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In Sittwe, relief camps struggle to cope with new influx

By Soe Than Lynn with *AFP*

THE Rakhine State government is unable to accept more Rohingya refugees seeking shelter in Sittwe, an official said last week, as aid workers warned of a deepening humanitarian crisis with critical shortages of food, water and medicine.

More than 100,000 people have been displaced since June in two major outbreaks of violence in Rakhine State, where renewed clashes last month between Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims uprooted about 30,000 people.

Dozens were killed on both sides and thousands of homes were torched.

Rakhine State Attorney-General U Hla Thein said the Sittwe camps could only take care of those displaced during violence in June.

"The government is spending K100 million a day on relief camps and supplies will only last another three months. There are a large number of new refugees coming to Sittwe – approaching 7000 – and we cannot accept them. We are sending them to Maungdaw, which is three or four hours drive from Sittwe. We sent them to Maungdaw to balance refugee populations and manage them more conveniently," he said at the office of the Rakhine State government on October 27.

However, the government on October 27 allowed about 50 boats carrying refugees to land in Sittwe, where they have been temporarily accepted, and U Hla Thein said number of people in Thaechaung camp, which houses displaced Muslims, has swelled as a result.

While the government has previously said there are 40,000 in the camp, the number is much higher if refugees in nearby areas, such as Thechaung, Bumay and Thetkaipyin villages, are included in the total.

"It is hard to collect data on them

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Members of the Rohingya Muslim community search through the ashes of destroyed homes in Rakhine State last week. *Pic: Kaung Htet*

President enacts FIL changes after vote in hluttaw

By Win Ko Ko Latt and Stuart Deed

PRESIDENT U Thein Sein last week enacted amendments to the foreign investment law, a day after they were approved by the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, ending months of speculation and debate.

On the president's recommendation, hluttaw representatives on November 1 revised a version of the bill they approved less than two months earlier to make it more "investor-friendly". The president signed the changes into law on November 2.

"Investors are waiting for the bill to be approved. That's why he signed it as soon as he could," said U Zaw Htay, an official in the President's Office.

He said the former general wanted to enact the bill before flying to Laos to attend a major summit of Asian and European leaders which starts on November 5.

President U Thein Sein returned an earlier version of the bill, approved by the hluttaw on September 7, to parliament with 11 proposed changes, amid concerns it was too protectionist.

Ten of the president's 11 changes were approved, with Pyidaungsu Hluttaw representatives taking exception to the proposal that Myanmar's workers who have the same qualifications and experience as foreign workers should have equal rights in terms of wages.

The proposed changes had been reviewed by the Joint Bill Committee before the vote and the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw accepted all of its recommendations.

Representatives said the most significant change was the removal of a 50 percent limit and 35pc minimum on foreign investment in 13 restricted sectors. Under the final version, the investment ratio is negotiable between the investor and their local business partner. "I like the flexibility shown by the hluttaw bill committee," said Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. "I think they did it in the interests of the people."

The National League for Democracy leader would not comment on whether the changes would protect the interests of domestic business owners, some of whom lobbied parliament hard for protectionist changes to the draft submitted by the government.

The bill to amend the existing investment law, which dates to 1988, was first submitted to the parliament in March and had been the subject of extensive debate, with some initially arguing it unfairly favoured foreign investors over local firms.

"The bylaw will tell us a

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Hopes for peace in Myanmar

Recent ceasefires between the government and non-state armed groups represent the best prospect in decades to resolve ethnic conflicts in Myanmar. The people who stand to benefit most from peace are civilian communities, which have suffered from decades of fighting and associated human rights abuses. However, the voices of local communities are seldom heard over the political elites who argue among themselves

A Kayin man from northeast Bago Region holds a newly issued identity document, which allows him to travel legally around the country, in May. *Pic: Nan Tin Htwe*

By Ashley South

THE past year has been one of extraordinary changes in Myanmar. The government has implemented a series of reforms, including the release of most political prisoners and relaxations on censorship and freedom of association. Perhaps most significant has been the rapprochement between President U Thein Sein and reformist ministers, and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Also hugely important has been a series of ceasefires agreed between the government and various non-state armed groups, some of which have been fighting for autonomy for more than half a century.

Of course, many problems remain, including the urgent need for economic reform. Furthermore, horrific recent violence in western Rakhine State indicates how badly things can go wrong if ethnic and political differences are not managed carefully. Nevertheless, the reform process represents the best opportunity in decades to resolve armed ethnic conflicts which have plagued the country since independence.

Dozens of non-state armed groups – representing minorities that constitute more than 30 percent of the population – have been fighting for autonomy from the militarised state, and self-determination for their communities. Although some insurgent leaders have private economic motivations, many of Myanmar's armed ethnic groups do enjoy strong support from those they seek to represent. These war-ravaged minority communities express strong desires for peace – challenging government and ethnic minority elites to respond creatively.

The people want peace

On my travels through Myanmar over the past 20 years, I have made many dozens of excursions into the warzones. Particularly over the past year, I have been privileged to visit some highly remote and conflict-affected areas. I have been struck by the degree to which "ordinary" civilian populations support the peace process. Again and again, people have said how much they welcome the benefits of peace – although many still do not trust that the peace process is irreversible.

> **'This window of opportunity will not last forever.'**

People have told me that it is far easier to travel in conflict-affected areas. Previously villagers had to fear rough handling – or worse – on the part of Myanmar army personnel and/or insurgent forces. In contrast, recent months have seen travel restrictions greatly eased in many areas so that villagers can move more freely and spend more time tending their fields and getting products to market. While these benefits may not seem significant to political elites (or foreign analysts), they mean a great deal to local communities. As one person put it: "For the first time in living memory, we have not heard gunfire in the hills for many months – and no longer live in fear." An elderly Karen lady told me that, for the first time in decades, she did not have to hide her food stocks in the forest, and her sons could sleep overnight in the rice fields, without fear of violence.

In order for these benefits to be sustained and consolidated, it is important that the government and non-state armed groups move on from the agreement of ceasefires to negotiate substantial political settlements. The president and his advisers have negotiated truces with 10 of the 11 most significant armed ethnic groups. However, fighting continues across much of north and northeast Myanmar – particularly in Kachin State. If the government is serious about the peace process, its first priority must be to end all fighting nationwide. At the same time, it urgently needs to move beyond ceasefires, to starting political talks with the leaders of ethnic communities.

Hopes and fears

The government seems willing to engage in political discussions, which would be an extremely important breakthrough. Many ethnic leaders regard these peace overtures as the best opportunity in decades to address the social, political and economic issues that have long structured armed conflicts. However, others feel threatened by the peace process, fearing marginalisation in the new Myanmar as the government enhances its legitimacy. This has prompted some ethnic leaders and activist groups in exile to criticise or even reject the peace process, accusing the government and international community of moving too quickly. In contrast, other opposition actors claim that the pace of change is too slow. Such criticisms relate to genuine concerns about the peace process. However, they also reflect fears among some exile opposition groups of losing control of the political agenda and donor funding. It is sad to see some overseas-based activist groups criticising those who are working with local organisations inside the country to help communities recover from decades of conflict.

The sceptics do have legitimate concerns regarding the peace process – in particular, the lack of substantial political talks (so far) and the fighting in Kachin areas. It would, however, be a grave mistake to allow such concerns to undermine the peace process. Over the past decade-plus, Myanmar has been something of a "boutique issue" in human rights circles – but otherwise largely ignored by the international community. The reform process has provoked renewed interest from major powers and this brings the chance to highlight ethnic issues. This window of opportunity will not last forever.

The international community has an important – but limited – role to play. Foreign aid can help communities recover from conflict, test the ceasefires and build trust and confidence in the peace process. The US, Australia and Europe seem committed to supporting the reforms in Myanmar, and international donors have committed tens of millions of dollars to support the peace process.

The stakes are high. If Myanmar can re-invent itself as a country with respect for basic rights and the rule of law, this will be a major achievement – a rare example of a "pariah state" coming in from the cold. In the process, Myanmar will likely move away from the Chinese sphere of influence, which is an important geostrategic objective for Western countries.

In the context of such power politics, potential spoilers are unlikely to succeed in undermining the peace process. Instead, they should seize this opportunity to ensure the best outcome for minority citizens. In this way, activist groups and other political elites can support the communities they seek to represent, rather than undermining the prospects for sustainable peace in Myanmar.

(Ashley South is a writer and consultant specialising in ethnic politics and humanitarian issues in Myanmar and Southeast Asia.)

Contestants take part in the annual Kyaukse Elephant Dance Festival in Mandalay Region on October 30. The festival, held at Kyaukse's Shwe Thalyaung Pagoda, drew larger-than-normal crowds this year, which organisers attributed to an increase in prize money across the three categories. The winner in the traditional section took home K600,000. *Pic: Si Thu Lwin*

World Bank shows support for reforms with aid grant

By Zaw Win Than and Aye Thidar Kyaw

AFTER a 20-year absence, the World Bank is back in Myanmar. The World Bank Group's board of directors last week endorsed a new Interim Strategy for Myanmar and a US$80 million grant targeted at improving rural communities.

A further $5 million will go towards supporting conflict-hit communities, while the bank also said it plans to provide a further $165 million in low-interest loans once Myanmar clears its debts.

The new strategy will guide the World Bank's work in Myanmar for the next 18 months, focusing on accelerating poverty reduction by helping reformed institutions to deliver better services to people during this critical transition period.

"I am heartened by the reforms that have been taking place in Myanmar, and encourage the government to continue to push forward with their efforts," said Jim Yong Kim, the president of the World Bank Group.

"We hope to move ahead as part of a united global community to deliver solutions to address people's most urgent development needs, especially in areas such as health, education, and infrastructure, and we'll also work to build up the private sector so jobs can be created."

Under the Interim Strategy, the World Bank Group will help the government improve economic governance and create conditions for growth and jobs by providing policy advice and technical assistance in three main areas: public finance management, regulatory reform and private-sector development.

Analytical work, including a financial accountability assessment, a public expenditure review, and an investment climate assessment are under way to underpin these efforts.

While institutional change is a long term effort, the Interim Strategy aims to build confidence in reforms by bringing visible benefits to local communities, and strengthening the role of civil society to engage with the government.

"Our strategy has a strong focus on inclusive development and reforms that create real opportunities for all the people of Myanmar," said Pamela Cox, the bank's vice president for East Asia and the Pacific.

> **'I encourage the government to continue to push forward with their [reform] efforts.'**

"Transitions take time, but we are committed to working with all our partners to ensure that poor people start to feel the benefits of reforms quickly, especially through better services from the government."

The Interim Strategy was prepared jointly with International Finance Corporation, the member of the World Bank Group focused on private-sector development in developing countries.

"Developing Myanmar's private sector will be important to generate concrete benefits for the citizens of Myanmar such as jobs and economic opportunities," said IFC vice president for Asia Pacific, Karin Finkelston.

"IFC is seeking to improve access to finance in the country so that businesses can expand and hire people. We are also working together with the World Bank in assessing Myanmar's investment climate and infrastructure needs, with an initial focus on helping to connect people and businesses through better telecoms services and providing reliable power that will help firms to thrive."

World Bank's country manager for Myanmar, Mr Kanthan Shankar, told a press conference on November 2 that an analysis was being conducted to work out how best the anticipated $165 million in low-interest loans could be spent.

"We are going to do analysis and find out what is the most priority for the government and the people. At this point, we are looking at infrastructure, but we have not decided anything," Mr Shankar said.

He said human capacity and the bank's unfamiliarity with Myanmar were the most significant challenges, and added that it planned to slowly scale up its programs.

"For us our global advantage is to bring experiences and solutions from the outside. But it is not true that every solution will work in [Myanmar] so we need to ensure that we try [project], we pilot [them] and build on success," he said.

In an earlier interview with *The Myanmar Times*, Mr Shankar said the $80 million in assistance would be earmarked for infrastructure, such as roads, hospitals and schools, and livelihood development projects in 15 rural townships – one in each state, region and union territory – while the extra $5 million will go to communities in ceasefire areas.

Communities will be able to decide which projects they want funded, Mr Shankar said, adding that non-government organisations will also be involved in the process.

"The grant money doesn't go to the government, but to the community. We will keep track of the funds to avoid corruption and ensure transparency," he said. "Progress would be monitored through a financial report every four months, and the government would audit projects every year. The funds will be transferred in instalments to special accounts at the community level in small amounts, depending on the project size.

"The implementing agency would show us the bills, and future payments will be transferred after the invoices are checked."

While the government has granted a waiver to allow international financial institutions to operate in Myanmar, the government will have to repay its outstanding debt, which stands at $893 million, according to the bank's information centre.

Voters begin push to unseat MDY mayor

By Si Thu Lwin

THE bid to remove Mandalay Mayor U Aung Moung through the constitutional recall procedure took another step forward this week, with residents saying they have amassed signatures of more than one percent of the electorate, as required under the constitution.

Activists in Mandalay have been collecting voters' signatures to remove Mayor U Aung Moung from Mandalay Region Hluttaw seat of Mahaaungmyay 1 because they are unhappy at his heavy-handed attempts to evict people living illegally on municipal land. It is believed to be the second time the procedure has been tried in Myanmar, with voters in Yangon's South Okkalapa township unsuccessful in their attempt to recall Pyithu Hluttaw representative U Aung Thein Linn.

Ko Nyi Nyi Kyaw, a political activist and former member of All Burma Students' Democratic Front, told *The Myanmar Times* he was ready to submit the signatures to the Union Election Commission this month.

"The signatures that I've got now are from the voters who actually voted in the 2010 election … the number of voters who want to remove the mayor is now more than 1pc of voters who supported him in the past election. Now we will submit [the signatures] to the Union Election Commission in early November," Ko Nyi Nyi Kyaw told *The Myanmar Times*.

U Aung Moung was formerly minister for finance and revenue for Mandalay Region and was appointed mayor seven months ago. Critics say he has directed police to use excessive force to resolve land disputes, such as the relocation of a vegetable market and eviction of families in Chanmyatharzi and Pyigyitagun townships.

"This isn't based on personalities. We want people to know they have a way of making their voice heard without waiting five years [for the next election]," said Ko Nyi Nyi Kyaw.

> **'We want people to know they have a way of making their voice heard without waiting five years.'**

U Aung Moung, who represents the Union Solidarity and Development Party received 16,868 votes in the 2010 election, defeating National Unity Party representative U Myo Chit by 2080 votes.

The recall process requires the Union Election Commission, on receiving the necessary signatures, to investigate the complaints. The official concerned may rebut the accusations.

The commission must take action according to the law if it finds the accusation proved, and that the official is not suitable to remain in office. – *Translated by Thiri Min Htun*

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Govt agrees to political talks with KIO

By Seng Mai

THE Kachin Independence Organisation has welcomed a promise from lead government peace negotiator U Aung Min to pursue political talks.

The concession from the government, which has in the past proposed ceasefire talks before political negotiations, came during a meeting at Kyin Chang Hotel in Shweli, China, on October 30.

U Aung Min, who is also a minister in the President's Office, said the government would try to resolve the conflict through political means in order to achieve peace.

"We have reiterated our demand for political dialogue. War is waged because political problems are unresolved. If there are no political problems, there is no war. So we must hold political discussions," said U Swong Lut Gum, head of the KIO delegation.

"Political problems cannot be resolved by means of war but war will be resolved politically."

He said the KIO has coveted political negotiations since it rebelled against the central government in the early 1960s.

While a ceasefire was signed in 1994, the military government deferred political talks, saying they would be the responsibility of a civilian government established under the 2008 constitution.

Peace negotiators from the government and Kachin Independence Organisation in the Chinese town of Shweli on October 30. *Pic: Seng Mai*

For its part, the government team demanded the KIO's armed wing, the Kachin Independence Army, not launch attacks against transport infrastructure, that conflict be scaled down, and that more than 50 Chinese workers be allowed to pass through a KIO checkpoint to repair the Tapain Hydropower Project.

Because battles were being fought near KIA Brigade 4 while the meeting was taking place, KIA deputy commander-in-chief General Gun Maw did not attend the meeting. The government reciprocated the snub, with chief of the Bureau of Special Operations Lieutenant General Myint Soe staying behind in Nay Pyi Taw.

The government delegation included ministers U Ohn Myint and U Win Tun, Northern Region Commander Brigadier General Tun Tun Naung, Northeast Region Military Commander Brigadier General Aung Soe and other representatives.

The KIO was represented by U Song Lut Gum, U La Phiang La, U Ge Naw, U Zaw Yaw, U Naw Htwei and U Zein Khaw.

– Translated by Thit Lwin

From page 1

President enacts

lot so we can only say after seeing the bylaw," she said.

Other MPs said the amendments to the law needed to balance the interests of the people, domestic businesses and foreign investors.

"We think this is the best result for the Foreign Investment Law [amendments]," said U Zaw Myint Pe, an Amyotha Hluttaw representative and secretary of the Joint Bill Committee.

U Win Htein, Pyithu Hluttaw representative for Meiktila, said representatives had "removed some clauses that overprotect local business owners".

Mr Alessio Polastri, a managing partner at P&A Asia, a legal and tax advisory firm, said the enactment of the law represented "a great opportunity for both potential investors and Myanmar".

"I was extremely happy when I saw that the restrictions on foreigners with regard to minimum investment threshold and participation in restricted industries have been deleted from the draft approved several weeks ago," Mr Polastri told *The Myanmar Times*.

"While the passing of the amended draft foreign investment law alone may not be enough to secure large investment flows into the country, it is for sure the much awaited 'first step' towards realising such investment inflows," he said.

He said that while he believed there is nothing in the enacted law that would be of concern to prospective investors, how it is implemented will be more important than the text.

"The law looks good on paper and now it must also pass the practical test. We have had, in the past, great expectations of the extent to which a certain newly enacted or amended law can help … this country, only to be disappointed by the manner of its application, which did not necessarily reflect the intended purpose for which such law was enacted or amended in the first place."

Mr Luc de Waegh, founder and managing partner of West Indochina, said the publication of the law was an "absolute necessity" to attract investors, but added that he believed Myanmar needed a "first success story with a big name" to lure more companies.

For listed Western firms, enacting the law "will not be enough", Mr de Waegh said. "These companies are very conservative … even if the investment law is perfect, even if the legal environment is perfect [they will hold back] because these companies are more followers than leaders – I think the country needs a first success story with a big name," he said.

"That I think will have a psychological impact … the first one that comes in might open the way for others." – *With AFP*

Sittwe refugees

and manage them. If more Bengalis come, it will be harder," he said.

"Because of some rumours, refugees do not want to go to Maungdaw. For now [we are accepting them temporarily] and the priority is to feed and accommodate them. But the supplies that we have for the next three months are only meant for the old refugees. For the new ones, we can only consider giving them space to live," U Hla Thein said, adding that there may still be more refugees "on the sea or in boats".

But even in the camps near the state capital Sittwe housing ethnic Rakhine Buddhists people are going hungry.

"We don't have enough to eat," said Phyu Ma Thein, 33. "The abbot gave us a bowl of rice but we have no pots, no plates. We have nothing. We're just trying to survive."

The situation is likely to deteriorate, the UN refugee agency warned last week, as a new influx of refugees pushes the camps "beyond capacity in terms of space, shelter and basic supplies such as food and water".

"Food prices in the area have doubled and there are not enough doctors to treat the sick and wounded," it added.

Most of the displaced are Rohingya and their displacement camps are at crisis point, said Refugees International (RI), which estimates that even before last month's flare-up nearly a quarter of children in the squalid facilities were malnourished.

"Conditions in these camps are as bad if not worse than ones in Eastern Congo or Sudan," Melanie Teff, a researcher with the charity who visited Sittwe in September, said from London.

"Child malnutrition rates are startlingly high. There's an urgent need for clean water and food. If further aid does not come through there will be some unnecessary deaths," she said.

However, most Rohingya refugees *The Myanmar Times* interviewed said they would not consider leaving Sittwe.

"We don't accept any plan to send us from Sittwe to somewhere else. We will live here and die here. Our family members and businesses are in Sittwe and its vicinity and we are determined to live here together with them," said one Rohingya refugee who recently arrived in Thaechaung from Pauktaw township.

While some said, "If we can we want to go to a third country, like Australia, as the president said," a more common response to the question of resettlement was: "We would not go even if we were sent to United States. We will live on this land and water. Now the government said they want to send us to Maungdaw but if they try and force us to go we will jump into the water."

Another Rohingya refugee said he was also worried about being sent to Maungdaw.

"The government said that it has already arranged to feed and accommodate us in Maungdaw and Navy escorts would be provided for us. But we do not belong in Maungdaw. We replied that we live on the land in Sittwe and will die on the same land," he said.

Daw Zawlimar, 65, who fled violence in Kyaukpyu for Thaechaung camp in Sittwe, said: "We will live here, we dare not go back to Kyaukphyu. … We left in 50 boats carrying more than 8000 people. Of the group, 45 were sent to Setmaw island and people from five boats were able to disembark here."

But one Rakhine community leader from Sittwe expressed concern at what he perceived was the government giving in to the humanitarian concerns of international organisations by allowing the Rohingya refugees to disembark in the town.

"The government seems to be concerned about international pressure. It has to reject the pressure that can hurt national security and instead do what has to be done. Our government is not the United Nations so it does not need to do what the United Nations says or wants to do. The government should not make concessions that may hurt national security but it should cooperate with United Nations," he said.

Compounding the immediate need for essentials such as rice, water and oil, aid workers say refugees are facing a mounting psychological toll with terrified children bearing the brunt.

"They lost their houses in the fires. Children cannot be left alone like before. So they're depressed," said Ma Moe Thadar, a local Red Cross worker.

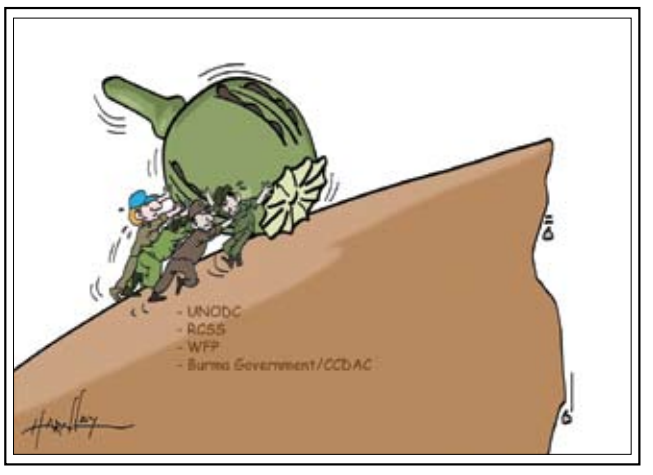
With tensions still at boiling point despite beefed-up security, the relief effort is in jeopardy and the outlook for peace is grim unless the two communities can somehow reconcile, said Ms Teff.

"As it stands there is a total lack of hope for the Rohingya. They have been rejected by many countries. They have suffered all around," she said. "The only way out is for the international community to act on the current situation."

– Translated by Thit Lwin

Poverty, conflict to blame for opium production rise: UN

By Win Ko Ko Latt



OPIUM cultivation in Myanmar is expected to increase in 2012 on last year because of food shortages, poverty and armed conflict, a United Nations official said last week.

"Opium poppy growing increases when there is weakness in the country's security, and law and order," Mr John Bleho, regional representative of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNDOC), said in Nay Pyi Taw on October 31.

UNODC country manager Mr Jason Eligh said eradication alone is not an effective means of reducing opium poppy cultivation.

"We must remember why farmers grow poppy. In most cases it is because they need cash to buy food to feed their families. Growing opium poppy provides much needed food security for many of them," a UNODC statement quoted Mr Eligh as saying.

"In areas of conflict and instability like Shan and Kachin states with poor access to markets, there are few employment alternatives to poppy. A sustainable long-term solution to poppy can only come through significant investment in peace, the rule of law and alternative development."

According to the *South-East Asia Opium Survey 2012*, in 2011 the country had 43,600 hectares given over to opium growing and 256,000 opium farmers. The total production of raw opium was 610 tonnes, giving a yield of 14 kilograms a hectare for a total value of US$330 million.

Those numbers have grown in 2012 to 51,000 hectares of opium poppy and 300,000 cultivators, with a total production of 690 tonnes. The yield per hectare is slightly lower, at 13.5kg, but the value has risen to $420 million, said Mr Bleho.

Overall, opium cultivation in Southeast Asia has doubled over the past six years, UNODC says. **(See adjoining report**.)

In 2011, there were 39,000 hectares of opium fields in Shan State, representing 90 percent of all poppy cultivation in Myanmar. That proportion has fallen to 82pc in 2012, though the cultivation area has increased to 46,000 hectares.

The 2012 figures are estimated by combining the results of satellite and field surveys. Poppies grow mostly in the dry season, from September to December.

Of the 690 tonnes of opium produced, most is destined for the Chinese market, with the rest distributed throughout the world via other Asian countries. Local consumption makes up a relatively small amount, Mr Bleho said.

"We can say there are few local consumers in Myanmar because only 75,000 people are injecting drug users," said Major General Kyaw Kyaw Tun, the deputy minister for home affairs.

Mr Bleho said more should be done to provide farmers with food, help them shift to substitution crops and develop infrastructure that would facilitate trade in agricultural products. Alternative careers should be provided through the establishment of vocational schools, he said.

"We must try to fill their needs because they will grow poppies if they have no food and no income," he said. "The daily income from a paddy field is just K1000 to K1500. But farmers can make K5000 a day with poppies."

Conflict zones have also become larger opium-producing areas because of the breakdown of the rule of law. "Poppy cultivation in Kachin State was limited in the past, but is now increasing. That shows the lack of security," he said.

The anti-drug taskforce destroyed more than 7000 hectares of opium poppy fields in 2010-11, and more than 23,700 hectares in 2011-12, said Maj Gen Kyaw Kyaw Tun. – *Translated by Thiri Min Htun*

Chinese users drive opiate trade

BANGKOK – Opium cultivation in Southeast Asia has doubled over the past six years as growing demand for heroin in China and the rest of Asia lures more farmers to grow poppies, the UN said last week.

Opiate users in East Asia and the Pacific now account for about a quarter of the world total, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime said in a report on October 31.

China alone has more than one million registered heroin users, and consumes most of the drug in the region, it said, adding farmers in Laos and Myanmar are pushing into increasingly remote land to avoid their crops being destroyed by authorities.

The findings cast doubt over the future of opium eradication programs that were successful in driving down cultivation in both countries in the decade until 2006.

With prices rising, cultivation in Laos soared 66 percent to 6800 hectares (16,800 acres) in 2012, and by 17pc to 51,000 hectares in Myanmar, the world's second largest producer after Afghanistan, according to UN estimates.

"Overall, opium poppy cultivation in the region has thus doubled since 2006," despite officials reports from Laos, Myanmar and Thailand that nearly 25,000 hectares of poppies were eradicated in 2012, the report said.

A worker in Shan State prepares to lance opium buds to collect the opium poppy resin. *Pic: AFP*

The study estimates opium produced by Laos and Myanmar to be worth US$431 million in 2012, a third more than the previous year. Farm-gate prices reached $1800 a kilogram in Laos amid scarce supply, and $520 in Myanmar.

The number of people engaged in cultivation has risen in parallel with up to 38,000 "opium growing households" in communist Laos and 300,000 in Myanmar.

The rise indicates Myanmar farmers – mainly in northeastern Shan State – will only turn away from opium cultivation if alternative livelihoods are available, the report said.

"Farmers are very vulnerable to losses in income derived from opium, especially those who depend on such an income source for food security," it said.

"Furthermore, opium cultivation is generally linked to the absence of peace and security, which indicates the need for both political and economic solutions," it added.

The drugs trade is closely linked to Myanmar's long-running insurgencies in remote border areas, with ethnic minority rebels widely thought to use drug profits to fund operations.

In May the government signed a deal to wipe out opium and other drug production in Shan State with a number of rebel groups currently engaged in ceasefire talks.

The move was part of a wider 15-year plan to eradicate opium by 2014, but the UN study, which used satellite, helicopter and ground surveys, suggests that timescale is slipping away.

In the 1980s, Myanmar was the world's largest producer of illicit opium, until it was replaced by Afghanistan in 1991.

The recent revival of opium cultivation in Myanmar has prompted concern at the UN, which says wage labourers are being drawn in to work alongside smallholder farmers who depend on the crop for a living. – *AFP*

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Former NLD members in Pathein form social organisation

By Kyaw Hsu Mon

FORMER members of the National League for Democracy from Pathein township in Ayeyarwady Region have formed a social organisation, Democracy Network, after resigning from the party over the organisation of the party's national assembly.

The network was formed on October 27 with a ceremony to formally take down the party flag from its former Pathein head office, from where the network will now operate.

> 'Some people are still unsure whether they should resign.'

About 130 members resigned in late October after serving the party for more than two decades. The 132 members formed the social organisation to help carry out health, education and other social activities in Pathein, said U Nyunt Hlaing, one of the founders of Democracy Network.

"We don't want to form a new political party because we love the NLD but we can no longer work with the leaders. That's why we organised this social network here," he said.

Up to 500 NLD members had been expected to resign in the township but U Nyunt Hlaing said many were still hesitant to leave, despite their unhappiness over the national assembly.

The members resigned because of conflict with the party's head office over the decision to select new, rather than long-serving, members to lead the township and sub-township assemblies.

"I heard that some people are still unsure whether they should resign. Anyway, we have organised this social organisation and we will continue our work through it," he said.

Democracy Network will assist with students' education, open libraries, provide support to farmers and help with healthcare issues in Pathein township. Some of the members are teachers and doctors, U Nyunt Hlaing said.

"We'll use the former NLD office as our Democracy Network office. We took down the NLD flag on October 27. Many NLD members in Myaungmya and Labutta visited on that day," U Nyunt Hlaing said.

The Democracy Network will hold its first meeting this week to elect central executive members, plan activities and source funding.

"The NLD head office has still not responded to us about this issue."

Par Par Lay (right) with brother Lu Maw, two of the three members of the Moustache Brothers. *Pic: Phyo Wai Kyaw*

Par Par Lay begins 'no fear' campaign

By Phyo Wai Kyaw

ATTENDANCES at National League for Democracy office openings in Mandalay and Sagaing regions have been swelled by the regular appearance of renowned comedian Par Par Lay.

In his speeches at the office openings, Par Par Lay has urged attendees to abandon their fear of politics, a message he said is targeted at those who are considering joining the party for the first time.

Par Par Lay launched what he calls his "no fear" campaign in June and has attended office openings in Myingyan, Ngazun, Taungtha, Myotha, Ayardaw and Shwebo in Sagaing region and some townships in Mandalay region.

"I already went to about 40 offices for this campaign. I don't criticise or point out any weak points about our opponents, I just tell people how they can move within the framework of the [law]. Sometimes I make political jokes and sing songs … I also tell people about courage, giving the example of how I would go and perform, even though I knew I could be arrested after the performance," said Par Par Lay.

One-third of the well-known Moustache Brothers troupe, Par Par Lay has been imprisoned three times, the first occasion after performing at Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's house on Independence Day in 1996.

He said Daw Aung San Suu Kyi told him in 1988 that famous artists had more influence among voters than politicians and he hopes to exercise this influence for the party until the 2015 election.

"We need to try to get more people [to vote] for the NLD in the 2015 election and I am working for this goal. I decided on the 'no fear' theme because I found that some were afraid to vote for the NLD even in the by-elections and I still see some of them [are afraid]. So I talked to them about courage and democracy by comparing with my life, the difficulties I faced in the past, and letting them know what human rights are," he said, adding that he thought about one-third of people in the areas he visited were afraid of involvement in politics.

"I just targeted prospective members at the campaigns, not those already in the party. Some people are afraid to take a pamphlet or wear red-coloured clothing … I also went around some working class wards before the by-elections … it seems like we were successful because we got many more votes than our rivals in those places."

NLD member U Ko Ko Aung from Mandalay's Pyigyitagun township said that the support of respected artists like Par Par Lay gave the NLD a significant boost.

"Par Par Lay in Mandalay and Zaganar in Yangon are famous comedians who sacrificed their lives for politics and the people love them. More people come to the opening of NLD ward offices if Par Par Lay is there so we have a better opportunity to give them a political message at the time," U Ko Ko Aung said.

"However some senior NLD officials in Mandalay Region don't like Par Par Lay and we think it because Par Par Lay used to get more cheers than them. We asked Par Par Lay about it … but he said there were no [problem]."

MAI gets new aircraft

NATIONAL carrier Myanmar Airways International received a new aircraft, an A320-200, on October 28. The 280-seat plane is the airline's seventh and will be used to expand existing routes and add new destinations.

MAI will begin flights between Yangon and Hong Kong by the end of this year and launched a service from Mandalay to Gaya on November 1. The airline is also planning to offer more routes out of Mandalay, including Bangkok, Singapore and Kunming.

MAI also began a Yangon-Bangkok-Singapore-Bangkok-Yangon service on October 28, which it says will be convenient for travellers who want to do a round trip of the countries. – *Yu Yu Maw*

Don't resign over assembly issues, NLD members urge

By Phyo Wai Kyaw

NATIONAL League for Democracy members from Mandalay who have been outspoken in their criticism of the handling of preparations for the party's national assembly have urged fellow members not to resign over the issue.

The Myanmar Times reported last week that up to 500 NLD members from Ayeyarwaddy Region's Pathein township are expected to resign over the selection of delegates for the party's upcoming national assembly. Members from Mandalay's Pyigyitagun township said they also faced conflict with "undemocratic" elements in the party but said they plan to "fight back" rather than quit.

"We want to urge the members in the country not to resign … we need to fight and drive out undemocratic, dictatorial members in the party; that has become our duty," said member U Ko Ko Aung.

"I want to urge members, especially U Myint Soe and Dr Than Htike from Pathein, to follow the example of our leader, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. She didn't leave from Myanmar politics even when the NLD was suppressed for many years and we can see the result now," he said.

NLD members in Pyigyitagun said conflicts over the assembly are yet to be resolved, with a regional official having to step in to stop a dispute in the township on October 28.

"There was an argument that nearly turned into a brawl on October 28 at the NLD township office. Undemocratic members formed a ward assembly commission with just their people and did not include those who were suggested by members in the wards. We don't like it and so we went to the meeting that day but they didn't let us enter the meeting. I think they don't know well about democracy and human rights. Some officials from the division commission arrived and promised to solve the problem so we left," said member Ko Kyaw Kyaw Naing from the township's Zagwe ward.

Another member, U Win Hlaing, said the township commission had been stacked with members from one ward.

Pic: Supplied

A region-level NLD member mediates a dispute between party members at a meeting in Pyigyitagun township on October 28.

"There are 16 wards in Pyigyitagun township and the NLD has opened offices in 14 wards. However, when the township commission was formed, eight of the 15 members were from a single ward, Zamyinzwe … members from other wards didn't get a chance to be involved," he said.

"Some members from the township commission tried to stop activities to sign up new members. They don't give member cards in Pyigyitagun township. I think that they are dishonest and using undemocratic ways to organise the assembly," said member U Myint Ko.

Union Election Commission warns NDF over village for poor

By Kyaw Hsu Mon

THE National Democratic Force has received a warning from the Union Election Commission over a proposed plan to build a town for low-income families in Yangon Region's Htantapin township, chairman U Khin Maung Swe said.

The head of the party's Hlaing Tharyar branch, U Myint Thein, announced the plan to the media last month and said it would help achieve the party's goal of improving living standards. While it has not been formally adopted by the party headquarters, U Khin Maung Swe said in an earlier interview with *The Myanmar Times* that it would be discussed and possibly adopted.

U Khin Maung Swe said the election commission had warned the plan infringed the authority of the township administration office.

"We know what U Myint Thein is planning … so we already talked to him and encouraged him to work together with the township administration," U Khin Maung Swe said.

"No political parties can go over the top of government administration," he said. "His project still hasn't started yet because he is in hospital. ... It is a good project but we have to negotiate with the township authorities, we, as a political party, cannot do it on our own."

Neighbours urged to let in refugees

KUALA LUMPUR – Myanmar's neighbours should prepare to accept refugees from the country's Rohingya minority who may try to flee abroad to escape bloody communal violence, refugee organisations said last week.

Clashes in Rakhine State have left at least 180 dead since violence broke out in June, swamped refugee camps and forced tens of thousands to flee the bloodshed.

The violence has sparked warnings of a potential surge in refugees opting for dangerous sea voyages.

"We are appealing to countries to keep borders open and to ensure safe access and whatever assistance they can provide," said Vivian Tan, Asia-Pacific spokeswoman for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

"The main thing is that they have a safe place to land," she said.

Ms Tan said Myanmar's neighbours also should ensure that the UNHCR is granted access to any Rohingya who have legitimate claims to refugee status.

Bangladeshi police say about 130 people are missing after a boat sank Sunday while carrying Rohingya refugees heading for Malaysia.

Human Rights Watch warned this week of a potential "dramatic increase in the number of Rohingya taking to the sea this year" in the wake of recent unrest.

– AFP

ကမ္ဘာအနှံ့အပြား သင့်ငွေလွှဲကို
မိနစ်ပိုင်းအတွင်း
လက်ခံရရှိနိုင်ပါပြီ။(၁)
မကြာခင်စတင်တော့မည့်ဝန်ဆောင်မှု
အဆင်ပြေမှုကို
ပျော်ရွှင်ခံစားပါ။

လျှင်မြန်ခြင်း

ငွေကိုပို့ပြီးပြီးခြင်းမိနစ်ပိုင်းအတွင်းလက်ခံရရှိနိုင်ပါပြီ။(၁)

ယုံကြည်စိတ်ချရခြင်း

- နှစ်ပေါင်း၁၄၀ကျော်ငွေလွှဲလုပ်ငန်းအတွေ့အကြုံများနှင့်ဝန်ဆောင်မှု
- ငွေလွှဲမှုတိုင်းအတွက်ငွေလွှဲထိန်းချုပ်နံပါတ်ဂဏန်း(၁၀)လုံး(MTCN).

အဆင်ပြေလွယ်ကူခြင်း

- ကမ္ဘာအနှံ့အပြားနိုင်ငံပေါင်း၂၀၀ကျော်တွင်အေးဂျင့်ပေါင်း၅၀၀,၀၀၀ကျော်ရှိခြင်း၊

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ငွေပေးပို့သူမှသာကျသင့်ငွေပေးဆောင်ရပါသည်။

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(၁) တစ်ခါတစ်ရံသတ်မှတ်ထားသောကန့်သတ်ချက်များနှင့် မကိုက်ညီသောအချက်များဖြစ်သည့်ပေးပို့ငွေပမာဏ၊ လက်ခံသည့်နိုင်ငံ၊ နိုင်ငံသုံးငွေကြေးစနစ်၊ တားမြစ်ကန့်သတ်ချက်နှင့် နိုင်ငံခြားငွေလဲလှယ်မှုထုတ်ပြန်ကြေငြာချက်၊ ငွေလက်ခံသူမှဆောင်ရွက်ရမည်များ၊ သက်သေခံစာရွက်စာတမ်းများလိုအပ်ချက်၊ ဘဏ်ခွဲတည်ရှိရာနေရာ၏အချိန်၊ အချိန်ကွာခြားချက်သို့မဟုတ်နောက်ကျနိုင်ကြောင်းရွေးချယ်ချက်တို့ကြောင့် ငွေလက်ခံရရှိချိန်နောက်ကျနိုင်ပါသည်။ ထပ်တိုးကန့်သတ်ချက်များလည်းရှိနိုင်ပါသည်။ အသေးစိတ်ကို ငွေပေးပို့ပုံစံတွင်ကြည့်ပါ။

(၂) ၃၀ရက်၊ ဇွန်လ၊ ၂၀၁၂တွင်ရရှိထားသောစာရင်းများအရအချို့သောနိုင်ငံများတွင် ငွေလွှဲကိုသာလက်ခံရယူနိုင်ပြီး ငွေပေးပို့နိုင်ခြင်းမရှိပါ။

MES seeks feedback for building code draft

By Aye Sapay Phyu

MYANMAR Engineering Society is inviting suggested changes to the first draft of a new national building code and expects to finalise the draft in December, general secretary U Ko Ko Gyi said last week.

He said the first draft of the code was distributed to government departments, United Nations agencies, non-government organisations, experts and other stakeholders in September.

"According to the suggestion from the users, we will revise the draft in December and hope it will come into effect soon after," he said.

He said that everybody is welcome to request a copy of the draft from the Myanmar Engineer Society.

U Ko Ko Gyi said that while the project to draft the building code was organised by Ministry of Construction, United Nations Human Settlements Program and MES, representatives from all relevant government departments as well as private sector experts and engineers had participated in developing the document.

He said a building code is important for disaster preparedness and implementing the code will improve risk reduction activities, especially against strong winds and earthquakes.

"Lots of properties that didn't use proper construction techniques were damaged during [Cyclone] Nargis. If we obey the code in the construction of buildings such as schools, hospital and houses, the community will be safer if and when disasters strike," he said.

Yamethin miners protest in Yangon

By Naw Say Phaw Waa

Miners from the Moehti Moemi region of Yamethin township protest in Yangon on October 29. *Pic: Boothee*

ABOUT 35 people from the restive Moehti Moemi gold mining region of Yamethin township protested in front of the Myanmar National Prosperity Public Company office in Yangon last week, one of the protesters said.

The group demonstrated outside the University Avenue office from 9am to midday on October 29, said Ko Youte Kyi, over the company's conduct since taking over a lease in the mining area.

"We demanded compensation and to work freely like we were able to before. However, nobody from the company came out to meet us or say anything about it. After we protested, we went back to Yamethin at 5pm the same evening," Ko Youte Kyi said.

He said the protest was held in Yangon because the group had twice been refused permission to hold it in Yamethin, in southern Mandalay Region.

They received permission from Kamaryut Township Police Station on October 29, said Daw Myint Myint Khine, who also took part in the protest.

She said organisers estimated about 1000 workers from Moehti Moemi would come to Yangon for the protest but because of financial difficulties only a few could make it. "The reason we came here is because the company has not negotiated in good faith. They negotiated with Mandalay Region Minister [for Forestry and Mining] U Than Soe Myint on August 20 over this issue. Then the Farmland Investigation Commission came in October and negotiated with the company again. The organisation instructed the company to give compensation. However, the company was stubborn and didn't do anything," said Daw Myint Myint Khine.

But company spokesperson Daw Na Di Lwin told *The Myanmar Times* that the protesters who came to Yangon just didn't want to work and are "obstreperous".

"That's why we don't plan to do anything" to meet their demands, she said.

Daw Myint Myint Khine said the Moehti Moemi workers have applied to Kamaryut Township Police Station to protest again, from November 3 to 7, in front of the company's office.

