficult fiscal situations such as Indonesia and the Philippines get caught up in the “corporate tax cut war”, this could accelerate fiscal deterioration in some ASEAN countries,” said Hirokazu Hiratsuka, chief economist at Marubio Research Institute. “Government bonds of some countries could be downgraded as a result. A tax-cut war is undesirable.”

Some experts say Japan could be affected as well. “If ASEAN’s over-all power to attract foreign capital strengthens, this could accelerate a move among Japanese companies to move their operations to other countries. Japan could feel pressured to lower its own corporate tax rate,” said Chuo University professor Shigeaki Morinobu. – The Drummer Shinobu
Government urged to join transparency initiative

AUNG SHIN

A PROMINENT non-government organisation has urged the government to show it is serious about improving governance by speeding up its efforts to join the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI).

Shwe Gas Movement representatives made the comments at the launch of the group’s report, “Good Governance and the Extractive Industry in Burma” in Yangon on July 17.

The report highlights the existing shortcomings of Myanmar’s regulatory framework for the extractive industries.

“The government’s current reform activities are just [for] public recognition,” said Shwe Gas Movement representative Wunna Aung.

He also criticised the lack of ethnic minority involvement in decision making.

“I don’t see much involvement of ethnic people. Local people from affected areas should be able to participate more than they can now,” he added.

The report said governance in Myanmar is still weak and that the government must develop its own policy framework for sustainable extraction of natural resources.

It also highlighted the shortcomings of existing laws and the 2008 constitution in regards to the environment, human rights, transparency and natural-resource management.

“The government needs to consult more and encourage civil-society participation. Transparency and accountability for government activities is strongly needed … in particular there must be transparency in revenue sharing,” said Daw Khon Ja from the Kachin Peace Network.

While Myanmar’s reforms have received international praise, they have had little impact on its ranking in international transparency indices.

The US-based Heritage Foundation placed Myanmar 40th out of 41 countries in the Asia Pacific region in its 2013 Index of Economic Freedom, with a score of 50.2 – an increase of just 0.5 points on 2012.

Similarly, Myanmar also received a “failing” score of just four out of 100 in Revenue Watch Institute’s 2013 Resource Governance Index, placing it last out of 58 countries surveyed for the quality of governance in the oil, gas and mining sectors.

The government announced its intention to join EITI in July 2012. Under the initiative, the government has to disclose contracts signed with extractive companies, establish proper regulatory agencies, publish timely and comprehensive reports on oil, gas and mining operations, and extend transparency and accountability standards to state-owned companies.

Joining EITI is particularly urgent given the country is expected to enjoy revenues of more than US$30 billion from the Shwe gas project in the next three decades, speakers at the report launch said.

But new projects will also pose a threat, said environmentalist U Tin Thar.

“We are facing new challenges in terms of environmental issues because of the political and economic reforms,” he added.

Central Bank Law aims for independence

An important aspect to the independence of any central bank is the security of its officers. If, for example, the government, although nominally independent, can be replaced at will, he may be reluctant to fend off encroachments on the central bank’s areas of competence.

The new law states that, apart from voluntary resigna-

tion, a director’s tenure may be terminated if an incompati-

bility arises (e.g., the director acquires more than 5 percent of the equity of a company); if the director is sentenced to prison; if the director skips board meetings for more than three months; and if “the president decides that the director is incapable of discharging his duties.”

The law does not specify whether the termination of a director’s tenure requires parlia-

mentary approval. In any case, the new Central Bank Law illustrates (again) the strong position of the presi-

dent. It remains to be seen whether the president’s power to determine that a director is “incapable of discharging his duties” (and the right of of-

ficials to attend board meetings) will have any impact on the central bank’s independence. Ultimately, laws work best when their spirit as well as their letter is observed.

Sébastien Pawlita and Kyaw Zai Ya are consultants at Polastri Wint & Partners Legal & Tax Advisers in Yangon.

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According to the new law, the members of the board of di-

rectors of the central bank are to be appointed by the presi-
dent and approved by parliament. Previously, the directors were appointed “by the govern-

ment.”

The appointment automatically terminates any tenure as public officer or membership in parliament. Directors must not be members of political parties.

They are effectively banned from having any other employ-

ment than from owning more than five percent of a company’s equity.

The old law also contained a clause barring lawmakers and public officers from serv-

ing on the board of directors of the central bank, but the new law was authorised to grant “exemptions for special reasons.”

The board of directors is composed of the central bank’s governor, three deputy govern-

ors and “five external experts selected by the government.” The directors must be “well versed” and experienced in any of the central bank’s operations, “in economics, in finance and banking law and in accounting and auditing.” The board may be a problem in practice to find a sufficient number of qualified and willing candidates. For-

giveness may not be appointed.

Representatives may not represent the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development may attend board meetings as observers.

The Fine Print
Legal & tax insight

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Dated: 22nd July, 2013

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Dated: 22nd July, 2013

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Dated: 22nd July, 2013

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Foreign banks get gradual access to market

THOUGH foreign banks are hoping to enter the banking market in Myanmar as quickly as possible, more regulation and infrastructure are needed before that can happen, officials told an international banking and finance conference in Yangon on July 16.

Daw Naw Eh Hpaw, deputy director general of the Central Bank of Myanmar, said the central bank’s recently adopted strategy for developing the banking sector will be incremental. Foreign banks will eventually be allowed to open branches here, but this will be a gradual process. The first step will be to allow domestic banks to operate joint ventures with foreign banks, after which foreign banks will be allowed to establish locally incorporated, 100-percent-owned subsidiaries, she said. After that, foreign banks will be allowed to open local bank branches without local partners, she added.

“At present, foreign banks are not yet allowed to operate in Myanmar, and when they are allowed in initially they will only be able to operate joint ventures with local banks,” Daw Naw Eh Hpaw said.

The central bank, however, encourages foreign assistance for the newly privatized banking industry. “We invite foreign investment, particularly in the areas of infrastructure and the technology sector,” Daw Naw Eh Hpaw said.

A spokesperson for the central bank said it hopes regulations allowing joint ventures will be finalised within two months and that several domestic banks have already forged links with foreign partners.

“Even though some foreign banks do not want [to be limited to] joint ventures, we have to make the changes step by step because this is the most appropriate way for the country,” the spokesperson said.

New regulations will set the ratio of investment between foreign and domestic banks in joint ventures, he said.

The conference was attended by executives from 25 representative offices of banks from Southeast Asia, Japan, South Korea and India. Most are eager to sidestep the joint-venture process and invest directly.

David Proctor, chairman of the financial-services consultancy Consilium, said domestic bankers need more training in international banking processes, better infrastructure, more capital and more foreign direct investment. At the same time, he said, foreign banks should have full branching rights in Myanmar, led by executives from 25 representative offices of banks from Southeast Asia, Japan, South Korea and India. Most are eager to sidestep the joint-venture process and invest directly.

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Daw Khine Khine Nye, a member of the Myanmar Investment Commission, said the country has already achieved a great progress by implementing a floating exchange rate and preparing for the opening of a stock exchange.

The development of the banking and finance sector is crucial for continued economic development and it is necessary to sustain the momentum already achieved in economic reforms, she added.

U Maung Maung Thein, deputy minister of finance, said the biggest challenge for the banking and finance sector is to establish the capital market, though a draft of a new securities exchange law is expected to be enacted this month.

“We now face some issues in the banking sector,” he said. “The first is to modernise and strengthen the local banks. Another concerns regulatory issues – the last issue is the entry of foreign banks into the domestic market.”

Toshiyuki Mori, chief representative of Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation, summed up the interest of foreign investors. “Many Japanese customers want to be involved more and more [in Myanmar] because of the Thilawa industrial zone and other projects,” he said.

Sugary deal

THAN NAING SOE
thannaingsoe@gmail.com

MYANMAR Sugar Development is now selling shares to the public at K10,000 apiece, its management director said.

U Win Htay added that his Mandalay-based company will allow each investor to buy as many as 10,000 shares and a minimum of 10. “Anybody who buys 10,000 shares is eligible to be elected as a company director and can vote in general meetings,” he added.

The company aims to increase the quality and output of the country’s sugar industry by boosting investment in technology and agriculture inputs such as fertiliser and labour. It also aims to increase sugar exports and earnings.

“We are opening an international standard sugar factory in Katha township in Sagaing Region,” U Win Htay said.

“Dividends will be paid at every annual general meeting and shareholders can resell shares on the open market.”
ANALYSIS

Moving beyond diplomacy and defence in the US pivot to Asia

Asia and the United States will benefit from greater business, cultural and educational engagement

Curtis S Chin

The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) in Myanmar is inviting qualified candidates to apply for the following positions:

Sr. Title and level
1. Procurement and Logistics Assistant (LICA 3)
2. Public Health Analyst (LICA 6)
3. Food and Fiscal Assistant (Roving) (LICA 3)
4. Contracts Assistant (MNCH/ATM) (LICA 3)
5. Associate Finance Officer/Treasury (LICA 6)
6. M&E Analyst (MCH) (LICA 5)
7. Senior Finance Officer/Deputy Financial Management Officer (NCG)
8. Administrative Analyst (NDA)
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For details please visit UNOPS website https://gups.unops.org and click on the post you are interested in applying for. All applications must be made through UNOPS E-recruitment system.

Presidents Barack Obama and U Thein Sein during the former’s visit to Myanmar. Photo: The Myanmar Times

Curtis S Chin is a managing director with advisory firm RiverPeak Group and a member of the boards of World Education Services and Community and Family Services International. He served as US Ambassador to the Asian Development Bank from 2007 to 2010.

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China to lift lending-rate controls, central bank

China's central bank will lift controls on lending interest rates and allow financial institutions to set them, it said on July 19, in a step toward liberalising the financial sector.

The bank touted the move as a way to lower financing costs for businesses and support China's long-term economic restructuring, while analysts called it a small positive step toward liberalisation.

Likewise, countries that have used tax laws to court investment could help China's growth rate, as a way to lower financing costs for businesses and support China's long-term economic restructuring, while analysts called it a small positive step toward liberalisation.

