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Reshuffle puts 'right person in right place': government

Four ministers were switched and six deputy ministers appointed in a move that surprised even the staff in affected ministries. The President's Office said the July 25 reshuffle, which has drawn some criticism, was designed to improve policy implementation in the ministries. **NEWS 3**

NEWS 6

Police raid IDP camps in Rakhine

Activists say the government is trying to cut off communication through phone, laptop seizures.

OPINION 10

Why Myanmar needs its 'cronies'

The government should not rely on foreign investors to take the lead on infrastructure.

IN PICTURES

Make-up artists and florists paid homage to former leaders of the industry in a ceremony at Mandalay's Oriental Hall on July 25. Fifteen senior florists and make-up artists aged between 70 and 93 were honoured at the event and presented with K150,000 each. It was the third time the ceremony has been held.

- Si Thu Lwin



a good sofa is the soul of a home

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Page 2

online editor **Kayleigh Long** |
kayleighlong@gmail.com



THE INSIDER: The local lowdown & best of the web

Jaws

A trainer at a popular reptile park in Thailand had a narrow escape after a stunt involving him putting his head in the mouth of a crocodile went awry.

The 27-year-old crocodile trainer, Pravit Suebmee, reportedly has more than eight years of experience dealing with crocodiles, but received bite wounds to his face and neck after he brushed the creature's cheek, startling it during what is considered a routine stunt at the park. The incident occurred on July 21 at the Prakan Crocodile Farm and Zoo, with footage of the near-miss going online soon thereafter. The man escaped the crocodile's grip when another trainer grabbed its tail.

Myanmar's "Mankini King"

A Czech "performance artist" has ruffled feathers online, offending the sensibilities of a good number of Myanmar web users with his photographic series of a young man wearing a Borat-style "mankini" at various locations around the country.

Viktor Kopecek's travels around Myanmar saw him take the usual tourist trail, going from Yangon to Inle Lake, then on to Mandalay and Bagan. At each location, his "model" posed for photographs in the revealing lycra number. The images, posted to online hub Behance,

showed the young man in the skimpy number at some of Myanmar's more recognisable tourist sites, while bemused locals looked on. Some web users took offence at the young man's sexually suggestive poses with an urn and a pagoda.

It seems Kopecek enjoyed his time in Myanmar. "It was a truly amazing trip. All those places...and all those looks! Incredible! Friendly people. Most of them was really excited about our ideas!" he posted.

Marathon effort

UK teacher and activist Ben Hammond has completed his crossing of the UK, dancing all the way from John O'Groats on the tip of Scotland to Land's end, the most westerly point of England. Hammond undertook the challenge as part of his campaign to raise awareness about the plight of Myanmar refugees, as well as to raise funds for his charity.

The "teacher in a tutu" faced a significant setback on his journey last October, when he became the victim of a hit-and-run accident. Not allowing this to deter him, he set out again on quieter coastal roads. Hammond, 35, spent a year teaching in a refugee camp on the Thailand-Myanmar border eight years ago, and was so affected by his experiences there that he set up a charity called LearnBurma in 2011.

Swedish party member's Instagram gaffe

A Swedish lawmaker was caught with his pants down Wednesday after flashing his private parts in a picture meant to show off his newly-inked Liverpool football club tattoo.

A picture of former Left Party leader Lars Ohly's tattoo – inspired by the Premier League team's Liver Bird emblem – was deleted by the politician after his followers on the photo-sharing network Instagram pointed out that they could also see his penis.

"Ha, ha, I accidentally posted a picture on Instagram that showed more than intended. Now corrected," Ohly wrote on Twitter.

The 56-year-old lawmaker was sunbathing outside his summer cottage when the picture was taken, he told the *Aftonbladet* newspaper.

Other Swedish politicians were quick to weigh in on the issue. "Congratulations to you, after all these years, for getting this genuinely public breakthrough!" conservative Foreign Minister Carl Bildt, a political opponent, tweeted.

Other Twitter puns ranged from allegations over Ohly showing "loads of balls to admit he supports Liverpool", to questions over whether he was really "left leaning".

"Today I decided not to start using Instagram," current Left Party leader Jonas Sjoestedt wrote. – *AFP*



Style Statement

NOW!

Poe Darli was photographed for *NOW! Magazine* at Yangon's Alfa Hotel by Greg Holland.

When Myanmar was Burma...

Archival material provided by Pansodan Gallery

CANINE FIFTH-COLUMNISTS?

Stray dogs in Occupied Burma have, in the literal sense, become a howling menace. And through their howling, they are responsible for a very privately conducted war of nerves.

These dogs, it is said, do not merely howl in the normal canine manner: they deliberately attempt to imitate the air raid siren. More than that, they appear to hold siren practices, and on several occasions a solitary dog has been seen practising hard at a-tuning his howl to the siren's note.

This might seem amusing to most, but people living in dog-infested areas don't think so. They have often spent whole nights in trenches through mistaking a howling dog for a wailing siren.

Once upon a time stray dogs were rounded up and exterminated. But people haven't the time for that sort of thing now. They're too busy concentrating upon rats. No, Nippon, this time we don't mean you!

Yangon's street dogs were a noisy problem back in occupied Burma, according to this excerpt from *Burma To-Day*, Volume 1, No. 10, August 1944.



Ne Win-era advertisement for a farmers conference, 1964

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Villagers pan for copper at a mine dump near the Letpadaung project in Sagaing Region in September 2012. Photo: AFP

Copper project to resume in Sept after new contract signed

WIN KO KO LATT
winkolatt2012@gmail.com
SOE THAN LYNN
soethanlynn@gmail.com

THE US\$1 billion Letpadaung copper mine expansion will resume by the end of September, a senior government official said last week, after a new contract was signed giving the state a 51 percent share of the profits.

Minister for the President's Office U Hla Tun said at a press conference on July 26 that the project would resume within two months. The expansion, which is expected to take about three years, will enable annual production at the Sagaing Region mine to increase from 40,000 tonnes of copper to 100,000.

U Hla Tun announced the details of the new contract to the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw on July 25. The big loser from the new contract appears to be army-owned Union of Myanmar Economic Holdings Limited, which saw its share of the profits from the mine cut from 51pc to 19pc. The main investor, Wanbao Mining from China, will get 30pc, down from 49pc.

Wanbao will be required to put aside US\$2 million a year for land reclamation, while it will also have to pay \$1 million a year for corporate social responsibility projects during construction. After production begins, 2pc of all profits will be kept for CSR.

"In the new contract, Mining Enterprise 1 is included in the contract to get more revenue for the state ... The state will also get a \$5 million signing bonus for the new contract," U Hla Tun said.

"The agreement between these three groups was signed successfully on July 24."

The new contract was recommended by the Letpadaung Investigation Commission set up in November 2012 and led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. The previous contract was signed by the military regime in 2010, when former investor Ivanhoe Mines left the project.

Minister for Mines U Myint Aung told the hluttaw that the new contract also includes requirements on environmental and social impact assessment reporting. It also clarifies ISO requirements that were only mentioned generally in the original contract.

"The new contract is signed to follow the Letpadaung Project Investigation Commission's recommendation that the weaknesses in the contract be amended," he said.

100,000

The number of tonnes of copper the Letpadaung mine is expected to produce when expansion is complete

The commission recommended that environmental and social impact assessments be conducted, and environmental management and occupational health and safety plans be written and implemented.

Discussions on the new contract started on April 6, less than a month after the commission released its report. Agreement was reached after 17 meetings.

U Aung Tun Thet, a member of the Myanmar Investment Commission,

said the new contract meant the copper mine project will be a "model for international investment in Myanmar".

"Every investor has to consider social responsibility in their business," he added.

However, not everyone applauded the new deal. Daw Khin San Hlaing, the Pyithu Hluttaw representative for Pale in Sagaing Region and a member of the investigation commission, said the government should have released the full contract.

"U Hla Tun and U Myint Aung came to the hluttaw to explain the new contract on July 25 but MPs do not know exactly what the terms are," the National League for Democracy representative said. "The government should show more transparency."

Political observer U Yan Myo Thein wrote on his Facebook page that the new contract was not a surprise but praised Daw Aung San Suu Kyi for taking on the tough job of heading the investigation commission.

"It was an undeniable fact that Wanbao and UMEHL would have to make some concessions once Daw Suu was involved," he wrote. "The investigation commission was a political trap and there is only one person who is brave enough to walk into that trap for the interests of the country and the people. That is Daw Aung San Suu Kyi."

For Wanbao, the new contract represented closure on a difficult period. Geng Yi, the managing director of Wanbao's local subsidiary, said the Chinese company had already spent \$600 million in the project. It expects to invest \$997 million altogether, he said.

"We want to restart the project as soon as possible and stop any further losses."

— Translated by Thiri Min Htun

Ministers trade places as president shuffles team

President's Office orders four ministers to switch portfolios in a move that it says will improve implementation of new policies



**NANTIN
HTWE**

nantin.htwe@gmail.com

THE latest cabinet reshuffle was about putting "the right people in the right place", improving policy implementation and supporting U Thein Sein's clean government push, officials say.

Four ministers were rotated while six new deputy ministers were appointed, the government announced through state-run television on the evening of July 25.

A senior official in the President's Office, who asked not to be named, described the change as a "positive development" aimed at ensuring "good and clean" government.

The reshuffle of ministers and deputy ministers was decided based on a scoring system that took into account their transparency, the opinion of their staff, and the extent to which they had been able to implement government policy.

Presidential spokesman U Ye Htut said reshuffling the government was normal in a democracy and was ordered because of policy changes and reforms in the relevant ministries.

"Government policies will be implemented more effectively because of this change," he said.

Staff within the ministries only learned about the change from state media. Daw Moh Moh Thwin, an assistant director in the Department of Labour, said on July 26 that she and her colleagues had been surprised when they saw the announcement on state television that Minister for Labour, Employment and Social Security U Maung Myint had been transferred to the Ministry of Industry.

"I thought [the former union minister] was doing his best," she said.

She said she was unsure whether the change was good or bad

because she knows nothing about the new minister. "We've never seen him before," she said.

Daw Moh Moh Thwin said she was not in a position to criticise the decision as staff within the ministries are bound to follow the government's decision. "We are not in position to think about [whether it's good or bad]. We don't need to," she said.

The government's announcement also said Deputy Minister for Education U Aye Kyu and Deputy Minister for Rail Transportation Thura U Thauung Lwin had been "allowed to resign of their own volition".

Thura U Thauung Lwin's position as chairman of the Dawei project's management committee appears to be unchanged by the reshuffle.

An official from the Ministry of Education said he also learned the news from state media. "The new deputy minister hasn't arrived in the office yet. We don't know whether he is good or bad. I just know that the former [deputy minister] is leaving because he is ill," he said.

The announcement brought a lukewarm response. U Ko Ko Hlaing, a political adviser to President U Thein Sein, did not back the decision. "I also want to know whether this is good or bad," he said.

Daily Eleven, which is generally critical of the government, reported that those close to the President's Office had received the best positions. It reported that U Zeya Aung, the former railways minister who will become the new minister for energy, is the brother-in-law of U Ye Htut, the president's spokesperson. It also said that because the Ministry of Energy deals with many international companies the position presents "good business opportunities" for the new minister.

"Analysts say this change is nothing special for a government that is regularly criticised for its corruption," *Daily Eleven* reported, without naming any analysts.

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MYANMARTIMES

Managing Director and Editor-in-Chief (MTE)
Ross Dunkley
rsdunkley@gmail.com
Chief Executive Officer - U Myat Swe
Editor-in-Chief (MTM) - Dr Tin Tun Oo
drtto@myanmartimes.com.mm
Chief Operating Officer - Wendy Madrigal
madrigalmcm@gmail.com

EDITORIAL

newsroom@myanmartimes.com.mm
Editor MTE - Thomas Kean
tdkean@gmail.com
Editor MTM - Zaw Myint
editormtm@myanmartimes.com.mm
Chief of Staff - Zaw Win Than
zawwinthan@gmail.com
Editor Special Publications - Myo Lwin
myolwin@myanmartimes.com.mm
Jessica Mudditt - jess.mudditt@gmail.com
Deputy Editor MTM - Sann Oo
sannoo@gmail.com
Business Editor MTE - Vincent Maclsaac
biz.news.myanmar@gmail.com
Business Editor MTM - Tin Moe Aung
Property Editor MTM - Htar Htar Khin
property@myanmartimes.com.mm
World Editor MTE - Douglas Long
editors@myanmartimes.com.mm
The Pulse Editor MTE - Manny Maung
manny.maung@gmail.com
Timeout Editor MTM - Moh Moh Thaw
mohthaw@gmail.com
Online Editor - Kayleigh Long
kayleighlong@gmail.com
Sports Editor - Tim McLaughlin
timothy.mclaughlin3@gmail.com
Chief Political Reporter - Soe Than Lynn
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Head of Photographics - Kaung Htet
Photographers -
Boothee, Aung Htay Hlaing, Thiri
Book Publishing Consultant Editor -
Col Hla Moe (Retd)
Editor - Win Tun
Nay Pyi Taw Bureau Chief - Soe Than Lynn
soethanlynn@gmail.com

PRODUCTION

production@myanmartimes.com.mm
Head of Production & Press Scrutiny Liaison
- Aung Kyaw Oo (1)
Head of Graphic Design - Tin Zaw Htway

MCM PRINTING

printing@myanmartimes.com.mm
Head of Department - Htay Maung
Warehouse Manager - Ye Linn Htay
Factory Administrator - Aung Kyaw Oo (3)
Factory Foreman - Tin Win

ADVERTISING

advertising@myanmartimes.com.mm
National Sales Director
Khin Thandar Htay
sales-director@myanmartimes.com.mm
Account Director - Nyi Nyi Tun
Classifieds Manager - Khin Mon Mon Yi
classified@myanmartimes.com.mm

ADMIN & FINANCE

Finance Manager - Mon Mon Tha Saing
finance@myanmartimes.com.mm
HR Manager - Nang Maisy
administration@myanmartimes.com.mm
Publisher - Dr Tin Tun Oo, Permit No: 04143
Systems Manager - Khin Maung Thaw
webmaster@myanmartimes.com.mm

DISTRIBUTION & CIRCULATION

Circulation & Distribution Director -
Jesse Gage
distrmgr@myanmartimes.com.mm
circulation@myanmartimes.com.mm

ADVERTISING & SUBSCRIPTION ENQUIRIES

Telephone: (01) 253 642, 392 928
Facsimile: (01) 254 158
administration@myanmartimes.com.mm

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Myanmar Consolidated Media Ltd.
www.mmtimes.com

Head Office: 379/383 Bo Aung Kyaw Street,
Kyauktada Township, Yangon, Myanmar.
Telephone: (01) 253 642, 392 928
Facsimile: (01) 392 706
Mandalay Bureau: No.178, 74th Street, (Bet. 31st
& 32nd streets) Chan Aye Thar San Township,
Mandalay. Tel: (02) 24450, 24460, 65391, 65392
Fax: (02) 24460
Email: mdybranch@myanmartimes.com.mm
Nay Pyi Taw Bureau: No. 10/72 Bo Taung Htein
St, Yan Aung (1) Quarter, Nay Pyi Taw-Pyinmana.
Tel: (067) 23064, 23065
Email: capitalbureau@myanmartimes.com.mm

REGIONAL INSIDER

U Thein Sein acts, while Daw Aung San Suu Kyi stays mute

ROGER MITTON

roger.mitton@gmail.com

PRESIDENT U Thein Sein, opposition leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and Myanmar's most notorious drug dealer, Lo Hsing Han, were all in the news in the past week or two.

The latter, who was daftly dubbed the "Godfather of Heroin" by the US government, died earlier this month at his Yangon home.

It was there, at the turn of the millennium, that I met the irascible but genial old codger a day after I had interviewed Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. He was a relief, because he simply spoke his mind, whereas with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and even U Thein Sein it is never clear whether their words reflect their true sentiments.

Indeed, when I first met U Thein Sein up in northeastern Shan State, he said so few words that it was hard to know what he was thinking. He appeared rather shy, mousey even, so it was a shock to learn that he was the military commander of that volatile region, which is plagued by ethnic strife, drug dealing and cross-border incursions.

How he was appointed to that post remains perplexing, as is the way he was later chosen as prime minister of the military government and, two years later, as Myanmar's president.

Still, we should be thankful it happened. And if proof is needed of that, consider his speech on July 15 to the Royal Institute of International Affairs at Chatham House in London.



President U Thein Sein speaks to the media at the presidential residence in Nay Pyi Taw on October 21, 2012. Photo: AFP

U Thein Sein noted that his government had passed a new constitution, held elections, lifted media and internet censorship, and introduced laws to protect freedom of association and expression.

Had he voiced such intentions back in Shan State more than a decade ago, he would not only have been ridiculed, he would have been locked up.

Yet here we are, and U Thein Sein's amazing reforms have even included embracing Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. She has also surprised us but in ways that have disturbed party acolytes and fawning Western diplomats.

It is not so much her intimacy with the former army dictators, but her embrace of the crony businessmen who kept the military in guns and roses for decades - rather as did Lo Hsing Han and his son, Steven Law.

Aside from pocketing dollops of dosh from cronies like U Kyaw Win and U Zaw Zaw, and having the latter build a spiffy pink wall round her Inya Lake compound, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi recently accepted free flights for life from U Tay Za.

He is Myanmar's most notorious crony, and three years ago he set up Asian Wings Airways to skirt sanctions imposed by the United States

on his other domestic carrier, Air Bagan.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has now become an instant platinum frequent flyer on Asian Wings, so she can take flights, along with two other people, for free.

One of U Tay Za's lackeys explained that it was done because they have "deep heartfelt respect, admiration and appreciation of everything Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has done in her lifetime".

Sure they do. They just forgot to mention it before U Thein Sein became president. And while Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was accepting yet more goodies from the sanctioned cronies, U Thein Sein was promising more reforms and the release of all political prisoners by the end of the year.

He tacitly mocked her shamefully muted criticism of anti-Muslim pogroms by vowing at Chatham House that his government would take "a zero-tolerance approach" to any renewed communal violence.

Indeed, he has already acted. Earlier this month, he unilaterally disbanded the Na Sa Ka border security agency, which has been blamed for many of the atrocities against Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine State.

"His removal of an agency created for oppressive purposes, and with an institutional culture of corruption and abuse, can only be a good thing," the International Crisis Group said.

All these good things sound like an election platform but U Thein Sein said in Paris on July 19, "As of now, I have not prepared myself to run for the 2015 presidential election."

Let us hope he reconsiders.

OPINION

Telecoms could answer rural energy problems

KALA MULQUEENY
newsroom@mmtimes.com.mm

LAST month, Norway's Telenor and Qatar's Ooredoo won a fierce auction for telecoms licences to become the first international operators in Myanmar, where only 9 percent of the country's 60 million people have mobile services.

With 70pc of people living in rural areas, and three-quarters living without power, Myanmar's major challenge for economic development is electricity. But that doesn't need to mean highly polluting fossil fuel power plants and only large-scale grids. If the government is smart, it can have Telenor and Ooredoo, and others like them, help address the energy access problem too.

The huge challenge for providing energy access to remote and rural areas is the cost of building large transmission and distribution lines. Most rural villagers don't have the money to contribute to meeting those high costs. The private sector doesn't have the incentive to invest and with chronic budget deficits the government can't bear the burden of borrowing to finance the infrastructure.

How do mobile telecommunications services fit in? Cell phones are ubiquitous in places as remote and unlikely as the Himalayas and the outer islands of Tonga. Telecom companies have had great success in urban and rural areas alike - about 75pc of the world's rural inhabitants are covered by a cell signal. By 2015, that number

is expected to rise to close to 100pc.

To work, a cell signal is transmitted from the phone to a telecom tower, between towers and back to a phone. Towers run on electricity, either from the central grid or, in remote areas, some other primary fuel that supplies just the tower. In areas that are off the grid cell towers are normally powered by diesel engines but a push is being made to shift to cleaner, greener solar energy, including through "Green-Power for Mobile", an initiative led by the

Surplus energy from telecoms towers could be used to give electrical power to nearby rural villages by creating a mini power grid.

telecoms industry's international body, Groupe Spéciale Mobile Association.

In Myanmar, a Deloitte study estimates that about 15,000 towers will be needed to improve mobile phone access. This means that telecom towers will be relatively widespread, even in remote areas where people currently don't have access to electricity. Those towers will have a source of power and the towers can be at least partly powered by renewable energy.

The implication is clear. A telecom tower in a rural area needs off-grid power to transmit cell signals. But if

the power source can be resized and increased, the surplus energy could be used to give electrical power to nearby rural villages by creating a mini power grid system.

In tech-speak, this idea is known as an off-grid "anchor load". And it needn't only apply to towers: Any large source of power demand, like an agricultural facility or a large shopping mall, could justify the base financial costs of putting a mini-grid in place for a private sector power operator. The resizing to

of diesel fuel and the government can save on fuel subsidies.

Clear government policy, laws, regulations or rules can drive investments in such systems. In 2011, the Indian Department of Telecommunications established rules that 50pc of rural cell towers and 20pc of urban cell towers be powered by a combination of renewable and grid-based energy sources by 2015. By 2020, these rules will require 75pc of rural towers and 33pc of urban towers to use renewable energy to power their networks. And there have been experiments with upward resizing of the power source for rural access - but so far not significant take-up.

If the Myanmar government is smart it will follow India's example and write the rules to incentivise new telecom operators to install towers that use renewable and hybrid power. It would also go a step further and encourage their sizing to provide rural access. If private sector power operators are smart, they will seek to do deals with the telecoms companies to supply green, clean power for the towers, and rural communities. For the sake of Myanmar's rural poor, one hopes both grab this opportunity.

Kala Mulqueeny is principal counsel at the Asian Development Bank and a World Economic Forum Young Global Leader. The views in this article are hers and not necessarily those of the institutions with which she is associated.



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- ခေတ်မီဆန်းသစ်သော နည်းပညာ



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- သွေးချိုတိုင်းတာရုံထက် ၈၅/၀ (၁၅) mmol/L ဖြင့်
ဖော်ပြနိုင်ခြင်း
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Activists decry seizure of laptops, phones at IDP camps

Officials accused of restricting Muslims from contacting outside world through internet-enabled devices

BILL O'TOOLE
botoole12@gmail.com

MUSLIMS living in camps for displaced people near the Rakhine capital Sittwe say police have been conducting regular nighttime raids to confiscate laptops and smartphones.

The move appears to be designed to isolate IDPs and stop them from communicating with foreign individuals and groups. Sittwe's Rohingya Muslims, who are referred to in Myanmar as Bengalis, are largely restricted to the camps and a few sections of the city and the internet is their only means of connecting with the outside world.

A Rakhine State government spokesman has denied the allegations, calling them fabricated.

But one IDP from a camp near Thatkeyyin village, who asked not to be named, said police have been arriving several times a week since early June to search camps for laptops and other internet-enabled devices.

He said the visits usually involve harsh interrogation, with police even sometimes beating people in the camp for information. During the visits, the police regularly accuse people of using the internet to spread "wrong information".

"They are trying to stop us from communicating with foreigners," said the man, who was a university student before the violence broke out.

He said he uses the internet to keep in touch with his brother in Europe and communicate with sympathetic groups in Malaysia.

"Rohingya people want to share their suffering with the world and share information," the man said.



A man rides his bike past the Mizigawon IDP camp in Sittwe township in May. Photo: Aung Htay Hlaing

U Aung Win, a Rohingya activist in hiding in the Sittwe area, estimated that more than 80 people found with computers or smart phones have been arrested on "false charges" in Sittwe in the past month. Other sources based in the area made similar estimates.

"I also use a laptop secretly. Everybody uses a laptop secretly ... In every IDP camp it's the same thing," he said.

Many of the IDP camps in Rakhine State lack basic amenities, such as running water and electricity, and residents are forced to be resourceful to recharge their electronic devices. Sources in the camps say that several groups have worked together to buy 15-watt solar panels, at K15,000 a unit, that can be used to charge their devices.

U Win Myaing, a spokesperson for the Rakhine State government,

denied that the raids were taking place and said he had never heard reports of police harassing IDPs. He said that U Aung Win and the other IDPs were being paid to spread disinformation.

He said the websites that post their information are "biased" against the Rakhine ethnic group. "No one ever talks about all the good things [the state government] does for the Muslim people."

Head of co-op denies ministry allegations

SHWE WAR LWIN
shwewarwin.mmt@gmail.com

THE head of a disbanded shoemaking cooperative in Mandalay who has been accused by the Ministry of Cooperatives of misusing assets says the claims are false and has instead pointed the finger at a military captain within the ministry.

Deputy Minister for Cooperatives U Than Tun told parliament recently that it had received complaints from 26 members about U Tun Tin, who was the chairman of the Lotearr Yadanar shoemaker cooperative. The deputy minister said he misused cooperative assets for personal gain, readmitted expelled members to the cooperative and sold land owned by Lotearr Yadanar without approval from the authorities.

But U Tun Tin said the claims were false and instead blamed Cooperatives Department head Captain Aung Win, who began involving himself in the cooperative's affairs in 2009.

"The members of Lotearr Yadanar have worked together for 46 years to make it a success. But the unity of the members started collapsing when Capt Aung Win arrived," U Tun Tin said last week.

"Although members called several meetings to choose a new executive group, Capt Aung Win forcibly abolished Lotearr Yadanar," he said.

After the cooperative was abolished, Capt Aung Win auctioned its assets for K300 million but did not distribute the profits to members, he said.

One member of Lotearr Yadanar, who has been in the cooperative since it was established, said the allegations against U Tun Tin were incorrect. "It is not true that U Tun Tin readmitted banned members ... and it is not also true that he allotted shares to the members."

- Translated by Zar Zar Soe

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Medical association vote delayed until at least September, says CEC

BY YAMON PHU THIT
yamon89@gmail.com

MYANMAR Medical Association members will not know until next month when they will get the chance to vote on a controversial plan to lease the association's Yangon headquarters.

The vote was originally scheduled for July 13 but was delayed because there was not enough time to prepare, central executive committee officials said.

They will be asked to decide whether the association should lease its Mingalar Taung Nyunt headquarters to a foreign property developer, a move advocates say is needed to generate income for the association's activities.

However, not all members will have the right to vote. Each of the 88 association branches across the country will select one or two delegates to take part who will then vote on their behalf.

Association general secretary Dr Myint Thuang said the new date for the vote would be set at a central executive committee meeting

in the second week of August.

"We hope we can hold the vote shortly after August but we have not confirmed the exact date yet," he said.

"We are not able to collect votes from all members, of which there are more than 18,000. Instead, representatives will be elected by the members of each branch."

'We are not able to collect votes from all members. Instead, representatives will be elected by the members of each branch.'

Dr Myint Thuang

General secretary, Myanmar Medical Association

He said there was nothing untoward in the decision not to take the vote on July 13.

"We delayed the original plan because we want all representatives across the country to have a chance to take part so the vote will be fair. We decided more time was needed," Dr Myint Thuang

said. "It is not because some members are against our plan."

The issue has divided the association, with members opposed to the plan forming a temporary Land and Building Protection Committee. It has threatened to launch legal action to stop any property deal for the headquarters

the result," he said. Some members said they were concerned that the voting system would allow the central executive committee to control the result and called for all members to be given the chance to vote.

"The representatives are chosen by them and it's not transparent," said Dr Maung Maung Soe, who is a member of the Land and Building Protection Committee.

Dr Myint Thuang rejected these concerns. "The members say they want us to vote so we organised it and then they said they are against the vote. We don't really understand what they want," he said, adding that the central executive committee did not recognise the Land and Building Protection Committee because it had not been formed according to the association's rules.

The central executive committee says it wants to use the additional revenue that the deal would bring to conduct research, sponsor doctors for further study, improve association facilities for members and expand its public health activities.

"We will look at how transparent the voting process is and will proceed based on

Tharpaung land dispute causes headaches for regional govt

Parliamentary investigation commission has ordered fields be returned to original owners but regional government says that tenant farmers also qualify for ownership under 1963 land law



NOE NOE AUNG

noenoeag@gmail.com

A DISPUTE has erupted in Ayeyarwady Region between two groups of farmers who are both claiming ownership of farmland confiscated by a subsidiary of U Tay Za's Htoo Group, in a case that highlights the challenges the authorities face in trying to wind back decades of land confiscations.

Htoo Group subsidiary Ayeyar Shwe Wah, of which Thura U Shwe Mann's son, U Aung The Mann, is also a director, agreed to return more than 41,200 acres of farmland in Ayeyarwady Region in 2011 because its contract farming operations were economically unviable.

The land, in Tharpaung, Kanyidaunt, Kyaunggon and Yegy townships, was transferred to the township authorities and the parliamentary land dispute commission decided on March 29 that it should be given back to the original owners.

However, under a 1963 land law, those who work land for at least five consecutive years are considered the owners. As a result, two groups of farmers - the original owners and those who cultivated the land under contract from Ayeyar Shwe Wah since 1999 - are seeking formal ownership of 550 acres in Tharpaung township.

Almost four months after the commission made its decision,

the regional authorities are still considering how to proceed.

"There are problems in deciding who we should give the farmland back to," said U Win Ko Ko, the minister for finance from Ayeyarwady Region.

"The company took the land from farmers in 1999. And between 1999 and 2013, the company and then the regional authorities employed tenant farmers so we can say that those tenant farmers have some rights to possess the land according to the [1963 farmland law]. That's the problem we are facing," he said.

He said the regional government is taking its time to decide because it wants a fair result that minimises losses to both sides.

"We are looking for the right decision and I think we can solve the problems in a couple of months."

Impatient with the regional government's refusal to implement the hluttaw's decision, some of the original land owners have started to cultivate the fields. About 20 have since been charged with trespassing after the tenant farmers filed complaints to police.

The original owners have accused township authorities of stalling in returning the land because they want to keep renting the fields to the tenant farmers.

"Our farmlands were seized in 1999 by Ayeyar Shwe Wah ... We didn't get any compensation. In 2011, Ayeyar Shwe Wah shut down its project and returned the farmland to the township authorities. Instead of giving it back to us, the township

authorities kept the farmland and rented it to the farmers who could give them money or to their relatives," said U Myo Min Tun, who lost 55 acres to the company.

"The original farmers were told they would get their land back by the hluttaw so we have been waiting ... but there is no action and they couldn't wait anymore as the rain is heavier and it is nearly too late to cultivate. So they cultivated their old land without permission," he said.

U Thaug Tin, one of the farmers who has been charged with trespassing, said the land had effectively been confiscated twice, once by Ayeyar Shwe Wah and then by the township authorities.

"The hluttaw gave us hope," he said. "I need this land back; it is so important for my family's survival."

U Than Htike, a member of the National Democracy Network in Ayeyarwady Region, said the delays could lead to serious unrest.

"Conditions in Tharpaung and Myaungmya are the worst because farmers from these townships tried to cultivate the land without permission," he said.

"These farmer problems should be resolved faster and I want the authorities to make it a priority.

"Farmers are becoming more and more dissatisfied and I am worried that it will hold back the country's development. It's like constructing a building: If the foundation is not strong, the building will collapse."



Farmers at work in a field in Bago Region. Photo: Kaung Htet

Farmers take fight against draft law to Nay Pyi Taw

SU HLAING TUN

hsuhlainingtun.mcm@gmail.com

REPRESENTATIVES of a national organisation of farmers say "cronies" should not be allowed to benefit from a bill aimed at improving living conditions for the country's millions of farmers.

Seventeen representatives from the Farmer's Network held a four-hour meeting with the Agriculture, Livestock and Fishery Development Committee in Nay Pyi Taw on July 18 to outline their objections to agriculture-related legislation, particularly a proposed farmer "enhancement" law.

As *The Myanmar Times* reported last week, the draft legislation has been written by MPs, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and Thura U Shwe Mann, and would set a minimum price for agriculture products. Originally called the Farmer Protection Law, it has since been renamed the Farmer Enhancement Law with a narrower focus.

Many farmers are unhappy that the law defines agribusinesses as farmers, which would allow them to also sell their products to the government.

U Ohn Kywel, a farmer from Ayeyarwady Region's Bogale township, said the legislation was being pushed by businessmen to support their own interests and the network would fight against its introduction.

"The aim of the bills should not be to profit cronies such as U Chit Khine and U Khin Shwe," he said, referring to the owners of the Eden and Zaykabar business groups.

They also said those drafting the law had not properly consulted farmers on the legislation.

"If the government really wants to alleviate poverty at the grassroots level, farmers should be included in the process of drafting laws ... because only other farmers know the difficulties we face," said U Ohn Kywel.

Another farmer, Ko Sithu from Pyin Oo Lwin township in Mandalay Region, said the committee had agreed to redraft the law based on their concerns.

"The committee chairman said they will start redrafting the laws if farmers disagree with its current form. Bills relating to farmers should be drawn by respective officials and law experts along with farmers to be absolutely sure they improve the lives of farmers," Ko Sithu said.

At the meeting network representatives also discussed land use rights in conflict-hit areas of Kachin State, where they said farmland has been seized by the military.

Farmers also said the Pyithu Hluttaw's Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries Development Committee should

incorporate a farmland survey - including lands seized from farmers in the past - as well as a rice price control policy and the extension of long-term loans to all remote areas.

A final demand was that technical support be provided to farmers.

'The aim of the bills should not be to profit cronies.'

U Ohn Kywel

Farmer from Bogale township

"University students who have no experience farming paddy get the chance to learn modern farming techniques for four or five years as part of their courses," said Ko Tin Aung Lin, a farmer from Ayeyarwady Region. "Farmers should be eligible to receive at least two days training in these techniques. If not, we will keep farming using our old ways." - Translated by Zar Zar Soe

Heavy rain expected to continue

AYE SAPAY PHYU

ayephyu2006@gmail.com

RECENT heavy rains in Yangon are set to continue, the Department of Meteorology and Hydrology said last week.

A department spokesperson said the formation of a low pressure area in the Bay of Bengal in conjunction with the continuation of strong monsoon conditions in the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal will result in heavy rainfall until August 2.

The department's Weather Research and Forecast Model predicts parts of Rakhine, Kayin, Shan and Mon states, as well as Bago and Tanintharyi regions, can expect heavy daily rainfall - more than 75 millimetres a day - until July 29. However, the threat of isolated torrential rains was expected to decline from July 27.

Most of the country has received rain since July 20, with

many coastal areas receiving more than 75mm of rainfall a day.

Launglone and Dawei in Tanintharyi Region recorded falls of 15.9 inches (398mm) and 13.78 inches (345mm) in the 24 hours to 9:30am on July 24, the department said.

Ko Yazar Soe from Dawei

said low-lying parts of the town had been flooded on July 24, including one of the town's schools.

"The [quarters] flooded after torrential rains on Tuesday and Wednesday," he said. "But there was no need to relocate people. Floods are common in these areas."

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After criticism, MPs lead Wa peace talks



SOE THAN
LYNN

soethanlynn@gmail.com

MPs say their efforts to play a greater role in the peace process are already paying off, with several representatives playing an important role in talks with the United Wa State Army in eastern Shan State earlier this month.

The talks took place on July 12, 10 days after Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann said that the government-led peace process had only made limited progress and had not been keeping the hluttaw informed of its activities.

On July 5, a reshuffle of the two peacemaking committees was announced. While on the surface there were few changes to the 11-member

'We have only become involved in peace negotiations since the committee was reorganised.'

U Sai Paung Nap

Amyotha Hluttaw representative

central committee and 52-member working committee, parliamentarians were told that they would be given more opportunities to participate and would also be kept better informed about the peace process.

One week later, Pyithu Hluttaw representative for Myitkyina U Thein Zaw, one of three vice chairmen of the working committee, led a peace team delegation to Kengtung for talks with the UWSA. In the weeks leading up to the talks, reports from the region said hundreds of UWSA and Tatmadaw troops were preparing to face off in the mountains near the Thai-Myanmar border. On July 12, both sides agreed to scale back their forces.

U Sai Paung Nap, an Amyotha Hluttaw representative from the Wa region who is also on the working committee, said MPs had been able to play an important role in securing an agreement. Prior to the talks, U Sai Paung Nap and U Khun Tun Lu, the chairman of the Wa Self-administered Region Leading Body, had met with Wa officials to lay the groundwork for the successful talks on July 12.

U Sai Paung Nap also praised U Thein Zaw's ability to bring about a deal with the Wa.

"During the recent negotiations we also saw [U Thein Zaw's] ability. He is flexible. I'm not exactly sure why U Thein Zaw went instead of U Aung Min but I can see that U Thein Zaw was able to successfully resolve some issues surrounding [Wa] Special Region 2," he said. "At the talks in Kengtung,



Pyithu Hluttaw representative U Thein Zaw, who led the delegation that met the United Wa State Army on July 12. Photo: Staff

we discussed the shifting of Wa and Tatmadaw troops and discussed how to withdraw soldiers. [U Thein Zaw] was able to coordinate this with both the Tatmadaw and cabinet."

He said the change was a direct result of the July 5 reshuffle and Thura U Shwe Mann's comments. "We have only become involved in peace negotiations since the committee was reorganised," U Sai Paung Nap said. "Before that we were only superficially involved. I hope that the new committee allows us to play a practical role like this in future talks as well."

Eighteen MPs - nine each from the upper and lower houses - are on the working committee, while Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann

and Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker U Khin Aung Myint are both on the central committee.

So far the parliamentarians on the committee have been forced to take a back seat to members of the government but a number said this would change in the coming weeks and months.