Myanmar National Prosperity won a tender to mine gold in the area in late 2011. But in June, workers from the hundreds of small mines at Moehti Moemi began protesting after the company allegedly reneged on an earlier verbal agreement to split all gold found in the area 50-50, *The Irrawaddy* reported on June 8.

The Chiang Mai-based news organisation reported that Myanmar National Prosperity had made the promise to small mining companies and individual miners in December 2011, saying they could excavate gold from the area for the duration of its five-year contract with the government.

When the protesting workers failed to reach an agreement with the company, they started marching on Nay Pyi Taw. The company then relented and agreed to allow small operators to continue mining at Moehti Moemi for another year, *Democratic Voice of Burma* reported on June 15. However, the simmering unrest has continued, with a number of miners charged with committing an obscene act and criminal intimidation in September.

Party formed in Mandalay to represent Muslims

By Khin Su Wai

A GROUP of Myanmar Muslim politicians have been given permission to form a political party, but only after agreeing to remove the word "Pathi" from its name.

The United National Congress Party was approved by the Union Election Commission on October 15, said party official U Maung Maung Soe.

He said he originally applied to form the party in February under the name Pathi National Congress. Pathi is a generic term for Myanmar Muslims.

"The Union Election Commission said that the word 'Pathi' could not be included because it is not recognised among the 135 official ethnic groups. So they asked us to change the party name and apply again … we applied with the name United National Congress," U Maung Maung Soe said.

The group's founders say their party aims to follow in the political footsteps of Myanmar-Muslim martyr U Razak, who was assassinated along with Bogyoke Aung San in July 1947.

The United National Congress participated in the 1990 election but failed to win much support. Since then its members' have not been particularly active, although some campaigned on behalf of National Democratic Force candidates in the 2010 election.

U Maung Maung Soe said the group was unhappy at not being able to use the word "Pathi" in its name, saying the term – and the Myanmar Muslim community – had been recognised by King Bodawpaya.

"They said that Pathi races are not among the official ethnic groups but King Bodawpaya recognized [the Pathi] and King Mindon donated not only recognised them but donated land in Mandalay for mosques. This list of official ethnic groups is a problem and we want it to be discussed in the hluttaw," he said.

He said United National Congress Party is the only party in Myanmar that represents Myanmar Muslims and its ambition is to establish peaceful relations among the country's various ethnic groups.

"We plan to form relationships with other political parties in Mandalay. If we get permission, we will also try to establish an organisation for Myanmar Muslims in upper Myanmar," U Maung Maung Soe said.

A traffic policeman attempts to maintain order on the crowded streets of Mandalay. *Pic: Phyo Wai Kyaw*

Residents complain about worsening traffic

By Than Naing Soe

TRAFFIC congestion in Mandalay has increased significantly because of a relaxation of import restrictions on cars and programs to license illegal motorbikes, roads users have told *The Myanmar Times*.

"Under the former government, there were limitations on importing luxury cars but when the new government took power, luxury cars were able to be imported. I think the government should initially import vehicles for public transport instead," said Ko Kyaw Phone Aung, a resident of central Chanayetharsan township.

"The government also failed to do any upgrading work to ensure the roads can handle the likely increase in vehicles before they give permission to import cars and register motorbikes. That's why roads are blocked during rush hour. To avoid the traffic we have to leave for work earlier," he said.

The increase in vehicles has also made driving more dangerous, with a significant increase in accidents and road fatalities this year.

"I have to drive carefully when I take my children from their school, which is in the downtown area, because most drivers don't stick to their lanes or drive recklessly. Drivers also have to careful when motorbikes suddenly appear in front of their car," said U Ye Win, who lives in an industrial zone in Pyigyitagun township.

He said while a commute into the downtown area during peak hour previously took 30 minutes, it now takes up to one hour.

Mandalay City Development Committee's Department of Engineering (Roads and Bridges) says passenger buses are responsible for most traffic jams because they wait too long for passengers at bus stops and sometimes collect passengers near intersections.

Other factors are street vendors who open shops on the road and illegally parked cars, motorcycles and bicycles.

But residents maintain it is the number of vehicles that is to blame.

"The main roads of the city are significantly blocked by more new cars and new motorbikes. Sometimes it takes about 10 to 15 minutes just to move one block," said Ko Nyan Win from Mahaaungmyay township.

Another issue is the lack of side streets at the east and west sides of the city, poor adherence to traffic rules and a lack of parking in new commercial buildings, said U Zin Min Swe from CAD Construction.

"There is still no traffic control plan so I think the government should start to resolve these problems by drawing a traffic control plan immediately. If not and things continue the way they are now, within two years the fastest commuters will be those walking," U Zin Min Swe said.

As of August, there were 38,544 cars, 1359 buses, 420,768 motorcycles, 9825 three-wheeled vehicles and 5729 trawlergyi (farm vehicles) registered in Mandalay. – *Translated by Zar Zar Soe*

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Minorities fight to save mother tongue

By Kelly Macnamara

TAUNGGYI – For half a century a single precious copy of a textbook kept the language of Myanmar's Shan people alive for students, forced to learn in the shadows under a repressive military regime.

Now with a reformist government reaching out to armed rebel groups after decades of civil war, calls are growing to reinstate ethnic language teaching in minority area state schools as part of reconciliation efforts.

"Shan is the lifeblood of the Shan people. If the language disappears, the whole race could disappear too," said Sai Kham Sint, chairman of the Shan Literature and Cultural Association (SLCA) in the state capital, Taunggyi.

Photocopies of the cherished Shan book have been used in private lessons for years in Shan State, after the original was banished from the curriculum by a regime intent on stamping out cultural diversity.

Shan activists this year finally felt able to print a new edition as Myanmar emerges from decades of military rule.

The SLCA runs its own summer schools, giving students basic training in written and spoken Shan and familiarising them with such classics of local literature as "Khun San Law and Nan Oo Pyin" – a tale of lovers who turn into stars after their deaths.

But Sai Kham Sint said allowing teachers to hold Shan classes in state schools "without fear" would help sustain the language.

Shan, akin to Thai spoken just across the border, is one of about 100 languages and dialects in Myanmar.

Several of the country's more than 130 ethnic groups, including the Mon, Chin and Kayin, are also seeking to persuade the government to add their mother tongues to the official curriculum.

"The ethnic issue is absolutely central to Burma's future," said Benedict Rogers, author and rights activist at Christian Solidarity Worldwide.

"Even if Burma has all the democratic institutions in place, if there's still conflict or even oppression of ethnic minorities then it's never going to fulfil its full potential," he said.

Minority rebels have fought for varying degrees of autonomy since independence from colonial rule in 1948. Relations between the government and ethnic groups worsened after the military seized power in 1962.

Brutal military counter-insurgency tactics – including rape, torture and the murder of villagers – further embittered local populations.

While a new quasi-civilian regime has inked tentative ceasefires with most armed ethnic groups since coming to power last year, lasting political solutions remain elusive and fighting continues in northern Kachin State.

In Kachin, as in other states such as Chin and Kayin, the Christian faith of local people has also put them at odds with a regime that has long demanded conformity.

"State resources are currently spent on the aggressive propagation of Buddhism, including to coerce ethnic Chin to convert to Buddhism at vocational training schools in the name of 'union spirit'," said Salai Ling of the Chin Human Rights Organization.

"Instead the funds should be spent on improving the mainstream education system, including the teaching of ethnic minority languages in the national curriculum."

Yet there remains an indifference to more nuanced questions of cultural identity among officials, many of whom spent years as soldiers tasked with quelling minority uprisings.

"We use Burmese as the common language. So ethnic groups should learn Burmese if they like," a top official involved in the peace process said.

Vice chairman of the Shan Literature and Cultural Association Sai Khin Mg Sein displays a Shan language textbook in Taunngyi. *Pic: AFP*

"If they also want to learn their ethnic language, they can if they have free time."

In September, Myanmar's Vice President Sai Mauk Kham, himself a Shan, said provisions had been made for teaching ethnic languages during holidays, but added it would be too difficult to have these lessons within school time.

Observers say teaching all languages could prove impossible in this polyglot nation, where many areas have several overlapping dialects and the education system is in tatters after chronic underfunding by the junta.

The ability to speak foreign languages – particularly Chinese and English – is also seen as crucial as the country opens up to the world.

In Taunggyi, the author of the original Shan text book, Tang Kel, is still respected for his linguistic efforts.

The frail nonagenarian, who also enjoys a modicum of national fame for a sideline in traditional medicines that come in packs emblazoned with a virile-looking tiger, cracked a smile when reminded that his book is still used.

Asked whether he was glad about efforts to revive Shan language teaching for today's students, he said: "It is good!"

The original book's beautiful illustrations of snakes, elephants and monks carrying alms bowls evoke the pastoral lifestyle of the lush, mountainous region when it was first printed and used in schools in 1961, a year before the start of almost half a century of military rule.

Photographs have replaced drawings in the new edition, but no one has yet taken up the challenge of updating the text.

"In this age we have computers but there are no such Shan words for them in the textbook. Even radio – we do not have the word for radio," said SLCA member Sai Saw Hlaing.

"We need to invent words for email and the internet." – *AFP*

Language software launched for Chin dialect

By Nuam Bawi

WANT to learn a Chin language? A software program to teach the basics of the Zomi dialect of the language has just been launched.

A program called Zolaisinna – which means learning the Zomi, or Chin, language – was launched in early October.

"My ethnic group is small, and I don't want its literature to disappear. This is one way I can help the development of my people," said Tg Chin Suan Kap, 24, who developed the software.

"Although I was brought up in Tonzang township, Chin State, and learned the Chin language to elementary level at school, I'm not very good at the language. These days children have even fewer opportunities to learn our literature so I invented this software so they can learn the language at home," he said.

Tg Chin Suan Kap completed his master of engineering degree in July 2012 and developed an interest in social work among the Chin, which led to his work on the language. The software is designed for children and teaches them to a fourth-grade level.

"This is a chance to learn the Chin language without a teacher. Parents don't have time to teach their children their own language, so children only know what they have learned at school. But using this software, if they don't understand the first time, they can just go over it again until they do," he said.

The software is in the Zomi (Tiddim) dialect of the Chin language. Zomi is one of three main variants along with Hakha and Falam but the language has 51 dialects.

All Chin dialects use the Roman alphabet in a system developed by American missionaries in 1899. Those interested in learning more can call 09-5006-1315.

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British Embassy Yangon

A Service of Remembrance will be held at Htaukkyant War Cemetery, Pyay Road, north of Yangon, on Sunday 11 November at 0800. The Service is to commemorate the contribution of British and Commonwealth Military and civilian servicemen and women in the two world wars and later conflicts.

A memorial church service will also be held at the Holy Trinity Cathedral, corner of Bogyoke Aung San and Shwedagon Pagoda Road on Thursday 15 November at 1800.

Anyone is welcome to attend these events (please come 15 minutes early if you wish to attend).

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Too soon for refugee return: Shan groups

Region still unstable despite signing of ceasefires between government and several non-state armed groups

IN DEPTH
with
Bill O'Toole

Soldiers and villagers walk home after destroying poppy fields near the village of Ho Hwayt, Shan State, on January 26. *Pic: Reuters/Damir Sagolj*

NATIONAL and regional governments have begun talks over the creation of a village in Shan State for people displaced by armed conflict but sources in the region say they are concerned it may be too soon to resettle refugees.

A report in the *Shan Herald Agency for News* said the proposed village would be in the Honam-Tawng Hio area of Tangyan and Monghsu townships and would house about 350 families.

The government reached an initial ceasefire with the Shan State Army-South in November 2011 and the Shan State Army-North two months later but activists and residents say parts of Shan State still suffer from instability and conflict.

"Most refugees want to go home," said Sai Khur Hneng, a spokesperson for the Shan Human Rights Foundation in Thailand. "But now they also think about their livelihoods, and their health and their children and how much they can trust the peace."

Though fighting has subsided near larger towns such as Lashio, Sai Khur Hneng told *The Myanmar Times* that outbreaks of violence between Shan rebel groups and the Tatmadaw are still common in rural areas. In his estimation, there have been over 100 armed encounters in rural Shan State since September 2011, shortly before the ceasefires were agreed.

"We cannot say the exact number, but since the ceasefire hundreds of people have fled to Thailand to escape the fighting ... it may be thousands," he said.

U Khun Htun Oo, a prominent Shan politician and former political prisoner, said it was "a problem of chain of command".

"The military says they are under the control of the commander and chief, not the government," said the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy leader. "They must change their attitude."

The Shan soldiers are equally hesitant to lay down their arms, he said.

"Successive governments have not kept their promises; it's hard to trust a government that you have been fighting for 50 years."

In addition to fighting the Tatmadaw, the Shan State Army-North has also clashed repeatedly with soldiers from the United Wa State Army. "Casualties from fighting the Wa are very high," U Khun Htun Oo said.

The director of one prominent non-government organisation in Shan State criticised the armed militias for being more interested in preserving their power than in peace.

"So many groups want to maintain their leader and control their own area ... the Wa doesn't want any other armed groups, they have a strong army and lots of money. Neither side is thinking about the people," said the NGO leader, who requested not to be named.

For many activists in the region, Shan State's economic situation poses an even bigger problem than the fighting.

The NGO leader reported that people in Shan State are suffering through two years of poor harvests.

"This year the crop yield was higher, but the crops themselves were poor quality," he said. He also said that lower food prices in general have hurt many small farmers and could derail efforts to resettle displaced people.

"They want to start their lives again," said Sai Khur Hneng. "But maybe they won't have a livelihood to support them."

Another issue is opium poppy cultivation, with the *Shan Herald Agency for News* reporting last week that representatives of the Restoration Council of Shan State and its armed wing, the Shan State Army-South, plan to meet government officials to discuss the drug situation and particularly replacement crops for Shan State communities.

Sai Khur Hneng said that the international community needed to cooperate with all groups to solve the drug problem. "The drug issue has lasted 100 years," he said, adding that it was dangerous for groups like the Shan Human Rights Foundation to monitor drug production too closely.

When asked about the village project in Honam-Tawng Hio, all those interviewed urged a slow, step-by-step approach, adding that they think it will be a long time before it is possible for displaced people to return. "The situation is so unclear," said Sai Khur Hneng, speaking by phone from Thailand. "If we go home and stay at some new settlement, these problems could reach us and we'd have to run to the border again."

The military did not respond to requests for an interview last week. However, the author of a recent article in army-run daily newspaper *Myawady* published in response to a cartoon in *The Myanmar Times* said the Tatmadaw was working "in accordance with the law in the conflict zones of Kachin State and some areas of the Shan State, where ethnic armed groups are violating the constitution and peace agreements".

"It is clear that the top leaders of the Tatmadaw have been playing important roles in the positive results of the peace making process," the author wrote, under the pseudonym Mg Pyi Chit.

'Successive governments have not kept promises; it's hard to trust a government that you have been fighting for 50 years.'

Japanese NGO to provide $5m for mobile healthcare

By Shwe Yee Saw Myint

A JAPANESE non-government organisation will provide US$ 5 million over five years for a Myanmar Medical Association-run mobile medical clinic project, an MMA official said last week.

Deputy project manager Dr Hnin Wai Lwin Myo said the mobile medical service project had been approved by the government and will be implemented in selected townships in Mon and Kayin states this month with funding from the Nippon Foundation.

The townships include Hpa-an, Hlaingbwe and Kawkareik in Kayin State and Kyaikto and Thanbyuzayat in Mon State.

"Right now in these areas the leading cause of morbidity is non-communicable diseases, landmines and road traffic accidents. We also plan to extend this project into areas of Shan State," Dr Hnin Wai Lwin Myo said.

Central offices will be opened in each of the townships, as well as basic offices and mobile clinics, Dr Hnin Wai Lwin Myo said.

A project team was established on September 1, a spokesperson for Nippon Foundation said, adding that it hoped to expand the project to Shan State and then other areas of the country but this "will depend on the result of evaluation report of these first operations".

MMA president Dr Kyaw Myint Naing said at a launch ceremony in Yangon on October 24 the project would see the association undertake a variety of development tasks linked to health.

"We aim to provide mobile health clinics, emergency ambulance services and, if possible, improve water, sanitation and personal hygiene and conduct health activities in schools, such as medical checkups and educational talks," he said.

MMA is the only professional body of medical doctors in Myanmar and was established in 1949.

It conducts projects in collaboration with UN agencies, focusing mostly on malaria, tuberculosis, reproductive health and youth development.

People take part in a demonstration calling for the release of political prisoners. *Pic: Naw Say Phaw Waa*

Renewed call for release of all prisoners of conscience

MORE than 500 former political prisoners met to demand the release of the remaining prisoners of conscience and pay respects to their elders last week.

Prominent elder former prisoners included U Win Tin, U Tin Oo, U Thu Wai, U Nyunt Thein, Thakhin Chan Htun and U Soe Maung. The ceremony was held on October 30, the full moon of Thadingyut, when it is the tradition to pay respect to seniors and other respected people.

Wearing prison garb and chains, the president of the Federation of Student Unions (Organising Committee) Ko Di Nyine Lin and others portrayed oppressive conditions in jail. "We performed to show up the system, and to demand humane treatment for political prisoners. We also wanted to call on the authorities to release the remaining political prisoners as soon as possible," said Di Nyein Lin.

The event, in which other organisations also participated, took place at Royal Rose restaurant in Bahan township.

A number of relatives of political prisoners joined the event to call for the release of those still held. Family members of actor U Khine Tin called for the release of their relative, Ko Thein Htun, who they say is serving an unjustly imposed life sentence.

"He has been in jail more than 15 years now. I want him to be released quickly. Though I was happy when the political prisoners were released, I'm disappointed that my brother hasn't been released yet," he said. – *Naw Say Phaw Waa*

Ex-political prisoners to hold assembly

By Naw Say Phaw Waa

FORMER political prisoners are organising a mass meeting to make a number of demands, including the release of remaining political prisoners.

The Ex-Political Prisoners League, formed two months ago, is planning to hold the meeting in December, Ko Nyo Htun, a member of the league's organising committee, told about 150 supporters at M3 restaurant in Yangon on October 21.

The meeting will demand the release of remaining political prisoners and better living standards for former political prisoners, as well as highlighting issues related to the development of civil rights and national reconciliation, Ko Nyo Htun told *The Myanmar Times*.

"We want an early release for political prisoners still in jail. We also propose to raise the living standards of former political prisoners. These are our basic principles," added Ko Myint Win Maung, another organiser.

During the past two months, league members have been making donations to prisons and schools, and to the families of deceased political prisoners.

"We expect more than 4000 people to attend the meeting, which is scheduled for December. We will discuss the league's constitution, and future activities," Ko Nyo Htun said.

Crimewave hits speaker's hometown in Bago Region

Residents of Kanyut-kwin in Phyu township take to patrolling streets to combat thieves

By Toe Wai Aung

RESIDENTS have taken to the streets of a township in Bago Region in a bid to deter thieves after a spate of burglaries.

Since mid-September, thefts and burglaries have been rampant at Kanyut-kwin in Phyu township, causing residents to mount volunteer night patrols to protect their property.

"Southern and northern Kanyut-kwin have experienced continuous thefts in recent days. We have now formed groups ward by ward to patrol our properties every night. This is interfering with our daytime work," said one resident on October 23.

"Twelve houses in southern and two houses in northern Kanyut-kwin have been broken into, but property was taken in only five cases. We caught two thieves, but a third is still at large. And one of those we caught has escaped from the hospital," he said.

Before it hit national headlines as a hotbed of thievery, Kanyut-kwin was most well-known for being the hometown of Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann.

U Soe Win, the ward administrator of northern Kanyut-kwin, said: "One night I saw a stranger in our ward. When I followed him I noted his physical appearance by the light at the entry of a monastery."

> **'We caught two thieves, but a third is still at large.'**

U Soe Win said the man shot at him with a catapult when challenged but missed. The next day the man was arrested by police, he said.

U Soe Win also described a case where a suspected thief was apprehended by members of the public near Kanyut-kwin bus stop after a failed attempt at burglary the previous night. The man was found to be in possession of a motorcycle, a mobile phone and K26,000 in cash. The man, who sustained injuries during the arrest, is now in hospital, he said.

Ko Lwin Oo, who lives in western Kanyut-kwin, said he had been robbed of gold jewellery worth about K2 million.

"We started guarding our house when we heard of the series of thefts in Kanyut-kwin. I slept in the cowshed and my wife slept at the grocery shop in front of our house. But we found the windows of our house had been forced. The clothes in the closet had been scattered, and money and gold jewellery kept among the clothes had gone. The thief had entered the house by forcing the window bolt," he said.

"That same night, a tical of gold and some cash was stolen from another house in the same street," said Ko Lwin Oo. "When we heard that someone had been arrested for the theft, we went to see him at the hospital."

Police have arrested Mg Zaw, also known as Nga Me, who lives in Magyipin village, western Paenwekone, and detained him at Phyu township police station. Another suspected thief, arrested with the help of residents in norther Kanyut-kwin, was being detained at the police station in Nyaungkone village, said U Soe Win.

"We're acting for the rule of law and the stability of our community," said U Soe Win, adding that he had K1.5 million stolen from him last month.

– Translated by Zar Zar Soe

Eye banks call for more donations

By Yamon Phu Thit

MORE than 2000 patients suffering from impaired vision are in need of corneal transplants but the country's two eye banks receive only about 150 cornea donations a year, an official from Yangon Eye Hospital says.

In seeking to raise public awareness of the problem, Professor Tin Win, department head of Yangon Eye Hospital, said new donors are needed to supply the country's two eye banks, which are at eye hospitals in Yangon and Mandalay.

"Cornea transplants will be successful only with the public's cooperation," Professor Tin Win said.

Would-be donors should register with one of the eye banks, indicating their consent for their cornea to be taken after death. A cornea should be removed from the body within four hours and can be kept for four days at the eye bank.

"Sometimes, although the donor has registered, family members fail to contact the eye bank. Sometimes there are delays in transportation or communication, and there are superstitions. Some people fear they will be [re]born blind if they are buried or cremated without their eyes," Professor Tin Win said.

The eye banks have received more than 2700 cornea donations since they were established in 1994. On receiving a donation, the eye bank has to examine its quality and test for infection. Then it conducts a transplant operation on a first-come-first-serve basis, though sometimes those in severe need are given priority. The success rate of the operation is up to 90 percent and corneas can be collected and used from every age group.

The cornea is the "window" of the eye, which helps to focus and control the amount of light entering the eye. Cornea damage is caused by injury, disease and infection. Damage to the cornea can interfere with vision by blocking or distorting light.

Because of the large proportion of its population that works in agriculture, Myanmar has a high rate of corneal diseases and injuries. The World Health Organisation says up to 12 million people in Southeast Asia are at risk of developing cornea ulcers every year as a result of minor agricultural injuries.

An estimated three million people in Southeast Asia who have lost their vision due to corneal opacity are in need of corneal transplantation.

However, no more than 30,000 corneal transplantations are performed every year in the region because of lack of cornea donors.

The most common eye diseases in Myanmar are cataract, glaucoma, cornea diseases, injuries and retinal diseases.

In Mandalay, breaking down artistic barriers

Artist Suu Myint Thein at Mandalay Contemporary Art Centre. *Pic: Thomas Kean*

By Thomas Kean and Phyo Wai Kyaw

CONTEMPORARY art has not always been encouraged or appreciated in Myanmar, particularly by the powers that be.

Suu Myint Thein knows this all too well. While teaching at the State School of Fine Arts in Mandalay, he created a 21-foot-high statue of a woman holding her mouth in her hands in front of her stomach. He put it on display at the school but quickly learned to cover it up whenever his superiors visited.

"They always asked me the same three questions: Why is the woman so tall? Why does she have no mouth? Why is she holding a mouth in her hands? In the end I would cover the statue up whenever senior officials came to the school," he told *The Myanmar Times* in a recent interview.

The statue now resides on top of the recently established Mandalay Contemporary Art Centre, which houses Dreamland Art Studio, Alin Dagar Art School, a music classroom and an art accessories shop.

"I always wanted to put the sculpture on a building; I've seen it done in Europe, but never really in Myanmar," Suu Myint Thein said, before adding: "I always try and be a bit different; I don't want my work to be simple and straightforward."

His desire to "do crazy, creative things" has also caused some conflict with Mandalay City Development Committee, he said; on a number of times he has been forced to sign a pledge to obey municipal laws after buildings and sculptures encroached on the street. Recently, Suu Myint Thein was also briefly detained for a street performance that saw him wrap his body in blue tape and walk the streets handing out paddy and writing the letter "p" on the palms of bystanders.

"It might have looked easy but it was really difficult to move wrapped in the tape and it was also hot but some people poured water on me to cool me down. And then I nearly fell down near the moat but I was determined to keep going," he said.

He said the demonstration also highlighted the archaic legal framework in which art is regulated; the 1964 Library, Museum and Exhibition Monitoring Act contains nothing on performance art.

"I asked the police how I should have sought permission to do the performance, and they told me they didn't know."

But the Mandalay Contemporary Art Centre, on the corner of 69th and 37th streets, is more than a vehicle for Suu Myint Thein's output; its main focus is as a venue for training young artists in sculpture, painting and music, and holding monthly exhibitions and performances.

"There are so many art galleries in Mandalay but none of them teach students like this," Suu Myint Thein said, as the sound of a student practising the violin alone in a room lined with keyboards and a rack of guitars drifted through the two-storey centre. In the next room, at the rear of the ground floor, a monk worked on a sculpture while next door another student, seated at a bank of computers, browsed the internet.

The centre has about 30 regular students, ranging from five years of age to university level, and this number rises to 200 for its summer classes. It charges K20,000 a month but students from disadvantaged backgrounds pay less or in some cases nothing.

Ma Soe Soe Lwin, 18, said she started attending the school because she was "impressed" by Suu Myint Thein. She said the course fees are "reasonable" and she likes the flexible timetable.

"My hobby is painting and I finished the basic six-month course on sketching after graduating from high school," she said. "I intend to try all types of traditional painting and continue on to modern painting, like contemporary arts."

The works the students create are also entered in international competitions. This is hardly new but Suu Myint Thein also brings paintings by children from other countries to Myanmar to show his students. Conscious of the fact most formal and informal art education in Myanmar is confined to Yangon and Mandalay, he is planning a roadshow of art by Japanese children that he will take to Lashio, Kyaukme and Hsipaw in Shan State.

Another plan is for monthly events: Former prisoner of conscience Htein Linn hosted one of the first exhibitions at the centre in August, while a Polish non-government organisation recently held a five-day media training workshop on its upper floors.

"We also have a special focus on democracy and human rights and how they relate to art," he said.

Despite recent changes to censorship of the press, Suu Myint Thein said art in Myanmar is still "restricted" by a 1964 law that requires all exhibitions to be inspected by censorship officials. He laments what he perceives as most artists' indifference to the 1964 law.

"The reason [censorship] is not changing [for art exhibitions] is because not many people are pushing the boundaries," he said. "Most people are only interested in creating their art, not fighting for more freedom."

While insisting that censorship has no place in any society, let alone a democracy, he said the government inspections of artwork are even more chafing for contemporary artists.

"The people who inspect the painting don't understand anything about art," he said. "But when it's a realist painting, they can see pretty quickly what it's about. Contemporary art is often more abstract – and that's when you get real problems with the censorship officials."

Mandalay Contemporary Art Centre, with statue.

Immunisation program to target more than 70,000 children

By Yamon Phu Thit

HEALTH officials are preparing to launch a six-month program that aims to immunise 70,000 children in remote communities throughout almost 180 townships.

Dr Soe Lwin Nyein, director of epidemiology at the central branch of the Department of Health's Expanded Program on Immunisation, told *The Myanmar Times* that the six-month program will begin in November.

The program is targeted at children under one year of age in low-coverage areas, said Dr Soe Lwin Nyein, who added: "The aim is to ensure that no child is left behind."

UNICEF statistics show that while immunisation coverage in Myanmar meets the global standard of 90 percent, in some areas it is below 80pc. These include areas with large migrant populations, isolated communities and conflict zones.

"We plan to immunise the children in all these areas," Dr Kyaw Kan Kaung, project manager and assistant director of the program, said on October 22.

Routine immunisation includes prevention of potentially life-threatening childhood diseases, such as tuberculosis, diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, polio, hepatitis B and measles.

The activities, which will start from November 6, will be implemented in two phases. The first will target 16,277 infants in 61 townships, and the second is aimed at 53,846 children in a further 118 townships.

"Through this program of intensification, we will reach more than 70,000 children under the age of one who have missed routine immunisation," said Dr Soe Lwin Nyein.

Funding is provided by World Health Organisation, UNICEF and the Global Alliance on Vaccine and Immunisation (GAVI), with the cost estimated at US$3000-3500 for each township.

More than 6.4 million children were vaccinated against measles in March and a second dose will be provided towards the end of this year. The national immunisation program will also be introducing a new pentavalent vaccine, which combats five diseases.

The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey conducted by the Ministry of Health and UNICEF in 2009-10 shows that 88.6pc of children under the age of one receive immunisations.

The survey estimated infant mortality was 37.5 deaths for every 1000 live births, and the under-five mortality rate is 46.1 for 1000 live births, a decline compared to the previous five-year period.

No new CNG conversions: MOGE

Only owners of CNG cars substituted under government program can convert imported vehicles to CNG

By Kyaw Hsu Mon

THE government will not allow new vehicles to be converted to compressed natural gas unless they have been imported to replace a car that formerly used the fuel, which is far cheaper than petrol and diesel, a Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise official said last week.

The spokesperson said the ban on new conversions was put in place so MOGE could focus on supplying natural gas to industrial zones.

He said the owners of CNG cars handed in to the government under an overage car substitution program have the option of importing a CNG car or importing a petrol or diesel vehicle and converting it after it arrives in Myanmar.

"CNG car owners can change to the CNG system when they import a new car after giving their old car to the government," he said.

However, they have to show the original owner book, a receipt from the Ministry of Transportation for the conversion to CNG and some other documentation when applying to install CNG in the new car. The official said the CNG conversion could be done at approved private companies and costs about K100,000.

"Passenger bus lines will be given priority to change to CNG. For all eligible cars, the owners have to submit all documents to the Yangon office and then we will forward them to Nay Pyi Taw for approval. After it is approved we will post it on our noticeboard" at the CNG Department in Thaketa township.

'The ban has been put in place so that MOGE can focus on supplying natural gas to industrial zones.'

However, owners of CNG vehicles said they faced difficulties providing the required documentation and also have to wait several months to get permission from Nay Pyi Taw.

"I've been waiting more than two months to get permission to change the CNG. It is very annoying for us … we want the head office to process the applications much faster," said Dr Hla Han from Hlaing township, who handed in two CNG cars to the government and is waiting to convert them to CNG.

"Running costs for petrol cars are much higher so I can't make as much money and want to convert them to CNG as soon as possible. I come here regularly to check the noticeboard and see whether my cars have been approved yet," he told *The Myanmar Times* in the CNG Department office.

"I always wonder why the government staff are taking so long to approve the CNG change. Lower-level officials should be able to approve the application, there's no reason for it to sit in the Nay Pyi Taw office for a few months," he said.

"It costs us a lot of money so why are they delaying?"

The spokesperson from MOGE said he couldn't comment on why the Nay Pyi Taw office was taking months to approve the applications.

A worker at a CNG filling station. *Pic: The Myanmar TImes archive*

"I realise that owners have to wait longer than before but we can't do anything, we just have to wait for permission from Nay Pyi Taw," he said.

He said about 5000 CNG cars have been handed over to the government. The owners of about 3000 have already applied to change their newly imported cars to CNG and by the start of November about 1200 have received approval.

He said Yangon has about 27,000 CNG vehicles and 40 CNG filling stations.

Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Vacancy Announcement

The Embassy of Switzerland partners with Myanmar citizens, local and international organizations to reduce poverty, to promote gender and ethnic equality, and to foster good governance. We value accountability, transparency, an active civil society, and democracy.

We are a team of highly motivated professionals working in the newly opened Embassy of Switzerland in Yangon that besides the diplomatic representation manages an important development programme. We are looking for a dynamic Myanmar national to reinforce our expertise, to fill the positions of:

Finance Assistant

As a Finance Assistant, a new position in our Embassy team, you will be responsible for:

- **Drafting contracts and Agreements for Project Partners**
- **Managing accounts of Embassy of Switzerland and related Projects**

Tasks include among others:

- Draft contracts and Agreements with national and international partners for the implementation of supported Projects.
- Prepare payments and internal booking vouchers, posting in accounting software for day to day transactions -
- Responsible for cash including fund/cash transactions with local banks
- coordinating and maintaining relationship with Field office monthly expenditures settlement
- Assisting in monthly budgetary control with Finance Unit
- Execute payments of salary to local staff and personal income tax to Myanmar authorities
- Prepare payment order
- Establish monthly bank reconciliations
- Prepare quarterly financial reports
- Assist Finance Officer in working with auditor
- Support National Programme Officers in financial issues of the projects
- Provide support to other staff members with financial services

Applicants shall be able to plan clearly, have strong analytical capacities and sound judgment. For this position we are expecting a relevant post-graduate degree or equivalent and fluency in both English and Burmese, with at least 3 years relevant work experience.
The Embassy of Switzerland in Yangon is a value based equal opportunities employer, appointing on merits by open competition. We highly encourage women and persons from diverse background to apply. Please send Curriculum Vitae (incl. references, certificates and expected salary) and a one page application letter explaining why we should consider you to be the ideal candidate for the position to:

Embassy of Switzerland 11, Kabaung Lane 51/4 mile, Pyay Road Hlaing Township, Yangon

You can send a copy electronically to: ch.embygn.vacancies@gmail.com

Closing date for applications 11th November 2012.
Only short-listed candidates will be contacted for interview. No telephone inquiries. We do not return application files.

Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
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Confederaziun svizra
Embassy of Switzerland in Myanmar

Vacancy Announcement

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Personal Assistant to the Ambassador
Personal Assistant to the Director of Cooperation

As a Personal Assistant, a new position in our Embassy team, you will be responsible for:

The overall support to the Ambassador or the Director of Cooperation and their respective team members in administrative and secretarial tasks

Tasks include a.o.:

- Plan the Agenda of the Ambassador and the Director of Cooperation and their team including all travel arrangements (booking of flights, hotels, cars)
- Draft daily correspondence, making phone calls to governmental, national and international partners
- Organize and coordinate work plans for missions and delegations to visit Myanmar as well as seminars and workshops
- Publish the monthly embassy newsletter and organize/coordinate cultural events
- Arrange meetings and receptions, prepare the agenda and on specific request take the minutes of the meetings

Applicants shall be able to plan clearly, have strong analytical capacities and sound judgment. For this position we are expecting a relevant post-graduate degree or equivalent and fluency in both English and Burmese, with at least 3 years relevant work experience, knowledge of any Swiss national language like German or French are welcome.

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RECEPTIONIST cum SECRETARY

As a Personal Assistant, a new position in our Embassy team, you will be responsible for:

As a receptionist, a new position in our Embassy team, your main responsibility will be to:

- Receive visitors and answer the phone
- Write letters, texts and reports
- Manage incoming and outgoing mail
- Manage petty cash
- Organise the filing
- Arrange travel and accommodation for staff and visitors
- Others as per instructions from the management

Requirements

- Degree in English or Commerce or equivalent qualifications
- Minimum of three years experience in a similar position with an International Organization or NGOs
- Excellent written and spoken English
- Good organizational skills and strategies and attention to details
- Good communication skills
- Computer literate, especially in Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint.
- Dynamic and outgoing

The position is based in a multi-cultural environment that places a high value on inclusive team work. You will have opportunities to work closely with all levels of Government and non-governmental agencies and interact with local people from all over the country. The position offers opportunities for professional growth.

The Embassy of Switzerland in Yangon is a value based equal opportunities employer, appointing on merits by open competition. We highly encourage women and persons from diverse background to apply. Please send Curriculum Vitae (incl. references, certificates and expected salary) and a one page application letter explaining why we should consider you to be the ideal candidate for the position to:
Embassy of Switzerland 11, Kabaung Lane Simile, Pyay Road Hlaing Township, Yangon

You can send a copy electronically to: ch.embygn.vacancies@gmail.com

Closing date for applications 11th November 2012.

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Five hotels to open at Ngwe Saung beach for SEA Games

By Yu Yu Maw

FIVE hotels at Ngwe Saung, including some that closed in 2006, are planning to reopen in time for the 2013 SEA Games, U Hla Moe, a spokesperson for the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism for the Ayeyarwady region, told *The Myanmar Times* last week.

"The hotels that closed since late 2006 are planning to reopen, and some hotels that are already open for business are upgrading and expanding the number of rooms," said U Hla Moe.

'We are preparing for the SEA Games by expanding the number of rooms.'

The hotels that closed in 2006 include Shwe Kayu and Shwe Thazin, while Hotel ACE shut the same year under previous management. It was acquired by ACE, the company of former Minister for Hotels and Tourism U Tint Hsan, in 2011.

Asia World Hotel will also open next year, while Rainbow View, which closed for an upgrade earlier this year, will reopen in March, ahead of the games in December 2013.

U Aung Htay Lin, financial officer of the Ngwe Saung hotel zone, said eight hotels at Ngwe Saung will be used to accommodate competitors in yacht races at the games.

"We are preparing for the SEA games by expanding the number of rooms, not only for competitors but also for visitors," he said.

There are more than 700 rooms at Ngwe Saung but when the five hotels open there will be 840 in 21 properties.

"The hotel zone will have more than 840 rooms if all 21 hotels can be opened in 2013. So we estimate we will accommodate on average more than 1700 visitors a day," said U Hla Moe.

More than 37,000 travellers, from Myanmar and abroad, visited Ngwe Saung during the 2011-12 high season – October 1 to April 30 – and hoteliers say they expect a higher number this season. – *Translated by Zar Zar Soe*

'Dos and dont's' travel booklet released

By Yu Yu Maw

TOURISM Transparency launched the first 5000 copies of a "dos and don'ts" booklet for tourists at the opening of the Hanns Seidel Foundation office in Yangon last month.

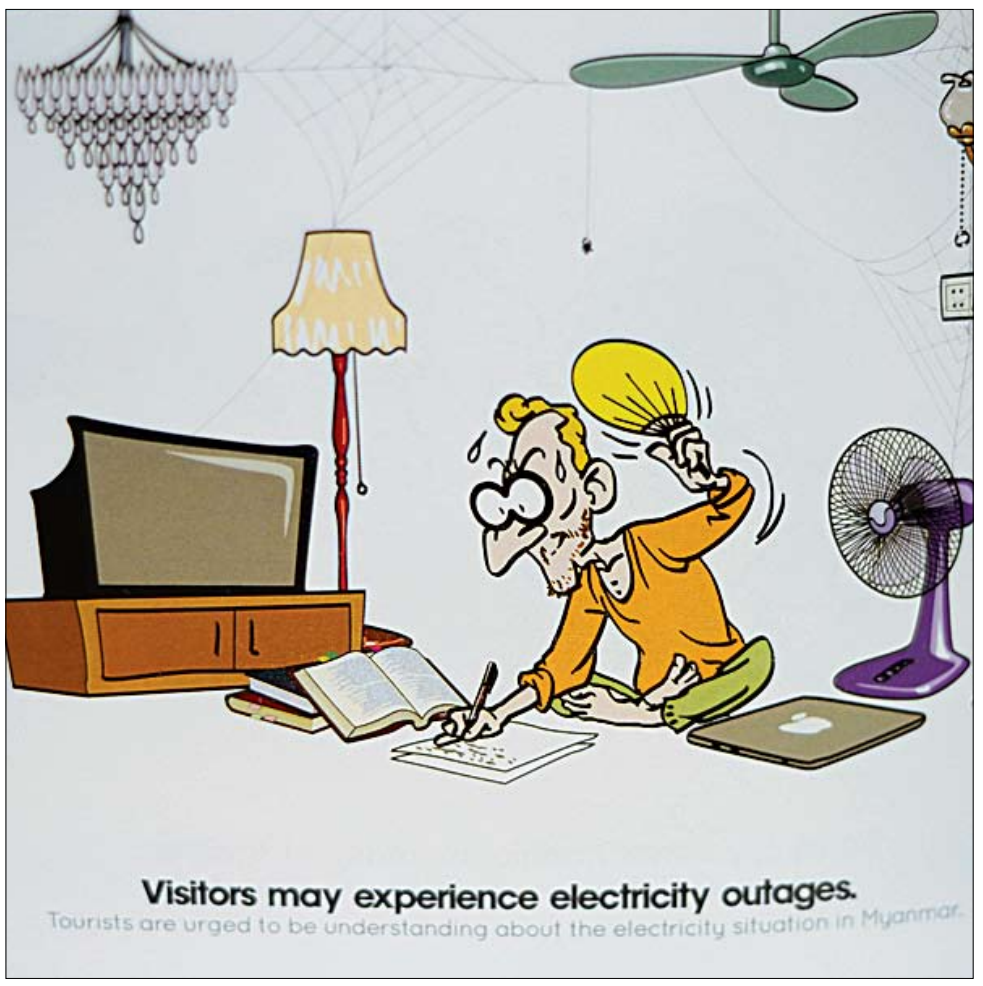
Dr Andrea Valentin of Tourism Transparency said Hanns Seidel Foundation had supported the publication of the publication, which features 30 cartoons to help travellers understand the traditions and cultures of the communities they visit.

"The booklet took a little more than four months to finish. In five weeks my assistant and I travelled around the country and spoke with more than 350 people in Yangon, Bagan, Mandalay, Kengtung and Nyaungshwe about what are the main issues, and what should be communicated to tourists," Dr Valentin said.

The booklet fits into the first action point of the new Responsible Tourism Policy – minimising unethical practices. The policy was developed with the support of Hanns Seidel Foundation and has been sent to the cabinet for approval.

"We wanted to get it out in time for the tourism peak season. We received approval for this project from Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, Myanmar Tourism Board and Hanns Seidel Foundation in May this year, and we began the research in June. Then we presented the research results in Nay Pyi Taw to 17 ministries related to tourism during a very interesting day of 'dos and don'ts' debate," Dr Valentin said.

"I presented what our respondents told us, and then we all finalised the guidelines together. We even had a democratic election about what guidelines should be included," she said.



An illustration from the 'dos and don'ts' booklet published recently by Tourism Transparency with support from Hanns Seidel Foundation. *Pic: Ko Taik*

"It was absolutely essential for us to speak not only with the tourism elites but also with the people on the ground, who bear the largest impact of tourism but are rarely consulted. We spoke with trishaw drivers, horse-cart drivers, ethnic minority villagers, pagoda trustees, monks, comedians, tour guides, hoteliers, artisans, restaurant managers, food sellers on the street, embassies, NGOs, tour operators, travel agents, taxi drivers and many more," she added.

