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PAGE
3

PHOTO: AFP

Murdered teachers laid to rest in Myitkyina

Tensions ran high in Myitkyina on January 23 as thousands of mourners attended the funeral of two volunteer teachers raped and killed in a village in northern Shan State four days earlier. Government soldiers camped nearby have been blamed for the attack but an official investigation has not yet resulted in any arrests.

NEWS 6

Defiant Wirathu defends 'whore' slur

Despite international and local condemnation of attack on UN official, Yangon's Sangha committee says it will only investigate U Wirathu's comments if it receives a formal complaint.

NEWS 8

Land policy could help farmers win disputes

Senior official involved in drafting land-use policy says it will offer a range of protections for farmers that should give them an advantage in resolving disputes over confiscated land.



BUSINESS 28

Heavy metal: U Tay Za claims uranium find

The Htoo Group tycoon claims he has purchased small samples of uranium near Mogok, adding he hopes to pursue further discoveries to be used for the security of the state.

PROPERTY 32

At-risk heritage sites need legal protection

Experts say now is the time to create a heritage law to protect historic buildings, or risk losing them completely to future urban development.

Clashes end Union Day deal

Minister accuses Kachin leaders of sabotaging the peace process, after more fighting in Hpakant and the refusal of armed ethnic groups to sign a nationwide ceasefire without the KIO ended any chance of a Union Day agreement. **NEWS 4**



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Page 2

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THE INSIDER: The local lowdown & best of the web

Sticks and stones

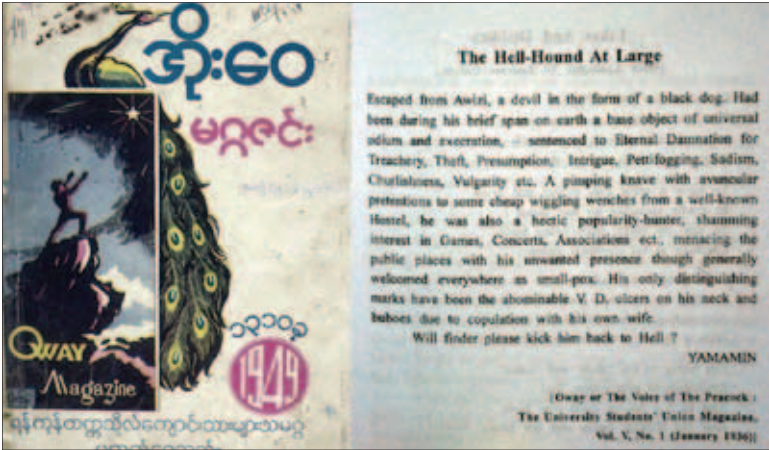
There's been a sizeable to-do in the last week about those comments made by Masoeyin monastery's U Wirathu in a public address which, if you don't read the news, saw him refer to UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights for Myanmar Ms Yanghee Lee as a

"whore" and leveled accusations about her proffering her "arse" to "kalars" over a statement she made in the course of doing her job. Much tut-tutting ensued, and debate has raged about whether or not such rhetoric is befitting of a religious leader. Speaking with *The Irrawaddy*, Minister

for Information U Ye Htut tactfully responded to the matter. "I would not make any criticism against the monks," he said, "but I am sure that the Ministry of Religious Affairs always urges the religious leaders to act in accordance with their religious code of ethics. Personally, I believe that Buddhist monks and any other religious leaders should recite speeches reflecting compassion, love, empathy and good ethics." As U Ye Htut rightfully pointed out, any scrutiny of this on the basis of U Wirathu's standing as a monk is something for the Sangha to resolve. The question shouldn't necessarily be "is it okay for a monk to call someone a whore?" but "Is it appropriate to hurl insults at someone for performing their job?" As a fun hypothetical exercise, imagine if the comments were made by another public figure. If it were a politician, the uproar would be of an entirely different nature.

Calling someone a whore is also undoubtedly a sexism-loaded statement: I can't recall Quintana getting called one. He probably got called worse in private – and let's not forget that his car was set upon by an angry mob – but there's a different framework for rhetoric at play here. The part of Lee's statement with which a vocal section of the population took issue was her stance on the religious conversion and interfaith marriage laws, and particularly the use of the term Rohingya. This is a pity because it was undoubtedly carefully worded, making doubly sure to acknowledge the very valid grievances and concerns of the Rakhine community. It also said, quite pointedly, that focus on the semantics of the Rohingya/Bengali debate will do nothing to resolve the dire humanitarian circumstances that continue to play out. Does that justify anyone referring to her as *kaungma*, and calling her a whore? Does that pave the way for productive, rational dialogue and a peaceful way forward? Panzagar.

Unsolicited Helpful Advice Corner: doggie singles in your area
To whoever posted a personals ad on Yangon Expat Connection looking to find a mate for their bichon havanais (which sounds delicious but is actually a type of dog), there's a rather fetching character who limps around outside *The Myanmar Times* offices who might be an appropriate suitor. We've had bets on his impending



Nyo Mya's 1936 "Hell Hound at Large" article in Oh Wei made pointed jibes about a senior British university official. Then-editor Aung San was threatened with expulsion, along with U Nu, for refusing to reveal the author's identity.

Once was Burma...

Archival material courtesy of Pansodan Gallery

First floor, 286 Pansodan, upper block, Kyauktada township



Oh Wei magazine featuring "In This I Believe" by U Thant, edition 85

demise for quite some time now but he's proved us wrong, living through two more rainy seasons than expected and emerging as the sole survivor of the YCDC canine Kristallnacht of 2013, which speaks volumes for his bravery. As far as we can tell, he is largely rabies-free and, given a chance, probably very loyal. Please get in touch to arrange the transfer.

In brief:
Chinese tourist in Mong La demands refund after drinking "quite a lot" of

tiger-penis wine fails to give him the formidable erection he had hoped for

"Honk if you [heart] the rule of law" NLD bumper sticker campaign backfires horribly

Next week:
Masonic sect found to have infiltrated the UN, several embassies and an international school
Argument in gold shop resolved peacefully and without incident
Hideous polyester blanket pattern traced back to single colourblind vengeful designer in Yunnan

'The moment the doors opened to Hooters Phuket we realized the tremendous opportunity to greatly broaden our efforts to develop the Hooters brand across Asia.'

From US chain breasaurant press release issued last week, indicating Myanmar is in the company's sights

"The Buddha has taught the Five Qualities of Rhetoric, described in Pancaka Nipata, Anguttara Nikaya, with the aim to benefit the worldlings.

Kala – Speak at the appropriate time, but not at inappropriate time
Sacca – Speak truth, but not untruth
Sanha – Speak gently, but not harshly
Atthasamhita – Speak advantageous words, but not disadvantageous words
Mettacitta – Speak with loving-kindness, but not with fury.

These are the Five Qualities of Rhetoric – Anguttara Pali"

– From *Some Teachings of the Buddha for a Cultured Mind*, a booklet distributed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, compiled from snippets published in daily newspapers in 2006

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Thousands attend funeral as investigation ramps up



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THOUSANDS of mourners attended a funeral service in Myitkyina for two volunteer teachers who were raped and murdered on January 19 in a village in northern Shan State occupied by the Tatmadaw.

The two women, Maran Lu Ra, 20, and Tangbau Hkwan Nan Tsin, 21, were working for the Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC) in Kaung Khar village teaching children whose education had been disrupted by persistent fighting.

Their deaths have provoked widespread outrage, with civil society groups alleging Tatmadaw soldiers were responsible and demanding a prompt and impartial investigation to identify and apprehend the perpetrators.

KBC secretary Reverend Samson Hkalam said the huge turnout for the January 23 funeral highlighted the community anger over their deaths. He put the attendance at more than 100,000, and Myitkyina residents said the crowd was larger than at the Manaw festival earlier in the month.

"The funeral finished in the evening. So many people attended the service. We held a prayer ceremony in AD2000 hall and the two bodies were cremated at Jaw Bum Cemetery," he told *The Myanmar Times*.

U Mya Aye, a senior member of the 88 Generation Peace and Open Society, said at a press conference on January 22 the attack was "not a normal case" and could have serious political ramifications.

"We are very worried that the peace talks could be threatened and postponed because of this," he said.

A spokesperson for President's Office, director U Zaw Htay, has promised that firm action will be taken if it is established that army soldiers were responsible.

One of the deceased was from Myitkyina township, Kachin State, and the other had grown up in a displaced-persons' camp in Shan State.

Their bodies were taken to Myitkyina on January 21 for the funeral following a commemoration service in Muse township.

Two days before they were killed, about 40 soldiers of the 503rd Light Infantry Regiment under Northeast Region Command had established a temporary base in Kaung Khar, about 100 metres from where the incident occurred.



Mourners pay tribute to the casket of one of two murdered women in a funeral procession in Myitkyina, Kachin State, on January 23. The women were raped and killed in Shan State, some allege by Tatmadaw soldiers. Photo: Seng Mai (MKN)

The women's naked bodies were discovered on the morning of January 20 in their residence in the church compound with stab wounds and head injuries. Local people have accused the Tatmadaw, and said they found a Tatmadaw belt at the scene of the crime and footprints made by soldiers' boots nearby.

The KBC issued a statement following the killings demanding a swift and thorough investigation.

"We want justice for them. We are worried that they won't find the real culprits," it said.

U Zaw Htay said the Tatmadaw was investigating the allegations the President's Office wants the case to be solved as soon as possible.

"This incident is unforgivable. The authorities should be prepared to take severe action," he said.

A team including the sub-township administrator, Muse district police, and representatives of the KBC and a local militia are investigating.

U Zaw Htay said the Tatmadaw is also conducting its own investigation and is interrogating soldiers from the light infantry regiment.

A resident in the area, who asked not to be named, said the civilian investigation team had interrogated 30 soldiers from the regiment as well as 10 civilians. They have been DNA tested against hair found on the bodies, the resident said.

Meanwhile, state media reported that police on the team had recovered a bloodstained steel blade and other evidence at the crime scene.

He defended the decision not to send more senior officials from Nay Pyi Taw to take charge, saying

'We are very worried that the peace talks could be threatened and postponed because of this.'

U Mya Aye
88 Generation

it could be handled by district-level officials.

U Sit Myaing, the deputy head of the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission, said the commission was not yet involved in the investigation.

"If the investigation has defects, the commission will participate in another investigation. We are just observing at the moment," he said.

La Mar Yaw, a spokesperson for the KBC, said details of a medical report on the two victims are being withheld, apparently on the orders of the Tatmadaw. Muse district police refused to answer questions when contacted by *The Myanmar Times*.

"The authorities should release the preliminary autopsy reports. But I understand the Tatmadaw has ordered the hospital to suppress them," La Mar Yaw said.

He added that neighbours reported hearing cries from the church compound on the night of the murders.

"The local people were afraid when the military arrived in the village, and didn't go out at night. People heard cries, but were afraid to enter the compound," he said.

Speaker calls on president to enter dialogue

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PYIDAUNGSSU Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann has written to President U Thein Sein urging him to hold proposed six-way talks "as soon as possible". The speaker sent the message on January 22, five days after the president responded to the proposal for talks, which was approved by parliament in November.

The talks would bring together U Thein Sein, Thura U Shwe Mann, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker U Khin Aung Myint, National League for Democracy leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and an ethnic minority representative, Rakhine National Party leader U Aye Maung.

The president said in response to the proposal that the topics for discussion needed to be more clearly defined before he could make a decision on whether to attend the talks.

Thura U Shwe Mann informed the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw about the president's message on January 20.

He replied that the talks should be held as soon as possible "in order to set and coordinate the future [reform] process as well as a framework for future discussions".

His letter said the meeting would benefit national stability and development, national reconciliation and internal peace, and the transition to democracy.

The government has not formally rejected the talks but presidential spokesperson U Ye Htut has described them as "impractical" and said the president wants "all-inclusive" dialogue.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has previously proposed four-way talks - between herself, U Thein Sein, Thura U Shwe Mann and Senior General Min Aung Hlaing - while the Yangon Region Hluttaw passed a motion late last year for a 12-way meeting that would add six additional ethnic minority representatives.

On January 13, Thura U Shwe Mann said it was not the number of participants that mattered so much as the practical outcome.

"We can meet, whether it is two people, three or four or five people. It is ok if it is 12-way talks. The most important thing is that it works," he said. - *Translation by Thiri Min Htun*



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Ethnic armies stand together on NCA

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THE agreement to sign the national ceasefire accord on Union Day, February 12, appears to have been scuppered by the outbreak of fresh fighting in Kachin State. Last-minute suggestions that armed ethnic groups abandon the Kachin Independence Army and sign separately have received little or no support.

Fighting broke out between Tatmadaw and KIA 6th battalion forces in Hpakant township after the KIA detained three policemen who were escorting the Kachin State minister for transport on January 14. After four days of heavy fighting, the policemen were released but more than 1000 local residents are blockaded in their villages, and the situation remains tense.

The clashes stalled what appeared to be momentum leading to a February 12 signing, as originally proposed last month by the government and leaders of the Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT), which is negotiating the ceasefire on behalf of 16 armed ethnic groups.

Further formal talks were planned in late January but these have now been delayed indefinitely.

Presidential spokesperson U Ye Htut, the information minister, announced on social media on January 19 that the KIA had arrested the policemen intentionally to disturb the peace process and torpedo the proposal for a Union Day agreement.

"The KIA understands that military troops would clear territory to rescue those arrested... That's why I think the KIA intentionally launched a military offensive to hamper the peace talks," he posted.

Government sources said last week



Kachin Independence Army deputy commander-in-chief Major General Gun Maw is greeted by supporters. Photo: Boothee

the agreement is almost complete, and they want to sign it as soon as possible. Both sides have raised concerns about the negotiations dragging on close to the election, and possibly being scuppered by a change of government.

"But some military-related points still need to be addressed," one source said. "If they can meet again around the table, I think these problems can be solved. But the situation in Kachin State could delay the next round of talks."