Daw Dwe Bu, the Pyithu Hluttaw representative for Injayang in Kachin State and a member of the working committee, said that while on the surface the peace team is "basically the same as before" she believes MPs "will be able to participate in peace talks more than we were able to previously".

"In the past, it was rare to see MPs in the committee participate in the

peace talks," she said.

"For pretty much the past 12 months ethnic MPs were only involved as witnesses when an agreement was signed following negotiations," she said. "I participated in peace negotiations only once, during the talks with the Kachin in May, because I again requested that [U Aung Min and U Thein Zaw] let me take part."

U Ye Tun, the Pyithu Hluttaw representative for Hsipaw, said he agreed with Thura U Shwe Mann's criticisms and expects the working committee will be "more effective" with greater parliamentary involvement.

"There may have been some flaws in how the committee worked before," he said. "For example, it made some promises during negotiations that it couldn't really meet, even though these were well intentioned."

One of these "flaws", U Ye Tun said, was the fact that armed groups had been encouraged to enter the hluttaw by founding a political party and standing for election without first giving up their arms.

A military MP in the Pyithu Hluttaw also applauded the reshuffle, saying the involvement of more MPs would give the committee better insight into local concerns.

"The committee will perform better if ... [hluttaw] representatives have a greater role," said the colonel, who asked not to be named. "Top senior officials can't always know exactly what's going on among the people."

- Translated by Thiri Min Htun



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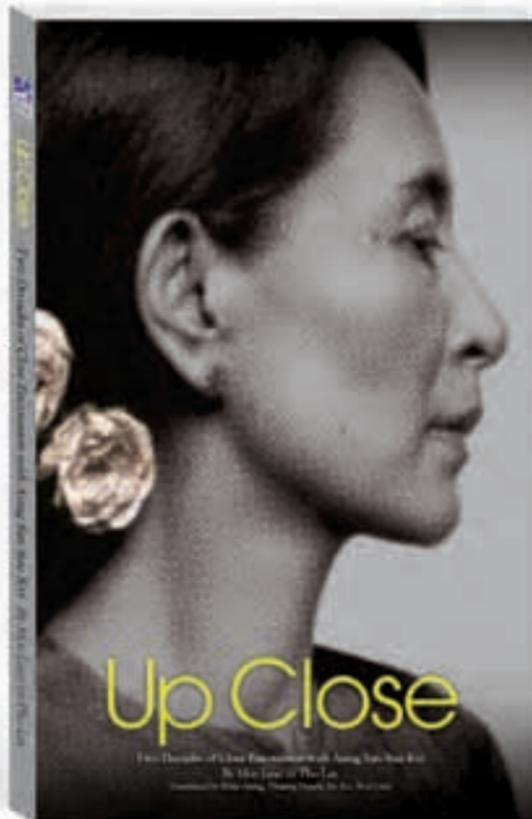
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Tour agency to launch airport shuttle bus

EI EI THU

91.eieithu@gmail.com

TRAVELLERS flying in or out of Yangon International Airport will be able to take a shuttle bus to and from the airport starting in August.

The newly formed company, JTB Polestar, plans to offer a shuttle service for tourists connecting Yangon airport to a number of downtown locations, including hotels such as Parkroyal, Traders, Sedona and Chatrium. Tickets will cost US\$10 one way and the company is planning to run eight shuttle buses, said vice president U Kyaw Min Htin.

JTB Polestar was established on May 9 as a joint venture between Myanmar Polestar Travel and Tours and JTB, a Japanese travel company.

The chief minister of Yangon Region, U Myint Shwe, said at the shuttle launch ceremony that he believed the joint venture would help to boost tourism.

"The Ministry of Hotels and Tourism is expecting 1.8 million tourists will visit Myanmar ... in 2013. Five hundred thousand people have already visited at the end of May. That's why I hope the JTB polestar company will help to implement our target," he said.

JTB Polestar vice president U Kyaw Min Htin said the Japanese company would provide expertise on "new ways of marketing" for the Myanmar firm, and help it tap into the market for Japanese tourists.

"From this joint venture we hope more Japanese tourists - globally and from Japan - will visit Myanmar," he said.

JTB was established in 1912, and today has branches in more than 100 countries. It holds a 60 percent stake in JTB Polestar.

Amnesty will boost peace efforts: activists

Most of the 73 prisoners released on July 23 were jailed for links with armed ethnic groups



EI EI TOE LWIN

eieitoelwin@gmail.com

ACTIVISTS say last week's amnesty will boost peace efforts as most freed political prisoners released were jailed for links to the Kachin Independence Army and Shan State Army-South.

Of the 73 people freed on July 23, 68 were considered political prisoners, the Former Political Prisoners (FPP) group said.

President U Thein Sein ordered the amnesty under section 204(a) of the constitution and 401(1) of the Code of Criminal Procedure "with the aim of placing emphasis on humanitarian grounds and encouraging them to be able to serve the national interest after understanding the goodwill of the state", state media said.

They were released from Insein Prison in Yangon, as well as jails in Mandalay, Myitkyina, Hinthada, Thayet, Mawlamyine, Myingyan, Kengtong, Tharyarwaddy, Kyaukpyu, Bhamo and Hle Hlaw Inn at 3pm on July 23.

Most had been convicted for high treason under the Penal Code or for offences under section 17(a) of the Unlawful Association Act and section 19 of the Arms Act.

"Most [of the freed political] prisoners are ethnic people those have been jailed for contact with ethnic armed forces. Most of them are related to the KIO and RCSS/SSA as well as Kayin and Rakhine," said FPP member U Ye Aung. "I'm not sure of the exact figure but about two-thirds of the political prisoners are ethnics."

The group's spokesperson, Ko Thet Oo, said he was "sure" that amnesty would "support the national reconciliation between government and ethnic groups".

U Sai Nyunt Lwin, general secretary of the Shan Nation-



An ethnic Kachin political prisoner who was released from the Insein Prison on July 23. Photo: AFP

alities League for Democracy (SNLD), also welcomed the release of so many ethnic prisoners. "It is a good decision and I expect good results will come from the amnesty," he said.

He confirmed that 29 Shan nationals linked to the SSA-South and its political wing, the Restoration Council of Shan State. The SNLD had been lobbying for their release, he said.

"Actually, they are war prisoners. They were arrested maybe in 2009," said U Sai Nyunt Lwin, who is also a member of the government's political prisoner committee headed by Minister for the President's Office U Soe Thein. "We are preparing to meet up with prisoners in Mandalay and then we will send them to the RCSS/SSA liaison office in Muse [in northern Shan State]."

In Myitkyina, the 13 freed convicts were greeted by Minister for the President's Office U Aung Min, who was visiting Kachin State for the opening of the Kachin Independence Organisation's liaison office. They were temporarily settled in a camp for displaced people in Myitkyina township.

Maran Naw Sann, 29, who was released from Insein Prison, said he was delighted to be

Kamai [in Hpakant township] in 2012 but I did not contact the KIA ... Now that I'm free I plan to go back my family," he said.

United Nations secretary general Ban Ki-moon also praised the president's decision, saying in a statement that he hoped it "and other measures undertaken recently in the country's transition to democracy will further strengthen efforts toward a comprehensive nation-wide cease-fire and national reconciliation in Myanmar".

The amnesty came after President U Thein Sein pledged on July 15 to release all political prisoners by the end of the year.

Former political prisoners said they believed about 100 political prisoners are still behind bars. The government committee formed in February to oversee the release of all political prisoners was to meet again on July 27 to discuss further amnesties.

Constitution review committee approved

WIN KO KO LATT
winkolatt2012@gmail.com

25

PYIDAUNGSU Hluttaw last week approved the formation of a constitutional review committee comprising 109 members.

The committee was approved with no objections on July 25, speaker U Khin Aung Myint said.

It was proposed in March by senior members of the Union Solidarity and Development Party.

All 18 parties represented in the hluttaw have at least one member on the committee. The USDP has 52 members, while the Tatmadaw has 25. Of the other parties, the National League for Democracy has the most with seven. Parties were allowed to nominate which of their representatives they wanted to sit on the committee.

While there are only eight female representatives, committee member Daw Dwe Bu said she was satisfied that the members were chosen based on their merits rather than gender.

"In my party at least members were chosen on their skill rather than their gender," said Daw Dwe Bu, who is from the Unity and Democracy Party of Kachin State.

Daw Phyu Phyu Thin from

The number of military MPs on the constitutional review body.

the NLD said she was "satisfied" despite not being on the committee.

"Our party leaders chose the most suitable people - those who can discuss the constitution in detail," she said.

The committee will be chaired by the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw deputy speaker, with the Amyotha Hluttaw and Pyithu Hluttaw speakers as deputies. The secretary and joint secretary will be appointed by the chairman.

Despite the approval of its formation, there is still little clarity on the committee's "exact responsibilities, rights, rules and regulations", said U Ye Tun, the Pyithu Hluttaw representative for Hsipaw.

While he said he was unsure when it would begin reviewing the constitution, U Thein Nyunt, the Pyithu Hluttaw representative for Thingangyun, said he thought it would be next month.

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Bringing in the big boys: Why Myanmar needs its 'cronies'

The government needs to encourage Myanmar businessmen, rather than foreign investors, to take the lead on infrastructure development

STUART LARKIN

newsroom@myanmartimes.com.mm

PRESIDENT U Thein Sein has managed to "flip the switch" in Myanmar politics, gaining legitimacy for the constitution and bringing international and domestic critics on board his reform program. Reinforcing this with rapid economic development, however, will be a much harder act to follow. It may require a different approach - one that includes the very people U Thein Sein has sought to exclude.

Myanmar's liberation from a half-century of isolation has captivated the world, not least of all because of its undoubted economic potential. But with outbreaks of violence, uncertainties over governance and economic reforms, and the unknowable composition of the next government, it is understandable that many foreign investors are taking a "wait and see" approach. When you factor in over-priced land, a still overvalued exchange rate, a severely constricted domestic market and woefully inadequate infrastructure, only business plans using highly complex random walk algorithms can make the numbers stack up.

President U Thein Sein has already achieved his principal objective - international acceptance and legitimacy for Myanmar's new constitution. However, his reliance on foreigners for the economic follow-through and the distancing of himself from many of Myanmar's leading business families - whose patriarchs are often referred to as "cronies" for the patronage they enjoyed under the preceding government that he wishes to differentiate himself from - is problematic. Myanmar's economic take-off - a necessary reinforcement for its nascent democracy - hinges primarily not on foreign economic relations but on the handling of domestic state-business relations.

In terms of development priorities, the major challenge for the government after agriculture and the rural sector is to create new jobs through industrial development. As a poor country, Myanmar's domestic market is small so growth needs to be achieved through exports, both of agricultural commodities produced from labour-intensive family farms and other products from labour-intensive manufacturing. But to be export competitive Myanmar needs a massive upgrade in its infrastructure. The current and former governments have looked to foreign investors to take the lead but this strategy is problematic and unsustainable for two reasons. First, foreign project promoters struggle to manage relations with the military and civilian bureaucracies. Second, if Myanmar people perceive that their national infrastructure has fallen un-

der foreign control a populist politician may emerge to reverse the process.

Ports are an example of the first reason why foreign-dominated infrastructure development is problematic. The Dawei project has foundered and the Chinese are complaining about the slow progress at Kyaukpyu. At the Thilawa Special Economic Zone, which includes port terminal facilities, the proposed development vehicle is still unregistered and therefore unable to sign a concession agreement. Progress in site development is reliant on Japanese aid. It's a similar story in terms of power generation, where signed memoranda of understanding collectively account for a 60 percent increase in capacity but nothing has yet progressed to Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) approval. The recent awarding of two mobile phone operating licences to foreign companies is to be applauded but the ease and swiftness of network roll-out remains to be seen.

Ports may also offer an example of the second reason: Thilawa for the Japanese, Kyaukpyu for the Chinese, Dawei for the Thais, and something else for the South Koreans and the Americans looks a bit like economic partition. Even foreign-owned energy infrastructure, such as gas pipelines and hydro-electric power plants, could provide raw material for future nationalist populist politicians. The problem is not so much with foreign participation in infrastructure development but with actual or perceived "foreign domination".

An infrastructure upgrade, however, is a precondition for the rapid industrial development necessary for large-scale job creation and political stability. It is in the nature of infrastructure development that the state plays a central

The president has to direct national entrepreneurs into activities that yield a high development dividend for the country as a whole rather than just leave them to pursue private profit as they see fit.

role - for strategic planning, regulation of monopolistic concessions and so on - but the private sector is needed for their initiative and greater efficiency. The leadership in infrastructure development should come from Myanmar-owned companies and this makes the management of domestic state-business relations critical. Foreigners have an important role to play in supporting Myanmar businesses in terms of project design and contributing early



Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (second right) visits the Myanmar International Terminals Thilawa port on May 25. Photo: AFP

stage technical and equity capital resources, and later as implementation subcontractors where necessary, but infrastructure development should not be dominated by foreign investment.

Given the limits of state capacity and the multitude of bilateral and multilateral development partners calling at their door, government infrastructure development planning will be slow and bureaucratic. Leading local entrepreneurs will not hold their breath waiting for results and will simply refrain from getting involved. Myanmar's most pow-

erful business conglomerates, which have the experience of getting big projects off the ground and of managing state-business relations effectively, also have many other businesses - such as property development, cement and consumer credit - that can yield satisfactory short-term profits. They know that large infrastructure projects can make them the really big money but these guys are not dreamers. In fact, quite the opposite: They are experts in the art of assessing what is possible. As a result, many of Myanmar's leading businesspeople are biding their time and concentrating on growing existing businesses.

parts have entered through a similar process. It seems unlikely though that U Thein Sein will suddenly embrace the "cronies" in the cause of national development. U-turns are not easy manoeuvres for politicians and the businesspeople themselves may not be interested in cultivating a politician they perceive as having a limited shelf life. Much-needed administrative reform may absorb much of U Thein Sein's energy anyway. All eyes are understandably focused on what might be the composition and nature of the next government but rather than speculate on what will happen let's consider what needs to happen.

Now that nearly all sanctions have been lifted and the new constitution enjoys legitimacy at home and abroad, Myanmar's next president needs to be a strong personality with a keen understanding of the "development state" and the role it must play in harnessing and directing domestic and foreign business to realise national development objectives. If matters are left solely to the public sector it will take too long. The ability of the many thousands of small- and medium-sized enterprises in the country to grow and prosper, augmented by investment from foreign firms, is predicated on the country's big businessmen delivering on infrastructure. These entrepreneurs have the seed capital, organisation, connections and experience of working with government to take the lead on infrastructure project development, drawing on international technical expertise and capital as necessary. But as well as directing the business patriarchs towards certain types of infrastructure the new president must facilitate international project financing for them too, for which this person needs to understand the nature of global finance.

Global finance is divided up into two systems: Non-China finance - the United States dollar-denominated international financial architecture controlled by the US - and China finance. The new Myanmar president must direct Myanmar entrepreneurs to one or the other system depending on whether they are on the US Specially Designated Nationals (SDN) list. The US has indicated that names do not readily come off its blacklist, which effectively denies individuals

and organisations access to the global financial system that it controls.

Instead, those on the SDN list must cultivate relations with China sources of project financing - the China Development Bank (CDB) and China Export Import Bank (CEB) - and the non-SDNs must jump through the hoops set by the World Bank's International Finance Corporation (IFC), Asian Development Bank and the Japanese and South Korean development banks.

Globally, in 2010 the World Bank/IFC lent about \$100 billion, while the CDB and CEB together lent about \$110 billion. China also has a foreign financing war chest of \$2.4 trillion in foreign exchange reserves. Myanmar's next president can maximise capital inflows for infrastructure by placing the world's two financial systems in competition with each other. Nay Pyi Taw may work with the two categories of entrepreneurs in different ways. This dual system will be complex for the new president to manage - and often contradictory messages will be sent out to society - but given the nature of the external financing options it is simple pragmatism if the country is to maximise capital inflows for national development and poverty reduction. Indeed, the success of the next president may be evaluated and quantified according to how much infrastructure project financing he manages to pull in because this criteria serves as a reasonable proxy for economic take-off, poverty reduction and performance legitimacy, provided project selection and execution is reasonably efficient.

So where does that leave us for the next two years? Well, of course, there is plenty of time for unpleasant surprises and fire-fighting. But there is also the hosting of the Southeast Asian Games to be enjoyed and the chairing of ASEAN next year. There will be plenty of opportunities for high-level socialising as domestic and international political, business and civil society elites contemplate Myanmar's next crucial phase - the one where the "big money" plays - and strategise and position themselves for it.

Stuart Larkin is a policy and investment researcher who has been based in Yangon for more than 17 years. He offers consulting services and can be emailed at stuart.larkin@yahoo.com.



A truck at the Thilawa port terminal near Yangon. Photo: Staff



Police patrol near where a bomb was detonated on July 21. Photo: Si Thu Lwin

Arrests made over July 21 Mandalay blast

SI THU LWIN
sithulwin.mmtimes@gmail.com

POLICE have arrested two people in relation to last week's Mandalay bombing who were captured on CCTV footage in the area just prior to the blast.

Five people were injured in the explosion, one of whom is still receiving treatment in hospital.

The blast occurred on the evening of July 21 near a preaching ceremony conducted by controversial monk U Wirathu from Mandalay's Masoeyin Monastery.

The handmade bomb was detonated under a car parked in front of Aye Myittar medical clinic between 84th Street and 85th Street in Maha Aung Myay township, about 100 metres from where the sermon was taking place.

Police identified several suspicious people from CCTV footage recorded by a nearby minimart,

the regional police force office. Two people were later arrested.

"In the security camera footage we saw some suspects walking around the area. Police investigated who they are and what they were doing," Police Major Soe Nyein told *The Myanmar Times* on July 23.

Three women, one man and one young novice were injured in the blast. One of the women is being treated at Mandalay General Hospital, while the rest sustained minor injuries.

"The number of injuries was small because the bomb exploded under the car. If it had been outside the car then the number of wounded would likely have been much higher," said a police second lieutenant who was in the area when the bomb went off.

The explosion occurred at about 9:15pm on the final day of U Wirathu's five-day preaching event.

- Translated by Zar Zar Soe

Bombing sentences 'an injustice': accused

SI THU LWIN

sithulwin.mmtimes@gmail.com



FIVE men convicted for a series of bomb attacks that rocked Mandalay, Nay Pyi Taw and Pyin Oo Lwin on June 24, 2011, have described their sentences as an "injustice".

Mandalay district court on July 24 sentenced Ko Sai Thein Naing, Ko Sai Hla Aung, Ko Sai Kyaw Than, Ko Myo Khin and Ko Sai Moe Hein to 10-year jail terms on explosives offences. Three of them will also have to serve additional sentences, a deputy district law official involved in the hearing said.

"Among them, three men have had an extra two-year term added for wrongful communication offences and another man was sentenced to an additional six-month term, apart from his 12-year imprisonment, under the immigration law," the official said.

The men were arrested in Mandalay, Tachileik and Yangon a few days after the bomb attacks. The trial, which took 18 months, heard 48 statements from witnesses in Tachileik, Taunggyi, Muse, Yamethin and Mandalay, and delivered its verdict behind closed doors.



Photo: Si Thu Lwin

Two men convicted over a series of 2011 bombings leave court on July 24.

"We were not involved in the bombings at all," Ko Sai Thein Naing, who was sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment, told *The Myanmar Times*. "We were total strangers ... [and] just became familiar in prison."

"I was accused of having an incoming call to my phone dialled by terrorists. I don't know anything. It is an injustice ... it's not truth."

The five offenders said they were tortured by police after being detained. Relatives also maintain they are innocent.

"We have no relation with any organisation," said Daw Su Su Naing, sister of Ko Sai Thein Naing. "We don't understand politics and law. We are determined to have the truth heard." - Translated by Zar Zar Soe

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Internal pressures take their toll on the peace process

MPs should be careful not to disrupt progress already made toward a national ceasefire and political talks, ethnic leaders warn



EI EI TOE LWIN

eieitoelwin@gmail.com

WHEN the government reached an agreement with the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO) in Myitkyina in late May, its peace efforts appeared to be in the ascendancy. This perception was reinforced just days later, when Shan State Army-South leader Lieutenant General Yawd Serk made his first visit to Nay Pyi Taw and met the president.

During the Myitkyina talks, chief government negotiator U Aung Min had announced plans for a ceremony to sign a national ceasefire agreement that would be held by the end of July.

However, this event will almost certainly be postponed because of a number of political challenges, particularly those posed by the parliament, which is seeking a greater role in the

cal point of the government's peace efforts. The former railways minister, who has known the president since they fought on the front lines together as young officers, has publicly refuted the rumours. Sources say he has acquiesced to President U Thein Sein's request that he see the peace process through to the end of his five-year term.

During the Myitkyina peace talks, he told reporters he would seek to complete peace agreements with all ethnic groups before the next election in 2015.

U Aung Min concedes that a number of issues had delayed the peace process. However, he has expressed confidence that stalled progress can be moved forward.

"The [initial] talks were concluded very quickly, and some areas, such as the division of territory, were not dealt with in detail," he said at a press conference in Myitkyina.

"This has led to misunderstandings and the resumption of fighting. Now we plan to

Peace Center, which has received significant support from the international community and is closely aligned with the government, is also "a key player in the negotiation peace with all ethnic groups" despite not being an independent organisation.

"The peace centre was set up through a special order from the president and without approval from the hluttaw," he said. "But we accept it is needed because there is no other place for peace committees to deal with ethnic groups. The peace centre acts as a bridge between us."

Observers say that Thura U Shwe Mann's comments indicate the lower house speaker will push for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and U Htay Oo, a vice chairman of the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), to be included in the peacemaking team.

This did not happen in a reshuffle announced on July 5, which saw the former ministers for defence and border affairs, Lieutenant General Hla Min and Lieutenant General Thein Htay, replaced with the current ministers for defence and border affairs, Lieutenant General Wai Lwin and Lieutenant General Thet Naing Win.

Col Khun Okkar, who represents the Pa-O National Liberation Organisation in the UNFC, an umbrella organisation for 11 armed ethnic groups, said he believed the government was deliberately trying to keep Daw Aung San Suu Kyi out of the peace process.

"The government doesn't want to open the peace process to other actors. They want to control it to some extent," he said. "I think that [Thura U Shwe Mann] wants to put in place a system of checks and balances. But what we want to see is more members of the military in the peace process rather than MPs. The military has a crucial role to play in achieving peace."

Even some political leaders concede that involving hluttaw representatives could complicate and delay the peace process.

'What we want to see is more members of the military in the peace process rather than MPs.'

Colonel Khun Okkar
Pa-O National Liberation Organisation

peacemaking process. This confrontation has the potential to derail the government's peace efforts, both ethnic leaders and sources in the Myanmar Peace Center say.

On July 2, Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann told the hluttaw that parliamentarians should play a more active role in the peace process. He criticised the government's peacemaking team, led by U Aung Min, for only making what he described as limited progress and not keeping parliament informed about its activities.

His comments came amid rumours over the future of U Aung Min's position as the fo-

establish technical and monitoring teams to solve this problem and resume discussions on the division of territory with the groups."

The possibility of U Aung Min being sidelined has prompted warnings from some ethnic groups that the parliament needs to be careful not to damage the progress already made.

"The whole process will stop if U Aung Min is no longer involved," Colonel Khun Okkar, general secretary of the United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC), told *The Myanmar Times*.

He said that the Myanmar



U Aung Min shakes hands with European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso. Photo: Boothee

"The peace working committee has just reached initial ceasefires and they are trying to get proper ceasefire agreements with all ethnic armed groups," said U Khin Maung Swe, the chairman of the National Democratic Force, which has about a dozen hluttaw representatives.

"There are many challenges in negotiating these and it should just involve the government and the Tatmadaw until concrete ceasefires are concluded."

However, some observers said that the government should keep the hluttaw better informed about its activities to ensure continuity after 2015, when the government

is likely to include many new personalities.

"The hluttaw should know every action of the government's peace process," said U Sai Laik, a spokesperson for the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy.

"There will be a general election in 2015 ... [and] it's not certain that the peace process will be complete by then. If not, other people will have to conduct it and the parliament can help to ensure this handover is smooth," he said.

U Sai Laik said he believed that increased cooperation between the government, peace centre, Tatmadaw and hluttaw

would yield faster results.

"The peace centre is working with goodwill but there is weakness in cooperation between the [peace centre and Tatmadaw]," he said. "For example, at the moment there is fighting between the [Tatmadaw and] SSA-South and United Wa State Army (UWSA). It shows that the government is yet to reach durable ceasefire agreements."

U Sai Laik said he did not believe that the peace process was overly dependent on U Aung Min. "This process was not implemented by one person - it is the policy of the whole government. If he leaves, other people can take over the process."

Govt meets MPs to talk peace

CLEARING the air - that was the aim of a meeting between government peace negotiators and senior parliamentarians at the Myanmar Peace Center last week, Minister for the President's Office U Aung Min says.

The meeting, which took place behind closed doors, was attended by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Pyithu Hluttaw Thura U Shwe Mann and other MPs on July 21.

U Aung Min said after the meeting that it was arranged so that he and other negotiators could explain what they have been doing to bring about peace in Myanmar.

It comes after Thura U Shwe Mann criticised the government on July 2, saying its peace

efforts had not been successful and it had not kept parliament informed of its activities.

U Aung Min agreed that communication with parliament is important, particularly because MPs will be involved in political discussions with ethnic groups once ceasefires are finalised.

Funding was also discussed on July 21, with U Aung Min saying that Thura U Shwe Mann had promised that the hluttaw would ensure the peace process was properly funded from government coffers and it would not be dependent on international support.

"We'll calculate [expenses] in detail and will propose it [to the hluttaw]. Thura U Shwe

Mann said we can accept international funding if we get it but we haven't got anything yet," U Aung Min said.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's attendance marked her first official involvement with the peace-making committee but did not come as a surprise: At a press conference in Nay Pyi Taw on July 18, Thura U Shwe Mann said he wanted her to be involved because it was the public's desire.

U Aung Min said the committee would cooperate with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi more in future, particularly in her capacity as head of the parliamentary peace, stability and rule of law committee.

- Ei Ei Toe Lwin



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US to fund restoration of historic Mandalay monastery

SI THU LWIN
sithulwin.mmtimes@gmail.com

THE United States will provide US\$500,000 for the restoration of Shwe Nan Daw Monastery in Mandalay, one of the few remaining links with King Mindon's royal palace.

The funding was announced during a visit to Mandalay by US ambassador to Myanmar Derek Mitchell on July 25.

The two-year project will involve the embassy, the Ministry of Culture and a US-based conservation group, the World Monuments Fund, the embassy said.

Both the embassy and the ministry said care will be taken to protect the original features of the teak building, which is more than 130 years old and one of Mandalay's most prominent attractions.

"We've accepted an offer of help from the US because we need funds and technical assistance to preserve the monastery," Deputy Minister for Culture U Than Swe said. "During the preservation process, we'll make sure the original Burmese architectural style is maintained so that we avoid some of the things that happened in Bagan."

He said restoration will begin in September and is expected to end in June 2015, with American experts to work alongside officials from the Department of



US ambassador to Myanmar Derek Mitchell (left) visits Shwe Nan Daw Monastery in Mandalay on July 25. Photo: Si Thu Lwin

Archaeology, National Museum and Library.

The US funding will come from the State Department's Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation. The ministry and the World Monuments Fund will also contribute to the project.

"This partnership is a celebration of this country's rich cultural and architectural heritage," Mr Mitchell said in a statement. "Even as this country develops and modernises, it is important to preserve its unique heritage for future generations. We are honoured to begin this partnership with the Ministry of Culture, which will foster

collaboration between US and local preservation experts and help train a team of experts to conduct other preservation efforts in the future."

The monastery was originally the northern chamber of Mandalay palace and was built at a reported cost of 120,000 silver coins. After King Mindon died inside the structure it was disassembled and reconstructed outside the palace in 1883.

It is one of the few royal buildings that survived a huge fire in 1944 when British troops retook the city from Japanese forces. - Translated by Win Thaw Tar

Press council to send bill directly to parliament

NAW SAY PHAW WAA
nawsayphawwaa@gmail.com

THE Interim Press Council plans to submit its draft media law directly to parliament through an MP rather than the Ministry of Information, a council member said last week following a meeting with a parliamentary committee.

Eight council members met officials from the Amyotha Hluttaw Bill Committee in Nay Pyi Taw on July 24 to discuss the Ministry of Information's Printing and Publishing Enterprise Bill, which was approved by the Pyithu Hluttaw earlier this month but has not yet been discussed in the Amyotha Hluttaw.

The council has refused to endorse the ministry's bill, which it says does not properly ensure freedom of expression, and has drafted its own version.

"The intention of meeting with the Amyotha Hluttaw Bill Committee was to discuss the press council's print media bill," said council member U Myint Kyaw.

They also met Pyithu Hluttaw Sports, Culture and Public Relations Development Committee chairman Thura U Aye Myint and the deputy ministers for information.

"We have discussed both the press council's bill and the ministry's public service media bill," he said.

The press council submitted its proposed law to the Ministry of Information in late June but the ministry has refused to send it to parliament until the council makes 17 amendments.

"Unless we amend those points they won't submit so we have been told that if we don't want to make the amendments we should approach a hluttaw representative and get them to submit it directly to the hluttaw," U Myint Kyaw said. "Then the ministry can say whatever it wants to amend when the bill is discussed."

Thura U Aye Myint said he agreed that the press council should submit the bill directly.

"It might be difficult to submit the press bill to parliament if the Ministry of Information cannot agree on 17 of the points in the press council version," he said. "We want the issue to be quickly discussed in the parliament. The press council should pick an MP who can submit the bill and then forward it to our committee. They should mark which sections the ministry disagrees with," he said.

The meeting between the parliamentary committee and press council came after senior lower house representatives, including speaker Thura U Shwe Mann and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, said they did not realise the press council had opposed the ministry's version of the law.

"What I understood was that the press council and the ministry had already discussed this bill and reached an agreement," the NLD leader said on July 18. "That's why we approved it but later we found out that was not the case."

Thura U Shwe Mann agreed and said Pyithu Hluttaw representatives would get another chance to make amendments after the Amyotha Hluttaw votes on the bill.

- Additional reporting by Soe Than Lynn

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Old debts delay agriculture loans in delta



SHWE GU
THIT SAR

khaingsabainyein@gmail.com

THE Myanmar Agriculture Development Bank is refusing to issue more than US\$8 million in loans to thousands of farmers in Ayeyarwady Region's Maubin district because many still owe money from last year.

The bank's manager for Maubin district, which includes Maubin, Danubyu, Nyaungdon and Pantanaw townships, said more than 6000 farmers are waiting for loans because not everyone

6000

The number of farmers yet to receive loans from the Myanmar Agriculture Development Bank in Maubin district

in their village has repaid their debt from last year. In some cases, the bank is still processing the new loans because the old debts have only recently been cleared.

"We can't grant new loans to anyone until the debts [for their entire village] are settled," manager U Ohn Lwin told *The Myanmar Times*. "Some

farmers complained that bank loans for this year were delayed. We didn't advance money to them because we are waiting for others to repay.

"This has created difficulties for us because we take loans from the Myanmar Economic Bank at 4 percent interest and then provide it to the farmers at 8.5pc. But because we haven't got all of the loans back from the farmers yet we can't get more credit from MEB. This is our problem and we have to work according to the rules," he said.

The bank's policy is to only issue new loans when everybody in a village has repaid their old loans and more than half of the 78 villages that the bank lends to in Maubin district are still in arrears. U Ohn Lwin said more than 3500 farmers in 21 villages have already received more than K2.3 billion to cultivate more than 23,000 acres, while farmers in 15 villages have cleared their debts and loans will soon be disbursed. Seven villages are expected to get loans on July 29.

Farmers who do not meet the payment deadline are charged additional interest of 1pc a month. This year the bank is offering loans of up to K100,000 - about half the cost of cultivation, but double the amount lent in 2012 - at an interest rate of 0.71pc. Loans must be repaid within 10 months.

The bank expects to issue a total of K10.3 billion to cover 103,375 acres in Maubin district this year - but only if all of the K5.27 billion loaned last year is repaid.

U Ohn Lwin accused some farmers of "destroying" the bank's efforts to promote agriculture by buying consumer items, including solar lights



Farmers wait outside the Myanmar Agriculture Development Bank branch in Maubin last month. Photo: Shwe Gu Thit Sar

and motorcycles, before repaying their loans.

"They ask us to keep extending the due date and there are some groups that tell the farmers not to repay their loans. These groups are doing that with a destructive intent. We also heard that some farmers didn't repay their loans although they have money because they are waiting for some groups to help them, like last year," he said.

Last year, the Union Solidarity and Development Party representative for the Ayeyarwady Region Hluttaw seat of Maubin 1, U Yan Win - the owner of A1 Construction - provided interest-free loans to residents of 14 villages so that they could repay their debt to the bank and it could issue new loans, U Ohn Lwin said.

U Maung Win, the secretary of the farmers' and agricultural workers' association in Maubin district, said the delay in issuing new loans was causing hardship for farmers, who have no alternative but to borrow illegally from businesspeople who charge interest rates as high as 20pc for one month.

He said the bank should amend its rules so that it can continue lending to those who have repaid their debts even if others in their village still owe money.

"The bank says it will only advance the new loans when all of the old ones are repaid. This means that farmers who fulfilled their promise don't know when they will get loans for this year. I don't want those people to face difficulties," said U Maung Win, who

cultivates paddy and beans on 10 acres of farmland.

"The bank should think about those who have cleared their debts ... the current system will only benefit profiteering businessmen who offer high-interest loans."

One of those yet to pay back their loan from last year is Ko Kyaw Myint Naing from Maung Taung Su village, borrowed K100,000 for 2 acres.

"Last year my yield was lower than I expected and I could only sell about 100 baskets, earning just over K300,000. That meant I couldn't afford fertiliser for my bean crop in summer, so the yield was low, and I had nothing left to pay my debt," he said.

- Translated by Thiri Min Htun



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- Excellent interpersonal skills with an ability to work well within a small team environment.
- Must have initiative and the ability to handle conflicting priorities in a busy office environment.
- Excellent communication and liaison skills.
- Good knowledge of modern office procedures, practices, methods and equipment including use of standard computer software programs such as Microsoft Word and Excel.

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Thai system fails Myanmar migrants

Illegal workers are dying unnecessarily because employers do not let them access the health system – and Thai officials are not enforcing the law

BILL O'TOOLE

botoole12@gmail.com



NANG Lu first migrated to Thailand from Shan State in 2004 with her husband and two sons, then aged 10 and 11. They left their small village south of Lashio, in northern Shan State, and crossed the border illegally to find work – just four of the 90,000 Myanmar nationals who migrated that year, according to United Nations figures.

After several years of working as a labourer in northern Thailand, Nang Lu and her family became legal, documented migrant workers. In 2010, she, her husband and their now-adult sons began working for the property developer Karnkanok in Chiang Mai.

The family lived in a community with more than 300 Shan migrants workers in bamboo huts directly behind a plot of pre-fabricated homes they were building for Karnkanok. Her family and neighbours describe her as “honest”, someone who mostly stayed at home and didn’t cause problems. To relax in the evenings, she liked to listen to her eldest son sing and play guitar.

In early November of last year, Nang Lu began to feel a sharp pain in her kidneys. Normally, Nang Lu – like the rest of the Shan community – relied on NGOs such as the Shan Youth Power Network for her general health needs. For anything more serious, they would go to one of the small clinics nearby. This time, Nang Lu felt the problem was serious enough to require a hospital visit.

She first went to a hospital in San Kamphaeng district near her home, where the hospital staff refused to examine her, saying she was not eligible for treatment without a social security card. She was sent home with a bottle of antibiotics.

A week later the pain was still present and Nang Lu was no longer able to relieve herself. She went to another hospital in nearby Doi Saket district. While this hospital agreed to treat her, she was told that without a social security card she would not have access to more specialised care. She was fitted with a catheter, for which she and her husband paid 4000 baht (about US\$135). The pain continued but at least she was able to use the bathroom.

Several days after that, Nang Lu visited a third hospital, in Mae Rim district, which also told her she couldn’t be treated without a social security card and sent her home with another bottle of antibiotics.

By the first week of December, Nang



A migrant worker from Myanmar on a construction site in Chiang Mai in northern Thailand. Photo: Kaung Htet

Lu was dead – seemingly from kidney failure. She was 40 years old.

Her family has no death certificate, but the details of Nang Lu’s final weeks were independently confirmed by members of the community and labour activists who work with migrants.

Nang Lu’s story is sadly common in Thailand, where migrant workers routinely find themselves lost in a web of inaccessible social services. As *The Myanmar Times* reported recently, about 1.2 million Myanmar migrant workers in Thailand are living without the health care they are entitled to under Thai law.

Under the current system for migrant health care, workers must pay 4 percent of their salary to enter the Thai social security program. Their employers must also pay 4pc. Failure to enrol workers in the program is a crime under Thai law but many employers don’t want to spend the money, so they don’t tell their employees about the system.

Nang Lu’s husband said that when she first fell sick in November, “we didn’t know about the program.”

The head of the Shan community, chosen because he is the only one who can read Thai – although only “a little bit” – said he has raised the village’s health care needs with Karnkanok’s representatives for more than two years but the company has yet to respond.

This, too, is sadly common.