The booklet features the works of a range of cartoonists, including Ngwe Kyi, Thit Htoon, Harn Lay, Aw Pyi Kyeh and Chit Thu.

Dr Valentin said there was concern that a rapid increase in tourism could bring serious negative consequences for the country.

"The negative impacts of tourism are slowly becoming visible, and many different people have told us that this book is important and will be very useful. Most international visitors are not conversant with the plurality of Myanmar culture and may cause unintended negative impacts. We try to minimise these negative impacts by raising their awareness on the intricacies of Myanmar culture," she said.

"We hope to distribute the booklet widely across the country, to make sure that as many visitors as possible will get their hands on it," she added.

Hard copies of the book will be distributed through tourism companies and other supporters, while soft copies can be viewed and downloaded from the website www.dosanddontsfortourists.com. The book is free and printing will be financed through sponsorship.

Government to co-finance $15m immunisation program with GAVI

By Yamon Phu Thit

NEARLY one-and-a-half million infants are to be protected against childhood diseases by a national vaccination program financed jointly by the government and an international immunisation organisation.

The program, to be launched in November, will target 1.4 million children under the age of one year, an official from the Ministry of Health told *The Myanmar Times* late last month.

The government will contribute US$5.3 million for the five-year program, with $10 million being provided by the Global Alliance on Vaccination and Immunisation (GAVI) between 2012 and 2016.

"This is the first program with government co-financing to vaccinate children against preventable diseases," said Dr Soe Lwin Nyein, director of epidemiology at the central branch of the Department of Health's Expanded Program on Immunisation.

The vaccine, pentavalent, will be used for the first time in Myanmar and is a combination of five vaccines to protect against diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, hepatitis B and haemophilus influenza type B (the bacteria that causes meningitis and pneumonia). It will replace DTP, which protects against diphtheria, whooping cough and tetanus.

According to World Health Organisation statistics in 2009, about 2200 out of 100,000 children under the age of five in Myanmar are infected with meningitis and severe pneumonia.

Pentavalent costs $17.5 for one vial and $1.75 for one dose, said Dr Htar Htar Lin, assistant director of the Expanded Program on Immunisation. "The vaccines are bought from India and have been approved by Food and Drug Administratio. It is 80 to 95 percent effective," she said.

Children receive four doses and the ministry, which has trained health staff to administer the vaccine, is urging parents not to miss the vaccination.

"We want all children under the age of one to be vaccinated," Dr Soe Lwin Nyein said.

"It will help fulfil one of the Millennium Development Goals, which calls for the reduction in under-five mortality by two thirds by 2015."

‘So many unkowns’ over border aid delivery, says Nippon Foundation

By Aye Sapay Phyu

Nippon Foundation’s Yohei Sasakawa. *Pic: Nyein Maung*

TOKYO-based Nippon Foundation is to begin spending US$3 million in emergency aid to about a million internally displaced persons by the end of this year. Recipients live in areas controlled by a union of 11 armed groups.

Speaking at a press conference in Yangon on October 29, foundation chairman Mr Yohei Sasakawa said the money would be spent following discussions with representatives of the United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC) in Bangkok and Japan.

He said the foundation would deliver an initial $300,000 worth of food and medical supplies in December this year to UNFC-controlled areas in Kachin, Shan, Kayah, Kayin, Mon, Chin and Rakhine states.

“As the first batch, we are going to spend $300,000 as a trial. We don’t really know how accessible the IDP camps are, and the state of the roads. There are so many unknowns. We will go there to make a survey first,” he said.

He said the foundation also expected to provide the remaining $2.7 million in kind as quickly as possible to ease the suffering of the internally displaced people.

“They need food and medicine, so we want to act quickly and get it to them as soon as possible. We carry out all our activities under the recognition of the Myanmar government as well as UNFC. We have very close relationship with both,” he said.

Mr Sasakawa said the Nippon Foundation had discussed such matters as the content, allocation, and delivery methods of the emergency aid with 20 representatives of the UNFC in Japan on October 18, and intended to use domestic channels to deliver the goods.

Passport validity boosted to five years

By Kyaw Hsu Mon

MYANMAR passport holders have welcomed the Myanmar Passport Issuing Board’s decision to extend the validity of new passports from three to five years.

All Myanmar citizens who apply for a passport from November 1 will receive the five-year passports, said Police Major Soe Tun Aung, spokesperson for the board.

“Applicants do not need to pay any extra charge for the longer validity passports. The process will also be the same as before. The main reason we extended the validity is because Myanmar passport holders said they regularly encounter difficulties applying for visas when the validity was only three years,” he said.

He added that Myanmar citizens previously had to renew their passport every two-and-a-half years, because most countries require at least six months validity on a passport to issue a visa, and this made it difficult for people living abroad.

“Now they only have to only renew their passport every four-and-a-half years so it will be more convenient for them,” he said.

Seven types of passport are issued by the board: visit, religious, work, student, dependent, seafarer and business.

To apply for a new passport or renew an old one, applicants only have to spend one day at the passport office to get a receipt and can get the passport after 21 days. Before 2011, the application process took up to a week and many resorted to paying a broker rather than do it themselves.

“I’m really happy to hear about this change because we used to spend a lot of time when we had to renew our passport every two-and-a-half years. Most countries require at least six months in the passport [to issue a visa] so that is difficult for us and we used to have to rush at that time. Now I think it will be more convenient than before,” said Ma Yuzana, who works for telecoms company ZTE.

She said it would be better if passports were valid for 10 years and it was possible to apply online.

However, Pol Maj Soe Tun Aung said that while many Western countries issued 10-year passports this was unlikely to happen in Myanmar because most ASEAN countries issue passports valid for about five years.

“Most ASEAN nations give at least five years to their passport holders and now we are following them,” he said.

Ma Santhida, 32, who is working in Dubai, said she was also “very pleased” to hear about the policy change.

She said Myanmar workers in the city used to have to send their passports to embassies in Saudi Arabia or Kuwait every two-and-a-half years at significant cost of time and money.

“It used to take about one-and-a-half or two months to renew the passport … I think this news is very good for us,” she said.

According to the Passport Issuing Board, about 200,000 passports have been issued since electronic passports were introduced in 2010.

Konbaung-era bronze bell uncovered

A BRONZE bell believed to be more than 200 years old has been uncovered near the southern entrance to Mahar Sandar Muni Pagoda in Mandalay’s Chanmyatharsi township.

The bronze bell is three feet high, two feet wide at its mouth and three inches thick, and features images of two lions and carved inscriptions. It was found on October 25 while workers were preparing soil to plant trees, said Ko Sithu, one of the workers.

“We found the bell in an upside down position when we dug about two feet down and we lifted it up with a crane. The weight is estimated at about 300 viss (480 kilograms],” he said.

The bell has been placed in Dhamma Wihara Monastery, inside the compound of the pagoda, which was built by King Bodawpaya in 1782.

– Hlaing Kyaw Soe, translated by Zar Zar Soe

PTTEP INTERNATIONAL LIMITED (Yangon Branch)
Vacancies Announcement

PTTEP International Limited (Yangon Branch) one of a Leading Oil and Gas Companies in Myanmar, is seeking for highly motivated, qualified and experienced candidate for the following positions to support the operation and maintenance activities at offshore locations and onshore facilities.

All applicants must have the relevant qualification and professional skills with fluency in English communication (both spoken and written). Experience in oil and gas industry or international company is preferable for all positions.

Offshore Production Operations

1. **Production Superintendent**
   - Bachelor's degree in Process/ Petroleum/ Mechanical Engineering or equivalent
   - Have 10 years experience about production operations
2. **Production Supervisor**
   - Technical Diploma in related fields
   - Have 7 years experience about production operations.
3. **Team Leader Production Operations**
   - Technical Diploma in related fields
   - Have 5 years experience about production operations.
4. **Panel Operator**
   - Technical Diploma in related fields
   - Have 5 years experience as a panel operator in a plant.
5. **Maintenance Superintendent**
   - Bachelor's degree in Electrical/Mechanical Engineering or equivalent
   - Have 10 years experience about maintenance of oil and gas facilities.
6. **Mechanical Supervisor**
   - Technical Diploma in Mechanical or related fields
   - Have 7 years experience about maintenance of oil and gas facilities.
7. **Electrical and Instrument Supervisor**
   - Technical Diploma in Electrical, Instrument or related fields
   - Have 7 years experience about electrical/instrument maintenance of oil and gas facilities.
8. **Mechanical Technician**
   - Technical Diploma in Mechanical or related fields
   - Have 5 years experience about mechanical equipment/machine maintenance in oil and gas facilities.
9. **Electrical and Instrument Technician**
   - Technical Diploma in Electrical, Instrument, Electronic or related fields
   - Have 5 years experience about maintenance of electrical and instrument equipment in oil & gas facilities.

Onshore Facilities Operations

1. **Operations & Safety Superintendent**
   - Bachelor's degree in Process/ Petroleum/ Mechanical Engineering or equivalent
   - Have 10 years experience about production operations and pipeline operations.
2. **Operations & Safety Supervisor**
   - Technical Diploma in related fields
   - Have 5 years experience about production operations and pipeline operations.
3. **Pipeline Supervisor**
   - Technical Diploma in related fields
   - Have 7 years experience about operations and maintenance of oil and gas pipeline.
4. **Team Leader Operations**
   - Technical Diploma in related fields
   - Have 5 years experience about production operations and pipeline operations.
5. **Mechanical Technician**
   - Technical Diploma in Mechanical or related fields
   - Have 5 years experience about mechanical and machine maintenance.
6. **Instrument Technician**
   - Technical Diploma in Instrument, Electronic or related fields
   - Have 5 years experience about maintenance of instrument equipment.
7. **Electrical Technician**
   - Technical Diploma in Electrical or related fields
   - Have 5 years experience about maintenance of electrical equipment.
8. **Production Operator**
   - Technical Diploma in related fields
   - Have 5 years experience about production operations and pipeline operations.
9. **CMMS Technician.**
   - Technical Diploma in related fields
   - Have knowledge and skill to use a Computerised Maintenance Management System (CMMS) as a maintenance planning tool to generate and update preventive management plan and create maintenance reports.

Interested applicants are requested to send updated CV with recent photo, and relevant supporting documents to Human Resources Section, PTTEP International Limited (Yangon Branch) at No. 2(C), Sei Myaung Yeiktha Lane, 8 1/2 mile, Mayangone Township, Yangon, Myanmar or email to JobApp@pttep.com not later than 30th November 2012.

Switzerland opens embassy in Yangon

By Cherry Thein

THE first resident Swiss ambassador to Myanmar has pledged to expand his country's humanitarian aid programs.

Switzerland formally opened its embassy – at 11 Kabaung Lane, Pyay Road, Hlaing township – on November 3 in the presence of Swiss Foreign Minister Didier Burkhalter during his state visit to Myanmar.

Ambassador Mr Christoph Burgener said at a press conference on October 29 that he was happy and proud to be his country's first resident ambassador to Myanmar, and promised to expand long-term humanitarian activities.

"We want to support the reforms in Myanmar, and to share our experience with the government, political parties and ethnic minority groups, and with the people of Myanmar," he said.

"We too have had to work through our differences, developing a complicated system of checks and balances and a strong bottom-up approach to democracy.

"We also want to further strengthen our presence in Asia."

He said the political changes in Myanmar had meant that in the past six months, Switzerland has "had more visitors from Myanmar than in the past 50 years", including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

Mr Peter Tschumi, deputy head of mission and director of cooperation, said Swiss development assistance would be used to improve health and social access in some of the country's most vulnerable communities, and would focus on restoring and improving living conditions for the poor and those in conflict-affected areas.

There would also be assistance to promote better agricultural practices and food security, and to enhance livelihoods, he said.

Short- and long-term training would also aim at providing employment and vocational skills.

Ms Corinne Henchoz Pignani, head of economic and political affairs, said Switzerland would seek to expand its economic ties with Myanmar by assisting Swiss companies seeking to invest in Myanmar and Myanmar businesses wishing to operate in Switzerland. It would work closely with the Swiss Asian Chamber of Commerce and the Swiss-Myanmar business network.

She said particular focus would be placed on small and medium enterprises.

"I do appreciate what President U Thein Sein said on the rights-based approach to economic and social development. Switzerland will favour the same approach, which is beneficial to political reform in Myanmar and sustainable in the long run," she said.

"Switzerland is seeking to promote an ethical approach by proposing a regular economic dialogue between two governments," she added.

Ms Claudine Haenni Dale, an adviser to the embassy on peace building and human rights, underlined that the Swiss approach to peace building is long-term engagement with the various actors involved in negotiations.

"We are not seeking to take the role of mediators. The various groups and the government are already talking directly with one another. There is no need for third-party direct involvement," she said. "But we are ready to assist if asked."

Govt plans log export ban, targets value-added growth

Ban on all exports of raw teak and hardwoods to come into force from 2014

By Su Hlaing Tun

Teak logs for export at Yangon port. *Pic: Kaung Htet*

THE Ministry of Forestry will scale back logging and ban the export of raw teak and hardwood from 2014 in a bid to increase exports of higher-earning finished products, the Ministry of Forestry announced late last month.

"In the past, we couldn't export finished products for various reasons. But now we will try to export [finished] products and we will halt logs exports. That's a serious aim we will carry out in the future," Minister for Environmental Conservation and Forestry U Win Tun said at a recent planning meeting.

Under the ministry's Annual Allowable Cut framework, production of teak will decline by 15 percent in the 2012-13 financial year, while hardwood will fall by 20pc.

However, this reduction is higher in some areas, such as the Bago Yoma, where hardwood production will fall 30pc and teak 70pc this financial year.

While the ministry did not provide export figures, it said teak production also fell 15pc in 2011-12, while hardwood production fell 20pc. *Weekly Eleven* reported recently that the country exported 371,000 metric tonnes of teak and 1.789 million metric tonnes of hardwood in 2011-12. According to the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, earnings from teak log exports for the year were almost US$284 million, while hardwood logs earned about $273 million.

U Win Tun said at the National Level Meeting for Development of Forestry Sector in Nay Pyi Taw on October 24 that the reduced production would mean the "future of Myanmar's forests will be significantly improved".

He said there would still be enough timber extracted to meet domestic demand and the easing of sanctions against Myanmar would be a positive for the industry.

He added that the ban on exports would create "many job opportunities" because the buyers of exported logs will be encouraged to invest in production facilities inside Myanmar.

Foreign businesses will bring expertise and capital, he said.

"There will be much more competition in the forestry sector," U Win Tun said at the meeting. "It is sure that we will gain visible profits when we start banning log exports."

A spokesperson from log exporter Myanmar May Kaung welcomed the plan.

"Selling finished products will be better for the country and demand for sawn timber from Europe has now also increased. The system will help to protect the environment and the tax rate is also fairer now so the industry is on a positive trend," the spokesperson said.

However, timber traders said Myanmar companies will initially struggle to compete internationally because they lack equipment, capital and skills.

U Win Tun said the introduction of the European Union Timber Regulation from March 2013, which seeks to stop imports of illegally sourced timber into the 27-member bloc, will also be a "challenge" for the industry.

"Our timber products will be weak in the global market if we can't follow the Timber Regulation," said U Win Tun.

Under the EU's Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Action Plan, companies that export timber products to the EU will face prosecution if it is illegally sourced.

So far six timber-producing countries have agreed voluntary partnership agreements with the EU, while another six are in negotiations. Myanmar is in the pre-negotiation phase, the FLEGT website says.

The bilateral, legally binding agreements "aim to guarantee that the wood exported to the EU is from legal sources and to support partner countries in improving their own regulation and governance of the sector", the website says.

U Win Tun urged stakeholders in the forestry sector to collaborate with local and foreign organisations to comply with the timber legality assurance system in order to EU Timber Regulation criteria.

"There are meetings taking place about the Timber Regulation but we don't know how it will affect the market," said one exporter.

In the Kayah State capital Loikaw, U Zaw Htay, the in-charge of the main teak and hardwood depot in the state, said the new policy had resulted in a decline in production of about 50pc.

"It is because of the environmental protection policy," he told *The Myanmar Times* in an interview late last month. "There are about eight logging companies in Kayah State but some have shut down temporarily because of the production drop." – *Additional reporting by Thomas Kean*

Conflict prompts autonomy call

By Tim McLaughlin

A RAKHINE political group has issued a renewed call for greater autonomy in the region following recent communal unrest.

The central executive committee of the Arakan National Council (ANC) released a statement on October 27 criticising the Myanmar government for actions that it said led to the deaths of Rakhine citizens. The party stated that the violence highlights the need for greater regional control over affairs in the state.

"According to these events, it is clear that Rakhine desperately needs to practise self-determination and autonomy because the central government [of Myanmar] is unable to establish Rakhine's security, stability and development," the statement said.

The one-page statement was issued six days after the outbreak of fighting in Rakhine State between the Buddhist Rakhine and the Muslim Rohyinga minority that has seen at least 89 people killed.

"Moreover, we condemn the actions that lessen the social value of Rakhine, the army's actions that led to deaths and injuries to locals when they cracked down on the riots," the statement said.

"We believe that Myanmar /Burma army and other Burmese security forces have made the situation worse," U Twan Zaw, general secretary of the ANC, said by email.

Conspicuously absent from the statement are the words Rohingya and Bengali, the two names given to the large Muslim community in Rakhine State.

The ANC views the group as illegal immigrants, U Twan Zaw said.

"There are different peoples in Arakan history, but not the Rohingya," he said.

U Twan Zaw blamed poor governance for the violence, including what he described as mishandling of the "immigration issue".

"There is huge number of illegal immigrants in Arakan because of the corrupt administration," U Twan Zaw said. "As a consequence, Arakan also has become the second-least developed state in the nation and people are living under the poverty line with the alarming illiteracy and malnutrition rates though it [Rakhine] has fertile land and affluent natural resources. These kinds of vulnerabilities and unfairness become a part of the root causes to escalate the violence and create more issues."

The ANC said in the statement that "the right answer to the problem is peaceful negotiation and resettlement", presumably a reference to resettling Muslim Rohingya communities.

When U Twan Zaw was asked about the proposed resettlement, he said it should apply to "illegal immigrants".

KPMG opens office in Yangon

By Stuart Deed

KPMG has opened an office in Myanmar to serve the "potential tremendous growth" of the country, the company's chairman said last week.

The office, officially open since May at 32 Pyay Road in Yangon's Hlaing township, operates through the Thailand branch of KPMG International and is the first of the so-called "big four" professional services companies to set up in Myanmar. The office is

The recent easing of many international sanctions against Myanmar has sparked a great deal of interest from investors globally, a KPMG press release issued on October 30 said.

"With the easing of trade sanctions, Myanmar has the potential for tremendous growth, and many multinationals and other investors are already entering the market or exploring opportunities," said Michael Andrew, chairman of KPMG International.

"In addition to the in-depth local knowledge and capabilities of the new office, KPMG can support clients investing in Myanmar with extensive global resources, including specialised practices in areas such as financial services, healthcare, hospitality and infrastructure. We look forward to contributing to Myanmar's economic resurgence and to helping clients succeed in what should be a rapidly expanding economy," he said.

The office will offer tax and advisory services initially, with plans for audit services to follow.

The press release said the office "will be able to draw on the full capabilities of KPMG in Thailand and its more than 1200 professionals, with additional support from KPMG firms in Japan and Singapore".

Govt witholds SEZ demarcation

MASTER plans for the Thilawa Special Economic Zone (SEZ) should be completed as early as next month, or perhaps January 2013, U Set Aung, Deputy Minister for National Planning and Economic Development has told *The Myanmar Times*.

The deputy minister was elaborating on remarks made at a workshop on progress at the Thilawa SEZ on October 28.

"The exact demarcation of the SEZ area is not yet confirmed. It will be confirmed when the master plans are completed," said the deputy minister in an email in response to questions. He added that though the precise location of the SEZ had been determined, it has not been identified so as to avoid land speculation in the area.

However, it has been widely speculated that the zone would cover about 2400 hectares and is about 25 kilometres south of Yangon, in Thanlyin and Kyauktan townships, and incorporates the Myanmar International Terminals Thilawa, a deepsea port facility built in the mid-1990s.

Thilawa SEZ will be implemented as a joint venture between the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry and Japan External Trade Organisation, holding 51 percent and 49pc of the shares respectively.

"Hence, we are preparing to sign the memorandum of cooperation between the Myanmar and Japanese governments," said U Set Aung, adding: "It will not be a Japanese zone. It will be a Myanmar zone [led by the developer in which Myanmar people hold a major portion of the shares], with the financial and technical resources of Japan that are committed through cooperation between the Myanmar and Japanese governments."

On completion, said the deputy minister, "investors from all over the world will be invited to invest in the zone, that is, to set up their manufacturing plants".

"The government wants to start the Thilawa SEZ in early 2013 and to finish it by 2015. As a result, long-term job opportunities can be created for local people. Another benefit is sharing the technology of foreign companies. We are also considering establishing a technical school in the SEZ."

Since it would benefit foreign companies to use local technicians rather than importing them, this could provide jobs for locals, said U Set Aung at the Thilawa SEZ workshop on October 28.

Digicel crafts red-hot public relations blitz

By Tim McLaughlin

A FULL moon rises high into the sky above Yangon's Thuwanna Stadium packed with red shirt-wearing fans watching the final match of the Myanmar Football Federation season.

The crowd erupts when an Ayeyawady FC striker pushes the ball past the diving KBZ FC goalkeeper to open up a 1-0 lead in the sixth minute of play.

Accompanied by a pulsating drum beat, the fans in red cheer wildly when KBZ's Obi sends a shot from just beyond the box glancing off the right corner of the goal in the 16th minute.

The fans in red are always cheering because all of the fans, regardless of team affiliation, are wearing the same colour. The homogenous hue of the crowd is not due to a uniform gaffe that has pitted similarly clad teams against each other – the KBZ players are wearing a royal blue strip.

The unusual scene is actually the result of an extremely successful marketing drive from a Jamaica-based, Irish-led telecoms firm that, as of yet, is not operating in Myanmar.

Digicel, which owns and operates mobile networks in 31 countries in the Caribbean, Central America and Pacific regions, is following an tried-and-tested policy to insinuate its brand into Myanmar by tapping into the country's love of football.

According to Frank O'Carroll, vice president of business development for Digicel Pacific, sports sponsorships are one of the four outreach programs employed by Digicel in target markets; the others are health initiatives, education programs and cultural events.

Andrew Georgiou, chief operating officer at the World Sport Group, a Singapore-based sports marketing, event management and media company, said Digicel's strategy enables the company to reach out to potential clients directly.

Ayeyawady FC celebrate after winning the Digicel Cup in Yangon last week. *Pic: Boothee*

"Through sponsorship, companies can interact directly with their consumers by creating unique and memorable experiences with their brands through product promotional tie-ins, hospitality, ticket promotions, product sampling, fan competitions and by leveraging upon social media channels," he said

While rugby and cricket teams bear the Digicel name in other countries, football was the obvious choice in Myanmar where English Premier League matches result in packed beer stations and teashops.

"It is the sport that really unites the country," said Mr O'Carroll.

Digicel has signed a two year sponsorship agreement with the MFF that includes sponsorship of both the men's and women's national teams.

In the late 1960s until the early 1970s Myanmar was a dominant force in Asian men's football. The squad won gold at the 1966 and 1970 Asian Games and despite countrywide unrest found the top of the podium at five consecutive SEA Games beginning in 1965.

But since the 1970s fans have had little to be excited about. Myanmar ranks 184 in the FIFA/Coca-Cola World Rankings out of 209 recognised national teams. The team suffered an embarrassing 11-game winless streak through much of 2010 and 2011 that included a 7-1 thrashing by ASEAN rival Vietnam. But a spot in next month's AFF Suzuki Cup in Thailand and recent success by the Under-22 national team have sparked hope of resurgence.

"The national team, there is very little sponsorship there, we really want to have a look at bringing back Myanmar's recent history of glory from the 1960s and make it a really powerful football nation again," Mr O'Carroll said.

But because Myanmar's telecoms sector is highly restricted – state-run Myanma Posts and Telecommunications maintains a near monopoly – Digicel does not operate in the country, at least not yet.

"We're not operational, so our objective is to try and have people understand who we are and get our name out there," Mr O'Carroll said.

T Bettina Cornwell, Professor of Marketing and Research Director at the Sports Marketing Centre at the University of Oregon, said introducing a brand using sport can have a broader impact when coupled with additional strategies.

"Just a few years ago brands were less inclined to use sport sponsorship as a market entry strategy. Sponsorship has a limited communication capacity when one looks only at the brand displayed in broadcast or online sport viewing. On the other hand, most brands now utilise extensive collateral marketing with their sponsorship," Ms Cornwell said, adding, "market entry and expansion with a sponsorship platform makes sense for some brands."

Digicel, in conjunction with Information Matrix, has conducted 10,000 interviews to gauge how the platform is working for it in Myanmar. Mr O'Carroll said the results are promising.

"The awareness of the Digicel brand name is very high," he said, but added that "the awareness of what we actually do is very low." Though Mr O'Carroll also said that this is what Digicel expected and because of telecoms being a closed market, for now this is what the sponsorships were intended to do.

But Digicel's presence in Myanmar is not just a goodwill mission framed by corner kicks and penalty shootouts.

While the payout when Ayeyawady United hoisted the Digicel Cup after defeating KBZ on October 31 was K30 million, it is a pittance compared to what Digicel could make if it is awarded one of the operating licenses scheduled to be awarded to foreign companies. Then it might be the guys in suits cheering the loudest.

ITD to develop light industry in Dawei

THE Thai developer of the US$50-billion Dawei economic zone in Myanmar plans to invest more than 1 billion baht ($32 million) on infrastructure to help attract light industry amid uncertainty over the project.

The plan includes building a 33-megawatt power plant plus road and water systems on the 101 hectares of land designated for light industry, Somchet Thinaphong, managing director of Dawei Development Co, told *Reuters* on October 30.

"We are arranging land area of 633 rais [101 hectares] for the light industries. For heavy industry, we are still working on that," he said.

He said the company had already lined up companies keen to invest in the light industry zone but declined to give names.

Somchet said the small power plant would use natural gas as fuel and Italian-Thai Development, Thailand's largest construction firm and the parent of Dawei Development, was working on how to supply the gas.

Italian-Thai has been struggling to find financial backing for the 250-square-kilometre complex, which was planned to include a deepsea port, steel mills, refineries, a petrochemical complex and power plants.

Italian-Thai has said it aimed to conclude financial plans for the project by the end of this year.

But it has struggled to find $8.5 billion to finance infrastructure and utilities under the first phase and the governments of Thailand and Japan have stepped in to keep it afloat.

In September sources said Thai banks would provide short-term loans before an expected Japanese loan of up to $3.2 billion could be secured.

A lack of basic infrastructure such as roads and ports have made it difficult for the Dawei project to get off the ground, CIMB Securities said in a research note.

In May the Thai government approved a budget of $1.1 billion for infrastructure inside Thailand that would link up with the zone, including a four-lane highway to the border and homes for Thais who would work in the zone. – *Reuters*

The sleepy main street of Dawei in Tanintharyi Region. *Pic: Myanmar Times Archive/ Hein Latt Aung*

How will the Dawei project benefit Myanmar?

OP-ED with Stuart Deed

KEVIN Costner is a polarising actor – in between some sterling performances in *Dances With Wolves* and *A Perfect World,* he found time to act in some of the worst movies of the recent past, bottoming out with widely derided *Waterworld*, a film so dreadful that even Dennis Hopper as a mad pirate could not save it.

And at this point in time you might legitimately be wondering if *The Myanmar Times* has been taken over by crackheads: An opinion article in the business section about that dashing rogue Kevin Costner – what's that possibly got to do with Myanmar?

The point lies in another Costner effort that deals with his apparent desire to portray himself as a serious but down-on-his-luck sportsman – and no, I'm not talking about the preposterously awful *Tin Cup,* but the moderately watchable *Field of Dreams*, released in 1989.

Now, I'm not going to lie and say I remember the movie well but I do recall the line delivered by Costner's ghostly co-star: "If you build it, he will come."

At this point Costner's character digs up part of his cornfield in a bid to encourage the ghost of Shoeless Joe Jackson, a long-dead player idolised by Costner's father, to play baseball at the field.

And here's where I belatedly – and very crudely – arrive at my point: I think the mooted US$50-billion Dawei Special Economic Zone and deepsea port in Tanintharyi Region is Myanmar's field of dreams, with Thailand and possibly Japan acting as the ghostly voice.

Frankly, I don't see the benefit that Myanmar gets from Dawei but it seems clear from former Thai prime minister Mr Abhisit Vejjajiva's comments during a weekly television address in late 2010 that Thailand knows what it wants from the project.

'Some industries are not suitable to be located in Thailand.'

"Some industries are not suitable to be located in Thailand. This is why they decided to set up there," he said, referring to Dawei.

Tycoon U Zaw Zaw told *Reuters* news agency in early July that his company, Max Myanmar Group of Companies, planned to reduce its share in the 250-square-kilometre project from 25 percent.

"We are pulling out from the project gradually," he confirmed to *Reuters* in a phone interview on July 4.

The ambitious Dawei project was announced to the public in late 2010 but has hit a number of roadblocks since then, including U Zaw Zaw's planned pullout, the axing of a planned 4000-megawatt coal-fired power plant on environmental grounds and perhaps the greatest threat of all – the failure of developer Italian-Thai to secure funding.

Somjet Thinaphong, the managing director of the Dawei Development Co. Ltd, said a gradual withdrawal by the Myanmar strategic partner is unlikely to affect the project's long-term viability, according to an article in the *Bangkok Post* in early July.

"The viability of such a capital-intensive development project is largely dependent on fund sourcing," he said. "The local company, or even Ital-Thai, does not have the financial capacity to fund such a massive development project. We have to bank on others to provide us with financial support."

However, Japan and Thailand have since intervened to keep the project afloat.

"Italian-Thai has had difficulty in mobilising the funding. So now the Thai government has effectively taken over the project," U Thaung Lwin, chairman of the Dawei SEZ told *Reuters* in mid-September. "The next step is to invite Japan", which he said is committed to seeing the project succeed.

Since the Thai and Myanmar governments agreed on July 23 to connect Dawei to the Thai port of Laem Chabang, 100 kilometres southeast of Bangkok, Thai banks led by Bangkok Bank and Siam Commercial Bank have arranged a 10 billion baht ($325 million) bridge loan to sustain it for another 8-10 months, Mr Somjet Thinaphong told *Reuters*.

However, I think the concerns over funding miss what I consider an important point: There seems to be an expectation that if the site is built then workers will arrive in droves to take up jobs.

"We need tons of workers," Premchai Karnasuta, the president of Italian-Thai Development, told the *New York Times* in November 2010. "We will mobilise millions of Burmese."

But unless wages and working conditions on offer at the project are competitive, who is going to turn up for work? There seems to be an unspoken belief that Myanmar workers are going to stream to the development from further north in Myanmar or from other jobs in Thailand, but it just looks like a pipedream to me – and Kevin Costner ain't around for the happy ending.

There are just so many question marks hanging over the project: Where are the workers going to live? Is road and rail infrastructure linking the zone with the rest of Myanmar going to be built?

Above all – how does this development benefit Myanmar and its 60 million people?

Instead, the special economic zone planned for Thilawa in Yangon's Thanlyin township seems a much better bet: The workers, basic infrastructure, services and companies are already there, and Japanese businesses and the government are strongly backing the project, which means the funding should not be a problem in the same way that it has been in Dawei.

For its part, the Asian Development Bank has advised the Thai government to invest in transport and infrastructure development in Myanmar to encourage international investors and financiers, the *Bangkok Post* reported on August 30.

Mr Craig Steffensen, the ADB's Thailand country director, said during the Thailand Focus 2012 meeting in Bangkok on August 29 that the $8 billion required for the first phase of the project had not been secured.

He added that the Thai government should consider building more roads or rail links to augment the motorway planned between Nonthaburi's Bang Yai district and Kanchanaburi province.

"It doesn't need to be a massive investment, just an initial amount that can get the Dawei project off the ground," he said.

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Dated: 5th November, 2012

Visa partners with three domestic banks

By Zaw Win Than

Mr Peter Maher speaks during a Visa press release to announce the company's partners in Myanmar. *Pic: Thiri Lu*

VISA, the world's largest payment network, signed its first licensing agreements in Myanmar with three domestic banks at Sedona Hotel in Yangon on November 3.

The domestic banks are Kanbawza, Co-operative and Myanmar Oriental.

The agreements will establish arrangements for Visa-branded payment cards to be accepted in Myanmar, a development that will support the growth of Myanmar's financial infrastructure and help the country to integrate with the international economy.

Visa-branded cards will now be able to be used at automatic teller machines and point-of-sale machines at selected locations. By joining the Visa network, the banks agree to adhere to Visa's network operating regulations and security standards, a press release said.

"We are proud to partner with Kanbawza, Co-operative, and Myanmar Oriental banks under the leadership of the Central Bank of Myanmar in leading the charge to enable the economic and societal benefits of electronic payments for Myanmar's economy, its people and tourists," said Mr Peter Maher, Visa Group country manager of Southeast Asia and Australasia. "As Myanmar develops its financial infrastructure, we will work hand-in-hand with our partners to enable safe, secure and convenient electronic payments across the country," he said.

Visa's licensing agreement with the banks will bring immediate benefits to tourists who will be able to use their Visa credit, debit and prepaid cards in the country.

"Today's event and announcement is an important milestone for Myanmar's economic development and the development of the payment and settlement system which is one of the financial infrastructures in Myanmar," said U Mg Mg Win, chairman of the Myanmar Payment Union.

"Visa's licensing agreement with Kanbawza Bank, Cooperative Bank and Myanmar Oriental Bank will help and integrate Myanmar further into the global economy," he said. He added that the partnership would help to connect Myanmar into the global electronic payment system.

"Due to this agreement, there will be greater financial inclusion in Myanmar to access digital currency, and this will lead the way towards the country's economic development," U Mg Mg Win said.

According to the most recent Visa Global Travel Intentions survey, 64 percent of international travellers prefer to pay by card when travelling in the Asia-Pacific region. Additionally, 53pc of respondents said they would withdraw cash from ATMs, if they were readily available in the destination country.

The Visa licensing agreement is a significant development for Myanmar ahead of international events, such as the Southeast Asian Games in December next year, the World Economic Forum for East Asia 2013, and the country's 2014 chairmanship of ASEAN.

Mr Maher said Visa is committed to continuing to support the development of the country's electronic payments infrastructure as international business and tourist arrivals grow at a rapid pace.

"These are three important banks [but] I'm sure there will be more banks in Myanmar to join with Visa in the future," he added.

JOB WATCH

UNFPA Vacancy Notice No.2012/011

Position Title : Programme Assistant
Grade : GS-5
Duty Station : Yangon, Myanmar
Issue Date : 05 November 2012
Closing Date : 19 November 2012 (5:00pm)
Duration of Appointment : 1 Year (possible extensions)

Applications are invited from interested **Myanmar nationals** for the post of Programme Assistant. Applications should be addressed to UNFPA Representative.

Attention : International Operations Manager RoomA07, UNFPA, No.6, NatmaukRoad, Yangon. Email: myanmar.office@unfpa.org

For details on duties and responsibilities, educational and other requirements, please see the vacancy announcement posted at UNDP billboard. No.6, Natmauk Road, Yangon and also at UNFPA website (http://myanmar.unfpa.org)

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Malaysia's Minister of Plantation Industries and Commodities Mr Tan Sri Bernard Dompok speaks during a press conference in Yangon last week. *Pic: Thiri Lu*

Malaysia eyes rubber, oil plantations in Myanmar

By Myat May Zin

MALAYSIA is eyeing Myanmar as a possible site for a palm oil and rubber plantations and a refinery, a senior Malaysian government minister said last week.

Minister of Plantation Industries and Commodities Mr Tan Sri Bernard Dompok said Malaysian companies were keen to pursue opportunities in Myanmar.

Speaking at a press conference on November 1, the minister said: "Malaysia and Myanmar trade in three main sectors: palm oil, rubber and timber. We see how we can maximise long-standing business relationships between our two countries."

"We might discuss this with the president and the agriculture ministry during my trip to Myanmar. Malaysia has long experience in the plantation sector, and can share that experience," he said.

"The plantation would be set up as a joint venture, and the choice of partners would depend on decisions yet to be taken by businesspeople on both sides," he added.

Myanmar's climate was similar to that of Malaysia, he said.

"We have the idea to establish a rubber plantation in the southern part of Myanmar. We will set up the refinery industry near the port," he said.

"We cannot say how much tonnes of palm oil will be produced and how many hectares of plantation will be here. I hope to provide more details in my next visit," he added.

The director of the Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE), Mr Zulkeplimohd Perai, said Malaysian businesspeople were interested in palm oil industries in Myanmar. The oil would be exported to China and India, where demand is high. But they are awaiting the final passage of the amended foreign investment law.

The delegation led by the minister visited the president on October 31 in Nay Pyi Taw and discussed promoting trade and investment between the two countries, as well as cooperation in the production of palm oil, rubber and forestry products.

Illegal border trade thriving

IN DEPTH with Aye Thidar Kyaw

ILLEGAL trading across the country's borders is nine times as high as legal commerce, greatly reducing customs revenues, trade officials admit.

The latest figures for the 2012-13 fiscal year, which began in April, put the Myanmar estimate for trade across the Thai border at US$85 million. But according to the Thai side, the figure came to $821 million – a difference of about $736 million, or 900 percent.

"We found that the illegal trade is nine times as large as legal trade. We have to obstruct that," said U Nyunt Aung, deputy director general of the border trade department.

Speaking at an October 26 meeting on border trade promotion at the Ministry of Commerce in Yangon, U Nyunt Aung said: "The government has done a lot to liberalise trade policy since the 2011-12 fiscal year. But as of September, trade volume is only about half what we expected. We hope it will reach the target we've set for the end of this year."

The ministry allowed trade in 19 previously banned items, including tinned food and drinks, chewing gum, seasoning powder and 32 different kinds of alcohol. It also cut commercial tax to about 8pc. The ministry also issues trading licences to small traders, the meeting was told.

"The main reason for the gap is staff shortages. We don't have enough staff to check goods at the border gates, and there are too many alternative routes into the country," he said.

There are more than 20 routes into Myanmar along the borders with China and Thailand, which hamper the government's ability to gather accurate trade data and collect taxes, he said.

Consumer products such as fuel, food and drugs are imported without permission and taxation, and jade and gems, animals and mining products are illegally exported.

The most important illegally imported product is fuel, followed by edible palm oil, alcoholic drinks, cigarettes not approved by the Food and Drugs Administration, LPG gas, electronic products and automobiles, U Nyunt Aung said.

Illegal trading also reduces the quality of products available on the market, he added.

The Ministry of Commerce has announced the deployment of mobile teams to crack down on illegal cross-border trading **(see related story below)**.

Mobile teams to crack down on illicit trade

By Shwe Wah Lwin and Hlaing Kyaw Soe

TRADE officials are to launch a crackdown on smugglers, the government has announced.

Deputy director of border trade U Thein Htun Oo said mobile teams would be used to reduce and eradicate contraband.

The teams would take action at cross-border trading points, airports, seaports and markets, and would involve the police, Customs department, local administrative offices, business associations and the media.

Importers or exporters who trade without permission, or who breach the rules, would be targeted as the teams sought to block illegal channels and enforce the use of legal channels.

"The teams will work on blocking illegal trading channels and illegal trading within the radius of between five and 10 miles from border trade points. They will be able to call in reinforcements according to security circumstances," said U Thein Htun Oo.

The teams will conduct spot checks at border crossing points, airports, seaports and markets.

The first step is an "educational period" from November 1 to December 31, which may be extended or shortened as necessary.

"The commodities covered by the license will be inspected in negotiation with the customs department. We will confiscate any contraband we find," he said, adding: "Once the educational period has expired, if we find commodities being carried without an import license, we will blacklist the company and take legal action against the owners and drivers," he said.

Export and import licences are issued in Nay Pyi Taw, Yangon and Mandalay. *Translated by Thit Lwin*

Imports undercut domestic salt producers

By San Yamin Aung

MYANMAR'S salt industry is withering under the onslaught of higher-quality imports from Thailand, traders said last week.

Salt production has fallen by up to 40 percent this year, said U Myint Than, a trader based in Ayeyarwady Region's Labutta township.

"Domestic salt production has fallen by about 40 percent this year, and traders are selling salt imported from Thailand instead," he said. Even though salt from Thailand is nearly four times as costly as domestically produced salt

The wholesale price for Thai salt is about K270 a viss (1 viss is 1.6 kilograms or 3.6 pounds), while domestically made salt is K75-80 a viss, he said.

Labutta salt farmer U Win Naing Oo said the cost of salt barely covered the cost of production, which is about K25-30 a viss, unchanged from 2011.

Traders said that although salt imported from Thailand is more expensive than the domestic product, it is better quality. U Myint Than said the amount of salt imported from Thailand has been growing since Cyclone Nargis hit in May 2008, destroying many salt farms in the Ayeyarwady Delta.

He added that domestically produced salt increased to K500-600 a viss following Nargis, while Thai salt was only K210.

"Thai salt conquered the entire market after Nargis. But Myanmar's salt industry is tiny compared with other industries – it's a small kitchen product," said U Myint Than.

"Thai salt is a high quality product but we need Myanmar salt, even if we can't compete on quality," said U Thant Zin, owner of Sein Mittar salt mill.

However, he said about 30pc of the salt produced annually is surplus to requirement. He added that 70pc of the salt produced locally is used for industrial purposes and the remaining 30pc is used in kitchens.

"Thailand's salt entered after our domestic production was destroyed by Cyclone Nargis but our production has recovered, so we need to control imports again," U Thant Zin said.

There are 260 salt farmers in Rakhine State but only 72 were registered in 2012. In Ayeyarwady Region, 400 farmers applied for licences to produce salt, compared with more than 700 before Nargis.

– *Translated by Zar Zar Soe*

Salt farmers work in the Ayeyarwady Delta in June, 2009. *Pic: Myanmar Times Archive/Than Htike Oo*

South Korea aims for expo trade boost

By Aye Thidar Kyaw

SOUTH Korean products and arts will be the centerpieces of a trade promotion event beginning in Yangon on November 8, a Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency spokesperson said last week.

The four-day Korea Week 2012 is aimed at boosting trade and cultural ties between the two nations, the spokesperson said.

The event will feature booths from 55 companies, such as Posco, LG, Daewoo, KIA Motors, Doosan Infracore and KD Power, and showcase goods such as kitchen products, foodstuffs, medicines, electronics, automobiles and vehicle parts from November 8-11 at the Myanmar Convention Centre.

The event will coincide with the Korean Film Festival and the 6th Korean Ambassador's Cup Taekwondo championship, as well as a Korean language competition that will be held from November 9 to 14.