The figures this year have so far proved disappointing after the 7.8pc growth seen in 2012 – the worst in 13 years. However other analysts saw the move as a “moderate” step in the wider context of the reform of interest rates, rather than a response to re- est signs of economic slow- down.

China economist Zhwei Zhang of Nomura said Premier Li Keqiang has already announced the reforms as a goal for 2013 and called the move a “positive” toward that end, suggesting China “intends to take a gradual ap- proach” in liberalising inter- est rate policy.

Mark Williams, chief Asia economist at Capital Econom- ics, called the lending-rate lift a “significant development for China’s financial sector” – but said that it will have minimal impact. In principle more cred- it-worthy borrowers could now enjoy better rates, but “in prac- tice the immediate difference will be small”, he said.

Bigger firms have already been able to access alternative sources of credit, thanks to a fast-growing corporate bond market. - AFP
A touch of serenity

THIS house off Kone Myint Thar Lane in Mayangona township offers a large compound and a touch of serenity for US$3000 a month. Off the main road and down a side lane, the compound includes a two-storey main building, a two-car garage, a large paved yard and a smaller garden and lawn.

Newly repainted in blue, the simple house is ringed with a head-high wall topped with razor wire. On the ground floor of the house there is a large living room with sliding doors, a kitchen and dining room completes with ceiling fan. The kitchen is bright and airy and connects to the garage. The upper level has two bedrooms: a master with an ensuite bathroom and small balcony looking over the front yard and a single. They share a bathroom.

There is a small maid’s quarters, including an outside kitchen, behind the main house. The house comes with four air-conditioners and is fully, if modestly, furnished.

-Ei Thaw Thaw Naing

Beijing

A symbol of speculative financing in China

POSTERS of the Chinese character for good luck adorn shops bolted shut in the northern city of Ordos, where cranes stand silently above half-finished developments and doors on workers’ dormitories creak in the wind.

Apartment sales have come to a virtual halt in the central district, real estate agent Zhang Wei says. With the municipality’s revenue falling, the Inner Mongolian city that saw a surge in building during China’s record credit boom is now a showcase for the speculative financing Premier Li Keqiang is trying to curb.

“In the past few years there was a lot of coal so people came from all over the country,” says Gao Wei, 30, smoking in an office that deals in second-hand construction machinery and had no clients that day. “Now the economy has collapsed, they’ve all gone.”

The implosion in Ordos, 750 miles west of Beijing, stands at one extreme of a national slowdown that a government report last week signaled may deepen this quarter, with industrial output growth last month matching the weakest since the 2009 global recession. The challenge for Mr Li’s administration is to assure growth is resilient enough for the world’s second-largest economy to weather both financial and industries ridden by overcapacity.

“What has to drive growth now is greater productivity and more efficient investment with a financial system that channels money to the most efficient companies,” said David Loevinger, former US Treasury Department senior coordinator for China affairs and now an emerging markets analyst at TCW Group in Los Angeles.

China’s growth slowed for a second quarter to 7.5 percent in April-to-June, the June 15 National Bureau of Statistics report showed. Factory production rose 8.9pc in June from a year earlier, equal to the lowest since 2009. The report boosted speculation the government will act to deepen this quarter, with industrial output growth last month matching the weakest since the 2009 global recession. The challenge for Mr Li’s administration is to assure growth is resilient enough for the world’s second-largest economy to weather both financial and industries ridden by overcapacity.

“The government has already started to fine-tune policies and support growth,” HSBC Holdings said. State Council announcements this month encouraging investment in public housing, energy saving, environment-
Cheap GSM SIMs to boost smartphone use

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MOBILE phone users will be able to apply for internet access by text starting August 1, Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications Board chairman Aung Myint said, but the feature comes at a price.

"We want to apply to have internet enabled on their phones can do so by sending an SMS message to 133, but they need to set up their phones themselves," he said.

"It was long seen as impossible to win this," said Robert Robertson, chief aerodynamicist at a company called AeroVelo, which was created by a team of about 20 students and young professionals.

"That quarter of a million dollars absolutely brought out some of the best innovators and the best talents in the world to tackle this challenge," said Hirschberg.

The first prize attempt at a human powered helicopter was by California Polytechnic State University, which flew its craft for 8.6 seconds at a height of 8 inches (20 cm) off the ground in 1989, according to AAP.

A team from Nihon University in Japan set the endurance record for the prize with almost 20 seconds in 1990.
A US military judge on July 18 refused to dismiss a key charge that an American soldier “aided the enemy” by giving a trove of secret documents to WikiLeaks.

The decision marked another setback for Bradley Manning, 25, the Army private on trial for espionage who has admitted to passing hundreds of thousands of classified military and diplomatic files to WikiLeaks.

Mr Manning’s defence lawyers had filed motions seeking the dismissal of the aiding the enemy count as well as a charge of computer fraud. But the judge, Colonel Denise Lind, said prosecutors had offered enough evidence to allow the trial to go ahead with the charges intact, pending a final verdict.

Mr Manning maintains his massive leak – the biggest in American history – was meant to trigger a public debate about American policy.

‘It’s pretty disconcerting from a First Amendment perspective. The government is equating all leakers with traitors and they’re not’.

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‘It’s pretty disconcerting from a First Amendment perspective. The government is equating all leakers with traitors and they’re not’.

Mary-Rose Papandrea, Boston College Law School professor.

A US military judge on July 18 refused to dismiss a key charge that an American soldier “aided the enemy” by giving a trove of secret documents to WikiLeaks.

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Mansour pledges to fight for “security”

EGYPTIAN President Adly Mansour vowed on July 18 to battle for “security” that military warned it would ramp down on any violence in роли played by Mohamed Morsi’s supporters and opponents. “We are at a decisive moment in Egypt’s history, which some want to steer into the unknown,” Mr. Mansour, installed as military leader by the military after Mr. Morsi’s overthrow on July 3, said in a televised address.

Mr. Morsi’s Muslim Brotherhood has refused to recognise Mr. Mansour, who was a top judge before becoming president.

In his speech, Mr. Mansour again offered an olive branch to Mr. Morsi’s Muslim Brotherhood, but he also pledged “triumphal justice” amid calls for the prosecution of Mr. Morsi and a crackdown on the Islamists.

“The framework of justice and reconciliation extends to all,” he said.

The Brotherhood and anti-Morsi groups have called for new rallies, prompting the military to issue a stern warning.

“The armed forces warn against any deviation from peaceful expressions of opinion, and the resort to violence,” it said in a statement on its Facebook page.

Brotherhood officials said they had insisted on Mr. Morsi’s reinstatement in a meeting with EU foreign policy chief Cath- erine Ashton, who visited Cairo on July 17. It “was impossible to get engaged in the political process under the rules of a military coup,” one official, Amr Darrag, said in a Facebook post.

“People are increasing on the street,” Mr. Darrag said of Brother- hood-led protests demanding Mr. Morsi’s reinstatement. “The military will definitely keep making mistakes, and definitely more people will come to our side.”

Mansour's government, instead placing its hopes in sustained protests, believes the military will topple the elected president after nationwide demonstra- tions against him.

Although mostly peaceful, Brotherhood rallies have led to clashes that have killed dozens of people since Mr. Morsi’s ouster.

“We will fight the battle for security to the end. We will pro- tect the revolution,” said Mr. Mansour.


declining “octail, prawn, dump- ing vegetables”

Another granddaughter, Zawiae Damirani-Manaway, dis- tributed food at a school.

“I think it’s important for us to give back,” she said. “We are a family, we hope for him to come home, and we know the whole nation would hope the same thing, and the whole world.”

The United Nations de- clared the Nobel Peace laure- ate’s birthday Mandela Day in 2010, but for many this year it takes on extra poignancy.

Mr Clinton, UN leader Ban Ki-moon and Andrew Mlani- ngi, who is a former leader of 45 years of marriage to her hus- band Machel, who also celebrated 15 years of marriage to her hus-

day and also one of their children volunteering at a children’s home. They then gathered at the hospital for banch, along with Mandela’s third wife Graca Machel, who also celebrated 15 years of marriage to her hus- band on July 18.

“The 67 minutes was the highlight of our day and also the time we spent with grand- dad and family. It was really a phenomenal day,” Mr Man- dela’s granddaughter Ndlaleka said. He was “excited” to have the family, including at least four great-grandchildren, gather around him for his birthday. “He always does, especially when he sees the little ones. It was good for him,” said Ms Ndlaleka.

The birthday meal included his favourite food, in

Mandela hospital

Mandela hospital

Malala’s UN speech

Taliban criticise Malala’s UN speech

Poisoned Indian students buried at school

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The UN launched one review of its links with the FARC and has started a new investigation after the latest incidents, Mr Nesirky said.

"The secretary general is deeply concerned about reports of alleged desecration of corpses of M23 combatants by the Congolese armed forces," said Mr Ban’s spokesman Martin Nesirky.

The UN mission in DR Congo, MONUSCO, "has raised this matter at the highest level" with the army “and welcomes steps by the Congolese army to investigate these claims and to hold the perpetrators of these acts accountable,” said the spokesman.

Images of DR Congo soldiers prov- dding the body of an M23 fighter were shown on the internet. The M23 has launched a new offensive on the major eastern city of Goma and scores of rebels were killed in fighting last week. The desecration of bodies is the latest scandal to hit the Armed Forces of the DR Congo, known under the acronym FARDC, as it battles to secure control in the east of the country. In November after the army fled a previous M23 onslaught against Goma, soldiers were accused of raping at least 130 women and girls, some as young as six, in a two-day rampage around the town of Minova in South Kivu province.

The UN launched one review of its links with the FARC then and has started a new investigation after the latest incidents, Mr Nesirky said.

"In line with the United Nations Hu- man Rights Due Diligence Policy, MO- NUSCO has launched the process of reviewing its support to FARC units suspected of being involved in these incidents," said the spokesman. - AFP

UNITED NATIONS

UN condemns DR Congo desecrations

UN secretary general Ban Ki-moon on Monday condemned the alleged desecration of the bodies of Congolese Revolutionary Army, or M23, rebels in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo by government forces.

"The secretary general is deeply concerned about reports of alleged mis- treatment of M23 detainees and desecration of corpses of M23 combatants by the Congolese armed forces," said Mr Ban’s spokesman Martin Nesirky.