“Employers have a chance to make

migrants aware of their rights,” said Dr Brent Buckholder, coordinator for the World Health Organisation’s Border and Migrant Health Program in Thailand. “[But] for that to happen, employers have to pay a piece. So many are not forthcoming.”

Phil Robertson, deputy director of Human Rights Watch’s Asia division, agreed. “Many employers would prefer to not go through the cost and hassle of registering migrant workers, especially in sectors like construction or agriculture,” he said.

‘Many employers would prefer to not go through the cost and hassle of registering migrant workers [for health benefits].’

Phil Robertson

Deputy director, Asia division, Human Rights Watch

Health care is not the only legal entitlement that migrant workers miss out on. While Thailand passed a law this year guaranteeing a minimum wage of at least 300 baht (\$10) a day for all workers, both Thai and foreign, many migrant workers earn much less.

The head of Nang Lu’s community, who has been living and working in

Thailand for nine years, said he has never met a female migrant worker making more than 170 baht a day. Nang Lu was earning 120 baht a day clearing paths and hauling rubble when she died.

Sources at the Migrant Workers Rights Network said that workers who demand benefits from their employers are often the target of harassment and abuse from their employers and local police. However, they said they had not heard any allegations against Karnkanok of this sort.

Despite repeated attempts, *The Myanmar Times* could not reach Karnkanok for comment. Sources in the region say the company employs more than 1000 migrant workers in the Chiang Mai area alone.

However, Thai Deputy Minister for Labor Anusorn Kraiwatnussorn said his department would investigate the claims of Nang Lu’s family and take

appropriate legal action against Karnkanok if it was warranted.

“We will force the company to comply with the law,” Mr Anusorn said. “Workers should have social security ... Every boss should follow the law.”

Asked about the larger claims of abuse and exploitation of migrant workers, Mr Anusorn said it is not a “big issue” and that he believes most employers treat their workers fairly.

Mr Robertson, who has authored a number of reports on the abuses migrant workers in Thailand face, said there was ample evidence to the contrary and accused the Ministry of Labor of “doing nowhere near enough.”

“The reality is that migrants really have no leverage to demand that employers comply with requirements on wages and working conditions,” he said.

“The continuous parade of abuses migrant workers face, and the fact that employers can violate migrant workers’ rights with impunity, is a clear indication that the [Thai] Ministry of Labor is doing nowhere near enough.”

He said he doubted whether the ministry would be able to enforce the law even if it wanted to.

“Labour inspectors are few and far between, and they don’t speak Burmese or other migrant worker languages, and their priority is focused on the rights and welfare of Thai workers first,” he said.

“Registered migrant workers can file complaints with the Ministry of Labor but they are often scared to do so, lack the knowledge about how to do so or the language skills in Thai to pull it off, and remain concerned that they could be retaliated against.”

Dr Buckholder said he believes the Myanmar government has a responsibility to assist its workers in Thailand, particularly before they leave Myanmar.

“There should be an obligation for the sending countries to educate migrants,” he said. “The bottom line is that a lot of good faith efforts are being made to provide health services to migrants ... [but] a lot more needs to be done.”

Representative from the Department of Labour in Nay Pyi Taw could not be reached for comment.

For members of the community in which Nang Lu lived, worked and died, there is little hope that living conditions for migrants will improve. Speaking to *The Myanmar Times* in Chiang Mai, a Shan man – who works driving a truck and has lived in Thailand since 2005 – said that even if more migrants were aware of their rights and knew they were entitled to a social security card, he doubted they would be able to get them. “These employers,” he said, “are not interested in [our] healthcare.”

Dancing policeman ad lands organisers in hot water

NANDAR AUNG

newsroom@myanmartimes.com.mm

WHAT started as a simple, choreographed scene for a vitamin C television advertisement has ended in charges for a dancer, a director and the general manager of Mango Marketing Services.

The advertisement, for the Vice vitamin supplement, saw Ko Min Min Tun don a traffic police uniform and perform a Michael Jackson-esque dance at the crossroads of Anawrahta and Sule Pagoda roads. Four other celebrities – Bobby Soxer, actors Shine Waiyan and Ma M Sai Lu, and model Ko San Toe Naing – also took part in the ad, which was directed by U Zaw Ko Ko and arranged by Mango.

Immediately after shooting ended on July 13, a bystander who filmed

the shoot put a scene from the advert online, calling it “The Traffic Policeman’s Choreography”. It quickly became an internet sensation – but also caught the eye of Police Major Thar Htay from the Yangon Region Traffic Police Force.

Pol Maj Thar Htay was not amused and ordered police to prosecute those involved for impersonating a police officer. The advertisement, he said, also caused the traffic police to “lose prestige”. Police have filed three charges each, including one for defamation, against Mango general manager Daw Thet Khine, director U Zaw Ko Ko and dancer Ko Min Min Tun.

U Zaw Ko Ko said he was unaware that they were doing anything wrong. Regardless, he said, the video uploaded to the internet was not the final cut of the advertisement.

“I didn’t know that we would need permission to use the police uniform in an advert,” U Zaw Ko Ko said. “I know that when we shoot an advert, we need to inform and get permission from the Myanmar Motion Picture Organisation. Then, when the shoot is over, we have to go to the Ministry of Information to get approval from the censors and often the ministry will make changes. Now we know we need to get permission from the traffic police station, too.”

Lawyer U Khin Zaw from Mayangone township said simply wearing a traffic police uniform is not considered a crime and if the case proceeds to court the judge will consider the context in which the impersonation took place.

“If they took the uniform and tried to pretend they were police, with hand-

cuffs or something, then it would be clear ... but the intention would have to be that they tried to commit a crime. Then, it would be considered under section 170, the law covering impersonation,” U Khin Zaw said. “But [in this case] it was just to make an advert.”

Next time, he said, they should get permission from the police station before filming. He suggested the likely outcome is that the three defendants will have to sign a pledge not to do it again.

But U Zaw Ko Ko said police had misunderstood the advertisement, which was designed to show that a traffic policeman’s work is difficult and if they take the vitamin C supplement they will have more strength and feel relaxed. He described the charges as “a misunderstanding”.

“People will be satisfied when they

watch the full advert. But someone took a video of the first shooting scene and put that on the internet,” he said.

U Aye Kyuu Lay, a vice chairman of the Myanmar Motion Picture Organisation, said that when the advertisement is complete it will still need to be shown to the censorship board. “The organisers will need to give the actors’ names, the director’s name and the shooting location when making an advert. After they finish their advert, then it goes to the censors.”

Daw Thet Khine, director U Zaw Ko Ko and dancer Ko Min Min Tun had their first appearance on July 17 at the Kyauktada township court and were granted bail, U Zaw Ko Ko said. A second hearing will take place on July 30.

“I hope the case will be okay,” U Zaw Ko Ko said.

Daw Bauk Ja to face court on July 31

EI EI TOE LWIN
eieitoelwin@gmail.com

NATIONAL Democratic Force member and land rights activist Daw Bauk Ja will appear in court this week on three charges related to the death of a man in 2008.

The deceased man's wife, Daw Kaing Am, from Hpakant's Kamai ward, pressed charges against Daw Bauk Ja for allegedly causing death by negligence under section 304(a) of the Penal Code. Daw Bauk Ja is also facing charges under the excise and medical council acts.

"Hpakant township court summoned Daw Bauk Ja to appear on July 31. We are preparing to face trial," said her lawyer, U Myint Thwin.

He said the charges relate to the death of a man in 2008. The man's wife previously filed a charge against Daw Bauk Ja but agreed to withdraw the complaint in 2010, enabling the activist to represent the NDF in that year's general election.

"I don't know in detail why they have filed the charges against her now but we should

know at the trial," U Myint Thwin added.

Daw Bauk Ja was detained by police at her home in the Kachin State capital Myitkyina on the evening of July 18 and transferred to the police station in Hpakant township's Kamai ward the following day.

NDF chairman U Khin Maung Swe said the party would assist Daw Bauk Ja as much as possible.

"She is a very reliable member of our party and we will try to help as much as we can. We asked our members to provide whatever assistance they can and are keeping in touch with her lawyer," he said.

In the November 2010 election, Daw Bauk Ja competed against U Ohn Myint from the Union Solidarity and Development Party. She lost and submitted a complaint to the Union Election Commission but later agreed to withdraw the suit.

She was also an active participant in the campaign against the Myitsone Dam and has taken Yuzana Company to court for its land confiscations in Kachin State's Hukawng Valley region.



Journalists offer donations to students on Sein Kha Nauk Mountain. Photo: Si Thu Lwin

Mandalay journalists donate to remote schools

SI THU LWIN
sithulwin.mmtimes@gmail.com
THAN NAING SOE
thennaingsoe@gmail.com

A PHILANTHROPIC organisation led by young journalists from Mandalay donated stationery, equipment and cash to two monastic schools on Sein Kha Nauk Mountain for the second time on July 20.

The location of the schools - 975 metres (3200 feet) above sea level - makes it "difficult" for students to get supplies

otherwise, said one journalist, Ko Nyi Nyi Zaw. Sein Kha Nauk Mountain is in Patheingyi township, about 30 kilometres east of downtown Mandalay.

Another journalist said that sharing knowledge is a form of philanthropy but it is also important to make financial donations. "Nothing can replace the delight of making contributions in person where it is really needed," he said.

As well as giving supplies to 220 students, the journalists also offered robes to monks residing on Sein Kha Nauk Mountain. - Translated by Zar Zar Soe

TNLA, govt to hold first peace talks

NAN TIN HTWE
nantin.htwe@gmail.com

THE Palaung State Liberation Front is scheduled to meet government peace negotiators this week following recent tension between its armed wing and the Tatmadaw.

The group announced on July 26 that peace talks will be held in northern Shan State border town of Muse on July 31.

The statement said U Aung Min will head a peace-making working committee delegation at the talks and will be joined by Shan State Chief Minister U Sao Aung Myat and commander of Northern Region Command General Aung Soe. Senior officials from the PSLF and its armed wing, the Ta Aung National Liberation Army, will also attend.

Other ethnic armed groups, including the Kachin Independence Organisation, Karen National Union, Shan State Progress Party and United Wa Sate Army will attend as observers.

Captain Thar Aung Ko, communication officer of PSLF/TNLA, told *The Myanmar Times* by phone that it was the group's first meeting with the government peace team.

"I'm not sure how the meeting will go. But as the government is making efforts in its peace process, we hope the discussions will lead to a better situation," he said, adding that the most recent clashes between the Tatmadaw and TNLA took place on July 25.

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Crew members of the MV Haixun 1 arrive in Yangon for a goodwill visit on July 24. Photo: Boothee

Chinese naval vessel visits Yangon on goodwill tour

AYE NYEIN WIN
newsroom@myanmartimes.com.mm

CHINESE vessel *MV Haixun 01* visited Yangon last week on a goodwill tour as part of the ASEAN-China Maritime Consultation Mechanism.

The vessel docked at Bo Aung Kyaw Jetty on July 24 on a friendship tour of the region agreed on at the 11th ASEAN-China Transport Ministers meeting in Bali, Indonesia, in 2012.

Chinese naval officials were due to discuss bilateral cooperation in the subjects of port state control, maritime investigation, search and rescue, and maritime security. Weather permitting, the vessel's crew will also conduct a search and rescue exercise using the ship's helicopter.

"The main purpose is to discuss bilateral needs in Myanmar's marine transportation sector," said Zhai Jiugang, deputy director general of China's maritime safety body.

U Htay Win, deputy director general of the Department of Marine Administration, said Myanmar has been part of the ASEAN-China Maritime Consultation Mechanism since 2010.

"In the past, we have sent officials to China to learn and do capacity building exercises," he said.

The ship left China from Shanghai on June 10, visiting Australia and Indonesia before arriving in Yangon. It was to depart for Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia on July 28.

Residents of Meiktila call on govt to lift curfew

NAW SAY PHAW WAA
nawsayphawwaa@gmail.com

MEIKTILA residents say they want the government to follow up the lifting of a state of emergency by removing a curfew that still remains in place.

The curfew was ordered under section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure to quell violence that erupted in Meiktila in March. A state of emergency that was imposed on March 22 in Meiktila, Wundwin, Thazi and Mahlaing townships was lifted on July 20 by the president. As a result, the Myanmar Police Force has taken over responsibility for security from the army, which is now only monitoring the entrances to the town.

Resident U Htin Lin Khine said most people in the town supported the lifting of the state of emergency because it had depressed the town's economy. However, he said not much had changed because the curfew is still in place.

"The only change is that the army has withdrawn," U Htin Lin Khine said. "As long as the curfew is still there, businesses won't be able to run normally. We only want the curfew to be lifted. We don't care whether the army is here or not."

'As long as the curfew is still there, businesses won't be able to run normally.'

U Htin Lin Khine
Meiktila resident

Ko Thi Ha, an 88 Generation member in Meiktila, agreed that lifting the state of emergency has had little impact and that removing the curfew is more important.

"If the curfew is lifted, ordinary people will have more chance to conduct business normally. The curfew makes it hard for people who normally wake up early to do work ... Business is very slow now," he said.

U Win Htein, the Pyithu Hluttaw representative for Meiktila, said many residents had told him they want the curfew to be lifted so they can work normally. "Because of the curfew, business is down. I also want it to be lifted and I think it will happen in one or two months. Then business will gradually improve."

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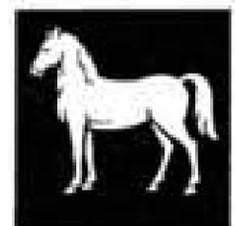
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BRIEFS

Yangon
Ministry plans no change to university entrance marks
 Students waiting anxiously for final marks to be released may be relieved to know the university entrance requirements this year will not differ significantly from last year's, the Ministry of Education says.

U Zaw Htay, director general of the Higher Education Department (Lower Myanmar), said the department would not set higher entrance scores, but that could change based on student demand.

"Changes in university entrance marks depend on students' choices. Whether the marks differ from the year before depends on how many students apply to universities. We have to see how many students have applied," he said.

In previous years, medical universities had the highest entrance requirements. This changed last year, however, with the reopening of Yangon Technological University (YTU).

"Last year, the [required] marks for medical university were about 500 for girls and the entrance marks for YTU were over 500," said Daw Mi Mi Maw, a high school teacher. "YTU is more popular among students."
 - Ei Thae Thae Naing

Mandalay
Spike in fires in Mandalay in first half of year

Mandalay Region firefighters dealt with 169 fires during the first six months of 2013, with combined damages to property exceeding K1 billion, they say.

The numbers for January to June of this year are higher than they were for the equivalent period in 2012, with 55 more cases being reported, according to a list released by the Mandalay Region Fire Department. In addition, four people were killed and five people were injured in fires.

The figures include 20 cases of arson during riots in Meiktila township in March.

The largest single category of causes was negligence, with 63 cases.

"Fire cases have not decreased," said U Kyi Toe, the head of the region's fire department. He said more equipment, including vehicles, would be needed to help contain the damage caused by future blazes. - Than Naing Soe, translated by Thae Thae Htwe

Nay Pyi Taw
MPs oppose president on Anti-corruption Law

The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw last week rejected five of the president's six proposed amendments to the Anti-corruption Law.

The only change MPs accepted during a vote on July 26 was to change the name of the draft legislation from the Bribery and Corruption Eradication Law to the Anti-corruption Law. The bill will now be sent to the president for signing into law.

The president had also recommended MPs remove a requirement that the 15 members of the anti-corruption commission submit a list of their family's assets, including income and property, together with an estimated value to the president when appointed.

The president said the clause was not in line with the constitution. - Soe Than Lynn, translated by Zar Zar Soe

Farmers campaign over decades-old land feud



PHYO WAI KYAW

pwkyaw@gmail.com



A farmer signs a petition in support of Daw Tin Oo on July 17. Photo: Phyo Wai Kyaw

FARMERS in Mandalay's Amarapura township are banding together to correct what they say is an injustice from Myanmar's socialist period.

They are calling on the authorities to return 4 acres of farmland to a 76-year-old woman, Daw Tin Oo, that was confiscated from her in 1985 because she could not give the required 50 baskets of paddy to the government. The decision consigned Daw Tin Oo to decades of poverty, they say, with casual labour her only source of income.

The land was taken by Thar Lar Aye village's administrative department, which is renting it to other farmers for K300,000 an acre.

Two other farmers who lost their land under the same circumstances had it returned to them several years later, after the collapse of the socialist regime. However, the authorities have refused to relinquish Daw Tin Oo's land.

"For many years officials from Thar Lar Aye's administration office have benefited from Daw Tin Oo's farmland, while she has struggled and faced many troubles," said farmer U Nay Win.

Twenty farmers from the area have now signed a letter requesting the land be returned and sent it to the appropriate departments, including the President's Office, said U Win Naing, 45, from Tamotesoe village.

"At that time, farmers needed to give 45 baskets of paddy an acre to the government after harvest season. This created many hardships for farmers.

"I was just a young at that time. You could blame Daw Tin Oo if she was not a hard worker but the crop yield depends on the weather and the type of soil. Because of this decision, Daw Tin Oo has been in trouble for many years. Just look at her face. You can see how

tired and poor she is," he said.

Daw Tin Oo said she had lost everything by the time she was forced to give up her fields.

"I needed to give 50 baskets from my farms to the government ... but I had nothing left to give, even after I sold my cows as well. The farmers here urged me to try to get back my land. They told me that other farmers are also getting back their land nowadays," she said.

But U Thein Bo, from the Thar Lar Aye village administration office, said that Daw Tin Oo's former land generated money for the whole village.

"We use the money for different things in the village," he said.

ANA offers daily flights to Tokyo from Sept

ZAW WIN THAN
 zawwinthan@gmail.com

JAPAN'S largest airline group, All Nippon Airways, is going to dramatically boost capacity on its Yangon-Tokyo route from the end of September by offering daily flights with more seats, its Yangon office said.

Manager Ma Nyo Nyo Khaing said the airline would begin daily flights between Yangon and Tokyo on September 30.

The airline currently offers three flights a week with 34 mostly business-class seats. When the new schedule comes into effect ANA will switch to larger aircrafts that seat up to 202 passengers, including 35 in business class.

The company hopes that by offering more economy tickets they will "attract more passengers between the two countries", Ma Nyo Nyo Khaing said.

ANA launched direct flights to Yangon on October 15, 2012, making it one of the first Japanese airlines to offer non-stop flights between the two countries.

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Seng Raw receives Magsaysay Award

CHERRY THEIN
t.cherry6@gmail.com

A KACHIN activist has won the Philippines' prestigious Magsaysay Award.

Lahpai Seng Raw, the former executive director of one of the country's longest-running NGOs, the Metta Development Foundation, was one of five winners. She will travel to Manila on August 31 to collect the prize.

Lahpai Seng Raw said she was deeply honoured to receive the award and thanked her family, friends and colleagues. She reserved special praise for the late chairman of the Kachin Independence Organisation, Maran Brang Seng, whom she said persuaded her to get involved in community work, as well as the government for providing opportunities to assist conflict-affected communities.

She pledged to use the prize money, which was US\$50,000 in 2012, on projects that will protect and preserve the Myitsonne area in Kachin State and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for its communities.

"I will maintain my commitment to work for sustainable peace and a development process that will be evenly spread across the country," she said.

"My fervent hope is that the Ayeyarwady will continue to flow for all time, and that efforts to make this a reality is a factor that unites all citizens of Myanmar.

"I am therefore most grateful to the Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation for providing me with the opportunity not only to use my prize money to protect and preserve Myitsonne but also [to have] a powerful forum to publicise the need to stop the dam construction once and for all.

"Losing Myitsonne for the Kachin is like losing his or her heart and soul. It would be a loss of unbearable proportions, not just for Kachin at the source of the Ayeyarwady but for the rest of the country also, for whom the river is like a mother who feeds Myanmar's citizens."

Metta was established to assist disadvantaged communities regardless of ethnicity or religion in a way that respects different cultures and values. Its activities also focus on post-conflict needs and creating space for people with different backgrounds to work together, strengthen the peace process and develop their regions.

The Magsaysay Awards were established in 1957 and take their name from the former president of the Philippines, Ramon Magsaysay.

Seven NGOs unite on aid for displaced Kachin

CHERRY THEIN
t.cherry6@gmail.com

SEVEN local NGOs have drafted a joint strategy aimed at protecting those affected by ongoing armed conflict in Kachin and northern Shan states.

The strategy, which runs from 2013 to 2015, seeks to protect the rights, needs, dignity and safety of internally displaced people, said Daw Mary Tawn of Wunpawng Ninghtoi, one of the NGOs involved in drafting the plan.

Despite a lull in fighting between the Tatmadaw and Kachin Independence Army in recent months, about 80,000 people are living in 139 camps for displaced people.

"The strategy aims to ensure efficient and quality humanitarian responses that address the most urgent needs of people in conflict areas," she said at a press conference last week.

She added that those in the affected areas face "many challenges" in spite of the best efforts of NGOs, especially as larger international organisations and United Nations agencies have so far had only limited access to affected areas.

The joint strategy is an attempt by the seven aid organisations to maximise the impact



Children displaced by the conflict in Kachin State line up for their dinner ration at Pakahtawng camp near Mai Ja Yang in Kachin State on January 21. Photo: Kaung Htet

of their efforts by adopting a common understanding of how the humanitarian response should be designed, strategised, targeted and managed, Daw Mary Tawn said.

All aid will be delivered with a strong commitment to international humanitarian principles and the joint strategy will help reduce gaps and overlaps between the efforts of different aid groups. It will also work to minimise donor-driven policy and maximise the use of international cooperation opportunities.

The Kachin Baptist Convention, Kachin Relief and Development Committee, Karuna Myanmar Social Services, Metta Development Foundation, Shalom Foundation and Bridging Rural Integrated Development and Grassroots Empowerment were also involved in drafting the strategy.

The steering committee will release a report every six months that will be used proactively to feed the communication and advocacy agenda, the networking policy and fundraising strategy.

But with local NGOs having only limited access to funding, the organisations expressed concern that they might struggle to

sustain the project for its intended duration.

U Gun Mai, from the Shalom Foundation, said the three-year budget requirement is estimated at about US\$70 million, but they have so far received only \$13 million. Most of the funds will be used before September, he said, and commitments for next year's projects are uncertain.

MILLION US\$
13
The amount given to date for relief activities in Kachin State

"Fundraising is one of the important factors for a humanitarian response. There are still many gaps," he said.

The executive director of the Metta Development Foundation, U Sai San Kham, said the organisations welcome internal or external experts who can help meet needs in under-resourced sectors, such

as psychosocial support and rehabilitation for women and children.

"We were unable to look after young people properly in the response program because we were working on many other priority issues," U Sai San Kham said. "Children in [displaced persons'] camps are rarely interested in education when they doubt the government will recognise the results of exams in the camp."

He said the lack of economic opportunities is also a major challenge for aid groups to overcome. "The people in the camps say they feel insecure because they have no income."

The groups said that while the conflict might be resolved before 2015, when their plan ends, it is not clear when displaced people will be able to return to their homes.

"There are many scenarios ... that we need to consider," U Sai San Kham said. "It is very difficult to tell when the conflict will stop completely and the IDP will be able to return and resettle."

"Even if the ceasefire agreement is attained, there will be many processes necessary for IDP returns, resettlement and rehabilitation."

Call for applications for journalism training

With the support of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's (UNESCO) International Programme for the Development of Communication, Myanmar Consolidated Media, publisher of *The Myanmar Times*, is seeking applications for capacity-building programs for print media journalists in Myanmar.

A four-week training program will be conducted for journalists with minimal or no experience. Trainees will have the opportunity to undertake an internship at *The Myanmar Times* upon concluding the course.

The program will be conducted in September 2013 by expatriate and Myanmar journalism instructors outside office hours. English skills and a university degree are preferred but not essential. Successful applicants will need to provide a release form from their employer for the duration of the course. Applications should include an up-to-date CV and cover letter explaining why the applicant wants to undertake the training. Applications close on Friday, August 16.

For further information or to submit an application please email:

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Members to reform conflict prevention committee

SITHU
LWIN

sithulwin.mmtimes@gmail.com

A COMMITTEE formed to help prevent the outbreak of riots will be re-established with new members because some of its founders are too busy, members say.

The Mandalay-based Committee for the Prevention of the Creation of Riots was established on April 2 with a three-month mandate. The group worked with community leaders, including monks and leaders from other religions, and politicians, to help the authorities identify and take action against people who seek to incite unrest.

Daw Win Mya Mya, a member of the organising committee for the original group, said a meeting will be held at Kan Tet Kone Monastery on July 27 to plan the new committee's future.

"We will form a new committee replacing the old members, who are so busy, with new members. We want to keep this committee going and be able to continue to help stop the spread of conflict in Myanmar," she said.

Its original members included U Wirathu, a controversial monk from Maseyein Monastery who has been accused of inciting anti-Muslim sentiment. It is not clear whether he will continue to be involved.



A Muslim family sits in a monastery in Lashio following violence in the town in late May. Photo: Win Ko Ko Latt

"We decided to form a new committee to prevent conflicts because there is still a risk of more violence occurring. We will reorganise it with people of different religions, different races and different political parties," said U Sein Hla Aung, a founding member of the original committee.

Daw Win Mya Mya said that in its short existence the committee had enjoyed some success.

"The committee was organised after

the Meiktila conflict and was able to play a role in bringing conflicts under control," she said. "Also, some small sparks in Mandalay did not turn into violence as was the case in other towns because of the committee's efforts."

The new committee will operate until at least the 2015 election, and will include a chairperson, secretary, treasurer and executive committee members. - *Translated by Thiri Min Htun*

Govt urged to push religious harmony as ASEAN chair

AYE SAPAY PHYU
ayeephyu2006@gmail.com

MYANMAR should prioritise religious acceptance and address climate change, labour relations, and health and education when it chairs the ASEAN bloc in 2014, a representative of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community said in Yangon last week.

"Climate change leads to unpredictable hazards and we need to emphasise how to manage these disasters," said Daw Nanda Hmun, Myanmar's ASCC representative and director general of the Ministry of Culture's Department of Historical Research.

She also said the issue of migrant workers needs to be addressed. "Some workers go and work abroad legally but others do not. We need to consider how to solve the possible difficulties created by illegal workers," she told a forum in Yangon.

She stressed that ASEAN encompasses a huge diversity of religions and that all members need to work together to create harmony between different faiths.

"[Religious harmony] has become an important global issue and will be one of ASCC's priorities in 2014," Daw Nanda Hmun said.

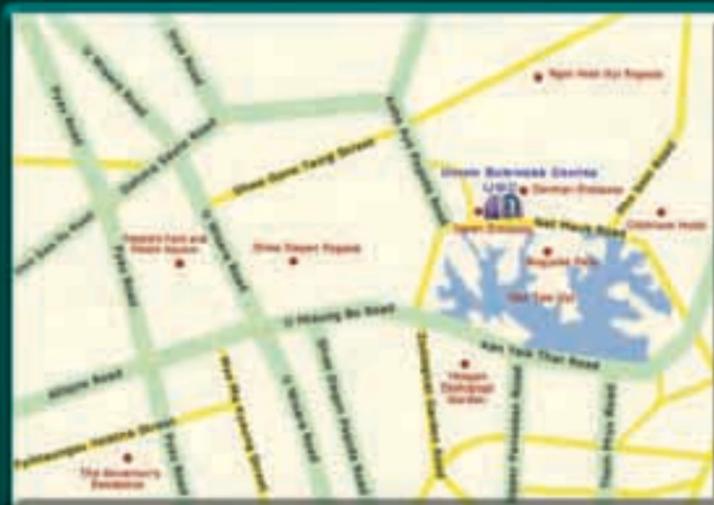
ASCC is one of three pillars supporting the ASEAN Community, the others being the ASEAN Economic Community and the ASEAN Political-Security Community. ASCC describes itself as a people-oriented and socially responsible organisation that aims to achieve enduring solidarity and unity among the peoples and member states of ASEAN.

Daw Nanda Hmun said ASCC has a broad agenda for 2009-2015, including: human development; social welfare and protection; social justice and rights; ensuring environmental sustainability; building ASEAN identity; narrowing the development gap; and providing a framework to strengthen the ASEAN community's belief in their peoples.

As a host Myanmar can propose priority issues for 2014.

"There are many things to do concerning socio-cultural issues," she said. "We can't handle all those issues at the same time, so we choose some priority topics for each year. Those priorities should be things that can be executed by the host country and related with regional issues. The host country proposes the priority issues for each year and a decision is made after consultation with the ASEAN Secretariat."

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Business

Volatility likely after govt loosens grip

Domestic banks say they are ready for the arrival of an inter-bank forex market in August, a move that will result in 'lively and dynamic' trading as the govt moves to curb the black-market trade in US dollars



AYE THIDA KYAW

ayethidarkyaw@gmail.com

DOMESTIC banks say they are ready for the inter-bank foreign exchange trading market that will be launched in August as the government takes another step toward a freely traded kyat.

U Zaw Lin Htut, senior general manager of international banking at Kanbawza Bank, said lenders have already installed the necessary telecom infrastructure, including extra land lines, and have developed backup plans to deal with network failures.

Once the market opens, domestic banks will be able to negotiate exchange rates with each other. Rates can change in an instant rather than once a day as they do now, U Zaw Lin Htut said, referring to the central bank's daily auction that sets the exchange rate between the kyat and the US dollar every weekday at 9am.

'One of the critical issues facing Myanmar is how to absorb black market activity into the formal economy.'

Sean Turnell
Economics professor
Macquarie University

He predicted that the market will be "lively and dynamic", but said that trading should be conducted within a narrow margin so that exchange rates remain stable.

The Yangon Foreign Exchange Market Committee - which comprises the 16 domestic banks given licences last November to conduct foreign-currency transactions - has been drafting regulations and a code of conduct in anticipation of the move to interbank trading. It will make these public in August.

U Win Myint, a spokesperson for the Ministry of Commerce, said the exchange rate between the kyat and the US dollar will be determined by supply and demand. He added, however, that the market could possibly be manipulated by those who hold large reserves of foreign currency, such as banks and exporters, and that this could cause the kyat to depreciate.

"Someone holding or selling a lot of money could have an impact on the currency trade, but the central bank can intervene in [the market] if manipulation is occurring," U Win Myint said.

The central bank plans to complete the switch from the managed-float system it has used since April 2012 to a free-floating policy within a year, deputy finance minister U Maung Maung Thein said.

"When the market operates under a free-floating policy, we have to think about how far we should go," said a spokesperson for the central bank's foreign exchange management department. He said the new system will not be entirely free but it will be freer than the current one. Initial trades will be restricted to transactions between the kyat and the US dollar, he added.

The spokesperson said the transi-



tion is being made with help from the International Monetary Fund and the Japan International Cooperation Agency. The former is providing advice while the latter has provided technical training to central bank staff as well as advice.

Sean Turnell, an economics professor at Australia's Macquarie University, described the move as "good policy".

"There are risks of course," he said. "The banks will have to develop

hedging and other strategies against exchange-rate movements and other market volatilities. But this is not 'rocket science,' he added. "After an initial adjustment period they should be able to cope fine."

The move could also help curb the black market. "One of the critical issues facing Myanmar is how to gradually absorb black-market and other 'informal' economic activity into the formal market economy. This is a step

in that direction," Mr Turnell said. He also advised that Myanmar maintain a managed float, saying that "such a system safeguards against long-term misalignments and diversions from fundamentals". At the same time, "it gives some policy discretion", he added.

Mr Turnell also said an exchange rate of about K1000 to the dollar "sounds reasonable". It helps the government pursue an export-led growth strategy and at the same time allows

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Pressure mounts on U Aung Win

BUSINESS 25



Row over rent could delay relocation

PROPERTY 28

Exchange Rates (July 26 close)

Currency	Buying	Selling
Euro	K1285	K1303
Malay Ringitt	K305	K310
SG Dollar	K770	K780
Thai Baht	K31	K32
US Dollar	K975	K978

on kyat



Photo: Staff

Controversial pipeline to begin sending gas to China this week



AUNG SHIN

koshumgtha@gmail.com

THE controversial pipeline that will ship natural gas from Rakhine State to China will begin operating this week, after an official opening ceremony at a control station in Mandalay Region on the evening of July 28, local officials said on July 26.

This follows several weeks of testing in which there were no malfunctions or leaks, said a representative of two Chinese companies behind the dual pipeline.

Alice Pyr, a public relations representative for Southeast Asia Crude Oil Pipeline (SEAOP) and Southeast Asia Gas Pipeline (SEAGP) told *The Myanmar Times* on July 26 that testing had "gone well" and that health and safety inspections by Southeast Asia Gas Pipeline were completed "several days ago".

Representatives of nongovernmental organisations opposing the project said residents of villages near the pipeline in Rakhine State had reported leaks during its testing phase. They said its operation would be delayed for a month or two as a result.

However, Minister of Energy U Than Htay was quoted in state-run media last week as saying testing was complete and that there were no problems with the pipeline.

The dual pipeline project will ship natural gas and crude oil from Rakhine State to China. The crude will be shipped to the state while the gas will come from offshore wells.

The pipelines have sparked protests over environmental and



Farmers in Rakhine State examine a paddy field that is flooded near the pipeline to China. Photo: Staff

safety concerns. Protesters have also said the contract, which was signed under the military regime, should be revisited and that Myanmar should not export gas when three-quarters of the population lack electricity.

Daewoo announced the discovery of Shwe gas field in 2004. The then-military government

awarded purchasing rights to China in June 2008 under a deal that will see 6.5 trillion cubic feet exported to China over 30 years. SEAGP is the operator of gas pipeline from Kyaukphyu to Muse, a Myanmar border city. The cost of the 792.5 kilometre pipeline has been estimated at US\$2.01 billion.

China National Petroleum Corporation has a 50.9 percent stake in the project. Two South Korean firms, Daewoo and Korean Gas Corporation, hold 25.04pc and 4.17pc respectively, while two Indian firms - Gas Authority of India Limited and Oil and Natural Gas Corporation - hold 4.17pc and 8.35pc respectively, according to a report by the Shwe Gas Movement, which opposes the pipeline. State-run Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise owns 7.37pc of the project.

The gas pipeline is designed

to transmit up to 12 billion cubic feet of natural gas a year, though it will initially transmit only 5.2 billion in the first phase, according to SEAGP.

The pipeline crosses Rakhine State, Magwe and Mandalay regions, and Shan State. Myanmar is set to earn revenues of US\$30 billion over the next 30 years from the project, according to the Shwe Gas Movement.

U Wong Aung, a representative of the advocacy group, said protests against the project will continue even after the gas starts flowing.

"We are still receiving complaints from local people that land has been damaged or confiscated due to the pipelines. We have received thousands of complaint letters, but we have not received any commitment to address the complaints from the authorities," he said.

BILLIONS of US\$

30

Amount of revenue the government is expected to earn over the next 30 years from the pipeline project

for the accumulation of foreign reserves. "This strategy and system [has] a good track record in the context of other Southeast Asian countries pursuing export-led growth," he added.

Meanwhile, the kyat appreciated slightly against the US dollar last week. The central bank reference rate was 977 to the dollar on July 26, compared with K980 the week before. The black-market rate ranged from K978-982 to the dollar.

Old hand on new board

AYE THIDAR KYAW
WIN KO KO LATT

PRESIDENT Thein Sein has appointed a new board of directors to run the Central Bank of Myanmar, according to a parliamentary announcement on July 26.

The appointments follow the enactment of the Central Bank Law on July 11, which called for the creation of a new board as part of a move to make the bank independent.

The board includes a chairperson, three vice chairpersons and five directors. Former central bank chairman U Kyaw Kyaw Maung was appointed chairman, while U Set Aung, U Than Nyein and Daw Khin Saw Oo were appointed as vice chairpersons. Five directors will be named soon, the announcement said.

U Kyaw Kyaw Maung was in charge of the central bank during the 2003 financial crisis, when banks faced a liquidity crisis.

Business leaders launch code of conduct

THE Myanmar Women's Entrepreneur Association has launched a code of conduct intended to reduce disputes and friction between employers and employees as well as promote workers' rights.

Association vice-president Daw Hnin Wai, who led the drafting of the code, told a press conference on July 26 that it covers child labour, workers' rights and pensions for staff at private companies, among other issues. Twenty-one businesswomen signed on to the code at the event.

"Company owners must know that employees have a right to demand their rights be met, and workers must know that they can protest but they have to work while they are waiting for a settlement," said Daw Hnin Wai.

Association members said the code was drafted following discussions with the International Labour Organisation and the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement's department of social welfare. The code includes sections on



Members of a women's business association examine a code of conduct designed to improve working conditions. Photo: Aung Htay Hlaing

setting a basic salary, overtime, fair pay, employee health and social welfare, and pensions.

"If the code is widely disseminated, I believe that the working environment and working conditions will improve," one association mem-

ber said. "As employers we seem to think that we know what workers' rights are, but after studying various codes of conduct, I realised that we lack basic knowledge about workers' rights," Daw Hla Wadi said.

"If company owners follow the

code, I believe that communication between owners and workers will improve a great deal and successful businesses will be created."

Association members said they plan to offer pension plans to employees who have worked at their companies for than 10 years.

Correction

The report "Foreign banks get gradual access to market" in our July 22-28 issue attributed a quote to David Proctor, chairman of financial-services consultancy Consilium, which misrepresented his view. The quote, from another banking expert, called for foreign banks to have unrestricted access to Myanmar. Mr Proctor believes that Myanmar should restrict the entry of foreign banks until domestic banks are capable of competing with them. We regret the error.