South Korean companies, such as Hanhwa Petrochemicals, Lotte Conglomerate, CJ Group and SK Telecoms have recently opened offices in Yangon, with Hana Bank and Samsung Construction and Trade planning to establish offices soon, the spokesperson said.

The spokesperson said there are about 150 South Korean companies, employing about 50,000 Myanmar workers, operating in Myanmar.

Myanmar President U Thein Sein visited South Korea from October 8-10, and discussed trade, investment, construction and infrastructure during meetings with South Korean President Mr Lee Myung-bak.

However, Mr Park Chulho, KOTRA's commercial attaché, said the talks had failed to show results yet.

"The two leaders only talked one month ago and we have not seen the results yet. However, I can certainly say that [South] Korea will invest in various sectors in Myanmar, especially in construction, hotels and tourism," he said.

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Dated: 5th November, 2012

Property sales 'sluggish' post-Thadingyut

By Htar Htar Khin

High property prices and an August tax increase are limiting real estate sales in a normally brisk time of year, agents said last week. *Pic: Stuart Deed*

EVEN though Buddhist Lent has come to a close with the end of Thadingyut on October 31, sales activity in the real estate market is sluggish, agents said last week.

Traditionally, Buddhist Lent is a period when non-essential house- and home-buying is shunned but its end usually heralds a rush of activity. But high property prices, an increase in property sales tax in mid-August and uncertainty surrounding the amended foreign investment law are creating a "wait and see" climate for possible buyers.

Ko Nyi Nyi, a supervisor at Khit Thit real estate agency in Lanmadaw township, said demand is booming for land on the city's outskirts, where large foreign investment projects are expected to be built.

"But aside from that we are only seeing apartment sales for less than K100 million in areas such as at Tarmwe township," he said. "Sales demand at the end of Thadingyut is poor and we're only seeing a few enquiries. I would guess that demand is less than half what it was at this time last year," he said.

He said buyers were reluctant to invest in real estate because prices are too high.

"The only people who are buying are those who plan to use it themselves, there are few speculators looking for residential plots. However, there are plenty of people looking to buy land on the outskirts," Ko Nyi Nyi added.

However, he said prices for prime commercial locations were skyrocketing.

"Properties in good locations are fetching incredible prices. Some locations on Kabar Aye Pagoda Road are selling for more than double what they were last year. Some locations are selling for K700,000 a square foot, up from K300,000," he said.

Daw Moh Moh Aung, from Win Shwe Wah real estate agency in Kyauktada township, said her agency is focusing most of its attention on Thanlyin township and other outer townships.

> **'I think potential buyers are quite reluctant because of rising property prices.'**

"We have been making plenty of sales in Thanlyin, Dagon Seikkan, as well as North and South Dagon townships, where 2400-square-foot plots are still available for less than K10 million.

"Everyone seems to be waiting to see if the foreign investment law will be enacted, and if it results in significant expenditure," she said.

"But aside from the outskirts, sales have been poor at the end of Thadingyut. We've recorded only about 30pc as many sales as we did last year," she added.

Daw Moh Moh Aung said her agency had been taking enquiries from Asian investors in October who were looking for large parcels of land either downtown or nearby to build hospitals, hotels or office blocks. But she said none has resulted in sales so far.

Ko Maung Maung Gyi from Excellent real estate agency in downtown Yangon, said the market is sluggish.

"We have made a few sales in Thingangyun township but mostly we're seeing sales in North Dagon township or the outskirts of Yangon where people are looking for houses between K150 million and to K200 million.

"But the market is cool and there are few sales being made. I think potential buyers are quite reluctant because of rising property prices," he said.

Ko Maung Maung Gyi said he doubted that the enactment of the amended foreign investment law would have a significant impact on the market.

"I think enacting the investment law would bring some buyers back to the market but the bigger problem is the tax – if you can't show where you've made your money you must pay a tax equal to 30pc of the property, which is a major problem."

YCDC moots new housing project

YANGON City Development Committee announced last week that it is planning to build an affordable housing project in North Dagon township.

The 114-acre development will be built on Bo Ba Htoo Street in North Dagon township's 48th ward, YCDC stated through an announcement in the state-run *New Light of Myanmar* newspaper on October 31.

The article said development will include "recreation centre, playgrounds, car parking, shopping malls, mini marts and well-ventilated and lighted apartments" and apartments will be sold to the public at a "fair price", although these were not disclosed.

The notice called for interested contractors and bankers to contact YCDC by November 7 at the latest and a public meeting to explain the project will be held at City Hall at 8am on November 14.

– *Htar Htar Khin*

The 3MDG Fund
Maternal, newborn & child health programme

Call for expressions of interest

Deadline 22nd November 2012

The Fund Board of the Three Millennium Development Goals Fund (3MDG) requests eligible organisations to express their interest to implement activities for the Fund's maternal, newborn and child health programme.

Chin State, Magway Region and Shan State are under consideration in the first phase.

Further information, eligibility criteria and Expression of Interest forms are available on the Three Diseases Fund (3DF) website, 3dfund.org

Specific questions can be directed to: info@3mdg.org or to Hnin Su Mon at the 3DF Communications Unit, 01 534498.

Mumbai home sales fall

MUMBAI, India – Home sales in Mumbai, India's most expensive property market, fell in the quarter ended September as record prices crimped affordability, said Liases Foras Real Estate Rating and Research.

Sales slid 1.2 percent to 9.75 million square feet in the three months ending on September 30 from the previous quarter, said Pankaj Kapoor, founder of Liases Foras, a Mumbai-based real estate research company. Prices in Mumbai rose 1.9pc to a record 11,385 rupees (US$211) a square foot, he said.

"The Mumbai market has become inefficient, high prices are hurting affordability," Kapoor said in a telephone interview from Mumbai. "Supply has increased but sales haven't kept pace."

Mumbai's efficiency index, which measures the impact on demand given the increase in property prices, fell 6pc to 11.66 in the quarter from the previous three months, Kapoor said. The index is near a record low and compares with the high of 85 in June 2009, he said.

India's central bank left interest rates unchanged at 8pc to fight price pressures while cutting lenders' reserve requirements to back a policy revamp by the government aimed at reviving growth. Governor Duvvuri Subbarao reduced the cash reserve ratio to 4.25pc from 4.5pc, adding about 175 billion rupees (about $3.2 billion) to the banking system, the Reserve Bank of India said in Mumbai on October 30.

Sales in Hyderabad gained the most, increasing 46pc to 4.06 million square feet in the quarter after dropping to their lowest levels in more than three years, data compiled by Liases Foras showed. Prices in the city climbed 3pc from the previous quarter. Sales in the western Indian city of Pune gained 27pc to 11.31 million square feet.

Sales in the National Capital Region, which includes New Delhi and its surrounding areas, incased 22pc to 25.94 million square feet in the quarter, Liases Foras's data showed.

– Bloomberg News

Home price index rises in US

By Lorraine Woellert

There are early signs that the US housing market is on the mend, with prices in 20 cities rising the most in two years. *Pic: AFP*

WASHINGTON – Residential real-estate prices increased in the year ended August by the most in two years, a sign housing will continue to boost US economic growth.

The S&P/Case-Shiller index of property values in 20 cities rose 2 percent from August 2011, the biggest year-to-year gain since July 2010, after climbing 1.2pc the previous month, the group said in New York on October 30. The median forecast of 25 economists in a *Bloomberg* survey projected a 1.9pc gain.

The stabilisation in values is rippling through the economy after the housing slump helped trigger the recession, supporting gains in consumer confidence and spending that are benefitting companies such as Lowe's and Whirlpool. Federal Reserve policymakers have promised to keep interest rates low until mid 2015 to spur growth and reduce unemployment.

"The housing recovery has had modest momentum," said Anika Khan, a senior economist at Wells Fargo Securities in Charlotte, North Carolina, a subsidiary of the largest US mortgage lender. "We still are looking for housing improvement and think that trend will continue."

Estimates in the *Bloomberg* survey ranged from gains of 1.5pc to 3.1pc. The Case-Shiller index is based on a three-month average, which means the August data was influenced by transactions in June and July.

US home prices adjusted for seasonal variations increased 0.5pc in August from the previous month, with 19 of 20 cities showing gains, the Case-Shiller report released on October 30 showed. Seattle was the exception, showing a 0.1pc decline. Unadjusted prices climbed 0.9pc.

The softening in unadjusted prices that typically happens starting around this time of year as sales cool may be exacerbated in the short-run by superstorm Sandy, said Khan.

"We could see in the Northeast in particular a little bit of a pullback in home sales," Khan said. "The month-to-month declines are going to be because of the seasonally slow" time of year, she said.

Lenders may put transactions on hold in the affected areas until properties can be inspected for damage, said David Stevens, president of the Mortgage Bankers Association. Homes in seven states valued at almost US$88 billion were at risk of having been damaged, said a report by CoreLogic Inc, a mortgage software and data firm in Irvine, California.

The year-over-year gauge provides better indications of trends in prices, according to the S&P/Case-Shiller group. The panel includes Karl Case and Robert Shiller, the economists who created the index.

Seventeen of the 20 cities in the index showed a year-over- year gain, led by an 18.8pc increase in Phoenix. Atlanta led declines, with a 6.1pc drop.

"The sustained good news in home prices over the past five months makes us optimistic for continued recovery in the housing market," David Blitzer, chairman of the index committee, said in a statement.

The pickup may be helping gain confidence. The Thomson Reuters/ University of Michigan sentiment gauge advanced this month to the highest level since September 2007, before the recession began.

Household purchases, which account for about 70pc of gross domestic product, rose 0.8pc in September, the most since February, Commerce Department data showed on October 29.

A drop in borrowing costs to record lows, thanks in part to the Fed's open-ended commitment to buy $40 billion of mortgage debt a month, may continue to buoy the housing market. The average rate on a 30-year, fixed-rate loan was at 3.41pc last week compared with 3.36pc in early October that was the lowest in data going back to 1972, according to Freddie Mac.

Americans bought new homes in September at the fastest pace in two years, the Commerce Department reported in late October, with demand up 27.1pc from a year ago.

– Bloomberg News

Hong Kong announces measures to cool property market

HONG KONG – Hong Kong announced on October 26 it will raise real-estate buying and resale costs to cool its overheating property market down, in a move targeting non-local buyers and speculators.

The prices of small and medium sized residential flats in the southern Chinese city, famous for its sky-high rent, surged 20 percent for the first nine months of the year, prompting the government to take action.

The new measures include the increase of special stamp duties for properties re-sold within the first three years of its purchase and imposing an extra 15pc transaction cost on non-local buyers and local and foreign companies.

The measures "targets speculative activities, and for most genuine homebuyers it would not affect them because they won't be reselling in a short period of time", said Financial Secretary John Tsang.

The extra 15pc transaction cost "will cause inconvenience to some non-local buyers. We hope that they will understand that this is an extraordinary measure introduced in exceptional circumstances", Tsang said.

The new measures went into effect on October 27.

Tsang attributed the substantial increase in the demand for property to low interest rates, adding that the city's economy is showing signs of slowing down due to a weak US market recovery and Europe's sovereign debt crisis.

"It is apparent that the property market and the local economy are heading in different directions," he said.

Tsang also acknowledged that the city was in short supply of residential units. Hong Kong in August unveiled a series of measures to cool the red-hot property market, including to provide about 65,000 new units on the market in the next three to four years.

"Maintaining a healthy stable property market will be our ongoing endeavour," Tsang said. *– AFP*

How NASA talks to its rover on Mars

By Brian Palmer

WE live in a chaos of electromagnetic energy. Visible, infrared and ultraviolet light courses omnidirectionally from the sun. A fraction of it bathes our planet, while some bounces off other planets, moons, comets and meteoroids. The visible light from stars up to 4000 light-years away can be seen from Earth with the naked eye. With instruments, astronomers can detect gamma rays from stars 13 billion light-years away. Radio waves from remote galaxies help Earth's official timekeepers monitor our planet's path around the sun.

Once a day, a minuscule stream of radio waves joins this cacophony, making the 13.8-minute trip from an antenna on Earth to an SUV-size machine parked on the surface of Mars. Those short-lived waves represent our way – our only way – of communicating with Curiosity, the rover that NASA landed on Mars in August.

How, exactly, does information flow between NASA and its correspondent on Mars? Earthbound engineers exchange messages with Curiosity on a set daily schedule. Actually, "daily" isn't quite accurate. Mars takes about 37 minutes longer than Earth to complete a rotation, so astronomers refer to a Martian day as a "sol" for the sake of clarity. From here on, when I refer to a time, it's Mars time.

At about 10am each sol, after the sun peeks over the Martian horizon and floods the landscape near the rover in light, NASA sends a packet of commands to Curiosity. Since a sol doesn't coincide with an Earth day, the agency can't always use the same antenna on Earth, which might not be facing Mars at the right moment. Instead, NASA uses the Deep Space Network, a system of antennae in the Mojave Desert and in Spain and Australia.

The content of the instructions encoded in these radio waves depends on the sol. On many sols, the rover doesn't move a Martian inch. It digs into the soil, for example, or spends its time analysing the mineral contents of onboard samples it has collected.

When NASA does tell Curiosity to move, the process is deliberate. First, the engineers use imagery from the rover itself and from orbiters passing overhead to create a three-dimensional model of the surroundings. It is critically important to ensure that, wherever they direct the machine to go, it will not face any hazards. (Spirit's six-year tour of Mars ended in 2009 when that rover got stuck in a sand pit.)

NASA's Mars rover Curiosity on the red planet on Sol 13 (August 19) 2012. When Curiosity sends information to NASA it is via a pair of orbiters, Odyssey and Reconnaissance, that were launched in 2011 and 2005 respectively. *Pic: AFP*

When NASA is convinced a destination is safe, it transmits a set of coordinates for where the rover should go. NASA will also include a suggested path, but the rover has autonomy to make changes if necessary.

A set of commands also tells Curiosity when it should listen for a new set of instructions. There are contingency plans, so the rover is prepared if a transmission is delayed or missed for some reason. In the event that no instructions come for several sols, the rover takes protective action. It is programmed to stop conducting scientific missions, stays put and listens for communications at predetermined times.

More important to the average Mars enthusiast than this daily to-do list is the information travelling from Curiosity to Earth. Those dazzling photographs that the rover takes need a little help to get here.

"Curiosity's transmitter is about one foot [30 centimetres] in diameter and uses less power than the light bulb in your refrigerator," says Chad Edward, the chief telecommunications engineer for NASA's Mars Exploration Program.

To get its messages to Earth, Curiosity first sends information to a pair of orbiters, Odyssey and Reconnaissance, that were sent in 2001 and 2005, respectively, to analyse Mars from a distance and are constantly circling the planet. (The Mars Express orbiter, operated by the European Space Agency, is also available if necessary.) The antennae on the orbiters are more than 1300 times as powerful as the antenna on Curiosity. The rover waits for the orbiters to pass overhead to ship its messages, usually about 3pm and again at 3am.

"Some of the composite panoramas that the rover has sent to Earth comprise a few hundred megabits of data," says Edward. "Curiosity would take weeks to send that much data. Using the relays, we can have it in a day."

Since most of us live in a world where our laptops can lose WiFi signals if we walk out the front door and our cell phones drop calls if we stray too far from a tower, it may seem incredible that NASA can control a robot millions of kilometres (miles) away. Curiosity, however, is relatively close by space communications standards. Voyager 1 is the most distant human-made object in the universe. It's about three times the distance to Pluto, and, with some antennae upgraded in the 1980s, we're still able to receive information from the spacecraft.

Talk about roaming. Maybe NASA should take over telecommunications here on Earth. Just a thought. – *The Washington Post*

A 'stunning' start for Windows 8: Ballmer

SAN FRANCISCO – Microsoft chief executive Steve Ballmer said on October 30 the Windows 8 operating system was off to a "stunning" start with four million upgrades downloaded since its release on October 26.

"In just the last three days, we have sold four million Windows 8 upgrades," Ballmer said while kicking off a BUILD Conference for developers at the software giant's headquarters in Redmond, Washington.

"The level of embrace from enthusiasts is very, very high."

Analysts have depicted Windows 8 as a bold bet for Microsoft since it dramatically changed the long-familiar user interface to adapt to touch-screen mobile devices increasingly popular in modern lifestyles.

"The level of enthusiasm seen for the new products has really been stunning," Ballmer told the thousands of developers at the sold-out event.

Globally popular one-to-many text messaging service Twitter and online file sharing hit Dropbox are among applications being tailored to Windows 8, Ballmer told third-party software developers at the gathering.

Microsoft kicked off sales of its revamped Windows 8 system and Surface tablet on October 26 as it ramped up efforts to compete in a market shifting rapidly from PCs to mobile devices.

Microsoft on October 29 set out to win over iPhone and Android gadget devotees with Windows 8 smartphones, new devices that emphasise individualism and unify digital lives in the internet cloud.

The global rollout of Windows 8 phones, set to begin in Europe on November 3, is the final piece in a Microsoft operating system transformation aimed at harmonisng the technology titan's software and hardware for mobile lifestyles.

The operating system has a user interfaced based on "tiles" that can be personalised with people's pictures, applications, games, music and more. – *AFP*

On the line, for 259,132 years

TOKYO – Japanese mobile phone users made a quarter of a million years' worth of calls last year, the government said on October 31.

A total of 59.17 billion calls were made from cell phones in the 12 months to April 1, 2012, with conversations lasting 2.27 billion hours, a communications ministry official said. The figure is equivalent to 259,132 years.

The total number of hours of talking fell 1.8 percent from a year earlier, said a spokeswoman.

The ministry has carried out the survey every year since 1992 to help with decisions on infrastructure investment. – *AFP*

New York struggles back to life

NEW YORK – The toll of death and suffering from superstorm Sandy mounted on November 1 even as New York struggled back to life, with the first subway trains rolling in four days.

New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg said Sandy killed at least 37 people in the city. At least 88 people have now been reported dead across the 15 American states hit by the hurricane on the night of October 29.

Fuel shortages led to long lines of cars at filling stations in many states and the country faced a storm bill that some economists have estimated at US$50 billion.

With about 650,000 people still without power in New York, Bloomberg said the city would start handing out food and water and National Guard officers and police would go into high-rise buildings to help the elderly.

The Con-Edison power company said some New Yorkers would have to wait until November 11 before electricity is restored.

New Jersey suffered the most widespread destruction, with at least 12 people reported dead in the state and many isolated districts still being searched. Some 1.8 million people in New Jersey were without electricity three days after the storm.

Some heartbreaking stories have emerged from the storm.

Two brothers, aged two and four, were swept from their mother's arms in the floods as the family tried to escape the rising seas in Staten Island in the New York suburbs.

Others victims were electrocuted or drowned in flooded basements.

Hurricane Sandy brought devastation throughout the Caribbean before hitting the United States and Canada. The overall death is at least 160. – *AFP*

• **Earlier reports, P. 30.**

Giant pandas enjoy a snack at their new home in the Wolong National Nature Reserve in China's southwestern Sichuan province on October 30. They are among a first batch of 18 giant pandas to return to the newly rebuilt research centre in the reserve after it was damaged in the 2008 Sichuan earthquake. *Pic: AFP*

Briefly

BEIJING – The Chinese Communist Party's Central Committee convened behind closed doors on November 1 ahead of a landmark congress which will open on November 8 to usher in leaders for the next decade, with Vice President Xi Jinping expected to succeed outgoing President Hu Jintao.

DAMASCUS – Syria's main anti-regime group said on November 2 the US was undermining the country's revolt by seeking an opposition overhaul, as the UN accused rebels of possible war crimes over a video showing soldiers being executed.

LOS ANGELES – Two hapless immigrants tried to enter the United States by driving a car over the US-Mexico border fence on makeshift ramps but failed when the vehicle got stuck on top, the US Customs and Border Patrol agency said on November 1. – *AFP*

Obama, Romney race to finish

CLEVELAND, Ohio – President Barack Obama and Republican foe Mitt Romney spent a last frenzied weekend before the November 6 election chasing one another through the battleground states that will decide the outcome of a bitter, gruelling White House race.

Obama campaigned in Ohio, the possible tipping point state, before heading to Wisconsin and Iowa, his trio of "firewall" battlegrounds.

Romney, fresh from the biggest rally of his campaign, which drew around 18,000 people on a cold night in West Chester, Ohio, on November 2, campaigned in New Hampshire, Iowa and Colorado.

"We're almost home. One final push will get us there," Romney told the crowd. "We are so very, very close. The door to a brighter future is there, it's open, it's waiting for us."

Obama had earlier avoided a last-minute setback with the release of data showing that the economy generated more jobs than expected in October, delivering a boost to his re-election hopes.

After several weeks of polls suggesting a neck-and-neck race, there were new signs that Obama's position, as he seeks a second term, may be solidifying.

National polls of the popular vote mostly show a tied race or with either man up one point – but with time running out Obama's position in key battleground states seems to be holding.

The candidate who wins the White House will need to mass 270 electoral votes on the state-by-state map.

Obama, perhaps mindful of millions of Americans suffering from the lingering impact of the worst recession since the 1930s, avoided a triumphal tone on the jobs data that sent relief rippling through his campaign team.

"We have made real progress," Obama said on November 2 in Hilliard, on the first stop of a day-long swing through small towns in Ohio.

The release of the final major economic data before the election had worried Obama aides who feared that a leap in the rate above the psychological eight percent mark could have sent late-deciding voters to Romney.

But although the data was far from spectacular – with 171,000 jobs created last month – there was enough in the report, including upward revisions of previous monthly figures, for Obama to argue the economy was improving.

Romney highlighted the fact that, although the economy is creating jobs at a moderate pace, unemployment remains at historically high levels.

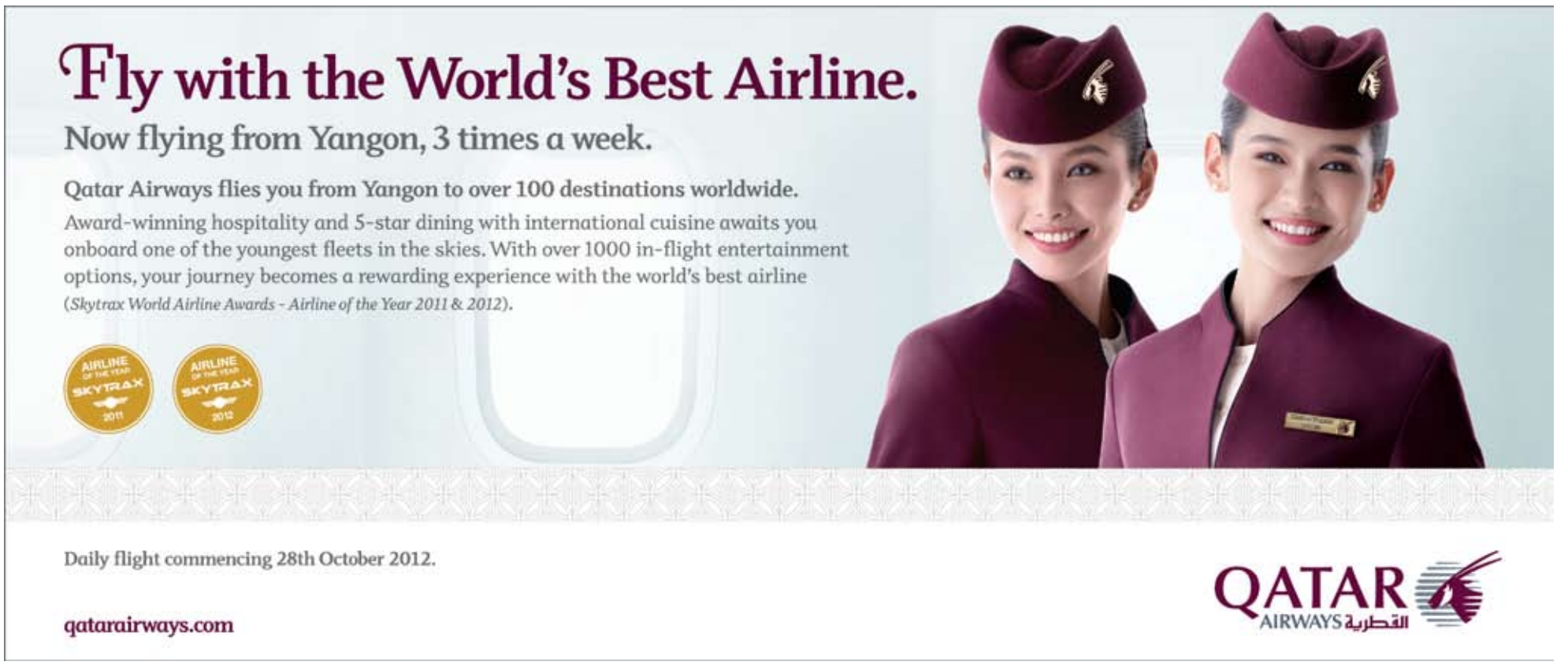
"For four years, President Obama's policies have crushed America's middle class," Romney said in a statement.

"When I'm president, I'm going to make real changes that lead to a real recovery, so that the next four years are better than the last," said Romney, who started his day in Wisconsin and ended it in Ohio.

Obama on November 2 repudiated Romney's claim to being an agent of change, accusing him instead of trying to "massage the facts," highlighting a Romney ad that claims that Chrysler plans to outsource jobs to China to produce its Jeep vehicles.

"I know we are close to an election, but this isn't a game. These are people's jobs. These are people's lives," Obama said, noting that auto bosses had directly contradicted Romney on the attack. – *AFP*

• **Earlier reports, P. 34, 35.**



The remains of New York's Breezy Point neighbourhood after it was devastated by a hellish combination of fire and water during superstorm Sandy. *Pic: AFP*

Sandy wreaks havoc from the Caribbean to Canada

NEW YORK – New York struggled to get back on its feet on October 30 after superstorm Sandy carved a path of destruction from the Caribbean to Canada that left at least 110 people dead and millions without power.

The cyclone drove hurricane-force winds and deadly ocean surges against a large swathe of the US East Coast, adding an uncertain twist to an already tight US presidential race.

President Barack Obama declared Sandy a "major disaster" in the states of New York and New Jersey, where he was to tour flooded areas on October 31.

Romney cancelled a second day of campaign events on October 30 to focus on rescue and recovery work, just one week before American voters go to the polls.

The death toll from accidents related to the storm rose to 43 confirmed in North America since Sandy made landfall on October 30. A total of 67 had already been killed as the then hurricane tore through the Caribbean.

Meanwhile, authorities and citizens in America's biggest city struggled to restore vital services and clear debris after a wall of storm-driven seawater swamped road and rail tunnels and triggered massive fires.

"Restoring power and mass transit remain the two biggest challenges in the days ahead," New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg told reporters, as rescue crews and utility workers surveyed an apocalyptic scene.

In the ocean-front Queens neighborhood of Breezy Point, more than 80 houses burned after flooding caused a fire, while lower Manhattan – New York's iconic high-rise financial centre –was blacked out by a massive power cut.

Bloomberg struck an upbeat stance: "We have a plan for recovery and that recovery is already beginning, I'm happy to say. This is the end of the downside, and hopefully from here it is going up."

Before things could improve, however, the New York subway system, much of which was flooded by seawater, will need to recover from what management dubbed its worst disaster in its 108-year history.

More than eight million homes and businesses from the Carolinas to Maine were without power on October 30, the Department of Energy said.

Insured losses from the massive superstorm Sandy could run between US$7 billion to US15 billion, showed initial industry estimates.

The destruction was not limited to New York. Cities up and down the Eastern Seaboard from Boston to Philadelphia to Washington were buffeted by storm-force winds and coastal communities suffered widespread flooding. – *AFP*

Hellish blizzard consumes NY neighbourhood

NEW YORK – Fire and water don't mix? Tell that to the shell-shocked residents of New York's Breezy Point, an entire neighbourhood wiped out in a hellish blizzard of fire and flood during superstorm Sandy.

On October 30, isolated outbreaks of orange flames still licked at the sprawling, blackened pile that was all that remained of one of Breezy Point's most beloved beachfront areas after the hurricane-strength storm.

More than 80 houses vanished in the blaze. Simultaneously, hundreds of others were left sodden and shaken by water.

No-one has been confirmed to have died in the district, but many residents compared the devastation to that of a battlefront.

Carol Anderson, whose nearby house escaped the fire but instead was hammered by flooding, even had trouble identifying where streets had been.

"This is Ocean Avenue," she said hesitatingly, picking her way over charred beams and under scorched, dangling telephone and electrical lines.

"What a disaster, it's like a warzone," said Anderson, 53.

It's not clear yet what ignited the fire in the middle of a storm that brought intense rain and an Atlantic surge pouring through the entire Breezy Point community.

Lifelong resident Rob Kirk, who installs fire sprinkler systems for a living, said houses in the tightly packed beach portion of the community were required to have walls able to contain fires for up to two hours.

But those building standards never took into account winds of up to 153 kilometres an hour (95 mph) an hour.

"When you basically have a blowtorch going, that two hours is out the window. It's more like five minutes," said Kirk, 55. His own house escaped the blaze by about three metres (10 feet), but was badly damaged by flooding.

Nearly every street in Breezy Point, which has a year-round population of just under 5000, remained underwater hours after Sandy had passed.

Dan O'Leary, 62, said Breezy Point regulars respect the power of the sea and sky. But he'd never imagined seeing such destruction.

"You live by the sea. You expect water, you can live with that. But not fire," he said. "This is a close community. It makes you want to cry."

Kirk surveyed the smoking remnants of his neighbors' houses and recalled his father telling him that to live on Breezy Point, so close to nature, carried risk.

"It's the price you pay for living on the water," he said. "What God gave you, God can take away."

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Briefs

Benghazi mission 'a CIA operation'

WASHINGTON – The US mission in Benghazi that came under attack by militants on September 11 was mainly a secret CIA operation, the *Wall Street Journal* reported on November 2.

The Obama's administration has faced questions about why there was not more security at the US consulate where four Americans, including ambassador Chris Stevens, were killed on September 11.

The *Journal* also said that of the 30 American officials evacuated from Benghazi after the assault, just seven worked for the State Department.

17-year sentence for model plane plot

BOSTON – An American supporter of al-Qaeda was sentenced on November 1 to 17 years in prison for plotting to bomb the Pentagon and US Capitol using remote-controlled model planes laden with explosives.

Rezwan Ferdaus pleaded guilty in July to the scheme. His 17-year prison term will be followed by 10 years of supervised release, a Justice Department statement said.

Ferdaus, 27, was arrested in September 2011 as part of an undercover operation in which FBI agents posed as members of al-Qaeda.

Israel admits killing Abu Jihad

JERUSALEM – Israel has for the first time admitted assassinating the PLO's former number two, Abu Jihad, in a raid on the movement's Tunis headquarters in 1988, a newspaper reported on November 1.

Israel's top-selling *Yediot Aharonot* said the operation was planned by the Mossad spy agency and carried out by the Sayeret Matkal elite commando unit.

Abu Jihad, whose real name was Khalil al-Wazir, was shot dead in the early hours of April 16, 1988 in a commando raid on the PLO headquarters by what was presumed to be Israeli agents.

Ministry defends $16,000 snake bill

LONDON – Britain's foreign ministry has defended a £10,000 (US$16,000) bill to re-stuff a giant anaconda named Albert.

The 20-foot (six-metre) snake is believed to have been presented to colonial officials in what is now Guyana in the 19th century.

A ministry spokesman said that as Albert was a gift, he was regarded as a government asset, which the Foreign Office was obliged to maintain and the work on the snake was "essential maintenance." – *AFP*

Libyan assembly backs cabinet

TRIPOLI – Libya's national assembly gave its approval on October 31 to a cabinet presented by prime minister designate Ali Zeidan weeks after rejecting his predecessor's line-up.

But in a sign of the fragility of the country's transition to democracy a year after the overthrow of veteran dictator Moamer Kadhafi, protests erupted around the assembly building for a second day in a row.

Zeidan, the second premier designate to try to form a government since the assembly was elected in July, had presented a 30-member line-up including both liberals and Islamists.

"The General National Congress gives its confidence to the government of Ali Zeidan," the official *LANA* news agency reported.

A total of 105 members voted in favour, 18 abstained and nine voted against.

Protests erupted outside the assembly moments after the vote, witnesses said.

Security forces fired in the air as they struggled to prevent a repetition of chaotic scenes the previous evening when demonstrators broke into the chamber derailing a first attempt at a vote.

More than a dozen security vehicles were stationed at the assembly building and a throng of about 60 people had gathered outside the main gate which was shut tight, an *AFP* photographer reported.

"The blood of our martyrs was not spilled in vain," chanted some, while others said they had come to air their objections to some of the ministers.

There were no visible efforts to negotiate with the crowd but a security source contacted inside the building said the situation was "under control" and that assembly members had managed to leave the building after the session.

Zeidan was elected on October 14 after his predecessor, Mustafa Abu Shagur, was dismissed in a vote of no confidence as the assembly rejected his proposed line-up as unrepresentative of Libya's many factions.

Zeidan, a long-time Kadhafi opponent, needed the assembly's approval for his cabinet line-up so that he can assume office replacing Abdel Rahim al-Kib, who has served as prime minister since November last year.

No date has yet been set for his formal swearing-in.

Assembly members can still put forward objections to individual cabinet nominees and the suitability of several has already been called into question, assembly sources said.

Zeidan's program puts heavy emphasis on reforming the army and police, which remain heavily dependent on the myriad of former rebel militias that have yet to be brought under unified command since last year's uprising.

The militias are particularly powerful in second city Benghazi, cradle of the rebellion, where jihadist sympathisers stormed the US consulate on September 11, killing ambassador Chris Stevens and three other Americans.

Zeidan won his post thanks in large part to the backing of the liberal National Forces Alliance, the biggest party in the assembly, but he said on October 30 that he had reached out to all the main political factions in forming his government.

He said that he had decided to put independents in charge of key ministries such as foreign affairs, international cooperation, finance, justice, interior and defence.

Among his nominees are former fighter pilot Mohammed al-Barghathi as defence minister and Ashur Shwayel as interior minister. Both are natives of Benghazi. Zeidan named Ali Aujli, Libya's ambassador to the United States, as foreign minister and Abdelbari al-Arussi, a native of the western town of Zawiyah, to head the strategic oil ministry.

The chief task of the new government is organising fresh elections within 12 months on the basis of a new constitution, which has yet to be drafted. – *AFP*

Zimbabwean First Lady Grace Mugabe listens in Harare on October 30 as her husband, President Robert Mugabe, officially opens the last session of parliament ahead of elections next March. The elections are expected to end an uneasy coalition government formed in 2009 between Mugabe and Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai. *Pic: AFP*

Rhinoceros toll soars in South Africa

JOHANNESBURG – More than 30 rhinos have been killed in South Africa in the two weeks to October 30, taking to 488 the toll of the pachyderms slaughtered this year, the government said.

"A total of 488 rhinos have been lost to illegal killings since the beginning of this year," said a government statement on October 30, up from 455 reported killed on October 16.

The 33 "were killed over the past two weeks," environmental affairs spokesman Albi Modise told *AFP*.

South Africa is home to the world's largest rhino population, with more than 18,000 white rhino and about 1600 critically endangered black rhino.

Last year, a total of 448 rhinos were poached, up from 333 in 2010 and just 13 in 2007

Most of the rhinos are killed in the world-famous Kruger National Park and their horns turn up on the black market in Vietnam, China and other east Asian nations where they are literally worth their weight in gold. – *AFP*

Iran averted showdown: Barak

LONDON – Iran averted a showdown over its nuclear program by putting a third of its medium-enriched uranium to civilian use, Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak said on October 30.

The decision put back any immediate plans Iran had for acquiring a nuclear bomb, but Barak told the *Daily Telegraph* the "moment of truth" had only been delayed by "eight to 10 months".

Barak said that Tehran had amassed 189 kilograms (417 pounds) of 20-percent pure uranium – a key step in the development of weapons-grade material – but that 38pc of this was converted into fuel rods for a civilian research reactor.

In comments published on the *Telegraph*'s website, Barak argued there were three possible reasons for this.

"One is the public discourse about a possible Israeli or American operation deterred them from trying to come closer," he said.

"It could probably be a diplomatic gambit that they have launched in order to avoid this issue culminating before the American election, just to gain some time.

"It could be a way of telling the International Atomic Energy Agency 'oh we comply with our commitments'," he added.

Several rounds of negotiations between world powers and Tehran have failed to produce much progress on increasing the transparency of Tehran's nuclear program, which the West suspects is a front for developing nuclear weapons.

Tehran denies the charge and insists it has a right to enrich uranium – despite four rounds of UN sanctions over its refusal to cooperate with nuclear agency inspectors.

Barak said he doubted that sanctions and diplomacy would resolve the crisis and predicted Israel would probably face a decision over whether to launch strikes in 2013.

He insisted that Israel had the right to act alone and that a preemptive strike would be less risky than waiting until Iran had acquired a nuclear weapon. – *AFP*

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Dated: 5th November, 2012

World-first operation gives Australian boy new hope

MELBOURNE – Australian doctors last week hailed what they described as a world-first surgical treatment for a boy suffering from a rare disease that sends his blood pressure soaring and triggered a stroke.

Matthew Gaythorpe, 10, has suffered severe hypertension his entire life due to a combination of kidney and liver conditions called autosomal recessive polycystic kidney disease and congenital hepatic fibrosis.

He had a minor stroke last year and has lived with seizures and extreme fatigue requiring him to take about 30 medications a day. He was also diagnosed, at age four, with the chronic sleep disorder narcolepsy.

Matthew was facing the prospect of daily dialysis, a dual kidney-liver transplant and even another stroke until his doctor was granted special permission to try a highly experimental operation with a custom-made device.

The custom-made renal denervation device that was implanted into Matthew Gaythorpe, 10, by surgeons from the Monash Heart Institute in Melbourne. *Pic: AFP/ Monash Heart Institute*

"Using innovative radio frequency technology, we were able to effectively zap some of the nerves and tissue surrounding Matthew's renal arteries," surgeon Ian Meredith from the Monash Heart Institute, said on November 1.

"This has resulted in a noticeable reduction in Matthew's symptoms and blood pressure."

Meredith's plea to be allowed to try the renal denervation procedure – never before performed on a child and still experimental with adults – went before three separate ethics panels before it was approved.

"We didn't know whether it was going to work in a child, whether it was appropriate to do in a child and whether it should be done in a person with such a complex set of illnesses," the surgeon said.

"But on balance we collectively as a team came together and felt on compassionate grounds it would be a good thing to do."

The instrument used, a small balloon with electrodes on its surface, had to be specially designed for keyhole insertion into Matthew's tiny arteries by an American firm.

Meredith said the "ingenious" device worked by targeting faulty nerves to the kidneys, which are critical in blood pressure control.

Five weeks on Matthew's mother, Alex Gaythorpe, said the results had been incredible, with a noticeable improvement in her son's behaviour which she described as more calm and focused, as well as a significant drop in his blood pressure.

"He has begun reading novels again," she said.

"It may seem trivial but (it's) something he hasn't been able to do for a while. He is also focusing more at school."

Gaythorpe said her son "was often referred to as a puzzle with pieces that didn't quite fit" but the surgery had given him a new lease on life, also putting off the prospect of transplants and dialysis.

"Avoiding that for as long as possible is a bonus. We now have hope," she said.

– AFP

'Halloween horror' vote hands Cameron a defeat

LONDON – British Prime Minister David Cameron was battling to reclaim authority on November 1, after rebels in his Conservative party delivered his first major parliamentary defeat by defying him over the EU budget.

Lawmakers passed a motion late the previous day urging Cameron to insist on a real-terms cut in the European Union's trillion-euro 2014-2020 budget at a summit in Brussels next month.

While the vote is not binding, it is the most significant defeat for the Conservative-led coalition since it came to power in 2010.

Cameron had tried to stave off a rebellion by promising to veto any above-inflation increase of the EU budget, which has become increasingly contentious as austerity measures bite across the continent.

He insists that a seven-year EU budget freeze in real terms is the best Britain can realistically expect next month, as most of the bloc's 27 member states support a budget increase.

But in a humiliating blow to his authority, 53 Conservative lawmakers defied the prime minister and voted for a budget cut.

After heated debate in the House of Commons, the vote passed by 307 votes to 294, to loud cheers from the rebels.

The *Telegraph* newspaper described the defeat as a "Halloween horror" for Cameron, while the *i* newspaper summed the situation up as: "Nightmare on Downing Street".

Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg, leader of the Conservatives' junior coalition partners, the Liberal Democrats, said there was "absolutely no hope" of a real-terms cut in EU spending.

"The Prime Minister and I may have our differences on Europe, but on this we are absolutely united," said Clegg, a former Member of the European Parliament whose centrist party is more pro-EU than the Conservatives.

But ministers face a battle to get any EU budget deal approved by parliament. Mark Reckless, a leading Conservative rebel, said Cameron could not afford to return from Brussels with anything less than a real-terms budget cut.

The European Commission, the EU's executive arm, wants a budget of 1.03 trillion euros (US$1.33 trillion) for 2014-2020, up 5.0 percent on 2007-2013, but seven major contributor states have baulked at the increase at a time when they are having to cut spending at home.

The parliamentary revolt puts renewed pressure on Cameron after months of blunders and U-turns by the coalition, which is halfway through its five-year term, and whisperings of a possible leadership challenge.

He is not the first Conservative premier to be haunted by Europe, an issue that has bitterly divided the party for decades. *– AFP*

An African asylum seeker on a Spanish rescue boat at Tarifa, southern Spain, on October 30 after being rescued from an overloaded boat. At least 16 boat-people from Africa drowned off Spain late last month amid an increase in attempts to reach Europe on sub-standard vessels. *Pic: AFP*

Kalashnikov appeals to save factory

MOSCOW – Mikhail Kalashnikov, the Russian who designed the AK-47 assault rifle, on October 30 called on President Vladimir Putin to halt the decline at the legendary factory where he invented the weapon.

Kalashnikov, 92, and 16 colleagues said in an open letter addressed to Putin that production had fallen to a record low at the Izmash motor and weaponry factory in Izhevsk, the main city in the central Russian region of Udmurtia.

"In the name of the veterans who have spent most of their lives working at Izmash, we ask you to save our factory," the letter said.

Izmash, which dates to 1807, is still one of the main producers of Russian weapons including the famed AK-47 (also known as Kalashnikov) and its derivatives.

However like several other specialised Russian industrial enterprises, it has been hit by the drying up of domestic demand after the collapse of the Soviet Union and failure to make up for this with foreign orders. *– AFP*

Berlusconi's party loses in regional stronghold

ROME – Italy's major parties were in disarray last week after an anti-establishment party headed by comic Beppe Grillo made major gains in a regional election in Sicily.