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NUSCO has launched the process of reviewing its support to FARC units suspected of being involved in these incidents," said the spokesman. - AFP

PESHAWAR

Taliban accuse Malala of ‘smeared campaign’

A SENIOR Pakistani Taliban com- mander has written to Malala Yousafzai, the teenage education ac- tivist shot by militants, accusing her of “smearing” them and of promoting “satanic” values, while urging her to return home.

Gunmen from the Tehreek-e- Taliban Pakistan (TTP) shot Malala, now 16, in the head in her hometown in Swat last October after she had campaigned for the right of girls to go to school.

She made a powerful speech to the United Nations on July 12 in her first public appearance since the near- fatal attack, vowing to continue her struggle for education and not be si- lenced by the militants.

In an open letter released on July 17, Adnan Rasheed, a former air force member turned TTP cadre, said he personally wished the attack had not happened, but accused her of running a “smeared campaign” against the militants.

“Nobody will believe a word the Taliban say about the right of girls like Malala to go to school until they stop burning down schools and stop massacring pupils,” he wrote to Malala to warn her against criticizing the Taliban when she rose to prominence with her blog for the BBC Urdu service chronicling life un- der the militants’ 2007-2009 rule in Swat and your writings were provocative.”

“It is amazing that you are shout- ing for education, you and the [UN] is pretendng that you were shot due to education, although this is not the reason … Not the education but your propaganda was the issue,” he contin- ued. “What you are doing now, you are using your tongue on the behalf of the others.”

The letter was sent to report- ers in northwest Pakistan and its authenticity was confirmed to AFP by a senior Taliban cadre who is a close associate of Mr Rasheed. It is understood Malala has not received the letter herself.

Mr Rasheed accused Malala of seeking to promote an education sys- tem begun by British colonialists to produce “Asians in blood but English in taste,” and said students should study Islam and not the “satanic or secular curriculum.”

“I advise you to come back home, adopt the Islamic and Pashtun cul- ture, join any female Islamic madrasa near your home town, study and learn the book of Allah, use your pen for Islam and plight of Muslim [com- munity],” Mr Rasheed wrote.

Malala was given lifesaving treat- ment in Britain, where she now lives with her family.

Mr Rasheed was sentenced to death over a 2003 attack on Pakistan’s then-military ruler Pervez Musharraf, but escaped from custody in a mass jailbreak in April last year.

He said he had originally wanted to write to Malala to warn her against criticising the Taliban when she rose to prominence with her blog for the BBC Urdu service chronicling life un- der the militants’ 2007-2009 rule in Swat, in northwest Pakistan.

The Taliban have destroyed hun- dreds of schools across the north- west, an area on the front line of the country’s bloody struggle against Isl- amist militants.

But Mr Rasheed said the attacks were necessary because government forces used schools as hideouts and bases.

Gordon Brown, the former Brit- ish prime minister turned UN special envoy for global education, who has supported Malala since she was shot, issued a caustic response to the Tali- ban letter.

“Nobody will believe a word the Taliban say about the right of girls like Malala to go to school until they stop burning down schools and stop massacring pupils,” he said in a statement.

Last month, militants blew up a bus carrying female students in Pa- kistan’s southwestern city of Quetta, and then stormed a hospital where survivors had been taken for treat- ment. At least 25 people were killed in the attacks. - AFP

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WASHINGTON

Groups sue NSA over data collection

ROBERT LEVER

NINETEEN US organisations filed suit on July 16 against the National Security Agency, claiming its constitutional rights were violated by its secret data collection programs.

The Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) filed the action on behalf of a variety of groups, including the First Unitarian Church of Los Angeles, the gun rights group Calguns Foundation, Greenpeace and Human Rights Watch.

The suit, filed in California federal court, alleges that the mass collection of phone records under the so-called PRISM program violates Americans’ constitutional rights.

“Our case seeks to apply the right of association in the digital age,” said EFF attorney Cindy Cohn.

Ms Cohn said the suit, based on a longstanding Supreme Court ruling, contends the government’s collection of “metadata” or information on calls placed, without the content of the conversation, allows the government to monitor who is associating with various groups.

“People who hold controversial views — whether it’s about gun ownership policies, drug legalisation or immigration — often must express views in a group in order to act and advocate effectively,” said Ms Cohn.

“But fear of individual exposure when participating in political debates over high-stakes issues can dissuade people from taking part. That’s why the Supreme Court ruled in 1998 that membership lists of groups have strong First Amendment protection.”

Sherwin Siy of the digital advocacy group Public Knowledge, which joined the lawsuit, said the programs “don’t just invade privacy; they also harm people’s First Amendment right of association”.

“When the government collects information about who calls whom, when and how often, they get a vivid picture of a person’s contacts and associations. In the past, authorities have tried to compile lists of association members to discourage people from joining certain groups,” Mr Siy said.

Other groups joining the lawsuit include the California Association of Federal Firearms Licensees, the Competitive Enterprise Institute, the Council on American Islamic Relations, the National Organisation for the Reform of Marijuana Laws, People for the American Way and Students for a Democratic Society.

The case is the latest in a wave of legal action since revelations in the media about the PRISM program, believed to have collected vast amounts of phone and internet data as part of efforts to protect national security.

In a separate case on July 15, the secret US court overseeing national security investigations opened the door to declassifying documents related to the government’s secret collection program in a case involving internet giant Yahoo.

The Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court said the government should review which documents should be declassified and inform the court of its decision by July 29.

The case dates back at least to 2008, when the court issued an order reportedly requiring Yahoo to allow the government to obtain access to customer data. The Justice Department took “no position” on the request, according to the court document.

Yahoo asked the court on June 14 to release documents about the program, shortly after revelations of the vast data collection program. – AFP

Beware of counterfeit Scholl

It has come to LRC’s attention that a number of wholesalers and outlets and stalls in Myanmar have been offering for sale footwear using “Scholl” or confusingly similar marks such as “Sholl” when such footwear are not made by or with the consent of LRC.

On May 17, 2013, LRC has conducted with the support of the Police of Mandalay series of raid actions in the market area of Chan Ave Thazan in Mandalay against wholesalers of counterfeit Scholl resulting in the seizure of hundreds of counterfeit shoes and the lodge of criminal actions:

Following the success of its raid action and good cooperation with the Police, LRC is strongly determined to continue enforcing its trade marks against counterfeiters, including filing criminal and civil actions for damages against all identified counterfeiters, including retailers, in Myanmar.

“Our commitment to fight both the manufacture of counterfeit products and the trade of them is not only about protecting the Scholl brand. It is, before all, protecting our customers and the public from a potentially serious safety risk since counterfeit Scholl and look-alikes do not provide the same reliability, stability, durability, comfort and safety that customers would expect to receive from genuine Scholl foot wear.”

Mr. Ata Safdar, Managing Director Thailand, Philippines & Indo-China Cluster at Reckitt Benckiser.

By this notice we wish to inform all manufacturers and dealers of counterfeit “Scholl” and lookalikes that we have identified who they are and are determined to strictly enforce our rights to protect our customers, the public and our brand. In case of any doubts about the authenticity of “Scholl” foot wear and accessories you should immediately contact us at the following number tel: +66 (0) 2 614 8999 or send Email to: Schollfootwear@RB.com.

Tin Ohnmar Tun & The Law Chambers
Tel: 01-557990 / 01-559894
(Fos, LRC Products Ltd, United Kingdom)

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Some history ...

• Founded in 1906 by podiatrist William Mathias Scholl in Chicago, United States, the brand expanded globally through innovative designs, strong intellectual property protection and original ways to market such as advertising phrases, which included: “Put one on, the pain is gone” or “No more foot trouble” as illustrated below:

• By 1955 “Scholl” became the world’s third-best-known brand name.

• Today, Scholl can rightfully claim to be “The World’s No. 1 Specialist in foot care”.

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Scholl’s ranges of footwear have long been established and well accepted by consumers for their comfort, health enhancement and durability. As a result “Scholl” has achieved a reputation for excellence, creating valuable respect and strong recognition in the brand.

Scholl’s footwear and accessories you should immediately:

• Beware of counterfeit Scholl in Myanmar by following the success of its raid action and good cooperation with the Police, LRC is strongly determined to continue enforcing its trade marks against counterfeiters, including filing criminal and civil actions for damages against all identified counterfeiters, including retailers, in Myanmar.

• “Our commitment to fight both the manufacture of counterfeit products and the trade of them is not only about protecting the Scholl brand. It is, before all, protecting our customers and the public from a potentially serious safety risk since counterfeit Scholl and look-alikes do not provide the same reliability, stability, durability, comfort and safety that customers would expect to receive from genuine Scholl foot wear.”

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(Fos, LRC Products Ltd, United Kingdom)
MEXICO CITY

Mexico fears violence after Zetas arrest

LAURENT THOMET

WITH the capture of the Zetas drug cartel’s leader, authorities have dealt a blow to Mexico’s most vicious gang, but analysts warn a violent power struggle and turf wars could follow.

Capturing Miguel Angel Trevino was the biggest anti-cartel victory for the administration of President Enrique Peña Nieto since he took office in December on a pledge to reduce a wave of drug-related murders that has left 70,000 people dead since 2006.

With the arrest, Mr Peña Nieto has provided a reprieve to fears that his new security strategy focused too much on crime prevention instead of putting kingpins in handcuffs.

The president said the arrest was the product of good cooperation between Mexican and US authorities and between Mexican government agencies, reaffirming his administration’s “commitment to creating better conditions for security”.

But the arrest of Mr Trevino, a drug kingpin who has been described as the “godfather of the Zetas” and who is believed to have a group of “stew” victims in burning oil, could set off an internal war of succession marked by more strife in the cartel’s northeastern territories, analysts say.

Mr Trevino’s arrest, along with “Z-40”, was intercepted by marines before dawn on July 15 without a shot fired, after a helicopter swerved down in front of his pickup truck as he travelled with two associates on a dirt road near the northeastern city of Nuevo Laredo, which borders Texas.

The Mexican and US governments have not said whether the United States helped. The arrest came days after the head of the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) visited Mexico and amid a visit by the Mexican military chiefs in the United States.