Chief government negotiator U Aung Min said the continued fighting could impact the election.

"Peace is the main point of the election. Although government has pledged to hold peaceful and fair elections, that cannot be done if the fighting persists in these areas," he was quoted as saying in state-owned media

on January 21.

However, the other ethnic armed groups have made it clear they will not sign an agreement until the KIA is on board, for fear of undermining ethnic unity and possibly compromising the election, which is scheduled for late

'I think the KIA intentionally launched a military offensive to hamper the peace talks.'

U Ye Htut

Presidential spokesperson

October or early November.

Sai Nyunt Lwin, general secretary of the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy, said the government should take the time to get a solid agreement with all groups. "No one should be left behind. I also believe no group will agree to sign separately," he said, adding that failure to secure peace in Kachin State could risk the stability of the elections.

NCCT chair Naing Han Thar told *The Myanmar Times* that the groups would not agree to sign separately. "If one group is isolated, the army would attack it. We've seen this before," he said.

On January 19-20, NCCT members including the KIA met to discuss the draft NCA in Chiang Mai, Thailand, and on January 21 they met with a Myanmar Peace Center working

group led by U Hla Maung Shwe for further talks to finalise the draft. Of 103 points in the document, only eight are yet to be finalised. Both sides have previously said the next round of talks would be held this month but no date has been set.

"We can't decide the date because we need to finalise some points," Padoh Saw Kwe Htoo Win, deputy leader of the NCCT, told *The Myanmar Times* after the January 21 meeting, adding that there would be no Union Day signing without further meetings.

KIA deputy commander-in-chief Major General Gun Maw underlined the message, telling reporters in Chiang Mai flatly, "There will be no signing on February 12."

One of the military-related points still unresolved is KIA's insistence on an agreement to prevent further Tatmadaw attacks like the artillery assault on Laiza that left 23 KIA soldiers dead last November. The government has not yet responded to a KIA request for direct talks with the army on this point.

"We shouldn't neglect the attack on Laiza. We can go on to the next step only after resolving these problems with a constructive attitude. We've asked to discuss this issue at the next meeting," Maj Gen Gun Maw said.

Meanwhile, Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing has accused some ethnic groups of not wanting peace. In an interview with Channel News Asia on January 20, he said a ceasefire agreement depended on the armed groups.

"Do they really want peace? If they really want peace, there is no reason why they should not get it. If they wish to go along the path of democracy, and if they have the desire to bring unity and development in their region, they can choose this path," he said. "We cannot keep arguing. Disputes hinder the country's development."

Labour survey launched

THE first national labour survey in 24 years is under way, as government officials seek to tally the number of workers, employment rates and child labour prevalence.

Ministry of Labour deputy director Daw Sanda Aye said officials would survey 24,000 households between January 1 and March 31, asking more than 100 questions - ranging from the number of workers in the household to the nature of their employment and their income - within an hour.

The results are scheduled for release in October.

"The first national survey was

conducted 24 years ago so the data is no longer reliable. We could not do it for a long time because we had no technical support," she said.

"The main purpose of this survey is to support labour-related planning."

The International Labour Organization is providing technical support for the survey as well as US\$4 million to cover expenses.

The survey will be undertaken by Ministry of Labour staff, Daw Sanda Aye said, adding that poor road and communication infrastructure would prove challenging in some areas.

- Shwe Yee Saw Myint

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Cars pass concrete blocks erected to mark out a bus lane on Anawrahta Street in downtown Yangon. Photo: Aung Htay Hlaing

Yangon roads to grind to halt without huge investment: JICA

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TRAFFIC could be reduced to crawling along at less than 8 kilometres (5 miles) per hour unless US\$10 billion is invested in Yangon's transport network over the next two decades, researchers have warned. Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), which is working with the government on an urban management master plan for Yangon, said congestion would continue to worsen over the next 20 years without significant investment. The researchers predicted that by the year 2035, vehicle use in Yangon would rise 22-fold. As a result, even if the Yangon transportation plan - formally known as the Yangon Urban Transport Master Plan of the Project for Comprehensive Urban Transport Plan of the Greater Yangon (YUTRA) - is carried out, average traffic speeds would still drop from 30kph (18mph) to 20-25kph (12-15 mph), they calculate. But it would be significantly worse if the government fails to invest in

infrastructure, the head of JICA Myanmar, Masahiko Tanaka, told reporters on January 19. "Transportation is an urgent issue for Yangon," he said. The improvements suggested under YUTRA include the upgrading of railway networks and an eventual mass rapid transit system to take the strain from car-users. The plan also proposes measures including bus rapid transport and an improved traffic management system.

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Estimated investment required in Yangon's transport system under the JICA master plan

But it will take at least two or three years even to make a dent in the existing poor quality of roads and railway lines. "Trains can't go faster because the rails are not straight, and the roads have no traffic lights," said Mr Tanaka, adding that JICA was providing technical assistance. But YUTRA's improvements will be costly, says Mr Tanaka. "The transportation sector alone could cost \$10 billion," he said. Practical measures to improve the traffic flow so far have ranged from building soaring flyovers and new bridges to laying down lines of concrete blocks to prevent impatient drivers from appropriating oncoming lanes. Smart traffic lights have also been installed at some major junctions. Yet still Yangon residents continue to complain about the traffic. Yangon Mayor U Hla Myint told a recent press conference he was "ashamed" of having to lay down concrete blocks to create bus lanes. "No other country does this," he said. "I'm also ashamed at the criticism of foreigners about Yangon's traffic."

MPs ignore president on pay rises

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw salaries to rise to K1 million a month from April after objections were voted down

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MEMBERS of parliament will be paid K1 million a month from April - more than three times as much as their current salary of K300,000. The MPs ignored a suggestion from President U Thein Sein, who received the bills for signature after parliamentary approval, that the increase should be paid gradually in increments. The law covers the salaries of Pyithu Hluttaw, Amyotha Hluttaw, and region and state hluttaw representatives, as well as members of the leading bodies in self-administered areas. State and regional representatives' salaries will go up from K200,000 to K500,000.

The vote was 323 in favour to 175 against - mostly military MPs - with 15 abstentions. Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann confirmed that the rise would be paid in the fiscal year beginning in April.

U Maung Toe, of the ruling Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), said the salary increase should be seen as a rise for the people, because MPs represented the people.

A number of MPs said the pay rise would reduce the gap between the salary of rank-and-file members and that of the speakers and deputy speakers, who receive K3.5 million and K3 million respectively. They complained that K300,000 was not enough to enable them to represent their constituents, since they were obliged to pay for their own transportation back and forth from Nay Pyi Taw, as well as accommodation,

transportation, meals and other expenses. Overall the current salary is well below international standards, they said.

"Sometime we have to deal with local administrators who don't respect us because they get paid more than we do," said a Chin State representative, Daw Zar Talam.

Others saw merit in the president's suggestion. U Thein Nyunt, representing Thingangyun, Yangon Region, said the K91.045 billion the government will be paying to 1349 MPs when the law

'We think the money could be better used for the poor, the homeless and poverty eradication.'

U Thein Nyunt
Pyithu Hluttaw representative

comes into force could be better spent. "We think the money could be better used for the poor, the homeless and poverty eradication projects instead," he said.

The bills now have to be sent back for the president's signature, but will become law automatically after seven days, even without his approval. If the president refuses to sign, it would be the fifth law passed without his signature.

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MP likens religion bill to Spanish inquisition

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A CONTROVERSIAL religious conversion bill has passed the upper house of parliament, despite an opponent comparing it to the notorious Spanish Inquisition.

The proposed law requires anyone who wants to change their religion to apply for permission to an 11-member committee comprising religious affairs, immigration, women's affairs, education and General Administration Department officials.

Amyotha Hluttaw representative U Zone Hle Thang from Chin State's No 2 constituency told *The Myanmar Times* that he was concerned the "interrogation" of people's religious beliefs by these township-level bodies could harm freedom of religion, which is protected by the constitution.

"In European history, torture was used to interrogate people about their religion, and stopping them from converting from Roman Catholicism. I am concerned the same kind of thing could happen here," said U Zone Hle Thang.

But when the bill was put to a vote, U Zone Hle Thang was one of only six who voted against the bill, which won the support of 87 members. Rather than a secret vote, speaker U Khin Aung Myint asked those opposed to the bill to stand up.

Deputy Attorney General U Tun Tun Oo submitted the proposal, saying that President U Thein Sein was committed to its adoption.

He said the bill was in line with the constitution and existing laws, good for the state and the people, and would be accepted by people in Myanmar and the international community. He said it would not harm those of any particular faith.

But U Zone Hle Thang said the bill would create difficulties for the exercise of religious freedom.

"The constitution stipulates that every citizen is entitled to freely practise religion. Enacting such a law would make that more difficult because of the need for interrogation by the authorities," he said.

The law was first drafted by the

Committee for the Protection of Religion and Nationality - better known by its Myanmar-language acronym, Ma Ba Tha - and submitted to the government in 2013. It is one of four "protection of religion" laws drafted by Ma Ba Tha, with others focusing on interfaith marriage, monogamy and population control.

In early 2014 President U Thein Sein submitted the draft laws to parliament but Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann returned them to the government, saying they were not in the proper format to be considered by MPs.

In response, the president set up a 12-member commission on March 7, headed by Deputy U Tun Tun Oo, to draft the religious conversion and population control bills.

The four proposed laws have been deeply controversial. In early 2014, more than 100 civil society groups issued a joint statement saying the introduction of a proposed interfaith marriage law would be a "disgraceful act". They were promptly labelled "traitors" by monks advocating for the law, and civil society leaders reported receiving death threats.

The international community has also been highly critical. At the end of her visit to Myanmar last week, Yanghee Lee, the United Nations special rapporteur on human rights, urged parliamentarians to "thoroughly scrutinise these bills and to play a role in building a more tolerant and inclusive community".

"If these bills are passed, it could be viewed as one of the indicators of backtracking in the political reform process," she warned.

Like U Zone Hle Thang, Ms Lee raised concerns about the "interview and discussion" with the township-level committee, describing it as "onerous and potentially intimidating".

"The freedom to practice religion and to convert is a fundamental human right, a very personal one. I am also concerned at the offences and penalties this bill proposes for 'insulting religion', which is vague and could be used to discriminate against minority religions," she said.

- Translation by Thiri Min Htun

Defiant Wirathu defen

UN describes attack on special rapporteur as "intolerable" but Sangha committee

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U WIRATHU has defended his personal attack on United Nations special rapporteur Yanghee Lee, saying senior monks had used similar language in the past - even at the sacred Shwedagon Pagoda.

U Wirathu labelled Ms Lee a "whore" for opposing a package of laws he is pushing the government and parliament to enact during a protest on January 16, the final day of her 10-day visit earlier this month.

According to one translation, he told the crowd of several hundred people, "Just because you hold a position in the United Nations doesn't make you an honourable woman. In our country, you are just a whore."

"You can offer your arse to the *kalars* if you so wish but you are not selling off our Rakhine State," he said, using a pejorative term for those of South Asian descent.

He told *The Myanmar Times* last week that the language had been used in the past by famous monks, but could not provide examples beyond a vague reference to Shwedagon Pagoda.

"Our famous sayadaws and senior monks have used these harsh or strong words if necessary according to the time and circumstance," he said. "You can check the history books if you don't believe me."

His comments come as a senior member of Myanmar's leading Buddhist body, the Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee, said it would only consider taking action against U Wirathu if it receives a formal complaint.

The outburst was provoked by her criticism of the treatment of Muslim Rohingya in Rakhine State and her opposition to four "protection of religion" laws proposed by the Committee for the Protection of Nationality and Religion, which is better known by its Myanmar-language acronym Ma Ba Tha. U Wirathu is a prominent member



U Wirathu talks during a protest against UN special rapporteur Yanghee Lee in Yangon on January 16. Photo: AFP

of Ma Ba Tha and released an initial draft of one of the laws, on interfaith marriage, to journalists in June 2013.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein described the "sexist, insulting language" used against Ms Lee as "intolerable", and called on religious and political leaders "to

unequivocally condemn all forms of incitement to hatred including this abhorrent public personal attack against a UN-appointed expert".

The government, however, has distanced itself from the issue, saying it is up to the Sangha committee to respond.

But U Gunarlinkarra, the deputy

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ds ‘whore’ slur

says it will not act unless it receives a formal complaint

head of the Yangon Region Sangha committee, said the committee “can’t just take action because we want to.”

“We need a complaint from the person [targeted],” he said. “If we get a complaint we will investigate and then take action.”

He also refused to condemn U Wirathu’s comments and rejected suggestions he had tarnished the image of Buddhism.

“His words can’t affect all Buddhists. It also seems he is saying this to protect the country and people. However, harsh words are not good for a monk,” he said.

Despite presidential spokesperson U Ye Htut being quoted as saying the government would ask the Ministry for Religious Affairs to investigate U Wirathu’s comments, President’s Office director U Zaw Htay told *The Myanmar Times* that the government would not act.

‘Ashin Wirathu’s harsh words could harm the image of the Buddhist religion.’

Myawaddy Sayadaw

“It is up to the Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee to take action according to the Sangha organisation’s rules. The President’s Office will not issue instructions,” he said.

“The Sangha will tackle the issue themselves and the Ministry of Religious Affairs will assist if necessary. The township administration or religious officials will be informed if he is prosecuted.”

A spokesperson for the UN in Yangon said it was “in communication with the government” on the issue but declined to give further information, including whether a formal complaint had been submitted.

Spokespersons for the UN Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights did not respond to requests for comment.

During the protest, U Wirathu

also directed abuse at local human rights activists who have opposed a draft interfaith marriage law that would stop Buddhist women marrying men of other faiths.

One of those targeted, U Aung Myo Min of Equality Myanmar, said he would not seek charges against U Wirathu.