The election on October 28 saw Grillo's Five Star Movement pick up votes at the expense of the centre-right party of former prime minister Silvio Berlusconi, which lost its key stronghold in Sicily to the centre-left.

The result also saw a drop in support for the centre-left Democratic Party (PD) despite its victory.

With only 48 percent of Sicilians turning up to vote, victory went to centre-left anti-Mafia candidate Rosario Crocetta with about 30pc, ahead of the candidate of Berlusconi's People of Freedom Party (PDL) with 26pc. The Five Star Movement cruised to third place on a tide of support from the disillusioned youth in Sicily.

"The Grillo vote is a protest vote, a warning to the traditional political class. His model is also a winning model," said Mario Centorrino, political science professor at the University of Messina in Sicily.

Massimo Franco, a columnist with leading newspaper *Corriere della Sera*, said the result revealed "the chasm left by the sad end of Silvio Berlusconi and his power system, which translates into abstention, fragmentation and populism". *– AFP*

Ukraine poll 'a step backwards': Clinton

KIEV – US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on October 30 accused Ukraine of taking a step backwards in legislative elections won by the ruling party but which the opposition claimed were unfair and fraudulent.

Jailed former prime minister and opposition leader Yulia Tymoshenko said she was going on hunger strike to protest the results but the prisons service vowed to force feed her if necessary.

Observers from the OSCE had already expressed disappointment over the conduct of the polls, which risk further isolating President Viktor Yanukovych who is already largely shunned by the West over Tymoshenko's imprisonment.

On a visit to Bosnia-Hercegovina, Clinton called the elections "a step backwards" and urged "the Ukrainian leadership (to) stop the backward slide".

Yanukovych's Regions Party was set to win the polls against Tymoshenko's opposition bloc and the UDAR (Punch) group of boxer Vitali Klitschko.

Results based on 93.8 percent of the precincts reporting showed the Regions Party collecting 30.9pc of the ballot and Tymoshenko's alliance registering 24.9pc.

'...it is a crime, a bacchanalia of banditry.'

UDAR moved into third place on 13.7pc, just ahead of the Communist Party on 13.5pc. The nationalist Svoboda (Freedom) group, loosely allied with Tymoshenko, would also make it into the chamber with 10.5pc.

The final composition of the 450-seat Verkhovna Rada will be determined half by the proportional vote and half by first-past-the-post results in single mandate constituencies where the Regions Party has polled well.

In the single mandate count, the Regions Party was set to win seats for 117 constituencies, the Tymoshenko bloc 43 seats, Svoboda 10 and UDAR five.

The other seats are set to go to marginal parties and independents, many of whom analysts believe will turn out to be loyal to the Regions Party and give it an overall majority in the new parliament.

Prime Minister Mykola Azarov told reporters: "This means that the Regions Party has scored a resounding victory."

Nevertheless, the entry of Svoboda into the parliament and the prospect of a relatively thin majority are expected to give the Regions Party a rough ride at a time when it is accused of creeping authoritarianism.

Tymoshenko's allies said the slowness of the count raised suspicions and predicted that mass protests could follow.

"What has happened over the last day cannot even be called falsification, it is a crime, a bacchanalia of banditry," said leading pro-Tymoshenko MP Sergiy Pashynsky.

The Ukrainian foreign ministry issued a moderate response to the tough international reaction, promising to "carefully analyse" the observers' criticisms and "improve the election legislation and practice". *– AFP*

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Obama: Challenging history again

WASHINGTON – Whenever his presidency ends, Barack Obama's legacy will be historic: posterity will know him as the first black president of a nation scarred at birth by a deep racial fault line.

But for Obama partisans, the hope of re-election lies in the idea that only with a full eight White House years, will he be remembered for the change he wrought, not just for who he was.

Though it was key to euphoria that greeted his election in 2008, Obama's race has rarely been a dominant political theme since.

Quickly, the same political dynamics faced by many of his predecessors: divided, vicious, partisan politics threatened to swamp the 44th US president.

All presidents crave the validation of a second term, but for Obama, that desire may be even more keen, as his Republican foe Mitt Romney vows to quickly reverse much of his legacy.

Obama's whole political project, the idea that America is not as divided as it seems, that a grass roots movement can change a nation from the bottom up, and that hope has tangible political power, is on the line.

"Our destiny is not written for us; it's written by us," Obama told a crowd in New Hampshire on October 27, seeking to revive the sense of possibility that powered his first election win, but has since dissolved.

"We look forward to that distant horizon, to that new frontier. We imagine a better America and then we work hard to make it happen."

Should Obama win on November 6, much of his second term will be devoted to cementing the legacy of his first.

He will enshrine his health care reform – the most sweeping social legislation for 50 years, which Romney promises to end on his first day in the Oval Office – deep into American life.

Obama the president emerged as an elusive figure, of many contradictions.

Obama may get several more chances to reshape the Supreme Court for a generation, after adding two women, including the first Hispanic justice in his first term.

And the president, 51, will solidify reforms on gay rights, women's rights, student loans and financial reform and may tackle global warming and immigration reform.

Obama, now a graying, sometimes terse and wizened figure is a changed man from the beaming young dreamer who bounced onstage in early 2007, on a bitterly chill day in Illinois and announced for president.

Rocketing from political obscurity, Obama, only a senator for two years, promised to use "the power of hope" to transform a nation – a message he belted out to massive 2008 crowds, often moving his audience to tears.

He invoked a politics where people could "disagree without being disagreeable."

But the hope and optimism of his win over Republican John McCain barely survived the first contact with polarised Washington politics.

Obama the president emerged as an elusive figure, of many contradictions.

A Nobel Peace laureate who got US troops out of Iraq, Obama ruthlessly applies lethal force, in a drone war and the mission to kill Osama bin Laden.

Candidate Obama chided political leaders who feuded over "small things" yet lambasts his 2012 foe for a flip flopping condition he calls "Romnesia."

Obama inspired a generation into politics for the first time: but once president, appeared to disdain the grubby business of getting things done in Washington.

He was devoted to the grand gesture on the world stage – for example his speech to the Muslim world in Cairo in 2009 – but despite some success, his presidency hardly transformed America's place in the world.

And the hope that exploded in 2008, soon fizzled.

Four years on, Obama is locked in a grim grind to the finish with the joy of four years ago but a memory.

Some things have not changed. Obama retains the burning self confidence – foes call it arrogance – and a fierce will to win.

In its way, victory on November 6 would have its own historic sweetness, should Obama defy economic blight that made other presidents one termers.

Busting convention is written in Obama's political DNA – not for him a political apprenticeship in the Senate: he left to slay the mighty Hillary Clinton machine in the 2008 Democratic primary.

Matching dazzling oratory with a formidable grass roots network, Obama, along with cerebral aides like David Plouffe, re-invented how US elections are won in 2008.

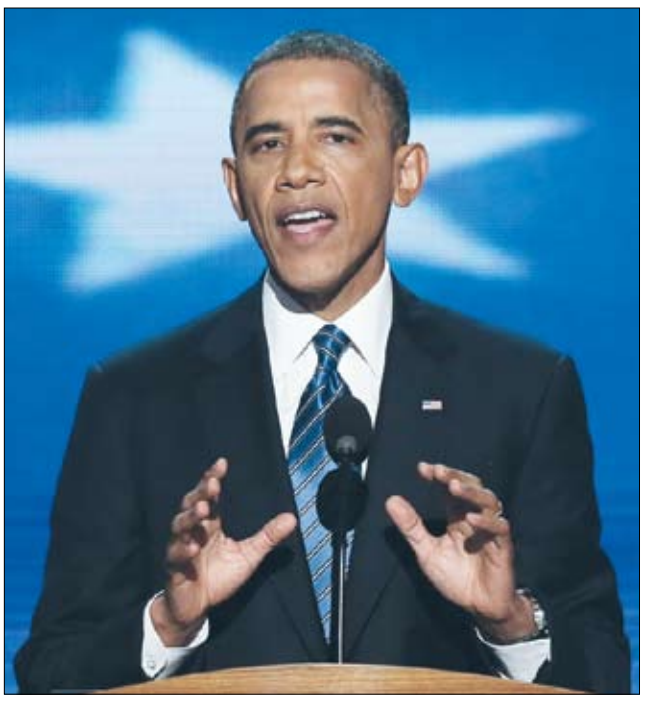
His massive operation will redefine re-election races if he wins this week.

Obama, despite the claims of conservative conspiracy theorists, was born in Hawaii in 1961 to a black Kenyan father and white mother from Kansas. His father abandoned the family when "Barry" Obama was just two.

His mother Ann, an anthropologist who died in 1995, took her son with his new stepfather to Indonesia and he returned to live with his grandparents in Hawaii in his restless teens.

After attending an elite Hawaii academy and two colleges including Columbia University in New York, Obama went to the elite Harvard Law School and was the first African-American to edit the Harvard Law Review.

Married in 1992 to Michelle, a fellow lawyer, Obama rose through bare-knuckle world of Illinois politics then announced himself to the world at the 2004 Democratic convention. – *AFP*



Barack Obama accepts the nomination for president on the last day of the Democratic National Convention in Charlotte, North Carolina, on September 6. *Pic: AFP*

The man who would be president

WASHINGTON – Mitt Romney has been a shrewd businessman, a skilled governor and an Olympic turnaround master, but his main job over the past six years, more than any other American, has been running for president.

After a failed first bid in 2008, a shift toward more conservative positions, victory in this year's Republican primaries and then a tack back to the centre, Romney can finally see the ultimate prize within his grasp.

With just days before the biggest night of his political life, Romney is in a dead heat with President Barack Obama.

Should he win, he would make history as America's first Mormon president.

A loss would likely end to a political career that began with a failed 1994 Senate run but saw Romney go on to become the governor of Massachusetts and eventually the flagbearer of his Republican Party.

The management skills and determination that made him so effective in business as he amassed a huge fortune and saved the Salt Lake City Olympics from ruin are fine White House credentials.

But Romney, 65, has struggled to counter the image that congealed in the primaries battle and beyond – that of a policy flip-flopper with awkward social skills, a Mormon faith that he is reluctant to discuss and questionable concern for America's struggling lower classes.

Is he a cut-throat venture capitalist or a skilled manager with the business acumen to turn around the American economy? A cunning political chameleon or a constantly recalculating fake with secret liberal leanings?

Romney is a difficult character to pin down and staunch conservatives harbour concerns that he really shares their views on sensitive issues such as gay marriage and abortion.

Throughout the roller-coaster primaries, rivals struggled to land telling blows on the former Boston venture capitalist who managed to stay above the fray while giving off the air of an inevitable nominee.

Despite lingering doubts, he handily won the nod of his party as the candidate with the best chance of beating Obama.

Early in the campaign the multimillionaire businessman demonstrated a tin ear with a string of wealth-related gaffes – including challenging Republican Texas Governor Rick Perry to a $10,000 bet during a debate – that made it all too easy for opponents to portray him as out of touch with ordinary Americans.

Romney's image received a carefully scripted makeover at the convention in Tampa, Florida, as he tried to close the yawning likability gap between himself and Obama.

Wife Ann invoked their love story as high school sweethearts to show the human side of a man whose ram-rod straight bearing is lampooned as too stiff and whose hair is clearly too perfect.

Romney has struggled to counter the image of a policy flip-flopper with awkward social skills.

The couple's squeaky-clean and loving family life – they have been married 43 years and have five sons and 19 grandchildren – is a clear vote-winner.

Mitt was born into wealth and privilege in Detroit in 1947, the son of George Romney, who served as Michigan governor and chairman of American Motors.

George Romney tried and failed in his own presidential bid, briefly emerging as a top contender for the 1968 Republican nomination before losing to Richard Nixon.

His son was often at his side while campaigning for the governorship, but for two years his Mormon faith took Mitt to France as a religious missionary.

It was there in 1968 that tragedy struck. Romney had been driving members of the Mormon church when another car slammed into their Citroen. A passenger in Romney's car was killed, and Romney himself nearly died.

But he recovered and returned to the United States and to Ann, whom he married months later.

As a rising star with a Harvard degree in law and business, he joined Bain & Company in 1977, where he so impressed the chief executive that in 1984 he was entrusted to head the new venture capital arm, Bain Capital.

Romney ran the firm for 15 years, earning spectacular wealth and laying the groundwork for a political career that from the beginning seemed geared toward the national stage.

During his 2003-2007 governorship of Massachusetts, he built a reputation as a moderate deal-maker and he allied with Democratic state lawmakers to implement the nation's first universal healthcare program.

After losing the 2008 nomination to Senator John McCain, he has subsequently distanced himself from his crowning gubernatorial achievement as the program served as a model for the nationwide plan created by Obama in 2010, which most Republicans despise.

This fits seamlessly into the narrative perpetuated by White House attack ads – that Romney has undertaken a wholesale reversal of many positions for political gain.

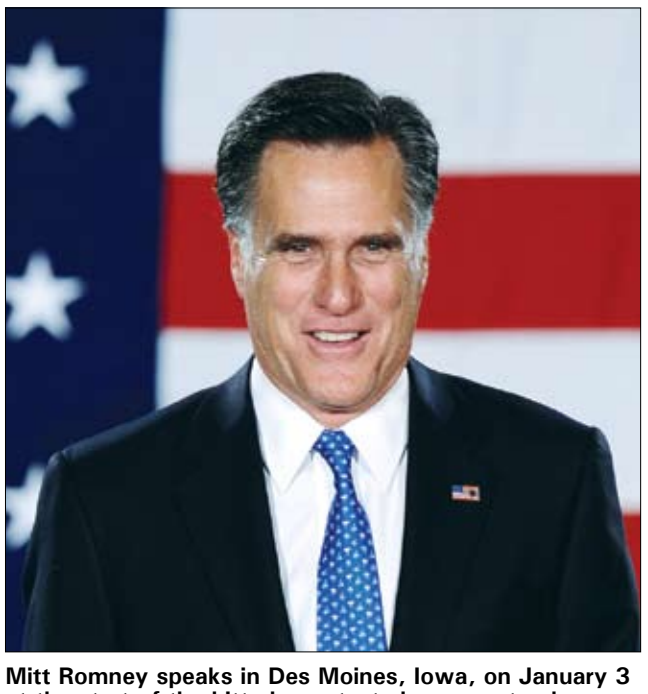
Initially "pro-choice," Romney switched to become anti-abortion after being elected governor. He made a similar about-face on gay rights.

He raised eyebrows among conservatives when he said in early October that he could not foresee supporting any new law restricting women's rights to abortion, but rowed back the next day, pledging to be a "pro-life president."

Romney faced opprobrium for comments that surfaced in August in a video that showed him disparaging "47 percent" of voters as government-beholden victims.

The remarks threatened to do him in, until his command performance in his first debate with a lacklustre Obama, in early October.

He came out of the showdown a clear winner, and polls soon show him running neck-and-neck with the incumbent. – *AFP*



Mitt Romney speaks in Des Moines, Iowa, on January 3 at the start of the bitterly contested process to choose a Republican presidential candidate. *Pic: AFP*

270 votes to win in the quirky White House race

WASHINGTON – In a quirk of the US system, American voters do not directly elect their presidents and vice presidents. Technically speaking, they pick "electors" in an Electoral College.

Here is how this unique system, laid out by the country's founding fathers, works:

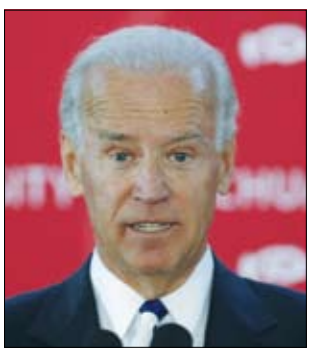
- A total of 538 Electoral College votes are distributed among the 50 states and the District of Columbia (the nation's capital, Washington DC).
- Presidential hopefuls must win 270 Electoral College votes or more to be elected.
- In the event of a tie, in which each candidate wins 269 electoral votes, the House of Representatives, currently dominated by the Republicans, would be called on to choose the president.
- Each state, and DC, has a minimum of three Electoral College votes, but those with the largest populations have the most.
- California has 55 Electoral College votes, Texas 38, and New York and Florida 29, making them the largest states up for grabs.
- Almost 40 states are seen as shoo-ins for either the Democrats or the Republicans.
- This means the battleground is across a clutch of swing states, with varying numbers of Electoral College votes on offer.
- Florida is the largest swing state in terms of Electoral College votes. Then comes Ohio with 18, North Carolina with 15 and Virginia with 13.
- The candidate who wins the popular vote in each state wins all its Electoral College votes, except in Maine and Nebraska, which use a tiered system.
- The political parties (or independent candidates) in each state submit to the state's chief election official a list of individuals pledged to their candidate for president and equal in number to the state's electoral vote.
- Democrats and Republicans select these individuals either in state party conventions or through appointment by state party leaders, while third parties and independent candidates designate theirs.
- The electors, as they are known, will meet in their state assemblies on December 17, 2012 to formally elect the next president and vice president of the United States.

Critics say the Electoral College does not always reflect the national will. In 2000, Democrat Al Gore won the national popular vote, but Republican George W. Bush won 271 Electoral College votes when he was deemed to have taken Florida.

Supporters argue that changing the system to a direct vote for the president would concentrate too much power in the hands of urban populations to the detriment of rural, more sparsely populated states.

– AFP

Biden: A wealth of experience



Joe Biden addresses students at Sichuan University in Chengdu, during a visit to China in August 2011. *Pic: AFP*

WASHINGTON – When Vice President Joe Biden accompanied Barack Obama into the White House in 2008, he brought with him a wealth of experience from Capitol Hill and the world stage.

Biden, 69, who is known as much for his personal warmth as for his memorable public gaffes, spent 36 years in the Senate, representing the state of Delaware, before Obama made him vice president.

In more than three decades in office, he was only absent from the Senate – where he chaired the foreign relations committee – for seven months in 1988 when he was hospitalised due to illness.

Having once referred to his predecessor Dick Cheney as the most dangerous vice president in US history, Biden maintained his role at the White House should be defined by strict constitutional limits.

He has not been an echo chamber for the president, however. The two differed over Afghanistan at the front end of Obama's first term, with Biden opposing a 30,000-troop "surge" in American boots on the ground.

Four years on, Obama ordered the withdrawal of just as many troops, but his vice president was not gloating.

He plunged into the re-election campaign with gusto, clashing head-on with Mitt Romney's running mate candidate Paul Ryan in an October 11 debate in which he helped stall the Republican momentum following Obama's dismal own first debate performance.

Biden grew up in an Irish-Catholic family in the rust belt town of Scranton, Pennsylvania, and studied at the University of Delaware and the Syracuse University law school.

In the 2008 campaign, his down-to-earth style and appeal to traditional grassroots Democrats gave him an edge in connecting with working-class voters who were initially wary of Obama.

The young Biden moved to Delaware at age 10 when his father relocated in search of employment. In adulthood he developed a natty dress style and dazzling high-definition smile, but as a child in Scranton he sometimes had to walk barefoot as his family struggled to make ends meet.

He was first elected to the Senate in 1972, when he was aged 29. Soon after, he lost his wife and baby daughter in a Yuletide car crash that also left his two young sons badly injured.

Biden took his Senate oath of office at the boys' hospital bedside. For many years he commuted daily to Washington from Delaware so he could be home each night with them and, from 1977, his second wife Jill.

He was first elected to the Senate in 1972, when he was aged 29

As chairman of the Senate foreign relations committee, Biden met many of the leading actors on the world stage and was an outspoken critic of then-president George W. Bush's foreign policy.

Unlike Obama, Biden was initially in favour of the Iraq invasion in 2003, but he was later critical of how the conflict was handled after Saddam Hussein was toppled.

His detractors in the Republican party also say that Biden was against the first Gulf War in 1991, and that in 2006 he suggested partitioning Iraq between its Shiite, Sunni and Kurdish regions. But as senator, Biden was among the first to call former Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic a war criminal, and to urge the shutdown of the Guantanamo Bay detention centre for terrorism suspects. *– AFP*

Ryan: Intense, driven crusader

Paul Ryan on the campaign trail, in Waukesha, Wisconsin, on August 12. *Pic: AFP*

WASHINGTON – People in Washington know Paul Ryan as a number-crunching budget hawk who has been leading a ruthless crusade in Congress to rein in government spending and slash the deficit.

They are less familiar with the other Paul Ryan: the Irish-Catholic backwoods boy from Janesville, Wisconsin who hunts with a bow and whose favorite pastime is "noodling" – hunting catfish with his bare hands.

Ryan, 42, was tapped in August to be former Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney's running mate in the Republican bid to unseat President Barack Obama and reclaim the White House.

Despite working for most of his adult life in the US capital, Ryan played up his country boy appeal at a Wisconsin homecoming rally after well-to-do Romney selected him for the ticket.

"My veins run with cheese, bratwurst, a little Spotted Cow, Leinie's and some Miller," he said, rattling off the names of favourite local beers.

Ryan is a fifth generation resident of Janesville, and while he comes from a prominent family that has run a construction company for decades, he has lived there all his life and continues to live on the street where he grew up.

Since his nomination, the Romney campaign has played up Ryan's blue-collar Midwestern outdoorsman roots and his hard-scrabble childhood scarred by the death of his father when he was aged 16.

But there's a side of Ryan that few Americans have known – assuming they knew much at all about the intense, policy-wonk lawmaker.

He also is an avid fitness devotee, and has led a class of like-minded exercise buffs in a gruelling workout in Congress where he chairs the House of Representatives budget committee.

In Washington, Ryan has come to be known for his proposal to overhaul the federal budget. Critics allege it would decimate social welfare programs, especially Medicare health coverage for the elderly.

As a sign of just how devoted he is to thrift, Ryan is said to sleep on a couch in his congressional office, rather than renting a Washington house or apartment as do most lawmakers.

The death of Ryan's father turned the then-teenager into an introspective, serious student who held odd jobs, joined the Latin and history clubs in school and became versed in supply-side economics.

Libertarian icon Ayn Rand was one of his biggest inspirations.

He pored over books by libertarian icon Ayn Rand, who was one of his biggest inspirations, but has distanced himself more recently from her writings in light of how the late author was a convinced atheist.

In the 1990s, Ryan's pluck, determination and understanding of economic issues helped him ascend the Washington power ladder.

He moved quickly from lowly staffer jobs to speech writer for revered Republican Jack Kemp – himself a vice presidential hopeful in 1996 – and then became an aide to senator Sam Brownback.

In 1998, at 28, he was elected to Congress, and again rose quickly through the ranks. By 2004 he set about trying to privatise Social Security, the government safety net for retirees. While his bid stalled, it presaged the caustic debates over entitlement programs that were to follow. *– AFP*

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5th November 2012 ***utm@kcyangon.com***

The slum next door to stylish Gangnam

SEOUL – Shadowed by the high-rises of Seoul's wealthiest Gangnam district, Kim Bok-Ja, 75, pulls her trolley of folded cardboard through a shanty town that sits uncomfortably in one of Asia's most developed cities.

At a local recycling yard, Kim smiles thinly as she counts out the meagre cash return she gets for the load of boxes and packaging she spent all day collecting.

"This is all I can do to survive, probably up until I die, because I live alone with no proper income," she said.

Kim's home is Guryong – a squalid, sprawling slum of plywood and tarpaulin shacks settled in 1988 by squatters evicted from other areas in a push to beautify Seoul as it prepared to host the Olympic Games.

Nearly 25 years later, Guryong (which translates as "Nine Dragons") has more than 2000 residents scrabbling out a subsistence living with Third World poverty levels and little or no proper sanitation.

Highrise buildings tower in the background over Guryong, a shanty town near Seoul's wealthiest district, Gangnam. Guryong was settled in 1988 by squatters evicted from other others from the Seoul Korean capital as it prepared to host the Olympic Games. *Pic: AFP*

It's about as far removed as possible from the opulent, glitzy world of neighbouring Gangnam – an upscale district of luxury boutiques and night clubs made famous by South Korean rapper Psy's global hit, "Gangnam Style".

Taxi drivers have difficulty finding Guryong, although it is only separated from Gangnam by a six-lane highway and covers an area of 30 hectares (70 acres).

"Our village is Seoul's biggest slum settlement but it will not appear on any maps," said Lee In, 59, the deputy head of the Guryong residents' council.

Many of them residents are in their 70s or 80s and live alone, most of them without any sort of state assistance.

"Many are engaged in rough work or odd jobs to earn their daily living," Lee said. "The fact they don't starve is largely down to help from volunteers and religious groups."

One of the many notable aspects of Guryong is the number of wooden crosses visible on the low-rise roofline, marking dozens of ramshackle churches that cater to the community.

Another is that every inch of available land has been turned into small plots where residents grow vegetables to supplement their diet.

Guryong dwellings are all illegal structures, and gas and electricity supplies almost non-existent, leaving smoky coal briquettes as the main heating source during Seoul's bitter winters.

A fire in January spread through the flimsy plywood shacks in a matter of minutes, gutting scores of homes, while floods triggered by heavy rains in July last year destroyed a large section of the village.

The only advantage of living in such crude housing is that it can easily be replaced.

'It's a powerful symbol of inequality in our society.'

"What comes down during the day, we can erect again at night," said resident Kim Mi-Ran, 54.

The irony of Guryong's squalor – and the factor most likely to lead to its eventual disappearance – is that it sits on an area of prime real estate which developers have long coveted.

The land is privately owned, but the squatters have been there so long that they have acquired a quasi-legal status buttressed by the municipal government's decision to grant them temporary residency cards last year.

Earlier this year, a private developer proposed a plan to build low-rent accommodation to house Guryong residents and redevelop the land they vacate.

The Seoul authorities have since proposed a similar plan of their own, and the two proposals have split the community down the middle with a heated debate over which would be more beneficial.

"We don't trust politicians who make promises and never translate their words into action," said Kim Mi-Ran.

Forcible eviction is an obvious alternative, but the authorities are particularly wary of taking extreme action.

An effort to force illegal tenants out of a building slated for redevelopment in another Seoul district in 2009 triggered clashes that left five people and a police officer dead.

Park Won-Soon, a long-time liberal activist who was elected Seoul mayor last October, has made it clear that any solution in Guryong must reflect the opinions and interests of its residents.

"Under the current mayor, there is no question of using coercion," a municipal government official told *AFP*.

For Kim Kyo-Seong, a professor at Chung-Ang University's graduate school of social welfare, Guryong is a concentrated embodiment of everything that is wrong with South Korea's rapid economic development.

"It's a powerful symbol of inequality in our society," Kim said, citing widening income gaps, the lack of support for a rapidly ageing population and the marginalisation of those left behind by the country's industrial drive. – *AFP*

Fiery protests against Chinese rule spread in Tibet

NEW DELHI – As China's Communist Party prepares for its leadership transition, a wave of self-immolations has spread and accelerated across Tibet, in the most sustained protests against Beijing's rule there in five decades.

Most of those who have set themselves afire are in their late teens or early 20s, activists said. Exiled Tibetan political leaders and scholars described the actions as an emphatic rejection of the economic development and material gains that China is offering the Tibetan people and an anguished call for independence and the return of the region's religious leader, the Dalai Lama.

"Almost all of them were born after the Chinese occupation of Tibet and the Cultural Revolution," Lobsang Sangay, the political leader of the refugee community's India-based government-in-exile said of the perpetrators. "They have grown up in the Chinese system, received Chinese education. They are the primary beneficiaries of whatever the Chinese government gave them. They are saying 'this is not what we want.' "

In the week ending October 27, seven people doused themselves in petrol and set fire to themselves in eastern Tibet, including two cousins in their 20s who called for "freedom for Tibet" before setting themselves ablaze in front of a government building. At least 62 people have set themselves on fire inside Tibet since February 2009 and all but nine are known to have died, the Free Tibet group says.

It is not certain if the latest acceleration of the protests is timed to send a signal to the Chinese Communist Party Congress, which meets from November 8 to install a new leadership in Beijing.

Nevertheless, the protests appear to have embarrassed the Chinese leadership, which has responded by intensifying its crackdown, activists and scholars say.

China says it rescued the Tibetan people from medieval serfdom under the Dalai Lama's theocratic rule when it took over in 1950 and in recent years has poured money into the region to build roads, a high-speed railway and projects such as rural electrification.

It blames the self-immolations on the old regime's attempts to split the country. "This is shameful and should be condemned," Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei told a news conference last week.

But many Tibetans appear to view the perpetrators as heroes, sometimes trying to prevent Chinese police removing their bodies, laying ceremonial scarves at protest sites, or paying tribute to their families.

"Tibetans are responding to China's repressive policies, to seeing their neighbors, friends and families attacked, harassed, beaten and jailed," said Lhadon Tethong, director of the Tibet Action Institute. "The self-immolations are a response to escalating repression, which the Chinese meet with more repression, and we are in this vicious cycle."

In the run-up to the 2008 Beijing Olympics, Tibet was engulfed in protests and riots that saw hundreds killed and thousands arrested. Since then, China has tightened its grip on the high plateau, in what many Tibetans have described as an attack on their language, religion and culture.

The self-immolations spread from an important monastery in the town of eastern Tibetan town of Aba, taking off as form of protest in March last year. Most of the initial protesters were monks or former monks, but most of the latest are lay people, including farmers, students, and a writer.

The protests have spread across eastern Tibet and even to Lhasa, the region's main city, prompting a renewed crackdown there, activists say. Foreign tourists are already banned from visiting Tibet, but now Tibetans from outside the city are unable to travel there without a residence document, in an attempt to stop further incidents, activists say.

In other areas where self-immolations have taken place, internet access and telephones have been cut off, sometimes for months, activists say.

'They are the primary beneficiaries of whatever the Chinese government gave them. They are saying 'this is not what we want.'"

Police in one region recently issued flyers offering rewards of nearly US$8000 for tips about planned self-immolations and up to $30,000 for information about the "black hands" who supposedly organised four such acts in the area.

"Local authorities are under pressure from the central government to put an end to this," said Elliot Sperling, a Tibet expert at Indiana University. "But this is a form of protest that doesn't need a conspiracy, it just needs a person. These flyers seem to me to be somewhat desperate."

The protests have spread because the "tactic is resonating," said Sperling, although some activists said the recent spurt could be linked to the imminent Communist Party Congress meeting.

While Sangay renewed his appeal for Tibetans not to take such "drastic action", the Dalai Lama has taken a more neutral line on what he said was a "very, very delicate political issue."

"Now, the reality is that if I say something positive, then the Chinese immediately blame me," he told India's *Hindu* newspaper in July. "If I say something negative, then the family members of those people feel very sad. They sacrificed their own life. It is not easy. So I do not want to create some kind of impression that this is wrong."

In September, US ambassador to China Gary Locke paid a rare visit to Aba, the restive area where many of the self-immolations have taken place, and visited monasteries. He called the incidents "very deplorable."

"We implore the Chinese to really meet with the representatives of the Tibetan people to address and reexamine some of the policies that have led to some of the restrictions and the violence and the self-immolations," Locke told an online forum on October 29. "We very much believe there should be respect for the culture and religion of the Tibetan people, as well as the language of the Tibetan people." – *The Washington Post*

Briefs

No deterrent

SYDNEY – Australia's new policies designed to stem an influx of boatpeople will not deter thousands of asylum-seekers from trying to reach the country, a top Indonesian immigration official said on November 2.

Indonesia's head of immigration enforcement, Djoni Muhammad, told public broadcaster *ABC* there were 100,000 people throughout Southeast Asia who want to leave for Australia and sending them offshore would not halt the tide.

Asked what the answer was to stopping people heading to Australia, he replied: "No answer."

Sanctuaries stymied

HOBART – Conservation groups expressed outrage on November 2 after resistance led by China and Russia stymied efforts to create new marine sanctuaries in Antarctica.

Hopes were high that a reserve covering 1.6 million square kilometres (640,000 square miles) would be approved for the pristine Ross Sea, the world's most intact marine ecosystem, but two-weeks of talks at the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources ended without resolution.

Fatal acid attack

MUZAFFARABAD – A mother and father in Pakistan-administered Kashmir have admitted killing their 15-year-old daughter by beating her up and dousing her with acid after seeing her talking to a young man, police said on November 1.

Local police officer Tahir Ayub told AFP the girl was assaulted by her parents after her father, Mohammad Zafar, became enraged when he saw her with a boy outside their home on October 29. – *AFP*

Australia seeks closer ASEAN ties

SYDNEY – Australia will elevate its engagement with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and seek to more closely align its foreign policy with that of the bloc, Foreign Minister Bob Carr said on November 2.

In an interview with the *Australian Financial Review*, Carr said Australia, which the previous week released a comprehensive blueprint for enhancing its ties with Asia, recognised ASEAN's "centrality in the region".

"I am quite happy to be associated with a shift (in Australia's level of engagement)," Carr said.

"I think we need to ease into habits of consultation with ASEAN as a grouping and with its individual members and also relax into the habit of listening to them more as they talk about their region."

The sweeping policy blueprint, *Australia in the Asian Century*, released on October 28, set a series of goals for the next 13 years to seize upon Asia's rapid ascent as a global economic powerhouse.

The ambitious plan is aimed at maximising links with booming China and other soaring Asian economies to power Australia into the world's top 10 wealthiest nations by 2025.

Prime Minister Julia Gillard said China, India, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea and the United States would be Australia's key partners while Canberra also decided to post a full-time ambassador to the 10-nation ASEAN.

> **'...it is our number two trading partner.'**

Carr said no regional grouping was more relevant to Australia's security or prosperity than ASEAN.

"I want to emphasise the sheer vitality of the economies that lie within ASEAN and their importance to Australia ... taken as a bloc it is our number two trading partner," he told the newspaper.

Carr, speaking ahead of visits to Indonesia and Malaysia, added that ASEAN had been at the forefront of resolving disputes over territory in the South China Sea involving China.

"ASEAN members want to see ASEAN prove itself on this issue," he said. – *AFP*

Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse with Shirani Bandaranayake soon after she was appointed the country's first woman chief justice in May last year. Lawmakers with Rajapakse's United People's Freedom Alliance moved on November 1 to have Bandaranayake impeached amid rising tensions between the government and the judiciary. Analysts said the move was the latest sign of efforts by the government to tighten its grip on power. *Pic: AFP/ Presidential Secretariat*

Indonesians fume at maids ad

JAKARTA – An advertisement in Malaysia for cut-price Indonesian maids has gone viral online in Indonesia and sparked new outrage over an issue that has long divided the two countries.

Indonesian Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa has phoned his Malaysian counterpart to complain and web users have vented their anger over the flyers tacked to trees in Kuala Lumpur which read "Indonesian maids now on sale!!"

"Now your housework and cooking come easy. You can rest and relax. Deposit only 3,500 ringgit ($1,150)" reads the ad, which was posted online on October 27-28 by an Indonesian campaigner for migrant workers' rights.

"Let's boycott travelling to Malaysia, they have become even more disrespectful," said Arifin Sutrisno on Twitter.

Labour ministry spokeswoman Dita Indah Sari told *AFP*: "Saying Indonesian workers are on sale is likening a human being to a commodity. This is unacceptable."

Relations have been strained by a series of cases of abuse of Indonesian women working as domestic helpers in Malaysia. Maids in recent years have been the victims of attacks with a hammer, scissors and a hot iron.

The abuse prompted Jakarta to impose a ban in June 2009 on new maids being sent to Malaysia. Indonesia announced last December the ban was being lifted after both countries agreed on a pay rise and measures to curb abuse.

However the furious reaction in Indonesia to the flyers and the government's swift response showed that the issue remains deeply sensitive.

Malaysian Labour Minister S. Subramaniam condemned the flyers. "We are going all out to trace the group responsible for the leaflets," he said. – *AFP*

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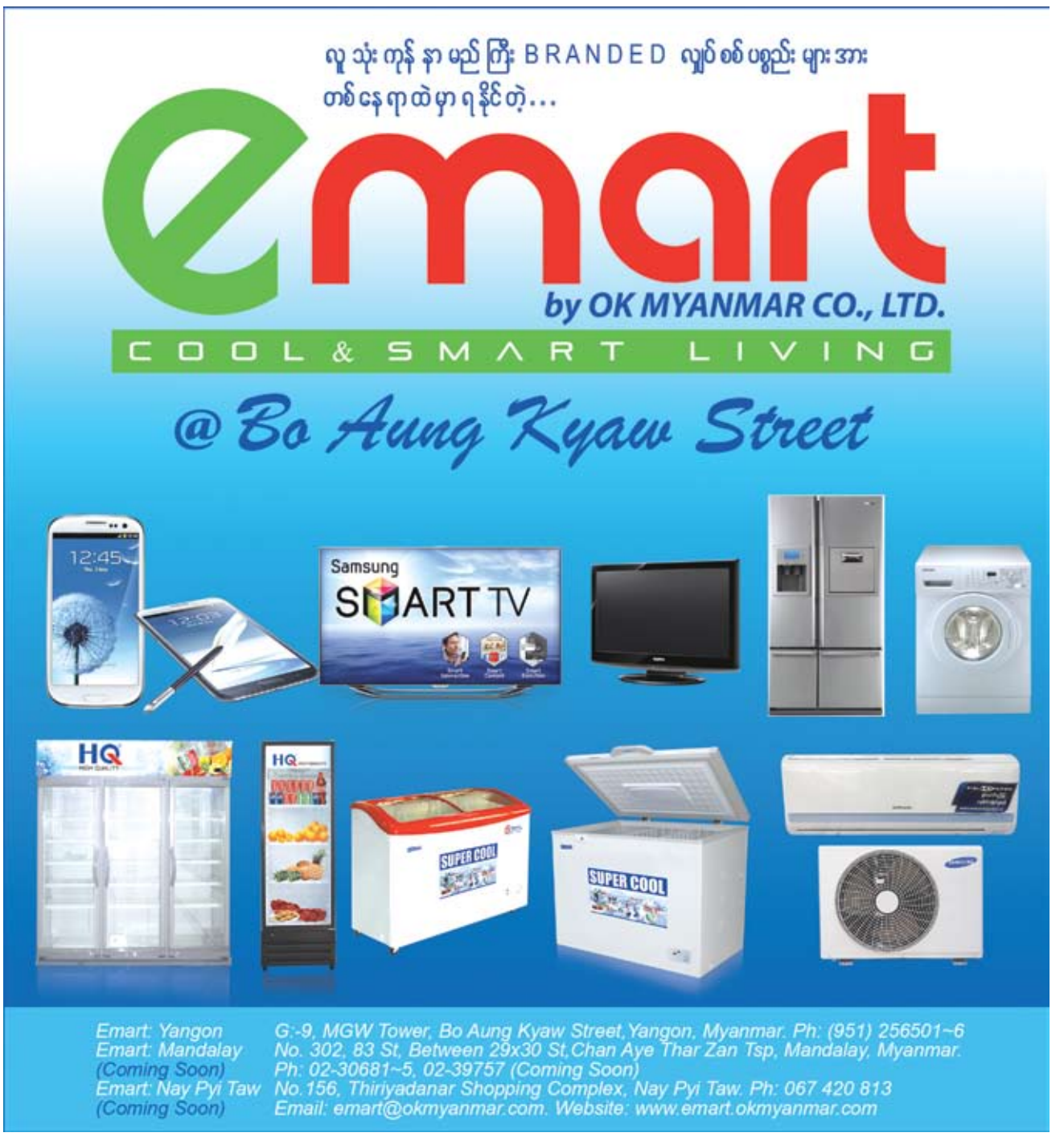

New urgency sought in malaria fight

SYDNEY – Asia accounts for most of the 46,000 annual malaria deaths occurring outside Africa, a report showed on November 2 as experts demand more urgency in fighting the deadly disease.

Leading scientists and health experts meeting in Sydney last week at the "Malaria 2012: Saving Lives in the Asia-Pacific" conference also want tougher political leadership and regional coordination.

International efforts to defeat malaria have focused on Africa, where most deaths occur. But of the 3.3 billion people at risk from the mosquito-borne disease, 2.5 billion live outside the African region.

Fatoumata Nafo-Traore, director of the Roll Back Malaria Partnership, the global framework for coordinated action against the disease, called for that to change.

"Asia accounts for the second highest burden of malaria, second only to Africa," she said.

"In the face of persistent economic uncertainty and profound changes in the landscape of global development aid, the region needs strong political leadership.

"It also needs to develop financing strategies that include substantive and sustained domestic investment, traditional multilateral and bilateral aid and truly innovative sources of funding."

She was speaking at the launch of *Defeating Malaria in Asia, the Pacific, Americas, Middle East and Europe*, a joint initiative with the World Health Organisation.

The report said that the parasite threatens more than two billion people each year in the Asia-Pacific region, while smaller numbers are at risk in the Americas (160 million) and Middle East (250 million).

The report said that of 34 million cases of malaria outside Africa in 2010, which killed an estimated 46,000 people, the Asia-Pacific accounted for 88 percent, or 30 million, of these cases and 91pc, or 42,000, of the deaths.

India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Myanmar and Papua New Guinea were hardest hit.

Outside Asia, there were 1.1 million cases in the Americas and 1200 deaths and 2.9 million cases in the Middle East and the Caucasus with 3100 deaths.

The Sydney conference focused on growing resistance to the drug used everywhere to cure the life-threatening disease – artemisinin – which is central to the efficacy of anti-malarial treatment.

Resistance has been detected in Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar, and Vietnam and the report said it stood to "unravel the hard-won gains of recent years". – *AFP*

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Films recount life of Baptist missionary

By Zon Pann Pwint

AMERICAN Baptist missionary Adoniram Judson will be honoured with the release next year of two locally produced films about his life, aimed at marking the 200th anniversary of Mr Judson's arrival in Myanmar.

"Next year Baptish churches in Myanmar will celebrate the 200th anniversary of Adoniram Judson's first arrival to Myanmar," said Dr Tha Nyan, general secretary of the Young Men's Christian Association and owner of Green Yellow Red film production company.

"No full-length documentary or historical film about him has ever made before, so we have decided to make a quality film to honour him in time for the celebration."

Reverend U Toe Toe from U Naw Memorial Baptist Church in Yangon said Mr Judson first set foot in Myanmar on July 13, 1813. He is famed for writing and editing an English-Myanmar dictionary, and for translating the full text of the Bible into Myanmar language, a version that is still in wide use today.

The Green Yellow Red production will be directed by U Kyi Soe Tun. Dr Tha Nyan and his wife, Myanmar Academy Award winning actress Daw Myint Myint Khine, will help with the filming.

The early part of Mr Judson's life will be scripted by the US-based Christian organisation Vision Beyond Borders, while the part covering his life in Myanmar will be written by U Kyi Soe Tun.

"I will take the historical approach in making a film about Judson, and I want to show the special bond between him and the Myanmar people," Dr Tha Nyan said.

He said the production company will cooperate with Vision Beyond Border in its search for an American actor to play the role of Mr Judson.