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Gem Lab eyes 'Ruby Land'

A FOREIGN company is working to bring international testing standards to Myanmar's gem industry - and provide recognised quality certificates to boost prices.

Gubelin Gem Lab, a Swiss company that has a regional office in Hong Kong, sent foreign gemologists to Mogok, known as "Ruby Land", in early July to test gemstones in the area, which has previously been off-limits to foreigners.

"After the government allowed foreigners into Mogok in April we received permission for our technicians to go into the area," said Ko Hpone-Phyo Kan-Nyunt, a Gubelin Gem Lab gemologist.

The company has already sent stones back to its main lab in Hong Kong and will announce their quality soon.

"There is no database of Myanmar gemstones at our lab, which is why we wanted to do our own sampling and testing," Ko Hpone-Phyo Kan-Nyunt said.

The company also held seminars on gems and testing in Mandalay and Yangon on July 20 and 21 at which its experts made presentations about gems and gem labs, said seminar organiser Ko Ko Myo.



A gem trader examines a nine-stone ring. Photo: Staff

Lore Kiefert, a chief gemologist at Gubelin, said Myanmar's rubies are rated the best in the world and its sapphires second best.

Ko Hpone-Phyo Kan-Nyunt said Myanmar needs better labs to certify the quality of stones mined here.

"Myanmar's gemologists are good at testing but our testing facilities do not meet international standards," he said.

"When traders sell stones, foreign buyers often ask for certificates, which cannot be provided. This leaves the quality of stones - and the industry

- a little uncertain and lowers prices."

Kyaw Thu, owner of a gem lab at FMI Centre, said Myanmar needs top-quality labs to certify its stones in an increasingly competitive market. "When we sell gems internationally we need quality certificates," he said.

"Many gemstones are mined in parts of Africa and Vietnam that are quite similar to ours but not quite as good. If we don't have certificates, then we won't earn the same prices."

Gubelin plans to open a mobile lab in Myanmar.

BRIEFS

Mandalay Waso robe prices surge

Japanese-made cotton robes have been in high demand in Mandalay since the start of the Waso religious festival, when they are traditionally donated to monks, according to sellers.

Last year, cheaply priced Thai- and Chinese-made robes found greatest favour with buyers, but this year Japanese brands such as 555 and 777 are attracting the most attention, said Daw Htay Htay Yin of Diamond and Emerald Robe Shop.

"Sales of Japanese brands were tiny compared with Thai and Chinese brands last year," she said. "But this year buyers' appetites have shifted to high quality brands - and the Japanese-made robes are light and easy to dry."

She expects to sell about 10,000 robes during the festival, which started on July 22 and ends on August 21.

"This year we even have cotton robes made in Italy that cost K45,000." - Aung Ye Thwin, Translated by Zar Zar Soe

Yangon Tips for fish exporters

American non-profit Win-rock International is offering Myanmar fish farmers practical advice on how to market their products in the European and US markets, according to a spokesperson for the Myanmar Fisheries Federation.

The program is funded by the United States Agency for International Development, said Daw Toe Nandar Tin, executive committee member of the federation. The initial focus is tilapia, with training already offered on breeding and raising the species. Potential exporters are now receiving tips on how to enter the EU and US markets, Daw Toe Nandar Tin said.

Burt Hick, an American volunteer in the program, said Myanmar fisheries exports to the US were massive before sanctions blocked them almost a decade ago. - Myat Nyein Aye

Damp demand hits car show

AYE NYEIN WIN ayeinyeinwin.mcm@gmail.com

MONSOON rains drowned out possible car sales at a July 20-23 show at Tatmadaw Hall in Yangon.

The show was intended to allow car showrooms to offer discounts in the hope of making quick sales after several lean months.

"This is the fourth car show we've participated in," said Ko Zar Ni, managing director of Afreen Auto Service. "But because of the weather we were only able to sell four cars. Normally we can put lots of cars in the hall's compound but that wasn't possible this time because of the rains, and not many buyers turned up either."

Other car traders said constant changes to import policies, fluctuating exchange rates and ever

worsening traffic are reducing demand.

Ko Win Ko, from Win Ko Services Co, said he had expected sales at the show to be limited.

"We did not sell as many cars as we have in previous events, in part because not many customers came," he said. "It rained for most of the four days, but I only participated in this event to advertise my company and did not expect to make many sales."

Ma Shwe Sin Win, director of event organiser Smart Business Group, said participating in shows is good for business even if showroom owners do not sell vehicles.

"Even if people don't buy on the spot, if they see a car they like they often approach the centre later, so it's good advertising for the companies that take part," she said.

The Fine Print
Legal & tax insight



New bank law may spur confidence

SEBASTIAN PAWLITA
sebastian@pwplegal.com
KYAW ZAI YA
kyaw@pwplegal.com

THE new Central Bank Law aims at establishing a central bank free from government interference. Nevertheless, the owner of the central bank is, as in other jurisdictions, the state. The authorised capital is set at K300 billion of which the state is supposed to pay up K100 billion. This is a steep increase; the old Central Bank Law of 1990 provided for an authorised capital of K500 million and for a paid-up capital of K200 million. The central bank is to pay (probably in addition to the paid-up capital) 40pc of its annual profit into a general reserve until the amount of the paid-up capital is reached.

Typically, central banks make profits by charging interest on loans granted to the government and to commercial banks and by having interest-bearing foreign currency securities in their portfolio.

The new Central Bank Law was signed by the president on July 11 and took effect immediately. There is no timeline for the establishment of the new central bank. However, the president may determine a "transitory period" of up to one year to

"enable necessary negotiations". The directors of the present central bank shall continue their operations until their responsibilities are handed over to the new board of directors.

The goals of the central bank are the stability of money, the stability of the banking system and the development of effective payment systems. Furthermore, it is to support the government's general fiscal policy in order to create a vibrant economy, though it remains to be seen if this goal will have any impact on the central bank's independence.

Central banks all over the world are charged with keeping money stable. Simply put, they influence inflation by adjusting the interest rate at which commercial banks can borrow money from them.

In a cash-based society like Myanmar, however, the effect of interest rates on the inflation is not very pronounced. In terms of inflation control, the exchange rate of the local currency to the dollar is probably far more important. Of course, the exchange rate as such only influences the price of imported goods and services and has nothing to do with, for example, soaring real estate prices or rising wages.

However, the exchange rate is a high-profile figure, and if the market exchange

rate is stable, people probably rightfully expect their savings in the local currency to retain their value.

As in many other countries, the foreign exchange regime is decided on by the government and implemented by the central bank. Presently, Myanmar has adopted a managed float system in which the central bank holds daily auctions of foreign exchange. Money changers may set their exchange rate within a range of plus or minus 0.8 percent of the auction price.

The central bank may intervene ("manage the float") to keep the exchange rate at a desirable level. In international practice, such interventions are usually done by central banks buying foreign exchange, or selling part of their foreign reserves.

The central bank is charged with assuring the stability of the banking sector by licensing commercial banks and supervising them. In a society like Myanmar, where lack of trust in banks still prevents people from channeling money through them, a central bank that is perceived to be independent is an important tool to instill confidence.

Sebastian Pawlita and Kyaw Zai Ya are consultants at Polatri Wint & Partners Legal and Tax Advisors in Yangon.

Minister enters fray over financial report



SU PHYO WIN

suphyo1990@gmail.com

THE Ministry of Commerce is calling on the president of the country's largest business association to resolve a row over its financial report, according to a copy of the letter obtained by *The Myanmar Times*.

The July 17 letter from Commerce Minister U Win Myint instructs U Win Aung, president of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, and the federation's central executive committee to answer questions about the financial report for the fiscal year ending in March that were raised at the association's annual general meeting on July 13.

The letter specifically mentions

concerns raised by Zawtika International chairman U Khin Hlaing and instructs U Win Aung to answer them. U Khin Hlaing said neither U Win Aung or members of the federation's central executive committee had contacted him to discuss the financial report, which some federation members say they were asked to approve without being given time to examine it.

"I want to urge people to do the right thing for the federation rather than for their own benefit and popularity," U Khin Hlaing said. "I want to change the processes and policies of the federation so that it becomes fair and benefits the people of Myanmar," the former politician added.

U Win Aung, who is on the US State Department's blacklist for alleged links to the former military regime, did not respond to requests for comment. Other senior members of the federation also declined to comment on the dispute at their organisation, which began

with a controversial election in June that some federation members said was rigged. The protest over the election continued at the annual general meeting, with 12 members standing up at the meeting hall and shouting after they were asked to approve the financial report. Allegations that senior executives at the association used its funds to pay for lavish lifestyles have come to the fore since the dispute erupted.

Federation members say they will lobby its international affiliates to support their call for a fresh election to choose those who represent Myanmar's business community globally.

"Myanmar is becoming democratic so I do not accept cheating or bias in an election in a state-registered organisation like the federation," said U Tin Maung Sint, a member of the Myanmar Paddy Producer Association's central executive committee.

"If U Win Aung is elected president again in next election, I will warmly



U Win Aung at UMFCCI's annual general meeting. Photo: Aung Htay Hlaing

welcome him as our president if the election is conducted fairly," he added.

U Win Aung's presence on the

blacklist prevents American companies and individuals from doing business with him or his many companies.

Firm pledges jobs

AUNG SHIN koshumgtha@gmail.com

AUNG KYAW NYUNT zeezee383@gmail.com

FPT Corporation, one of Vietnam's largest ICT firms, is promising to create 5000 jobs within five years in Myanmar after launching their business in July.

FPT Myanmar chairman Hoang Minh Chau told *The Myanmar Times* that the company's office will open by the end of the year but that it has already brought information and communication technology experts from Vietnam to train local staff in education, enterprise resource planning, software and IT solutions for banking and finance, and providing internet service.

Speaking at a July 26 workshop on IT banking applications, Mr Hoang said training of

staff was central to the company's developing. The workshop was organised by FPT, the Association of Vietnamese Investors in Myanmar, and the Bank for Investment and Development of Vietnam.

"We are going to provide on-the-job training for Myanmar students and develop software engineers through six-month courses," Mr Hoang added.

FPT has sent 21 Myanmar students to Vietnam for training and will send another 300-400 over the next few years, company staff said.

FPT is planning to be a major supplier of ICT to the banking sector by offering core, retail and internet banking systems.

Poultry price rise

MYAT NYEIN AYE

myatnyeinae11092@gmail.com

WHOLESALEERS are scratching their heads over surging prices for chickens and eggs, which have hit a two-year high during a season when they usually fall.

Broiler Association vice chairman U Myo Thant said prices usually fall during the monsoon. He attributed rising prices to a fall in production, but Egg Enterprise Association chairman U Joe Zet said the number of eggs sold in Yangon is up 20 percent over last year, to about 1.2 million a day.

"Wholesalers sold about one million eggs a day last year, but the price did not go up," he said. "This year more eggs are being

sold, but the price is going up. This is not the result of supply and demand."

Retailers said the price of chicken has risen about 18 percent to K7000 for one viss (1.6 kilograms or 3.6 pounds), while the price of eggs has risen more than 50pc to as high as K150 for one. The price has fallen from to about K130 per egg, they said.

Broiler Association chairman Hla Hla Thein blamed fewer chicken farms for rising prices. "The government doesn't rent as much land to farmers so there is less production," she said.

Another reason could be that fishery exports are rising and consumers are switching to chicken because there is less fish for sale at markets, she added.

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Job watch

Following publication of Call for Sub-Recipient Proposal Concept Note for Myanmar NFM under the HIV and Malaria Grant, published on 18 and 22 July in Myanmar Times, we would like to point out an error in the text. Under Malaria, the text should read as follow "Active diagnosis... increasing the use of long-lasting insecticidal net (LLIN), notably in the non-artemisinin resistant area".

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TOKYO

Japanese firms spend record amounts in Southeast Asia

JAPANESE firms have spent record amounts scooping up assets in Southeast Asia this year, part of a trend that has seen Tokyo moving to boost its presence in the fast-growing region and away from China.

As Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe leaves Thursday for a three-day trip to some of the region's biggest economies to tap an expanding middle class, figures show Japanese firms have already this year spend more on mergers and acquisitions than ever before.

Rising wages in China and a Tokyo-Beijing territorial dispute that has infected bilateral trade has also taken the sheen off the world's number-two economy as an investment destination, analysts say.

Japanese firms have spent a staggering \$8.2 billion on M&A in Southeast Asia so far in 2013, already a record with five months to go and well above the \$614 million at the same point in 2012, data provider Dealogic said.

The figure easily outstrips the previous full-year best of \$7.6 billion in 2006, it added.

Two deals helped inflate this year's figure: Mitsubishi UFJ's \$5.6 billion bid earlier this month for Thailand's Bank of Ayudhya and Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corp.'s agreement to buy a 40 percent stake in Indonesia's PT Bank Tabungan Pensiunan Nasional for about \$1.5 billion.

But Japan also took top spot in terms of the overall volume of such regional agreements, followed closely by Thai and Singaporean firms, said Dealogic, which counts deals in its data from the moment they are announced.

The Thai bank tie-up comes after Japan's largest lender said it had agreed to buy a 20 percent stake in state-owned VietinBank for about \$743 million, the largest-ever foreign investment in Vietnam's banking sector.

Toyota has said a new \$230 million plant in Indonesia will start producing vehicle engines by 2016, among a string of investments in



Japanese President Shinzo Abe at Thilawa Economic Zone during a visit to Myanmar early this year. Photo: Staff

the region by the world's biggest automaker.

"Japanese companies have been searching for places to invest in addition to China," said Toru Nishihama, economist at Dai-ichi Life Research Institute. "This trend is likely to continue for the next five to 10 years."

The ramped-up shopping spree has come even as the yen has weakened against the dollar since late last year - owing to a big-spending plan by Mr Abe to kickstart the economy - making overseas deals relatively more expensive for Japanese firms.

The 58-year-old premier's three-day tour to Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines is the latest of several trips he has made with business leaders since coming to power in December that aim to drum up new deals.

In May, Mr Abe announced a development aid and loan pack-

age for Myanmar worth hundreds of millions of dollars. Japan also agreed to cancel about \$1.8 billion of Myanmar's debts during a visit by Abe. He was accompanied by a 40-strong delegation of bosses from some of Japan's top companies.

"The Japanese government is very proactive about it," Mr Nishihama said. "It has become enticing for Japanese businesses to invest in Southeast Asia, with government-affiliated financial institutions."

Tokyo's shift in focus comes amid tight diplomatic tensions with neighbours and key trade partners South Korea and China, where a jump in wages has pushed up foreign firms' costs and made it a less appealing place to set up shop.

Relations have been frayed as Abe mused about watering down Japan's apology over wartime aggression while territorial disputes also tested nerves.

Last year, a long-running row with China flared over an island chain in the East China Sea, setting off a consumer boycott of Japanese brands in China, a major export market.

Hundreds of Japanese firms also have plants in China, including major automakers such as Toyota and Nissan, and the dispute hurt firms' view of the country.

Nissan chief Carlos Ghosn last year warned that the Japanese automaker - the most dependent on China among Japan's big three - would think twice about investing more in the country, where it already has several plants.

"Certainly beyond what we have decided, before going for further decisions in China, we will be very careful in assessing how much of an impact [the political situation] has on consumers' minds," Nissan's top executive told the Financial Times. - AFP

Corporate India sets sights on Myanmar

MYANMAR is the new battleground for Indian companies seeking to wrest business from Chinese firms.

Export-Import Bank of India, the state-controlled trade financing institution, has pledged US\$800 million in Myanmar, which includes funds to upgrade the Yangon-Mandalay railway and a plant for Tata Motors to assemble vehicles in the Southeast Asian nation, executive director David Rasquinha said.

China, which has beaten Indian companies in the race to invest in energy assets from Kazakhstan to Venezuela, has agreed to lend more than \$2.4 billion in Myanmar.

Exim Bank of India faces an uneven contest as China Development Bank, which has a loan book more than three times the size of the World Bank, and the Export-Import Bank of China offer cheap loans to snare business. The Indian lender

plans to sign credit agreements of as much as \$500 million by next month to participate in an economy that the IMF forecasts will expand 7 percent annually over the next five years.

"We shouldn't get pessimistic because competition is there," Mr Rasquinha said. "We should be seeing the size of the pie and fighting smart." The lender expects to mirror some of its African success in Myanmar.

Exim Bank is trying to "excite" Indian companies to conduct business in Myanmar, Mr Rasquinha said.

The lender charges a floating 50 basis point over the London interbank offered rate to a fixed 2pc on overseas lines of credit.

India in 2010 approved plans by state-owned ONGC and GAIL India to invest a combined \$1.3 billion in natural gas projects in Myanmar. - Bloomberg

UNOPS

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

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3.	Field Finance Assistant (Roving) (LICA 3)	Yangon	National	31-July-2013
4.	Senior Finance Officer/Deputy Financial Management Officer (NOC)	Yangon	National	4-August-2013
5.	Administrative Analyst (NOA)	Yangon	National	4-August-2013
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HOUSE OF THE WEEK



A single flight

ASKING K270 million for a walk-up apartment is a tall order, but that's what the owner of this 1600-square-foot, twin-level unit at Anawrahta Housing in Kamaryut township is seeking.

If you take this apartment, however, you'll only have to battle one flight of stairs since it's on the first floor.

The Anawrahta development sits between Pyay and Insein roads and includes its own security to guard over the walled compound. Each apartment comes with one parking space.

The lower level has no partitioning, a simple tiled floor and white walls. Upstairs there is one double bedroom, a single bedroom, two separate bathrooms and a small shrine room. All have parquet flooring. There are also three air-conditioning units in the apartment.

Plenty of windows on both floors give the apartment a surfeit of natural lighting and ventilation. The price tag includes stylish curtains. If you like privacy it may be best to keep them shut.

— Ei Thae Thae Naing

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Stall prices surge at New Bogyoke



A man passes the site of New Bogyoke Market, which is being torn down for a new development. Stall prices are surging as owners expect to return to the site. Photo: Ko Taik

SHOPS at the New Bogyoke Market have skyrocketed in value since it was announced in May that the 6.525-acre site in central Yangon will be redeveloped by Shwe Taung Development.

The mixed-use project will include offices, residences, hotels and retail space when it opens in 2017, and its signature will be twin towers. The joint venture between Shwe Taung Development and Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC) will see the latter contribute the land as its share of the investment. Shwe Taung will pay for construction.

News of the development has led to a surge in prices for space at the market, according to its development committee chairman, U Soe Win. "Shop prices started rising last year when rumours of the redevelopment started," he told *The Myanmar Times*. "At that time, a 64-square-foot shop sold for K4 million or K5 million but immediately afterward the price doubled."

Since then prices have risen by 600 percent - to K60 million for a shop.

U Kyaw Nyunt, a joint secretary of the market development committee and owner of a clothing shop, said that even with prices so high, few shop owners are selling.

"Nobody is selling because everybody wants to wait until the new development is finished so they will get a space there," he said. "The developer has built a temporary market and we trust them."

Most shopkeepers predict a bright future, he added. However, shop owners who rent sites, such as pharmaceutical store owner Ko Win Htun, said the sudden interest in the market has tripled rental prices.

"When we moved to the temporary market, we lost a lot of customers because they did not know where we had moved," he

said. "We used to pay K40,000 to K50,000 a month, but now we have to pay about K150,000," he added.

Another medicine shop owner said business is better at the temporary market even though customers were lost in the move to it.

"The former market had some hard-to-find nooks where the shops struggled to make sales," he said. "But the temporary market is a nice place and is near bus stops," he said.

U Soe Win said the old market was built more than 30 years ago and shopkeepers had to do their own maintenance.

"We had to maintain the market ourselves because it was made from wood. Now we will get a new site in the new market without paying any extra money."

The New Bogyoke Market was built in December 1980, and filled from shops moved from Theingyi Market Building C. It housed 436 shops, more than 200 of which were pharmacies or medicinal stores.

Shops relocated to the temporary market, alongside Shwedagon Pagoda Road on June 27.

A spokesperson for YCDC's building department said a joint-venture contract was signed on May 11 after a tender was announced in state-run newspapers last year. "The company will invest 100 percent of the funds required for the construction," he said.

"The New Bogyoke Market will be one of the main markets in Yangon and we expect it will be popular with foreigners, so we want it to meet international standards," the spokesperson added.

However, the official allayed fears that the development would rise above the city's most famous landmark - Shwedagon Pagoda - saying it will not reach the 112-metre height of the pagoda.

TOKYO

Olympic bid inspires big plans

TOKYO, the front-runner city to host the 2020 Olympics, is planning its biggest housing complex in 42 years to lodge athletes, a move that could benefit developers such as Shimizu and Mitsubishi Estate.

The 95.4 billion yen (US\$958 million) Olympic Village complex would occupy a 44-hectare parcel of land next to Tokyo Bay and would be financed by developers, said Kenichi Kimura, who is in charge of the finances for the city's bid. The government separately plans to spend 153.8 billion yen for new construction and renovations at 11 sites, he said.

Tokyo is ahead of Istanbul and Madrid to be awarded the games when the International Olympic Committee announces its decision on September 7, according to GamesBids.com, a website that tracks the selection process. The village is planned on an area 28 percent larger than Disneyland Park in California and would be Tokyo's biggest since 1971 when a residential project called Tama New Town was built on the western outskirts of the capital.

"It would have quite a positive impact for the construction and the real estate market," said Yoji Otani, a Tokyo-based analyst at Deutsche Securities. "Construction companies would be able to receive huge orders and the government's investment in the Tokyo Bay area will help boost land values there."

The Tokyo Olympic bid committee plans to chose developers to build the athletes' housing complex by mid-2014. The economic effect of the games would be highest for the services industry at 651 billion yen, with the construction industry second with 475 billion yen, followed by the property sector with 152 billion yen, according to IOC estimates.

"The economic effect would go to the construction and the real estate sectors first," Mr Kimura said. The bid coincides with a recovery in the nation's construction industry after the March 2011 earthquake. Expectations that Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and the Bank of Japan's policies will end 15 years of deflation have also spurred optimism.

"I certainly expect to see an increase in activity in the property market as a result of the Olympics," Toyota Motor honorary chairman Fujio Cho said. — *Bloomberg*

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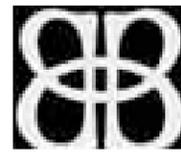
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New flats spark rising expectations

Tenants moving from a crumbling government-owned estate in Yankin township say they want to own their new apartments



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RESIDENTS of dilapidated government housing in Yankin township who are being relocated to newly built apartment blocks a few kilometres away say they would be less reluctant to move if they could become the owners of their new flats. They are also questioning the system used to assign them new homes and higher rents at the new location, despite its distance from a major road.

Representatives of the 160 families, all of whom received apartments because one member is a civil servant, say they are happy to move to newer, larger apartments, but the rent increase - from K51 a month (a rate set in the late 1960s) to over K10,000 a month - is too much for retirees.

Some say the location of the new apartments is also inconvenient. They are on a secondary road in the township while their current apartments are on its main thoroughfare: Yanshin Road.

U Han Htay, a resident of one of the six buildings that will be demolished, said that although he is grateful for the new apartment, he is disappointed with the government for shipping him and the other families to a site that is less accessible.

"I want the public and authorities to know that we expect more transparency," he said.

U Han Htay, like many residents of the six buildings, runs a small business from the flat his father received as part of his compensation for a career spent teaching. The family has lived in the flat since 1969.

Their building is one of hundreds built in a post-Independence boom of government housing. Sixty years later, the buildings are unsafe and unhygienic and many - if not most - are cheaper to tear down than repair. The residents of Yankin are the first from the government's 42 crumbling estates - which house an estimated 50,000 people nationwide - to be relocated.

However, U Han Htay says the main reason residents are reluctant to move is because they want to own the new flats.

"It's quite painful that we're not being allowed to own our flats, like residents of Shwe Ohn Pin housing do," one tenant said, referring to a government housing project nearby that gives ownership to occupants. Tenants moved into it earlier this year and were given ownership titles to their flats by the department of human settlement and housing development, which is also providing the apartments to the Yankin families.

U Yu Khaing, director of the administration and estate division at the department, said the government is doing its best to help the residents. "We're aiming to develop all of Yangon city, including the old Yankin site," he said, adding that officials had "negotiated" with the tenants and they will move into their new flats on August 7.



New buildings for tenants of a government-owned estate in Yankin township near completion. Photo: Aung Htay Hlaing

Construction of six new buildings is complete, but the question of ownership remains a stumbling block, he said.

Flats on the top two floors of each of the new six-storey buildings have been sold to staff at his department, U Yu Khaing said. The first four floors of each building are for the tenants being relocated from the crumbling estate, he added.

U Yu Khaing said that they will not be made owners of their new flats, but insisted that the tenants will be secure because the new apartments are on government land.

Although rents will rise, they are still quite low, he said. Tenants who now pay K51 a month for their flats will pay monthly rent of K10 per square foot at the new ones, U Yu Khaing said. The new apartments are 896 square feet each, putting monthly rent at K8960. A surcharge of 25 percent will also be added because the apartments are located in central Yangon.

Yankin township administrator U Win Aung said local authorities are negotiating with residents to ensure their relocation goes smoothly. "We're trying to calm them down ... Transportation from the old location to the new one is the township's responsibility," he added.

U Han Htay said the monthly rent-

al fee is affordable for most tenants, but not those who rely on a civil-service pension. He asked, however, how the department will manage buildings in which some residents are tenants and others are owners, saying it would be simpler if every occupant was an owner.

The department of human settlement has two types of contracts for residents of government housing - ownership and rental - and since it offered ownership contracts at Shwe Ohn Pin earlier this year demand for these contracts is spreading.

U Han Htay said he and other residents want to know who will be responsible for maintenance and repairs at the new buildings. With rents of K51 per month tenants took responsibility for repairs and upkeep, but when rent rises above K10,000

per month they expect the landlord to assume responsibility, he added.

U Thaug Kyaw, an MP from Yangon Region, is calling the department of human settlement to review its contracts.

"The process of relocation is always problematic, but issues about the rental system can cause delays. At Shwe Ohn Pin, authorities let tenants own the new apartments so those who can only rent are now dissatisfied. We need a system that is fair for all to create harmony," U Thaug Kyaw said.

MP U Thar Win, who represents Yankin, has raised the issue at the huttaw. He is calling for a standardised system under which all occupants of government housing receive rental contracts with maintenance and repair costs paid for by the department of human settlement.

'The process of relocation is always problematic, but issues about the rental system can cause delays.'

U Thaug Kyaw
Yangon Region MP



A trash collector passes a crumbling housing estate in Yankin township whose residents are being relocated to the one pictured above. Photo: Aung Htay Hlaing

BRIEFS

Athens

Island auction starts at €10 million

An uninhabited private island off the coast of Greece will go up for auction at a starting price of €10 million (US\$13.2 million) in September, the company organising the sale announced on July 25.

The sale of the island, part of the Spalathronisia archipelago that sits 500 metres from the Halkidiki peninsula, a tourist hotspot in northern Greece, is just the latest from the country's crisis-hit landowners.

Greece's privately owned islands have been sold off in great numbers as the government attempts to refill its coffers after four years of economic crisis.

COLOMBO

China to build city in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka has signed a deal with a Chinese company to build a US\$1.4 billion city complex on reclaimed land near the capital's harbour, an official said on July 25.

The state-run Sri Lanka Ports Authority (SLPA) will reclaim 230 hectares next to the new Colombo South port, said SLPA chairman Priyath Bandu Wickrama.

He said the SLPA finalised a deal under which China Communications Construction Company (CCCC) will invest \$1.43 billion to build a Port City that will change the coastline in the capital.

"We are moving toward the sea to reclaim land and build a mini city," Mr Wickrama said during a visit to the port.

"We have finalised the deal with CCCC and construction will begin by September. We hope to complete the land reclamation within 39 months," he added, without saying when the deal was struck.

Miami

Frenzy over auction of Versace villa

The firm auctioning off slain fashion mogul Gianni Versace's former villa claims the luxury Florida property has sparked a frenzy among potential foreign buyers.

The owners hope the buzz generated by an auction on September 17 will convince someone to part with more than US\$40 million for the Casa Casuarina. The villa "is the Mona Lisa of real estate in South Florida," said realtor Jill Eber. "You can see, you can feel Versace's vision, Versace's soul everywhere," she added. - AFP

SHANGHAI

China curbs extravagant spending on govt offices

CHINA has banned government departments, Communist Party agencies and state-owned companies from constructing new office buildings for five years as the country seeks to cut wasteful spending.

The ban includes construction for purposes of training, meetings and accommodation, the government said in a statement on its website yesterday, calling for resources to be spent instead on developing the economy and improving public welfare. Projects that have already won approval and are not under construction should also be halted, the government said. All localities should report on the implementation of the new rules by September 30, according to the statement issued on July 24.

President Xi Jinping, appointed as the ruling Communist Party's general secretary in November, last month pledged a "thorough cleanup" of the party amid a yearlong campaign aimed at ridding its ranks of bureaucracy and extravagance. China's economy grew 7.5 percent in the second quarter and is at risk of the weakest annual expansion in 23 years.

"The main purpose of the call for a ban on new government buildings is largely symbolic in that these are a highly visible sign of government officials misusing public monies," said Andrew Wedeman, author of *Double Paradox: Rapid Growth and Rising Corruption in China*. "A real assault on corruption, however, requires a much less visible, long-term effort to attack the causes of corruption, not just those involved and the visible symbols of corruption," he added.

The ban applies to courts, prosecutors, labour unions and youth leagues, according to the statement. Some departments and local authorities have recently built office compounds in violation of regulations, which has hurt the image of the party and the government, according to the statement.

Finance departments should not release funding for projects without proper approvals and land agencies should not grant property-use rights, according to the statement. Restoration of buildings with outdated facilities is allowed, but such projects must be designed to remove safety risks. - Bloomberg

Broken cable means slow(er) internet this month

AUNG KYAW NYUNT
zeezee383@gmail.com

A FAULT in an underwater cable linking Myanmar internet users to the outside world means connections will be slower than usual for about a month, state-run newspapers announced July 22.

Myanma Posts and Telecommunications (MPT) are launching an expedition in conjunction with a Singapore-based underwater cable repair team to repair the fault which developed in cable SEA-ME-WE 3 at about 5pm on July 22, reports said.

In the meantime, MPT has warned users that, until the repairs are finished – in about a month – surfing the internet may lead to more capsizes than usual. A number of businesses in Yangon have said they've already noticed the difference.

"Users are having difficulty because of this problem," said U Thet Nin Oo from Chit Chat internet café in Lathar township. "Now, the number of customers using the internet in our café is down. Some people go back home again because the connection is so bad. Our business has decreased a little." Online businesses are also having

problems.

"We cannot update our website," said Ma Thet Su Mon from www.Motors.com.mm. "We are so unhappy. Our work is decreasing so badly because of this problem. We hope a good internet connection will return soon."

Ko Nay La, owner of Exact internet café in North Dagon township, also reported problems. "Now the internet connection is very slow. When customers ask me why we explain about this [the broken cable]. Customers making downloads are having difficulty. There are few internet users and online gamers are not playing in my internet café. Only LAN [local area network] game players are playing."

Ma Ohnmar Oo, director of sales at Golden Orbit International Travels and Tours, has found the lack of reliable access has cut down her productivity and jeopardised customers' travel plans.

"We cannot do online air bookings and cannot open email. I tried to send an important email yesterday but it is not sending yet. I also cannot read email. I cannot do my work all day."

Even more concerning for local

entrepreneurs is the effect the shortage will have on Myanmar's reputation abroad. Though Myanmar has cast off its status as a pariah nation, desperately needed foreign investment has yet to roll in owing to a lack of dependable infrastructure.

"I think [the internet shortage] makes [foreign investors] nervous," said Mr. Jeremy Rathjen, vice president of Thura Swiss consultancy in Yangon, "[Internet] is such a key piece of infrastructure."

He pointed out that this same problem has occurred several times in the last decade, making industries that depend on high speed internet, such as banking, wary of setting up shop in Myanmar.

Speaking over the phone to *The Myanmar Times*, he said Myanmar is unlikely to develop dependable internet service for some time, and catching up to ASEAN nations like Vietnam and Thailand is "a long way off."

He added that the coming of Telenor and Ooredoo's mobile phone networks could alleviate internet shortages "in the short term", but stressed that proper landlines are the only real solution. "You can't have an office full of people working on their phones."

World's cheapest computer gets millions tinkering

THE world's cheapest computer, costing just \$25, has astonished its British creators by selling almost 1.5 million units in 18 months.

The Raspberry Pi is now powering robots in Japan and warehouse doors in Malawi, photographing astral bodies from the United States and helping to dodge censorship in China.

"We're closing in on one and a half million [sales] for something that we thought would sell a thousand," said Eben Upton, executive director of the Raspberry Pi Foundation.

"It was just supposed to be a little thing to solve a little problem."

"We've sold many more to children than we expected to sell, but even more to adults. They're using it like Lego to connect things up."

The device, which runs the open-source Linux operating system, was designed as an educational tool for children to learn coding.

But its potential for almost infinite tinkering and customisation has fired up the imaginations of hobbyists and inventors around the world.

Tokyo inventor Shota Ishiwatari has created a small humanoid robot run by a Pi, which can tell you the weather, manage your diary and even make coffee.

"I wanted to create something by using a 3D printer and the Raspberry Pi – two cool items," he told AFP, adding that he also wanted to demonstrate the potential of the microcomputer.

"Many Raspberry Pi users did not know how to have fun with the chip. I wanted to present practical ways to play with it."

Upton and his colleagues first thought of creating a cheap computer suited to programming when they were teaching computer science at Cambridge University.

They noticed that children of the wired generation lacked the day-to-day experience of coding that was so formative for the computer geeks who grew up in the 1980s.

"They didn't have the grungy familiarity with the dirty bits, the hacking," Upton told AFP.

"The theory of computer science is maths, but the practice is a craft, like carpentry."

Upton reminisces happily about his childhood coding on a BBC Micro, a rugged early personal computer from 1982.

Back then, you had to know a computer "language" in order to use one at all. But home computers are now so complex that parents often ban children from interfering with the underlying code.

Upton and his colleagues saw that developments in

technology meant something like the Micro could now be created for a fraction of the cost, in pocket size, with the capacity to run multimedia programs.

The team behind the Pi grew as the project developed; it now includes David Braben – the designer of a classic Micro game, *Elite* – and tech entrepreneur and investor Jack Lang.

By 2012, with Upton now working for a chip design firm, the Pi was ready to launch.

Demand for the device, assembled in Wales, was so high that the websites of its distributors crashed.

User groups called Raspberry Jams now meet monthly in cities from Manchester to Singapore to share ideas.

A Raspberry Jam brought together the team behind a Pi camera that will photograph rhinos and other endangered animals in east Africa, generating data on their habits and on poaching.

The Instant Wild system, backed by the Zoological Society of London, already operates in several countries, beaming images via satellite to park rangers and to an app that crowdsources identifications of animals.

But by replacing expensive purpose-built equipment with cheaper Raspberry Pis, Instant Wild hopes to vastly expand

its work.

A grid of 100 Pi cameras will be set up in 2015 on a Kenyan ranch, while another Pi will make its way to Antarctica to record penguin behaviour.

"It used to be very expensive -- you'd have to run a laptop, with a huge car battery to power the thing. This saves countless power and it's easy for it to send out alerts automatically," said Alasdair Davies, technical advisor to the project.

Upton, however, is focused closer to home.

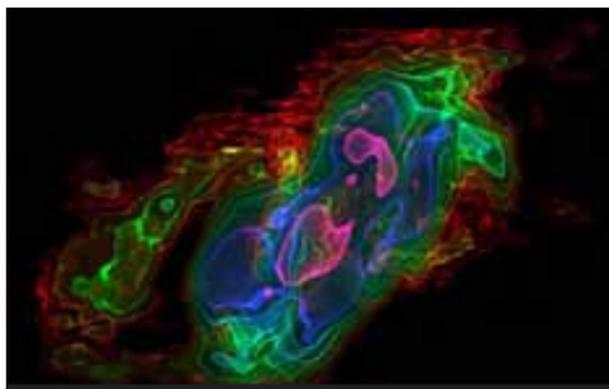
The Raspberry Pi Foundation is nonprofit and the design freely available, so he and his team will not be retiring on the proceeds of their success.

Instead they are working on software to make the Pi more accessible for children without expert help, and Upton remains intent on improving computer education.

The foundation is in discussions with the British government on a new IT curriculum.

For the country that invented some of the earliest computers, Upton feels that teaching coding should be a matter of national pride.

"The definition of computing is being reworked to be less about PowerPoint and more about computer programming -- the useful stuff. The real stuff" he said. – AFP



IN PICTURES

A handout photo provided on July 23, 2013 by the European Southern Observatory shows a view of a three-dimensional visualisation of cold carbon monoxide gas in the nearby starburst galaxy NGC 253 (The Sculptor Galaxy).

Photo : AFP

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U Kyaw Moe Htet, Attorney at Law

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Tel: 959 4500 59 247-8, Email: info@untlaw.com

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U Kyaw Moe Htet, Attorney at Law

U Nyunt Tin Associates International Limited,

Intellectual Property Division

Tel: 959 4500 59 247-8, Email: info@untlaw.com

Partnership in practice with

Ms. Saowaluck Lamlert, Attorney at Law

Siam Premier International Law Office Limited

Email: saowalck@siamlaw.co.th

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Dated: 29th July, 2013.