“This ruthless leadership has now come to an end,” the DEA said in a statement.

Mr Trevino’s arrest came eight months after Mexican troops killed his predecessor, Heriberto Lazcano, in a gunfight in the northern state of Coahuila – only for Mr Lazcano’s body to be stolen by gunmen hours later from a funeral home.

Mr Lazcano’s death was not followed by internal bloodshed for his job, but it is rare to see such an orderly succession or a fight.

His brother Omar “Z-42” Trevino is considered a potential heir, but it is unclear how high up he ranks within the organisation.

The Zetas were formed by former elite soldiers and its leaders had been ex-troops until Mr Trevino, a civilian, took over last year.

“Omar could step in and take power relatively quickly,” said Sylvia Longmire, a former US Air Force special agent and author of Cartel: The Coming Invasion of Mexico’s Drug Wars.

But she said Mr Trevino’s arrest may not affect the cartel’s day-to-day operations because the Zetas work like a decentralised franchise.

At the same time, the rival Sinaloa cartel could say “this is a perfect, opportune time to strike”.

“This leaves lots of opportunities for an increase in violence in the short term,” she said.

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Russia frees Navalny ahead of appeal

ANKA MALPAS

A RUSSIAN court on July 10 unexpectedly freed protest leader Alexei Navalny pending his appeal against a five-year sentence for embezzlement, as his conviction threatened to further strain relations between the Kremlin and the West.

The judge in the northern city of Kirov ruled that keeping President Vladimir Putin’s top opponent in custody would deprive Mr Navalny of his right to stand in Moscow’s municipal election on September 8. The new ruling follows Mr Navalny’s conviction, which remains in place, drew widespread condemnation from US President Barack Obama reportedly “retreat” from plans to trip to Moscow in September.

“What happened now is a completely unique phenomenon in the system of Russian justice,” said Mr Navalny, who was immediately set free from the glass-fronted defendant’s cage and rushed to embrace his wife Yulia.

A lower court in the city of Kirov, 900 kilometers (560 miles) northeast of Moscow, had on July 18 sentenced Mr Navalny to five years in a penal colony.

Mr Putin’s spokesman Dmitry Peskov denounced any fruit playing in the Kremlin’s feud on Sunday, saying that both decisions “were done in accordance with the law” and “must be respected.”

Mr Navalny, who is a lawyer by training, was found guilty of defrauding the government in the Kirov region of 10 million rubles ($800,000) in a timber deal while acting as an advisor to the local authorities in 2009.

Mr Navalny’s co-accused, Pyotr Otoloff, who was sentenced to four years in prison, was also released on July 19 pending his appeal.

The guilty verdict disqualifies Mr Navalny from politics, bringing his prosecution and trial into force only if the verdict is upheld on appeal, giving him time to launch a credible campaign for the powerful and visible post of Moscow mayor.

Observers say the jailing of a high-profile mayoral candidate during the campaign was a huge embarrassment for the authorities and linked the west councilors’ decision to appeal to a possible change of heart by the Kremlin.

Legal experts said the decision to release Navalny was unprecedented and clearly politically motivated. “That has never happened before,” said lawyer Dmitry Agranovsky.

The judge in his ruling on July 19 said that Mr Navalny’s jailing would “limit his right to be elected” and put him at a disadvantage compared to other mayoral candidates.

Mr Navalny said he was not a “pet kitten or puppy” who could be taken out of the equation and then inducted back. He said he would decide upon his return to Moscow whether to continue his campaign or boycott the polls, where he was due to challenge President incumbent Mayor Sergei Sobyanin.

More than 200 people were arrested after thousands rallied near the Kremlin walls in Moscow to protest Mr Navalny’s sentencing. All have now been freed.

Police said that 2500 people took to the streets in the Russian capital, while activists put the turnout at around 10,000, with protests continuing into the night. Navalny, who was convicted in July 18 sentenced Mr Navalny’s sentencing. All have now been freed.

Police said that 2500 people took to the streets in the Russian capital, while activists put the turnout at around 10,000, with protests continuing into the night.

A similar demonstration also took place in Saint Petersburg.

-AFP

REPORTERS in conflict zones appeal for justice at UN Security Council

JOURNALISTS seized a rare chance on July 17 to plead for greater UN Security Council protection as the world media death toll mounts amid increased coverage of Syria and other conflicts.

AFP’s prize-winning Somalia correspondent Mustafa Haji Abdiurah, a reporter for the Kalsan International newspaper The Guardian.

“It is one bullet and he will be killed and no one will be questioned after that bullet,” a fellow journalist added Mr Abdul Ahad, who was held by the Taliban while working in Afghanistan and by the Libyan army in 2012.

Abdul Ahad said journalists in conflict zones should be considered “part of a humanitarian effort to tell a story.”

“My story is not unique. I am here today simply because I am lucky, because the gunman who has killed so many of my colleagues, my friends, has not yet found me.”

Mr Abdulurah said a security official could have a journalist thrown in prison because he does not like a story, and said he himself would face greater risks for having spoken at the Security Council.

“There is a sense of immunity in killing a journalist,” said Ghath Abdul Ahad, an Iraqi correspondent for British newspaper The Guardian.

“It is a sign that we are doing our job properly. There has to be some sort of balance. Let us be there. Kind of treat us as human beings. Just don’t kill us.”

UN Deputy Secretary General Jan Eliasson told the meeting that journalists are the “lifeblood” of democracy. He said it is “shocking” that 90 percent of murders of journalists go unpunished.

Richard Engel, a correspondent for American television channel NBC who was kidnapped in Syria last year, also spoke, and Kathleen Carroll of the Associated Press told the agency’s 3 journalists killed while working.

It was the first debate on journalism at the Security Council since it passed a resolution on journalism, proposed by France and Greece, in 2006.

Many Western envoys spoke up for journalists’ rights.

“Journalists are literally our eyes and ears in every corner of the world,” said US ambassador Rosemary DiCarlo.

“Journalism at the Security Council is serving as council president for July, organised the meeting. The impunity for violence against journalists must end,”

Mr DiCarlo said. “This council has an obligation to help protect those we provide with so much vital information.”

Gerard Araud, France’s UN ambassador, said that “every one can see that the first ref of the enemies of freedom is to muzzle the press”. - AFP

UNITED NATIONS

90%

Percentage of murders of journalists that go unpunished globally.
Delivering mail to streets with no name

IN Kabul, many streets have no name and houses often have no number, meaning that postalmen already braving the constant threat of suicide bombings must play detective to deliver mail.

Mohammad Rahim makes his rounds on the so-called “Karb-e-Sakhil” hills, streets of the Afghan capital riding an old bicycle. After 30 years on the job he isundaunted by even the vaguest addresses on letters.

“We have a letter for a man who lives near Dr Hashmat’s house,” Mr Rahim, 46, says. “I don’t know the address, so let’s see, how can we find the right place?”

His only clues are the addresses: Mohammad Naem, the doctor’s name and instructions on the back of the envelope to “Karb-e-Sakhil hills”, behind the agricultural ministry.

Wearing a black fur hat, blue jeans and a violet T-shirt, he cuts a familiar figure and is often recognized by Kabul residents. He sets off from the neighbourhood post office to start asking people for help.

“Brother, can you tell me – where is Dr Hashmat’s house?” Mr Rahim shouts at a shopkeeper.

“Go up the hill, and turn right,” comes the reply, so Mr Rahim sets off up the rocky road.

Further on, another man tells him, “Turn right and it is the third house on the left.”

After waiting outside the gate, a woman in her 40s comes out: Mohammad Naem’s wife, who takes the letter for her husband.

“We have received letters from the US, Canada, Germany and Pakistan, and the postman always brings them safely and on time,” she says.

Mr Rahim delivers dozens of letters every day across west and southwest Kabul, a city reduced almost to ruins in the brutal 1992-96 civil war.

The Kabul population has boomed with many houses and shacks built on contested land or without planning permission. But the days of confusion over addresses could soon be over, as last month the communications ministry signed an agreement with the city authorities to create a comprehensive new address book.

All streets and houses will be coded, numbered and mapped in a two-year project that the government hopes to expand to other districts.

The scheme – which will use the global positioning system (GPS) – should help Mr Rahim and fellow postalmen such as Khan Agha, 42, who works in a post office in the central Shar-e-Nafir district.

For now Mr Agha, who started delivering mail 22 years ago, says the chaotic street mapping makes it “the most difficult job in the world”.

“We don’t care about traffic, summer or winter, snow or rain, but there are many vague addresses, though a telephone number on the back of the envelope can help,” he says.

“We ring them up and they say: ‘I’m standing here; so we go and hand over the letter. I do my best to treat people well. We see on television that postmen are admired in foreign society, because we connect the sender and receiver.”

The job is even more challenging for Mr Agha, who lost his right eye when he was being served as a solder more than 20 years ago, another victim of the fighting that has battered Afghanistan for decades.

“One day in the fighting, I was shot with a bullet in the back of my head and the bullet came out of my right eye socket.”

Admitting that the injury continues to trouble him, Mr Agha scrabbles through a huge pile of mail on the post office floor, looking for what needs to be delivered to his area.

“We are going to take a letter to a Mr Romeo in Sherpoor from Germany,” he says.

As so often, the letter has only the district name without any house or street number.

After a search lasting nearly two hours and asking 12 different people, including the local baker, he finally finds the small lane where the intended recipient works in a health centre.

Such hard work is not well rewarded in Afghanistan, which has 900 postmen nationwide with 100 in Kabul. Mr Agha earns just 5000 afghani (US$60) a month – barely enough, he says, to feed his family of eight.

But he is hopeful that soon most streets and houses in Kabul will have a permanent address.

“This is a good move by the ministry to pack a new postal system,” he says. “With the completion of this project, we could do our job more easily.” – AFP

The street name on Mr Agha’s delivery list is called e-Sakhi neighbourhood on June 11.

Afghan postman Mohammad Rahim delivers letters to a resident in Kabul’s Kart-e-Sakhil neighbourhood on June 11. Photo: AFP

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SRI NAGAR
Six dead in Kashmir clash

INDIAN paramilitary forces on July 18 shot dead six people protesting at an incident involving the troops at an Islamic school in Kashmir, police said.