"We are looking for an American actor who has an interest in learning Myanmar language because Judson learned the language and continued speaking it afterwards. He even preached in Myanmar language in his native land after living here for 34 years," Dr Tha Nyan said.

However, he said the production company can't pay the money to hire a famous actor, so they are looking for a lesser-known actor within their budget.

"A famous make-up artist here will make him look like a foreign missionary," he said.

He added that the roles of U Naw, who was a first person to be baptised in Myanmar, and others will be played by local actors.

"The film will feature a turning point in Judson's life, when he served as an interpreter in peace negotiations between the Burmese and British in 1826 to end the First Anglo-Burmese War, and the film will also show his missionary works in the harsh conditions in Myanmar," he said.

Actor Phyo Ngwe Soe portrays Baptist missionary Adoniram Judson on the set of the film 'Su Khat Tharaphu' (Thorny Crown), due to be released next year on DVD.
Pic: U Naw Memorial Baptist Church

Dr Tha Nyan said he expected the filming to take nine months, and the movie will be shot on location in the United States, India and Myanmar.

U Naw Memorial Baptist Church is also in the process of making a video about Mr Judson, entitled *Su Khat Tharaphu* (Thorny Crown).

The video, which has been in production since February, is being directed by Thein Han (Phoenix) and will be released on DVD in time for next year's 200th anniversary celebration.

The role of Mr Judson is played by Phyo Ngwe Soe. The video covers Mr Judson's missionary work in Myanmar, including how he spread the gospel, how he first baptised U Naw, U Thar Hla and U Pyar, and how he was supported by three women through many difficult times.

"Many people who are not Christians wrote books and poems in praise of Judson's selfless works, including U Tint Naing Toe's book *Thamine Hteka Saya Yudathan* (Judson in History)," Reverend U Toe Toe said.

"It shows that he not only preached the Christian faith to others, but also engaged in social works that benefitted the community at large, such as translating a dictionary from English language to Myanmar."

He added: "His Bible translation is remarkably complete and so perfect that to this day no one has retranslated it."

Baptist churches in Yangon will mark the 200th anniversary of Mr Judson's arrival in Myanmar from July 12 to 14, 2013.

On July 13, the date of his arrival, a celebration will take place at View Point Hotel in Thaketa township, near the Yangon River, aimed at recreating the atmosphere during his landing on the spot 200 years ago.

Final judges named for movie awards

By Nyein Ei Ei Htwe

JUDGES were chosen last month to make the final decision on the winners of the Myanmar Academy Awards for films released in 2011, which will be presented at a ceremony in Yangon on December 30.

The judges were chosen by the Myanmar Motion Picture Enterprise (MMPE), according to an announcement by the Ministry of Information published in the state-run press on October 23.

The judges are: U Tin Kha from the Myanmar Writers Association; Hinthada U Myint Ngwe from the Myanmar Music Association; and U Kyi Soe Tun, U Min Naing, Daw Yin Yin Lae, U Sonny Tin, U Phoe Htaung, U Hla San Oo, U Aung Ko Latt and Daw Myint Myint Khin from the Myanmar Motion Picture Organisation.

Choosing the winners will be the third and final stage of the selection process for the film awards.

During the first stage, a board of judges watched all the films screened in Myanmar in 2011 and created a long-list of potential award winners. In the second stage a different group of judges viewed the long-listed films and from these made a short-list from which the third group will make the final decisions.

Daw Yin Yin Lae, a member of the third group who has worked as an actress, scriptwriter and film editor, said the judges will need to explain all their decisions in writing after they choose the winners.

She said she was proud to be named as a judge for the third stage.

"I've been interested in acting since childhood, so I won't be bored being a judge on the Academy board," she said.

Another judge, U Sonny Tin, said he was very surprised to be chosen as a board member for the third stage.

"I thought I wouldn't be chosen for the judging board because I'm old and I've worked for many years as a judge, but I found out I had been chosen this year when they announced it in the newspaper," said U Sonny Tin, who started working as an actor in 1951.

"There won't be any special preparation for judging, but we will need to watch the films chosen by the previous judges, make our decisions and write down the reasons for our choices."

He said the judges will spend about one month watching the films, making their decisions and writing their reasons.

S Korean culture wave ready to inundate Yangon

By Douglas Long

A WEEK of South Korean cultural events will be held in Yangon from November 8 to 14, including a film festival, taekwondo competition, speech contest and K-pop dance final, according to a statement released last week by the South Korean embassy in Yangon.

Anchoring Korea Week 2012 will be the Korean Expo at the Myanmar Convention Centre from November 8 to 11, with exhibitions from 55 South Korean companies covering consumer and kitchen goods, cosmetics, foods, electronics, cars, construction equipment and more.

The seventh Korean Film Festival will be held at Thamada Cinema from November 9 to 12, under the theme "Exciting". Films will include *Highway*, *Bunt*, *Fly Penguin* and *Late Blossom*, and free tickets can be picked up at the South Korean embassy from November 2 to 7.

On November 10, the Myanmar Convention Centre will host the K-pop Cover Dance Final and the Face of Myanmar Contest Semifinal, from 6pm to 8pm. The program will also include a performance by Poppin Hyun-Joon Crew, billed in the embassy statement as "world-famous Korean hip-hop and b-boy dancers".

The Korean Drama OST Myanmar-Korea Joint Concert will be held at the same venue on November 11, from 6pm to 8pm.

The public is also welcome to attend the sixth Korean Ambassador's Cup Taekwondo Championship at Thuwunna Indoor Stadium on November 12 and 13, from 10am to 6pm daily. More than 500 contestants from 20 teams will vie for prizes that include refrigerators, television sets and DVDs.

Rounding out the excitement of Korea Week 2012 will be the always-thrilling Korean Speech Contest at Traders Hotel's Myanmar Ballroom on November 14, from 1:30pm to 5:30pm. Now in its 10th year, the contest will be held under the theme "Fusion".

The grand prize for the speech contest is enrollment in the undergraduate or graduate scholarship program at Kangnam University.

Miss Now How 2012 attends a press conference in Yangon on October 25 to announce the finals for the 2013 contest. *Pic: Lwin Mar Htun*

Now How contest will held in January

By Lwin Mar Htun

THE finals for the Miss Now How Beauty Contest 2013 will be held on January 14, with the winner slated to get K2.5 million in cash plus a one-year supply of cosmetics from the sponsoring company, contest organisers said last month.

"We are holding this contest and providing training for all the finalists so they can gain self-confidence, which will help them be successful throughout their lives," Daw Ni Ni Myint, the managing director of Now How, said at a press conference at Blue Oasis Restaurant in Yangon on October 25

She explained that applications for the contest were accepted from September 1 to October 10, from which 80 semifinalists were selected.

Their performance at the semifinals, underway at Junction Square on November 4 and 5, will determine who makes the list of 24 finalists.

"After the semifinals, we will run a training program for the 24 competitors for final contest," Ma Thu Zar Htun, the brand manager for Now How, said at the press conference.

Four prizes will be given at the finals: Miss Now How 2013, first runner-up (K1.5 million), second runner-up (K1 million) and Miss Popular (K500,000). All prizewinners will also receive a supply of cosmetics.

Performers from the Thailand-based Membo cabaret troupe take the stage at the Myanmar Convention Centre in Yangon on October 25. *Pic: Nyein Maung*

Local audience welcomes transvestite performers

By Nuam Bawi

A CABARET show featuring transvestite performers from Thailand was held in front of enthusiastic audiences at the Myanmar Convention Centre in Yangon on October 25 and 26.

The "First Musical Show" featured members of the Thailand-based Membo cabaret troupe, who combined comedy with pop music covers from the likes of Lady Gaga and Rihanna.

Nan Su Kay Swan, a yoga teacher and presenter at the concert, said she "appreciated" how the transvestite performers were "enjoying their life".

"For human beings, they are just trying to live their life meaningfully, with happiness and in the way they choose. They have found the best way to live their lives, and I respect that," she said.

Audience members showed great support for the concert, including 64-year-old Saw Nandar (aka David). He is a founder of Moe Gyo Nget Nge Lay Myar (Thunder Birds), a gay performance group founded in Yangon in 1967.

He applauded the Thai entertainers, but added that Myanmar performers can rival foreign acts in terms of creativity and presentation.

"The Thai performers have had surgery on every part of their bodies because they come from a country with the technology for such procedures," Saw Nandar said.

"We don't have the chance to do that in Myanmar because we lack proper serves and also money, but we try to be as beautiful as we can with our natural bodies."

He said the Thai performers also have an advantage because they use supporting props and elaborate stage sets.

"In Myanmar, we must attract audiences with our performance alone because we lack stage sets and props, and there is no air conditioning. We even do our own makeup and create our own dresses," he said.

Saw Nandar said the support of his family has been important in helping him find his way in life.

"When my parents found out I was gay, they didn't give me any pressure. They just helped me discover what I was good at, and then supported me in pursuing it," he said.

"Some parents of gay children aren't like that. They treat their kids rudely and pressure them to 'change back into a man'. This kind of reaction can lead children in the wrong direction, like running away from home so they can live without parental control. I've seen many lives ruined right in front of my eyes because of their way their families reacted."

Saw Nandar said the support of his family gave him the confidence to form Moe Gyo Nget Nge Lay Myar with his friends while they were in high school in the late 1960s.

He said life is much easier now for gay people in Myanmar as the population becomes more knowledgeable about the gay community.

"In the past there was a lot of discrimination, even for job opportunities. Gay people were rejected in favour of non-gays, even if the gay person was more qualified or smarter," Saw Nandar said.

"But nowadays we see many gay people not only getting jobs, but also holding good positions in their companies."

Disney buys 'Star Wars', plans new film

By Michael Thurston

LOS ANGELES — Walt Disney Co announced last week it is buying *Star Wars* director George Lucas's film company for US$4 billion, and plans to revive the classic sci-fi series starting with a new movie in 2015.

The entertainment giant plans a new trilogy in the legendary franchise, launched with the original *Star Wars* movie in 1977, while Lucas himself said it was "time for me to pass *Star Wars* on to a new generation of filmmakers".

Star Wars 7 will be released in 2015, "with more feature films expected to continue the *Star Wars* saga and grow the franchise well into the future", said Disney, announcing the deal to buy pioneering movie company Lucasfilm.

In a conference call with investors, Disney said it planned a new trilogy with films eight and nine, after which more *Star Wars* movies would be made every two to three years.

The deal "combines a world-class portfolio of content including *Star Wars*, one of the greatest family entertainment franchises of all time, with Disney's unique and unparalleled creativity", said Disney chief Robert Iger.

"Lucasfilm reflects the extraordinary passion, vision, and storytelling of its founder, George Lucas," said Iger, head of global entertainment giant Disney, which is headquartered in Burbank, just outside Los Angeles.

The transaction is valued at $4.05 billion — based on current stock value — with Disney paying about half in cash and issuing approximately 40 million shares at closing. Lucasfilm is 100 percent owned by Lucas.

Lucas, who runs his company from its San Francisco base, added: "For the past 35 years, one of my greatest pleasures has been to see *Star Wars* passed from one generation to the next. It's now time for me to pass *Star Wars* on to a new generation of filmmakers. I've always believed that *Star Wars* could live beyond me, and I thought it was important to set up the transition during my lifetime."

The first *Star Wars* film came out in 1977, and there have been two trilogies — three films from 1977 to 1983 and three prequels from 1999 to 2005 — while the brand has expanded into theme parks and a huge merchandising arm.

The movies have earned some $4.4 billion at the box office globally over the last 35 years, and offer "a virtually limitless universe of characters and stories to drive continued feature film releases", Disney said.

"The franchise provides a sustainable source of high quality, branded content with global appeal and is well suited for new business models including digital platforms," it added.

The acquisition comes after Disney's takeover of animated film giant Pixar and comic book character-driven Marvel Studios.

Those deals had "demonstrated the company's unique ability to fully develop and expand the financial potential of high quality creative content with compelling characters and storytelling", Disney said. — *AFP*

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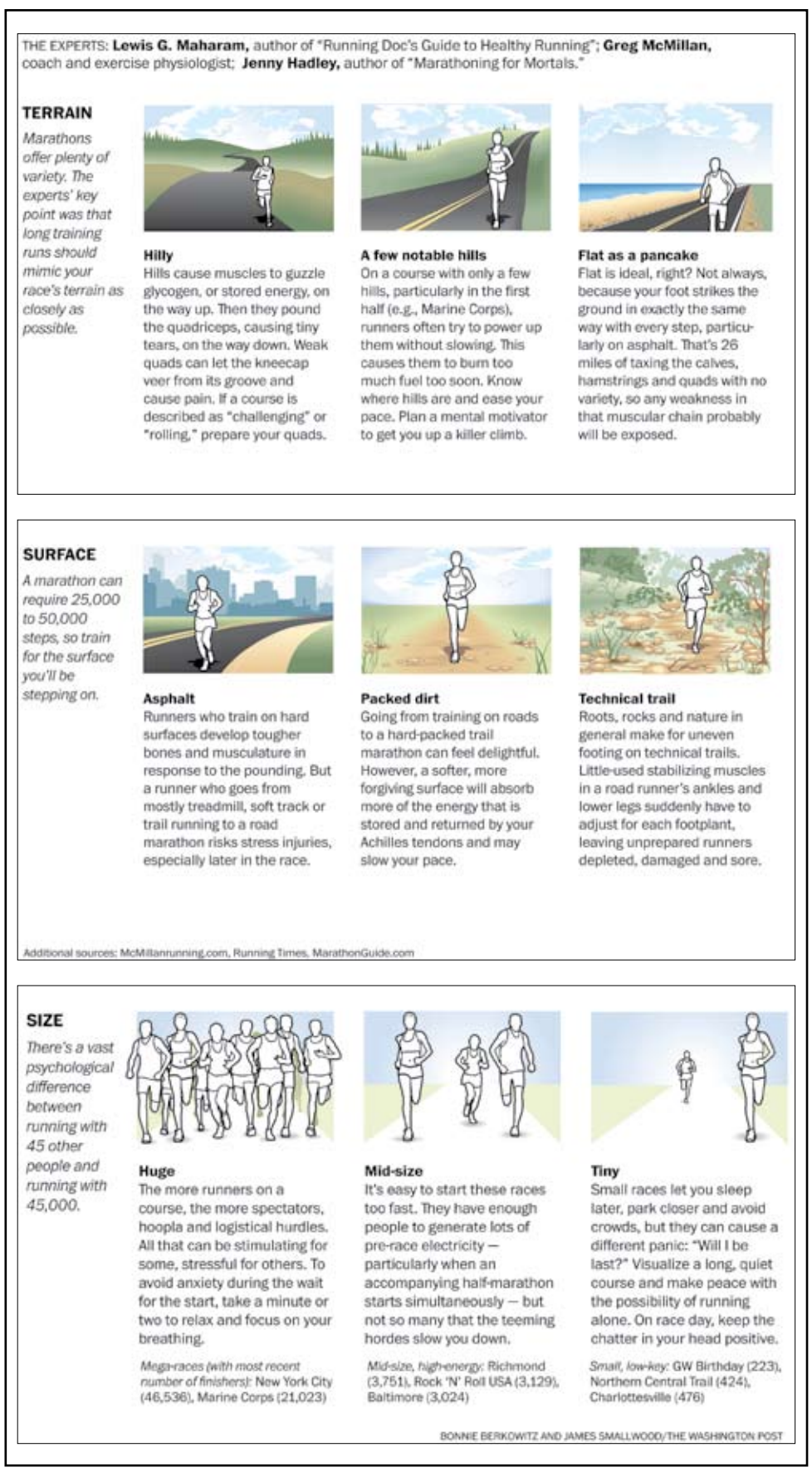

How not to run the Yangon Marathon

By Douglas Long

I'M no great authority on running marathons. I've done exactly one in my lifetime, in Los Angeles in 1997. I finished somewhere around four hours, smack in the middle of a field of about 17,000 entrants.

Based on my limited experience and modest results, I would not presume to offer guidance to anyone on how to finish well in a marathon.

But thinking back to 1997, I did learn some things that might help first-time marathoners (including those mulling participation in the Yangon International Marathon on January 27) avoid repeating my mistakes.

The accompanying graphics, which appeared in *The Washington Post* last month in the lead-up to the Marine Corps Marathon in Washington DC, offer additional advice from three running experts on how to tackle common marathon course characteristics in a scientific way.

Error 1: Training on flat roads. As I extended my running mileage in preparation for the LA Marathon, I stuck to flat, familiar training routes. Unfortunately, the race course included quite a number of hills, which although small turned out to be shockingly difficult, going both up and down, for my improperly trained quads.

Anyone who has cycled around Yangon will know that the terrain, while not exactly hilly, is not quite as flat as it appears from the backseat of a taxi. Also, the course of the Yangon marathon crosses the Hlaing River twice, which means two bridges, which means two long, steady uphill sections — and one of those toward the end of the race.

My advice: Integrate some hills into your training, including occasional runs over river-spanning bridges during the early morning hours, before traffic, vehicle exhaust fumes and the heat get too overwhelming.

Error 2: Excessive training on dirt paths. I did most of my preparation for the LA Marathon on dirt roads in the flat areas of the city's Griffith Park. While the soft surface helped save wear and tear on my knees during training, on race day my legs did their wicked best to rebel against 42 kilometres of relentless pounding on paved roads.

One solution is to train on a variety of surfaces: asphalt to toughen up the bones and muscles in preparation for the actual rigours of the marathon, but also some dirt for variety and to give the legs and knees a bit of a break every now and then.

Error 3: Starting too far back on race day. I figured that since I had never run a marathon before, it would be best to start at the very back of the pack in Los Angeles. But there were so many participants that once the race started, it took me 20 minutes to just reach the start line.

This was no big deal as far as the clock went, because the electronic timing chip did not start until I crossed the start line. But the pack of runners was so dense that for the first 5 kilometres of the marathon I couldn't do much more than walk. Then I spent the next 5 kilometres weaving around runners who were much slower than I was. It wasn't until about kilometre 10 that I was finally able to run at my own pace.

This won't be an issue for the Yangon race. In their initial press release in July, the event organisers said they expected about 1000 participants, including both locals and foreigners. Presumably, the majority of these will take part in the two shorter runs, of 3 and 10 kilometres.

This will likely put Yangon in the "tiny" bracket as far as field size, so start-line congestion won't be a problem. If you're a fast runner, line up at the front; otherwise, don't worry about losing too much time or energy if you start in the back.

Error 4: Stopping too long during the race. The route of the LA Marathon went past my apartment in the Silver Lake neighbourhood just before kilometre 32. My friends had gathered there to offer their support, and to taunt me with bags of Cool Ranch Doritos and bottles of Dos Equis beer that they knew I couldn't enjoy until after the race.

I stopped to talk to them for a few minutes, figuring it would provide the psychological boost I needed to make it to the finish line. But when I started running again, I knew from the first stride that I had made a mistake in stopping for so long. My muscles had frozen, and every step was excruciating in a way that I hadn't felt up to that point.

This agonising condition never eased, and in fact persisted all the way to finish line, making the last 10 kilometres an extremely uncomfortable experience.

Marathoners who are tired should not feel any qualms about slowing down or walking, but it's best to avoid coming to a complete stop or standing around for any amount of time. You might never get started again.

For more information on the Yangon International Marathon, visit www.yangonmarathon.com.

Pro runners debunk three persistent myths about marathons

By Ryan Hall and Sara Hall

EVERY marathon course is challenging for a different reason: New York's is known for the bridges that connect the city's five boroughs. Boston's is famous for its tough hills. And October's Marine Corps Marathon in Washington DC is notorious for its uphill finish. As professional runners, we've learned a lot about how best to train for marathons, who runs them, why they're so popular — and which myths deserve debunking.

Myth 1: Runners should "carbo-load" by eating pasta the night before the race.

As much as runners enjoy any opportunity to binge on food guilt-free, the best way to "carbo-load" is to eat just 100 extra grams of carbohydrates, the equivalent of three bagels, spaced out throughout the day before the race.

Your muscles can store only a certain amount of carbohydrate at one time for race day. Anything beyond that is stored as fat, which no runner wants weighing him down.

In Sara's early running days, she once ate six bowls of oatmeal before a race in an attempt to carbo-load. After a massive stomach cramp hindered her performance, she realised that a last-minute carbohydrate dash was not effective!

So instead of piling on the pasta the night before, it's better to graze on snacks with extra carbohydrates between meals. And taking in protein and healthy fat with your carbs — rather than having a carbohydrate-only meal such as spaghetti with marinara sauce — helps slow the absorption of the carbohydrates. That way, more carbs become stored fuel for the next day's race, and fewer turn to fat.

Myth 2: You have to be very fit to run a marathon.

One of the things we love about marathons is the diversity of the runners. After all, there aren't many events where you see tens of thousands of people of all ages, shapes and ethnicities participating together.

Watch a marathon from the sidelines and you'll see that, for most runners, becoming physically fit is still a work in progress — and the race is often a milestone in that journey.

We've known some runners who haven't even been exercising, let alone training for a marathon, who have been able to complete a race. This is clearly not advised — and if you ask one of them when they finish or wake up the next day, they will tell you why.

Some of the marathoners who have inspired us most are those who, since they are not yet fit enough to run the race, walk the entire thing. We see them walking the final miles, determined to finish, while the course is being dismantled around them.

Myth 3: Everyone hits the wall at Kilometre 30.

If runners believe this, it can become a self-fulfilling prophecy — but it doesn't need to be.

"Hitting the wall" is when your muscles begin to cramp or stop working because of a loss of glycogen, the fuel stored in muscles. Proper hydration and caloric intake, such as 8 ounces of a sports-performance drink every 5 kilometres along the course and during training runs, can give your muscles the glycogen they need to continue working, despite fatigue.

Another way you can lose glycogen is by starting out too hard and burning it up in the early stages of a marathon. As long as you train consistently for the race and stick to the pace to which you trained, you should finish strong.

The only time Ryan came close to hitting the wall was in the last stages of the 2012 Olympic Trials Marathon. He had an upset stomach from taking strong anti-inflammatory medications for a foot injury. Because his stomach didn't want any energy drinks and he wasn't finishing his bottles, he started getting dizzy and his muscles fatigued in the final miles. Fortunately, however, he was able to maintain second place and secure his second Olympic berth.

Ryan Hall and Sara Hall are professional runners for Asics and co-founders of the Hall Steps Foundation, which brings health care to underserved communities worldwide. Ryan is a two-time Olympic marathoner and holds the fastest American marathon time at 2:04:58. Sara is the Pan American gold medalist in the steeplechase.

— The Washington Post

'Some of the marathoners who have inspired us most are those who, since they are not yet fit enough to run the race, walk the entire thing. We see them walking the final miles, determined to finish, while the course is being dismantled around them.'

Phyo's Cooking Adventure

Phyo cuts through culture to reveal life's true taste

Rice is nice with shiitake mushrooms

RICE. Very simple, yet there are so many ways to cook it for so many flavours. The se variations take the boredom out of eating plain steamed rice all the time.

Luckily for me, my Aussie husband is an enthusiastic consumer of rice, which gives me all the excuse I need to experiment with mixing flavours from different culture and regions. We always have fun with these experiments.

This week I explain how to prepare Japanese mushroom rice using a rice cooker. How easy it is!

This is a very popular traditional Japanese rice dish, which can be cooked with dashi (cooking stock) and different types of mushrooms. I use dried shiitake mushrooms here, which are available at the local markets. The strong flavours and smell of the shiitake mushrooms tickle all the taste buds, making for a delicious meal.

In the past I made this recipe using white (shio) miso paste, which is easy to get at Asian supermarkets in Sydney. But it's not easy to find dashi or shio miso paste in Yangon, so I figured out an amazingly easy way to make my own dashi.

I also substitute Shan rice for sushi rice because it's cheaper and easier to find in Yangon. Shan rice is also sticky, so it combines perfectly with all the flavours and the mushrooms.

This rice dish goes very well with greens, so I have also included a recipe for spinach salad with sesame dressing. Enjoy!

Japanese mushroom rice

INGREDIENTS

(4 servings)
2 cups of Shan rice
180g of oyster mushroom
60g of dried shiitake mushrooms, or 200g of fresh shiitake mushrooms
3 tablespoons of Mirin (Japanese sweet rice wine)
4 tablespoons of Kikomon soy sauce
2 teaspoons of sesame oil
3 tablespoons of roasted white sesame seeds

PREPARATION

Wash the shiitake mushrooms and soak them in 3 cups (750ml) of hot water for at least 3 hours. We will use this water for cooking (this is Phyo-style dashi).

At least 30 minutes before cooking, wash the rice, drain well and set aside.

When the shiitake mushrooms are ready, gently squeeze them and cut their stems off. Then boil the stems in the shiitake mushroom water for 3-4 minutes. We need 2½ cups.

Slice the shiitake mushrooms and drain well. Wash and slice the oyster mushrooms thickly and drain well too.

Mix the Mirin, soy sauce, sesame oil and shiitake mushrooms in a saucepan and cook for 3 minutes. Add the oyster mushrooms into the saucepan and cook for another 5 minutes until most of the liquid is absorbed.

Mix the shiitake mushroom water, rice and mushroom mixture well, place in the rice cooker and cook. When the rice is finished cooking, add the roasted sesame seeds and mix well.

spinach salad

INGREDIENTS

3 bunches of spinach
4 cloves of garlic (sliced)
1 tablespoon of rice wine vinegar
1 teaspoon of Mirin
2 tablespoons of Kikomon soy sauce
1 teaspoon of brown sugar or caster sugar

PREPARATION

Pick the spinach leaves and young stalks (crisp and easy to break).

Blanch the leaves in lightly salted boiling water for 2 minutes, and do the same separately with the stalks for 3 minutes. Refresh them in cold water immediately. Squeeze them gently until no water is left.

Mix the remaining ingredients (except the garlic) in a jar for dressing.

Lay the spinach on a serving plate and pour the dressing along the leaves and stalks. Garnish with sliced garlic.

Kikomon soy sauce is available at City Mart, and Mirin rice wine vinegar can be found at all big supermarkets.

Main Tips

The rice should be dry when combined with the liquid and mushroom mixture. Otherwise it will turn out mushy.

Instead of spinach you can use morning glory (ka zun yet).

Drizzle the salad with sesame oil, if you prefer.

QUAFFING QUOTE

"The thing I absolutely love about food is it's a common thread that connects us no matter what culture we come from." — Poh Ling Yeow (Malaysian-born Australian artist, actress, celebrity chef and runner-up in MasterChef Australia)

NEXT WEEK

Next week I will introduce New Orleans-style rice salad and pan-fried turmeric chicken.

Red Wine

Tormaresca Neprica Puglia Rosso 2009

Blending Negroamaro, Primitivo and Cabernet Sauvignon ("Neprica"), this lush, dark and fruity wine offers excellent value for the money. Great with pizza, pasta and grilled meat.

Ks 12,400

Score BOX 8/10

White Wine

Nederburg Lyric 2011

This fresh South African blend of Sauvignon Blanc, Chenin Blanc and Chardonnay is good for everyday drinking on warm tropical nights. Try with creamy foods or pad thai.

Ks 6,850

Score BOX 7/10

FOOD REVIEW

Capital cuisine in NPT

IT might have a water fountain garden, safari park and the largest concentration of hotel rooms to residents in the world (by my reckoning) but it's fair to say that nobody goes to Nay Pyi Taw to enjoy its culinary delights.

My first visit I ate fried rice for four consecutive meals. Each was more mediocre than the last.

So I was happy last month when some friends in the capital agreed to take me out for dinner. Naturally, we headed straight for Pyinmana, a leafy town of narrow streets and modest homes — basically, the opposite of Nay Pyi Taw.

Uncle Chan, as the name suggests, isn't exactly good old fashioned Myanmar home cooking. We tried the barbecued fish, which was — for my tender taste buds at least — almost too spicy to eat, and the chicken kebab, which was somewhat more tolerable but no more memorable.

Pic: Ko Taik

Uncle Chan

Yaza Htarni Road, Pyinmana

Food:	5
Drink:	5
Atmosphere:	7
Service:	6
X Factor:	6
Value for Money:	6

Score BOX 6/10

The highlight was probably the fried watercress. However, everything was reasonably priced, in the K2000 to K5000 range. The beer was refreshingly cold and the service competent enough, although the waiters were quite unhelpful when asked to recommend something and then forgot to bring our drinks.

But whereas in Nay Pyi Taw proper you struggle to find either food or atmosphere, Uncle Chan can tick at least one of those boxes. It is barbecue-beer hall in style but you can sit outside beside Yaza Htarni road, savouring the warm upper Myanmar night and gazing up at Uppatasanti Pagoda, which towers over Pyinmana as Shwedagon does Yangon (funny that).

Uncle Chan is not without its faults. However, everything is relative and, in the capital at least, you can certainly do worse.

– RR

Mr Mak @ Singapore Airline Dinner

Dr Sai San Htun @ Ko Ko Thein and Ma Han Oo Khin Wedding Reception

Thandar Hlaing @ Singapore Airline Dinner

U Zaw Zaw and wife @ Ko Ko Thein and Ma Han Oo Khin Wedding Reception

Bride and groom with parents @ Ko Ko Thein and Ma Han Oo Khin Wedding Reception

Mi Sandy @ Canmake Tokyo Fashion Show

Ma Kalyar Sann @ Singapore Airline Dinner

U Htay Maung and U Wai Lin @ Ko Ko Thein and Ma Han Oo Khin Wedding Reception

Ma Khine Sabai @ Singapore Airline Dinner

Khine Su Yin and Ma Ei Thandar @ Ko Ko Thein and Ma Han Oo Khin Wedding Reception

Mr Robert Chua @ Singapore Airline Dinner

Ma Nandar, Daw Nang May Si Kyaw and Ma Myat Thandar @ Ko Ko Thein and Ma Han Oo Khin Wedding Reception

Hair specialists @ Lolane Hair Show

Khant Si Thu, Hla Izali Tint, Lin Zarni Zaw, Soe Myat Thuzar, Daw Thandar Phone and Khine Thin Kyi @ Myauk Kyun Thu Silk Wear Opening

Ma Kyi Pyar, Ma Thandar and Ma Thandar Aung @ Korean Beauty Credits Shop Opening

Ko Thet Hlaing Nyo @ Singapore Airline Dinner

Mr Yusuke Kobayashi and U Mya Zaw @ Fuji Film Graphic Products Presentation

Nay Nay @ Singapore Airline Dinner

Ma Aye Nandar Htoo and Ma May Phyo Khine @ Colorful Myanmar Handicrafts shop opening

Performers @ First Musical Show

Yan Aung @ First Musical Show

SOCIALITE
WITH NYEIN EI EI HTWE

THE end of the Buddhist Lent period is here, which means Thadingyut Festival of Lights, which means oodles of fantabulous sales promotions! But Socialite started her week on October 25 with an event of a different sort, with fantabulastic cross-dressing performers from Thailand taking the stage at the Myanmar Convention Centre. On the same day she also attended the somewhat tamer opening of Colourful Myanmar Handicrafts Shop at Bogyoke Market. On October 26 she went to the Fuji Graphic products presentation at Central Hotel, but the fun really started the next day at the fantabumagorical Thandingyut sale at Kandawgyi Park, including the promotion at the Korean Beauty shop. And then it finally arrived!!! October 28 was the Big Day that Socialite had marked on her calendar months in advance: the opening of YGN mobile phone shop in Latha township!!! After that she found time to drop by the wedding reception for her friends Ko Ko Thein and Han Oo Khin at Sedona Hotel, and of course we can't forget the Singapore Airline dinner at Parkroyal Hotel.

Daw Myint Myint, Ma May Phyo Khine and Ma Thwal Thwal Oo @ Colorful Myanmar Handicrafts shop opening

Shopkeeper and staffs @ YGN Mobile Shop Opening

Ma Wai Thit Lwin and guests @ ABC Mart Opening

Ma Phyu Phyu Hlaing @ Singapore Airline Dinner

Mr. K. Chandra Mohan from Singapore presing ISO certificate to MD U Htoo Min Myat Golden Spirit Co., Ltd.

Lolane staff members @ Lolane Hair Show

Ma Aye Hnin Phyu @ Korean Beauty Credits Shop Opening

Owner's family @ Myauk Kyun Thu Silk Wear Opening

Ko Min Thu Wai, Ma May Phyo Khine and Ko Ko Aung @ Colorful Myanmar Handicrafts shop opening

Hla Myo Thinzar Nwe @ First Musical Show

Model @ Lolane Hair Show

Ma Mya Thuzar Maung and Ma May Phyo Khine @ Colorful Myanmar Handicrafts shop opening

DOMESTIC FLIGHT SCHEDULES

YANGON TO NAY PYI TAW

Days	Flight	Dep	Arr
MON	6T 111	07:00	07:55
	UB-A1	07:45	08:45
	UB-B1	11:30	12:30
	UB-C1	16:00	17:00
TUE	UB-A1	07:45	08:45
	UB-B1	11:30	12:30
	UB-C1	16:00	17:00
WED	UB-A1	07:45	08:45
	UB-B1	11:30	12:30
	UB-C1	16:00	17:00
THUR	UB-A1	07:45	08:45
	UB-B1	11:30	12:30
	UB-C1	16:00	17:00
FRI	6T 111	14:15	15:10
	UB-A1	07:45	08:45
	UB-B1	11:30	12:30
	UB-C1	16:00	17:00
SAT	UB-A1	08:00	09:00
SUN	UB-A1	15:30	16:30

NAY PYI TAW TO YANGON

Days	Flight	Dep	Arr
MON	6T 112	08:15	09:10
	UB-A2	09:15	10:15
	UB-B2	13:00	14:00
	UB-C2	17:30	18:30
TUE	UB-A2	09:15	10:15
	UB-B2	13:00	14:00
	UB-C2	17:30	18:30
WED	UB-A2	09:15	10:15
	UB-B2	13:00	14:00
	UB-C2	17:30	18:30
THUR	UB-A2	09:15	10:15
	UB-B2	13:00	14:00
	UB-C2	17:30	18:30
FRI	6T 112	17:05	18:00
	UB-A2	09:15	10:15
	UB-B2	13:00	14:00
	UB-C2	17:30	18:30
SAT	UB-A2	10:00	11:00
SUN	UB-A2	17:00	18:00

YANGON TO MANDALAY

Days	Flight	Dep	Arr
MON	W9 205	06:00	07:25
	YJ 891	06:15	08:20
	6T 401	06:20	08:25
	K7 222	06:20	08:35
	YJ 909	06:30	07:55
	W9 143	07:00	09:05
	W9 011	07:30	08:30
	YJ 911	09:15	10:40
	W9 119	10:30	12:55
	W9 014	11:00	12:00
	YJ 761	11:00	12:55
	YH 727	11:00	12:55
	K7 824	12:15	14:20
	K7 622	14:00	15:25
	W9 109	14:30	16:10
	YH 731	15:00	16:55
	YJ 791	15:00	16:55
	6T 501	15:30	17:30
	W9 211	16:00	17:25
TUE	W9 205	06:00	07:25
	YJ 891	06:15	08:20
	6T 401	06:20	08:25
	K7 222	06:20	08:35
	YJ 909	06:30	07:55
	W9 143	07:00	09:05
	W9 011	07:30	08:30
	W9 251	10:30	11:55
	W9 014	11:00	12:00
	YJ 761	11:00	12:55
	YH 729	11:00	12:25
	YH 725	11:00	14:00
	K7 622	14:00	15:25
	6T 501	14:15	16:15
	W9 109	14:30	16:10
	YJ 791	14:30	16:25
	YH 731	15:00	16:55
	W9 211	16:00	17:25
WED	W9 205	06:00	07:25
	YJ 891	06:15	08:20
	K7 222	06:20	08:35
	6T 401	06:20	08:25
	YJ 909	06:30	07:55
	6T 331	07:00	08:25
	W9 143	07:00	09:05
	W9 011	07:30	08:30
	YJ 911	09:15	10:40
	W9 119	10:30	12:55
	W9 7751	11:00	12:25
	YJ 751	11:00	12:55
	YH 737	11:00	12:55
	K7 824	12:15	14:20
	K7 622	14:00	15:25
	YH 731	15:00	16:55
	YJ 791	15:00	16:55
	6T 501	15:30	17:30
	W9 129	15:45	17:40
THUR	W9 205	06:00	07:25
	YJ 201	06:00	07:25
	YJ 891	06:15	08:20
	6T 401	06:20	08:25
	K7 222	06:20	08:35
	YJ 909	06:30	07:55
	W9 143	07:00	09:05
	W9 011	07:30	08:30
	W9 112	10:30	12:25
	W9 014	11:00	12:00
	YJ 761	11:00	12:55
	YH 729	11:00	12:25
	K7 226	12:30	13:55
	K7 622	14:00	15:25
	6T 501	14:15	16:15
	YH 731	15:00	16:55
	W9 129	15:45	17:40
FRI	W9 205	06:00	07:25
	YJ 891	06:15	08:20
	6T 401	06:20	08:25
	K7 222	06:20	08:35
	YJ 909	06:30	07:55
	W9 143	07:00	09:05
	W9 011	07:30	08:30
	W9 014	11:00	12:00
	YJ 911	09:15	10:40
	W9 119	10:30	12:55
	W9 7751	11:00	12:25
	YJ 751	11:00	12:55
	YH 737	11:00	13:10
	W9 116	11:45	13:40
	K7 622	14:00	15:25
	YH 731	15:00	16:55
	6T 501	15:15	17:15
	W9 129	15:45	17:40
SAT	W9 205	06:00	07:25
	YJ 891	06:15	08:20
	6T 401	06:20	08:25
	K7 222	06:20	08:35
	YJ 909	06:30	07:55
	W9 143	07:00	09:05
	W9 011	07:30	08:30
	YJ 761	11:00	12:55
	YH 729	11:00	12:25
	YJ 892	08:35	10:30
	6T 402	08:48	10:53
	W9 011	08:50	10:30
	K7 223	09:10	11:30
	YJ 909	06:30	07:55
	6T 341	06:30	07:55
	W9 143	07:00	09:05
	W9 011	07:30	08:30
	W9 014	11:00	12:00
	W9 7751	11:00	12:25
	YJ 751	11:00	12:55
	YH 727	11:00	12:25
	W9 116	11:45	13:40
	K7 824	12:15	14:20
	W9 255	13:00	14:25
	K7 622	14:00	15:25
	6T 501	14:15	16:15
	W9 109	14:30	16:10
	YJ 791	14:30	16:25
	YH 731	15:00	16:55
	W9 211	16:00	17:25
SAT	W9 205	06:00	07:25
	YJ 891	06:15	08:20
	6T 401	06:20	08:25
	K7 222	06:20	08:35
	YJ 909	06:30	07:55
	6T 341	06:30	07:55
	W9 143	07:00	09:05
	W9 011	07:30	08:30
	W9 119	10:30	12:55
	YJ 601	10:45	12:10
	W977601	10:45	12:10
	W9 009	11:00	12:40
	YJ 761	11:00	12:55
	YH 729	11:00	12:25
	K7 622	14:00	15:25
	W9 109	14:30	16:10
	YH 731	15:00	16:55
	6T 501	15:00	17:00
	W9 211	16:00	17:25
SUN	W9 205	06:00	07:25
	YJ 211	06:00	07:25
	YH 917	06:10	08:30
	YJ 891	06:15	08:20
	6T 401	06:20	08:25
	K7 222	06:20	08:35
	YJ 909	06:30	07:55
	6T 403	06:45	08:50
	W9 143	07:00	09:05
	W9 011	07:30	08:30
	W9 251	10:30	11:55
	W9 014	11:00	12:00
	W9 7751	11:00	12:25
	YJ 751	11:00	12:55
	YH 737	11:00	13:10
	YH 737	11:00	13:10
	W9 116	11:45	13:40
	K7 622	14:00	15:25
	YH 731	15:00	16:55
	6T 501	15:15	17:15
	W9 129	15:45	17:40

MANDALAY TO YANGON

Days	Flight	Dep	Arr
MON	W9 205	07:40	09:45
	YH 918	08:35	10:30
	YJ 892	08:35	10:30
	6T 402	08:48	10:53
	W9 011	08:50	10:30
	K7 223	09:10	11:30
	W9 143	09:20	10:45
	W9 015	12:20	13:20
	W9 109	16:30	17:30
	YH 728	16:30	17:55
	YJ 762	16:35	18:00
	W9 120	16:40	18:05
	YJ 792	17:10	19:15
	W9 211	17:40	19:45
	6T 502	17:50	19:55
	K7 623	18:40	20:05
TUE	YH 730	07:20	18:45
	W9 205	07:40	09:45
	YH 918	08:35	10:30
	YJ 892	08:35	10:30
	6T 402	08:48	10:53
	W9 011	08:50	10:30
	K7 223	09:10	11:30
	W9 143	09:20	10:45
	W9 015	12:20	13:20
	6T 502	16:15	18:40
	W9 109	16:30	17:30
	YJ 762	16:35	18:00
	6T 502	16:35	18:40
	YJ 792	16:40	18:45
	W9 252	17:35	19:00
	W9 211	17:40	19:45
	K7 623	18:40	20:05
WED	W9 205	07:40	09:45
	YH 918	08:35	10:30
	YJ 892	08:35	10:30
	6T 332	08:45	10:10
	6T 402	08:48	10:53
	W9 011	08:50	10:30
	K7 223	09:10	11:30
	W9 143	09:20	10:45
	W9 120	16:40	18:05
	YH 738	17:10	18:35
	YJ 792	17:10	19:15
	YJ 752	17:50	19:15
	W9 7752	17:50	19:15
	6T 502	17:50	19:55
	W9 129	17:55	20:00
	K7 623	18:40	20:05
THUR	W9 205	07:40	09:45
	YH 918	08:35	10:30
	YJ 892	08:35	10:30
	6T 402	08:48	10:53
	W9 011	08:50	10:30
	K7 223	09:10	11:30
	W9 143	09:20	10:45
	W9 015	12:20	13:20
	W9 109	16:30	17:30
	YH 728	16:30	17:55
	YJ 762	16:35	18:00
	W9 120	16:40	18:05
	YJ 792	17:10	19:15
	W9 211	17:40	19:45
	6T 502	17:50	19:55
	K7 623	18:40	20:05
FRI	W9 205	07:40	09:45
	YH 918	08:35	10:30
	YJ 892	08:35	10:30
	6T 402	08:48	10:53
	W9 011	08:50	10:30
	K7 223	09:10	11:30
	W9 143	09:20	10:45
	W9 009	13:00	14:00
	W9 109	16:30	17:30
	YJ 762	16:35	18:00
	W9 120	16:40	18:05
	YJ 602	17:05	19:10
	W977602	17:05	19:10
	YH 730	17:20	18:45
	6T 502	17:20	19:25
	W9 211	17:40	19:45
SUN	W9 205	07:40	09:45
	YH 918	08:35	10:30
	YJ 892	08:35	10:30
	6T 402	08:48	10:53
	W9 011	08:50	10:30
	6T 404	09:10	10:35
	K7 223	09:10	11:30
	W9 143	09:20	10:45
	YJ 212	11:00	12:25
	W9 015	12:20	13:20
	YJ 502	16:35	18:40
	YH 738	17:10	18:35
	W9 117	17:20	18:45
	W9 252	17:35	19:00
	6T 502	17:35	19:40
	YJ 752	17:50	19:15
	W9 7752	17:50	19:15
	W9 129	17:55	20:00
	K7 623	18:40	20:05