World

WORLD EDITOR: Douglas Long | dlong125@gmail.com

UN chief demands Morsi's release ahead of rallies

SAMER AL-ATRUSH

UN Chief Ban Ki-moon called for the release of Egypt's deposed president Mohamed Morsi as his supporters and the military who toppled him sought to defuse soaring tensions ahead of rival rallies Friday.

Ban demanded that Morsi and his high-level backers "be released or have their cases reviewed transparently without delay," said deputy UN spokesman Eduardo del Buey.

Morsi and several Muslim Brotherhood leaders have been detained since the military drove him from power on July 3 in response to massive protests calling for his ouster.

Taking a step back after outraging Islamists and sparking concern in Washington, the military insisted on Thursday that it was not targeting Morsi's backers in calling for a mass rally to counter "terrorism and violence."

Police said they were planning large-scale reinforcements to secure Friday's rallies, amid fears they could turn into a massive showdown between Islamists demanding Morsi's reinstatement and an array of opponents, including the military.

Egypt's military has set a 48-hour deadline, which expires late on Friday, after which it will decisively deal with "violence and terrorism," according to a statement posted on a

military-linked Facebook account.

Military chief Abdel Fattah al-Sisi had issued the deadline, it said, at the end of which, "the strategy for dealing with violence and terrorism will change...appropriately to deal guarantee security and stability."

A senior army official told AFP the statement did not reflect the military's point of view, although it appeared on a "page with links to the armed forces".

"The 48-hour ultimatum is a political invitation," the officer said. "It doesn't mean after 48 hours we are going to crack down."

Hisham Qandil, prime minister before Morsi was pushed aside by the army on July 3, on Thursday proposed a three-stage roadmap that would start with confidence-building steps.

In a video recording posted on YouTube, the former premier said both sides should refrain from marches and hold rallies only in fixed locations.

Qandil was among the representatives of Morsi's camp in a meeting with EU diplomat Catherine Ashton last week.

He also called for the release of prisoners detained in the days leading up to Morsi's ouster by the military, and those detained since.

A delegation should be allowed to visit Morsi, detained by the army since his overthrow, to check on his health,

he added.

Earlier Thursday, the fugitive leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, Mohamed Badie, urged Egyptians to peacefully make a "stand for freedom and legitimacy, and against the bloody coup".

The United States on Wednesday expressed its concern at Sisi's call. After his comments, Washington, which has close ties with Egypt's military, announced it would suspend a delivery of F-16 warplanes.

In its statement Thursday, the military said Sisi's "call was not a threat to any political group in particular".

Army-installed interim president Adly Mansour's spokesman, who had supported Sisi's call, on Thursday called for peaceful rallies and cautioned against vigilantism.

The Brotherhood and allied Islamist groups had denounced Sisi's call as "an announcement of civil war".

Senior Brotherhood leader Essam al-Erian said Morsi loyalists would not be intimidated by the army chief's call for mass rallies. "Your threat will not prevent millions from continuously protesting," Erian wrote on Facebook.

London-based rights group Amnesty International also criticised the decision in a statement Thursday.

"Given the security forces' routine use of excessive force, such a move is likely to lead to yet more unlawful killings," said Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui, Amnesty's deputy director of its Middle East and North Africa programme.

Almost 200 people have died in political unrest since the end of June, according to an AFP tally, many of them in clashes between Morsi's supporters and opponents and in militants' attacks in the Sinai. — AFP

'[The Military's] threat will not stop millions from continuously protesting.'

Essam al-Erian
Senior Muslim Brotherhood Leader

Indonesia prison system rocked by drug, sex scandal

INDONESIAN authorities suspended a prison warden Thursday after a model claimed she routinely met her boyfriend, who is on death row, in a private room at the jail to share sex and drugs.

In the latest scandal to hit the country's notoriously corrupt prison system, Vanny Rosyane, 22, said she had visited drugs kingpin Freddy Budiman three times a week at the Cipinang penitentiary complex in the capital, Jakarta.

"I would go at 11 in the morning and stay until around 5 pm. We would ML and take crystal meth," she told local media, using letters to indicate "make love".

"There were two rooms, we kept changing. One of them was the warden's room," she said, referring to Thurman

Hutapea, warden of the complex's jail for prisoners with drugs convictions.

Rosyane's account has led to a flurry of salacious media reports and comments on Twitter, some denigrating the couple and others calling for the warden to be sacked.

A spokesman for the correctional facilities department at the justice ministry said the prison warden was being questioned.

"He was suspended because we have to question him based on reports received Wednesday. We will wait for the results," he told AFP.

Budiman, 37, was sentenced to death on July 15 by a court in Jakarta for attempting to organise the smuggling of 1.4 million ecstasy pills from China.

Budiman was already in

prison for another narcotics offence when he tried to organise the drugs run.

The Cipinang penitentiary, where high-profile corruption convicts and wealthy drug dealers are locked up, has been long criticised for giving special favours to those who can pay.

The jail has been caught giving some prisoners large private rooms and allowing them to bring in maids, furniture, air conditioners and televisions.

The case emerged two weeks after a major jailbreak from a prison which had more than two times its capacity of inmates. Convicted terrorists were among those who escaped.

The jailbreak on the island of Sumatra prompted calls for action on the country's overstretched prison system. — AFP



Pope Francis arrives on the popemobile at Rio de Janeiro's iconic Copacabana beachfront for his welcome.

1.5 million Brazil to see 'pope of th

A HUGE crowd of 1.5 million Catholics greeted Pope Francis on Brazil's Copacabana beach on Thursday after the pontiff toured a notorious Rio slum to defend the cause of the poor.

Latin America's first pope was confronted with starkly contrasting images of life in the tropical metropolis on the fourth day of his visit to Brazil, from its ritzy seafront to its impoverished hillside favelas.

A teeming swathe of young Catholics joined dancers swaying to samba beats on Copacabana for World Youth Day, braving cold rain and wind to cheer the Argentine-born pope who has championed a "poor Church for the poor".

"I always heard that the Cariocas [Rio residents] didn't like cold and rain. Your faith is stronger than cold and rain," the pope said as he was treated to religious choirs, samba songs and dance routines.

Pope Francis repeated a theme of his weeklong visit, urging young Catholics to shun the trappings of materialism and put Jesus Christ at the center of their lives.

"Possessions, money and power can give a momentary thrill, the illusion of being

happy, but they end up possessing us and making us always want to have more, never satisfied," he said.

Maria Aparecido, 53, travelled from Sao Paulo with her eight-year-old daughter to see the pope, who had arrived in Copacabana by helicopter before being paraded along the coastline in a jeep with open sides.

"I would have liked to get closer to him, to touch him," Aparecido said as she watched the pope on a giant screen on Copacabana. "He is the pope of hope. I hope he will change the Church. We want a simpler Church of the poor."

Stefania Burgos, a 25-year-old from Ecuador, said "seeing the pope and brothers and sisters from the world over gives me great joy. I see big changes with this pope. He will revolutionize the Catholic Church."

Vatican officials have made no secret of the fact that the pope's first trip abroad since his election aims to re-energise his flock. While Brazil remains the world's biggest Catholic country, its flock has shrunk while Evangelical churches grow.

The massive beach ceremony followed his visit to one of the city's notoriously violent slums, where he waded into Brazil's tense political and social debate over corruption and social injustice that erupted in massive protests last month.

"Dear young friends, you have a particular sensitivity towards injustice, but you are often disappointed by facts that speak of corruption on the part of people who put their own interests before the common good," he said.

"To you and to all, I repeat: never yield to discouragement, do not lose trust, do not allow your hope to be extinguished," he told thousands gathered

'I want the Church, parish colleges, the institutions to go into the streets.'

Pope Francis
Leader of the Holy See



Rebels say
conflict has
returned to DRC

WORLD 33

China sentences
fallen politician
Bo Xilai

WORLD 38-39



Closing
arguments in
Manning Trial

WORLD 35



me to World Youth Day ceremonies. Photo: AFP

ians thron e poor'

on a muddy soccer field in the rain-drenched Varginha.

Brazil was rocked by the largest street protests in two decades last month, when more than a million people took to the streets to condemn corruption, poor public services and the cost of hosting the 2014 World Cup.

During the beach event, some 500 people held an anti-corruption protest in front of the Rio state governor's luxurious apartment building.

The 1,000-resident Varginha slum is one of a dozen favelas where police have evicted drug gangs and restored security ahead of next year's World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games.

The pope, referring to the police drive to restore order in the city's violence-wracked favelas, said tough tactics are not a solution to poverty.

"No amount of pacification will be able to last, nor will harmony and happiness be attained in a society that ignores, pushes to the margins or excludes a part of itself," he said.

"A society of that kind simply impoverishes itself. It loses

something essential. Let us always remember this: Only when we are able to share do we become truly rich."

Under tight security, he walked through the ramshackle streets, stopping to chat with delighted residents, kissing babies and accepting a flower garland around his neck.

He visited the humble house of a slum resident, Maria Lucia dos Santos da Penha, who said she told the pope that "this was the best gift I've ever had in my life".

He then blessed the altar of the 62-seat Sao Jeromino Emiliani church, a tiny brick building that faces competition from the favela's four Evangelical temples.

Later, addressing fellow Argentines gathered in Rio's cone-shaped cathedral, the pope hammered home his message that clergymen must live must live and work among ordinary people.

"I want the Church, parish colleges, the institutions to go into the streets," he said.

The pope returns to Copacabana on Friday for a re-enactment of the Stations of the Cross. — AFP

Balkan leaders hold first gathering

EIGHT western Balkan presidents held Thursday their first-ever summit, aimed at promoting cooperation and getting more countries into the European Union, two decades after the bloody breakup of Yugoslavia.

The informal gathering in Slovenia, attended also by French President Francois Hollande, brought together the Albanian president and seven counterparts from the former Yugoslavia -- including Serbia and Kosovo, whose ties remain frayed.

Hollande said he supported the countries joining the bloc -- as Slovenia and most recently Croatia have done -- but that more work had to be done on reconciliation and on political, economic and institutional reforms.

"Not everything has been resolved in this region and there remain issues requiring vigilance and attention," Hollande told a news conference with Slovenian President Borut Pahor.

"But I came here to say to the eight heads of state that as the countries in the Balkans seek integration into the European Union, France

is on their side," he said.

Despite the EU's woes, Croatia on July 1 became the 28th member of the bloc, the first country to join since 2007. Slovenia joined in 2004 and three years later adopted the euro currency.

In June, the EU green-lighted the start of accession talks with Serbia after it struck a landmark agreement on April 19 to normalise ties with breakaway former province Kosovo.

At the same time EU leaders adopted a mandate to start talks on an agreement with Kosovo, whose independence is not universally recognised, even among EU members. The talks could pave the way for membership negotiations.

Albania applied in 2009 and was twice rejected and Bosnia-Herzegovina has yet to apply for membership status.

President Pahor said the leaders had agreed to meet again in Croatia.

"The goal of this process is to change the image of this region so that, instead of being seen as a region spreading fears it will be seen as one that offers opportunities," Pahor said.

— AFP

World abolishing death penalty, despite hiccups

THE number of death penalties carried out worldwide dropped last year according to an annual report released Friday by an Italian non-governmental organisation.

The global number dropped from 5,004 in 2011 to 3,967 in 2012, while the number of countries that abolished capital punishment rose from 155 to 158 over the same period, the Italian NGO Hands off Cain said.

In China, the number of death penalties has dropped 10 percent each year since 2007, when a new law meant death sentences had to go before the Supreme Court.

Despite the significant decrease, China remains the first country on the Hands off Cain blacklist, followed by Iran, which carried out 580 executions in 2012, and Iraq, where the number of death penalties almost doubled over the last year to 129.

Although 33 of the 40 countries that still have the death penalty are ruled by despots, some "liberal democracies" returned to capital punishment in 2012, the report said.

"While China seems to be progressively improving, some liberal democracies seem to be going the opposite way," said Sergio d'Elia, Hands off Cain secretary.

158

The number of countries that have abolished capital punishment as of 2012.

In 2011, of the "liberal democracies"; just the United States and Taiwan carried out executions, while in 2012 Japan, Botswana and India began using capital punishment again after many years in which the practice was suspended.

This year, Indonesia joined them, carrying out its first death penalty in five years.

"Countries that are going backwards instead of going forwards are what worries us the most," Bonino said.

In the United States, abolitionists appear to be gaining ground: "In the last six years an American state has switched over to the right side every year," the NGO's president Marco Pannella said.

Bonino said she was disappointed that "we cannot call Europe a death penalty-free continent because of Belarus, where three executions took place in 2012". — AFP

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Partnership in practice with

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Talks under way for new S. Sudan govt.

SOUTH Sudan's President Salva Kiir on Thursday held consultations with a view to setting up a new government, two days after firing his entire cabinet, a government official said.

"The president wants to have time to consult before coming out with the government," Mayen Makol, spokesman at the foreign affairs ministry, told AFP.

He declined to say how long the consultations would last.

"It could be three days, four days, a week," he said, adding that in the meantime ministries are being run by senior civil servants.

In a series of decrees signed Tuesday evening Kiir sacked his 28 ministers and their deputies as well as 17 police brigadiers and he announced his next government would consist of only 19 ministries.

A joint statement Thursday from the African Union, Canada, Norway, Switzerland, Britain and the United States urged all parties in South Sudan "to take all measures necessary to maintain calm and prevent violence".

On Thursday the South Sudanese capital Juba, where security was beefed up following Tuesday's decrees, was calm.

The diplomats further called on

South Sudan's leaders "to expedite the formation of a new cabinet".

"We encourage South Sudan to do so in a manner that reflects the diversity of the South Sudanese people," the statement said.

"It is critical that South Sudan stay true to the vision it laid out for itself two years ago at its independence. That vision can only be realized through sustained commitment to democracy and good governance, justice and accountability, and respect for rule of law and the human rights of all of South Sudan's people," it went on.

Among those fired was Kiir's deputy and major political rival Riek Machar.

Another of Kiir's political rivals, Pagan Amum, secretary general of the ruling Sudan People's Liberation Movement, was suspended and is being investigated for "mismanagement" and "insubordination". He was banned late Thursday from leaving Juba during the inquiry or speaking to the media, an official statement read on national television said.

Many of the ministers were key figures in the rebel SPLM or its armed wing that fought a brutal 1983-2005 war against the government of Sudan, which led to a 2011



Sudanese tribesmen and government officials attend a meeting in Localities, in el-Fasher, North Darfur. Photo: AFP

referendum in which South Sudan voted overwhelmingly to split from the north.

Fired vice president Machar, of the Dok Nuer people from the key oil-producing Unity state, is a controversial figure but commands loyalty among many branches of the Nuer, who form an integral part of the foot soldiers of the new nation's ex-rebel army.

He has made no secret of his desire to challenge Kiir for the presidency in elections due in 2015.

However, he fought on both sides of the civil war, leading a splinter SPLM faction that sided with the Sudanese government, battling troops commanded by Kiir, who comes from the Dinka people.

Machar's troops are accused of a brutal massacre in the ethnic Dinka town of Bor in 1991.

"This latest move is part of an

ongoing struggle in the highest levels of South Sudan's political leadership," said Akshaya Kumar of the US-based Enough Project, which campaigns for peace in the Sudans.

However, Charles Manyang, foreign affairs undersecretary and now temporarily in charge of the ministry, told reporters the sackings were a "legitimate exercise" of power by Kiir.

Last month, Machar led talks with Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir to ease tensions after his government threatened to halt South Sudanese oil flows transported through Sudan, worth billions of dollars to both impoverished neighbours.

Amum was the top negotiator with Sudan at long-running African Union-mediated talks over a raft of issues left unresolved at independence, including border demarcation and oil exports. — AFP

Putin hosts world's Orthodox leaders

PRESIDENT Vladimir Putin praised close ties between the Kremlin and the powerful Orthodox Church as he hosted top Orthodox clergy from across the world Thursday to mark the 1025 year anniversary of the arrival of Christianity in Russia.

Convening the heads and senior members of 15 Orthodox Churches for an unprecedented meeting at the Kremlin, Putin praised the moral authority of the Church as he seeks to strengthen his power following huge protests against his 13-year rule.

"It is important that relations between the state and the church are developing at a new level," Putin said in televised remarks, with Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill by his side.

"We act as genuine partners and colleagues to solve the most pressing domestic and international tasks, to implement joint initiatives for the benefit of our country and people," he told the black-robed clerics.

Alongside Kirill, those present included Patriarch Theodore II of Alexandria, Theophilos III of Jerusalem and Ilia II of Georgia, the Kremlin said.

Also present were the heads of the Bulgarian, Serbian, Polish and Cypriot Orthodox Churches. Together they represented more than 227 million faithful.

Conspicuously, however, Istanbul-based Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I did not go to the meeting and was represented by a lower-ranking cleric.

The Russian Orthodox Church was suppressed under Communism but has staged an astonishing recovery in post-Soviet Russia to become one of the country's most powerful institutions.

Putin, an ex-KGB agent who has said his mother had him secretly christened in the Soviet Union, has enjoyed unstinting support from the Church throughout his years in power, including during the unprecedented protests that broke out in Moscow and other big cities in the winter of 2011.

Since returning to the presidency for a third term last year, Putin has been promoting an unflinchingly conservative agenda in a move aimed at cementing his support among blue-collar workers and elderly Russians, his core backers.

This summer Russia's parliament passed a law imposing jail terms of up to three years on those who offend religious believers.

The controversial bill was proposed after several members of rock band Pussy Riot belted out a "punk prayer" against Putin and his close ties with the Church last year.

Two Pussy Riot members, Nadezhda Tolokonnikova and Maria Alyokhina, are now serving two years in a penal colony after being convicted last August on charges of hooliganism motivated by religious hatred.

The Russian parliament also adopted a law imposing jail terms for people promoting homosexual "propaganda" to minors, while another recently adopted law bans gay and lesbian couples in foreign countries from adopting Russian children.

Historian Alexei Beglov said Putin was the first Russian leader to have convened so many heads of Orthodox Churches, calling the meeting a "political gesture".

But he said it was not appropriate to speak of the coalescence of church and state in Russia, noting Putin was simply using the Church to advance his political goals.

"Putin is trying to exploit the Orthodox religion to strengthen the authoritarian system," he said. — AFP

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DR Congo rebels claim fighting has resumed

REBELS claimed Wednesday they had killed more than 400 army troops since fighting resumed last week in the Democratic Republic of Congo's volatile east, as each side accused the other of new attacks.

"Since July 14, 401 soldiers have been killed and several wounded among FARDC [government forces] ranks, while the M23 has had six deaths and 14 wounded," said Vianney Kazarama, military spokesman for the M23 rebel movement.

The army claimed on July 15, a day after the latest fighting erupted, that its forces had killed 120 rebels and lost 10 troops.

Neither toll could be independently verified.

Both sides meanwhile accused each other of launching new attacks Wednesday near the flashpoint city of Goma.

"The M23 is starting to attack," said an army officer after two bombs exploded in the town of Kanyarucinya, 12 kilometres (7 miles) north of Goma.

Just after the explosions, government troops with heavy weapons were deployed toward the town, an AFP correspondent said.

The rebels claimed the army had in fact attacked their positions first and accused them of deliberately targeting civilians.

"Two FARDC helicopters have just dropped multiple bombs" on a neighbourhood



A M23 soldier stands guard in the village of Kimbuba, in a M23 rebel-held territory, in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Photo: AFP

in Rumangabo, a town 45 kilometres north of Goma where the M23 has taken over a large military base, the rebel group said in a statement.

It called the attack "insane and irresponsible," and said three children had been burnt to death in their home, one man killed and several civilians wounded.

"Most of the victims are civilians," said rebel spokesman Kazarama.

The United Nations' peacekeeping mission in DR Congo, its largest in the world, said the army had reacted "quickly and

firmly" to M23 attacks, retaking a key hill in Kanyarucinya.

This had "a devastating psychological effect" on rebel morale, said the peacekeeping mission.

The UN has begun deploying its first-ever offensive force to DR Congo to fight the M23 and other armed groups. About two-thirds of the new 3,000-troop force is in place, and the UN said last week it was ready to send them into battle.

The rebellion by the M23, a group formed by Tutsi ex-soldiers who mutinied from

the army in April 2012, is the latest to ravage the vast central African country's mineral-rich but conflict-torn east.

The M23 occupied Goma - the capital of North Kivu province and the hub around which most of the fighting has revolved - for 10 days in November, before withdrawing from the city under international pressure.

The latest bout of fighting has extinguished a truce that had lasted from late May, when UN chief Ban Ki-moon visited the region, until mid-July. - AFP

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Haliburton destroyed evidence

HALLIBURTON, the US energy services giant, has admitted destroying evidence relating to the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil rig explosion in the Gulf of Mexico, the worst such disaster in American history.

A Justice Department statement released late Thursday said the company had agreed to plead guilty to criminal conduct that occurred when it was carrying out its own post-accident investigation.

Eleven people died and 4.9 million barrels of oil gushed into the Gulf over a three-month period after the explosion, with BP - who leased Deepwater Horizon - ending up paying billions of dollars in compensation and cleanup costs.

Halliburton Energy Services, BP's contractor, had been accused by the British oil giant of destroying evidence. BP has also asked Halliburton to pay damages stemming from the April 2010 accident off the coast of Louisiana.

The Justice Department statement said Halliburton -

which constructed the cement casing of the well at the centre of the disaster - had carried out its own internal investigations in May and June the same year.

However, the results of computer simulations conducted as part of that probe were ordered to be destroyed and were never recovered, it said.

In addition to a guilty plea - which is subject to court approval - Halliburton has agreed to pay the maximum statutory fine of \$200,000. The company said in a statement that it would make a separate and voluntary \$55 million payment to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

The disaster wreaked havoc on the Gulf region's environment and economy.

The central subject of the cooperation and guilty plea deal was the number of heavy metal collars, known as centralizers, placed at various points on the cement casing of the Macondo well that eventually exploded.

The Justice Department

said that prior to the blowout, Halliburton had recommended that 21 centralizers be used, but BP instead opted for six.

Halliburton's post-accident tests failed to back up its earlier suggestion.

"These simulations indicated that there was little difference between using six and 21 centralizers. (The) Program Manager was directed to, and did, destroy these results," the Justice Department statement said.

In a later incident in or around June 2010, similar evidence was also destroyed when Halliburton's cementing technology director asked another more experienced employee to repeat the simulations.

When he "reached the same conclusion" he was directed to "get rid of" the simulations, the statement said.

"In agreeing to plead guilty, Halliburton has accepted criminal responsibility for destroying the aforementioned evidence," the Justice Department added.

Halliburton's statement said

the agreement with the Justice Department would conclude the criminal investigation into its actions over the giant spill.

"A Halliburton subsidiary has agreed to plead guilty to one misdemeanor violation associated with the deletion of records created after the Macondo well incident, to pay the statutory maximum fine of \$200,000 and to accept a term of three years probation," it said.

Several government probes have castigated BP, rig operator Transocean and Halliburton for cutting corners and missing warning signs that could have prevented the disaster.

Last year, BP agreed to pay \$4.5 billion in penalties and pleaded guilty to multiple criminal charges relating to the explosion and ensuing spill.

The company also spent more than \$14 billion on the response and cleanup and has paid another \$10 billion to businesses, individuals and local governments that did not join an ongoing class action lawsuit. - AFP

**IN PICTURES**

THE "Queen of the Pacific," one of the most notorious women linked to Mexico's drug trade, was sentenced Thursday to 70 months, which a US judge considered already served. Sandra Avila Beltran had been charged with being an accessory after the fact in keeping another drug lord from being apprehended.

A prominent figure in Mexico's infamous Sinaloa cartel, She had been accused of belonging to a trafficking organization dedicated to buying and transporting drugs between Colombia and the United States from at least January 1999 to March 2004. She will be deported to Mexico in the coming days.

Avila Beltran gained notoriety by smiling for the cameras and inspiring books and even a well-known ballad.

Photo: AFP

Cuba heavy metal band seeks asylum in US

SIX members of a Cuban heavy metal group requested political asylum after touching down in the United States, a band member told AFP on Wednesday.

The musicians, who left Havana on Sunday night, touched down in Miami in the early hours of Monday morning en route to a concert in Oakland, California.

"It's not something we had thought about until we got here," said bass player Fanny Tachin, confirming reports of the request which first appeared on Cafe Fuerte, a blog catering to Cuban immigrants in Florida.

Tachin said members of the band Hipnosis had lodged requests after lead singer

Ramiro Pupo decided to seek asylum.

"Once we saw that we all decided to follow," Tachin said.

Tachin said the musicians had "sentimental, family and economic" reasons for seeking asylum, noting that Pupo's daughter already lived in Miami while the mother of

another band member was also a US resident.

Thousands of Cubans try to flee their homeland every year for the United States, where they are guaranteed political asylum.

Tachin said the six band members planned to pursue their careers in the United States. - AFP

Manning a traitor: US prosecutor

US soldier Bradley Manning betrayed his country by passing secret files to "information anarchists" at WikiLeaks and knew al-Qaeda would see the documents online, a prosecutor said Thursday in closing arguments.

As Manning's espionage court-martial entered its final stage, the prosecution asked the judge to find him guilty of "aiding the enemy", dismissing the defense's portrait of the accused as a naive but well-intentioned truth-teller.

"He was not a troubled young soul, he was a determined soldier with the knowledge, ability and desire to harm the United States in its war effort," lead prosecutor Major Ashden Fein told the court.

"Your honor, he was not a whistleblower. He was traitor."

As an intelligence analyst in Iraq, Manning had pledged under oath to safeguard sensitive information held by the government, but he "abused and destroyed this trust", Fein said.

The 25-year-old Manning has already admitted to leaking hundreds of thousands of classified diplomatic cables and battlefield intelligence reports to the anti-secrecy website

WikiLeaks.

But he has denied other charges against him, including the most serious count that he knowingly helped Al-Qaeda.

That charge carries a possible life sentence, and civil liberties groups have warned that a guilty verdict could have a chilling effect on government whistleblowers and journalistic inquiry.

Displaying a photo of Manning smiling and looking "gleeful" - allegedly after he began his document dump to WikiLeaks - Fein said evidence in the court-martial showed Manning had wanted to wreak havoc.

Manning "wasn't interested in oaths", Fein said. "He was interested in making a name for himself."

Working in military intelligence in Iraq, Manning had been trained to know that "terrorists" use the internet to gather information for attacks against the United States, he said.

Manning was aware that WikiLeaks had been identified in three military intelligence reports as a possible threat to national security, as the site sought to expose classified material, according to Fein.

The prosecution depicted Man-

ning as agent for WikiLeaks after having corresponded with founder Julian Assange and others in the organisation.

From November to December 2009, Manning was "searching for topics related to one mission -- finding and disclosing what WikiLeaks wanted", Fein said.

The material Manning leaked included a cockpit video of a US Apache helicopter attack in Iraq that killed 12 people, including two Reuters employees.

Fein said Manning was irresponsible in releasing the video and that he did it because he thought it would be "cool" to pass the footage to a "bunch of anti-government activists and information anarchists".

In an online chat, Manning described the impact of his document dump as a "beautiful and horrifying thing", the prosecutor said.

"These are not the words of a humanist, but the words of an anarchist."

The defence is due to offer its closing argument on Friday. Then the judge, Colonel Denise Lind, will deliver a verdict possibly as soon as this weekend, three years after Manning



U.S. Army Private First Class Bradley Manning is escorted by military police as he leaves after the first day of closing arguments in his military trial. Photo: AFP

was arrested in Iraq.

Born in Oklahoma to an American father and a Welsh mother, the slight, bespectacled Manning has said he wanted to shed light on US foreign policy abuses.

Manning says he believed the reports he saw in his job "needed to be shared with the world" and that doing so "would help document the true cost of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan."

He has pleaded guilty to 10 lesser

charges of federal espionage, computer fraud and wrongful storage of classified information, which could carry a sentence of up to 20 years in prison.

Prosecutors are trying to prove 12 additional counts, including theft of US property, exceeding authorized access on a government computer and the "aiding the enemy" charge.

Even if he is acquitted of aiding the enemy, Manning faces a possible sentence of 154 years behind bars.

- AFP



Teenage, women's rights activist Malala Yousafzai accepting an award in Spain. Photo: AFP

Pakistan's Burka Avenger fights for education

A NEW cartoon superhero disguised in a flowing black burka is set to debut on Pakistani television next month in an animated series which follows her battle for girls' education in Pakistan.

The Urdu-language show charts the adventures of Burka Avenger, a mild-mannered teacher who uses her superpowers to fight local gangsters trying to close down the girls' school where she works.

While set in the fictional town of Halwapur, the world of Burka Avenger will resonate in Pakistan where Taliban militants have prevented thousands of girls from going to school in the country's northwest and attacked activists campaigning for girls' education.

In what's billed as an action-comedy Burka Avenger, helped along by three schoolchildren, uses pens and books as projectile weapons to ward off the evil Baba Bandook and his henchmen.

Aaron Haroon Rashid, one of Pakistan's biggest pop stars, conceived the series as a medium through which to

emphasise the importance of girls' education.

Throughout Pakistan, nearly half of all children and nearly three quarters of young girls are not enrolled in primary school, according to UN and government statistics published late last year.

Last October a Taliban gunman shot teenager Malala Yousafzai in the head for campaigning for the right of girls to go to school in her home town in Swat Valley, northwest Pakistan.

Yousafzai survived the attack and earlier this month delivered a powerful speech at the UN in New York in which she vowed not to be silenced by terrorists.

The animation will be broadcast by private Geo television network from Sunday, the official Facebook page of Burka Avenger said.

"I have been working with my team at Unicorn Black for one year on this amazing TV series. The Burka Avenger iPhone game and music album is coming soon," Rashid said on his Facebook account. - AFP

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Protest songs rock a volatile Spain

IN a dark bar, Diego Rodriguez and his friends are thrashing out some of the wildest, angriest music in Spain: blistering guitars, keening punk vocals, barking saxophone and trumpet.

This is protest music, Spanish style – and after five years of on-and-off recession, it has an enthusiastic audience here in the working class Madrid suburb of Vallecas.

Dressed in black, young fans pogo on the dance floor, slamming into each other as the band rampages through “Familia Y Real”, its anthem against Spain’s increasingly unpopular monarchy.

“An illegal system, imposed by the sons of fascism! The Bourbon king is robbing me from dawn to dusk!” Diego sings, breaking off to lay on a catchy Caribbean ska rhythm with his trumpet.

“It is a very direct form of music, which deals with social issues,” says Diego, 32, a teacher by profession but currently unemployed, with brown hair down to his tattooed shoulders.

“Ska punk wasn’t very popular in Spain until about 10 years ago. But I think slowly people are starting to appreciate the spirit of punk,” he adds, smoking wearily after an hour roaring and hopping about on stage.

“A lot of our songs are about how bad the jobs situation is, and the political system that we don’t believe in. We try to focus the songs on our own experiences: being unemployed, earning no money, having to pay the mortgage.”

Like much alternative music in Spain, the songs by Diego’s band Oferta Especial – currently planning a new album – echo the mass street protests in Spain over recent years.

Like the demonstrators, singers complain of social injustice, economic hardship and political corruption, outraged by scandals that have even touched the conservative Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy.

At the hip-hop end of the spectrum, June saw the release of a new



Spanish musician Mala Rodriguez performs on the stage of the Mulafest Festival in Madrid. Photo: AFP

‘An illegal system, imposed by the sons of fascism...Bourbon king is robbing me from dawn till dusk!’

Lyric from ‘Familia Y Real’ by singer Diego Rodriguez

album by Mala Rodriguez, the Latin Grammy-winning princess of Spanish rap.

The first single from it, “La Rata”, alludes to what she calls a “crisis of values” in the country.

“There’s the prime minister, that bastard, why did we vote for him?” she moans, dropping her consonants in her sultry Andalusian accent as the rap mounts to a climax.

“I have heard a lot of musicians in Spain who are politically engaged and not afraid to express their an-

ger,” said Rodriguez, 34, known as “La Mala”, or “Bad Girl”.

“Rap was the only way I found to do it when I was young,” she told AFP. “Right now, in hard times when things are tight, you see who is armed for the fight.”

Observers say the mainstream music industry is resisting the wave of protest, however.

“La Rata” has made no mark on a Spanish top-40 chart dominated by international stars such as Jennifer Lopez and Rihanna.

La Mala’s new album is “an invective against complacent cultural attitudes towards the crisis our country is undergoing”, according to the editor-in-chief of the Spanish edition of Rolling Stone magazine, Beatriz G. Aranda.

“The groups that grab the attention of the media and public have a naive and individualistic vision of the world,” the editor told AFP.

“The protest song has taken on pejorative connotations in Spain and that has not helped.”

Known for rapping on social themes, Mala Rodriguez is proud of her roots in her native southern Andalusia – one of the parts of Spain hardest hit by the recession.

She says her style of rap is influenced by flamenco, the traditional gypsy lament native to her home region and itself an age-old form of social protest.

“Flamenco, like rock, is a music form created by those excluded and marginalised in a capitalist society,” explained Aranda. “Flamenco has been politically engaged since the beginning.”

Another Andalusian musician with flamenco roots, Chico Ocana, says he plans to release a new album of protest songs later this year.

Since the early 1990s he has fused flamenco vocals with blues and rock ‘n’ roll, singing poignant satirical ballads in a gravelly voice with soaring choruses.

His new album will mix in funk, rock and Latin styles, with lyrics about corruption scandals and the evictions of ruined homeowners that have sparked outrage in Spain.

“The songs are about protest, the crisis, the cuts, the war of the rich against the poor,” says Ocana, 56, recalling his own deprived upbringing in the south.

“I’ve been a child of crisis since I was born,” he says. “When nothing is being done, you have to make something happen. That is why I sing.”

– AFP

Life after the Islamists still a grind in Malian city of Gao

BOUREIMA HAMA

name@mymartimes.com.mm

AN ancient capital of West Africa’s Songhai empire, the Malian city of Gao was for centuries a bustling trade centre for Tuareg nomads taking lucrative camel caravans of gold, salt and dates across the Sahara desert.

These days, visitors are unlikely to find much business being done, the dusty tree-lined avenues emptied of many of the mud-brick shops which thrived before Islamist invaders occupied the city last year.

“Still no electricity, no banks, no government – Gao is living in a pre-historic age,” sighs a resident.

Gao will join the rest of the country in electing a president on Sunday, and it is in northern Mali’s largest city that the new head of state will have perhaps the heaviest workload.

The city of around 90,000 people on the banks of the Niger river, 320 kilometres (200 miles) southeast of Timbuktu, fell to Tuareg rebels last year along with the rest of the northern desert area comprising about 60 percent of Mali.

But they lost control to al Qaeda-linked radicals who imposed a brutal version of Islamic law, carrying out amputations and executions before Mali’s former colonial ruler France sent in troops in January and took back the cities of the north.

A United Nations stabilisation mission has largely replaced the French military and a post-election roadmap for peace is in place.

Yet the people of Gao have little reason for optimism.

In the gloom of a town hall typing pool, secretaries working for the local government strain to see their work as they bend over old-fashioned typewriters.

Electricity is something of a prized commodity, with each neighbourhood getting power for just a few hours a day.

Ravaged by conflict, the riverside town hall is emblematic of the battle faced by ordinary inhabitants to return to something like normality.

The building has undergone a partial revamp but “remains paralysed” due to a lack of essential fixtures and fittings, deputy mayor Aboubacar Toure told AFP.

The grinding cogs of local government, which seized up altogether during the occupation, are only just beginning to turn again.

“At least 80 percent of the officials in the region who fled on the arrival of the jihadists are not back yet,” the deputy said.

Those who are in place – the odd teacher, forestry agent or water management official – are largely natives of the region.

There is no visible police presence on the streets, where Malian security

forces patrol, backed by French and UN troops.

All is not hopeless, however, insists local government officer Zakaria Dicko.

“In a few months, we have managed to restore some archives destroyed by armed groups and we have established birth certificates for children born during the occupation,” he said.

But while the municipal authorities have managed to restart some functions, money – or the lack of it – is impeding any serious progress.

“The mayor can no longer collect taxes from traders. They say they have been ruined by the crisis and have not yet recovered,” deputy mayor Toure added.

In downtown ‘Washington’ market, traders explain that they simply cannot afford to contribute to the rebuilding of their city.

“Business is not doing well, so we will not pay anything,” says Alhassane, a grocer.

Leaning against the counter of his clothing store, Elhadj Dramane awaits customers who will probably never arrive.

He says he will vote on Sunday in the hope that the election will “change the game – end injustice, corruption and embezzlement”.

“If there is no change after, then the war against the jihadists will have been for nothing,” he says.



People pass by the closed entrance of an Ecobank branch, that was attacked by armed men a few months ago. Photo: AFP

Access to safe drinking water has also become a major problem in a city where, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the volume available decreased by 60 pc in the weeks after the conflict.

Fatimata, a young mother with her baby on her back, says she often has to re-supply from the cholera-ridden Niger river, “with all the risks of diseases that brings, especially since clinics lack essential medicines”.

Gao relies on the wet season to nourish stocks of rice, one of the main staples for its inhabitants, and the lack of rain during July has piled

on the pain for a population facing a daily struggle to survive.