Border Security Force (BSF) troops fired on demonstrators who had gathered outside their headquarters in the district of Gool, two officers said on condition of anonymity.

“It is mayhem. Six are dead and dozens injured. The death toll could rise further,” said one officer.

India’s Home Minister Sushil Kumar Shinde said he has ordered an investigation into the shooting and appealed for calm in the tense Himalayan region.

A revolt against Indian rule has simmered for decades in Kashmir, the country’s only Muslim-majority state.

“I have ordered an inquiry to be conducted without any loss of time to ascertain the circumstances leading to the firing,” Mr Shinde said in a statement. “I assure that any use of excessive force or irresponsible action shall be dealt with strictly.

The loss of life in this incident is particularly saddening.”

Protesters clashed with troops after an incident on July 17 at the madrassa (Islamic school) attached to a mosque in Gool, witnesses said.

The head of the madrassa, Qari Shabir, said four BSF troopers came in looking for refugees at the same time that a caretaker was alone there reciting prayers for the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

“They beat him up. That is when [caretaker] Abdul Lateef raised a white flag and people started to assemble and the word spread,” Mr Shabir told AFP by telephone.

Testers left, right and centre, “It tasted bitter, but the headmistress insisted that all the children should eat it” said Sanjudevi Mahato as she wept for the loss of three of her four children.

“My husband is bedridden. We have no food at home and it was only Muslim-majority state,” said Sanjudevi Mahato as she wept for the loss of three of her four children.

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“Some of the students dumped the lunch in school dustbins and we are trying to convince everyone that the tragedy will not be repeated,” said Sanjudevi Mahato as she wept for the loss of three of her four children.

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U Kyi Win Associates for Revlon (Suisse) S.A.

PO. Box No. 26, Yangon.

Phone: 372416

Dated: 22nd July, 2013

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Phone: 372416

Dated: 22nd July, 2013

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THE MYANMAR TIMES

P. O. Box No. 26, Yangon.
Cambodian opposition leader returns from exile

PHNOM PENH

The 64-year-old had faced 11 years in jail but was paroled by King Norodom on July 10 to help his party’s bid to end Prime Minister Hun Sen’s nearly three decades in power, his party said. Thousands of cheering supporters gathered outside Phnom Penh’s airport and lined the road to the city centre to welcome Sam Rainsy, waving and shouting, “Change! Change!”

“I’m very happy and excited to see the leader of democracy returning to the country,” said Sok Kan, 69, who was among those waiting to greet him.

The French-educated former banker fled in 2000 to avoid charges he contends were politically motivated.

Mr Rainsy kissed the ground at the airport upon returning from France shortly after 9am on a flight via Bangkok, and was due later to speak at Democracy Park.

“We expect some 40,000 people to greet him,” said Yim Sovann, a spokesman for the opposition Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP). “The UN will give facilitation and actors to vote in the elections.”

The UN special rapporteur on human rights in Cambodia, Suzy Subedi, on July 15 urged Cambodia to let Mr Rainsy play a “full part” in politics.

Mr Rainsy left his homeland and moved to Paris aged 16 after the disappearance of his father, which historians blame on agents contracted to finish him. He returned to Cambodia in 1992 and briefly held the post of finance minister.

He fled in 2005 after Mr Hun Sen pressed defamation charges against him but received a royal pardon the following year and returned to the kingdom.

He left Cambodia once again in 2009 and was convicted in his absence for charges including inciting racial discrimination and incitement. One of Southeast Asia’s longest-serving leaders, his Cambodian People’s Party (CPP) won the last two polls by a narrow margin amid allegations of fraud and election irregularities. – AFP

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As a gay man growing up in Myanmar, Phyo says he worried about him- 
self when he was younger because he didn’t like girls the same way other boys seemed to. Because he didn’t give any outward signs of being gay, he says he didn’t face much discrimination at school. There was, however, a constant anxiety that he would be found out. His only exposure to other homosexuals, he said, was when he saw them being treated badly in the community. “I felt unsafe because of that,” he says. “Sometimes I would cry alone.” Eventually, he couldn’t even relax at home, as societal pressures began to invade his family life. “My mother and brothers scolded me when the longyi I wore looked like a girl’s. Anmene [a women’s longyi]. I put thanaka on my face, they chastised me if I played in front of the mirror like a girl,” he recalls.

Make-up artist Seint Seint also remembers facing disapproval from members within his family growing up. “My mother and sisters didn’t mind my being gay but my uncles and cousins didn’t accept my behaviour,” Seint Seint says. “I tried and toughened me up after my matriculation exam, they made me stay with my cousins in the jungle, where they were working for the Ministry of Forestry. After ten days, I left and they gave up trying to make me change,” he says with a rueful smile.

Seint Seint is now one of the top make-up artists in the country, but says he is still subject to outward displays of homophobia. “Whether a make-up artist is a girl or a gay man, people should respect our profession. But when some people talk with us, they change their behaviour and look down on us. In Myanmar, people think of your personal and professional lives as being the same thing,” Seint Seint says.

U Aung Myo Min, executive director of Equality Myanmar, a human rights non-governmental organisation, said the number of LGBT rights organisations in the country is growing, but the discrimination faced by gay and transgender people has not changed. “We should be protected by laws, but some are allegedly even tortured in custody,” he says. “We didn’t choose our lives,” he says. “We were born homosexual. We should be protected by laws, but instead we are targeted.”

Despite the challenges still faced by the homosexual community in Myanmar, U Aung Myo Min says, there has been some progress made, with the establishment of LGBT rights groups such as Colors Rainbow helping to dispel stereotypes and educate the public. Phyo, who is now an activist pushing for equal rights of gay and transgender people, did not have an easy path to self-acceptance. “The turning point for him came in 2008, after he finished university and left home to work as a volunteer for World Vision in Ra Nang, in southern Thailand. It was a life-changing decision. There he attended a course run by Colors Rainbow and started to learn about homophobia for the first time. He found support groups online and, most importantly, made friends with other people who were also gay. The support, he says, helped him to no longer feel afraid.

“That’s the message he’s now passing on to others. As someone who has lived through the discrimination and come out proud on the other side, Phyo is now helping others face the same struggles he once did, making sure that the next generation of gay Myanmar doesn’t have to go it alone.”

“I was afraid to be called a-beoh (gay) by my friends. I was afraid of other people finding out I was gay. I was afraid to come out in public. But when I learned that being gay is not a mistake, I felt strong.”

U Aung Myo says personally, he just wants understanding from others. “People in this country often think gay rights is about homosexuals trying to turn people gay,” he says. “That’s simply not true. Like everyone else we just want the law to protect our dignity and human rights.”

“... When some people talk with us, they change their behaviour and look down on us. In Myanmar, people think of your personal and professional lives as being the same thing.”

Seint Seint
Make-up artist
The country’s move towards democracy is encouraging those once living on the fringes of society to come forward. Here, three prominent homosexuals talk about their experiences and explain what they want from Myanmar’s move to a more open society.

"Like everyone else, we just want the law to protect our dignity and human rights."

U Aung Myo
Equality Myanmar
Goethe Institut renews cultural exchange ties

NEYN EIEI HTWE
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The government has sealed a deal with Germany to help foster cultural ties between the two countries.

Myanmar’s cultural ministry and the Goethe Institut signed an agreement last week [July 15] that will enable cultural exchange, language and travel programs between Germany and Myanmar.

German’s spokesperson from the Federal Foreign Office, Cornelia Pieper at a press conference on July 16, said the agreement intended to establish the Goethe Institut in Myanmar by the end of the year.

“We are very glad to have this relationship with Myanmar,” Pieper said. “There are plans also for scholarships for Myanmar students to go to Germany.”

The Goethe Institut also wants to partner with local universities so that German can be taught at a tertiary level.

However, she said there were other plans underway.

“We won’t just concentrate on language programs. We will also have film festivals and exchange programs for students.”

Pieper said the cultural exchange program could help boost tourism investment in Myanmar.

President of the Goethe Institut, Professor Klay-Dieter Lehmann said he hoped to plan out the structure of the programs before March 2014.

“We’re trying to attract everyone from the public to take part in the programs,” Lehmann said. “There will be media exchanges, discussions about music and art, film festivals.

The Goethe Institute has opened offices once before in Myanmar in the early 1960s but was closed down in 1965. There are 150 Goethe Institutes in 95 countries around the world.
Local produce on the menu

Italian agronomist Paolo Cerati is filling the growing hunger for locally sourced produce at Fresco, his innovative farm and shop while sating his own cravings for faves from home.

How do you provide training for your staff?
I’m an agronomist so I teach our staff myself. I work with them directly and I do on-the-spot training.

How do you grow and harvest your produce?
Our farm is in Shan state, near Taungy. However we are now starting to establish a new farm closer to Yangon. We are also now discussing with one INGO to start contract farming with 30 farmers who want to produce organic local vegetables such as carrot and eggplant. We don’t want to grow everything by ourselves, we want to help farmers to learn how to grow high quality vegetables for us. To those who are interested, we provide training, high quality seeds and a contract with us. The farmers can grow the vegetables and we will buy all the production and they don’t need to worry about the market demand and price fluctuation.

Have you ever been affected by natural disasters?
Not really natural disasters but severe weather yes. One of the first years we started farming, that part of Shan state was extremely cold and temperature went down below zero Celsins and we lost all our plants. The value of the loss was very high. Here in Myanmar there is no insurance company that can back up farmers in case of severe weather loss so when something like this happens, it’s a big shock to absorb.

What’s the secret to cultivating your produce?
I would say passion for high quality products. We invest a lot in high quality seeds that are extremely expensive but they can guarantee a good result. The quality control is the most important thing in our business. We check our products again and again because we want to sell only the best ones. For example, our rocket salad is selected by hands, leaf by leaf. Our clients never complain about our quality and this is very important for us.

Can others do this at home?
Definitely not in Yangon because it’s too hot and humid. Plus the plants suffer from disease here.