YANGON TO NYAUNG U

Days	Flight	Dep	Arr
MON	YJ 901	06:00	07:20
	W9 205	06:00	08:10
	YH 917	06:15	07:35
	YJ 891	06:15	07:35
	6T 401	06:20	07:40
	K7 222	06:20	07:40
	W9 141	06:30	07:50
	W9 143	07:00	08:20
	6T 501	15:30	18:20
	W9 211	16:00	18:10
TUE	W9 205	06:00	08:10
	YH 917	06:15	07:35
	YJ 891	06:15	07:35
	6T 401	06:20	07:40
	K7 222	06:20	07:40
	W9 141	06:30	07:50
	W9 143	07:00	08:20
	YH 711	10:30	12:35
	6T 501	14:15	17:05
	W9 211	16:00	18:10
WED	YJ 901	06:00	07:20
	W9 205	06:00	08:10
	YH 917	06:15	07:35
	YJ 891	06:15	07:35
	6T 401	06:20	07:40
	K7 222	06:20	07:40
	W9 141	06:30	07:50
	W9 143	07:00	08:20
	YH 711	10:30	12:35
	6T 501	14:15	17:05
	W9 129	15:45	18:25
THUR	W9 205	06:00	08:10
	YH 917	06:15	07:35
	YJ 891	06:15	07:35
	6T 401	06:20	07:40
	K7 222	06:20	07:40
	W9 141	06:30	07:50
	W9 143	07:00	08:20
	YH 711	10:30	12:35
	6T 501	14:15	17:05
	W9 129	15:45	18:25
FRI	W9 205	06:00	08:10
	YH 917	06:15	07:35
	YJ 891	06:15	07:35
	6T 401	06:20	07:40
	K7 222	06:20	07:40
	W9 141	06:30	07:50
	W9 143	07:00	08:20
	6T 501	14:15	17:05
	W9 211	16:00	18:10
SAT	W9 205	06:00	08:10
	YH 917	06:15	07:35
	YJ 891	06:15	07:35
	6T 401	06:20	07:40
	K7 222	06:20	07:40
	W9 141	06:30	07:50
	W9 143	07:00	08:20
	6T 501	14:15	17:05
	W9 129	15:45	18:25
SUN	W9 205	07:40	09:45
	YH 918	08:35	10:30
	YJ 892	08:35	10:30
	6T 402	08:48	10:53
	W9 011	08:50	10:30
	6T 404	09:10	10:35
	K7 223	09:10	11:30
	W9 143	09:20	10:45
	YJ 212	11:00	12:25
	W9 015	12:20	13:20
	YJ 502	16:35	18:40
	YH 738	17:10	18:35
	W9 117	17:20	18:45
	W9 252	17:35	19:00
	6T 502	17:35	19:40
	YJ 752	17:50	19:15
	W9 7752	17:50	19:15
	W9 129	17:55	20:00
	K7 623	18:40	20:05

YANGON TO MYITKYINA

Days	Flight	Dep	Arr
MON	K7 622	14:00	16:55
TUE	W9 251	10:30	13:25
	K7 622	14:00	16:55
WED	K7 622	14:00	16:55
THUR	YJ 201	06:00	08:50
	W9 112	10:30	16:40
	K7 622	14:00	16:55
FRI	YJ 211	06:30	09:20
	W9 255	13:00	15:55
	K7 622	14:00	16:55
SAT	K7 622	14:00	16:55
SUN	YJ 211	06:00	08:50
	W9 251	10:30	13:25
	K7 622	14:00	16:55

MYITKYINA TO YANGON

Days	Flight	Dep	Arr
MON	K7 623	17:10	20:05
TUE	W9 252	16:05	19:00
	K7 623	17:10	20:05
WED	K7 623	17:10	20:05
THUR	YJ 202	09:05	11:55
	W9 113	17:00	19:55
	K7 623	17:10	20:05
FRI	W9 256	16:15	19:10
	K7 623	17:10	20:05
SAT	K7 623	17:10	20:05
SUN	W9 252	16:05	19:00
	K7 623	17:10	20:05

YANGON TO HEHO

Days	Flight	Dep	Arr
MON	6T 401	06:20	09:23
	W9 141	06:30	08:45
	W9 011	07:30	09:15
	W9 119	10:30	11:40
	YJ 761	11:00	12:10
	K7 824	12:15	13:30
	W9 109	14:30	15:25
	YJ 791	15:00	16:10
	YH 731	15:00	16:10
	6T 501	15:30	16:40
TUE	6T 401	06:20	09:23
	W9 141	06:30	08:45
	W9 011	07:30	09:15
	YJ 761	11:00	12:10
	K7 826	12:30	13:45
	6T 501	14:15	15:25
	W9 109	14:30	15:25
	YJ 791	14:30	15:40
	YH 731	15:00	16:10
WED	6T 401	06:20	09:23
	W9 141	06:30	08:45
	W9 011	07:30	09:15
	W9 119	10:30	11:40
	W9 7751	11:00	12:10
	YJ 751	11:00	12:10
	K7 824	12:15	13:30
	YJ 791	15:00	16:10
	YH 731	15:00	16:10
	6T 501	15:30	16:40
	W9 129	15:45	16:55
THUR	6T 401	06:20	09:23
	W9 141	06:30	08:45
	W9 011	07:30	09:15
	W9 112	10:30	11:40
	YJ 761	11:00	12:10
	6T 501	14:15	15:25
	YH 731	15:00	16:10
	W9 129	15:45	16:55
FRI	6T 401	06:20	09:23
	W9 141	06:30	08:45
	W9 011	07:30	09:15
	YJ 751	11:00	12:10
	W9 7751	11:00	12:10
	W9 116	11:45	12:55
	K7 824	12:15	13:30
	6T 501	14:15	15:25
	W9 109	14:30	15:25
	YJ 791	14:30	15:40
	YH 731	15:00	16:10
SAT	6T 401	06:20	09:23
	W9 141	06:30	08:45
	W9 011	07:30	09:15
	W9 119	10:30	11:40
	6T 451	10:45	13:00
	YJ 761	11:00	12:10
	K7 826	12:30	13:45
	W9 109	14:30	15:25
	6T 501	15:00	16:10
	YH 731	15:00	16:10
SUN	6T 401	06:20	09:23
	W9 141	06:30	08:45
	W9 011	07:30	09:15
	W9 7751	11:00	12:10
	YJ 751	11:00	12:10
	W9 116	11:45	12:55
	YH 731	15:00	16:10
	6T 501	15:15	16:25
	W9 129	15:45	16:55

HEHO TO YANGON

Days	Flight	Dep	Arr
MON	W9 141	09:00	11:05
	YH 918	09:20	10:30
	YJ 892	09:20	10:30
	W9 011	09:35	10:30
	6T 402	09:43	10:53
	K7 223	10:15	11:30
	YJ 912	12:35	14:45
	W9 109	15:45	17:35
	YJ 762	15:50	18:00
	W9 120	15:55	18:05
	6T 501	16:55	19:55
	K7 825	18:10	19:25
TUE	W9 141	09:00	11:05
	YH 918	09:20	10:30
	YJ 892	09:20	10:30
	W9 011	09:35	10:30
	6T 402	09:43	10:53
	K7 223	10:15	11:30
	YJ 912	12:35	14:45
	W9 120	15:55	18:05
	6T 501	16:55	19:55
	W9 129	17:10	20:00
	K7 825	18:10	19:25
WED	W9 141	09:00	11:05
	YH 918	09:20	10:30
	YJ 892	09:20	10:30
	W9 011	09:35	10:30
	6T 402	09:43	10:53
	K7 223	10:15	11:30
	YJ 912	12:35	14:45
	W9 120	15:55	18:05
	6T 501	16:55	19:55
	W9 129	17:10	20:00
	K7 825	18:10	19:25
THUR	W9 141	09:00	11:05
	YH 918	09:15	10:25
	YJ 892	09:20	10:30
	W9 011	09:35	10:30
	6T 402	09:43	10:53
	K7 223	10:15	11:30
	W9 113	11:55	19:55
	6T 501	15:40	18:40
	YJ 762	15:50	18:00
	W9 129	17:10	20:00

Domestic

6T = Air Mandalay
W9 = Air Bagan
YJ = Asian Wings
K7 = AIR KBZ
YH = Yangon Airways
UB = FMI UB Charter

Subject to change without notice

Days	Flight	Dep	Arr
FRI	W9 141	09:00	11:05
	6T 306	09:10	10:20
	YH 918	09:20	10:30
	YJ 892	09:20	10:30
	6T 552	09:30	10:40
	W9 011	09:35	10:30
	6T 402	09:43	10:53
	K7 223	10:15	11:30
	6T 501	15:40	18:40
	W9 109	15:45	17:35
	W9 117	16:35	18:45
	K7 825	18:10	19:25
SAT	W9 141	09:00	11:05
	YH 918	09:20	10:30
	YJ 892	09:20	10:30
	W9 011	09:35	10:30
	6T 402	09:43	10:53
	K7 223	10:15	11:30
	6T 452	13:15	14:25
	W9 109	15:45	17:35
	YJ 762	15:50	18:00
	W9 120	15:55	18:05
	6T 501	16:25	19:25
	K7 827	16:30	17:45
SUN	W9 141	09:00	11:05
	YH 918	09:20	10:30
	YJ 892	09:20	10:30
	W9 011	09:35	10:30
	6T 402	09:43	10:53
	K7 223	10:15	11:30
	W9 117	16:35	18:45
	6T 501	16:40	19:40
	W9 129	17:10	20:00

YANGON TO SITTWE

Days	Flight	Dep	Arr
MON	6T 607	11:15	12:40
	W9 309	11:30	13:15
TUE	6T 611	07:30	08:55
	W9 309	11:30	13:15
	W9 311	14:00	15:25
WED	6T 607	11:15	12:40
	W9 309	11:30	13:15
THRU	6T 611	07:30	08:55
	W9 309	11:30	13:15
	W9 311	14:00	15:25
FRI	6T 611	07:30	08:55
	W9 309	11:30	13:15
SAT	6T 605	11:30	13:30
	W9 309	11:30	13:15
SUN	6T 605	11:00	13:00
	W9 309	11:30	13:15
	K7 422	12:30	14:25

SITTWE TO YANGON

Days	Flight	Dep	Arr
MON	6T 608	13:00	15:00
	W9 310	13:30	15:15
TUE	6T 612	09:15	10:40
	W9 310	13:30	15:15
	W9 311	15:40	17:25
WED	6T 608	13:00	15:00
	W9 310	13:30	15:15
THUR	6T 612	09:15	10:40
	W9 310	13:30	15:15
	W9 311	15:40	17:25
FRI	6T 612	09:15	10:40
	W9 310	13:30	15:15
SAT	W9 310	13:30	15:15
	6T 606	13:50	15:15
SUN	6T 606	13:20	14:45
	W9 310	13:30	15:15
	K7 423	14:40	16:35

YANGON TO MYEIK

Days	Flight	Dep	Arr
MON	K7 319	06:30	08:35
	6T 707	11:30	13:30
	W9 333	11:30	13:35
TUE	K7 319	06:30	08:35
	YJ 301	07:00	09:05
WED	K7 319	06:30	08:35
	6T 707	11:30	13:30
	W9 333	11:30	13:35
THUR	K7 319	06:30	08:35
	6T 707	11:30	13:30
	YJ 301	12:15	14:20
FRI	K7 319	06:30	08:35
SAT	K7 319	06:30	08:35
	W9 333	11:30	13:35
SUN	K7 319	06:30	08:35
	6T 707	11:30	13:30
	YJ 301	12:45	14:50

MYEIK TO YANGON

Days	Flight	Dep	Arr
MON	K7 320	11:00	13:05
	W9 334	15:50	17:55
	6T 708	15:55	17:55
TUE	K7 320	11:00	13:05
	YJ 302	11:20	13:25
WED	K7 320	11:00	13:05
	W9 334	15:50	17:55
	6T 708	15:55	17:55
THUR	K7 320	11:00	13:05
	6T 708	15:55	17:55
	YJ 302	16:35	18:40
FRI	K7 320	11:00	13:05
SAT	K7 320	11:00	13:05
	W9 334	15:50	17:55
SUN	K7 320	11:00	13:05
	6T 708	15:55	17:55

Finding bits of Myanmar while on a visit to India

By Maw Maw San

HAVE you ever stood in front of an immigration officer at an airport with nothing in your hands except your passport? When I say nothing, I mean no small luggage, no backpack, not even a purse.

I can say that I have. It sounds ridiculous but it's true. I found myself in that position last month at Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport.

The reason was because my backpack was very heavy, so my kind-hearted travel companion offered to carry it inside her small wheeled suitcase, after which we queued in different lines at immigration.

I didn't realise this might be a problem, but then the people in front of me were pushed away because they did not have supporting letters or recommendations for their visit.

Only then did I start to worry, when I realised that my supporting letters were in my backpack. I also had a journalist visa – a red flag for immigration officials – because I was in India to attend a conference organised by the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers

I frantically looked for my companion, but she was far away and was also busy answering questions from her officer.

When my turn came I tried my best to look confident. I stared directly into the eyes of the immigration officer and answered his questions with a smile, even though inside I was choking with nervousness.

Luckily I made it through without too many questions. After that ordeal, I was able to enjoy the three-hour drive from Mumbai to the city of Pune, where the conference took place.

I fell in love with Pune as soon as I saw the view from my room on the 18th floor of Marriot Hotel. Surrounded by beautiful hills, it reminded me of Pyin Oo Lwin in Myanmar.

When we weren't engaged in training sessions, we set out to explore the city. Our first destination was the famous shopping district, Phadthare Chowk. Our tuk-tuk travelled so fast – the driver weaving around motorcycles, bicycles, cars, buses and pedestrians – that we sometimes screamed in fear.

Our visit occurred during a Hindu festival, so the everything was decorated with electric lights and plenty of loud music was playing, similar to Thandingyut in Myanmar. There were food stalls everywhere, and we tried many delicious snacks whose names we could not pronounce or remember.

The next day we visited a famous shrine to Ganesh, the elephant-headed Hindu deity who represents wisdom and literature. Our guide said he is also revered as the Lord of Beginnings and Remover of Obstacles, the patron of arts and sciences, and the deva of intellect and wisdom.

There was a long line of people waiting to pray at the shrine, but our guide helped us skip ahead as honoured guests. We prayed and we were told that Ganesh loved us, which was why we were given this fabulous opportunity.

We also visited the Raja Dinkar Kelkar Museum, "a collection of about 21,000 priceless artifacts which mirror the everyday life of India", according to the museum's website. These include textiles, statues, wooden and ivory utensils, and ornaments made of silver, gold and ivory. Many of them were similar in design to what can be found in Myanmar, including the betel nut crackers.

Our next destination was Shaniwarwada Fort, built in 1746. It was the seat of the Peshwa rulers of the Maratha Empire until 1818, when the Peshwas surrendered to the British. The fort itself was largely destroyed by fire in 1828, but the surviving structures are maintained as a tourist site. It is also considered one of the most haunted sites in India.

Even though the fort is located in the busy centre of the town, the atmosphere inside is very peaceful, and there were people relaxing under the shady trees.

There is also a fountain shaped like a 16-petal lotus flower, and each petal had 16 water jets with an 80-foot arch. At night it is illuminated, and people come from across the country come to enjoy it.

It was a beautiful sight, and I was happy that even though my trip started with a somewhat nerve-wracking experience, I was able to enjoy what Pune had to offer.

Domestic Airlines

Air Bagan Ltd.(W9)
56, Shwe Taung Gyar Street, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel : 513322, 513422, 504888, Fax : 515102

Air KBZ (K7)
33-49,Corner of Bank Street & Maha Bandoola Garden Street, Kyauktada Tsp,Yangon, Myanmar Tel: 372977~80, 533030~39 (Airport) Fax: 372983

Air Mandalay (6T)
146, Dhamazedi Road, Bahan Tsp, Yangon Tel : 501520, 525488 (Head Office) 720309, 652753, 652754 (Airport Office), Fax: 525 937

Asian Wings (AW)
No.34(A-1), Shwe Taung Gyar Street, Bahan Township,Yangon. Myanmar. Tel: 951 516654, 532253, 09-731-35991~3.Fax: 951 532333

Yangon Airways(YH)
166, MMB Tower, Level 5, Upper Pansodan Rd, Mingalar Taung-nyunt Tsp, Yangon. Tel: (+95-1) 383 100, 383 107, 700 264, Fax: 652 533.

Pythons and floating homes in Cambodia

By Aung Si Hein

TRAVELLING through Southeast Asia by bus is a thrilling experience that freshens the mind and helps destroy misconceptions about different parts of the region.

I recently had the chance to take such a journey with the China-ASEAN International Touring Assembly, which takes delegates through the region every year in support of the China-ASEAN Expo.

Along the way the group explored major urban centres such as Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur, but I was less interested in seeing metropolitan areas than in observing life in the countryside.

One member of the tour group, Dr Ling Tung King, echoed my thoughts when he said that "everywhere cities have the same features, with high buildings, flyovers and colourful lights at night".

But the countryside throughout Southeast Asia is much more diverse and appealing, he said, adding that we were lucky that places like Tonle Sap lake in Cambodia were on our travel itinerary.

"Tonle Sap Lake is a real place where we can see how the people there are living," he said.

His comments really piqued my interest, and I was looking forward to visiting the lake, which I imagined was far removed from the dreariness of city life.

Located near the town of Siem Reap, Tonle Sap is the biggest freshwater lake in Southeast Asia. It is usually reached by taking a boat along a canal that empties into the main body of water.

The lake even boasts a floating village called Chong Kneas, which is similar in some ways to villages on Inle Lake in Myanmar's Shan State.

But while the houses on Inle Lake are set on wood pilings driven deep into the lake bed, many of the houses at Tonle Sap actually float, so they can be moved from one place to another to compensate for the changing size of the lake between monsoon and dry seasons.

There is even a moveable Roman Catholic Church, which can change locations so it is accessible to all the Catholic believers around the lake.

Kids carry a python at Tonle Sap lake in Cambodia. *Pic: Douglas Long*

Another difference is that whereas Inle dwellers make their living from both fishing and tending floating gardens, those at Tonle Sap rely solely on fishing.

Our boat made its way through the canal and then headed across the open water of the lake. As we approached Chong Kneas village, another small boat came alongside. Onboard were three children and their father, who was madly rowing to keep up with our engine-powered vessel.

One of the children had a huge python draped around his neck. He showed off his pet, then asked us for money. Many were quire generous and dropped cash into the smaller boat.

They finally broke away from our boat, but when we reached a floating souvenir shop at the village, we saw several more children carrying pythons around their necks.

They swarmed around us for a few minutes, and then to our amazement they suddenly jumped into their own boats and, in a tempestuous rush, quickly rowed completely out of sight.

A moment later we understood why, when another boat carrying three policemen roared into the turbulent water left behind by the frantic rowing of the kids. The policemen did not appear to be too serious, though, and in fact were all smiling as they motored past our group.

As we enjoyed our tour around Tonle Sap, I told Dr Ling about how I had actually missed visiting Singapore because I had not procured a visa for that country in advance. So, when the rest of the group entered the country, I had to wait across the border in the Malaysian town of Johor Bahru until they returned.

"Singapore is only good for children," Dr Ling said. "The last time I went there I took my children along. That was enough for me."

Then he quickly steered the conversation away from cities and back to his appreciation of rural areas, and particularly the rich lake in Cambodia from which he clearly drew such inspiration.

International Airlines

Air Asia (FD)
33, Alan Pya Pagoda Rd, Ground Flr, Parkroyal Hotel, Yangon. Tel: 251 885, 251 886.

Air Bagan Ltd.(W9)
56, Shwe Taung Gyar Street, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel : 513322, 513422, 504888, Fax : 515102

Air China (CA)
Building (2), corner of Pyay Rd and Kaba Aye Pagoda Rd, Hotel Yangon, 8 miles, Yangon, Myanmar. Tel : 666112, 655882.

Air India
75, Shwe Bon Thar St, Pabedan Tsp, Yangon. Tel : 253597~98, 254758. Fax: 248175

Bangkok Airways (PG)
#0305, 3rd Fl, Sakura Tower, 339, Bogyoke Aung San Rd, Kyauktada Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 255122, 255 265, Fax: 255119

Malaysia Airlines (MH)
335/357, Bogyoke Aung San Rd, Pabedan Tsp, Yangon. Tel : 387648, 241007 ext : 120, 121, 122 Fax : 241124

Myanmar Airways International(8M)
08-02, Sakura Tower, 339, Bogyoke Aung San Rd, Kyauktada Tsp, Ygn. Tel : 255260, Fax: 255305

Silk Air(MI)
339, Bogyoke Aung San Rd, 2nd Floor, Sakura Tower, Kyauktada Tsp, Yangon, Myanmar. Tel: 255 287~9 , Fax: 255 290

Thai Airways (TG)
Room No. 1101, Sakura Tower, 339, Bogyoke Aung San Rd, Kyauktada Tsp, Ygn. Tel : 255491~6 Fax : 255223

Vietnam Airlines (VN)
#1702, Sakura Tower 339, Bogyoke Aung San Rd, Kyauktada Tsp, Yangon. Fax 255086. Tel 255066/ 255088/ 255068.

INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT SCHEDULES

YANGON TO BANGKOK

DAYS	Flight	Dep	Arr
MON	PG 706	07:15	09:30
	FD 3771	08:35	10:20
	8M 335	08:40	10:25
	TG 304	09:50	11:45
	PG 702	10:45	12:40
	TG 302	14:55	16:50
	8M 331	16:30	18:15
	FD 3773	18:05	19:55
	PG 704	18:45	20:40
	TG 306	19:45	21:40
TUE	PG 706	07:15	09:30
	FD 3771	08:35	10:20
	8M 335	08:40	10:25
	TG 304	09:50	11:45
	PG 702	10:45	12:40
	TG 302	14:55	16:50
	8M 331	16:30	18:15
	FD 3773	18:05	19:55
	PG 704	18:45	20:40
	TG 306	19:45	21:40
WED	PG 706	07:15	09:30
	FD 3771	08:35	10:20
	8M 335	08:40	10:25
	TG 304	09:50	11:45
	PG 702	10:45	12:40
	TG 302	14:55	16:50
	8M 331	16:30	18:15
	FD 3773	18:05	19:55
	PG 704	18:45	20:40
	TG 306	19:45	21:40
THUR	PG 706	07:15	09:30
	FD 3771	08:35	10:20
	8M 335	08:40	10:25
	TG 304	09:50	11:45
	PG 702	10:45	12:40
	TG 302	14:55	16:50
	8M 331	16:30	18:15
	FD 3773	18:05	19:55
	PG 704	18:45	20:40
	TG 306	19:45	21:40
FRI	PG 706	07:15	09:30
	FD 3771	08:35	10:20
	8M 335	08:40	10:25
	TG 304	09:50	11:45
	PG 702	10:45	12:40
	TG 302	14:55	16:50
	8M 331	16:30	18:15
	FD 3773	18:05	19:55
	PG 704	18:45	20:40
	TG 306	19:45	21:40
SAT	PG 706	07:15	09:30
	FD 3771	08:35	10:20
	8M 335	08:40	10:25
	TG 304	09:50	11:45
	PG 702	10:45	12:40
	TG 302	14:55	16:50
	8M 331	16:30	18:15
	FD 3773	18:05	19:55
	PG 704	18:45	20:40
	TG 306	19:45	21:40
SUN	PG 706	07:15	09:30
	FD 3771	08:35	10:20
	8M 335	08:40	10:25
	TG 304	09:50	11:45
	PG 702	10:45	12:40
	TG 302	14:55	16:50
	8M 331	16:30	18:15
	FD 3773	18:05	19:55
	PG 704	18:45	20:40
	TG 306	19:45	21:40

YANGON TO SINGAPORE

DAYS	Flight	Dep	Arr
MON	MI 509	00:25	05:00
	8M 231	08:30	13:00
	SQ 997	10:25	14:45
	8M 6232	11:30	16:05
	3K 586	11:30	16:05
	MI 517	16:40	21:15
TUE	8M 231	08:30	13:00
	SQ 997	10:25	14:45
	MI 517	16:40	21:15
WED	8M 231	08:30	13:00
	SQ 997	10:25	14:45
	8M 6232	11:30	16:05
	3K 586	11:30	16:05
	MI 517	16:40	21:15
THUR	8M 231	08:30	13:00
	SQ 997	10:25	14:45
	8M 6232	11:40	16:25
	MI 517	16:40	21:15
FRI	8M 231	08:30	13:00
	SQ 997	10:25	14:45
	8M 6232	11:40	16:25
	3K 586	11:30	16:05
	8M 233	13:45	18:15
	MI 517	16:40	21:15
SAT	8M 231	08:30	13:00
	SQ 997	10:25	14:45
	8M 6232	11:40	16:25
	3K 586	11:30	16:05
	8M 233	13:45	18:15
	MI 517	16:40	21:15
	MI 509	00:25	05:00
SUN	8M 231	08:30	13:00
	SQ 997	10:25	14:45
	8M 233	13:45	18:15
	MI 517	16:40	21:15

YANGON TO KUALA LUMPUR

DAYS	Flight	Dep	Arr
MON	AK 859	08:30	12:50
	8M 501	08:55	12:55
	MH 741	12:15	16:30
	AK 851	18:50	23:05
TUE	AK 859	08:30	12:50
	8M 501	08:55	12:55
	MH 741	12:15	16:30
	AK 851	18:50	23:05
WED	AK 859	08:30	12:50
	8M 501	08:55	12:55
	MH 741	12:15	16:30
	AK 851	18:50	23:05
THUR	AK 859	08:30	12:50
	8M 501	08:55	12:55
	MH 741	12:15	16:30
	AK 851	18:50	23:05
FRI	AK 859	08:30	12:50
	8M 501	08:55	12:55
	MH 741	12:15	16:30
	AK 851	18:50	23:05
SAT	AK 859	08:30	12:50
	8M 501	08:55	12:55
	MH 741	12:15	16:30
	AK 851	18:50	23:05
SUN	AK 859	08:30	12:50
	8M 501	08:55	12:55
	MH 741	12:15	16:30
	AK 851	18:50	23:05

YANGON TO GAUNGZHOU

DAYS	Flight	Dep	Arr
MON	CZ 3056	18:10	22:40
TUE	8M 711	08:40	13:15
WED	CZ 3056	11:20	15:50
THUR	8M 711	08:40	13:15
FRI	CZ 3056	18:10	22:40
SAT	CZ 3056	11:20	15:50
SUN	8M 711	08:40	13:15

YANGON TO TAIPEI

DAYS	Flight	Dep	Arr
MON	CI 7916	11:00	04:35
TUE	CI 7916	11:00	04:35
WED	CI 7916	11:00	04:35
THUR	CI 7916	11:00	04:35
FRI	CI 7916	11:00	04:35
SAT	CI 7916	11:00	04:35
SUN	CI 7916	11:00	04:35

YANGON TO KUNMING

DAYS	Flight	Dep	Arr
MON	MU 2032	09:40	12:50
TUE	CA 906	14:15	17:35
WED	MU 2032	09:40	12:50
	CA 906	14:15	17:35
THUR	CA 906	14:15	17:35
SAT	CA 906	14:15	17:35
SUN	MU 2032	09:40	12:50
	CA 906	14:15	17:35

YANGON TO KOLKATA

DAYS	Flight	Dep	Arr
MON	AI 234	14:05	17:10
FRI	AI 234	14:05	17:10
	AI 228	18:45	19:45

YANGON TO CHIANG MAI

DAYS	Flight	Dep	Arr
SUN	W9 7607	14:50	16:20
THUR	W9 9607	14:50	16:20

YANGON TO HANOI

DAYS	Flight	Dep	Arr
MON	VN 956	19:10	21:30
WED	VN 956	19:10	21:30
FRI	VN 956	19:10	21:30
SAT	VN 956	19:10	21:30
SUN	VN 956	19:10	21:30

YANGON TO HO CHI MINH

DAYS	Flight	Dep	Arr
TUE	VN 942	14:25	17:10
THUR	VN 942	14:25	17:10
SUN	VN 942	14:25	17:10

YANGON TO GAYA

DAYS	Flight	Dep	Arr
MON	8M 601	09:00	10:20
	AI 234	14:05	15:25
WED	8M 601	09:00	10:20
FRI	8M 601	09:00	10:20
	AI 234	14:05	15:25
SAT	8M 601	09:00	10:20

YANGON TO DOHA

DAYS	Flight	Dep	Arr
MON	QR 619	08:00	11:45
TUE	QR 619	08:00	11:45
WED	QR 619	08:00	11:45
THUR	QR 619	08:00	11:45
FRI	QR 619	08:00	11:45
SAT	QR 619	08:00	11:45
SUN	QR 619	08:00	11:45

YANGON TO SEOUL

DAYS	Flight	Dep	Arr
TUE	KE 472	23:45	08:05+1
THUR	KE 472	23:45	08:05+1
SAT	KE 472	23:45	08:05+1
SUN	KE 472	23:45	08:05+1

YANGON TO TOKYO

DAYS	Flight	Dep	Arr
MON	NH 914	22:00	06:40
WED	NH 914	22:00	06:40
SAT	NH 914	22:00	06:40

BANGKOK TO YANGON

DAYS	Flight	Dep	Arr
MON	8M 336	06:40	07:25
	FD 3770	07:15	08:00
	TG 303	07:55	08:50
	PG 701	09:05	09:55
	TG 301	13:00	13:55
	FD 3772	16:50	17:35
	PG 703	17:05	17:55
	TG 305	17:50	18:45
	8M 332	19:20	20:05
	PG 705	20:15	21:30
TUE	8M 336	06:40	07:25
	FD 3770	07:15	08:00
	TG 303	07:55	08:50
	PG 701	09:05	09:55
	8M 336	10:40	11:25
	TG 301	13:00	13:55
	FD 3772	16:50	17:35
	PG 703	17:05	17:55
	TG 305	17:50	18:45
	8M 332	19:20	20:05
	PG 705	20:15	21:30
WED	8M 336	06:40	07:25
	FD 3770	07:15	08:00
	TG 303	07:55	08:50
	PG 701	09:05	09:55
	8M 336	10:40	11:25
	TG 301	13:00	13:55
	FD 3772	16:50	17:35
	PG 703	17:05	17:55
	TG 305	17:50	18:45
	8M 332	19:20	20:05
	PG 705	20:15	21:30
THUR	8M 336	06:40	07:25
	FD 3770	07:15	08:00
	TG 303	07:55	08:50
	PG 701	09:05	09:55
	8M 336	10:40	11:25
	TG 301	13:00	13:55
	FD 3772	16:50	17:35
	PG 703	17:05	17:55
	TG 305	17:50	18:45
	8M 332	19:20	20:05
	PG 705	20:15	21:30
FRI	8M 336	06:40	07:25
	FD 3770	07:15	08:00
	TG 303	07:55	08:50
	PG 701	09:05	09:55
	8M 336	10:40	11:25
	TG 301	13:00	13:55
	FD 3772	16:50	17:35
	PG 703	17:05	17:55
	TG 305	17:50	18:45
	8M 332	19:20	20:05
	PG 705	20:15	21:30
SAT	8M 336	06:40	07:25
	FD 3770	07:15	08:00
	TG 303	07:55	08:50
	PG 701	09:05	09:55
	8M 336	10:40	11:25
	TG 301	13:00	13:55
	FD 3772	16:50	17:35
	PG 703	17:05	17:55
	TG 305	17:50	18:45
	8M 332	19:20	20:05
	PG 705	20:15	21:30
SUN	8M 336	06:40	07:25
	FD 3770	07:15	08:00
	TG 303	07:55	08:50
	PG 701	09:05	09:55
	8M 336	10:40	11:25
	TG 301	13:00	13:55
	FD 3772	16:50	17:35
	PG 703	17:05	17:55
	TG 305	17:50	18:45
	8M 332	19:20	20:05
	PG 705	20:15	21:30

SINGAPORE TO YANGON

DAYS	Flight	Dep	Arr
MON	SQ 998	07:55	09:20
	3K 585	09:10	10:40
	8M 6231	09:10	10:40
	8M 232	14:10	15:40
	MI 518	14:20	15:45
TUE	SQ 998	07:55	09:20
	8M 232	14:10	15:40
	MI 518	14:20	15:45
WED	SQ 998	07:55	09:20
	3K 585	09:10	10:40
	8M 6231	09:10	10:40
	8M 232	14:10	15:40
	MI 518	14:20	15:45
THUR	SQ 998	07:55	09:20
	8M 6231	09:10	10:40
	8M 232	14:10	15:40
	MI 518	14:20	15:45
FRI	SQ 998	07:55	09:20
	3K 585	09:10	10:40
	8M 6231	09:10	10:40
	8M 232	14:10	15:40
	MI 518	14:20	15:45
	8M 234	19:15	20:45
	MI 520	22:10	23:35
SAT	SQ 998	07:55	09:20
	3K 585	09:10	10:40
	8M 6231	09:10	10:40
	8M 232	14:10	15:40
	MI 518	14:20	15:45
	8M 234	19:15	20:45
	MI 520	22:10	23:35
SUN	SQ 998	07:55	09:20
	8M 232	14:10	15:40
	MI 518	14:20	15:45
	8M 234	19:15	20:45
	MI 520	22:10	23:35

KAULA LUMPUR TO YANGON

DAYS	Flight	Dep	Arr
MON	AK 858	06:55	08:00
	MH 740	10:05	11:15
	8M 502	14:00	15:00
	AK 850	17:10	18:20
TUE	AK 858	06:55	08:00
	MH 740	10:05	11:15
	8M 502	14:00	15:00
	AK 850	17:10	18:20
WED	AK 858	06:55	08:00
	MH 740	10:05	11:15
	8M 502	14:00	15:00
	AK 850	17:10	18:20
THU	AK 858	06:55	08:00
	MH 740	10:05	11:15
	8M 502	14:00	15:00
	AK 850	17:10	18:20
FRI	AK 858	06:55	08:00
	MH 740	10:05	11:15
	8M 502	14:00	15:00
	AK 850	17:10	18:20
SAT	AK 858	06:55	08:00
	MH 740	10:05	11:15
	8M 502	14:00	15:00
	AK 850	17:10	18:20
SUN	AK 858	06:55	08:00
	MH 740	10:05	11:15
	8M 502	14:00	15:00
	AK 850	17:10	18:20

GUANGZHOU TO YANGON

DAYS	Flight	Dep	Arr
MON	CZ 3055	15:15	17:05
TUE	8M 712	14:15	15:50
WED	CZ 3055	08:40	10:30
THUR	8M 712	14:15	15:50
FRI	CZ 3055	15:15	17:05
SAT	CZ 3055	08:40	10:30
SUN	8M 712	14:15	15:50

TAIPEI TO YANGON

DAYS	Flight	Dep	Arr
MON	CI 7915	07:15	10:00
TUE	CI 7915	07:15	10:00
WED	CI 7915	07:15	10:00
THUR	CI 7915	07:15	10:00
FRI	CI 7915	07:15	10:00
SAT	CI 7915	07:15	10:00
SUN	CI 7915	07:15	10:00

KUNMING TO YANGON

DAYS	Flight	Dep	Arr
MON	MU 2031	08:40	09:00
TUE	CA 905	12:40	13:15
WED	CA 905	12:40	13:15
	MU 2031	08:40	09:00
THUR	CA 905	12:40	13:15
SAT	CA 905	12:40	13:15
SUN	MU 2031	08:40	09:00
	CA 905	12:40	13:15

KOLKATA TO YANGON

DAYS	Flight	Dep	Arr
MON	AI 227	10:35	13:20
FRI	AI 227	10:35	13:20
	AI 223	13:30	18:00

CHIANG MAI TO YANGON

DAYS	Flight	Dep	Arr
THUR	W9 9608	17:20	17:50
SUN	W9 9608	17:20	17:50

HANOI TO YANGON

DAYS	Flight	Dep	Arr
MON	VN 957	16:35	18:10
WED	VN 957	16:35	18:10
FRI	VN 957	16:35	18:10
SAT	VN 957	16:35	18:10
SUN	VN 957	16:35	18:10

HO CHI MINH TO YANGON

DAYS	Flight	Dep	Arr
TUE	VN 943	11:40	13:25
THUR	VN 943	11:40	13:25
SUN	VN 943	11:40	13:25

GAYA TO YANGON

DAYS	Flight	Dep	Arr
MON	8M 602	11:20	14:30
WED	8M 602	11:20	14:30
FRI	8M 602	11:20	14:30
	AI 233	15:00	18:00
SAT	8M 602	11:20	14:30

DOHA TO YANGON

DAYS	Flight	Dep	Arr
MON	QR 618	21:05	07:35
TUE	QR 618	21:05	07:35
WED	QR 618	21:05	07:35
THUR	QR 618	21:05	07:35
FRI	QR 618	21:05	07:35
SAT	QR 618	21:05	07:35
SUN	QR 618	21:05	07:35

SEOUL TO YANGON

DAYS	Flight	Dep	Arr
TUE	KE 471	18:40	22:15
THUR	KE 471	18:40	22:15
SAT	KE 471	18:40	22:15
SUN	KE 471	18:40	22:15

TOKYO TO YANGON

DAYS	Flight	Dep	Arr
MON	NH 913	11:10	17:05
WED	NH 913	11:10	17:05
SAT	NH 913	11:10	17:05

International

FD & AK = Air Asia	CA = Air China
TG = Thai Airways	IC = Indian Airlines Limited
8M = Myanmar Airways International	W9 = Air Bagan
	3K = Jet Star
PG = Bangkok Airways	AI = Air India
MI = Silk Air	QR = Qatar Airways
VN = Vietnam Airline	KE = Korea Airlines
MH = Malaysia Airlines	NH = All Nippon Airways
CZ = China Southern	SQ = Singapore Airways
CI = China Airlines	

Subject to change without notice

Revisiting 'Robocop', a film ahead of its time

By Dana Stevens

NEW YORK — *Robocop*, Dutch director Paul Verhoeven's breakthrough film in the United States, a relatively low-budget sci-fi thriller, was a sleeper box-office hit in the summer of 1987 — the summer between my junior and senior years of college, which I spent working at a bakery in the small, movie-theatre-less town my parents had just moved to.

I have no memory of the film from that time, but I imagine it struck me as a cheap *Terminator* knockoff (a conclusion that would have been easy to draw from the trailer, which straight-up lifted the theme music from James Cameron's 1984 film).

Not unlike the murdered-cop-turned-law-enforcing-cyborg at its centre, *Robocop* has enjoyed a surprisingly robust afterlife. In the years since its release, film critics and scholars of culture seized on it as a canny political allegory for the Reagan/Bush era or an exploration of the future of human subjectivity in an age of encroaching technology. (It still plays convincingly as both.)

The film also shows up regularly on lists of the best movies of the 1980s or the best action films of all time. It's remembered and beloved for both its brawn and its brains.

So how does *Robocop* hold up? It's a given that, a quarter-century after the film's release, many of its animatronic special effects are going to look comically dated. Especially in the scenes where Peter Weller's cybercop faces off with the hulking ED-109 robot, it takes a conscious effort to remind yourself that this was anywhere near state-of-the-art at the time.

Nowadays, a child making a YouTube video of his Legos has more resources at his disposal. But if *Robocop*'s special effects have (charmingly) aged, the movie's caustic political wit still feels modern, even radical.

It's since become de rigueur for big action blockbusters to include some gesture toward political or social allegory, often taking place in vaguely defined surveillance states that could be designed to satirise the regimes of George W Bush, Richard Nixon or Joseph Stalin.

But *Robocop* (scripted by Edward Neumeier and Michael Miner) goes way further in its critique: It's embedded from start to finish in a detailed, fully imagined, deeply depressing political dystopia that we soon realise with horror is pretty much where we already live (in 2012 perhaps even more than in 1987).

"You give us three minutes, and we'll give you

the world!" burble the TV news personalities whose broadcast opens the film, with chirpy sound bites about horrifying news items from around the globe alternating with ads for a family board game called "Nukem". (The whole movie is studded with sharp, funny TV ads, many inserted by Verhoeven later in an attempt to lighten up the ratings board, who initially insisted this film be rated X for its graphic violence.)

The story takes place in a future Detroit (soon to be forcibly renamed "Delta City" by developers), where police corruption, industrial decline, corporate greed and consumerist oblivion have combined to create a chillingly familiar hellscape.

In the commentary track to the Criterion release of *Robocop* (a general note: There is no such thing as a Paul Verhoeven commentary track that is not worth listening to), the voluble Dutchman kicks off with the story of how he at first resisted when offered the chance to make *Robocop*.

He had a reputation in Holland as an up-and-coming filmmaker and didn't want to sully it by churning out a piece of substandard American schlock. It wasn't until his wife pointed out the similarities between this story of a rebuilt cybercop struggling to recover his own lost humanity to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* that Verhoeven began to warm to the script.

It was a brilliant stroke to cast the gaunt, ethereal Peter Weller as this melancholy techno-Frankenstein, who for most of the film is seen only as a mouth and lower jaw beneath a metal half-mask.

Weller's air of almost delicate melancholy sets the hero of *Robocop* apart from the lumbering golems in other action flicks of its time. Arnold Schwarzenegger and Rutger Hauer were both considered for the role, but the producers and Verhoeven decided they were too large to move well in the character's bulky suit. The setting of "Robocop" may be grimly dystopic, but its hero is almost Romantic in his idealism as he journeys from human to machine to some as-yet-unimagined hybrid of the two.

At a shockingly early point in the film comes a brutal scene in which a sicko crime boss (the bespectacled, physically unprepossessing, yet terrifying Kurtwood Smith) joins up with his gang in the horrific slaughter of Detroit beat cop Alex Murphy (Weller).

What's left of Murphy is reclaimed for the construction of a machine-cop prototype by the menacingly named OmniConsumer Products, headed up by that slick 1980s villain Ronny Cox. (Another minor charm of *Robocop* is its abundance of memorably nasty bad guys — even though one of them dies horribly every 20 minutes or so, there is always another in the bullpen.)