“Anybody can say what they like according to their right to free speech,” he said. “However, I don’t think this harsh language should be used against anyone.”

The interfaith marriage law is one of the four laws proposed by Ma Ba Tha.

U Wirathu’s words have drawn some stern rebukes – including, unusually, from within the Sangha.

“Ashin Wirathu’s harsh words could harm the image of the Buddhist religion,” Myawaddy Sayadaw Ashin Ariya Vamsa Bhivamsa was quoted as saying in *Daily Eleven*.

“The dignity of the Sasana [religion] can be saved by invoking *pakasaniya kamma*,” he said, referring to a formal rejection by the Sangha of the words or actions of a monk.

But Paul Fuller, a Buddhist studies expert focused on “ethno-centric” Buddhism in Myanmar and Sri Lanka, said U Wirathu was unlikely to have violated the monastic code, known as the *patimokkha*.

“When a monk deviates from these rules, various sanctions of increasing severity can be enacted against the monastic who transgresses them,” said Mr Fuller, who holds a PhD in Buddhist Studies from the University of Bristol and has taught at universities in the United Kingdom, Southeast Asia and Australia.

“However, very few of the 227 rules could be interpreted to prohibit a monk from expressing their own opinions, even political opinions.”

He said there is “far more focus” in the rules on criticising fellow monks than on prohibiting and individual monk from expressing opinions.

“If the monk continues to follow the rules of the *patimokkha*, and acknowledges any transgression of them, then, according to the monastic code, he is not committing any offence.”



Bottles of Grand Royal Whisky are displayed for sale at a wholesale market in Yangon. Photo: AFP

Govt proposes sin tax hike

MPs likely to accept proposed 20 percent increase on alcohol and tobacco taxes

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THE government plans to raise taxes on alcohol and tobacco products including cigarettes to improve the health and morals of the people, Minister for Finance U Win Shein has told parliament.

“The intention of these taxes is to control people’s consumption habits,” he said while speaking at the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw on January 19.

Officials are planning to insert the higher taxes into the 2015 Union Tax Law, which will replace last year’s tax law. So far it has proposed raising taxes on cigarettes, alcohol, tobacco, cheroots, cigars, pipe tobacco, chewing tobacco for betel and beer. Proposals call for taxes on cigarettes to move from 100 percent to 120pc, while the remaining goods on the list will have taxes increased from 50pc to 60pc. Wine will remain at 50pc.

Imported goods will be taxed based on their CIF price, while locally produced alcohol and tobacco goods will be taxed based on sales price. The bill proposing the tax increase must still be approved by the hluttaw, though it envisions imple-

menting the tax hike on April 1.

Amyotha Hluttaw representative U Phone Myint Aung said MPs have been invited to make suggestions on the bill, but so far no one has discussed changing the proposed rates.

60%

Proposed tax level for betel, beer and alcohol from April 1

“I don’t think anyone will reduce the tax rates on these goods,” he said on January 20.

While the goal of the tax hike is to cut down on alcohol and tobacco consumption, businesspeople are not con-

vinced it will be successful.

U Maung Soe, who runs a shop selling betel and cigarettes in Nay Pyi Taw’s Pyinmana township, said his core customers will keep coming even if prices increase.

“If the cost of betel rises, the number of consumers may decrease. But the people who consistently use betel will not reduce their daily rates, and neither will smokers,” he said. “It would be more effective to educate people.”

The public appears split on the issue of higher taxes for alcohol.

U Myint Thein, an occasional drinker from Nay Pyi Taw’s Leve township, said he reckons higher taxes will help to cut beer consumption.

Self-described beer lover U Win Myint, however, said he is less convinced. “It is rare to see drinkers who limit or stop drinking because beer prices go from K600 to K700,” he said. “Drinkers will just stop eating snacks instead.”

- Translation by Thiri Min Htun

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Farmers harvest paddy in the Ayeyarwady Region township of Bogale on January 19. Photo: Thiri Lu

New policy to give farmers edge in land disputes: official

SANDAR LWIN

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EXISTING land disputes will be settled according to a new land-use policy if they are still unresolved by the time a planned National Land Use Law is enacted, according to an official involved in the land reform process. The policy and law will give farmers a better chance of securing the return of their land, he said.

The government released a draft of its national land-use policy in October 2014. It is likely to be approved by cabinet in the first half of this year and will be followed by a land-use law, which will base on the policy.

The policy, which generally gives stronger land-use rights to smallholder farmers, states that the new law will take precedence over existing land-related legislation.

U Tin Maung Than, deputy director of the Land Unit in the Ministry

of Environmental Conservation and Forestry – the focal ministry for the drafting of the policy and law – said the legal framework would be “fairer” for farmers after the law is enacted.

According to the land dispute settlement mechanism outlined in the draft policy, parties to a dispute should first attempt arbitration before proceeding to legal action.

A new judicial branch will be set up to handle land disputes, and farm-

‘The new law ... will put in place a fairer system for protecting land users from losing their land.’

U Tin Maung Than
Ministry of Environmental
Conservation and Forestry

ers will be able to apply for an injunction to stop an impending land confiscation.

Farmers will also be able to receive support from non-government organisations throughout the dispute-settlement process.

Meanwhile, land-use rights for farmers will be strengthened. The draft also states that existing land users should be given legal land-use rights even if they do not hold official documents, while ancestral land will be registered and protected from confiscation for private projects.

Article 73 of the policy states that ancestral land includes not only those classified as farmland but also forest, vacant, fallow or virgin land.

Traditional land administration systems will be respected and traditional dispute settlement mechanisms applied if the dispute is between members of the same ethnic group.

“The policy is a draft so it might change but the new law will take precedence over existing land laws. It will put in place a fairer system for protecting land users from losing their land,” U Tin Maung Than said.

Despite these assurances, land rights organisations have called for more specific protections for smallholder farmers, particularly in regards to existing land disputes.

“More specific and clearer instructions on how to handle existing land disputes should be included because there are many concerns that the new policy cannot fully protect the farmers who are already in disputes,” said U Shwe Thein, who chairs the Land Core Group, a network of more than 50 land rights groups.

According to data from the Food Security Working Group, more than 2 million acres of land were confiscated with official permission from 1988 to 2010. U Thein Aung, head of the Freedom of Farmers League, said about 5 percent of the country’s farmers are engaged in some kind of land dispute.

The Land Use Allocation and Scrutiny Committee began drafting the land-use policy in June 2012. It was originally scheduled to be finalised in late 2014 but the committee agreed to give more time for consultations following complaints from civil society groups.

Land-use roundtable opened up to public

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THE government plans to open an expert roundtable meeting on its draft national land-use policy to the public. The meeting, which will be held in Nay Pyi Taw on January 31 and February 1, aims to consider input from the public on the policy gathered during consultations late last year.

“We are now analysing public suggestions and these will be released at the expert roundtable meeting,” said

U Tin Maung Than, deputy director of the Land Unit at the Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry.

Work began on the policy in June 2012 and it was released to the public in October 2014. The government initially said it planned to enact it in December 2014 after conducting consultations in November.

During the first consultation period, the government held public meetings in 17 major cities.

However, land rights groups called for a more open and broad

consultation process to ensure adequate input is received from the public.

In December, the Central Committee for National Land Resource Administration led by Vice President U Nyan Tun agreed to extend the public consultation period to the end of January. The policy is likely to be finalised at the end of March following the convening of a national forum.

The enacted policy will guide the drafting of a national land-use law, which is likely to come into force toward the end of this year.

“The national land-use law is the most important law after the constitution. If not enough public consultations are held, there will be protests against it like those taking place now against the National Education Law,” said U Shwe Thein, who chairs the Land Core Group, a network of more than 50 land rights group.

Those interested in joining the meeting can register no later than January 27 by calling (067) 405-428 or 09-2601-14155, sending a fax to (067) 405-428, or emailing luasc.myanmar@gmail.com.



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Myanmar to push for regional single visa

Proposal would allow visitors from outside region to visit ASEAN countries on one visa

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MYANMAR will be pressing for a common visa for all ASEAN countries during Malaysia's tenure as chair of the regional organisation, the head of the government's visa department said last week.

U Sein Oo, director general of the visa department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said an earlier plan for regional visa-exemption deals has been postponed because of resistance from some members.

Because the government considers it unlikely that Malaysia will agree to Myanmar's visa-exemption proposal, it will instead push to accelerate a smart visa system for the entire region, he said.

Similar to Europe's Schengen Visa, the proposal would allow non-ASEAN residents to travel through the region on a single visa.

"The [common visa] system agreement is already signed, and we will push for its [implementation] as an

essential measure," he said.

ASEAN member states have been working toward visa-free travel in the region for ASEAN nationals since 2006, with the goals of boosting the growth of local and regional tourism and fostering economic development.

So far this has resulted in bilateral visa exemption deals for nationals of

'The objective is to eliminate barriers to the movement of tourists.'

U Htay Aung

Minister for Hotels and Tourism

ASEAN countries rather than a single visa. Thai and Cambodian nationals have been able to visit each others' countries visa-free since 2013, and Myanmar citizens can visit Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, the Philippines and Vietnam - and vice versa - for up to 14 days without a visa.

U Moe Kyaw, managing director of

Myanmar Marketing Research Development, said a common visa system for both ASEAN nationals and those from outside the region would be a welcome development. "The ASEAN community should be a common market for business and economic integration. Anything that prevents connections should be eliminated," he said.

Minister for Hotels and Tourism U Htay Aung said his ministry was supportive of measures that would make it easier for tourists to visit Myanmar.

"The objective is to eliminate barriers to the movement of tourists that create disincentives to travel," he said at a press conference last week.

But one analyst said that differences in infrastructure, airport capacity and connectivity were holding up agreement on the no-visa regime. He said the current system also enabled government officials to make money illicitly, such as from human traffickers, and this would create resistance to change.

"The common visa system would benefit non-ASEAN nationals wishing to visit ASEAN countries," said U Kyaw Lin Oo, formerly of the ASEAN Secretariat. "But implementation could be delayed because individual ASEAN member countries are more concerned with their own profit."

Protesters denounce governmental failures on land, education

KYAW KO KO

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ACTIVISTS in Mandalay demonstrated last week in protest at what they called the government's inability to resolve farmland disputes, labour disputes and student unrest.

About 1000 people, including monks, farmers, workers and students, rallied in an open space at the western entrance of U Pwar pagoda in Kyun Lone U Shaun ward of the city's Chan Aye Thar San township. Some demonstrators had come from Sagaing Region and northern Shan State.

"All this government has done is to bring more and more problems. More and more farmland disputes are arising all around the country. Farmers are getting poorer," said U Ye Naing Win, a member of the Ministry of Labour's Arbitration Council, which is tasked with resolving disputes between employers and workers.

"The main reason for farmland disputes is the lack of a proper farmland law. And the reason for labour disputes is because we don't have a policy to deal with them," he added.

Participants urged the government to amend the 2008 constitution and stop the civil war in



Monks participate in a protest in Mandalay on January 16.

Photo: Kyaw Ko Ko

Kachin and northern Shan States.

Speakers at the rally called on the government to offer agricultural loans and disseminate modern farming techniques; to establish workers' rights and pay in accordance with the law; and to open negotiations over the national education law.

"We have continuously demonstrated against the national education law but the government has ignored us," said student union member Ko Nandar Sit Aung.

"That's why we changed tactics and went on strike. The government failed to negotiate during the 60-day period we stipulated."

- Translation by Zar Zar Soe

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Daw Yee Mon Aung, H.G.P

For WENERGY GLOBAL PTE. LTD., C/o Kelvin Chia Yangon Ltd., Level 8A, Union Financial Centre (UFC), Corner of Mahabandoola Road and Thein Phyu Road, Botataung Township, Yangon, The Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

Dated 26 January 2015

yma@kcyangon.com

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(US Application Serial No. 85/723,561)

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Khine Khine U, Advocate

LL.B, D.B.L, LL.M (UK)

For Dental Equipment, LLC

#205/5, Thirimingalar Hous; Strand Rd., Yangon.

Dated. January 26, 2015

After guilty verdict, American teacher calls on women to speak out

Mandalay judge sentences man who attempted to rape an American teacher after posing as a motorbike taxi driver to life imprisonment

**JEREMY MULLINS
THAN NAING SOE
KYAY MOHN WIN**

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KRISTEN Shaffer took a motorbike taxi home on a September night, like she had hundreds of times before, with no inkling of the events that would follow.

She had been a teacher at a Mandalay elementary school, with a break, for more than a year. The friendly local people, the beauty of the nearby Shan highlands, the uncomplicated city and historic sites within an easy motorbike drive - all of it was alluring.

Only with the benefit of hindsight did the motorbike driver who stopped to offer her a ride home seem odd. It was about 1am - well past normal hours for a Myanmar woman to be out - but Ms Shaffer said she had occasionally been on the streets this late and had never experienced difficulties.

She isn't a drinker but is friendly and outgoing, and enjoys evenings spent chatting. That night she had been hanging out with a friend who lives near Diamond Plaza on 78th Street in the centre of Mandalay. When it came time to go home, Ms Shaffer and her friend waited on the sidewalk for a motorbike.

After a few minutes, a taxi picked her up for the 20-block ride back to her house on 59th Street, where eastern Mandalay ends and the paddy fields begin. The trip initially didn't seem too strange. The driver had no helmets, while legitimate motorbike taxi drivers usually carry two - one for themselves and another for a passenger. But otherwise it seemed a normal midnight trip, the pleasant feel of the evening, the motorbike wobbling each time the driver spat out betel.

This all changed as the driver pulled onto 59th Street.

The events that followed have resulted in life imprisonment for the driver, Ko Nyein Chan, who on January 9 was found guilty of sexually assaulting Ms Shaffer.

Ms Shaffer said he suddenly sped up, roaring past her house. The driver ignored her efforts to get him to stop, and suddenly she became afraid. She said the bike was travelling too fast for her to jump off.