Fresco’s locally grown produce is available for the public to purchase. They are open Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday from 9am to 3pm. Visit the Fresco website for more details: www.frescoomn.com
Soul is the city a FIG-e-nved city welcomed us as we stepped out of Incheon Airport in South Korea. Green trees lined both sides of the main roads in Seoul, somehow highlighting the wonderfully symmetrical and well-structured city. Looking nothing like Yangon, the only thing common seemed to be how long it took to get from one side of the city to the other. We expected colourful leaves and hot weather, instead of other similarities to Yangon appeared to be the wet weather. Seoul receives about 60 per cent of its annual rainfall during the summer months, most of it in July. Still, the green trees and clean air exuded a cleanliness that was refreshing. The Han River divides Seoul in half, and there are more than 30 bridges that connect the north side of the city from the south. There are more than 10 million people living in the capital, yet the numerous cars that get bottlenecked in the downtown area eventually clear. It’s hard to comprehend that so many people live in one space.

**Development**

As Korean fashion is popular around the world, I was hoping to buy clothes and accessories when I arrived in Seoul. Unfortunately I found most items to be out of my price range, although the currency rate between Myanmar and Korea isn’t that different. Korea, however, has a higher basic salary and a commercial industry that has been running a great deal longer than Myanmar’s. Travellers from Myanmar to other countries has been a rare sight, but there are more who are going abroad and gaining experiences they can’t get by reading books back at home. One of my travel companions, Ma ThidaWin said that for her, travelling helped her to imagine how it could be like back home in Myanmar.

“I’ve been to some of our neighbour countries such as Thai, Laos, Cambodia and Indonesia,” she said. “Each country has its own unique vibe and energy and Korea gives me a different feeling as well. I love taking in the creative and artistic form of architecture in the different countries, and particularly Korea.

“But I’m envious when I see other countries developing like this. I want our country to be like this country.”

**Palaces and Ruins**

On the third day of our trip, we took the opportunity visit the Gyeongbokgung Palace

(“Palace” Gently Blessed by Heaven), built in 1395 and which served as the residential palace of the Korean royalty for more than five hundred years. The palace was destroyed by fire during the Japanese invasion of 1945 and was not reconstructed until 1967. During the Japanese occupation from 1910 to 1945, most of the palace was torn down with just a few buildings left standing. An effort to fully restore Gyeongbokgung Palace to its former glory has been ongoing since 1990.

The palace has also been lovingly restored on the interior and now serves as a museum. Old photos from the wars of twentieth century also hang as visual reminders that South Korea was not always as affluent as it is today.

The palace reminds me of one closer to home – the Mandalay Palace which has not had anywhere near as much renovation or maintenance prescribed to it as the Gyeongbokgung. There are just a few visitors each year and hardly any attempts to replicate the interior to its former glory. It’s a sad contrast to the palace in Seoul, where it’s clear by their attention to detail that Koreans are proud of their culture and would actively encourage generations of Koreans to learn about their history.

Seoul is certainly a tourist-friendly, cosmopolitan hub. From eating great kimbap while watching a traditional show running on the Han river, there are plenty of enteraining things to do. And of course, you could always just sit down and go to the theatre. The long running show, Nanta is responsible for a catalytic effect on the senses. The cooking show is more like a slap-stick comedy and includes everything from audience participation, dancing, singing and most entertaining of all – a magic show.

This reporter was the winner of Samsung Company’s lucky draw prize for Samsung Galaxy users. Four lucky draw winners were able to go on the trip out of a total five winners.

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**Contemplating Korea**

As one of the few who won a lucky draw prize and a trip to South Korea, our own Nuam Bawi shares with us her three-day experience touring the Korean capital.

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Black Rice: a tasty read

KO KO THETT

**Black Rice** by Myanmar-born author and political economist Dr. Kyi May Kaung, published in the spring 2007 issue of Northern Virginia Review, has been released in print and e-book formats. It is a beautifully crafted bite-sized delight and offers insights into Myanmar’s history.

The novella, Black Rice by Dr. Kyi May Kaung is sure to provide delightful insights into Myanmar’s history. Photo: Supplied

Black Rice is adopted and describes himself as “the black mascot in their white-skinned family.” Black Rice was adopted and managed to unpack many of Myanmar cultural idiosyncrasies and paradoxes in a most efficient way - Black Rice’s observations of his own family, his society and the war he fought are first-hand and gory.

The reader is bound to relish layer after layer of Myanmar obsessions with astrology, amulets and the skin colour, a Myanmar mother’s ritual to cope with her miscarriages; the Myanmar women’s soft power over their husbands; the Myanmar men’s barbarism; the brutality of the Myanmar armed forces and rebel groups alike; and the Myanmar food culture from simple boiled and steamed peas to fried water convolvulus to an extent that Black Rice could as well be the most portable fictional guide to things Burma/Myanmar.

‘Black Rice could be the most portable fictional guide to things Burma/Myanmar.’

A rainy day in Seoul: outside the Gyeongbokgung Palace Palace Photo: Nuam Bawi

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BOOK REVIEW

**Black Rice** by Dr. Kyi May Kaung

The novella, Black Rice by Dr. Kyi May Kaung is sure to provide delightful insights into Myanmar’s history. Photo: Supplied

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**The Myanmar Times**

JULY 22 - 28, 2013

44 the pulse
Celebrity chef Nigella Lawson and art collector agree to speedy divorce

BRITISH art collector Charles Saatchi and his celebrity chef wife Nigella Lawson said on July 15 they would not make any financial claims against each other to ensure a swift divorce.

Saatchi, 70, was cautioned by police last month for assaulting his 53-year-old wife, after pictures emerged showing him grabbing her neck at a London restaurant.

The pair, both multi-millionaires in their own right, said in a joint statement that the first stage of the divorce would go through on July 31.

“A divorce will proceed on the undefended basis, therefore it is to be pronounced on 31 July, and neither party will be making any financial claims against the other,” they said.

They said Lawson had employed Fiona Shackleton, the divorce lawyer used by both Prince Charles and Paul McCartney, while Saatchi was representing himself.

“Both parties would appreciate privacy for themselves and their children at this difficult time,” their statement said.

Saatchi announced his desire to end the 10-year marriage in the press earlier this month, just days after he was forced to defend himself against accusations of domestic violence.

“I feel that clearly I have been a disappointment to Nigella during the last year,” he told the Mail on Sunday.

Charles Saatchi
Lawson’s husband

The former advertising executive said the pictures of him with his hand around Lawson’s neck showed a “playful tiff”, but he accepted a police caution for assault.

The statement is Lawson’s first public comment since the row broke out, causing her to leave the family home.

The daughter of former finance minister Nigel Lawson, she is a successful writer and TV presenter, dubbed “the domestic goddess” and famed for her Bittmanius approach to cooking.

Saatchi, whom she married in 2001, made his money in advertising and now owns London’s Saatchi Gallery of contemporary art.

Lawson has two children from her marriage to journalist John Diamond, who died of throat cancer in 2001, while Saatchi has one daughter from his previous marriage.

The normally publicity-shy collector said he wanted a divorce because Lawson had not come out publicly and defended him over the photographs.

“I feel that I have clearly been a disappointment to Nigella during the last year or so,” he told The Times on Sunday.

“I am disappointed that she was advised to make no public comment to explain that I abhor violence of any kind against women, and have never abused her physically in any way”, - AFP.

In hot water: Liam Gallagher is accused of fathering a child outside of his marriage. Photo: AFP

Love child is Liam’s?

Rocker, accused of fathering year-old daughter in extra-marital affair

Liam Gallagher is being sued in a New York court by a woman who claims he is the father of her one-year-old daughter, the New York Post has recently reported.

A spokesman for the British rock star would not comment on the tablet’s claims but said that lawyers would be taking action over the report, published on July 10.

The Post said in its online edition that the former Oasis frontman had been asked to provide financial support for the toddler in a confidential suit currently before the Manhattan Family Court.

It said the case had been reviewed by magistrate Matthew Troy on July 12 at a preliminary hearing listed as “Anonymous v Anonymous” and then adjourned until later this month.

The woman involved was said to be in her 30s and to specialise in interviewing celebrities.

The Post’s story follows a report in Britain’s Sun newspaper on Saturday which claimed an unidentified British rock star was being sued for US$63 million dollars by the mother of an alleged American love child.

Gallagher, 46, is married to former All Saints member Nicole Appleton. He has three children, a daughter who was the result of an extra-marital affair during his first marriage to actress Patsy Kensit, and two sons – one with Kensit and one with Appleton.

He is currently the lead singer of Beady Eye, a group he formed after the 2009 break-up of Oasis and his estrangement from brother Noel. He claims to have turned his back on the rock and roll lifestyle for which he was once famous. – AFP

Patriotism is in the air tonight

Songs of nationalism to air on the radio after three decade ban

TO get a feel for how dramatic the changes taking place in Myanmar have been in the past year, a visitor needs only to turn on the radio.

For years, traditional, patriotic songs praising former General Aung San (Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s father) were forbidden from being played on air. It was more often exiled media stations like BBC and VOA that dared to broadcast the nationalist, patriotic songs – save a handful of local stations.

Officials were particularly sensitive to the songs in the later part of July and early days of August, when the majority of the population commemorates Martyr’s Day.

But this year, there were no barriers, no censors, no orders to ban these popular, patriotic songs. This year, Myanmar observed and remembered, marking Martyr’s Day in song over the radio waves.

Myanmar classical music vocalist Daw May Hla Myaing sang the patriotic song, “A Lay Pu Par Tal” (“To Give a Salute”) in the 1960s, but these particular song hasn’t been broadcast on the radio for more than three decades. Prior to the student uprisings in 1988, an album called Zar Thein Maw (National Spirit) was released by Daw Khin Nyunt Yee, also a Myanmar classical vocalist who sang the songs of Daw May Hla Myaing.

“I’m very happy because they, the FM stations in Yangon played my songs ... which have not been broadcast for over 30 years,” said Daw Khin Nyunt Yee. “Protesters in 1988 were playing my version of the songs when the uprisings broke out in 1988. After, the songs were banned because of their link to political protests.”

Daw Khin Nyunt Yee said she originally sang about General Aung San out of respect for him and who he was, but after 1988, she said that while she wanted the country to progress, she didn’t want to sing the songs in Myanmar because she didn’t consider herself to be “a political person”. She would, however, sing the songs outside the country and performed them in Singapore.