“The rice fields that stretch along the river for several kilometres are drying out. This is a sign of bad harvests,” said Ali, a boatman.

Poverty may be more deeply ingrained since the occupation, but the privations suffered by the people of Gao are not new, says Idrissa Haman, a former NGO worker, now unemployed.

His aspirations for the new regime in Bamako are simply “that the new president also thinks of us”, as all the development efforts of previous governments were concentrated in the southern areas of the country. – AFP

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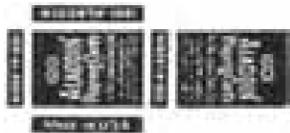
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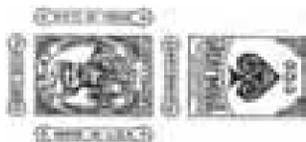
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Vietnam opposes China sea claims

VIETNAM'S president on Thursday voiced firm opposition to China's claims in the South China Sea but declined to back a Philippine bid to take the row to a UN tribunal.

On a visit to Washington, President Truong Tan Sang rejected China's so-called "nine-dash line" through which it claims virtually all of the strategic sea including islands close to neighbouring countries.

"We cannot find any legal foundation or scientific basis for such a claim and therefore it is the consistent policy of Vietnam to oppose the nine-dash line plan by China," Sang told the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

But Sang declined comment when asked if Vietnam would join the Philippines which in January said it was asking an arbitration panel of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea to declare China's claims invalid.

"As a member of the United Nations, the Philippines has the legal right to carry on with any proceedings they would like," Sang said.

The Philippines and Vietnam have led criticism of what they consider increasingly assertive claims by China in the South China Sea.

The Philippines has had especially tense relations with China, which seized the Scarborough Shoal, an outcrop claimed by Manila, after a two-month naval standoff last year.

But friction has eased slightly between Vietnam and China, with Sang visiting Beijing last month and agreeing to set up a hotline to try to prevent mishaps from escalating.

China separately has increasingly butted heads with Japan, which fears that Beijing is trying to exert control over resource-rich waters in the East China Sea.

Sang earlier Thursday met US President Barack Obama, who encouraged calm in the South China Sea.

Sang and Obama in a joint statement called for "the settlement of disputes by peaceful means" and renewed support for a code of conduct to manage potential mishaps.

- AFP

Archaeologist who led 'hobbit' discovery dies

THE Australian archaeologist who rocked the science world with his discovery of a tiny new species of human known as the "hobbit" has died after a year-long battle with cancer, his university said Wednesday.

Mike Morwood, the professor who was instrumental in the discovery of *Homo floresiensis* in 2003, died on Tuesday, the University of Wollongong said. He was 62.

"It was the adventure of a lifetime for Mike," long-time colleague Bert Roberts said of the revelation on the Indo-

Science (CAS) at Wollongong, said Morwood was an inspiration to many of the early-career researchers who worked on the bizarre find in Flores, including a generation of young Indonesian researchers.

New Zealand-born Morwood, who earned his PhD from the Australian National University in Canberra, was also an expert on Aboriginal rock art, having carried out extensive research in Queensland and Western Australia states earlier in his career.

But he is best known for leading the team of Australian and Indonesian researchers that uncovered the partial skeleton of a one metre (3.25 foot) tall woman at Liang Bua, a limestone cave on the Indonesian island of Flores.

A further six partial skeletons of the tiny humans, who weighed just 30 kilos (65 pounds) and had the brain the size of a chimp's, were later found, in addition to skeletons of megafaunal species including an extinct close relative of modern elephants and giant tortoise.

The extraordinary discovery sparked an intellectual battle that has raged ever since with one side declaring the "hobbits" -- whose nickname is inspired by the little people of J.R.R. Tolkien's tales -- a separate species of human while others argue they were just diseased *Homo sapiens*, with a disorder that made them midget-like.

"In the areas he chose to focus he was inevitably a game-changer...who made an extraordinary contribution to their field," said University of Western Australia academic Alistair Paterson. - AFP

'He actually discovered a brand new species of human'

Bert Roberts

Professor of Archeology

nesian island of Flores which shook the scientific community and the world's understanding of human evolution.

"The fact that he actually could discover a brand new species of human, I mean, how many archaeologists and anthropologists can ever do that?"

"It really is a very, very rare treat and Mike was just absolutely overjoyed to be able to go through that adventure, because it's never to be repeated."

Roberts, who is director of the Centre for Archaeological

Bo Xilai

The trial of China's fallen political

Former mayor of Chongqing

Stripped of his post in March 2012 in a dramatic fall after being widely tipped for national leadership

Placed under investigation for corruption in April



Chinese state media accused of former Chongqing politician suggested Bo failed to admit that his wife was suspected

AFP

China charges corruption, ab

CHINA'S once high-flying communist politician Bo Xilai was indicted Thursday for bribery and abuse of power, state media said, following a scandal that exposed deep divisions at the highest levels of government.

Bo, the former party chief of the southwestern city of Chongqing, will be the highest-profile Communist official to be put on trial in China for decades.

He has not been seen in public for more than a year since he was detained following the murder of a British businessman by his wife and his right-hand man's flight to a US consulate, triggering a huge political controversy.

"The indictment paper was delivered" to a court in Jinan, China's official Xinhua news agency said, citing prosecutors in the city in the eastern province of Shandong.

Bo "took the advantage of his position to seek profits for others and accepted an 'extremely large amount' of money and properties", it said, quoting the indictment.

A source with direct knowledge of the case, who requested anonymity, said the trial could begin in mid-August.

There was no sign of increased security on Thursday outside Jinan intermediate court, a huge gated building in the city centre where the trial is due to take place.

News of the proceedings comes at a time when the party is trying to show it is cracking down on corruption and

government waste.

It has also had to manage the political rifts exposed by the downfall of Bo - once one of 25 members of the ruling party's Politburo.

The decision to oust such a high-ranking leader would have required tough back-room negotiations among top leaders.

The trial would be an easier final step after the harder task of defusing any backlash among Bo supporters, said David Goodman, a China expert at the University of Sydney.

Holding the proceedings now would also allow leaders to draw a line under the scandal ahead of a key Communist Party plenum expected in the autumn.

"Politically it's logical now to do this before the plenum in October so you've got a neatness about it," Goodman said.

"The most difficult parts were all done," he said, adding that the trial would probably "be dealt with in a boring

'Politically it's logical to do this before the plenum in October'

David Goodman
University of Sydney

star is expected in August

Indicted for bribery, embezzlement and abuse of power, July 25, 2013



His wife, Gu Kailai, was handed a suspended death sentence in August for the murder of British businessman Neil Heywood

counts of the trial
lice chief Wang Lijun
act on information
cted of murder

Bo Xilai with use of power

procedural way with as little drama as possible”.

Both Xinhua and the People's Daily, the Communist Party's official paper, urged support for the decision.

Xinhua called on people to “recognise the ugly face” of officials “who sought personal gain” and on local governments to “defend the authority” of the Beijing leadership.

“China's history has repeatedly proved that the stability and security of the country can only be ensured when the authority of the central government is maintained,” it said.

The scandal emerged last year ahead of a once-a-decade leadership transition, in which Bo had been considered a candidate for the Politburo Standing Committee – China's most powerful body.

His downfall was triggered after his police chief and right-hand man Wang Lijun fled to a US consulate in Chengdu city near Chongqing, allegedly to seek asylum. Bo was detained a month later.

He had cultivated an unusually populist public image and led a high-profile anti-mafia campaign, which resulted in scores of arrests but led to allegations of torture against suspects.

Bo also revived some elements of 1960s Communist Party culture as part of a “Sing Red” campaign involving massive rallies, which drew comparisons with China's tumultuous Cultural Revolution period.

His approach won popular support but also divided top leaders, some of whom felt wary about the leftist bent.

Bo's wife was given a suspended death sentence last August for fatally poisoning businessman and family friend Neil Heywood. The penalty is normally commuted to a life sentence in China.

Wang was sentenced to 15 years in prison in September for defection and other crimes.

Bo himself was removed from his party and government posts, losing his legal immunity at the end of 2012.

Official media said he had “borne major responsibility” for the murder of Heywood and had taken “massive” bribes and had indulged in inappropriate sexual relations with “multiple women”.

It is unclear what evidence will be revealed in court. Trials in China are not public and move quickly, with judgements often decided beforehand by political authorities, especially in high-profile cases.

One user of China's popular microblog Sina Weibo questioned whether the trial “will showcase fairness and justice”.

Bo has appointed two lawyers, both members of a law firm that has close ties to the ruling party.

The last former Politburo member to be tried for corruption, Chen Liangyu, received an 18-year prison term in 2008. – AFP

Philippine indie film fest a platform for raw talent

THE Philippines' independent film festival opens Friday with a growing reputation for showcasing world-class movies focused on gritty social issues, with a seedy underworld and migrant labour among this year's themes.

“We remain a small festival in Asia, but we have become a springboard for brave movies to be shown abroad,” Laurice Guillen, Cinemalaya Foundation vice president and competition director, told AFP.

Cinemalaya was launched to discover new, passionate filmmakers willing to push boundaries and create important works – providing alternatives to the usual feel-good Filipino and Hollywood films that dominate the box office.

“We show films that are based on real stories that break new ground and are done with a human heart,” Guillen said.

But it wasn't always easy. The first batch of movies were shot and recorded on mini-DV (digital video) whose audio quality was far below that of big-budget productions, Guillen said, adding they were criticised as crude.

But with seed money from one of the Philippines' most prominent businessmen and mentoring from seasoned directors, the quality has gradually improved.

“Many [people] recognised later that there was something brave and innovative going on,” she said.

“People came and watched because they wanted to see what the filmmakers were saying. They saw the heart and soul in the movies that were shown.”

Cinemalaya begins its work in the middle of each year, accepting as many as 200 applications for film grants from aspiring film makers across the archipelago.

A selection committee whittles the number down to the best proposals from 15 directors, who are then called in for interviews.

Once they pass that, they are given funds so they can begin producing their work, with Cinemalaya experts periodically reviewing the rushes and giving technical and creative advice.

Guillen said that, considering each film cannot exceed a production cost of 3.5 million pesos (US\$81,000), the end products had been, for the most part, astounding.

Among this year's most anticipated movies is “Porno”, which director Adolf Alix said depicted three lonely people seeking fulfillment in their empty lives through pornography.

Alix, considered one of the Philippines' young emerging talents, is a Cinemalaya veteran with “Porno” his fifth in competition since 2006.

His offering last year was a brooding tale about poorly armed soldiers stationed in a

Philippine-occupied island in the Spratlys, an archipelago in the South China Sea claimed by China and other nations.

The movie was honoured as Best Asian Film at the Warsaw Film Festival.

“Cinemalaya has been the right vehicle, allowing film makers like me to showcase our off-tangent subjects that may not be for commercial production,” he told AFP.

“I am a Cinemalaya product through and through and the festival has helped directors like me get our work out there.”

For first-time filmmaker Hannah Espia, 26, Cinemalaya will this year give her a chance to honour the millions of Filipino overseas workers whose dollar remittances keep the Philippine economy afloat.

Her movie, “Transit”, tackles the plight of a Filipino single father seeking to protect his young son from being deported by Israel, where he works as a caregiver.

“We always say OFWs (Filipino migrant workers) are our modern day heroes, but we really do not know their struggles,” she said.

Both directors said they hoped their films would follow the success of “Bwakaw”, last year's standout that tells the story of a grumpy old man grappling with his homosexuality.

Time magazine hailed it as one of 10 must-see films when

it made its way to the New York Film Festival last year.

The movie was subsequently entered as the Philippines' entry to the US Academy Awards, but was eventually cut.

One of Cinemalaya's other standout films was “Engkwentro” (Clash), based on the real-life story of two brothers involved with local gangs being targeted by a vigilante “death squad” allegedly backed by a powerful politician.

The director, Pepe Diokno, was just 22 when his film went on to win the New Horizon's section of the Venice Film Festival in 2009.

And while Cinemalaya primarily serves as an entry-point for relatively unknown actors and directors, it has also started attracting mainstream stars.

This year the hugely popular Vilma Santos deglamorises herself as a bit actor in “Ekstra”.

With screenings expanding in recent years from Cinemalaya's traditional home at the Cultural Center of the Philippines and into commercial cinemas across Manila, local audiences are also growing to match the rise in quality.

Nearly a decade into the Cinemalaya experiment, Guillen takes great satisfaction that more and more people are appreciating the essence of the festival.

“I always say that if you want to understand our culture, you need to watch our films,” she said. – AFP

Japan eyeing drones for defence plan

JAPAN needs amphibious units and surveillance drones to protect its outlying islands, the defence ministry said Friday, as possibly-armed Chinese coastguards plied the waters near a disputed archipelago.

In a paper that had been widely reported on Thursday, the ministry said it was necessary to boost the strength and range of forces that could be used to protect Japan's far-flung territories.

“To deploy units quickly in response to a situation, it is important...to have an amphibious function that is similar to US Marines,” capable of conducting landing operations on remote islands, it said.

The interim report, which was approved by a high-level defence meeting on Friday, also advocates the introduction of a drone reconnaissance fleet that could be used to monitor distant islands.

The report will be reflected in Japan's long-term defence outline that is expected to be published towards the end of this year.

The paper also stresses “the need to boost a comprehensive capability of containment” as part of anti-ballistic missile measures against North Korea.

The phraseology reflects an on-going debate among politicians about the need to re-interpret aspects of the pacifist country's military stance, defence officials told reporters, and steered clear of any mention of “first strike”.

“We are not talking about pre-emptive attack. That's not good,” a defence official said.

“We have this awareness that given changes in the security environment surrounding Japan, we have to discuss whether it is enough for us to depend on US forces in terms of capability to attack enemy territory,” he told reporters.

Japan and the US have a security treaty that binds Washington to coming to Tokyo's defence if it is attacked.

The pact is part of a post-war settlement that left tens of thousands of American troops and a lot of hardware in Japan, sometimes euphemistically referred to as an “unsinkable aircraft carrier”.

Experts say North Korea, through the UN-banned tests of ballistic missile technologies and nuclear weapons, has improved its offensive capabilities.

China has become increasingly active in the seas surrounding Japan, including the waters near the Tokyo-administered Senkaku islands in the East China Sea, which Beijing claims as the Diaoyu islands.

The row over their ownership, which began decades ago, erupted last September when Japan nationalised three of the islands. It took another turn on Wednesday when possibly-armed Chinese coastguard vessels sailed through nearby waters for the first time.

Later in the day Tokyo scrambled fighters to shadow a Chinese reconnaissance aircraft that flew in international airspace in between two Okinawan islands.

It was the first time Bei-

Japan



AFP

jing had sent a military plane through the gap and out to the Pacific Ocean, Tokyo officials said, adding they saw it as a sign of “China's ever-growing maritime advance”.

Four Chinese coastguard vessels were back in the waters off the islands on Friday, their Japanese opposite number said.

Abe's administration de-

ecided to review the current long-term defence outline which was drafted by the now-opposition Democratic Party of Japan in 2010.

The hawkish premier this year boosted Japan's defence budget for the first time in over a decade against the backdrop of growing concerns among many countries in the region about China. – AFP

the pulse

Myanmar hip-hop meets the

NATHALIE JOHNSTON

YANGON-BASED hip-hop artist J-Me has been a mainstay in Myanmar's music scene for nearly a decade now, long enough to provide inspiration for a whole new generation of rappers.

Among the up-and-comers influenced by J-Me is Jock, a flourishing MC himself. Jock was an athlete in high school, hence his artist name.

Now he is preparing to take his SATs and go to college, but not before making serious moves in the Yangon hip-hop scene.

"I want lyrics to be real. Talk about the problems today. I want them to send a message," Jock says.

At just 19 years old, one of his songs has recently been chosen as the anthem for Myanmar athletes at the upcoming SEA Games, scheduled to be held in Myanmar in December.

Titled "Born to Win", the track features singer Zara Hnin Thwin on vocals and Jock rapping about "persistence" in a dedication to the young athletes and their fans, an honour sure to skyrocket Jock to fame.

However, he sticks close to the underground, which in Myanmar refers to independent producers, DJs and MCs creating a refuge of melodious beats and serious lyrics without all the limitations of pop music.

"Hip-hop as pop" acts have risen to fame in recent years thanks to Myanmar's youth. Teens aged 13 to 18 frequent group shows held in parks like Myaw Sin Kyun in Kandawgyi Park.

The spectacle is jarring. With not a longyi in sight, young boys and girls flash their brand new hats, jewellery, skirts and heels, and "jump around" with stars like Sai Sai, Bunny Phyo and Snare - the latter being a hip-hop duo who don gold chains and match-

ing shirts, their "dirty lyrics" most closely resembling American gangsta rap, characterised by a repetitive chorus and booming bass lines.

Because these pop artists cater to an age group born long after the birth of hip-hop, the requirements of old-school fans no longer apply. Pop is not about a subculture of messages or originality. For the most part, it covers love, sex, money and fame. Pop artists often usurp a beat and melody from a previously recorded track.

While sampling another artist's beats is considered a neutral homage to its original producer, more local musicians are realising that cover songs must become a thing of past. Like J-Me says, "You gotta plant your own seed and watch it grow, yo."

Asked about the changing scene, underground artists have expressed disappointment not only in their fellow rappers but also in the young men and women following the recent "swag" trend, which focuses on personal appearance over substance.

Jock wants things to remain respectful, saying, "It has to be about the beats, your skills and the people ... not [forgetting] your culture by dressing too sexy."

Not just in Myanmar but the world over, underground hip-hop artists agree that some musicians have lost their soul, forgetting why the marriage of DJ and MC was created in the first place.

In the past 15 years, artists like Zeyar Thaw and other members of Myanmar's first hip-hop group, Acid, have been considered inspirational because of their social activism - marrying traditionally Western hip-hop beats with issues close to the hearts of people in Myanmar.

Zeyar Thaw eventually became a politician, and a few other members

of the group started campaigns in the country's border regions, promoting social movements and music.

Slightly younger than the first generation, J-Me has been rapping and beat-boxing for almost 10 years; even his older sister used to breakdance back in the 1990s.

He is now one of the leaders of the growing underground subculture of Myanmar, including graffiti artists and political activists.

Now that censorship laws have relaxed and an open-door policy has been adopted, there is more exposure to other hip-hop scenes. So what do the young MCs of Myanmar listen to?

"Oh you know, Eminem, Afrika Bambaataa, Rakim, Bone Thugs ... all the old school stuff when lyrics meant something," J-Me says.

One of J-Me's English-language songs, titled "Burn 'em up", gives a shout-out not only to US artists Fabolous, Ryan Leslie and Nas but also to the city of Bangkok, a growing centre in Southeast Asia that promotes international hip-hop far better than Yangon or Mandalay.

Bringing an international community to the doorstep of Myanmar's hip-hop scene, he raps: "I feel so blessed/I feel like Loso and R-Les/I went to see Nas in Bangkok at a hip-hop fest."

Language and understanding make a big difference in terms of influence. Lyrics create a feeling of solidarity with rappers from the United States and the United Kingdom. More importantly, hip-hop lovers identify with artists who rap about people, hardship and change, something Myanmar artists know all too well.

The underground also focuses more on grassroots methods of producing, mixing, sampling and open sharing via social media tools like Me-

As they increase their connections with an international community of music, underground hip-hop artists remain the need to stay true to their own

dia Fire, Facebook and the Myanmar Hip-Hop Channel.

Today J-Me and his Mandalay-based counterparts Bigg-Y, Don Wareru and many others produce, rap, write, direct and inspire an entire generation of up-and-coming artists who want to stay true to their culture and their love of hip-hop.

"Some Thai hip-hop is good lyrically, but the DJs aren't doing their jobs," J-Me says. "We don't want hip-hop to be about playing Grandmaster Flash mixed with Lady Gaga. We want the pure thing, especially at a time when Myanmar is opening up to the world."

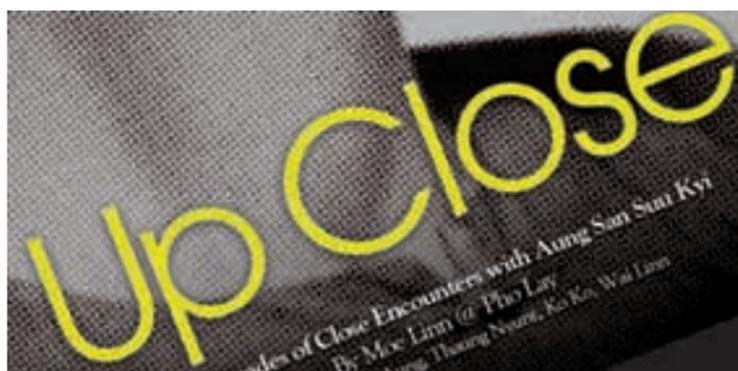
Hip-hop is a chameleonic medium - practiced the world over with different interpretations. Being connected to the outside worlds of hip-hop might just make Myanmar's underground scene stronger, as long as they can use their own filter to determine what is worth reinventing.

In other words, spread the love, ya'll.

Nathalie Johnston is an independent art researcher based in Yangon with a Masters in contemporary Southeast Asian art history. She can be reached at nathalie.johnston@gmail.com.



J-Me performs live in Yangon. Photo: Staff



An intimate glimpse
daily life during

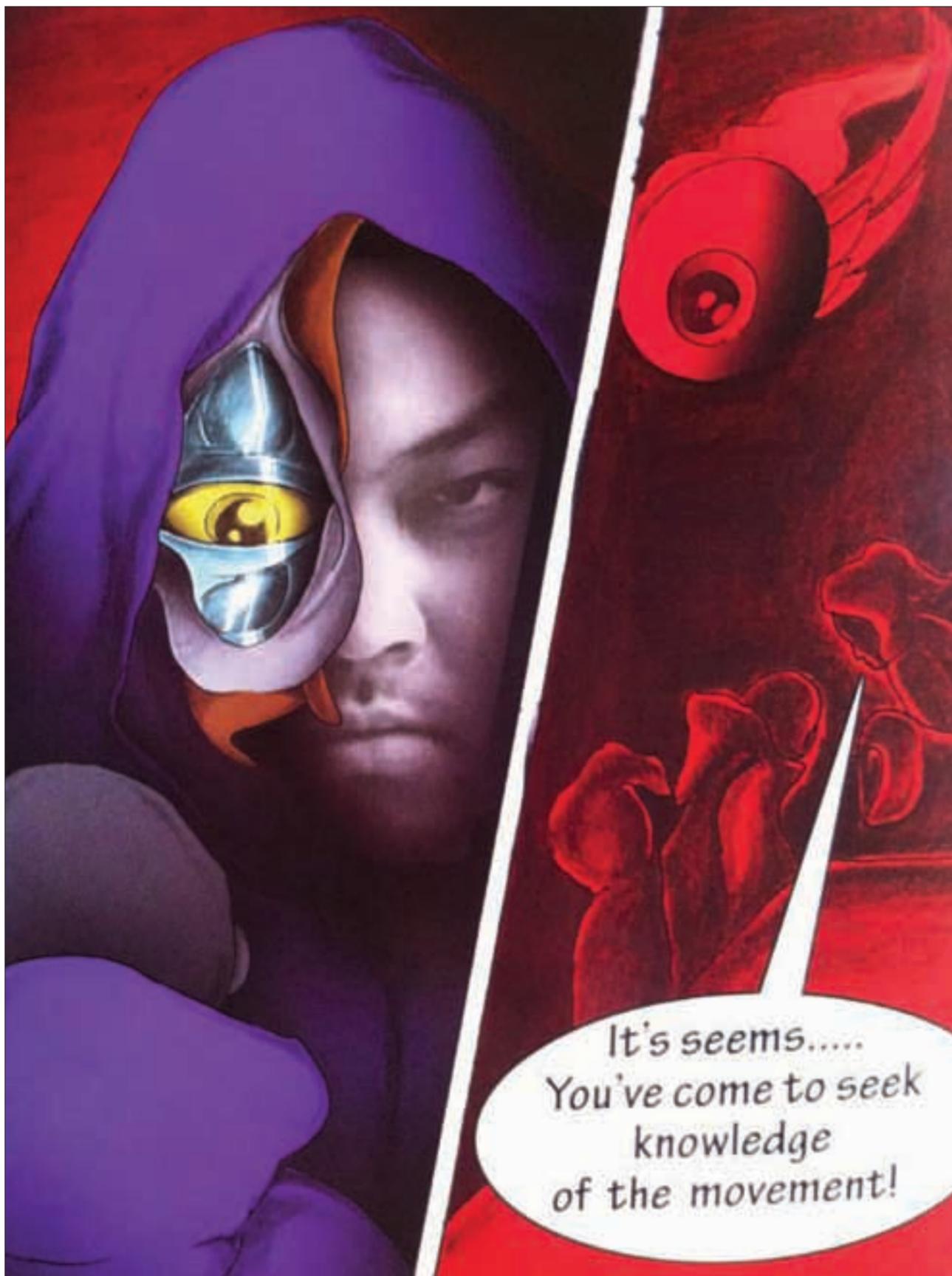
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"We don't want hip-hop to be about playing Grandmaster Flash mixed with Lady Gaga. We want the pure thing, especially at a time when Myanmar is opening up to the world."

J-Me
Hip-hop artist



Cover art for J-Me's 2011 album *Bawa Ye Nate Ban*.

mpse into Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's
her darkest years

Coming soon! A new release from
MCM Books by Moe Linn (aka Pho Lay)

National gallery still a dream

Sixty years after the establishment of the National Museum of Myanmar, lack of funding and space have conspired to ensure that the procurement of new artwork at the institution has come to a virtual standstill



ZON PANN
PWINT

zonpann08@gmail.com

AMONG the dimly lit rooms at the National Museum of Myanmar is a gallery showcasing some of the nation's finest artwork, including canvas paintings from the 19th century to the present, as well as replicas of murals from the stone age through the Bagan, Pinya, Inwa and Nyaungyan dynasties.

The paintings on display at the National Museum have been collected during the past 60 years. They were originally meant to be displayed in a separate national art gallery, but to this day the independent art institution has yet to be established.

When the Ministry of Culture was founded in 1952, then-consultant Niharayan Ray proposed the establishment of the National Museum, National Library, National Theatre and National Art Gallery as separate entities.

Following Mr Ray's suggestion, the ministry founded the National Museum and National Library in 1952, setting them both up in Jubilee Hall.

A senior museum expert based in Yangon, who wished to remain anonymous, told *The Myanmar Times* that the ministry started collecting paintings in the same year, with the intention of housing them in the yet-to-be-established National Art Gallery.

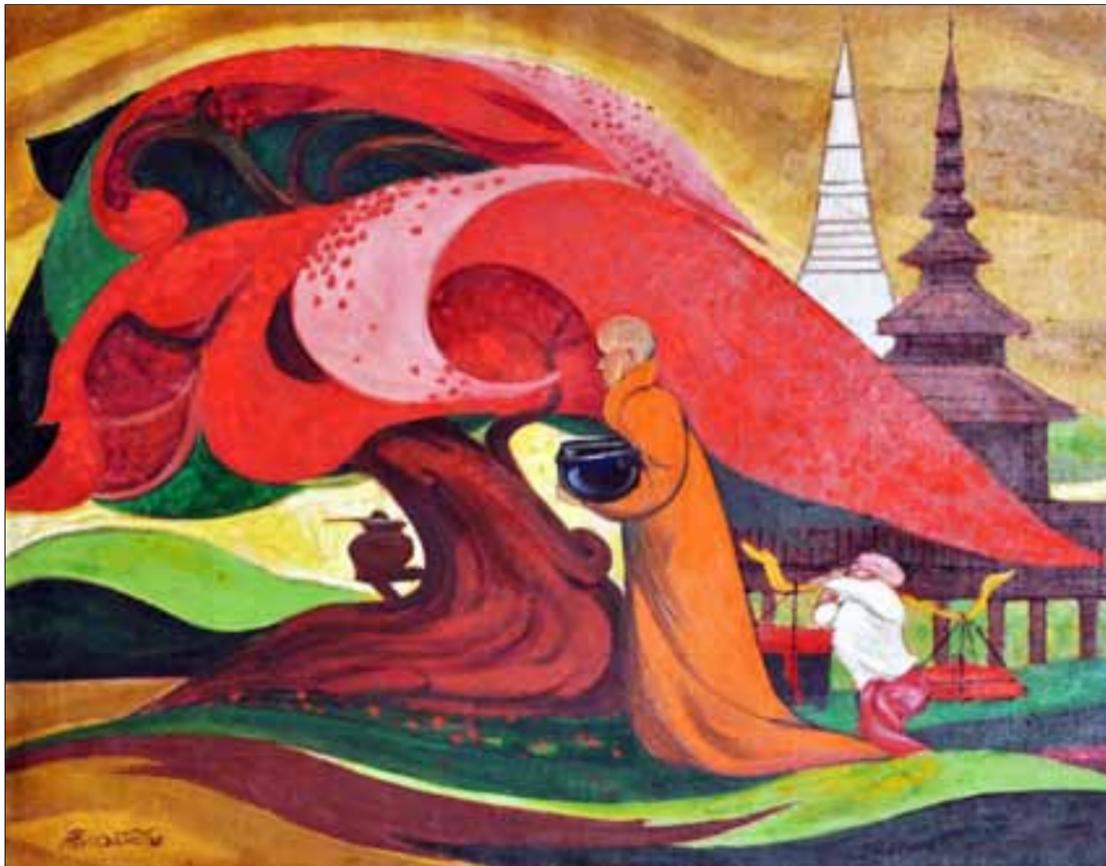
At that time, the State School of Music and the State School of Art were also lodged at Jubilee Hall, but the noise from the music school prompted the ministry to move the National Library to a building at 166 Pansodan Street in 1962.

"Then, in 1970, the National Museum moved to 24/26 Pansodan Street," said the museum expert, who in 2011 retired as deputy director-general of the Ministry of Culture.

"By then the collection of artwork for the National Art Gallery was quite big, but it still could not be separated at a time when the ministry was having trouble even finding a venue for the National Museum."

The entire top floor of the Pansodan space was dedicated to showing the collection of paintings.

It wasn't until the 1990s that the resources were allocated to construct a



Painting by U Paw Oo Thett (1936-1993), part of the National Museum of Myanmar's collection. Photo: AFP

discrete building to house the National Museum so that it could end its "hermit crab" existence of moving from place to place.

Despite this apparent step forward, provisions were still not made for the founding of a separate national art gallery.

"The new National Museum was opened on Pyay Road in 1996, but hopes of building a separate National Art Gallery were not realised. The art collection still had to be shown in the National Museum," the museum expert said.

The National Museum's move to the new building proved to be an ill-fated one for the art collection. From the start, the procurement of new artwork was impeded by lack of space and funding, a state of affairs that has continued to this day.

"It was not possible to expand the art gallery in the National Museum to hold the growing number of paintings, and some even had to be put into storage," the expert said.

From 1996 to 2000, the museum bought only two or three paintings a year, and since 2000 this has dropped to only one to two a year.

This is in contrast to the National Museum's heyday on Pansodan Street

'I feel sorry that the museum's collecting process has become painfully slow.'

Senior museum expert

from 1970 to 1996, when numerous artworks were bought at annual art and sculpture exhibitions at which the work of artists from around the country was displayed.

"Museum officials would attend these annual exhibitions and buy the best paintings for the gallery. The museum had first pick, and no one else, no matter who they were, could buy anything until after the museum had made its purchases," she said.

Nowadays, the combination of budget constraints, lack of space and the difficulty of preserving the paintings means that the museum barely makes an effort to add to its art collection, although it does accept the occasional donation of artwork.

Among those who have donated paintings are well-known artists Min Wae Aung and U Lun Gywe.

"Ten years ago, the museum bought a painting from U Lun Gywe for K1 million. The other paintings by U Lun Gywe at the museum were generously donated by the artist," the museum

expert said.

She said the painting collection is now big enough to fill the entire National Museum, and suggested that moving the gallery to its own building would not only provide a much-needed home for important artwork, but also leave vacated space at the museum to display a greater number of historical items.

"I feel sorry that the museum's collecting process has become painfully slow, but if efforts were put into actively trying to expand the collection again, it would not be too late to make up for lost time," the museum expert said.

Artist U Hla Tin Htun, a retired vice president of Myanmar Traditional Artists and Artisans Organisation, said the National Museum was losing the opportunity to add the finest contemporary paintings to its collection.

"These days, art exhibitions are held quite often, but because of budget constraints, National Museum officials hardly bother to show up to select the best paintings for the gallery," he said.

"The museum should be granted the budget to collect fine artwork. In June, the works of famous artist U Win Pe were exhibited in Yangon but the museum didn't get any of his artwork because they didn't have the money"

U Hla Tin Htun pointed out that in recent years the museum has added several masterpieces by famous artists to its collection - by removing them from the walls of the offices of Myanmar Railways, Myanmar Five Star Line and Yangon University Library and hanging them in the museum's gallery.

U Win Pe Myint said that "every country should have a national art gallery to be proud of".

"The government alone should not be responsible for establishing such a gallery. Other institutions, artists and citizens should also take responsibility," he said. "If the National Art Gallery is ever established, I will make it my duty to collect paintings for it."

The senior museum expert said the establishment of a national art gallery, and the allocation of enough funding to expand the collection, would help stem the flow of the finest paintings from the country.

"Everybody wants to take pride in seeing their paintings hanging in their own national art gallery. If they receive equal payment for a single painting, they will sell to the national art gallery rather than a buyer from abroad."

MOSCOW

Russia releases manuscript of banned wartime classic

STUART WILLIAMS

RUSSIA'S security service on July 25 released from its secret archives the manuscript of a classic World War II novel described as the *War and Peace* of the 20th century, over 50 years after it was confiscated by the Soviet authorities.

Vassily Grossman's epic novel *Life and Fate*, completed in 1960, was banned in the Soviet Union until the late 1980s but is now considered to be one of the greatest of all Russian novels.

The Federal Security Service (FSB), the successor to the Soviet KGB,

handed the novel's manuscript over to Russia's literary archives where it can now be consulted by scholars, state ITAR-TASS news agency reported.

"Taking into account its uniqueness and the value of the manuscript, the head of the FSB Alexander Bortnikov has decided to hand it permanently to the literary archives," the FSB said in a statement.

The handover, which took place at a ceremony attended by Bortnikov and Culture Minister Vladimir Medinsky, is a symbol of the book's resurrection after its languishing as an undiscovered masterpiece for decades.

"Western critics believe that the

novel is one of the most outstanding works of the 20th century - showing all our complicated, heroic and astonishing history through an entire generation," said Medinsky in comments broadcast on Russian television.

The papers released by the FSB include the original manuscript, typewritten versions, photocopies with corrections and notes by the author - a total of 10,000 pages and a goldmine for scholars.

The novel was deeply uncomfortable for the Soviet authorities owing to its unflinching portrayal of the effects of the 1930s Stalin-era purges and continued repression on Soviet

citizens living through World War II.

The book is one of very few Russian novels from the period to grapple with the crimes of Stalin as well as record the heroism of the Soviet people during World War II.

Grossman took a decade to write the novel but in 1961 the KGB confiscated the manuscript and the other typewritten versions.

In response to his pleas over its fate, Grossman was famously told by one Soviet official that it would only be published in 200 to 300 years.

The novel was only published because a friend of Grossman had kept a copy. A Russian-language

edition was published in Switzerland in 1980 and it subsequently appeared in French translation.

An abridged edition was published in the Soviet Union for the first time in 1988 and its reputation has grown further since the fall of communism.

The book became even more popular in Russia last year after the broadcast of a major serialisation on state television.

The huge novel tells the story of a number of interlinked characters against the background of the battle of Stalingrad in World War II, earning comparisons with the works of Leo Tolstoy. - AFP

BOOK REVIEW



Photo: Daniel Ehrlich

Bringing the backstage to the fore

Daniel Ehrlich's photo book *Backstage Mandalay* sheds light on the dark, cramped spaces where traditional Myanmar performers ready themselves to take the stage



DOUGLAS LONG

dlong125@gmail.com

THE same picturesque qualities that attract visitors to Myanmar can also inspire laziness when it comes to producing photo books about the country: Snap generic pictures of golden pagodas, fishermen on Inle Lake and cute kids wearing thanaka, and you have a coffee-table book ready for publication.

There is also the “creative” approach taken by many local photographers, in which great effort is expended in setting up contrived, “picture-perfect” shots: models “harvesting” paddy while wearing immaculate ethnic costumes, monks idling in weathered monasteries with open parasols resting on their shoulders and girls making lacquerware in the dim interiors of ancient pagodas.

Such artificial images might look nice, but they suffer from a lack of genuine narrative arc: There is no story behind them, aside from the photographer's manipulations. The result is a beautiful, yet ultimately hollow, postcard image.

Boston-based photographer Daniel Ehrlich takes an entirely different approach in his book *Backstage Mandalay: The Netherworld of Burmese Performing Arts* (2012), a hardcover volume featuring 290 images of the behind-the-scenes preparations that anchor *nat* (spirit) ceremonies and traditional Burmese stage shows such as *zat pwe* and *anyeint pwe*.

Ehrlich, who has made nearly 30 trips to Myanmar since his first visit in 1987, prefers his images to be unposed and candid, catching people

in unguarded moments. Whereas the hokey, staged photographs so popular in the Myanmar tourism industry are essentially sterile and lifeless, Ehrlich's images capture telling details that prompt speculation on the part of the viewer and conjure narratives that flow beyond the fleeting moment captured in the image.