"We were flying down the street. On the left was a wall separating a large, recently flooded field from the street ... Without warning, he suddenly jerked his motorbike to the left. We raced through the opening in the wall, then flew through the air for about 3 metres before landing in the swampy water. The motorbike sank quickly, with us still on top, and in a split-second I found myself completely under water, stunned. It all happened so fast, it took me a second to realise what had happened," she wrote in a note to explain to friends and family what happened.

Then the driver began his attack. He dragged her under the water, trying to drown her.

Ms Shaffer told *The Myanmar Times* this happened eight times that night.

"Every time I was in the water he held me under so long that I thought I was going to die. I think when he

saw that my body was surrendering and giving up life, that's when he pulled me out of the water," she said.

When Ko Nyein Chan pulled her back to the surface, she said she tried to scream before he clamped down on her windpipe. Ms Shaffer said this happened 12 times.

Ms Shaffer also said the driver tried to rape her three times.

He eventually gave up. Ms Shaffer said he then insisted on her helping to retrieve the motorbike from the flooded field. While he was bent over the bike, she managed to flag down help from a motorbike on the nearby street. But the ordeal wasn't over. Ms Shaffer said she then spent the next 12 hours enduring police interrogations and perfunctory hospital checks, and credits a Myanmar friend who came to help her, his wife and baby in tow, with helping her through the ordeal.

Ko Nyein Chan was found guilty by judge U Win Saung of attempt to commit culpable homicide, rape and unnatural offences, under sections 308, 376 and 377 of the penal code. On January 9 he was sentenced to life imprisonment, as well as two five-year sentences to be served concurrently.

'It shouldn't be just because of a nationality that the verdict turns out the right way. Everyone should have access to justice.'

Kristen Shaffer
Sex attack victim

The defendant's lawyer, U Thiha Aung, said he did not think the punishment was fair.

"It is too much," he said. "At the moment I am considering the sentence. Before deciding to appeal, I must discuss the case with the family."

Judge U Win Saung on the day of the verdict said it is important that people are good citizens and that Ko Nyein Chan exhibited the opposite behaviour.

"The government urges citizens to help and protect foreigners who visit or work here. This situation is an ugly event where [Ko Nyein Chan] has raped a foreign woman instead of helping," the judge said. "These events shouldn't happen in the future. That's why the accused was sentenced."

Ko Nyein Chan had previously been charged under section 307 with attempted murder but it was later changed to section 308.

Now that the September attack has receded, Ms Shaffer said a degree of normalcy has returned to her life.

"In some ways the passage of time has helped to heal ... but it's not something I'm ever going to forget," she said. "I've changed. Something in me has really changed. It takes a lot of effort to have patience."

Still, she said she is not ready to give up on Myanmar. She had only been back in the country a week when the attack occurred, having just taken up a new job in Mandalay. She had previously taught in the city for a year before leaving for 17 months.

Ms Shaffer said was fortunate to be an American, which meant she received support from the US embassy and close attention from the authorities.

A US embassy spokesperson said that - in line with its standard consular practices of protecting the interests of American citizens around the world - US embassy consular officers monitored the trial and provided consular support to the victim and the victim's family.

Since the attack, Ms Shaffer said Myanmar people have come forward to tell her of similar incidents that happened to their friends. She said many had been reluctant to speak out due to fears of cultural stigma and offending their family. She said some people counselled her to stay quiet about the attack, but she has chosen to speak out because she hopes it will help change these attitudes.

"Once this happened to me, I had friends come forward and share stories about things that were going down and I was shocked," she said.

"It shouldn't be just because of a nationality that the verdict turns out the right way. Everyone should have access to justice."

Women's rights experts said Myanmar society often makes the assumption that it is a woman's responsibility to avoid being the victim of a sexual crime.

"If you don't want to be raped, [society says] you have to wear proper dress, don't drink and don't go out late at night - victim blaming," said Ma Pyo Let Han from Rainfall, a women's rights advocacy organisation.

Women are reluctant to speak out after sexual crimes because of societal pressures, she said. Sex-related issues in general are also taboo and rarely discussed openly, while sexual education is nonexistent.

Existing laws are "pretty good" at protecting women but they are not properly enforced because of "societal stigmas", she said.

While she doesn't think the situation is improving, Ma Pyo Let Han said awareness of the problem is on the rise.

"Media, interviews, international stories and success stories of local women can break the silence, like Kristen's."

The trial over, Ms Shaffer said she is now focused on completing her teaching contract, which ends in June.

The experience has taught her that Myanmar women in similar situations are likely to come under intense pressure to remain silent, she said.

Ms Shaffer said she received positive responses from the people back home as well as local friends who care about her, but it's Myanmar people in particular she'd like to reach.

"Now that I've had this experience, I hope I can reach out to a whole host of other women who have gone through similar experiences."

Road traffic fines set for sharp increase

Fines for infringements of road rules could rise from just K1500 to K50,000 under Road Transport Administration Department plan



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PALTRY fines for traffic violations set by out-of-date laws could soon increase dramatically, police say. The current maximum fine of K1500 – about US\$1.50 – for some infractions is so low that many frequent offenders ask police if they can pay for 10 violations in advance, but fines could soon rise to K50,000.

A 1964 law setting fines at K200 to K500 was amended in 1989 to raise the maximum fine to K1500.

An order requiring an additional K50,000 payment introduced by the military regime was revoked in October 2013 because of complaints that the fine was too high.

However, officials now say that the low fines are making it impossible to stop drivers from flagrantly breaching road rules in Yangon, which is home to the majority of the country's cars.

"The 1989 law set the highest fine at K1500, which is not enough to impose discipline. Some people ask to prepay K15,000 so they can park illegally 10 times. Tariffs should be brought up to date," said U Kyaw Soe, secretary of the



Police stop a light truck carrying passengers in downtown Yangon. Photo: Staff

Yangon City Development Committee. Earlier this year, the traffic police asked the Union government to increase fines. Traffic police force sources said the Road Transport

Administration Department proposed an amendment in July that would increase fines to as much as K50,000. The proposal is now with the Attorney General's Office and once finalised

will be submitted to the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, said Colonel Kyaw Htwe from the Nay Pyi Taw Traffic Police Force. "People don't respect the law because the fine is too low," he said.

Police Captain Win Lwin from Yangon Traffic Police Force said it was up to government to set fines at the right level.

"It's up to the government to act. All we can do is make representations. We can't say by how much the fine should rise, but it should be up to date," he said.

Motorists said they support higher fines – but only if they are applied to everyone on the road. Taxi driver Ko Myint Oo Naing said traffic police sometimes ignore violations involving the vehicles of high-ranking officials.

"We don't care how big the fine is. What's important is that the police should treat everyone the same way. People won't respect the law if they see discrimination," he said.

Yangon Region Hluttaw representative Daw Nyo Nyo Thin agreed on the need for all motorists to be treated equally.

"In my opinion, the fines should increase and should be applied to everyone guilty of a violation," she said.

However, there is no indication yet as to when the new fines could come into effect.

"Once the new law is passed, by-laws will be issued stipulating the fines and other penalties," Daw Nyo Nyo Thin said. "But this can take time. I don't know even when the hluttaw will discuss the fines."

MPs prepare to debate proposed law on ethnic rights

HTOO THANT

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A LAW to protect the rights of ethnic minorities could soon be passed, say parliamentarians. Though such rights are protected by the constitution, no specific law exists to give them effect, critics say. The new law would create a Union-level ethnic affairs ministry.

U T Khun Myat, secretary of the

‘Ethnic rights are prescribed in the constitution, but in the absence of a specific law it can be difficult to exercise these rights.’

U T Khun Myat
Bill Committee secretary

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Bill Joint Committee, told the media on January 13 that the Ethnic Rights Protection Law would be adopted in the coming hluttaw session.

The law contains sections guaranteeing minorities the right to study their language and literature, practice other elements of their culture and maintain their traditions, he said.

"The law will come into effect in the tenure of the next government," he said, following a meeting with 29 regional ethnic affairs ministers. He added difficulties had arisen in guaranteeing ethnic rights for lack of a separate law to protect them.

"Ethnic rights are prescribed in the constitution, but in the absence of a specific law it can be difficult in practice to exercise these rights," he said.

U T Khun Myat, an ethnic Kachin who represents Kutkai in Shan State, was the first in the Pyithu Hluttaw to propose the draft.

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann told the ethnic affairs ministers at the meeting that the new law would support the peace-making process. "We want peace, and national



A nun prays at a Catholic church near Loikaw, Kayah State. Photo: AFP

solidarity and national reconciliation will help us get it," he said.

U Law Yin, a Kayan ethnic affairs minister in the Shan State government, said the lack of a specific ethnic rights law made it difficult for minorities to get permission from authorities to hold traditional events, to study their literature and to get senior positions in government bodies.

"There are a lot of difficulties. But the problem must be dealt with step by step. Perfection doesn't come straight away. It requires cooperation between the people and the government," he said.

The bill is now back with the Pyithu Hluttaw for finalisation, after being referred back by the Amyotha Hluttaw with additional amendments.

A proposal to form a Union-level ethnic affairs ministry responsible for ethnic affairs was submitted in the Amyotha Hluttaw, but the proposal was rejected on the grounds that there were already many Union ministries and the ethnic affairs ministers could protect minority rights.

In August 2013, the Pyithu Hluttaw instead proposed drafting a law for ethnic affairs.

– Translation by Thiri Min Htun

CRIME IN BRIEF

Military makes drug bust on border

Tatmadaw troops in the Kayin State border town of Myawaddy seized more than 200,000 amphetamine-type stimulants during raids on January 16.

The soldiers first found 2000 tablets packed in plastic in the home of a 35-year-old man in Aung Myay Shwe Bone quarter.

After investigating further, they searched the home of a 37-year-old man in No 4 ward and seized 164,000 tablets in plastic bags inside water bottles under the house. They also found 50,000 tablets in plastic bags on the back seat of a Toyota Mark II parked at the property, together with K5.5 million.

Woman dies in port accident

A woman, 28, died on January 18 while unloading goods from a ship at Thilawa Port in Yangon's Kyauktan township, according to police.

The woman was hit by two large hollow pipes while carrying crates from the Chinese-owned vessel. She was transferred to Yangon General Hospital but died shortly afterward.

Taiwanese prisoner dies in Insein

A Taiwanese man serving a 30-year jail term for drug offences has died at Insein Hospital. Shan Yi Yan, 41, died on January 1. He had been suffering from heart and lung problems, as well as haemorrhoids, police said. He was found guilty of drug offences in 2005.

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Title: "Fire Resistant Calcium Sulphate-Based Products"

Reg. No. 4/17180/2014

Abstract: The present invention relates to a calcium sulphate-based product comprising gypsum and a clay additive. The clay additive, which may be a kaolinitic clay, is provided in an amount greater than 22 wt%. The product is formed by drying an aqueous slurry containing calcined gypsum and greater than 25wt% clay additive. The product (e.g. a gypsum wallboard) exhibits improved resistance to shrinkage and increased strength after heat exposure.

Claim 1: A calcium sulphate-based product comprising gypsum and a clay additive, wherein the clay additive is provided in an amount greater than 22 wt%.

The said invention is the subject of a Declaration of Ownership recorded with the Office of the Sub-Registrar of Deeds and Assurance, Myanmar under the Registration No. **4/17180/2014** dated **November 18, 2014**.

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For. **Saint-Gobain Placo, France**.

Dated. 26th January, 2015

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(For. Domnarn Somgiat & Boonma,

Attorneys at Law, Thailand)

Dated. 26th January, 2015

A doctor examines a pregnant woman at a clinic in Yangon.
Photo: Staff



Govt plans pregnancy support

HTOO THANT

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A SCHEME to pay expectant mothers K15,000 a month for the last six months of their pregnancy is set to kick off this year. The plan forms part of the National Social Protection Strategy launched in Nay Pyi Taw on December 30.

Daw San San Aye, deputy director general of the Department of Social Welfare, under the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, said the aim of the plan was to ensure the healthy development of children from the earliest age.

The six monthly payments will begin at the start of the 2015-16 financial year, on April 1. Financial support of K15,000 during the first year of a child's life will be introduced in 2016-17, and for the first two years from 2017-18.

"The plan will provide support for

almost the first 1000 days of the baby's life. Investment in children from the earliest age will profit our country," Daw San San Aye said.

The government will allocate K103.3 billion - or 0.14 percent of gross domestic product - to the program in its 2015-16 budget bill, which will require parliament approval. Daw San San Aye said that it forecasts this will rise annually to 0.32pc of GDP by 2024 but subject to parliamentary approval and the availability of funding.

Pending exact numbers from last year's census, it is estimated that some 2.25 million women and children will receive financial assistance in 2017.

Daw San San Aye said the payment would make a real difference for poor families. "We're building a bridge for poor families to be able to send their children to school and to receive medical care," she said.

It has not yet been decided how

BILLION KYAT

103.3

Amount the government plans to allocate to maternal payments in its draft 2015-16 budget

to distribute the money but one option being considered is to disburse it through General Administration Department offices. The government expects to finalise further details about the program next month, and then in its discussions with parliament.

However, the proposal has already been welcomed by residents and MPs.

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Activists begin campaign on freedom of information

Push for Freedom of Information Law launched as international watchdog ranks Myanmar last on transparency



LUN MIN MANG

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OPEN up, freedom-of-information activists are telling the government. The Open Myanmar Initiative (OMI) told a press conference last week that the civil society research organisation would press for a law requiring the release of government information to both local and international media – as well as to individual citizens.

The group is planning to hold a series of workshops with MPs and citizens' groups throughout the year as part of the drafting process.

"Citizens' ability to obtain government information and documents is nearly zero, so far as I can see. Freedom of information should be enabled by law," said U Aye Kyaw, executive director of OMI.

Land disputes could be avoided if information about ownership was in the public domain, he added.