The songs, she said, require a special effort and emotion and she often feels tired after performing them.

“They are not like normal songs,” said Daw Khin Nyunt Yee. “These songs have meaning to the people listening and you have to convey that with honesty and respect when you sing.”
Laugh all the way to the bank when you rent this space.

The tea break page is being re-formatted in readiness for our move to a daily cycle. It may look something like this in the future. Our market research shows that a page like this attracts a large number of readers, who loyally read it every day. Ring Khin Thandar Htay our National Sales Director to book this space permanently and laugh all the way to the bank with the extra business coming in your door.

Telephone us now on +951 392 928
Perfect pasta

Pasta is a staple in many diets across the Mediterranean. Enjoy these recipes as both a traditional Italian-style or Myanmar-influenced dish.

MANNY MAUNG
manny.maung@gmail.com

Thai fare has travelled far and wide across the world. Nearly everyone is familiar with the finger dishes of pad thai noodles, a green chicken curry or a tom yum goong soup. Legacy Thai goes beyond the well-known favourites to offer something more authentic.

Legacy Thai Food is located in a lane in a township (near the Wizira intersection). Telephone: 09 73012890 or 01 709748. All the better to sample more dishes!

Legacy Thai Food upholds the Thai food legacy

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Legacy Thai Food upholds the Thai food legacy
Chan Chan and Phone Theik’s wedding

RG II cosmetic brand launch

BBQ Chicken opening

India-Myanmar Cultural Expo

Japanese Food Promotion

20 July - 3 August 2013
At the Traders Cafe Restaurant
Available Lunch $21.00 & Dinner $28.00

Chef Hideki Chomei will prepare traditional Japanese Food.
It was rather late to start the week for Socialite and she didn’t know why. Maybe it was from the lack of vitamin D and all that rain that she was so sluggish. To get her engines revving, Socialite made time to sip some cocktails at the Desjoyaux launch party on July 12. That made her hungry though, so she decided to leave early and head to the opening of BBQ Chicken and tucked into some good old-fashioned fried chicken. The next event saw Socialite mingling at the India-Myanmar Cultural Expo, held at the Myanmar Convention Centre. Gaining mid-week momentum, she continued on by attending the HTC product launch at Junction Square and then finally, celebrating the wedding of her favourite singer, Chan Chan.
# Domestic Flight Schedules

## Yangon to Naypyidaw

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<th>Flight</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Airline</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Air Bagan</td>
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## Naypyidaw to Yangon

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<td>Sun</td>
<td>FMI A1</td>
<td>18:00</td>
<td>Air Bagan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Domestic Airlines

- **Air Bagan Ltd (WB)**
  - Tel: 13082/9/10/11, Shwe... Fax: 13082/3/4/5/6
- **Air KBZ (KZ)**
  - Tel: 272277-94, 332000-39 (Airport), Fax: 272277-94
- **Air Mandalay (MT)**
  - Tel: Shwe Oo Oo (Airport), Fax: 272277-94
- **Asian Wings (YV)**
  - Tel: 95-915-64/5/6, Fax: 95-915-64/5/6
- **Golden Myanmar Airlines (YR)**
  - Tel: 95-915-64/5/6, Fax: 95-915-64/5/6
- **Yangon Airways (TH)**
  - Tel: 95-915-64/5/6, Fax: 95-915-64/5/6

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**Subject to change without notice**
INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT SCHEDULES

YANGON TO BANGKOK

Flight | Date | Dep | Arr
--- | --- | --- | ---
P8 706 | Daily | 7:15 | 9:30
BM 330 | 12:3, 4, 7 | 9:30 | 11:45
TQ 304 | Daily | 9:30 | 11:45
P7 002 | Daily | 10:30 | 12:25
TQ 302 | Daily | 14:35 | 16:50
BM 331 | 1, 5, 6 | 15:30 | 17:15
P7 004 | Daily | 18:20 | 20:15
V5 227 | Daily | 18:30 | 20:55
TQ 300 | Daily | 20:45 | 21:40

YANGON TO DUN MUENG

Flight | Date | Dep | Arr
--- | --- | --- | ---
TQ 782 | Daily | 2:55, 6 | 9:30 | 11:55

YANGON TO HANOI

Flight | Date | Dep | Arr
--- | --- | --- | ---
TQ 781 | Daily | 2:55, 6 | 9:30 | 11:55

YANGON TO KUALA LUMPUR

Flight | Date | Dep | Arr
--- | --- | --- | ---
FD 2750 | Daily | 8:20 | 10:55
FD 2756 | Daily | 12:15 | 14:05
TD 2754 | Daily | 17:50 | 19:35

YANGON TO KUNMING

Flight | Date | Dep | Arr
--- | --- | --- | ---
CA 956 | 23:55, 6, 7 | 14:15 | 15:55

YANGON TO MANDALAY

Flight | Date | Dep | Arr
--- | --- | --- | ---
MU 326 | Daily | 13:35 | 15:30

YANGON TO MANDALAY

Flight | Date | Dep | Arr
--- | --- | --- | ---
MU 326 | Daily | 13:35 | 15:30

YANGON TO SINGAPORE

Flight | Date | Dep | Arr
--- | --- | --- | ---
SQ 886 | Daily | 23:55 | 1:20
SK 585 | Daily | 9:10 | 10:40
SQ 632 | Daily | 10:40 | 12:10
MV 963 | 4, 7 | 11:40 | 13:15
BM 332 | Daily | 12:35 | 14:50
MI 518 | Daily | 14:20 | 15:45
PS 621 | Daily | 15:15 | 17:10
BM 334 | 1, 2, 4, 5 | 16:15 | 18:15
PS 517 | Daily | 21:10 | 23:55

YANGON TO SINGAPORE

Flight | Date | Dep | Arr
--- | --- | --- | ---
SQ 886 | Daily | 23:55 | 1:20
SK 585 | Daily | 9:10 | 10:40
MV 963 | 4, 7 | 11:40 | 13:15
BM 332 | Daily | 12:35 | 14:50
MI 518 | Daily | 14:20 | 15:45
PS 621 | Daily | 15:15 | 17:10
BM 334 | 1, 2, 4, 5 | 16:15 | 18:15
PS 517 | Daily | 21:10 | 23:55

YANGON TO TAIPEI

Flight | Date | Dep | Arr
--- | --- | --- | ---
CI 7915 | Daily | 11:25 | 13:00
CI 7916 | Daily | 11:35 | 13:05

YANGON TO TAIPEI

Flight | Date | Dep | Arr
--- | --- | --- | ---
CI 7915 | Daily | 11:25 | 13:00
CI 7916 | Daily | 11:35 | 13:05

YANGON TO TAIPEI

Flight | Date | Dep | Arr
--- | --- | --- | ---
CI 7915 | Daily | 11:25 | 13:00
CI 7916 | Daily | 11:35 | 13:05

KATHMANDU’S HIDDEN DINERS OFFER THE REAL DEAL

Kathmandu’s “real-deal” local fare isn’t for the faint of heart, and the options could be limiting for vegetarians. Photo: APP

DEEPAK ADHIKARI

OWN a narrow, stone-paved alley a few minutes’ walk from Kathmandu’s bustling tourist hub of Durbar and the Temple area, Manandhar prepares a tapas-style array of buffalo brain, spine and tendons. It might not look appetising to Westerners but dozens of indigenous Nepalis gather daily in his bhutta as part of a centuries-old social scene largely missed by the thousands of tourists who come to Nepal in search of culture. Hidden in the capital’s myriad labyrinthine alleyways are hundreds of these traditional hole-in-the-wall eateries – “specialties” to the locals – serving potent home brew and various buffalo meat snacks.

“They are the daily staple of Newars,” Manandhar says, multi-tasking between a boiling pot of spinal cord and some fried intestines. “I think the locals come here because, apart from being cheap, they are also nutritious and delicious.”

Both sides of the alley are dotted with these grimy, smoky caves which can be identified by those in the know by the greasy green curtain covering their doorways.

Inside, a dorei Newari dishes comprising beaten rice and every conceivable part of a buffalo are spread out before the hungry locals, who wash down their spicy barbecue, or sometimes raw meat with a rice gin concoction called raksi. Local parts with around 500 rupees (US$1.83) for a filling meal while soups and other dishes are available for less than 40 rupees.

The delicacies on offer include buffalo brain, a greasy dish of boiled blood called sukti, phakso (lungs stuffed with minced meat), aarada (raw meat), baked buffalo skin, boiled spinal cord and fried intestines. But the tourists who throng the courtyards of the nearby 17th century temples and other attractions in search of the “genuine” Kathmandu experience hardly ever venture here, says Manandhar.

“These places might be dark and not polished if you compare them with the fine dining places in Kathmandu. But once your palate knows about it, it will be hard for you not to be tempted by them,” he says. A typical bhutta might serve 60 people on a good day, making around 5000 rupees after expenses are deducted, although staff costs are low, with the owner usually doubling as waiter, barman and chef.

“We are busy in the late afternoon and early evening when our customers, mainly local Newar people, come to eat and socialize,” says Manandhar.

Sitting under a naked bulb in a long room with wooden chairs and tables, Narendra Gopal Shrestha is enjoying a plate of potato stew and soy bean and cucumber pickle with a generous helping of staff and vinegar.

“I grew up eating the Newari food at home and I can’t think of a day when I don’t have it. It’s found nowhere else except Kathmandu and it’s cheap and the best,” the 53-year-old tour guide says.

“My kids go out to expensive restaurants where they serve junk food like pizza and burgers. I think it’s only the older generation that knows the value of this cuisine,” he says.

Shrestha says the food reflects a rich culture that draws from his people’s unique mix of Buddhism and Hinduism and their agrarian past, when they supplied the food to their farmlands.

Diners in Kathmandu’s bhuttis are united about the quality of the food, but it’s the raksi or raki, a rice beer sipped through a pipe, that really strikes their passions during the capital’s chilly winter months.

“Because bhuttis are hard to find, they have never been counted. And although there were several bhuttis in every alley 20 years ago, their numbers are diminishing, according to food experts.