The leading image in Chapter 1, for example, depicts the low-key atmosphere of backstreet Mandalay, with a dirt path winding past an old brick monastery, wooden houses and shady, haze-enshrouded trees.

Many photographers might be tempted to frame this shot to block out ugly reminders of the modern age that run counter to the idea of Myanmar as a timeless land of charm and beauty. Refreshingly, Ehrlich avoids this approach. Here, a light truck is visible on the right-hand edge of the photo, while on the left a street

Ehrlich's images capture telling details that prompt speculation on the part of the viewer and conjure narratives that flow beyond the fleeting moment captured in the image.

dog sniffs the ground near a pile of trash. There are monks in the picture, but rather than dawdling with dainty parasols, they are lugging modern bags and briefcases on their way to who knows where.

The second chapter focuses on the activity surrounding *nat* festivals, including backstage rituals by *nat kadaw* (spirit wives) preparing for public ceremonies. Of particular interest is a series of images spread across three pages showing a *nat kadaw* enduring the process of becoming possessed by a spirit who enjoys quaffing orange soft drinks and indulges in the unhealthy habit of smoking two cigarettes at once.

The centrepiece of the book is Chapter 3, which captures the dimly lit world of traditional performances, and the time and effort that goes into getting ready for the stage. Singers, dancers and actors are shown sleeping, waiting, watching, dressing and putting on makeup as show time approaches.

These are tough conditions for a photographer who is reluctant to rely on the camera's flash, but Ehrlich does an admirable job of capturing the aura of mystery and otherworldliness that permeates these events, both onstage and behind the scenes. The performers, sporting sumptuous, glittering costumes, seem to come from another era, and many of the subjects appear to be lost in thoughts that can only be imagined by the viewer.

Anyone who has seen one of these live performances will understand their capacity for transporting audiences from the mundane world to the realm of the fantastic, and those who pay careful attention while paging through *Backstage Mandalay* will enjoy a similar experience.

Given Ehrlich's devotion to documenting reality, it's not surprising

that he makes a point of breaking the spell before the end of the book. One of the last photographs captures an all-night outdoor performance winding down at daybreak. The ground is strewn with trash, and the few remaining audience members are wrapped against the cold as they wander away from the stage. One person holds her scarf against her face, as if shielding her nose from a foul smell.

But the photograph on the next page, taken in late afternoon, shows families claiming their spaces on clean bamboo mats in front of the stage, settling in to enjoy another show that

will, over the next several hours, carry them away into a world of tradition, folklore and fantasy.

Ehrlich clearly hopes this cycle won't end anytime soon – that even as the crowds disperse each morning, they will return again in the evening to witness another performance.

This desire is expressed in the book's dedication, in which Ehrlich acknowledges that vast changes will inevitably come to Myanmar in the coming decade but pleads with the country's people to preserve the “great ceremonies” that define them uniquely in a world where everything is becoming the same.





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Contact Us

**Directorate of Trade, Ministry of Commerce of the Republic of
the Union of Myanmar**

Tel: +95-67-408324/408013/408315

Fax: +95-67-408243/408311

E-mail: moctradefair@gmail.com

CAEXPO Secretariat

Tel: +86-771-5813165

Fax: +86-771-5813355

E-mail: sophiezhang34@yahoo.fr

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Miss Myanmar aims for top prize at international pageant

LWIN MAR HTUN

lwinmarhtun.mcm@gmail.com

THE 53rd Miss International Beauty Pageant 2013 is still months away, but the current Miss Myanmar, Gonyi Aye Kyaw, is already working hard to increase her chances of taking the top prize at the competition.



Photo: Supplied

Miss Myanmar, Gonyi Aye Kyaw.

The pageant will be held in Japan in October, and Gonyi Aye Kyaw said she wants to do her best as the sole representative of Myanmar.

“Even though I believe I can win the audience favourite award with help from Myanmar fans, I want another prize in the competition,” she said. “But the prize isn’t for me. It’s for Myanmar because I am competing as a representative of my country.”

Gonyi Aye Kyaw said she is practising Myanmar harp – which she will play at the pageant – and keeping her body toned and fit.

“I’m doing exercises with a trainer to keep my body beautiful, and I’m practising three songs to play in the competition: a Myanmar national song, an English song and a Japanese song.”

Another key to her preparation is improving her English-language skills so she can stand out among the international competitors.

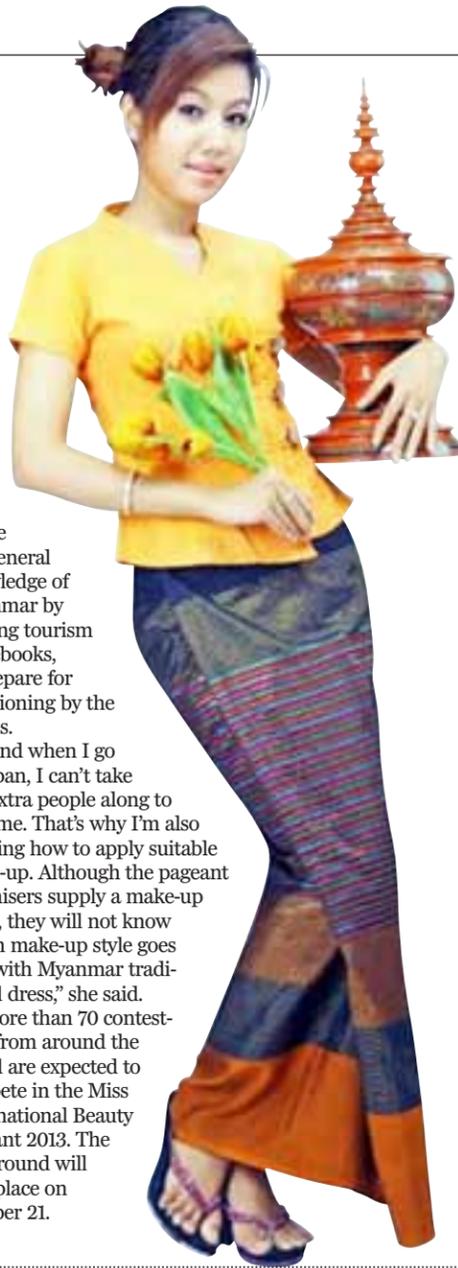
“I am practising my English with a teacher from Education Future Generation, and my skills are improving day by day. I also want to learn the Japanese language but I don’t have enough time,” Gonyi Aye Kyaw said.

Adding to the workload are her efforts

to increase her general knowledge of Myanmar by reading tourism guidebooks, to prepare for questioning by the judges.

“And when I go to Japan, I can’t take any extra people along to help me. That’s why I’m also learning how to apply suitable make-up. Although the pageant organisers supply a make-up artist, they will not know which make-up style goes best with Myanmar traditional dress,” she said.

More than 70 contestants from around the world are expected to compete in the Miss International Beauty Pageant 2013. The final round will take place on October 21.



Air Supply to soft-rock Yangon

NUAM BAWI



hknuambawi@gmail.com

AUSTRALIAN soft-rock legends Air Supply will endeavour to entertain and oxygenate fans with a concert at the Myanmar Convention Centre on Min Dhamma Road in Yangon on August 15.

Concert organisers Bagan Entertainment and the Htoo Foundation said they were keeping ticket prices lower than the astronomical fees charged for the Michael Learns to Rock concert in March, which was organised by the same companies.

However, the price of tickets will still knock the wind out of the average concertgoer in Myanmar, with the cheap seats going for K25,000. Increasingly deluxe seating is available for K30,000, K50,000 and K55,000 respectively.

Ko Nyi Nyi, manager of Bagan Entertainment, said Air Supply was chosen because the band transcended age limitations.

“There is no age limit for fans because Air Supply is not a super-old band or a brand-new band. If we invite new bands, older people won’t know much about them,” he said. “Also, most local people know the Myanmar versions of their songs. So we’re trying to accommodate the tastes of the largest number of Myanmar people.”

Air Supply, founded in 1975, is a duo consisting of Russell Hitchcock on lead vocals and Graham Russel on guitars and backing vocals.

The band has released 17 albums, starting with *Air Supply* in 1976. Hit songs through the ages include “All Out of Love”, “Making Love Out of Nothing at All”, “The One That You Love” and “The Power of Love (You Are My Lady)”.

- Translated by Thiri Min Htun

Legendary dancer remembered

LWIN MAR HTUN

lwinmarhtun.mcm@gmail.com

TRADITIONAL dance performances to commemorate the 80th birthday of the late legendary dancer Shwe Man Tin Maung will be held at the National Theatre in Yangon on August 9 and 10.

The concert is being organised by U Shwe Man Tin Maung’s son, U Win Maung, who is also a dancer and who said he has invited performers from many different traditional dance troupes to participate in the commemoration.

“I don’t want only our family to perform. I want many different performers to entertain the audience together,” he said.

U Shwe Man Tin Maung founded the Shwe Man Tha Bin traditional dance troupe in Mandalay in 1932, with all-night performances held in a huge pavilion made from bamboo matting. The dancer died while performing onstage in 1969.

The performances at the National Theatre will feature many of U Shwe Man Tin Maung’s family members, including Nyunt Win, Win Bo, San Win, Win Maung, Chan Thar, Kyaw Kyaw Bo and Tin Maung San Min Win, as well as other dancers from Yangon and Mandalay.

An exhibition of photos of U Shwe Man Tin Maung will also be held at the National Theatre on August 9 and 10, which can be viewed from 1pm to 5pm each day.

Tickets for the performances cost K7500, K20,000, K30,000 and K50,000.

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Universal Crossword

Edited by Timothy E. Parker

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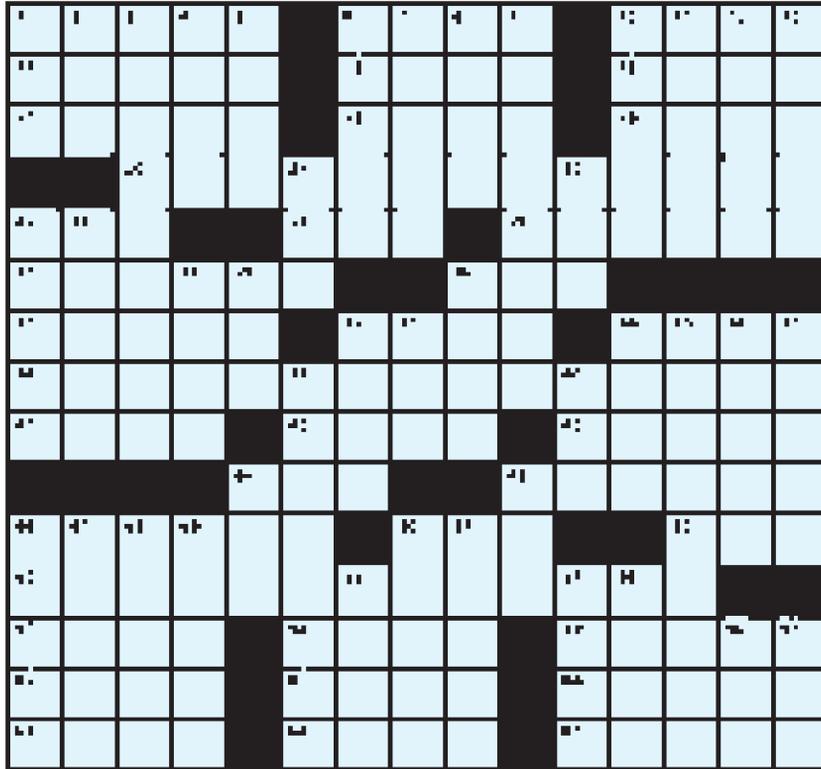
ACROSS

- 1 Bar mitzvah officiator
- 6 Alone at the prom
- 10 Light source
- 14 Shown on television
- 15 "The doctor ___ see you now"
- 16 The first "Mr. Shirley Temple"
- 17 Overdo it onstage
- 18 Napoleon's exile isle
- 19 "Half," "quarter" or "eighth" follower
- 20 Driving concern quip (Part 1)
- 23 Game piece, generically
- 25 Partook of
- 26 The eyes have them
- 27 Traitor Benedict
- 30 Hardly candid
- 31 Paw at
- 32 Clapping animal
- 34 Shopping bag
- 38 Driving concern quip (Part 2)
- 41 Inspires wonder in
- 42 "Batman" co-creator
- 43 Acetic and nitric
- 44 Funny Tina
- 45 Orbital high point
- 46 Bladed tool
- 50 Brooks the filmmaker
- 52 Admission requirements, sometimes
- 53 Driving concern quip (Part 3)
- 57 Part of ABM
- 58 Alveoli site
- 59 Make a new law
- 62 Leer
- 63 "If all ___ fails ..."
- 64 Person in a cast
- 65 Tournament ranking
- 66 Football blockers' practice device
- 67 In the poorhouse

- 6 It pours from pores
- 7 Spanish diacritic
- 8 Jessica of "Fantastic Four"
- 9 Bloom with sword-shaped leaves
- 10 Luau locale
- 11 Ancient Greek athletic competitions
- 12 Photo finish?
- 13 Bench exercise
- 21 Little bit
- 22 Like some senses of humor
- 23 Subterranean molten rock

- 24 Object in a quiver
- 28 Makes a decision
- 29 Feline zodiac sign
- 30 Sidewalk eatery
- 32 Reprieve from the governor
- 33 Many, many moons
- 34 Crunchy munchie
- 35 Stem (from)
- 36 Momentarily eased, with "over"
- 37 Abbreviations for weekend days
- 39 Small four-stringed guitars

- 40 Bit of toy ammo
- 44 Finder's take
- 45 Brewed drink
- 46 Pandemonium
- 47 Gate pivot
- 48 Fiber used in carpets
- 49 Confined to a pen
- 50 Cleric's quarters
- 51 Goaded (with "on")
- 54 Without value
- 55 "The Tree of Life" star Penn
- 56 Storybook beginning
- 60 Cape ____, Mass.
- 61 Make the effort



BY SCOTT ADAMS

DILBERT



BY CHARLES SCHULZ

PEANUTS



BY BILL WATTERSON

CALVIN AND HOBBS



SUDOKU PACIFIC

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains every digit from 1 to 9 inclusively.



7/29

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

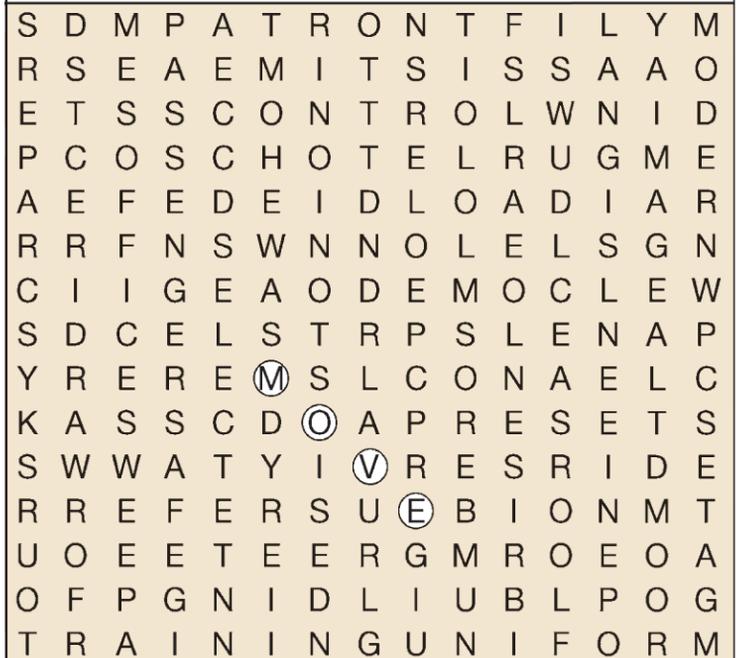
WONDERWORD

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and **CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY**. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD. The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

ELEVATOR OPERATORS

Solution: 5 letters



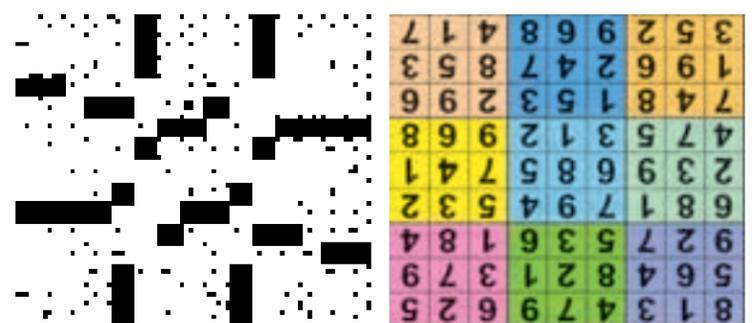
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7/29

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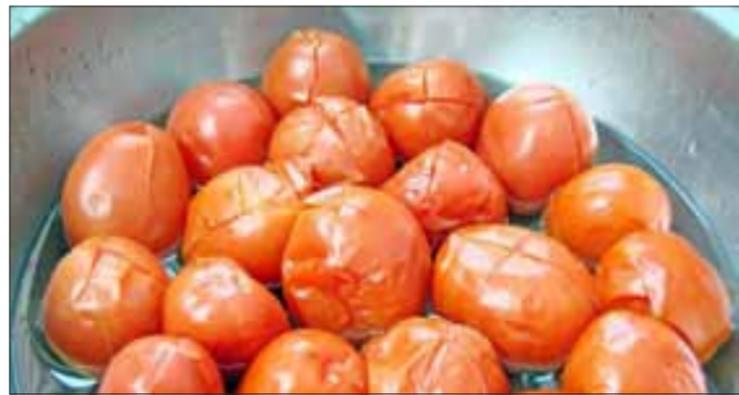
PHYO'S COOKING ADVENTURE

phyocooking@gmail.com

This week, I will share some tips on making whole peeled tomatoes at home. Making home-made tomato sauce can help cut out incidental salt intake. Many pre-prepared sauces contain a high salt content which is used as a natural preservative, so I try to make home-made sauces using whole peeled tomatoes whenever I get the chance.

WHOLE PEELLED TOMATOES FOR PASTA SAUCE

It's very easy to make whole peeled tomatoes at home. You only



need a couple of hours for the whole process. I buy 2-3 kilograms of organic tomatoes and lay them in a shallow basket. When tomatoes are really ripe, they turn a shiny red colour - which is the perfect time to boil them. After they are boiled and have their skins peeled off, the tomatoes are perfect for freezing or for immediate use.

PREPARATION

Wash all the tomatoes and make an "x"-shaped slit on the top of the tomatoes with the point of the knife. This will help the skins peel after the boiling process.

Arrange all the tomatoes in a pot and make sure to fully immerse in cold water.

Boil at a medium-high heat until the tomato skins start to tear. Allow to cool. Peel the skins off from the top of the x-shaped slit.

Store in an air-tight jar in the fridge. They should last about a week.

HOME-MADE PASTA SAUCE

INGREDIENTS (one portion)

12 whole peeled tomatoes
1 onion
1½ tablespoons olive oil

Dice the whole peeled tomatoes and onion.

Pour the olive oil in the fry pan and heat up to a medium heat. Add the onion and sauté until translucent.

Add the tomatoes.

When the juice from the tomatoes starts boiling, reduce the heat and cover with a lid. Simmer for 10-15 minutes. Add salt to taste.

When the sauce attains a thick consistency, switch off the heat and allow the sauce to cool down.

Freeze or keep in the fridge for up to two days.

I like to prepare this tomato sauce by making three or four portions at a time and then freezing for later use. The sauce is really versatile and goes well with any meat or vegetables.

WHOLE MUSHROOM PASTA SAUCE AND SPAGHETTI

INGREDIENTS (SERVES 6)

500 grams dried spaghetti
1½ tablespoon olive oil
2 cloves garlic
1 portion home-made tomato sauce
2 cups passata
1 can whole champignon mushrooms
½ teaspoon chilli flakes
Basil leaves to garnish



PREPARATION

Drain the whole mushrooms and slice them.

Cook the spaghetti as per the package instruction.

Meanwhile, heat the pan and add the olive oil. Add the garlic and sauté. Add chilli flakes and fry for few seconds. Put the mushrooms into the pan and fry for about 4 minutes.

Add the home-made pasta sauce and passata and boil for a couple of minutes. Turn the heat down and cover with a lid. Simmer the sauce for 15-20 minutes or until the mushrooms are soft. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Garnish with fresh basil and grated hard cheese.

SHOPPING

I bought the passata from Quarto Products on Inya Road. Champignon mushrooms are available at the supermarket.

FOODIE QUOTE

"Tell me what you eat, and I will tell you who you are."
- Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, French writer

NEXT WEEK

Vegetable dishes for the Buddhist lent period

Roaring for more at the Common Tiger

MANNY MAUNG

manny.maung@gmail.com

"MERDE," mutters my French companion. He's chewing slowly, taking long, deep breaths as he thinks about what he's just put into his mouth. Shaking his head, he puts his spoon down on the table. "It's incredible."

Open for just under two months, the Common Tiger in Phnom Penh is creating a ripple of excitement among Cambodia's foodies. I'm with two friends (one based in Siem Reap, the other in Phnom Penh): Both are chefs, and it's clear the Common Tiger's head chef, Timothy Bruyns, has just blown them away with his culinary skills.

Walking into the Common Tiger for a Thursday lunch date, we are the only customers - great for us, as we have the full attention of the chef and his team.

We decide to share a few dishes between us. We settle on six dishes and some home-baked caraway and walnut country loaf, fresh out of the oven and served with red onion marmalade and smoked caraway butter (US\$4). The bread has just the right give, and the flavour of the caraway seeds continues long after it has been swallowed.

We don't have to wait long before the first three dishes come out: prawn, smoked tomato and sauce verge accompanied by a light pumpkin panacotta (\$7); pork and squid with red curry and rice (\$6.50); and baked mushroom crème, shitake and tofu (\$8). If there has to be one standout dish, it's the baked mushroom crème. The crème is more like a mousse, thick yet light in consistency with a light, nutty aftertaste. This is food that's meant to be breathed in, rolled around in your mouth and savoured.

The next three dishes arrive: tomato and mozzarella on sourdough, (\$7); creamy scrambled eggs on toasted rye with home-cured bacon (\$6.50); and glazed pork ribs and sticky rice with a spicy green papaya salad on the side (\$9). The mozzarella is produced from buffalo in Siem Reap, and the home-cured bacon is comfort food at

its best. The glazed pork ribs are my absolute favourite, falling off the bone in sweet, delicate flakes.

The menu is set to change soon. Chef Bruyns is an alchemist - he's still experimenting with local produce and wants to keep challenging his customers' palates. In fact, the menu has changed 16 times since he opened the restaurant on June 1.

Bruyns' attention to detail is flawless. His philosophy of

continuous training for his staff, the simple yet elegant décor of the Common Tiger, his affable nature and his respect for Khmer produce will establish his restaurant as a culinary mainstay in Phnom Penh. The whole experience of eating at the Common Tiger consists of respecting and appreciating simple, good food.

My only complaint? That there isn't a restaurant like this in Myanmar.



Baked mushroom crème, shitake and tofu.

Photo: Manny Maung

WINE REVIEW

RED WINE

Chile Casa Campo

Light-bodied and quaffable, this wine was surprisingly inoffensive. Good as a table wine to throw down for a Sunday taco-munching session with friends.

Score

7/10



₹6000

WHITE WINE

St Marie Vieilles Vignes 2008

From fall to summer, this wine smells crisp and sweet, like apple orchards during autumn. The full-bodied texture ends with a long finish like ripe pears in the peak of summer.

Score

9/10



₹17,000

The Common Tiger

No 28 Street 294, Phnom Penh, Cambodia +855 (0) 23212917

Food:	10
Drink:	9
Atmosphere:	9
X-Factor:	10
Service:	10

Total: 10



Dunlopillo 85th anniversary



Bokalay Tint Aung



Daw Khin Marlar



U Lun Gywe



Alfonso Borja



Hnin Htet Htet Wai

JTB Polestar grand opening



U Min Thu Kha



Koji Onishi



U Myint Aung



Nobuya NAKADA



Daw Htay Htay Khine



Chris Cruzado



Nguyen Hoang Long

Western Union and Aya Bank press conference



Uniq Han Fashion Bar launch

Natalie , Marco and Insoo Kim



Tun Ko Ko



U Aye Kyaw, Andrew Harding and Irene Teng



CIMA Cocktail reception

CIMA dinner

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NYEIN
EI EI HTWE

nyeineiehtwe23@gmail.com

LONGTIME readers of this column will be well aware that Socialite is a huge fan of batteries and the way they give stuff the energy to do things. Readers will also know she is quite fond of lucky draws, even though she is never lucky enough to actually win anything (Socialite loves to dream). So it was a banner weekend when the two came together and 3K Batteries held a lucky draw at Yuzana Tower. Alas, Socialite went home empty-handed once again. Before she even went the aforementioned event, she was able to enjoy a cocktail reception with CIMA at Park Royal Hotel on the evening of July 15, while July 17 was crammed with exciting events: Dunipillo's 85th anniversary party at its office at 9 Mile, a Western Union and Aya Bank Press Conference, and a Maxxcare lucky draw at Park Royal Hotel. The next day she hit the JTB Polestar launch party at Traders Hotel before rounding out the week at the Uniq Han beauty counter opening at Blazon.



Ma Kyin Poh



Thazin Nwe Win



Zaw Paing

Maxxcare
lucky draw



NiPro Medical
Devices launch

Nozomu Fujita

Vachira Mangklaviraj



MFF
Awards Night

U Zaw Zaw and U Myo Win Nyunt



Ma Mya Mya Thwe and Ma Lae Lae Than



U Win Lwin Aung and U Soe Myint Lwin



City Mart tree-planting and
donation event

Ko Min Min and U Ohn



City Mart staff

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DOMESTIC FLIGHT SCHEDULES

YANGON TO NAY PYI TAW			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
6T 401	1	7:00	7:55
FMI A1	1,2,3,4,5	7:30	8:30
FMI A1	6	8:00	9:00
UB-B1	1,2,3,4,5	11:30	12:30
FMI A1	7	15:30	16:30
UB-C1	1,2,3,4,5	16:30	17:30

NAY PYI TAW TO YANGON			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
UB-A2	1,2,3,4,5	8:50	9:50
UB-A2	6	10:00	11:00
UB-B2	1,2,3,4,5	13:00	14:00
UB-A2	7	17:00	18:00
UB-C2	1,2,3,4,5	18:00	19:00

YANGON TO MANDALAY			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
W9 512	3	6:00	8:05
YJ 891	2,3,5,6,7	6:10	8:15
YH 917	Daily	6:10	8:40
YJ 891	1,4	6:10	8:45
Y5 234	Daily	6:15	7:30
6T 401/K7222	2,3,4,5,6,7	6:30	8:35
K7 222	Daily	6:30	8:40
K7 626	1,5	6:45	8:10
K7 226	2,4	6:45	8:10
YJ 143/W97143	1,2,3	7:00	9:05
W9 251	Daily	7:00	9:05
6T 401	1	7:00	9:40
YJ 761	6	7:00	8:55
YJ 211	5	7:00	8:25
W9 201	1,2,3	7:45	9:10
YJ 001	1,3,6	8:00	8:55
8M 6603	2,4,7	9:00	10:10
W9 251	2	10:30	11:55
K7 624	Daily	10:30	11:55
YJ 201	1,3,4	11:00	12:25
YJ 761	1,2,4	11:00	12:55
YJ 751/W9 7751	3,5,7	11:00	12:55
YH 737	3,7	11:15	13:25
YH 727	1,5	11:15	13:25
YH 729	2,4,6	11:15	14:15
YJ 211	7	11:30	12:55
YJ 601/W9 7601	6	11:30	12:55
YH 731	Daily	14:30	16:40
W9 129	1,2,3	14:45	16:40
K7 224	Daily	14:30	16:35
6T 501/K7 224	Daily	14:30	16:35

MANDALAY TO YANGON			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
Y5 233	Daily	8:10	9:25
YJ 892	2,3,5,6,7	8:30	10:25
YH 918	Daily	8:40	10:45
YJ 143/W97143	1,2,3	9:20	10:45
6T 402/K7 223	2,3,4,5,6,7	8:55	10:55
K7 223	Daily	8:55	11:00
YJ 892	1,4	9:00	10:55
W9 201	1,2,3	9:25	11:20
W9 201	4,5,6,7	9:10	11:05
W9 144	Daily	9:20	10:45
Y5 132	3,5,6,7	9:30	10:30
6T 402	1	10:00	12:00
K7 227	2,4	10:35	12:00
K7 627	1,5	10:55	12:20
YJ 002	6,3,1	11:00	11:55
YJ 202	1	11:00	12:25
YJ 212	5	12:00	13:25
YJ 762	4,6	12:35	14:00
K7 845	2,4,7	12:50	16:00
W9 120	1,3	15:45	17:10
YJ 202	1,3	16:00	17:55
YJ 602/W9 7602	6	16:10	17:35
YJ 212	7	16:30	17:55
YH 732	Daily	16:40	18:45
W9 129	4,5,6,7	16:40	18:45
YH 728	1,5	16:45	18:10
6T 502/K7 225	Daily	16:50	19:00
K7 225	Daily	16:50	19:00
W9 129	1,2,3	16:55	19:00
K7 625	Daily	17:10	18:35
8M 6604	2,4,7	17:20	18:30
YH 738	3,7	17:25	18:50
W9 511	2	17:30	19:35
W9 252	2	17:35	19:00
YJ 725/W9 7752	3,5,7	17:50	19:15
YH 730	2,4,6	18:00	19:25

YANGON TO NYAUNG U			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
YH 917	Daily	6:10	7:45
YJ 891	1	6:10	8:00
YJ 891	2,3,4,5,6,7	6:10	7:30
6T 401/K7 222	2,3,4,5,6,7	6:30	7:50
K7 222	Daily	6:30	7:50
YJ 143/W9 7143	1,2,3	7:00	8:20
6T 401	1	7:00	8:55
W9 129	1,2,3	14:45	17:25
W9 129	4,5,6,7	14:30	17:10
6T 501/K7 224	Daily	14:30	17:20
YH 731	Daily	14:30	17:25
K7 224	Daily	14:30	17:25

NYAUNG U TO YANGON			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
YH 917	Daily	7:45	10:45
YJ 891	2,3	7:45	10:25
YJ 892	5,6,7	7:45	10:25
YJ 143/W9 7143	1,2,3	8:35	10:45
YJ 143/W9 7143	4,5,6,7	8:05	10:45
K7 222	Daily	8:05	11:00
6T 401	2,3,4,5,6,7	8:05	10:55
YJ 891	1	8:15	10:55
YJ 892	4	8:15	10:55
6T 401	1	9:10	12:00
YH 732	Daily	17:25	18:45
6T 502/K7 225	Daily	17:40	19:00
W9 129	1,2,3	17:40	19:00
W9 129	Daily	17:25	18:45
K7 225	Daily	17:45	19:00

YANGON TO MYITKYINA			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
YJ 201	4	6:30	9:20
YJ 211	5	7:00	9:50
K7 844	2,4,7	7:30	11:05
W9 251	2	10:30	13:25
K7 624	Daily	10:30	13:25
YJ 211	7	11:30	14:20
YJ 201	1,3	11:00	13:50
K7 622	1,2,5	12:00	14:55

MYITKYINA TO YANGON			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
YJ 202	4	9:35	12:25
YJ 211	5	10:05	13:25
YJ 202	1,3	14:05	17:25
YJ 211	7	14:35	17:55
K7 625	Daily	15:40	18:35
W9 252	2	16:05	19:00

YANGON TO HEHO			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
YH 917	Daily	6:10	9:35
YJ 891	1	6:10	9:35
YJ 891	4	6:10	9:30
YJ 891	2,3,5,6,7	6:10	9:00
6T 401/K7222	2,3,4,5,6,7	6:30	9:30
K7 222	Daily	6:30	9:30
6T 401	1	7:00	10:35
YJ 761	6	7:00	8:10
W9 201	1,2,3	7:45	9:55
W9 201	4,5,6,7	7:30	9:40

K7 828	1,3,5	7:30	8:45
W9 119	1,3	10:30	11:40
YJ 751/W9 7751	3,5,7	11:00	12:10
YJ 761	1,2,4	11:00	12:10
YH 727	1,5	11:15	12:40
YH 737	7	11:15	12:40
K7 826	2,6	11:45	13:00
W9 129	1,2,3	14:45	15:55
W9 129	4,5,6,7	14:30	15:40
6T 501/K7 224	Daily	14:30	15:40
K7 224	Daily	14:30	15:45
YH 731	Daily	14:30	15:55

HEHO TO YANGON			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
YJ 892	2,3,5,6,7	9:15	10:25
YH 918	Daily	9:35	10:45
YJ 892	1,4	9:45	10:55
6T 402/K7223	2,3,4,5,6,7	9:45	10:55
K7 223	Daily	9:45	11:00
W9 201	4,5,6,7	9:55	11:05
W9 201	1,2,3	10:10	11:20
6T 402	1	10:50	12:00
K7 829	1,3,5	13:50	15:05
W9 120	1,3	15:00	17:10
YJ 762	1,2,4,6	15:50	18:00
W9 129	1,2,3	16:10	19:00
W9 129	4,5,6,7	15:55	18:45
YH 731	Daily	15:55	18:45
YH 728	1,5	16:00	18:10
6T 501/K7 224	Daily	16:00	19:00
K7 224	Daily	16:00	19:00
YH 738	3,7	16:40	18:50
K7 827	2,6	17:25	18:40

YANGON TO SITT WE			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
6T 605	5	11:15	13:15
6T 611	3,7	11:30	12:55
K7 426	Daily	12:30	13:50
6T 607	1	12:30	13:55
6T 611	2,4,6	14:30	15:55

SITT WE TO YANGON			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
6T 612	3,7	13:15	14:40
6T 606	5	13:35	15:00
K7 427	Daily	14:05	15:25
6T 608	1	14:15	16:15
6T 612	2,4,6	16:15	17:40

YANGON TO MYEIK			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
K7 319	Daily	7:00	9:05
YJ 301	1,2,3,7	7:00	9:10
YH 633	1,3,4,5,7	7:00	9:15
6T 707	2	7:30	9:30
6T 707	6	11:15	13:15
YJ 301	6	11:00	13:10
YJ 301	4	11:30	13:40

MYEIK TO YANGON			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
YH 634	1,3,4,5,7	11:25	13:25
YJ 302	1,3,4,5,7	11:25	13:35
K7 320	Daily	11:30	13:35
6T 708	2	11:55	13:55
6T 708	6	15:40	17:40
YJ 302	4	15:55	18:05
YJ 302	6	15:25	17:35

YANGON TO THANDWE			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
6T 605	5	11:15	12:10
6T 607	1	12:30	15:05

THANDWE TO YANGON			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
6T 605	5	12:25	15:00
6T 608	1	15:20	16:15

Domestic Airlines

Air Bagan Ltd.(W9)
Tel : 513322, 513422, 504888, Fax : 515102

Air KBZ (K7)
Tel: 372977-80, 533030-39 (Airport), Fax: 372983

Air Mandalay (6T)
Tel : (Head Office) 501520, 525488, Fax: 525937, Airport: 533222-3, 09-73152853, Fax: 533223.

Asian Wings (YJ)
Tel: 951 516654, 532253, 09-731-35991-3, Fax: 951 532333

Golden Myanmar Airlines (Y5)
Tel: 95 9 400446999, 95 9 400447999, Mobile: 95 9 5020711, Fax: 95 9 73256067

Yangon Airways(YH)
Tel: (+95-1) 383 100, 383 107, 700 264, Fax: 652 533.