88 Generation leader U Ko Ko Gyi, a member of the OMI's advisory team, said all citizens and not only the media should be given direct access to information from government departments. A formal system should also be set up to enable the public to access government documents no longer classified as secret.

"Citizens should at least have the right to know why government documents are secret. The papers should be open to the public after a certain period," said U Ko Ko Gyi, adding that some financial reports to parliament from ministries were marked "confidential", which prevented research institutes and organisations from obtaining the information.

"The removal of 'confidential' status would give researchers wider access to statistics on government expenditure. That's the best way of ensuring that the government is clean," he said.

Under the constitution, Pyidaungsu Hluttaw records shall be published unless the hluttaw itself decides otherwise.

The OMI also wants to know about

the wealth of individual government officials and the ministries' budget reports. "Some fear the government will not allow this, but the government has claimed that it was prepared to join an Open Government Partnership [OGP]," said U Htin Kyaw Aye, deputy director of OMI.

'Citizens' ability to obtain government information ... is nearly zero.'

U Aye Kyaw
Open Myanmar Initiative

President U Thein Sein announced Myanmar's intention to join the OGP in November 2012. The British government subsequently asked the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to help Myanmar prepare for membership.

To be eligible for membership Myanmar needs to score 12 out of a possible 16 points across four criteria. However, an OECD assessment carried out in 2013 pegged Myanmar's score at just two of 16 points.

The results are backed up by a new report from the World Wide Web Foundation that found Myanmar has made almost no progress on government data and information transparency.

The second edition of the Open Data Barometer, published on January 15, pegged Myanmar as the lowest-ranked of 86 countries surveyed in 2014. It also earned the dubious distinction of being the only country to receive a score of 0, behind Haiti on a score of 1.19. The United Kingdom topped the index with 100, ahead of the United States, Sweden, France and New Zealand.

The Open Data Barometer is published by the World Wide Web Foundation, which was established 2009 by web inventor Tim Berners-Lee, and aims to uncover the "true prevalence and impact of open data initiatives". – *Additional reporting by Thomas Kean*

payments

"Rich families spend tens of thousands on healthcare but people from poor families still depend on folk medicine when they suffer a dangerous illness, especially if transportation in the countryside is inadequate," said U Hla Tun, a businessman from Ywar Kauk ward, in Pyinmana township.

Amyotha Hluttaw representative U Phone Myint Aung, of Yangon Region, said he supported the plan. "This is a move we should welcome. In Japan, the government is encouraging women to have babies by providing financial support as the number of old people increases. In our country, we found that the population was only 51 million, instead of the more than 60 million we expected."

Daw Khin May, a farmer from Aye Chan Thar ward in Nay Pyi Taw's Lewe township, offered a wary welcome to the plan, which she called "unbelievable". – *Translation by Thiri Min Htun*

Protest in Dawei over power rates

LOCAL politicians, civil society organisations, activists and residents took to the streets of Dawei last week to protest against electricity charges they say could be 10 times as high as in the rest of the country. About 1000 demonstrators, who had received official authorisation for the protest, took part.

U Thant Sin, a representative of a Dawei-based civil society organisation, said residents of the Tanintharyi Region capital were paying K400 for one unit of electricity. "In some areas, a unit costs more than K600. It's too high. We want to pay the same price as other states and regions," he said.

Residents blame the high charges on a local private company, PTC, which distributes power in the absence of a supply from the government.

Another protester, an electrical engineer from the Dawei district electricity authority, said he did not know why the government did not supply electricity to the region. – *Lun Min Mang*



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Tourism creates 50,000 jobs

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JOBS in the tourist industry increased in number by about 50,000 between 2013 and 2014, according to a government report issued this month. According to the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, the tourist industry now employs a staggering 870,000 people.

That figure, up from 820,000 the year before, represents 6.5 percent of total employment, the ministry said. The dramatic growth in the number of tourists has created jobs for local people as tour guides and in hotels and related businesses, like the food and beverage industry.

More than 3 million foreigners visited Myanmar last year, bringing in more than K1.1 trillion, about K200 billion more than in 2013, according to government figures. Tourism minister U Htay Aung said that



Tourists board a boat at Mandalay's Mayanchan jetty. Photo: Phyo Wai Kyaw

most of that income flowed directly to the public.

However, as *The Myanmar Times* reported last week, almost two-thirds of those 3 million visitors were day-trippers from neighbouring countries, who would not be counted as tourists according to most international standards. Figures from sites regularly visited by tourists, such as Shwedagon Pagoda and Inle Lake, suggest arrivals of tourists increased by between 20pc and 25pc in 2014.

The employment figures mirror those of the Pacific Asia Travel Association, of which the Myanmar

Tourism Federation is a member. In its 2014 annual report, the association said travel and tourism accounted for 823,500 jobs in 2013 and this was forecast to grow to 877,500 last year, or about 3.1pc of total employment.

However, it includes not only direct jobs but also indirect and induced employment. This includes jobs created by spending of tourism-related companies, such as food purchases by hotels.

Direct employment in 2013 stood at 338,500 jobs, or 1.2pc of total employment, according to PATA, and this was forecast to grow by 12pc in 2014 to 379,000.

"[Direct employment] includes employment by hotels, travel agents, airlines and other passenger transportation services [excluding commuter services]. It also includes, for example, the activities of the restaurant and leisure industries directly supported by tourists," the association said.

The number of tour companies increased by about 300 last year to around 1500 companies, according to data from the Union of Myanmar Travel Association.

However, fears are growing for the long-term health of the industry, with many gaps to be filled, the general secretary of the entrepreneurs' association, U Naung Naung Han, told *The Myanmar Times*.

"Most companies lack skilled staff. They recruit interns as if they were training schools and most of their staff know nothing about tourism," he said, adding that the country's nightlife is also not very appealing to younger visitors.

"The government doesn't really get it. When we talk about nightlife, they think we're talking about nightclubs, which they think lowers the image of the country. What we mean is night markets, restaurants and bars, and so on. That's what tourists want," he said.

U Naung Naung Han also criticised a government plan to end the visa-on-arrival system in favour of an e-visa system. "They should have both. What about tourists with no access to the internet? The government should think twice before changing the policy," he said.

MTF signs marketing deal with US agency

THE Myanmar Tourism Federation has signed a three-year contract with US-based marketing agency Solimar International to attract more tourists, especially from North America.

U Phyo Wai Yar Zar, joint secretary general of the MTF and chair of Myanmar Tourism Marketing (MTM), said it was the first agreement signed with a marketing agency to promote the country.

"We believe the number of tourists coming from the United States and Canada will gradually increase [as a result of the agreement]," U Phyo Wai Yar Zar said.

The contract was signed on January 17 at Inya Lake Hotel in Yangon.

Solimar will help support sustainable, long-term growth for the tourism sector by attracting high-value and low-impact tourists, it said in a statement.

It said it would communicate "Myanmar's unique selling points to North American trade, media and tourists, to increase the number of tourists and their length of stay, and to encourage return visits".

U Phyo Wai Yar Zar said Solimar had already opened an office in Washington to work with the media and tourism industry there.

Minister for Hotels and Tourism U Htay Aung said the agreement was "a milestone in the history of Myanmar tourism". - *Zaw Win Than*

300

New tour companies launched in 2014, according to the Union of Myanmar Travel Association

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Dated: 26 January 2015



Workers prepare signboards ahead of the ASEAN Summit in Nay Pyi Taw on May 9, 2014. Photo: AFP

Government urges Malaysia to follow Nay Pyi Taw Declaration

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THE government has urged Malaysia to follow up on the Nay Pyi Taw declaration adopted at the last ASEAN summit, chaired by Myanmar, as well as other issues related to the future of the regional organisation. Malaysia is chairing ASEAN in 2015, following on from Myanmar's year in the hot seat.

U Aung Htoo, deputy director general of the foreign ministry's ASEAN Affairs Department, said the government was pressing for completion of work on the building of the ASEAN economic community that had not been accomplished during Myanmar's tenure. This included the establishment

of a high-level task force to speed progress on the issue, he said.

"We've got some agreement to set up the task force and we are pushing for it to be established during Malaysia's tenure," he said.

The 28-point Nay Pyi Taw declaration highlights the roadmap for an ASEAN Community (2009-2015), as well as enhanced efforts to empower women, youth, children, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups by encouraging their active participation in, and helping them benefit from, the ASEAN community-building process.

Malaysia has already set priority areas it hopes to achieve over the next year, which will be discussed at

the Foreign Ministers' Retreat at the Sutera Harbour Resort in Kota Kinabalu on January 27-28. The meeting will be the first of a series of ministerial and related meetings throughout the year.

The two main focuses for Malaysia are the realisation of the ASEAN Community 2015 and the development of an ASEAN Community Post-2015 vision.

Other topics are the Declaration on Combating Transnational Crime, the Agreement on Transfers of Prisoners and the establishment of an ASEAN Peacekeeping Battalion, the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) Master Plan, the Declaration on Elderly Persons and the First Ladies' Forum.

Agents lure workers to work illegally in Korea

High demand for jobs in South Korea tempts workers and agents to take illegal route



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MIGRANT workers tempted to seek work illegally in South Korea have been warned to stay away - unless they follow the legal route. Myanmar workers already employed in South Korea say the authorities crack down hard on undocumented foreign workers, despite the numerous factory jobs available.

Rising demand has led overseas employment agencies in Yangon to send workers to South Korea, bypassing the steps required by Myanmar and South Korean authorities, workers have told *The Myanmar Times*. Agencies offer low-cost flights and Korean language lessons, they say.

"The agents say they can send us to Korea at very low cost. But we don't know what will happen when

we get there," said Ko Myint Moe Lwin, who is studying Korean with a view to working there.

Workers who have passed the required Employment Permit System (EPS) exam, which is jointly conducted by the Myanmar and South

"There are incentives in our class to go without passing the EPS examination or getting a work permit. But I don't think it's safe," he said.

According to the labour ministry, there were 137 licensed overseas employment service agents in 2012 and most run Korean-language classes.

But Ko Kyaw Swar Hlaing, who has been working in South Korea for three years, said there were risks to working illegally. He said the many Myanmar working on visitors' visas were forced to live in hiding from the South Korean authorities.

"Getting through immigration is hard. If they do, they can stay only three months without overstaying," he said.

Many of those caught have either been deported, or are facing trial.

"It's best not to come illegally," he said.

After legal workers have been in South Korea for three months, they have to register to extend their work permit at the Korean Ministry of Employment and Labour.

137

Licensed employment agencies in 2012, according to the Ministry of Labour

Korean governments, pay US\$545 and K80,000 to the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security for permission to work in South Korea.

U Htoo Aung, who is also trying to go to Korea, said illegal avenues were advertised widely.



A man walks beside an eroded section of the bank of the Ayeyarwady River in Minbu township. Photo: Aung Kyaw Min

In Magwe, a different kind of land grab

In central Myanmar, increased shipping traffic is eroding farmland and displacing entire villages, according to worried residents



THE Ayeyarwady is Myanmar's central artery, without which its products would not move and its lifeblood would not flow. But like the tide of commerce itself, the river is greedy, going where it wants and taking what it wants. For residents of Minbu township in Magwe Region, that includes their homes and livelihoods.

"The route over there where ships are running was once our alluvial plain," says U Soe Lwin. A farmer and village administrator in Htone Magyi, 10 kilometres (6 miles) north of Minbu, he points to passing cargo ships a few hundred metres out. Just beyond them, large sandbanks crest the surface of the water, splitting this part of the implacable brown river in two.

"Look," he says, "even now most parts of the area where we are

growing chilli peppers are being gradually washed away by riverbank erosion."

The land U Soe Lwin stands on – and on which fields of crops still grow – ends not in a ditch or wildflower patch but in parched earth and a perilous unstable drop. Visible cracks suggest where the next slivers of land will soon fall away. In some places, crops planted earlier in the season now grow right up to the very edge. Rows are interrupted by patches of thin air. Some of the plants along the very edge most likely will not be here by harvest time.

U Soe Lwin attributes the erosion to the bigger waves made by ships, which are navigating closer and closer to shore to avoid the large sandbanks accumulating in the middle of the waters. But the result is a vicious cycle of land displacement, in which farmland falls away, resettles in mid-river and pushes the big boats even closer to the banks. For area residents, the pattern does not bode well.

Once built well back from the river's edge, Htone Magyi is fast becoming waterfront property. Over the past decade, steady erosion has seen large

chunks of land crumble. Today the disintegrating banks are only around 300 metres (just under 1000 feet) from the village itself.

No one in Htone Magyi is happy with their new view. They recall what happened to three other villages in the township – Latpa Taw, Lay Eain Tan and Latpan Tapin – which 10 years ago had to pack up and relocate when the waters came too close.

Two years ago, Htone Magyi's neighbour, Neitban Kyun village, did the same, after a riverbank collapse.

'Our village was very far from the river in the past ... [It] may need to be relocated in the next year.'

U Soe Lwin
Htone Magyi village administrator

Htone Magyi – home to over 800 people, with around 180 houses as well as a monastery and a primary school – will need to relocate soon as well, says U Soe Lwin.

"Our village was very far from the river in the past. If we take into account the amount of cultivable land we lost due to this year's riverbank erosion, the village may need to be relocated in the next year," he said.

More than 200 acres of village farmland has been lost over the past two years, prompting local authorities to appeal to the government and hlut-taw for help. But preventing the erosion is beyond their means. Unfortunately, so is the cost of moving.

Village head U Than Maung says buying new land, putting up new buildings and paying for transportation will cost between K500,000 and K1 million per household – more than many can afford. Residents are putting off packing up as long as possible.

"The village should be relocated but people keep on living there because they can't afford to move. They

will leave this place when they can't live here any longer," U Than Maung says.

It's a dangerous gamble. In the two years since Neitban Kyun moved, only 170 of 200 households have so far been replaced, said U Tin Shein, head of the village-tract administration office.