But neither the OCP executives nor the cops they've bought out are prepared for their creation to develop a memory, a conscience and a sense of ethics. *Robocop* rejoins forces with his former partner (Nancy Allen) to take revenge on those who deprived him of his humanity — all the while obeying his pre-programmed directives to "serve the public trust, protect the innocent and obey the law".

Like Verhoeven's best films — *Showgirls*, *Starship Troopers*, *Total Recall* — *Robocop* transcends schlock by embracing it. It's a suspenseful, hyper-violent black comedy that's at once skillfully exploitative and politically astute, even if viewers born after 1980 may have to Google the gag about the elementary school named after Lee Iacocca.

It's also an anxious meditation on the boundary between technology and organic life that still rings freakishly true. *Robocop* is set for a remake in 2014, with José Padilha directing and Joel Kinnaman in the title role. I don't envy them the challenge of remaking a movie that was already so ahead of its time. — *Slate*

Events Flash

Dancers exhibition

Artist U Lun Gywe will celebrate his 83rd birthday by holding the "My Golden Dancers" exhibition, featuring 70 paintings of Myanmar traditional dancers created from 2009 to 2012, at Professional Art Gallery (Kaba Aye Pagoda Road, Yangon) from November 3 to 7.

Illustrator art show

Artist Kyaw Thaung will hold a solo exhibition titled "Illustrator" at AMT Art Gallery (143 Myanmar Gonyi Road, Mingalar Taung Nyunt township, Yangon) from November 3 to 9.

Fashion week

Myanmar International Fashion Week 2012 will be held at Junction Square on Pyay Road, Yangon, from November 16 to 18. More than 80 models and actors will showcase styles from 12 local designers. Shows will be held from 6pm to 9pm on each night of the event.

Artfest for women

The Third Blue Wind Multimedia Art Festival for female artists will be held in Yangon from November 23 to 27, with highlights including a directing workshop led by Finnish cinematographer Pekka Niskanen. Venue TBA. Email bluewindmyanmar@gmail.com for info.

IC concert

Iron Cross will perform with Yadana My at People's Park on November 28. Tickets are K15,000 and K8000.

Wednesday wine

The Wednesday Wine Cub meets every (you guessed it) Wednesday at the QP Inya Shop (30 Inya Road). Taste four or five wines for K10,000 a person. Contact chad.quarto@gmail.com or 09-7321-8711.

Salsa lessons

Hola Dance Club (4 U Tun Myat Street, Tarmwe township, Yangon) hosts salsa dance lessons every Thursday, from around 8:30pm to 11pm. Music includes merengue, bachata, and cha cha. Beginners welcome. There's no charge for the lesson but the first drink is K5000.

Live music

Friendship Band belts out classic rock tunes at 50th Street Restaurant every Wednesday and Friday night.

If you would like your event listed in Event Flash, please email editors@myanmartimes.com.mm.

YOUR STARS

By Astrologer
Aung Myin Kyaw

Aquarius **Jan 20 - Feb 18**
Don't let the sun go down on Sunday afternoon before you do. Everyday has a new beginning, and you should not fret about the future. See what lies clearly at hand and do your best to complete your tasks accordingly, but don't forget that it sometimes pay to wait for the right time to take action. You can win the heart of the one you desire.

Pisces **Feb 19 - Mar 20**
Be aware that stubborn behaviour and dogmatic social policy on your part could lead to unfortunate results, unless you make a special effort to approach matters diplomatically. You cannot control others without first controlling and managing yourself. Conceit is a form of mental perplexity that will envelope your real character beyond your own recognition. Love requires harmony at all times.

Aries **March 21 - April 19**
Don't lose touch with old friends. You will have the opportunity to work on a long-term project, which will require you to have the courage to take risks in social communication. Attempt to rid your mind of stress, and consider finding a love interest to spice things up a little. Be careful about what you say and where you choose to speak confidentially.

Taurus **April 20 - May 20**
Strive for perfection but also accept that you are human and prone to err. Avoid thinking too much about money and focus more on your spiritual needs. Collect as much information as you can but don't be afraid to be spontaneous. Reconcile with friends with whom you have fallen out. You will find it difficult to explain yourself cogently. A small mistake in love could inflame larger issues within your relationship.

Gemini **May 21 - June 20**
Avoid making judgments about others, and take the advice of your parents seriously. Falling in love is a great and fortunate experience, but don't let yourself get carried away by your golden expectations. It takes time to build trust in social relationships, so you should start investing now. Be gracious when family members give you advice; it could be more useful than your own ideas.

Cancer **June 22 - July 22**
Maintain your optimism about others, even during those times when your patience risks faltering. Do not trust everything you hear this week, as some information will be incomplete or in error. You will be ruled by your heart in love; trust that it will lead you to happiness. A lack of interest in the pursuits of others and an unyielding nature are not healthy qualities.

Leo **July 23 - Aug 22**
Egotism and pride will hurt your interests this week unless you begin to consider in greater depth the needs and opinions of others. Possessiveness in love might be charming for a short time but your partner will soon tire of being boxed in. You should consider shifting your focus toward breaking from the present negative cycle in which you are trapped. Don't be a martyr without a cause of value.

Virgo **Aug 23 - Sept 22**
You might find it difficult to reach people with your keen mind and ready solutions. A happy event will occur in your love life, but it might not be what you expect or fantasize about. Be careful to watch what you say, as careless words can change a relationship irredeemably. Free yourself from outside influences and interference.

Libra **Sept 23 - Oct 22**
As things rapidly change, the time is ripe to consider your needs rather than your wants. Change is in the air but you must be careful to make the best of it by keeping away from negative influences. A sense of balance will be a welcome asset this week, helping you in your contacts with others. Avoid dwelling on love's past failures.

Scorpio **Oct 23 - Nov 21**
Study the actions of others more closely and you might discover something interesting about yourself. New social contacts made through old business partners could be very helpful to you. You might struggle with time management this week and should be careful to avoid overloading your schedule. Make it a point to seek indulgence in love.

Sagittarius **Nov 22 - Dec 21**
Be flexible in your decision-making and work hard to keep your promises. You might surprise yourself with how much you can achieve in a short period of time, with a little motivation and good focus. Develop your time-management powers with socio-political activities, and let others get the first opportunity. Nourish your love life with some lavish attention.

Capricorn **Dec 22 - Jan 19**
You will have to take responsibility for some big decisions this week. Try to bring out the best in others and you will find that you also bring out the best in yourself. Letting go a little more often will give you the inspiration and boost that you sorely need right now. Your love life is about to take a turn for better.

For a personal reading contact Aung Myin Kyaw, 4th Floor, 113, Thamain Bayan Road, Tamwe Township, Yangon. Tel: 0973135632, Email: williameaste@gmail.com

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GUIDE For Young Learners if you need to coach your child, you are welcome to contact us. We are ready to support with following subjects, English, Maths, Geo-graphy History, Science, Social English / Myanmar Language, Email:candlelight295 @ gmail. com

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Language

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MYANMAR Language Training Course for foreigners . Ph: 09-518-1316 , 09-731-27074 for Registration.

PUBLIC SPEAKING Course – 12000 Kyats, 28th October 2012, 11 am to 1 pm, Contact 09-5181316 , 09-73127074 for Location

DEAR Foreigners, Let me know, if you want to learn Myanmar Language & Speaking, please contact to me. Mobile phone number : 09 540 3453

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General

PRE ORDER 16GB - 770,000 Kyats, 32GB - 880,000 Kyats, 64GB - 990,000 Kyats. Goodways & Gate International Pte Ltd, Singapore Company. Yangon Contact - 40-42, 136st, Ma Ou Gone, Tarmwe. Ph: 09-510-9966, 09-730-33603.

PARADISE General Service: Security Consultant & Training Master. Contact: 511195, 09-732-24664. winmmkhin@gmail.com

Training

SMART Body Fitness: We need to care for our parents at home. Also, we want to care for your health. Please, come to visit our fitness center to get smart and healthy body. Teach in systematically. Ph: 09-730-17729.

Public Notice

GOLDEN Spirit Co.,Ltd has secured ISO 9000, ISO 14000 & ISO 18000 , ISO 22000, becoming the first Alcobev Company to have total quality management in production at its Yangon facility has recently launched sailors brand of matured xxx rum. The presentation ceremony of the ISO certification by the certifying body from UK to the MD U Htoo Min Myai of Golden Spirit Co .,Ltd. Golden Spirit Co.,Ltd Launching of Sailors in Oct 2012 will be followed by imperial & other brands. Factory : 123, Cor of U chaint & U Myu St, Dagon Seikkan Tsp, Industrial Zone 1, Yangon). Factory uses latest technology in water purification blending bottling line with the technology tie up with spirit Singapore Pte., Ltd.

FOUND: iPhone. In taxi on evening of October 6. Owned by a European. Contact: geoffrey@myanmartimes.com.mm

GARAGE Sale: 10th; 11th; 12th; November 2012. Ph: 511195, 09-732-24664, winmmkhin@ gmail.com, 43, Inya Myaing, Shwe Taungyar Qtr (1), Bahan, Yangon.

Travel

SWEET Seasons Travels & Tours is providing services such as individual/ group tour packages, Hotel reservation, transportat-ion, D-form, ticketing & delivering for indivi-duals, families & corporate companies. email: sales@ sweet seasonstours.com/ www. facebook. com/ sweetseasonstours, Ph: 09-511-7479, 09-730-86864, 09-506-2499.

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PROPERTY

HousingforRent

(1) BAHAN, Po Sein Rd, near Chatrium Hotel, 3 Stores, (80'x90'), 13 Bed room, AC, Ph, Kyats 60 Lakhs per month. (2) **Lanmadaw** ,Phone Gyi Rd, (25'x50') GF for Showroom & Office, Hall Type. Kyats 30 Lakhs per month. Ph: 09-4201-14749.

YAW MIN GYI Condo: Up market & fully furnished 2 beds, 2 baths, swimming pool, gym, bbq area, shopping center, 24 hrs security and it, s fully furnished with beds, fridge, dryer, washing machine, large TV, home theater, lounge & dining suites, cooking utensils, pots & pans, plates, spoon, knives & forks, tastefully decorated and located right in the heart of the city, well suited for an oversea business person, asking for US $600 a week, pls call Bill on 09-550-5220 or 525746 for inspection.

LAND ONLY (90' X 90')- Pin Shwe Nyaung Rd, Tamwe. Ph : 09-507-9048, 09-732-41848

(1) BAHAN, Golden velley, 2 storey, 4MBR, USD 4500 per month. (2) **Golden velly**, 2 storey, 4MBR, 7 AC, 2 Ph, USD 7000 per month. Ph: 09-4201-14749.

(1) BAHAN, Near Singapore Embassy, 5 storey, 7MBR, 11AC, USD 6500 per month. (2) **Golden velley** , 3½ storey, 5MBR, 7AC, 2 Ph, USD 8000 per month. Ph: 09-511-2525.

BAHAN (1) Near Myayeiknyo Hotel, 2 storey, 1 MBR, 2 Single Bad room, USD 1500 per month. (2) Kabaraye Pagoda Rd, near Myanmar Gems. 2 storey, 2 MBR, 1 Single room, USD 1500 per month. Ph: 399263.

(1) NEAR LAO EMBASSY (1) Near Lao Embassy, (2 storey) 2 MBR, 2 Single Bed, USD 4500 per month. (2) **Near Sedona Hotel** (Condominium) (1800) Sqft, 2 Master Bed, 1 Single room, USD 2000 per month, Ph: 09-492-14276.

FOR OFFICE ONLY (1) New University Avenue Lane Condo. 1500 Sqft, 2MBR, USD 1800 per month. (2) **Junction Maw Tin Tower**, 1300 Sqft, 2M, 1BR, AC, Furniture, 10F up, USD 1800 per month. Ph: 399263.

(1)**BAHAN**, Inya Rd, 1 acre, Lake sideview, colony house A/C, 3 master bed rooms, 1 single bed room, phone, SQ, big garden, tennis coat, good electricity & water, negotiable price. (2) **Mayangone**, 0.3 acre land, 2 story buildings, 4 master bed rooms, 1 single bed room, phone line, 8 airconditioners, fully furnished, SQ, generator, good electricity, US$ 6000 per month (negotiable), ph : 09-420-116460

KYAUK KONE 30'X120, 2RC, New, 2 Master, 3 Single, 6 A/C, 15 Lakhs Per month. Ph: 09-420076256.

BAHAN, Shwe Than Lwin Condo, 3600 Sqft, 2 MB, 1 BR, Ph, 4 A/C, Nicely apartment, asking price US$ 3000. Call Maureen : 09-5188320.

BAHAN (1) Kokkaine Yeik Thar St, 8500 sqft, 4MBR, Ph, 7AC, 4RC, USD 15000, (2) Near Chatrium Hotel, (85'x85') 8MBR, 11AC, 3RC, Kyats 60 Lakhs, Ph: 09-492-14276.

MAYANGONE (1) Pyi Rd (6 mile), (45'x 50') 1MBR, 2BR, 4AC, 2RC-USD-1800, (2) Pyi Rd (7mile), (100'x100'), 5MBR, 11AC, 3RC, USD-15000, Ph: 09-4201-14749.

BAHAN, (1) Inya Rd, 0.35 acre land, 2 story nice house, Swimming pool, phone, SQ, 4 master bed rooms, (2) **Golden Valley**, 0.55 acre land, 3 story building x 2 storey building house, big garden, 10 master bed rooms, European Style house, negotiable price, ph: 09-731-30141

TARMWE, Chanthar Condominium, 1750 sqft, 1 MBR, 2 Single BR, fully furnished with kitchen utensil, daily housekeeping, free drinking water, free facial tissue, free toilet tissue, 4 unit aviable. Ph:0943063890

BAHAN, Kanbawza Yeik Tha, 0.6 Acre, 12 MBR, fully furnished with kitchen utensil, daily housekeeping, free drinking water, free facial tissue, free toilet tissue. **Kamayut,** Inya Kan Yeik Thar, 80' x 90' ft, 4 Story Bldg, 2 MBR, 4 Single BR, fully furnished with kitchen utensil, daily house-keeping, free drinking water, free facial tissue, free toilet tissue. **Botahtaung**, 8 Story New Bldg, 30'x40' ft, Hall Type, Including Lift. Ph:09-501-9648

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Employment

UN Positions

THE UNITED Nations Office on Drugs & Crime (UNODC) is seeking for **Infrastructure Specialist** (Level: SC-6) MMRJ94/J95 Projects - 1 Post, in Taunggyi/ Hopone, Southern Shan State: University degree in civil engineering or related engineering fields. 5 years experience in all aspects of irrigation and water supply system design and construction for rural communities. Fluency in English. Pls submit a cover letter, current CV, copies of relevant academic qualification certifi-cates & a passport photo to UNODC, 11A, Mayli-kha Rd, Mayangone (or) C/O UNDP, POBox (650), Yangon, Closing Date: 5 November 2012.

INGO Position

THE LEPROSY Mission Myanmar require A **Human Resources Manager** to establish & maintain HR processes, develop policies: A relevant degree or equivalent experience. Experience of HR Management. Fluency in English. Strong computer literacy. Applicants with the qualifications & experiences stated above are welcome to submit CVs to Cindy Norfor, Global Support Coordinator, by email to:jobs@leprosymission.org. Closing date: 8th November 2012.

THE LEPROSY Mission Myanmar require **Physiotherapists** for Disability Resource Centres in Mandalay, Sagaing, Monywar, Pakokkum Taungoo, Thaton, Chaungzon & Pathein. We welcome fresh graduate without prior experience in similar position. The position will be based within Mandalay , Sagain, Monywa , Pakokku , Taungoo town, Thaton, Chaung-sone & Pathein and necessary to visit to communities where respective DRC are working . Contract will be initial one year with possible extension. Requirements: A relevant degree. Flexibility to station at a DRC with a need. Be a good team member. Cross-cultural interpersonal skills. Pls submit CVs to Htay Htay Win, Administrative Assistant of TLMM by email to: htay.wn@gmail.com. Closing date : 16th November 2012.

SOLIDARITES Int'l is seeking **Civil Engineer Supervisor** Kyin Dwe base, Kanpetlet, Chin State: Civil Engineer Degree & 3 years of professional experience in civil engineering (especially in gravity flow system);. Experience in Chin State. Good computer skills and practice of engineering software (e.g. AutoCAD). Please submit your application (CV, cover letter, references) by hand to the Solidarites Int'l office, Yangon : 44-A, Tharyarwaddy Lane, Sayar San Ward, Bahan, Yangon). You can also send your application by email to: hr. solidarites. mm @ gmail. com (Pls send only one email and put it copy sol. progdevmya @ gmail.com). Closing date: 10th November 2012.

MALTESER INT'L is seeking **ICT Officer/ Database Administrator** 1 Post in Tarchileik & Kyaing Tong, Shan State : Bachelor degree or Bachelor of Computer Science/Technology or Int'l certified in related field. Excellent skills in designing & managing databases. Excellent in Microsoft Access, SQL, VB and/or other relevant database applications. Good in English, Myanmar. Pls submit application incl. CV, photo, copy of educational certificates, references to the Malteser Int'l Office; **Malteser International Country Office:** #14/15 (6F), Pyi Taw Aye Yeik Thar St, Yankin , Yangon Email: hr.co. malteser@gmail.com (or) Closing date : 5th November, 2012

CARE Int'l in Myanmar is seeking **(1) Senior Program Officer**-Partnership-Loikaw (Kayah State) 1 Post: University graduate, with relevant experience. 2 years experience managing humanitarian programs in Myanmar. 1 year experience supervising staff. **(2) Technical Officer** (Monitoring & Evaluation) - Extension for Kokang Self Administrative Region, Northern Shan State: University graduate and/or degree holder with related working experience. Pls send an application letter outlining their claims against the matching indicators, along with a current C.V., passport photo, clearance certificate from police station - original and copies of any references or testimonials to HR Manager: 17-A, Pyi Htaung Su St, Sayarsan Rd, Bahan. Email: recruitment@care.org.mm, Closing date: 5th November 2012.

Local Position

GENDER EQUALITY Network is seeking **Research and Training Officer** (National Position) in Yangon, Experience & skills : A relevant educational qualification and at least 3 years experience in research, both in field and desk research. Excellent research skills in English and Myanmar, Well developed computer literacy skills and using MS Office and research software applications. Highly effective oral and written Myanmar and English language. Pls submit a CV and a brief email/letter expressing their interest to Mee Mee, Administrative & Finance Officer, email : meemeefwp @gmail.com by 5 pm on 5th November 2012.

GOENKA BANDOOLA Group is looking for (1) **Business Development Manager**. 5 years of experience in marketing and product promotion. Also experience in market research. (2) **Marketing Manager**: 5 years experience in Tractors & Agricultural Mechani-zation sectors. Duties include overall operations & marketing of the product. "Must be able to speak, read & write English fluently. (3) **Administration Staff**: Any degree holder, prefer with General Management Course. Should have Knowledge For Accounting. 4 years experience. Speak, read & write English fluently. (4) **Accountant** : Must have accountan-cy certification & complete knowledge of accounting. Minimum 3 years experience. (5) **Marketing Executive**: 2 years experience in selling tractor (or) agriculture equip-ments. Experience in selling products like water pump, generator, heavy equipments, etc. can also apply. (6) **Demonstrator**: 4 years experience in driving tractors & using agricultural imple-ments. Pls send CV's before 15th Nov 2012 to Email:gbg.tractors@gmail. com or your contract us on Ph: 09-4200-87374.

JOURNEYS Travel Main Office: No. 53, Nagayon Pagoda Lane, Mayangon (Near Mayangon Labour Office). Tel: 656905, 656259, 656307, 095192187. Journeys is one of the leading adventure travel company registered in Myanmar. We are expanding our operation and looking for a dynamic leader to fill in our operation team. (1) Operation Manager (1) post (Male) (salary 350000 - 500000). We are seeking a candidate who possesses a strong personality, self motivated and energetic, able to work interdependently. Must be computer literate and able to write both Myanmar and English. Willing to travel out of town if necessary. Driving license will be a bonus. Responsibilities: The Operations Manager has overall responsibility for the successful running of all trips to the standards stipulated in the agreement. He or she provides main point of contact between guide and back office as well as being responsible for the performance of the Operations Group and the well-being of the Operations staff. The Operations Manager contributes regularly to the overall direction of company policy being part of the company's Management Group. **Qualification and Experience:** Minimum 3 years of travel industry work experience or 5 years guiding experience. Excellent communication (verbal & written) in English. Extensive travel experience with in the country. Workable knowledge of Microsoft Word and Excel software. Ability to manage large group of employees, suppliers, local operations, and guides. Middle to senior level operational management experience, ideally over multiple locations. Strong knowledge of adventure travel, operating systems. Deep understanding of the qualities of products and services. Management, coaching / training experience. Reliable and responsible, with outstanding organisational and customer service skills. Understanding of cross-department dependencies & ability to work productively with all areas of the business Capacity to oversee successful resolution of emergency situations that may occur on trips Ability to work in a team environment Willingness to work long hours with some flexibility Friendly, flexible, adaptable and a sense of humour. Please Apply CV Form before (30.November. 2012).

BLUE BIRD Hotel (Bagan) Carrier 0pportunity **Front Office Supervisor** - M/F, **Receptionist** - F, **Guest Relationofficer** -F, **Reservation officer** -M/F: Work Place In Bagan **Reservation officer** - M/F, Work Place In Yangon. Pls contact us with your cv to 256-266, Rm 10D, Shine Tower , Seikkantha St, (Upper), Kyauktada , Ph: 398030, 09-505-2595

MYANMAR BEAUTY Trainer/Consultants/ Manager with years of experience who can handle Beauty training & able to do reporting. English or Chinese speaking with excel knowledge is essential. Estimated Total package over 400,000 kyats. Are a lady with a sweet smile and a cheer. Interested applicants, please send in your resume together with recent photo and expected remuneration to Mr. Tom: 09-421-148918. Email: jyunkamyanmar@gmail.com

(1) TOUR Operation Manager - M/F 1 Post Duties:- In preparing and creating tour Programs. Being able to handle all areas of bookings such as reservation for hotels, Restaurants, Guides, Transportation. Good computer skill (Excel/ Words) Email/ Internet. Able to speak and write in English. Have experience in Travel in Tour Business. (2) **Ticketing Sales Officer** -M/F 4 Posts : Being able to handle Abacus/ Amadeus computer (Words/ Excel), Email, Internet. Able to speak & write in English. Able to deal with Visa/ D-Form. Pls send with C.V with Photo 2 Nos, Graduated Certificate copy, Police Recom-mendation letter within 2 weeks to Sky Ride travel Tours Co., Ltd : 14/A, Baho Rd (Khine Shwe Wah St.) Hledan, Kamayut. Ph: 09-512-1804.

LOOKING FOR LADIES who can work at the 5-star-hotel boutique shop. English fluency required. Experiences dealing with foreigners highly valued. Qualified candidates, please send CV to Jin at jin.choi.wh04@wharton. upenn. edu

SUCCESS POINT Co.,Ltd. is looking for (1). **Asst Manager** - F 1 Post : Any graduate with certificate of secretary are preferable, Age 23 ~ 30, 2 years experien-ces in Administration & secretary field. Excellent communication skills in both Myanmar & English, Skill full in Microsoft Office, Email & internet, Can travel locally (2). **Sales & Marketing Executive** - M/F 1 Post : Any graduate, Age 21 ~ 28, 2 years experiences, Ability to use Microsoft office, internet & Email, Can travel locally. Pls send current resume (describe working experience from graduation till present & expected salary) with updated photo in MS word format, scan/copy of labour card, relevant certificates & docu-ments, update police recommendation letter & scan/copy of family registration form by Email to successpoint.mm@gmail. com within 2 weeks. Ph: 09-421-139038.

THINK ASIA Travel and Tours is looking for a **Reservation Staff**. The candidate must have a 2 years experience in Tourism Industry with good English & Computer skills. If you are interested, pls contact 230-1293 or info@ thinkasiatours.com

COFFEE SHOP & Mobile Shop (1). **Chef de Partie** - 2 posts : 3 years experience in western & Mediterra-nean kitchen at the established hotels or stand alone restaurants, Assistant the above position (2). **Cooks** 4 posts. (3). **Kitchen helpers** 4 posts (4). **Service technician** 1 post : B.E. or AGTI (Elect.), Experience in maintenance & service of F&B equipment, Coffee machines, refrigerators is an advantage (5). **Sales/Marketing executive** (F&B) 2 posts : Experience in market-ing foodstuff, bever-ages or related products to Hotels & F&B services is an advantage, Fluent in English (6). **Sales/ Marketing executive** (IT/Mobile) 1 post : Experience in mobile & IT products is preferred (7). **Service technician** (mobile phones) 1 post. Pls applied to :390, Rm (2), Set Hmu (1) Rd, Opposite Central Bank, Yankin. Tel: 541188

KELVIN CHIA Yangon Ltd., is now looking for (1) **Lawyers** who will work on a variety of corporate & commer-cial matters & transact-ions in Myanmar. If you are a Myanmar-qualified lawyer with strong English language skills, you are invited to apply to join our Myanmar practice group. Applicants may email to chw@ kcyangon.com & submit their curriculum vitae. (2) **Corporate Affairs Executive/ Assistant**; Applicants should be proficient in English, energetic & self-motivated. All nationalities are welcome (Myanmar, Japanese, Korean, Chinese, Taiwanese, etc). Pls email application & curriculum vitae to chw @kcyangon.com.

AMARA Group Co., Ltd. is looking for (1) **Junior Sous Chef** 2 Post (Ngapali), (2) **Chef De Partie** 2 Post (Ngapali), (3) **Ground Manager** 1 Post (Mandalay), (4) **Accountant** 1 Post (Yangon), (5) **Accountant** 1 Post (Mandalay), (6) **Sous Chef** 1 Post (Kalaw), (7) **Housekeeping Super-visor** 1 Post (Kalaw), (8) **Reservation Execu-tive** 1 Post (Yangon). Be part of a young dynamic team and contribute to the hotels success with your expertise & experience. Therefore we offer an interesting work environment, accommodation and an attractive package. We look forward receiving CV in English. contact: amaragroup. mmw@gmail.com, Ph: 663347, 652191.

PAHTAMA GROUP Co,. Ltd is seeking (1). **Marketing Supervisor** M/F 5 Posts : Age 25 ~ 35, Any Graduate, 2 years experience, Computer literate. (2). **Marketing Coordinator** M/F 5 Posts : Age 20 ~ 25, Any Graduate, 2 years experience (3). **Finance Assistant** - F 5 Posts : Age 23-28, Any graduate, LCCI Level II, can able to cash control & can handle cash book/ ledger, 1 year experien-ce. (4). **I & E Asst:** - M 5 Posts : Age 20 ~ 28 , Any graduate, Experience in related field, (5). **IT Asst:** - M 5 Posts : Age 23 ~ 28, Any graduate, Must have IT know-ledge. (6). **Sales Representative** (Driving) M 10 Posts : Age 22 ~ 30, 10th standard passed / Graduate, Have sales experience, driving skill & license. (7). **Asst: Sales Admin** - F 5 Posts : Age 20 ~ 25, Any graduate, Good computer skill, 1 year experience (8). **Driver** - M 5 Posts : Age 25 ~ 35, Valid driving license & 2 years experience. (9). **Promotion Girl** - F 30 Posts. Pls send C.V, 2 recent photos with others documents to 73-76, Waizayandar Rd, Thingan Gyun. Ph: 573-286, 565494. Email: hr.pahtama@gmail.com

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Brunei 317/319, U Wizara Road, Sanchaung Tsp, Yangon. tel: 526985, 524285, fax: 512854 email: bruneiemb@bruneiemb.com.mm

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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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 Road, Sanchaung Tsp, Yangon. tel: 512642, 510205, fax: 510206

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

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Russian 38, Sagawa Road, Yangon. tel: 241955, 254161, fax: 241953, email: rusinmyan@mptmail .net.mm

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Singapore 238, Dhamazedi Road, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. tel: 559001, fax: 559002, 559922, email: singemb_ ygn@_ sgmfa. gov.sg

Sri Lanka 34 Taw Win Road, Yangon. tel: 222812, fax: 221509, email: slembassy.yangon@gmail.com, info@slembyangon.org, www.slembyangon.org

Thailand 94 Pyay Road, Dagon Township, Yangon. tel: 226721, 226728, 226824, fax: 221713

United Kingdom 80 Kanna Road, Yangon. tel: 370867, 380322, 371852, 371853, 256438, 370863, 370864, 370865, fax: 370866

United States of America 110, University Avenue, Kamayut Township, Yangon. tel: 536509, 535756, 538038, fax: 650306

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Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia No.287/289, U Wisara Rd, Sanchaung Tsp. tel : 01-536153, 516952, fax : 01-516951

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ILO Liaison Officer Rm (M1212~1220), 12 Fl-A, Traders Hotel. 223, tel: 242 393, 242811. fax: 242594.

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, Malikha 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, Malikha Rd., Ward 7, MYGN. tel: 666903, 660556, 660538, 660398, 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.

WFP 3rd-flr, Inya Lake Hotel, 37, Kabar Aye Pagoda Rd. tel: 657011~6 (6-lines) Ext: 2000.

WHO 12A Fl, Traders Hotel. tel:250583.

ASEAN Coordinating Of. for the ASEAN Humanitarian Task Force, 79, Taw Win st, Dagon Township. Ph: 225258.

FAO Myanma Agriculture Service Insein Rd, Insein. tel: 641672, 641673. fax: 641561.

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Red Cross ☎tel:682600, 682368
Traffic Control Branch ☎tel:298651
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.
Myanma Post & Telecommunication (MPT) ☎tel: 067-407007.
Myanma 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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Central Women's Hospital ☎tel: 221013, 222811.
Children Hospital ☎tel: 221421, 222807
Ear, Nose & Throat Hospital ☎tel: 543888.
Naypyitaw Hospital (emergency) ☎tel: 420096.
Worker's Hospital ☎tel: 554444, 554455, 554811.
Yangon Children Hospital ☎tel: 222807, 222808, 222809.
Yangon General Hospital (East) ☎tel: 292835, 292836, 292837.
Yangon General Hospital (New) ☎tel: 384493, 384494, 384495, 379109.
Yangon General Hospital (West) ☎tel: 222860, 222861, 220416.
Yangon General Hospital (YGH) ☎tel: 256112, 256123, 281443, 256131.

ELECTRICITY

Power Station ☎tel:414235

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General Post Office
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Yangon International Airport ☎tel: 662811.

YANGON PORT

Shipping (Coastal vessels) ☎tel: 382722

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Railways information
☎tel: 274027, 202175-8.

General Listing

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Clover hotel
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Confort Inn
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Golden Aye Yeik Mon Hotel
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Hotel Yangon
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Inya Lake Resort Hotel 37 Kabar Aye Pagoda Rd. tel: 662866. fax: 665537.

Orchid Hotel
91, Anawrahta street, Pazundaung Township, Yangon, . Tel: 399930, 399990, 901061~65. E-mail: orchidhotel@myanmar.com.mm.

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Seasons of Yangon Yangon Int'l Airport Compound. tel: 666699.

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Sedona Hotel
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Strand Hotel
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Summit Parkview Hotel
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Traders Hotel
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Yuzana Hotel
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Home: 01-577 387,
Email: rosanafloral.ygn@gmail.com

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Foreigner influx boosts but troubles Russia

MOSCOW – A huge influx of foreign footballing and managerial talent into Russian football in recent years has boosted the standard and profile of the domestic league but also raised fears about a drought of home-grown players.

In the USSR, football existed exclusively on players trained under the rigorous Soviet system but since the 1990s a steady drip of foreign footballers into post-Communist Russia has turned into a flood.

Now fans can enjoy watching stars such as Anzhi Makhachkala's Cameroon striker Samuel Eto'o or Zenit St Petersburg's new signing Hulk of Brazil, with league teams managed by the likes of Dutchman Guus Hiddink or Italy's Luciano Spalletti.

But with Russia hoping for home glory when it hosts the World Cup in 2018, the transformation has left football chiefs with a dilemma: how far to welcome foreign talent without harming the domestic system?

There is even debate about whether Russia could use some of the foreign players in the national side by giving them Russian nationality.

Top flight side Alania Vladikavkaz for example has stepped in to help their Brazilian forward Danilo Neco get Russian citizenship, while Spartak Moscow striker Welliton, also from Brazil, said he was keen on playing for Russia.

CSKA Moscow's Alan Dzagoev and Dynamo's Alexander Kokorin apart, Russian football is suffering from a lack of young talent after the Soviet youth system collapsed along with the rest of the Red Empire in 1991.

Liverpool's English midfielder Steven Gerrard vies with Anzhi Makhachkala's Cameroonian forward Samuel Eto'o during their UEFA Europa League football match at Anfield on October 25. *Pic: AFP*

Russian Football Union (RFU) chief Nikolai Tolstykh said naturalising foreign players could be considered – but only in exceptional circumstances.

"The naturalisation of foreign players is possible but only as an exceptional case. These will only be the players who are really indispensable for the national side," he told the Izvestia Daily.

"The main goal of the RFU is to prepare the new players for the national squad in the under-18, under-21 and the Russian B team."

So far, no foreign footballer has ever been awarded a Russian passport to represent the country.

But there are precedents in other sports.

Russia granted citizenship to former South Korea Olympic champion Ahn Hyun-Soo to represent the country at the Sochi 2014 Games in short track speed-skating while a key player in the Russian women's basketball team is the US-born star Becky Hammon.

Another huge issue is a possible cap on foreign players – known as "legioneri" in Russian – playing at any one time in domestic league matches to ensure home talent has a chance to develop.

Currently a maximum of seven foreign players are allowed to take to the field at any one time so there are always at least four Russians involved.

But for the richest Russian clubs – owned by billionaires with seemingly bottomless pockets – the quota system imposes an uncomfortable restriction.

CSKA Moscow president Yevgeny Giner said the new limit when the Premiership clubs can field seven foreigners as match starters, fits the demands of modern football better that the previous rule of 6+5, which was introduced in 2005.

"Modern football is a kind of show," Giner told the Sport Express daily.

"But there is no point inviting foreign stars to Russia if they are just going to disappear in the crowd of mediocre footballers who received a place in the line-up only due to the limit."

The dearth of young talent, however, casts a shadow over the prospects of Russia's national side, who failed to qualify for the 2006 and 2010 World Cups and crashed out of the group stages at Euro 2012.

Tolstykh, 56, chosen as Russian football chief in September after the European championship debacle, has said he wanted set to review the limit and vowed to do everything possible to nurture young, home-grown talent.

Russia manager Fabio Capello has also raised fears about the current quota, saying it gives him too limited a pool of players to choose from.

"There are 16 clubs in the Premier league," Capello told a news conference shortly after his appointment.

"This means I have only 64 footballers at my disposal if only four Russian players come onto the pitch as the Premier League match starters.

"It's not enough players to expect success in the upcoming competitions and completely unacceptable for any serious progress of the country's football in the future." – *AFP*

Struggling Spain needs the Games more than ever: bid chief

PARIS – Madrid winning the right to host the 2020 Olympic Summer Games would deliver just the boost that is needed as Spain battles against a grueling recession, the bid leader Alejandro Blanco told AFP in an interview.

The 62-year-old, president of the Spanish National Olympic Committee, said in reply to those who query whether Madrid has the financial power to host the Games it was actually a very good reason to give Spain the Games for the second time in their history – Barcelona having hosted them successfully in 1992.

"The socio-economic situation in the country is a very good reason for investing and creating jobs and wealth to get the economy going again," said Blanco.

"You also have to remember that the global economy has been so unstable that it's only now that we can see exactly where we are. But what's going to happen in 2020?"

Blanco, a former judoka who was also president of the Spanish judo federation, drew a comparison with some host cities whose economies were stronger than Madrid's at the time they won the Games but who since have suffered serious economic hardship.

Representatives of Madrid's bid after their nomination as one of the three International Olympic Committee (IOC) 2020 Olympic Games Candidate Cities, with Tokyo and Istanbul, in Quebec City on May 23. *Pic: AFP*

"Some host cities were in a totally different economic situation when they were awarded the Games to when they actually delivered them," he said.

"To my mind, it's not how you start that matters so much, but how you end."

"And the fact that Madrid already has about 80 percent of the necessary infrastructures in place - including the airport, ring roads and underground - is a solid guarantee of stability.

"Our investments will be reduced to the minimum. We also have the full support of the Spanish, regional and local governments and will travel the whole way with them hand in hand."

Blanco, whose Madrid bid is competing against Istanbul and Tokyo - the only one of the cities to have previously hosted the Games – said that a Madrid win would be a win for the country as a whole.

"Spain needs the Games more than ever," he said.

"This is a strategic project for the country as a whole, not just the city, and we need joint projects that can bring us together.

"Private enterprise is committed to the Bid and sees it as a unique opportunity to breathe new life into the economy.

"The Games will attract investors, boost investment, create wealth and promote tourism."

Blanco, who is due to leave for a series of engagements over the next couple of months as he tries to sell his message to some of the 100-plus International Olympic Committee (IOC) members who will vote on the host city in Buenos Aires on September 7 next year, said the London Games proved his point about the economic benefits.

"The project does not come to an end in 2020.

"We have to look on it as a long-term initiative that will leave an incredible economic legacy for Spain.

"We only have to look at the UK, which came out of recession in the third quarter on the back of the Games. This is only the start of a long journey."

Blanco, who says he is driven on by a passionate belief that in winning they can build a new society, said victory would also give some much-needed hope to the youth of Spain, who presently are suffering from an unemployment rate of 52.34percent.

"Our young people are the force that can revitalise our economy," said Blanco.

"They need motivation and they need to know that they can get on in life.

"We've just conducted a nationwide survey on public support for the Bid, and the results showed that 90 percent of people aged less than 25 back the project.

"Young people see the Games as a vital opportunity for development and progress in these difficult times."

Blanco added that the late Juan Antonio Samaranch, who modernised the IOC and the Olympic Games during his presidency from 1980 to 2001 turning it into the huge commercial entity it is now, would give his approval to the bid's campaign.

Samaranch, who died in 2010, gave a heartfelt speech for the last Madrid bid team at the 2009 vote in Copenhagen where they surprised many in finishing second to Rio de Janeiro.

"The path Juan Antonio Samaranch traced in the Olympic movement has been followed by the sports world as a whole," Blanco said.

"He is a role model and wherever he is, he would be proud of the work we are doing." – *AFP*

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Ayeyawaddy United FC players celebrating winning the 2012 Myanmar Football Federation Digicel Cup on October 31 at Yangon's Thuwana Stadium.

Ayeyawaddy United FC captures MFF Digicel Cup

Aung Si Hein

AYEYAWADY United FC won the 2012 Myanmar Football Federation (MFF) Digicel Cup defeating KBZ FC 1-0 at Yangon's Thuwana Stadium on October 31.

Ayeyawady United fielded its first team but KBZ FC's side was depleted due to numerous injuries that saw Kyaw Zayar Win, Hanson, Soe Min Oo and Nay Win Aung miss the match.

Additionally Nunez sat out as he served a one match suspension.

The only goal came from the Ayeyawady side during the 6th minute when midfielder Nanda Lin Kyaw Chit dribbled past two defenders before passing across the goal where striker Jupiter connected to put the ball in the back of the net.

With effective strikers and midfielders lacking, KBZ FC had difficulty using the formation that had brought them success in previous matches.

KBZ FC players were forced into taking long range shots while Ayeyawady mostly sat back in their own box, confident in their defense.

KBZ came close to notching s goal in the 13th minute when captain Han Win Aung's shot hit the post giving forward Charles Obi a chance on the rebound that narrowly missed.

This close call aside, Ayeyawady dominated the first half.

A 40th counter attack almost saw a second goal for Ayeyawady but Nay Lin Tun failed to finalise on his run.

At the trophy ceremony after the match Ayeyawady United FC received a trophy and 30 million kyats while the runners-up KBZ snatched 15 million Kyats.

Ayeyawady United FC had survived three successive penalty shoot-outs to reach the final. KBZ FC had a hard-fought battle against MNL Champs Yangon United FC in their semi-final.

Spectators were uncharacteristically few at the stadium, but 25 among them won trips to Thailand to cheer on the Myanmar national team for three group matches of the upcoming AFF Suzuki Cup.

Max Energy, KBZ Bank and Sky Net will also sponsor up to 50 football fans to travel to the AFF Suzuki Cup.

Tokyo marathon upgraded

TOKYO – The Tokyo marathon will be upgraded next year to sit alongside Boston, London, Berlin, Chicago and New York as one of the world's major races, its organisers said on November 2.

The Tokyo marathon in its current form has been staged in February every year since 2007, contested by the world's leading runners as well as more than 30,000 mostly amateurs.

In 2013, the event will become the sixth race of the World Marathon Majors, a Grand Prix-style series for marathon runners, the Tokyo Marathon Foundation said.

Tokyo will kick off the 2013 series on February 24 followed by Boston and London in April, Berlin in September, Chicago in October and New York City in November.

The men's race in the 2012 Tokyo marathon was won by Kenya's Michael Kipyego and the women's by Atsede Habtamu of Ethiopia. – *AFP*

Aussies use asylum-seeker to boost spin

SYDNEY – Australia has an unlikely weapon as it prepares to stave off a red-hot South African bowling attack – a Pakistani asylum-seeker who will be helping batsmen ready for the Proteas.

Fawad Ahmed, who left his home in the border region near Afghanistan to come to Australia on a short-stay visa to play cricket in 2010, is awaiting news on whether his claim for asylum has been accepted.

In the meantime, he will be used by the Australian team for batting practice during the South Africa series because of the similarities in his bowling to the Proteas' leg-spinner Imran Tahir.

"I'm really excited and I think I can bowl well. It's good for them and it's good for me, that they have asked me to go there," Ahmed told the Sydney Morning Herald.

Ahmed is familiar with naturalised South African Tahir, having played against him when they were both in Pakistan's domestic cricket.

"We are the same height, with a high arm action, and we can both bowl a good wrong 'un," he said.

"His leg spin is bouncy, and I am like him, so it's good for the Australian batsmen to practise on my bowling".

Ahmed will be in Brisbane as a net bowler ahead of the Test starting on November 9, even though there is no guarantee South Africa -- with its powerful pace line-up -- will use Tahir at the Gabba.

But Australian opener Ed Cowan, who pushed for Ahmed to be a net bowler, said it made sense to practise against him ahead of the contest against the world's number one Test side.

"If you're looking to prepare for someone who would have been hard to replicate, you may as well get someone who, to the naked eye, seems pretty similar," Cowan told the Herald.

Ahmed has previously said he was targeted by Muslim extremists in Pakistan because of his involvement in cricket, even receiving death threats because of the perception that the sport promotes Western values. – *AFP*