FMI Air Charter - Sales & Reservations
Tel: (95-1) 240363, 240373 / (+95-9) 421146545

Domestic

6T = Air Mandalay
W9 = Air Bagan
YJ = Asian Wings
K7 = AIR KBZ
YH = Yangon Airways
UB = FMI UB Charter
Y5 = Golden Myanmar Airlines

Subject to change without notice

INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT SCHEDULES

YANGON TO BANGKOK			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
PG 706	Daily	7:15	9:30
8M 335	1,2,3,4,7	9:00	10:45
TG 304	Daily	9:50	11:45
PG 702	Daily	10:30	12:25
TG 302	Daily	14:55	16:50
8M 331	1,5,6	16:30	18:15
PG 704	Daily	18:20	20:15
Y5 237	Daily	18:05	19:50
TG 306	Daily	19:45	21:40

YANGON TO DON MUENG			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
FD 2752	Daily	8:30	10:20
FD 2756	Daily	12:15	14:05
FD 2754	Daily	17:50	19:35

YANGON TO SINGAPORE			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
MI 509	1,6	0:25	5:00
8M 231	Daily	8:00	12:25
Y5 233	Daily	10:10	14:40
SQ 997	Daily	10:25	14:45
8M 6232	Daily	11:30	16:05
3K 586	Daily	11:30	16:05
VN 942	2,4,7	14:25	17:10
MI 517	Daily	16:40	21:15

YANGON TO KUALA LUMPUR			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
8M 501	1,3,6	7:50	11:50
AK 1427	Daily	8:30	12:50
MH 741	Daily	12:15	16:30
AK 1425	Daily	16:45	21:00
MH 743	2,5,7	16:55	21:10

YANGON TO KOLKATA			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
AI 228	1,5	14:05	15:05

YANGON TO BEIJING			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
CA 906	2,3,4,6,7	14:15	21:55

YANGON TO GAUNGZHOU			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
8M 711	4,7	8:40	13:15
CZ 3056	3,6	11:20	15:50
CZ 3056	1,5	17:40	22:15

YANGON TO TAIPEI			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
CI 7916	Daily	10:50	16:15

YANGON TO KUNMING			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
MU 2012	3	12:20	18:35
MU 2032	1,2,4,5,6,7	14:40	18:00
CA 906	2,3,4,6,7	14:15	17:35

YANGON TO CHIANG MAI			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
W9 9607	4,7	14:20	16:10

YANGON TO HANOI			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
VN 956	1,3,5,6,7	19:10	21:30

YANGON TO HO CHI MINH CITY			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
VN 942	2,4,7	14:25	17:10

YANGON TO DOHA			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
QR 619	1,4,5	8:15	11:15

YANGON TO PHNOM PENH			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
8M 403	3,6	16:50	19:15

YANGON TO SEOUL			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
OZ 770	3,6,7	0:35	9:10
KE 472	Daily	23:35	08:05+1

YANGON TO HONG KONG			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
KA 251	1,2,4,6	1:10	6:00

YANGON TO TOKYO			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
NH 914	1,3,6	21:30	06:40+1

MANDALAY TO BANGKOK			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
TG 782	2,5,6,7	9:30	11:55

MANDALAY TO DON MUENG			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
FD 2761	Daily	12:45	15:00

MANDALAY TO KUNMING			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
MU 2030	Daily	14:40	17:20

BANGKOK TO YANGON			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
8M 336	1,2	6:15	7:00
TG 303	Daily	7:55	8:50
PG 701	Daily	8:50	9:40
TG 301	Daily	13:00	13:45
PG 703	Daily	16:45	17:35
TG 305	Daily	17:50	18:45
8M 332	Daily	19:15	20:00
PG 705	Daily	20:15	21:30
Y5 238	Daily	21:10	21:55

DON MUENG TO YANGON			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
FD 2751	Daily	7:15	8:00
FD 2755	Daily	11:10	11:45
FD 2753	Daily	16:35	17:20

SINGAPORE TO YANGON			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
SQ 998	Daily	7:55	9:20
3K 585	Daily	9:10	10:40
8M 6231	Daily	9:10	10:40
VN 943	2,4,7	11:40	13:25
8M 232	Daily	13:25	14:50
MI 518	Daily	14:20	15:45
Y5 234	Daily	15:35	17:05
8M 234	1,4,7	19:15	20:00
MI 520	5,7	22:10	23:35

BEIJING TO YANGON			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
CA 905	2,3,4,6,7	8:05	13:15

KUALA LUMPUR TO YANGON			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
AK 1426	Daily	6:55	8:00
MH 740	Daily	10:05	11:15
8M 502	1,3,6	12:50	13:50
MH742	2,5,7	14:45	15:55
AK 1424	Daily	15:05	16:15

KOLKATA TO YANGON			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
AI 227	1,5	10:35	13:20

GUANGZHOU TO YANGON			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
CZ 3055	3,6	8:40	10:30
CZ 3055	1,5	14:45	16:35
8M 712	4,7	14:15	15:50

TAIPEI TO YANGON			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
CI 7915	Daily	7:00	9:55

KUNMING TO YANGON			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
MU 2011	3	8:20	11:30
CA 905	2,3,4,6,7	12:40	13:15
MU 2031	1,2,4,5,6,7	13:30	13:55

CHIANG MAI TO YANGON			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
W9 9608	4,7	17:20	18:10

HANOI TO YANGON			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
VN 957	1,3,5,6,7	16:35	18:10

HO CHI MINH CITY TO YANGON			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
VN 943	2,4,7	11:40	13:25

BANGKOK TO MANDALAY			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
TG 781	2,5,6,7	7:25	8:50

DOHA TO YANGON			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
QR 618	3,4,7	21:05	07:00+1

PHNOM PENH TO YANGON			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
8M 404	3,6	20:15	21:40

SEOUL TO YANGON			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
KE 471	Daily	18:40	22:30
OZ 769	2,5,6	19:50	23:25

TOKYO TO YANGON			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
NH 913	1,3,6	10:30	15:30

HONG KONG TO YANGON			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
KA 250	1,3,5,7	21:45	23:30

DON MUEANG TO MANDALAY			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
FD 2760	Daily	10:50	12:15

KUNMING TO MANDALAY			
Flight	Day	Dep	Arr
MU 2029	Daily	13:55	13:50

International Airlines

Air Asia (FD) Tel: 251 885, 251 886.
Air Bagan Ltd.(W9) Tel : 513322, 513422, 504888, Fax : 515102
Air China (CA) Tel : 666112, 655882.
Air India Tel : 253597-98, 254758. Fax: 248175
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Qatar Airways (Temporary Office) Tel: 01-250388, [ext: 8142, 8210]

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Subject to change without notice

PAKISTAN

Local tourists flock to the Kashmir valley

SAJJAD QAYYUM

SUCCESS stories can be rare in Pakistan, but business is booming in one Kashmir tourist spot as the region rebuilds after a devastating earthquake in 2005 and shrugs off associations with violence.

Hundreds of thousands of Pakistani tourists drawn to the lakes and glaciers of the Neelum Valley are injecting desperately needed money into one of the poorest parts of the country.

Westerners stopped coming to the Himalayas of Pakistani-Kashmir years ago, put off by its reputation as a training ground for Islamist militant groups and the risk of sporadic conflict with India.

But with a new road built by the Chinese after the earthquake that killed 73,000 people and a ceasefire with India holding, Pakistanis are discovering the snow-capped peaks, glaciers, lakes and lush-green meadows of the Neelum Valley.

Known locally as "Paradise on Earth", the valley is about 115 kilometres (71 miles) east of the base camp where gunmen shot dead American, Chinese, Lithuanian, Slovakian and Ukrainian climbers in June this year.

It was the worst attack on foreigners in Pakistan for a decade, but in neighbouring Kashmir, few Pakistanis are worried.

"There is a bit of fear there, but overall we are enjoying ourselves and we will stay according to our plan," said Mohammad Amir, a lawyer on holiday with his family from southern Punjab.

Munazza Tariq, a university student from Karachi, agrees.

"This was carried out by enemies of Pakistan. After it happened, we received a lot of calls from our relatives from Karachi, but we are safe and enjoying ourselves," said Munazza.

Local tourism ministry official Sheila Waqar says 600,000 people visited Neelum last year compared to 130,000 in 2010, before the Chinese built a road linking the area to Muzaffarabad, the capital of Pakistani-administered Kashmir.

"There is an influx of tourists in the area because we have a very beautiful road from Muzaffarabad to the Neelum Valley," she said.

The nearby Line of Control slices apart the Indian-and-Pakistani-held zones of the Himalayan region where a ceasefire has held since November 2003.

"This area is very peaceful and there is no fear of terrorism," said Waqar.

India and Pakistan have fought two wars over Kashmir, a Muslim-majority region claimed in full by both sides.

Sporadic clashes killed six soldiers in January and February, but officials

on both sides have kept tensions in check and Pakistan's newly elected prime minister, Nawaz Sharif, has put improving relations with India at the cornerstone of his foreign policy.

By contrast, Taliban attacks in the northwest - where mountain resorts have in the past sucked domestic tourism away from Kashmir - and the impact of crippling power cuts pushing people towards balmy climes is also driving visitor numbers higher, Waqar said.

There are now 115 registered guest houses in the Neelum Valley, local deputy commissioner Mohammad Farid said, compared to none in 2010.

The authorities say they have stepped up security after the climbers were killed in Gilgit-Baltistan, but because tourists in Kashmir are Pakistani rather than foreign, they are not braced for a serious knock-on effect.

"We have strict instructions that all government and private guesthouses are to close their main gates at 10pm," Kashmir tourism minister Abdul Salam Butt said.

"No doubt this incident has damaged international tourism in Pakistan, but it won't affect Kashmir because we host domestic tourists

Splurging on high-class etiquette

Wealthy Chinese are forking out handsome sums – to learn how to use forks. Sarah Jane Ho's school of etiquette attracts some of the wealthiest clientele in China

SEBASTIEN BLANC

HOW to properly peel an orange, hold an oyster fork, and pronounce luxury brand names – wealthy Chinese are paying handsome sums to learn such skills as they seek to match their high-end lifestyles with high-class etiquette.

A two-week course at the newly opened Institute Sarita in Beijing costs 100,000 yuan (US\$16,000), but that has not dissuaded dozens of students from across the country from signing up.

Most are women in their 40s whose wealth rose fabulously along with China's breakneck growth in recent decades, says founder Sarah Jane Ho.

Their parents survived traumatic hardships under the late leader Mao Zedong, while their children enjoy privileged lives exposed to Western concepts. And they are caught in a constant culture shock, says Ho.

"Today's nouveau riche women in China are the first to take on all these roles of wife, mother, daughter, business-woman in this new drastically changed world. There are no precedents, no rules, no person for them to refer to," she says.

"What my clients want is really a guide, a new Confucius. What they need is a frame of reference and this is what I provide."

For many participants, the hefty price tag to acquire such knowledge can seem trivial. Ho says her students "easily spend three times that amount" to acquire the furs or jewellery introduced in class.

Besides learning to dress with elegance, the women familiarise themselves with wine, elite sports such as golf and riding, English tea service, floral art and table decorating.

One student erred on a recent lunch hostessing exam when she laid a knife with the blade facing out rather than in, Ho said.

They learn how to help their husbands and chat with their men's business associates – reviewing acceptable topics of conversation, unlike typically blunt enquires such as, "How much do you earn?" or "Why did you divorce your wife?" – and how close to stand to others.

"Personal space is something new in China," says Ho, who tells students to "keep your elbows close to your body".

The institute, which hosts students at a luxury hotel and formally opened in March, is based on the traditional finishing schools once reserved for young women from well-to-do families in the West, where they have largely disappeared.

Ho, a Harvard graduate who speaks five languages, herself attended the Institut Villa Pierrefeu, often called the last Swiss finishing school.

Many of her students decide they need help after finding themselves stumped at a fancy engagement, often a Western-style meal.

"They don't dare start [eating] for fear of being ridiculed, for example, with escargot," said the institute's head chef, whom Ho recruited from the French embassy.

Jocelyn Wang, 24, says the intricacies of Western dining protocol were among the most valuable lessons of her 10-day course at Institute Sarita.

"I think the way someone eats – how they hold their fork and knife, the way they eat their food – can say a lot about their etiquette and their temperament," she says, adding that such topics were not widely taught in China.

"My parents may have learned from experience or from TV or the internet," she says. "I wanted to be more specialised."

During her 9am to 6pm sessions she says she used rulers to measure the precise placement of forks and knives and toured art galleries, taking notes and collecting class handouts along the way.



Sarah Jane Ho, the founder of Institute Sarita in Beijing, demonstrates the proper way to hold a coffee cup. Photo: AFP

But the detailed instruction also impressed upon her the need for non-teachable qualities such as poise, taste and confidence.

There are differences between aristocracy and the nouveau riche, says Wang, who is studying globalisation for a master's degree in London.

"We have a really good life, at least materially speaking, so we can't just be unrefined."

Harvard sociologist Martin Whyte said Chinese interest in etiquette was to be expected in a society enjoying newfound wealth but lacking a strong, recent "aristocratic tradition".

They "recognise that being viewed as 'nouveau riche' makes them vulnerable to popular criticism," he said in an email, likening rich Chinese today to 19th century Americans.

"They feel a need to demonstrate to the world that they are not just crude money-grubbing upstarts, but have some cultural refinement and civility, and thus might be viewed as honourably wealthy, rather than resented," he said. – AFP

LOS ANGELES

Baron Cohen pulls out of Freddie Mercury biopic

BRITISH comic actor Sacha Baron Cohen has pulled out of a long-planned film about flamboyant Queen frontman Freddie Mercury, his spokesman said on July 23.

Industry journal cited his manager as saying the withdrawal was due to "creative differences" with producers over the movie's tone.

"Sacha has pulled out," the actor's publicist Matthew Labov said, declining to give any other details.

The as-yet-untitled film is being made by GK Films, in partnership with Hollywood A-lister Robert De Niro and Jane Rosenthal's Tribeca Productions and Queen Films.

Baron Cohen – whose hit movie characters include bumbling Kazakh reporter Borat, gay Austrian fashionista Bruno and wannabe gangster Ali G – was confirmed as linked to the project nearly three years ago.

Peter Morgan – who scripted the films



Sacha Baron Cohen. Photo: AFP

Frost/Nixon and *The Queen* – has written the screenplay for the film, planned to focus on the years leading up to Queen's stellar performance at the 1985 Live Aid concert.

Mercury died of AIDS-related pneumonia in 1991 at the age of 45.

Queen is one of the world's best-selling bands.

The British rockers' hits include "Bohemian Rhapsody" (1975), "We Are the Champions" and "We Will Rock You" (1977), "Crazy Little Thing Called Love" (1979), "Another One Bites the Dust" (1980) and "These Are the Days of Our Lives" (1991).

Baron Cohen is working on a spy spoof for Hollywood studio Paramount, focused on a secret agent who goes on the run with his football hooligan brother, according to the BBC.

He has written and will also star in the film. – AFP

WEEKLY PREDICTIONS

JULY 29 - AUGUST 4, 2013

AQUARIUS | Jan 20 - Feb 18



The laws of nature may feel like they are working against you, but it's all just a test to see if you're able to meet the challenge. Maintain your moral excellence and remember that actions speak louder than words. Accept logical changes in your professional environment and let your consciousness drift away from control. Let go.

LEO | Jul 23 - Aug 22



Comparing yourself to others will be your undoing. Your deepest desires unfolded during last week's full moon, with momentum building towards some major career moves that will project you into the frontline storm. Steer yourself clear of trouble if possible. In your personal life, love needs time to balance something.

PISCES | Feb 19 - March 2



Act with virtue and leave behind good deeds that the storm of time can never destroy. Some words such as "can't" and "mustn't" are words that should be cut out of your life. Life is very short, so don't waste it by being stupid or by chasing after excessive material wealth and sexuality. Have faith in the love that exists between you and your partner.

VIRGO | Aug 23 - Sep 22



The next few weeks are a golden age for you. Turn your life around by accumulating certain information that will benefit your career, putting together a life plan and applying your skill sets in a holistic way. Be ready to shoulder high duty and responsibility accordingly.

ARIES | Mar 21 - Apr 19



Professional training, social skills and useful connections are indispensable to achieving a favourable outcome, attainment of wealth or fame. Nobody is perfect and everyone can learn from others. Know that your loyalty is a vital ingredient to a relationship. Now is the time to start looking for true love.

LIBRA | Sep 23 - Oct 22



Your entire experience of the world is determined solely by how you engage in the world. Are you using the roles you play to share yourself fully or are you using your roles to protect yourself from hurt? If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change your attitude.

TAURUS | Apr 20 - May 20



Vanity is a futile, poisonous emotion that should not be embraced. Eliminate it as soon as possible and use your soundness of judgement in matters relating to life and conduct to change your life for the better in meaningful ways. In order to achieve your goals this week, it's all about applying method to the madness.

SCORPIO | Oct 23 - Nov 21



Love is that feeling that has been slowly growing and turning knots in your stomach. Unfortunately, you might have to keep it secret for just a little while longer. You are responsible for the reaction that your choices and behaviour produce, so think carefully before eliciting a reaction or response from others.

GEMINI | May 21 - June 20



You can have your way without needless aggression or insensitivity. Continue to adapt to situations the best you can. Maintaining a mixed social life is important to keeping a balanced perspective and you will find yourself rising in popularity. You can build harmony in relationships by granting favours and showing understanding. A great love will soon be at hand.

SAGITTARIUS | Nov 22 - Dec 21



Acknowledge what's wrong and then take action to fix whatever problems are heading in your direction. Measuring your success or failure will be based on how early you tackle these issues (you know what they are). Stop putting off "some day" and take ownership.

CANCER | Jun 21 - Jul 20



Think of significant acts of kindness that you've imparted in your life – the karma bank will be rewarding you soon. Allow yourself to be challenged and create mini-miracles at a pace that is comfortable for you. Believe that simplicity is the whole secret of well-being. Be ready to learn from the laws of nature.

CAPRICORN | Dec 22 - Jan 19



Seek new information about what could be happening and look for the signals that confirm what you already believe to be true. You have to be especially careful about the decisions you make this week because they could damage your reputation. Your love is an abstract beauty but true to you.

AUNG MYIN KYAW

4th Floor, 113, Thamaing Bayan Road, Tarmwe Tsp, Yangon.
Tel: 09-731-35632, Email: williameastel@gmail.com

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Brazil 56, Pyay Road, 6th mile, Hlaing Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 507225, 507251, 507482, fax: 507483, email: Administ.yangon@itamaraty.gov.br

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Cambodia 25 (3B/4B), New University Avenue Road, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 549609, 540964, fax: 541462, email: RECYANGON@mptmail.net.mm

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Egypt 81, Pyidaungsu Yeiktha Road, Yangon. Tel: 222886, 222887, fax: 222865, email: egymbyangon@mptmail.net.mm

France 102, Pyidaungsu Yeiktha Road, Yangon. Tel: 212178, 212520, 212523, 212528, 212532, fax: 212527, email: ambaf rance. rangoun@diplomatie.fr

Germany 9, Bogyoke Aung San Museum Road, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 548951, 548952, fax: 548899 email: info@rangun.diplo.de

India 545-547, Merchant Street, Yangon. Tel: 391219, 388412, 243972, fax: 254086, 250164, 388414, email: indiaembassy@mptmail.net.mm

Indonesia 100, Pyidaungsu Yeiktha Road, Yangon. Tel: 254465, 254469, 229750, fax: 254468, email: kuckygn@indonesia.com.mm

Israel 15, Khabaung Street, Hlaing Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 515115, fax: 515116, email: info@yangon.mfa.gov.il

Italy 3, Inya Myaing Road, Golden Valley, Yangon. Tel: 527100, 527101, fax: 514565, email: ambyang.mail@esteri.it

Japan 100, Natmauk Road, Yangon. Tel: 549644-8, 540399, 540400, 540411, 545988, fax: 549643

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North Korea 77C, Shin Saw Pu Rd, Sanchaung Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 512642, 512025

South Korea 97 University Avenue, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 527142-4, 515190, fax: 513286, email: myanmar@mofat.go.kr

Lao A-1, Diplomatic Quarters, Tawwin Road, Dagon Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 222482, fax: 227446, email: Laoembcab@mptmail.net.mm

Malaysia 82, Pyidaungsu Yeiktha Road, Yangon. Tel: 220248, 220249, 220251, 220230, fax: 221840, email: mwkyangon@mptmail.net.mm

Nepal 16, Natmauk Yeiktha, Yangon. Tel: 545880, 557168, fax: 549803, email: nepemb@mptmail.net.mm

Pakistan A-4, diplomatic Quarters, Pyay Road, Yangon. Tel: 222881 (Chancery Exchange) fax: 221147, email: pakistan@myanmar.com.mm

Philippines 50, Sayasan Road, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 558149-151, fax: 558154, email: p.e.yangon@gmail.com

Russian 38, Sagawa Road, Yangon. Tel: 241955, 254161, fax: 241953, email: rusinmyan@mptmail.net.mm

Serbia No. 114-A, Inya Road, P.O.Box No. 943-Yangon. Tel: 515282, 515283, fax: 504274, email: serbemb@yangon.net.mm

Singapore 238, Dhamazedi Road, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 559001, email: singemb_ygn@sgmfa.gov.sg

Sri Lanka 34 Taw Win Road, Yangon. Tel: 222812, fax: 221509, email: slembassy.yangon@gmail.com

The Embassy of Switzerland No 11, Kabaung Lane, 5 1/2 mile, Pyay Rd, Hlaing Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 534754, 512873, 507089, Fax: 534754, Ext: 110

Thailand 94 Pyay Rd, Dagon Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 226721, 226728, 226824

United Kingdom 80 Strand Rd, Yangon. Tel: 370867, 380322, 371852, 371853, 256438, fax: 370866

United States of America 110, University Avenue, Kamayut Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 536509, 535756, 538038, fax: 650306

Vietnam Bldg-72, Thanlwin Rd, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 511305 email: vnemb myr@cybertech.net.mm

Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia No.287/289, U Wisara Rd, Sanchaung Tsp. Tel: 01-536153, 516952, fax : 01-516951

UNITED NATIONS ILO Liaison 1-A, Kanbae (Thitsar Rd), Yankin Tsp, Yangon, Myanmar. Tel : 01-566538, 566539 Fax : 01-566582

IOM 12th Flr, Traders Hotel, 223, tel: 252560 ext. 5002

UNAIDS Rm: (1223-1231), 12 Fl, Traders Hotel. tel: 252361, 252362, 252498. fax: 252364.

UNDCP 11-A, Malikka St, Mayangone tsp. tel: 666903, 664539. fax: 651334.

UNDP 6, Natmauk Rd, Bahan tel: 542910-19. fax: 292739.

UNFPA 6, Natmauk Rd, Bahan tsp. tel: 546029.

UNHCR 287, Pyay Rd, Sanchaung tsp. tel: 524022, 524024. fax 524031.

UNIAP Rm: 1202, 12 Fl, Traders Hotel.tel: 254852, 254853.

UNIC 6, Natmauk St., BHN tel: 52910-19

UNICEF 14-15 Flr, Traders Hotel. P.O. Box 1435, KTDA. tel: 375527-32, fax: 375552 email: unicef.yangon@unicef.org, www.unicef.org/myanmar.

UNODC 11-A, Malikka Rd., Ward 7, MYGN. tel: 666903, 664539, fax: 651334. email: fo.myanmar@unodc.org www.unodc.org/myanmar/

UNOPS Inya Lake Hotel, 3rd floor, 37, Kaba Aye Pagoda Rd, Mayangone Tsp. tel: 951-657281-7. Fax: 657279.

UNRC 6, Natmauk Rd, P.O. Box 650, TMWE tel: 542911-19, 292637 (Resident Coordinator), fax: 292739, 544531.

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Yangon General Hospital (New) ☎tel: 384493, 384494, 384495, 379109.
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Department of Post & Telecommunication ☎tel: 591384, 591387.
Immigration ☎tel: 286434.
Ministry of Education ☎tel:545500m 562390
Ministry of Sports ☎tel: 370604, 370605
Ministry of Communications ☎tel: 067-407037.
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Myanmar Post & Tele-communication (Accountant Dept) ☎tel: 254563, 370768.
Ministry of Foreign Affairs ☎tel: 067-412009, 067-412344.
Ministry of Health ☎tel: 067-411358-9.
Yangon City Development Committee ☎tel: 248112.

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Naypyitaw Hospital (emergency) ☎tel: 420096.
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Reservation@391070 [Ext] 1910, 106.
Fax : (951) 391375. Email : hotelasiaplaza@gmail.com

Avenue 64 Hotel
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Chatrium Hotel Royal Lake Yangon
40 Natmauk Rd, Tarmwe. tel: 544500. fax: 544400.

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Confort Inn
4, Shweli Rd, Bet: Inya Rd & U Wisara Rd, Kamaryut, tel: 525781, 526872

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PANDA hotel

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33, Alan Pya Pagoda Rd, Dagon tsp. tel: 250388. fax: 252478. email: enquiry.prygn@parkroyalhotels.com parkroyalhotels.com

Royal White Elephant Hotel

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Savoy Hotel
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Sweet Hotel
73, Damazedi Road, San Chaung Tsp, Ph: 539152

Sedona Hotel
Kabar Aye Pagoda Rd, Yankin. tel: 666900.

Strand Hotel
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Summit Parkview Hotel
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Thamada Hotel
5, Alan Pya Phaya Rd, Dagon. Tel: 243639, 243640.

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223 Sule Pagoda Rd. tel: 242828. fax: 242838.

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MiCasa Hotel Apartments
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Sakura Residence
9, Inya Rd, Kamaryut Tsp. tel: 525001. fax: 525002.

The Grand Mee Ya Hta Executive Residence
372, Bogyoke Aung San Rd, Pabedan Tsp. tel 951-256355 (25 lines).

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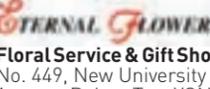
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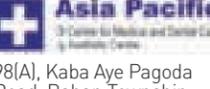
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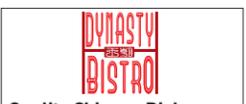
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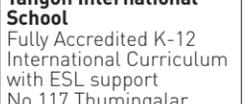
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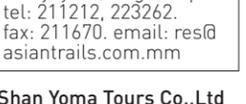
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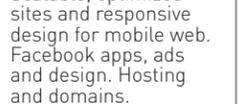


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Ian Bell (R) bats during the third day of the second Ashes cricket test match in London on July 20. Photo: AFP

LONDON

Bell enjoys putting Australia to sword

ENGLAND batsman Ian Bell admits he is relishing the chance to avenge his Ashes misery against Australia.

Bell averaged just 32 in 18 Ashes Tests before the current series and became something of a whipping boy for the Australians, with Shane Warne taking several opportunities to taunt him for his perceived lack of grit.

But the Warwickshire star has finally matured into England's middle order lynchpin and Australia has been unable to extend its dominance against him.

Bell has scored a century in the last three Ashes Tests, including

'From my first couple of Ashes series I knew I had to improve that.'

Ian Bell
England batsman

vital innings in the victories at Trent Bridge and Lord's.

"From my first couple of Ashes series I knew I had to improve on that," Bell said.

"The Australian team I started against was pretty good, so it is nice to be putting my hand up now as a senior player when we've needed it.

"I feel pretty confident right now and it is good to be putting it together in an Ashes series, which is what I've wanted to do.

"I don't really feel too bad about the previous series, but it is nice to be able to do things when the team need it most, and scoring hundreds is what you want to do.

"To have three now against Australia is exactly where I want to be."

With England already 2-0 up in the series, they can retain the Ashes with a win or a draw in the third Test at Old Trafford this week.

And Bell, who has always found Old Trafford to be a happy hunting ground, can't wait to punish the Australian bowlers again.

He has scored two hundreds and a 97 in five Manchester Tests, at an average of 87.

But if there is anything Bell takes from the epic drawn Test against Australia in 2005 - the last Ashes match played at Old Trafford - it is that the tourists will be determined not to surrender without a fight.

"I know that the Test matches I've been involved in there, we've got a good record, so it is a good place for England to go to now," Bell said.

"The 2005 Test was a game we were looking at targeting another win, but Australia battled right to the end.

"They were so excited about getting the draw, so you felt a little shift in the series right there because they were happy to get out of it.

"It was an intense game as all Ashes games are and I would expect another tough game coming up.

"Coming into this series it has been about contributing to the team, and at Lord's we had to work hard in different periods of the game and we got our rewards at the end.

"It has been hard work, but these couple of days will give us a nice break from the cricket so we're right for Old Trafford." - AFP

YANGON

Magwe FC axes hep-A positive Karamanov

AUNG SI HEIN

aungsiheinmm8@gmail.com

BULGARIAN footballer Ivan Karamanov has left Myanmar National League side Magwe FC after being diagnosed with hepatitis A, *The Voice Daily* newspaper reported last week.

He told the newspaper that he had contracted the illness due to unsanitary club training facilities and living accommodations.

He also told the newspaper that the club only paid him a month's salary of US\$4000 as severance even though his contract was supposed to end after August.

The team also ended its contract with Timor Leste national Almeida on the same day, but paid him two months' salary, equivalent to \$5000 on his contract.

However, Magwe manager U Soe Min refuted Karamanov's claims at a press conference on July 20.

"Our team owner gave Ivan a month's salary as an act of good faith, although *The Voice Daily* reported that he had asked for two months' salary but was given only one," he said.

"It is not proper that he not only destroyed the team's image, but also violated his contract and our code of conduct, which forbids any kind of disclosure about the team.

"His complaint that our compound is not hygienic, which he made based on the doctor's records, is false because the records were not made public," he said.

Magwe uses the Women's and Children's Centre compound in South Okkalapa township in Yangon as its home base, paying rent of K3 million a year until this year, when the fee was doubled, the team manager said.

He said that the club has hired a total of 19 foreign players, including a foreign coach, since 2009. He added that team policy requires the foreign players to stay at the compound - and not at hotels - to build unity with the Myanmar players.

"We've had 19 foreign players on our team," he said. "But none of them has encountered a problem like this.

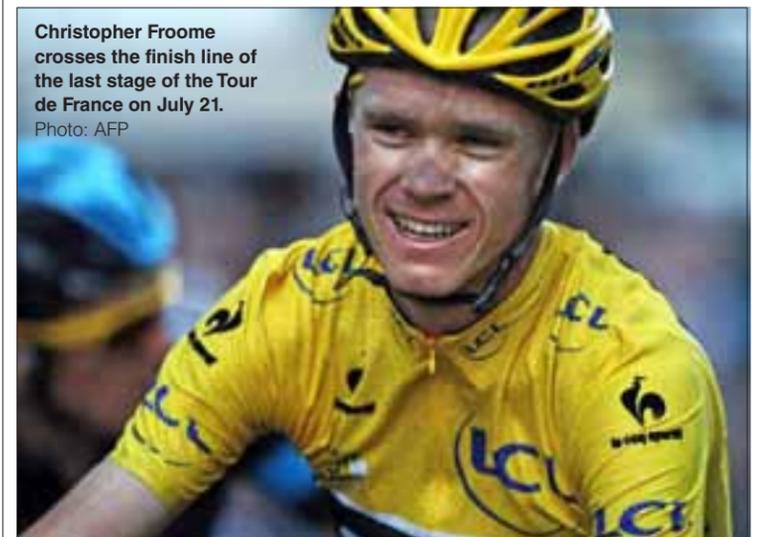
"Ivan caught this disease because he was not hygienic. If our compound was unhygienic, why was he the only person to contract the illness?" asked the team's head coach, Kyi Lwin.

He added that Karamanov had ignored the team doctor's prescription for medicine by stating that antibiotics made him unwell.

"Because of this case, new signings will have to undergo full medical tests before we offer them a contract," he said.

Kazumi from Japan and Seth Amoah from Ghana remain as foreign players on the team after Almeida's contract was ended for failing to follow team orders.

Magwe FC sits sixth on the MNL ladder, following closely behind Yangon United, Yadanarbon, KBZ Nay Pyi Taw and Ayeyarwady FC.



Christopher Froome crosses the finish line of the last stage of the Tour de France on July 21.

Photo: AFP

LONDON

Wiggins could challenge Froome in Tour, says Hoy

CHRIS Hoy believes Bradley Wiggins could take on his successor as Tour de France champion, Chris Froome, in next year's race but only if he can stand another 12 months of hard training.

Wiggins missed this year's race through injury and illness, leaving Froome as the undisputed leader of Team Sky.

Froome triumphed in Paris on July 21 to give Britain back-to-back Tour de France champions, with next year's race set to start in the northern English county of Yorkshire.

Six-time Olympic champion Hoy, who retired earlier this year, said on July 23, "Bradley has been a champion for a number of years - he won the Tour de France and has been Olympic champion and world champion.

"I'm sure if he wants to and he has the drive, he could easily be a champion again."

Hoy added, "It's one thing

becoming a champion but the hardest thing is actually replicating that.

"Everybody is vying to take your spot once you are up there.

"Sport isn't everything in life. There is nothing like that winning feeling. But only a tiny percentage of your life as a sportsman is that. The rest of it is the unglamorous, painful slog that happens in between times.

"So ultimately, Bradley might be thinking that if his kids' lives are passing him by while he's out racing and training, maybe he wants to see his family grow up and spend time with them. I can completely understand that.

"It's a very personal thing. Once you have achieved your lifetime goal, you might not feel the desire to push on again.

"However, I wouldn't be surprised to see him on top again. He's had a bit of time out to refocus. It depends how much he really wants it." - AFP



IN PICTURES

Taking the plunge: Mexico's Alejandra Estrella competes in the women's 10-metre platform diving event at the FINA World Championships in Barcelona on July 24. Photo: AFP

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Karamanov leaves
Magwe FC amid health row

SPORT 58



Arsene Wenger, then-manager of Japanese football club Nagoya Grampus Eight, acknowledges supporters after his last game in Japan on September 28, 1996.
Photo: AFP

TOKYO

Wenger's influence echoes in Japan

NEARLY 20 years after his brief stay in Japan, Arsene Wenger's influence still echoes, following its rise from a backwater of world football to one of its emerging powers.

The serious Frenchman left a lasting impression not only on his colleagues at Nagoya Grampus, where he was manager for 18 months in 1995 and 1996, but also on the Japanese game as a whole.

"Pass the ball to the future. The side pass is present and the back pass is past," Wenger was fond of saying at the time, according to former Nagoya midfielder Tetsuo Nakanishi, 43, who doubled as his interpreter.

When Wenger returned to Nagoya for the first time last week with Arsenal, a largely red-clad crowd of 43,000 turned out to greet him, waving banners such as "Welcome home, Benguru [Wenger]".

Before Arsenal's 3-1 win over Nagoya, former players of the club, including current manager Dragan Stojkovic, played a commemorative game in honour of the Frenchman.

"Manager Wenger remembered the names of everyone," mused former striker Takafumi Ogura, now 40. "I felt nostalgic when I saw them [Wenger and Stojkovic] together. It's been 17 years already. How amazing!"

Excitement is understandable in Nagoya after Wenger transformed the club, in the early years of the J-League, from a foot-of-the-table outfit to trophy winners, and then went

on to lead Arsenal to three English Premier League titles and four FA Cups.

"It was a great loss and disappointment to Japanese football that they abruptly decided on Wenger's transfer to Arsenal in the middle of the 1996 season," said veteran Japanese football writer Yoshiyuki Osumi.

"But he has since made a great success in England and become one of the most outstanding managers in football history."

Wenger's legacy extends beyond Nagoya after he wrote a book on football management, *Shosha no Esprit* (Spirit of Conquest) for the Japanese market.

While "the Professor" is not the only man to influence Japanese football, the attractive, short-passing game of their national team bears a resemblance to Arsenal's distinctive style.

And it's been successful for Japan, who won their fourth Asian Cup title in 2011 and will contest their fifth straight World Cup in Brazil next year. At the 2012 Olympics, Japan stunned "tiki-taka" experts Spain, the world and European champions, in the group stage.

Meanwhile in the women's game, Japan became Asia's first football world champions in 2011 when they beat the United States on penalties in the final in Frankfurt.

Hans Ooft's time in charge of the men's team, from 1992 to 1993, is seen as seminal for Japanese football, but Wenger, who turned down a chance to coach the Blue Samurai, is also credited with helping them recruit fellow Frenchman Philippe Troussier, manager from 1998 to 2002.

He also successfully mentored Stojkovic, a talented but wayward player for Nagoya when Wenger

arrived who then helped them win the Emperor's Cup and finish runners-up in the 1996 J-League.

The former Yugoslav international, who remains an ardent fan of Wenger's, later became Nagoya's manager and coached them to their first J-League title in 2010.

"One of Wenger's biggest achievements at Grampus was his success in helping Stojkovic's genius contribute to the team's victories," Osumi said.

"If Wenger had served as the Japan coach from 1998, the way the J-League and the Japan Football Association act would have been different," he added.

Asian influences also shaped Wenger following his arrival after seven years at Monaco. He was inspired by Japan's healthy diet and the feng shui concept of design when he began his project to revolutionise Arsenal's training habits and culture.

He said he was impressed at developments in Japan. Whereas the J-League once relied on foreign celebrities, it now exports players like Shinji Kagawa to Manchester United and Yuto Nagatomo to Inter Milan.

Japan, 37th in the world, are consistently Asia's top-ranked team, and have twice reached the knockout phase of the World Cup, on home soil in 2002 and again in 2010.

Expectations have now risen so high that there was harsh criticism when Japan crashed out of last month's Confederations Cup without a win, despite running Italy desperately close in a narrow 4-3 defeat.

"Japanese football has moved forward fantastically," Wenger, 63, told Arsenal's website, citing its Europe-based stars and well-organised youth system. — AFP

Yadanarbon and Yangon United draw

KYAW ZIN HLAING
kyawzinhlaing91@gmail.com

REIGNING Myanmar National League champions Yangon United FC could only muster a draw against Yadanarbon FC when the teams met on July 23 at Bahtoo Stadium in Mandalay.

Yadanarbon striker Jacques Enama gave the home team an early lead with a goal in the 5th minute of play. It would not be until the 70th minute, when Si Thu Aung found the back of the net, that Yangon United would equalise.

"We should have gotten a full point. Our team played the best in the second half. This draw is not good but it is not bad for the Yangon United either," said Yangon United coach Ivan Kolev.

Yangon United now has 43 points in the MNL standings, two points ahead of second-place Nay Pyi Daw FC. Yadanarbon is currently in fifth place with 32 points.

Bball teams fall to US visitors

KYAW ZIN HLAING
kyawzinhlaing91@gmail.com

VISION Sports basketball squads handily defeated the Myanmar men's and women's national teams on July 25 in Nay Pyi Taw in an exhibition organised by the Ministry of Sport and the Myanmar Basketball Federation.

US-based Vision Sports, a group that promotes intercultural relations through sport, defeated the men's national team 86-70. On the women's side, they won 65-47. A second match between the women's teams is scheduled for July 28 in Yangon.

The friendly matches are aimed at giving Myanmar basketball teams international experience prior to the 27th Southeast Asian Games being hosted in Nya Pyi Taw in December.

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