“Some changed emerged before fast food and the arrival of dining out culture. Back in the 1970s, creative people used to hang out there and spend hours over plates of the snacks and drinks on the sides,” says food writer Shrekar Kharel.

Kharel believes diners have become more knowledgeable and cosmopolitan as Kathmandu has opened up to the world in the last three decades, gradually rendering restaurants serving only one type of cuisine.

“The chefs who now run the restaurants of the neighbourhood’s upscale cafes,” Kharel says, adding that it was not all bad news.

“Although they are threatened by the newcomers, there are some who enjoy a loyal following. They may retain their glory if they modernise a bit but the food will no doubt have a uniquely authentic taste anywhere else” – APP
A Norweigian neo-Nazi black-metal musician and convicted killer has been arrested again, just four years after coming out of prison, over fears he may have been preparing a “major terror act”.

Intelligence officers arrested 40-year-old Kristian Vikernes at his home in a village in the central Cun- rez region on July 16, along with his French wife Marie Cachet, 25.

The ministry said Vikernes was “close to the neo-Nazi movement and could have been preparing a major terror act.”

Norwegian mass murderer Anders Behring Breivik had spent his early years in a village in the central Cun- rez region on July 16, along with his French wife Marie Cachet, 25.

The ministry said Vikernes was “close to the neo-Nazi movement and could have been preparing a major terror act.”

Vikernes, who also goes by the name Varg, Norwegian for “wolf,” had been under surveillance for several years.

But anti-terrorism authorities in Paris opened a probe into the father-of-three on the day after the beginning of the month after another soldier push was launched by the group along with the security forces.

Some psychologists even suggest FOMO helps drive the success of social media platforms, since we feel we need to use them to let us know what’s happening elsewhere. In fact, in some cases, FOMO might actually be a motivating factor to socialise with others.

Some argue that the feelings associated with FOMO are often associations with people who are concerned with their own safety. As the intro to the quiz puts it, “FOMO is the fear of missing out when people are concerned that others may be having more interesting experiences than them. It is characterized by the urge to stay continually connected with what others are doing.”

In a 2019 interview with the magazine Guitar World, he called on people to vote for Marine Le Pen, the leader of France’s far-right National Front party.

Vikernes, who was born in 1987, was also known as several names, including Jean-Claude Cauchard or simply “Citizen.”

The two men are believed to have had a long-term relationship before their arrest.

The couple met several years ago when Cachet was graduating from high school.

“Do you speak French well?” Cachet asked him.

One neighbour of the couple, Yves Lapang, told AFP that Vikernes was “polite” and “appeared to be normal and nice” and close to his children. - AFP

Norwegian black-metal musician arrested for terror intent

Jacques Clement

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Vikernes, who also goes by the name Varg, Norwegian for “wolf,” had been under surveillance for several years.

But anti-terrorism authorities in Paris opened a probe into the father-of-three on the day after the beginning of the month after another soldier push was launched by the group along with the security forces.

Some psychologists even suggest FOMO helps drive the success of social media platforms, since we feel we need to use them to let us know what’s happening elsewhere. In fact, in some cases, FOMO might actually be a motivating factor to socialise with others.

Some argue that the feelings associated with FOMO are often associations with people who are concerned with their own safety. As the intro to the quiz puts it, “FOMO is the fear of missing out when people are concerned that others may be having more interesting experiences than them. It is characterized by the urge to stay continually connected with what others are doing.”

In a 2019 interview with the magazine Guitar World, he called on people to vote for Marine Le Pen, the leader of France’s far-right National Front party.

Vikernes, who was born in 1987, was also known as several names, including Jean-Claude Cauchard or simply “Citizen.”

The two men are believed to have had a long-term relationship before their arrest.

The couple met several years ago when Cachet was graduating from high school.

“Do you speak French well?” Cachet asked him.

One neighbour of the couple, Yves Lapang, told AFP that Vikernes was “polite” and “appeared to be normal and nice” and close to his children. - AFP

Norwegian black-metal musician arrested for terror intent
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**Arthur sues Cricket Australia**

Former coach alleges racial discrimination in recent sacking

**SYDNEY**

**Arthur sues Cricket Australia**

Former coach alleges racial discrimination in recent sacking

AUSTRAILIA’s first foreign-born coach Mickey Arthur on July 17 confirmed he was suing Cricket Australia for racial discrimination after being dumped from the job, while blasting the leaking of explosive case details to the media.

The South African was axed just 16 days before the first Test against Ashes-holders England at Trent Bridge this month and replaced by former Australia batsman Darren Lehmann.

His Australian-based lawyers said proceedings were filed with the Fair Work Commission (FWC) “on a number of grounds for being sacked and scapegoated.”

“The grounds include racial discrimination.” Harriers Workplace Lawyers and Arthur said in a statement.

Reports said Arthur, fired two years before his contract was due to expire, was seeking up to A$4 million (US$3.69 million) in compensation, claiming he was discriminated against because he was South African and “didn’t understand the Australian way.”

According to Australian broadcaster Channel Seven, the legal documents reveal a major feud in the team between captain Michael Clarke and former vice-captain Shane Watson.

Clarke allegedly described the role of Watson and his faction as a “cancer” with Arthur calling himself the “vice in the sandwich” between the conflicting camps.

Arthur also reportedly claimed it was Watson who informed him of a nightclub incident in Birmingham, where David Warner punched England’s Joe Root during the Champions Trophy last month.

Arthur said he was upset the details had been leaked as he wanted the matter to be kept quiet.

“I am extremely upset and disappointed that confidential documents appear to have been given by others to the media,” he said.

“The matters raised in my application to the FWC concerning issues within the Australian cricket team are very sensitive, which is why I was at pains to keep them confidential, especially at this time.”

Cricket Australia said it was “disappointed that it’s come to this.”

When he was sacked, amid claims that discipline and standards had fallen, Arthur went quietly, admitting he had been “shocked and shattered” and had no idea he was about to lose his job.

He refused to blame the players and acted with good grace at a hastily-convened press conference to announce his departure.

Arthur flew back to Australia from England immediately after the decision, learning in transit that his mother had died.

Clarke shrugged off suggestions of internal dissent during Arthur’s short tenure and said harmony in the team was never better with Lehmann now in charge.

A confidential conciliation between Arthur and Cricket Australia has been scheduled for this week, the lawyer said. – AFP

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**YANGON**

**Mandalay Academy U15s look to benefit from scheduling mistake**

AUNG SHI HEIN

aungshihmnel@gmail.com

A LAST minute match postponement will likely mean three free points for Mandalay Academy’s U15s team as they fight for the inaugural FAM-Prenz U15 ASEAN Champions Trophy.

The scheduling error arose when Laos Toyota FC, who are also participating in the Swiss Cup, were unable to make their match against Mandalay Academy, slated for July 6.

At their request, the match was delayed to July 10, and again to July 16, but Laos Toyota were still unable to attend.

“Laos are requesting further postponement. It seems the game has to be dropped. If they don’t show up to play, we will automatically earn three points. The remaining three games are very important for us to go to the next stage. Though we are behind Malaysia B and Indonesia, we still have hope because our young players are better and better after each game,” Mandalay Academy’s manager Win Thu Moe told The Myanmar Times.

There are 12 teams competing in the regional tournament. Mandalay is in Group B along with Frenz Indonesia, Laos Toyota Academy, Brunel U15s, Philippines U15s and Frenz Malaysia B.

Group A consists of Frenz Malaysia A, Singapore NFA, Thailand Chonburi Academy, Timore U15s and Crown and PVF Academy.

Mandalay Academy have accumulated a total of 9 points through seven matches but the team will have a difficult time catching Frenz Indonesia, which have 20 points and Malaysia B, with 16 points. Both have played eight matches.

Mandalay are scheduled to face both PVF Academy and Philippines U15s away later this month. The two legs of the final stage are to be played August 24 and September 1.
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MOURINHO ISSUES WORLD CUP WARNING

Jose Mourinho on July 18 warned that players who aren't automatic picks for their clubs could miss out on the World Cup in Brazil next year.

The Chelsea boss issued the warning just after Manchester United rejected a bid from the Blues for 27-year-old Wayne Rooney, who has been told by new manager David Moyes that Robin van Persie is the club's first-choice striker.

"Normally for a player to be selected to play for his country, the player must be a first choice player in the club," Mourinho told reporters before the press conference that 90-year-old Mourinho would not answer any questions related to a failed bid for Rooney.

The England forward has two years left on his contract with Manchester United but has been pushing for a move. Dutch striker van Persie is seen as United's first choice striker.

During the conference Mourinho said that with the World Cup a year away, a player picked regularly for his team would obviously stand a better chance of representing his country in the Brazil World Cup.

"He must play very regularly for the club and that is the big motivation if they are thinking about the World Cup," he said.

Mourinho has previously stated that striker Rooney was Chelsea's only remaining summer transfer target for the club.

News reports had stated that Rooney wanted to leave Old Trafford this summer, identifying Chelsea as the club he wants to join, due to a lack of pitch-time at United last season.

The England international, who has been the subject of an inquiry from Arsenal, believes he is at the peak of his career and is unwilling to become a back-up player, particularly in a World Cup year.

KUALA LUMPUR

MOURINHO ISSUES WORLD CUP WARNING

Jose Mourinho speaks at a press conference on July 18 in Bangkok. Photo: AFP

If they are a second choice in their club they are in trouble.

Jose Mourinho
Chelsea manager

"We are selecting athletes to form national men and women teams. This sport will also be contested at the 29th SEA Games which will be hosted by Singapore. A Singaporean coach will train the Myanmar national teams," said secretary of the Myanmar Traditional Sports Federation, Daw Ohnmar Than.

The Blues-adoring supporters held up a "Welcome" banner and yelled: "We love you Chelsea." Chelsea will play Malaysia's national selection on July 21 before heading to Jakarta.

A Chelsea official told reporters before the press conference that 90-year-old Mourinho would not answer any questions related to a failed bid for Rooney.

"We are selecting athletes to form national men and women teams. This sport will also be contested at the 29th SEA Games which will be hosted by Singapore. A Singaporean coach will train the Myanmar national teams," said secretary of the Myanmar Traditional Sports Federation, Daw Ohnmar Than.

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