"There are many households who couldn't afford to build a new house. Some people who have built a house can't manage to buy land outright, so they have to pay rent to landowners, or buy it on an instalment system," U Tin Shein said.

Sweeping their world literally out from under their feet, the upheaval for some is nothing short of a cataclysm.

"Our elders have said that a port town will one day appear near Auk Kyaung Pagoda one day because of the Ayeyarwady River," U Tin Shein said, referring to a pagoda 1.6km (1 mile) south of Htone Magyi that is in danger of sinking into the river. "With this current situation, their words will come true."

– Translation by Zar Zar Soe and Thiri Min Htun

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IN DEPTH

Kachin divided over Manaw return

Thousands attended this year's Manaw festival, but not all agree that the display of Kachin culture and unity should have taken place

KATY CARLSON

newsroom@mmtimes.com

THE drumbeats could be heard several streets from the Manaw ground in Myitkyina, as people flocked to the annual festival in early January. The focus of attention was the large, circular field with Manaw poles in the middle and a spectator-lined fenced around the perimeter.

On the field, hundreds danced in two parallel lines, nearly every dancer wearing some kind of traditional clothing, ranging from extravagant tribal costumes to a mere *gaung baung* (traditional headdress for men), or a fan or scarf for the women (nearly all emblazoned with Oppo, the brand name of one of the festival's sponsors).

The lesser areas surrounding the field held stalls of gemstones, Kachin souvenirs, cosmetics and free coffee samples. Additional parts of the festival grounds held a stage for large performances at night and a "museum" of Kachin history and traditions.

Celebrated from January 5-11 this year, the Manaw festival has been marked on a sporadically annual basis since Myanmar gained independence from the British in 1948.

'Kachin people used to celebrate this Manaw dance only when the community is at peace.'

Brochure distributed by Kachin Civil Society during the Manaw

There was no festival from 1962 to 1974, during the early years of General Ne Win's reign, and was not celebrated between 2012 and 2014 due to renewed fighting between the Kachin Independence Army and the Tatmadaw.

Even before the annual festival, the Manaw dance, meant to be an imitation of birds and butterflies, had been celebrated around the traditional Manaw pillars for centuries. In Kachin culture, the dance usually runs for four days, but can last as long as eight. There are five main instances where

the dance is performed, including the gaining of wealth, the blessing of a death of an ancestor, a victory in war, a child moving out of the house or to drive out evil spirits prior to starting a new settlement.

Today, the annual festival - celebrated across the state, but with the largest event in the capital Myitkyina - has come to represent different things for different people. Many Kachin say that the festival is a celebration of unity and peace in their state.

"The Manaw festival is the greatest festival for our culture, for our identity," said Zau Tu, a young Kachin who served on the festival's dance sub-committee. "So we should celebrate every year because this means that we still have Kachin State. If we don't have Kachin State, then we don't need to celebrate the Kachin State Day Manaw Festival."

In this way, the festival is merely an act of preserving their culture. "We have six tribes [Jinghpaw, Lisu, Rawang, Lachid, Zaiwa and Lhaovo]. Manaw is for organising the many tribes and dancing and celebrating together," he said.

Most visitors arriving at the Manaw Festival in Myitkyina would have had no idea that a boycott was under way. Coinciding with Kachin State Day, which commemorates the formation of Kachin State in 1948, January 10 was the busiest day of the festival. But while crowds remained large, nearly all of the locals were aware of the boycott - and everyone had their own opinion.

The festival's official pamphlet for visitors, written in broken English, stated that "the reason for having this celebration are mainly to express and commemorate the peaceful life achieved in Kachin State; to identify clearly the participation of all the Kachin people and Kachin State Residents in realizing of the Four Social Objectives of the State Peace and Development Council [SPDC]; to achieve our Solidarity among the different dialect groups and then to strengthen our national unity; and to cooperate in the task of Peace and Development Programmers of our mother country, the Union of Myanmar, together with all the ethnic groups of Myanmar to contribute for the long life of our country."

The description seemed very out of date - and the reference to the SPDC, which was dissolved in March 2011,



Participants dance in front of Manaw poles in Myitkyina on January 10. Photo: Katy Carlson

suggested it had simply been dusted off from that year's event.

Still, this description was a perfect example of why many Kachin took offence to holding the festival this year. They point to the numerous people displaced by the conflict who have sought refuge in Myitkyina and, more recently, the deaths of the 23 cadets on November 19 in a Tatmadaw artillery attack. With the current state of the conflict and local politics, it is easy to argue that peace has not yet been achieved in Kachin State.

Further illustrating the point, just three days after the festival ended fresh fighting broke out between the Tatmadaw and KIA in Hpakant township, after

the KIA detained three policemen who were escorting the Kachin State minister for transport.

With this argument, a pledge was circulated around the region's Baptist churches in the weeks leading up to the festival. Those signing the pledge promised to not partake in Manaw festivities. It's unclear how many people signed it, but many young people that *The Myanmar Times* spoke to for this article said that they and the majority of their friends had signed it.

Further resistance to the festival came from a grouping that identified itself as Kachin Civil Society, which left informational brochures at guesthouses around Myitkyina. These

warned visitors that the Kachin culture is being exploited by the national government in an effort to show the international community that peace has been achieved in the country of Myanmar.

"Kachin people used to celebrate this Manaw dance only when the community is at peace and when people enjoy themselves for a particular victory," the brochure said, adding that "the Naypyidaw government has no reason to manipulate our Kachin Manaw for the benefit of any political advantage."

These sentiments seemed to be shared widely among the Kachin, with the topic of internally displaced persons (IDPs) recurring in each discussion. One 25-year-old IDP told us how her family had no choice but to leave their village four years ago. Prior to the civil war they were happy to celebrate the Manaw festival but now she and her family live with 319 other IDPs in Mali Yang Camp in Myitkyina.

In 2014, the camps were hit with financial insecurity as several international NGOs chose not to extend their projects, according to IDP camp leaders. Due to these changes and rumours of future cuts, it has been difficult for residents to watch this year's festival take place, particularly given the expense of holding the event. She joined many of her fellow IDPs in signing the pledge of non-involvement.

For the overwhelmingly Christian Kachin, the leadership of the Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC) carries far more legitimacy than the regional government. The KBC oversees most of the Baptist churches and also provides aid to IDPs in Myitkyina and elsewhere in the state.

Many pledge-signers attributed the boycott campaign to the KBC. However, members of the KBC said diplomatically that they advised all their members to be informed about the situation and to make a decision for themselves. They also noted that many of the Manaw organising committee leaders are members of Baptist churches.

While the Manaw Festival may play a significant role in Kachin culture, this year's boycott showed that the Kachin value the well-being of their people just as much as tradition. As the Kachin Civil Society pamphlet concludes, "How can we enjoy our Manaw while our brothers/sisters are crying in tears?"

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Praise, criticism after Muslim doctor is freed from prison

Dr Tun Aung pardoned by President U Thein Sein following appeal from member of US Congress

WALONE

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AMNESTY International has welcomed the release of a Muslim Rohingya community leader who was recently pardoned by President U Thein Sein following intervention by a member of the United States Congress.

Dr Tun Aung, a medical doctor and former politician who won a seat in the 1990 election, was freed from Insein Prison on January 19. He was arrested and jailed for 17 years following an outbreak of violence in Rakhine State's Maungdaw township in June 2012.

His release follows that of U Kyaw Hla Aung, a fellow Muslim Rohingya who was arrested in similar circumstances in July 2013 and freed in an amnesty on October 7, 2014, following a concerted international campaign.

Rupert Abbott, Amnesty International's research director for South-east Asia and the Pacific, said Dr Tun Aung's release was a "positive step". He urged the government to free the "dozens of other prisoners of

conscience still behind bars".

Dr Tun Aung told Radio Free Asia after his release that he had been freed because of lobbying from Congressman Aaron Schock and the Prague Freedom Foundation.

Dr Tun Aung said Mr Schock, a Republican from Illinois, raised his case in a meeting with Minister for the President's Office U Aung Min at the Myanmar Peace Center on

Muslim communities in Rakhine State.

"We don't know too much about Dr Tun Aung but he was an important person who incited violence in Maungdaw," U Aye Thar Aung said.

However, he was unable to give more specifics about Dr Tun Aung's role in the violence.

U Ye Aung, a member of the Former Political Prisoners Society who sits on the Prisoners of

Aung was found guilty in Sittwe court of a litany of crimes, including holding a fake identity card, damaging public property, endangering law and order, and foreign exchange violations.

He was initially sentenced to 11 years' jail but this was increased to 17 years after the prosecution appealed. Nine years was later cut from sentence on appeal to the Union Supreme Court.

Daw Wai Wai Nu from the Women Peace Network Arakan said Dr Tun Aung had been tried with inadequate legal representation and wrongly imprisoned.

"The government didn't charge those who really incited the violence. Instead, it has sent some people to jail unfairly," she said.

Amnesty International leveled similar accusations at the government, saying that according to credible eyewitness reports security forces had been involved in the violence or allowed it to happen.

"While Dr Tun Aung has been languishing in prison, those responsible for the violence he was trying to stop have walked free. Authorities should be focusing their energies on holding to account perpetrators of human rights abuses - not jailing those trying to prevent them," Mr Abbott said.

'While Dr Tun Aung has been languishing in prison, those responsible for the violence he was trying to stop have walked free.'

Rupert Abbott
Amnesty International

January 19. He was released later that afternoon.

While his release was welcomed abroad, it drew some criticism locally, particularly from ethnic Rakhine leaders.

U Aye Thar Aung, a senior member of the Rakhine National Party, condemned Dr Tun Aung's release and said it could create additional tension between the Buddhist and

Conscience Affairs Committee, said that Dr Tun Aung was not a political prisoner because he was jailed in relation to religious and racial violence.

"I really don't know whether he committed the crimes or not but we didn't recognise him as a political prisoner so I have no further comment," U Ye Aung said.

Following his arrest, Dr Tun

Soldier accused of shooting official

A LOCAL official is battling for his life in hospital after being shot in the head, apparently over an affair with a woman. Police say the gunman is a serving army officer, whose name and regiment they have identified.

The head of Langkho district administration office in southern Shan State, U Bo Bo Than Shwe, was shot in his office by a man in civilian clothes on the morning of January 19, police said.

"As far as we know, he was shot because of an affair with a woman, and the gunman is a military officer. We know his name, and we're trying to arrest him," said the police source.

U Nyunt Han, chair of the National League for Democracy in Langkho township, said the police had told him the name of the gunman, and that he was attached to the infantry regiment at nearby Mong Pan.

U Bo Bo Than Shwe is in Sao San Tun hospital in Taunggyi township. A spokesperson for the hospital said he was shot in the right cheek and the back of the head. "Blood is still dripping from his ears. The bullet hasn't yet been removed," the spokesperson said.

A man arrested on January 19 has now been released, apparently because of mistaken identity.

- Maung Zaw,
translation by Thiri Min Htun

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Views

Religious leaders turning the screws on region's non-believers



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WITH the *Charlie Hebdo* massacre causing more anguish over the age-old problem of religious intolerance, it is worth reassessing the appeal of the world's great faiths in this region.

For there is a misguided notion that in places like Malaysia and Indonesia, large numbers of people are signing up to a more pious, more ritualistic and more fanatical version of Islam.

Likewise, their co-religionists are said to be embracing more assertive forms of Buddhism, Christianity or Hinduism, and all, including the Islamists, are claimed to be wooing large numbers of new adherents.

Not true. Social research over the past four or five decades has shown that the fastest-growing group in this region today is none of the above, it is "unaffiliated".

That is a polite term for secular folks, who are mostly under 30 and who sometimes publicly, but mostly privately among themselves, reject all religious beliefs.

It is the reason why regional leaders, political and faith-based, are now speaking out forcefully – some would say desperately – against the trend, and trying to reverse it by introducing ever stricter religious decrees.

"They call it human rightism," lamented Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak, "where the core beliefs are based on humanism and secularism, as well as liberalism."

That's absolutely correct.

But in the typical sanctimonious mode of the religiously intolerant, Najib went on to condemn this human rightism not as a youthful flirtation but as a crime

punishable by death.

Echoing other religious leaders, he stressed that Malaysia would crack down on any of his country's Muslims who contemplate apostasy – the renunciation of Islam in favour of human rightism.

"We will not tolerate any demands or right to apostasy by Muslims," Najib said.

In other words, freedom of choice is denied. It is a sin. Of course, it is also an admission that their religion is based on shaky ground and that without harsh edicts it might collapse and fade away.

But even the edicts and barbaric punishments are failing, as evidenced by the growing ranks of the unaffiliated across Southeast Asia – and, in truth, across the world.

Berating this trend, Egypt's Grand Imam Ahmed al-Tayeb said, "It is regretful that some young people now openly brag about being atheist."

Well, no, it's not regretful, and you don't need to be a rocket scientist to know why it's not.

The reason is simple: They want to live a peaceful, tolerant and stress-free life that includes as much joy and happiness as possible.

But they will not get that without a mighty struggle against the absurdly repressive laws being introduced by the region's religious dogmatists.

In Najib's Malaysia, for instance, there is a renewed push for Shariah law in the state of Kelantan, while over in Brunei Shariah is already in force. In case you have forgotten, Shariah punishes crimes like theft, adultery, sodomy, rape and apostasy by such means as amputation, flogging and death by stoning.

As well, just a week ago, Malaysia's Islamic authorities condemned visiting South Korean pop stars, whose performance, they claimed, might negatively impact the faith of the nation's Muslims.

This silly but serious nonsense arose when members of the Korean boyband were seen hugging and kissing a trio of Malay girls wearing headscarves. The girls have now been called in for questioning.

When Najib ponders why his nation's youth are becoming secular,

he might consider the interrogation of these girls and the actions of other religious guardians, like those in Brunei who have banned Santa Claus. Last month, the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Bandar Seri Begawan said Christmas festivities must cease because they may lead Muslims astray and damage their faith.

It is odd how religious groups feel so insecure that they fear a pop song, a cartoon, a tinselly tree, or a headline might cause them to lose their faith.

But that's how it is, although it needs stressing that the stupefying rules and rituals, and the blood lust, are not confined to those of the Islamic faith. Christians, Buddhists, Hindus and other organised believers across the region are just as bad.

The surge in corruption and paedophilia among Thai monks and the actions of the U Wirathu brand of thuggish Buddhists cause many to recoil in horror and to question their own faith.

Perhaps even worse was the way the head of the Catholic Church, Pope Francis, told his flock in the Philippines that it would be understandable if they punched someone who had insulted their mother.

It was his explanation for why Muslims are so upset by the *Charlie Hebdo* cartoons and resort not merely to hitting those responsible but to killing them in cold blood.

Most secularists, would be surprised by the Pope's remark, since their tendency would be not to strike the insulter, but to inform them they are wrong. That's all. And it's invariably a far more effective response.

But frankly, religious bigotry is getting deeply depressing. Perhaps the best solace is to recall the 2009 advert put up by secularists on London buses, which read, "There's probably no god. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life."

It has been copied in dozens of countries around the world, but sadly none from this region, which might explain why there is so much religious intolerance here.

We can only hope that the rising ranks of the unaffiliated will change that.



President U Thein Sein addresses a meeting of civil society leaders at Yangon University.

Does the president to amend the constitution



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PRESIDENT U Thein Sein led a meeting of senior political figures in Nay Pyi Taw on January 12. In attendance was the parliament speaker, commander-in-chief, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, regional ministers for ethnic

affairs and other political leaders.

The 48-person meeting concluded with little more than a "see you again soon" – there was no clear outcome.




However, one event that gave the meeting significance was the president's opening speech, in which he revealed his real attitude toward amending the constitution.

The president said, "I always say that the constitution must be amended if the circumstances dictate it. I believe we have to amend the constitution to build a federal union that ethnic minorities have continuously demanded and continue the implementation of the democratic transition."

"But [amending the constitution]

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Dated: 26 January 2015

Views



Photo: Boothee

ent really want
nstitution?

should be done based on the outcome of political dialogue that will be held as part of the current peacemaking process, as well as in accord with legal procedures stated in the 2008 constitution,” he said.

“Trying to change the constitution without legal procedures tends to overwhelm the rule of law so we have to amend the constitution in accord with provisions in the constitution.”

His speech essentially says that the entire country must support the peace process so that a nationwide ceasefire agreement can be signed, political dialogue held and the constitution amended in accord with the rules set out in the current constitution.

The implication, however, is that nothing needs to be done at present on the constitution. There is also a veiled criticism of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the National League for Democracy and 88 Generation, who have been trying to generate public pressure outside parliament on amending the 2008 constitution.

But the fact is that the 2008 constitution was made by former military dictators as a tool to entrench military rule. It lacks even the barest of necessities for a democracy and contains no real trace of federalism. That’s why some provisions of this undemocratic constitution need to be changed immediately.

The president’s speech suggests that constitutional amendments can’t be made before political dialogue takes place. But the timeline for this dialogue is unclear.

It is not a stretch for us to conclude that he has no desire to change the constitution before the 2015 election – in fact, that he wants to conduct the election under the unchanged 2008 constitution.

The constitutional amendment process is already under way in parliament. However, according to reports from the Constitutional Amendment Implementation Committee, military representatives don’t want to make the changes that are essential for democracy and federalism.

Similarly, the Union Solidarity and Development Party, which holds the largest number of seats in parliament, has not made any firm statements on what it wants to change.

Even the most casual observer can see that the 2008 constitution privileges the military-backed USDP. For example, if the USDP – which is led by former military officers – won 34 percent of seats in a general election, it could work together with military representatives to select the president, who then forms the government.

Other parties, such as the NLD, will only be guaranteed the chance to choose the president and form a cabinet if they hold more than 67pc of elected seats. This is one reason why the constitution is inherently undemocratic.

And it’s the reason why section 60, which outlines the process of selecting the president, urgently needs to be changed. Not to mention others that need to go, such as 59(f), which stops Daw Aung San Suu Kyi from being president, and section 261, which means ethnic parties don’t have the chance to select their state’s chief minister, even if they win every single seat in the regional parliament.

Only if all of these flaws are fixed will the election, selection of the president and chief ministers, and formation of the Union and regional governments after the 2015 election have any credibility.

Only with these changes can the reform process move forward, a federal system be developed and economic growth continued.

Taking what he said on January 12 into consideration, it seems President U Thein Sein doesn’t want to change the constitution. Not only that, he wants to prolong the amendment process as long as he can.

That being the case, he also doesn’t want to continue the reform process, develop a federal union or put the country on the path to economic success.

- Translation by Zar Zar Soe

Rights, safety at risk without
lawful interception rules



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MYANMAR is among the fastest-growing telecommunications markets in the world. However, a key part of Myanmar’s telecommunications legal framework has yet to be finalised: rules governing the interception of communications by law enforcement, otherwise known as “lawful interception”.

Why is a legal framework governing this process important? It ensures that law enforcement officials have the necessary legal tools to fight crime. But it should also prevent the misuse of lawful interception and provide appropriate protection to human rights, such as freedom of expression and privacy.

Lawful interception intrudes into private communications. Law enforcement authorities clearly have legitimate reasons to intercept the communications of certain individuals and organisations – for example, people who are suspected of planning or carrying out a serious crime, such as a terrorist attack. But authorities may misuse the same technology, putting individuals or specific groups, such as political activists or minorities, under arbitrary surveillance, perhaps as part of a wider pattern of intimidation.

Regulations governing lawful interception in other countries are usually most strict when it comes to authorities requesting access to the content of communications, such as what is said in phone conversations, or written in text messages and emails. However, users of mobile phones and computers generate a lot of other data that could be potentially sensitive, such as their location. This information also needs to be protected under lawful interception regulations to prevent unauthorised access. That means only permitting access in accordance with strict criteria.

These criteria – the conditions under which communications can be intercepted, by which authorities, and for which suspected crimes – have not been established in Myanmar. The government has promised a public consultation before draft regulations on lawful interception are approved. This is a welcome step, and one that it has already undertaken with other telecoms regulations.

What should those draft regulations include? Building on good practice elsewhere, including in other countries’ legal frameworks and United Nations reports, the rules should include the need for requests for interception to fulfil the following criteria.

Firstly, interception of communications must be targeted against a specific person or organisation, and there must be prior suspicion that the target has been involved in a crime. In other words, it cannot be mass, indiscriminate interception.

Once this has been established, a lawful interception request must be subject to prior authorisation. In other countries, this is usually in the form of either a judicial or executive order that is presented to the operator as legal justification for intercepting communications.

Any lawful interception request made to the court should include



A man speaks on a public phone at a store in Yangon. Photo: AFP

an assessment of the necessity and proportionality of the contemplated interception, well-defined reasons supporting the request and be time bound. In other words, it should not permit surveillance for an indefinite period.

The terms of recently issued telecommunications licences already require that a valid court order must accompany any lawful interception request. But the process for this is not yet defined in regulations. These regulations also need to specify the route a lawful interception request takes from law enforcement authorities, such as the police, to the operator, such as Telenor and Ooredoo.

Emerging industry norms, such as the Global Network Initiative (GNI) Implementation Guidelines and the Guiding Principles of the Telecommunication Industry Dialogue on Freedom of Expression and Privacy – the latter of which is available in Myanmar language – provide useful guidance.

The terms of recently issued telecoms licences require that a valid court order must accompany any lawful interception request. But the process for this is not yet defined in regulations.

The request should be made to the operator in writing, either directly from a designated person in the requesting authority, or by the regulator – currently the Post and Telegraph Department (PTD) – on the authority’s behalf.

The request, accompanied by the court order, should contain as much information as possible, including the required time period for the interception. To ensure confidentiality, the data collected by the authorities should be destroyed after a specified amount of time.

Once the regulations are in place, judges likely to be involved in such court orders will need training.

On receiving the request or judicial order, the telecoms operator should then scrutinise the request

to ensure all legal requirements are met. If they are, it can authorise the interception and allow access to the requested data. If they are not met – for example, if the request is too vague or broad – operators should seek clarification to narrow the request.

In order for communications to be intercepted, the telecommunications system needs to be configured in a specific technical way according to a set of standards. The European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI) has taken the lead in producing globally applicable standards for ICTs, including lawful intercept requirements. Administrative bodies, manufacturers, research institutes and service providers from Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, South Korea and India are associate members of the ETSI.

In recent years, an industry has emerged around providing technical capability for lawful intercept solutions that are often unregulated. Civil society groups are concerned that many of these companies may be selling technology that goes beyond regulated, targeted and controllable interception of individuals under prior suspicion and instead permits the mass surveillance of citizens, in violation of their rights. As Myanmar develops its lawful intercept regulations, the PTD could take advice to ensure this kind of technology is not employed.

Finally, oversight – whether by parliamentary committee or ombudsmen – should be built into the regulations to ensure that they are being implemented correctly. Some countries, such as the United Kingdom, also publish an annual report from the oversight mechanism on the activities of that year that includes information on the number of lawful interception requests from the authorities to the operators.

These are complex issues. The government has asked the European Union for help in drafting its lawful interception regulations to ensure they reflect international best practice. Both business and civil society are keen to see Myanmar receive sound technical advice as soon as possible in support of a transparent consultation, drafting and adoption process. With Myanmar’s telecommunications sector developing at rapid pace, the need for clear and right-respecting regulations is becoming more urgent every day.

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Lucy Purdon is ICT project manager at the Institute of Human Rights and Business (IHRB). The IHRB and the Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business are conducting a sector-wide impact assessment of ICT in Myanmar that will be published in 2015.

Business

Banks favour branches over services

Race for deposits means many financial institutions are spending money on bank branches rather than experimenting with new services



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BANKS are making the first tentative steps toward specialisation, though most still focus only in a few traditional product areas.

While local banks do face constraints preventing them from offering some services, for instance being barred from accepting many internationally-accepted forms of collateral, in many instances they have been reluctant to push the envelope with products.

Experts say that while some are beginning to make greater use of technology, most banks focus on traditional areas like remittances and plain-vanilla loans.

Part of the problem is new products and services may not turn a profit for several years.

Banks are also keen to attract more deposits, which is leading to scarce capital being allocated to large-scale branch builds as there is a perception in the market that the safest banks have the widest networks, according to experts.

Co-operative Bank managing director U Pe Myint said that while it is trying to both attract more deposits and offer new services, many of these new services require technology and other costs that are prohibitively expensive for smaller banks.

For instance, necessary banking software can cost more than US\$4 million, and it can take six years to recoup the investment, he said.

CB is targeting a 300-branch network, though it currently has about 120 branches. It will add products in other areas, such as mobile banking, that can reach further into remote areas.

Still, CB is adding service often to meet the demands of foreign businesses such as Ooredoo.

"Offering more products is important to attract business from foreign corporations," he said. "But the decision to move forward or not depends on the



A stack of money sits on a bank counter. Currently common, this sight will decrease as new services such as electronic money take off. Photo: Staff

Board of Directors at a bank – some traditional directors don't want to change their ways."

U Pe Myint listed Asia Green Development, Ayeyarwady, Co-operative, Kanbawza, Myanma Apex and United Amara as the banks best able to adopt new technologies in part due to their large capital base.

Experts say opening bank branches is often even more expensive than new technologies, however.

Consultant U George Soe Win said returns from additional branches often depends on outside factors like property prices rather than only the bank's services.

Commercial banks need K20 billion paid-up capital, while each additional

branch requires K700 million in cities and K300 million in small towns.

The costs mean not all are able to compete. U George Soe Win said some smaller banks will need to merge to be able to compete in the modern marketplace.

Some small and medium banks are beginning to specialise rather than compete on every service.

Myanmar Oriental Bank is one of the country's oldest continually operating private banks, starting in 1993. It currently has about 30 branches.

Its chair U Mya Than said the bank has decided to focus on areas like internet banking and the treasury market rather than only enlarging its size.

It plans to focus in areas like small

and medium enterprises which are underserved by its larger rivals.

"Domestic banks often have the same products like deposits and loans, and compete with each other," he said. "So space in the market is narrow, and sometimes their performance isn't dignified."

"Hopefully their habit will change."

U Mya Than said Myanmar Oriental has connected with Commerzbank of Germany, which focuses on the largest customers, which is another avenue Myanmar Oriental plans to purchase.

Much of the current drive to add branches stems from a desire to add deposits.

U George Soe Win said many would-be borrowers are not able to access

loans from banks, as there is simply not enough money in financial institutions to go around.

Local banks only have about \$18 billion in cash deposits across the board, well below what the country needs, he said. "This is a very small amount for a country, and the habit of local businesspeople is they take as many loans as possible," he said.

Internationally, being a successful bank does not depend entirely on branch networks, though domestic banks are still furiously expanding.

"The concept hasn't changed yet," he said. "Banks should be thinking about ways that lead to profit, and building strong reputations through IT products."

Yoma Bank, Indian firm plan warehouse receipt financing



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INDIAN warehouse service provider SLCM has signed a memorandum of understanding with Yoma Bank to start warehouse receipt financing.

Traders and businesspeople will eventually be able to use crops stored at SLCM warehouses as collateral for loans from Yoma, aiming to improve access to credit, according to company officials.

The firm already has a Yangon warehouse than can store 8000 metric tonnes worth of crops.

Anubhav Kumar Sengar, assistant vice president of Myanmar operations with SLCM, which is a subsidiary of Delhi-based Sohan Lal Commodity Management Private

Limited, said it is already operating similar programs in India in conjunction with eight banks. It claims 600 warehouses in 20 Indian states.

"In India, we have been handling more than 165 agriculture commodities across India including cotton, barley, millet, castor seeds, wheat, pulses, maize, spices, paddy and rice," said Mr Sengar.

U Thaung Win, secretary of the Myanmar Rice Millers Association, said services allowing crops to be stored as collateral will help chip away at difficulties accessing capital.

As state loans are not enough to meet capital needs, rural businesspeople often face shortage of credit. One challenge to receiving loans from private sector lenders is tight restrictions on collateral, though programs such as the Yoma-SLCM tie-up will assist with addressing the problem.

"Farmers and traders will be happy with this plan," said U Thaung

Win. "In Myanmar, not only farmers but also traders don't have access to capital to operate their business. Programs like this, if properly implemented, will promote trade."

However, he said it is important there are warehouses available in areas beside Yangon, as Myanmar's largest city is often inconvenient for farmers.

"In my experience, warehouse receipt financing systems aren't successful if local people don't buy in," he said. "[The association] would be happy to help."

Mr Sengar said borrowers intending to use crops as collateral will eventually be able to use both SLCM and third-party warehouses.

"This model can be replicated to all commodities that Myanmar produces and to as many locations across the country for all production," he said.

The plan will initially be limited only to traders and people with business licences, though farmers may be

able to participate in the future.

Interest rates for loans will be 13 percent a year – the official ceiling on loan interest rates in Myanmar – and borrowers will also face maintenance charges. Loan values can reach up to 60pc of the stored crop, with loan terms based on the longevity of the crops.

U Lu Maw Myint Maung, one of the country's leading rice exporters, said 13pc is a high interest rate for

'Warehouse receipt financing systems aren't successful if local people don't buy in.'

U Thaung Win
Myanmar Rice Millers Association

agricultural businesspeople.

"Thirteen percent is the interest rate from loans from local banks, so there is nothing special in this plan," he said. "With loans at 13pc, we struggle to break even. Another point is the maintenance charges."

U Thein Aung, chair of the Myanmar Freedom Farmer League, said interest rates are crucial for agricultural businesses, though there is also lots of unmet demand for credit.

"We farmers hope to get loans from other sources besides the government, with proper interest rates," he said. "We would be happy to pay a little more in some instances than the bank's interest rate of 13pc."

There have been other attempts to establish warehouse receipt financing in Myanmar. The Myanmar Rice Federation attempted to tie up with local bank Myanma Apex in November to provide a similar service, though has put plans on hold, blaming rising rice prices.

U Tay Za claims to find uranium during a rare press conference

BUSINESS 28



Yangon needs laws to conserve its heritage buildings

PROPERTY 32

Exchange Rates (January 23 close)		
Currency	Buying	Selling
Euro	K1140	K1155
Malaysia Ringitt	K305	K307
Singapore Dollar	K766	K773
Thai Baht	K31	K32
US Dollar	K1024	K1028

Launch imminent for crude oil pipeline

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THE crude oil pipeline that is to cross Myanmar from a terminal on the coast of Rakhine State to Yunnan province in China is due to be launched at the end of January, according to government officials.

An opening ceremony for the pipeline will be held on January 28 in Yangon and January 30 on Made island in Rakhine state – though regular operation of the pipeline likely won't begin until mid-2015, said a senior Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE) official.

"This is the official opening of the pipeline. Crude tankers will arrive at Made island within two days, but operation of the pipeline won't start until mid-2015," said MOGE general manager U Kyaw Nyan Tun.

The South East Asia Crude Oil Pipeline Company (SEAOP) pipeline has attracted opposition from some residents and civil society groups. The 771-kilometre pipeline will run parallel with the Southeast Asia Gas Pipeline Company Limited pipeline that has been operating since last year.

State-owned China National Petroleum Corporation began the project in 2008. It envisions allowing oil tankers to offload up to 300,000 tonnes of crude at Made island for shipment to China.

Experts say that pipelines will allow gas and crude oil to be shipped



There may be light at the end of the tunnel soon for switching on SEAOP.
Photo: Staff

from the Indian Ocean to China without a need to pass through the Malacca Straits near Singapore.

The already completed crude oil pipeline was initially scheduled to launch at the end of 2013, though neither Myanmar or Chinese officials have yet explained the delay.

"It is true the oil pipeline is going to be launched on these dates. But invitations to the media are in the hands of the Ministry of Energy," said a SEAOP official requesting anonymity.

The Ministry of Energy has discussed the environmental and social

impacts of the project during parliamentary sessions, as well as activities undertaken to limit spills in the Andaman Sea.

China National Petroleum Corporation holds a controlling stake in the pipeline, while MOGE owns the rest. Myanmar stands to benefit with an annual road right fee of US\$13.81 million, as well as receive a transit fee of \$1 a tonne of crude for the next 30 years.

The pipeline is estimated to cost \$2.5 billion to construct, and designed for up to 2 million tonnes of crude a year.

PTT may suspend M-3 offshore block on oil price tumble

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THAILAND'S state-owned PTT Exploration and Production Public Company has not denied online reports that it may suspend investment in the Myanmar offshore M-3 project if international oil prices continue to languish.

"If average oil prices fall to US\$55 a barrel, then the company may adjust its investment plans and put an end to its M-3 project," said a representative from PTTEP according to EIN online news.

Late last year, PTT announced it would be adjusting some plans to cope with falling international oil prices. The company aims to allocate about 20 pc of its capital expenditure to Myanmar projects.

"We will closely monitor movement of crude oil prices. If prices fall below our projection, we have a room to adjust the investment budget downward in order to maintain our liquidity and performance," said PTT president Tevin Vongvanich in the press release last year.

The firm had not returned a request for comment from *The Myanmar Times* on the fate of the M-3

project after a week.

PTT first signed a production sharing contract with Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise in 2004 for the site, and has been conducting surveys and exploratory drilling since 2011.

It announced commercial discovery of condensate and natural gas at the M-3 block in 2013, originally aiming to start commercial production in 2018.

A Ministry of Energy official requesting anonymity said falling international crude prices is forcing several companies, not just PTT, to scale back its involvement in the sector.

"The falling global oil price is having some impact on the oil and gas industry in Myanmar," he said. "The next step of investment in M-3 is likely to be delayed by the operator, but we will put pressure on it to continue."

Myanmar government officials have said the supply from M-3 will eventually be available for domestic use.

PTT owns 80 percent of M-3, with the remainder held by a Japanese firm.

PTT has a number of other onshore and offshore projects in Myanmar, including producing gas at Zawtika. It has also been attempting to expand its downstream market presence in the country.

Thai trade counts on building better roads

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THAILAND expects to boost bilateral trade with Myanmar by 20 percent in the coming year as progress is made on logistics and trade promotion, according to government officials.

Trade between the two countries takes advantage of the 2400-kilometre shared border, generating US\$8 billion worth of trade in the last fiscal year, said Thai deputy minister of commerce Apiradi Tantraporn.

Thailand is Myanmar's second-largest trading partner after China, though weak transport connections – particularly overland – still slow commerce.

Mrs Apriadi said she hopes improvements such as upgrades on the Yangon to Myawaddy road will be completed this year, cutting the travel time to as little as 7 or 8 hours. Currently sections of the road through hills are one-way, switching direction from day to day often causing a journey of over 24 hours to complete.

"When the roads are in much better condition, there can be more trade between Thailand and Myanmar," she said.

Myanmar's exports to Thailand totaled about \$4 billion in the 2013-14 fiscal year, and about \$3.8 billion came the other way, according to

Boon Intiratana, minister counsellor (commercial) at the Thai embassy. By comparison, trade in 2012-13 fiscal year totaled \$4.8 billion.

Mr Boon said it is likely that new measures of commercial exchanges will become important in the future, as trade in services continues to grow.

Thailand also faced a tumultuous 2014 after the military deposed the sitting government in a coup. Still, Mr Boon said the change in Thailand's government last year had not upset trade relations.

"After the taking power, the Thai prime minister has already visited Myanmar twice," he said.

"The two countries' ministers have close relations, so it can be said there was no effect, and there are better relations now."

A Thai crackdown on smuggled goods was blamed for a price rise in compressed natural gas (CNG) last year. CNG is the primary fuel for many of Myanmar's stoves.

Mr Boon said trade has since stabilised, and both countries are prioritising legal, tax-paying trade.

About 200 Thai companies attended an event at the Myanmar Event Park earlier this month promoting trade links and business matching between the two countries' firms.

Another trade fair is planned at the Mae Sot-Myawaddy border zone from January 28 to February 1.

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Phone: 372416

Dated: 26th January, 2015

Fashion firm dressed for success



Ma Hillary Yee takes the stage.
Photo: Supplied/
Shady Ramadan

MYAT NOE OO

myatnoe.mcm@gmail.com

TWO women entrepreneurs have emerged from an incubation program with seed funding for their ventures, but say it is important that more local women plunge into business.

Ma Rosy, the founder of Rosy's Chin Fabrics, and Ma Hillary Yee, founder of CiCi, received US\$4000 and \$2000 respectively after completing the Project W program, organised by Project Hub Yangon.

The women say the awards – funded by Ball Corporation, Standard Chartered Bank and City Mart – will help grow their businesses. It is the outcome of several months' worth of learning at Project W, where the entrepreneurs received expert advice on how to found

their businesses. Project W bills itself as Myanmar's first incubation program for women entrepreneurs. Funded by Kav-lifondet and Partnership for Change, it aimed to develop women with business ideas to the point where they were ready to launch their firms.

Ma Hillary Yee said she has started CiCi fashion since joining the project. CiCi makes ready-to-wear clothing for women for professional and semi-casual use, as well as uniforms. “I want to make Myanmar women look sharp when they go to work, and be confident in themselves,” she said.

However, building market share has been a challenge for the firm. Ma Hillary Yee said Myanmar women often wear casual dress and uniforms when they go to work, and it can be a challenge to convince women to pay a little more

for clothing, even if the quality is better.

Ma Hillary Yee has family in the garment business, which has helped with supply. She added CiCi's prices are lower than many formal dressmakers, while CiCi is more flexible with prices and orders.

“Now I'm trying to link up with companies to make staff uniforms, because there's an opportunity,” she said.

The firm imports fabric, and makes its designs in Myanmar using local designers. Its products are now in about five shops.

Ma Hillary Yee said overall it is important Myanmar women build their own businesses. Non-profits can help through programs like Project W by building strong women entrepreneurs, helping them found businesses and find investors, she added.

JICA loan to boost telecoms sector

JAPAN is providing a US\$90 million long-term, low-interest loan to upgrade Myanmar's mobile telecoms, according to deputy communications and IT minister U Thauang Tin.

The ¥10.5 billion (US\$89 million) loan from the Japan International Co-operation Agency (JICA) will fund improvement in six areas, with a 50 year term and low interest of 0.01 percent, he said.

“This is a 50-year loan including a 10-year deferment period and the interest rate is relatively low. So we will

manage to successfully repay it by the due-date,” said U Thauang Tin.

Separately, Japanese firms KDDI and Sumitomo have a joint operations agreement with MPT, a state-owned mobile operator.

The new loan will be used to develop a main fibre line between Yangon, Nay Pyi Taw and Mandalay, high-speed cable installation in Yangon, gateway upgrades in Nay Pyi Taw and Yangon, separate developments for Thilawa Special Economic Zone and also adaptation of IPv6 internet pro-

ocol. Repaying the loan will not be a challenge, as the terms are generous and it can be paid using revenue from the different projects, he said.

U Thauang Tin said mobile penetration rates have soared from about 3pc of the population in 2011 to about 30pc by the end of 2014, due partly to Ooredoo and Telenor entering the market. He added SIM card prices have also fallen from K1.5 million to K1500 while internet use has also grown.

— Pyae Thet Phyto,
translation by Zar Zar Soe

A collection of colorful and patterned flipflops and bags. The flipflops feature various designs including polka dots, stripes, and abstract patterns. The bags are also decorated with patterns and colors. The Ripples logo is visible in the bottom right corner.

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(For. Domnarn Somgiat & Boonma,

Attorneys at Law, Thailand)

Dated. 26th January, 2015

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(For. Domnarn Somgiat & Boonma,

Attorneys at Law, Thailand)

Dated. 26th January, 2015

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U Kyi Win Associates

for **Xiamen Five Continents International Trading Co., Ltd.**

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Phone: 372416

Dated: 26th January, 2015

Tay Za claims uranium find



U Tay Za at his press conference.
Photo: Kyaw Phone Kyaw

KYAW PHONE KYAW

k.phonekyaw@gmail.com

TYCOON U Tay Za claims to have purchased uranium samples in upper Myanmar, and will return to the area in the future to search for a deposit.

Speaking at a rare press conference held at his Yangon home on Inya Road on January 19, he said that if a uranium deposit is indeed found, he hopes it is used for the security of the state.

"When open season arrives, I will go and search for uranium deposits there," he said. "Media can accompany me if they wish, but I can't guarantee what will happen."

Uranium is a naturally occurring radioactive element, according to the US Environmental Protection Agency. It is weakly radioactive and contributes to low levels of natural background radiation in the environment, and can also be enriched for use in nuclear power plants and nuclear weapons.

There have been previous discoveries of uranium in Myanmar, according to reports, though there is believed to be no active mining at present.

Myanmar has signed several international agreements on nuclear proliferation, including the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons in 1992, as well as a number of more recent agreements - though not all have been ratified, according to nonprofit Nuclear Threat Initiative.

U Tay Za said that while he reckons the stones he has purchased are uranium, no organisation or expert has yet certified it is uranium. He added the uranium may have already

made him sick.

"I didn't suffer too much when I didn't get food for four days and three nights after surviving a helicopter crash in the mountains," he said. "This time it is too bad."

U Tay Za said two villagers sold him the stones on a hill near Ohntone village, three hours' drive west of Mogoke in Mandalay Region. He concluded they were uranium after testing the stones with an apparatus, though added he was donating most of the sample to the government for further study.

Showing slides on a projector, U Tay Za said the land where the stones were



A slide picture of a device U Tay Za said measures radiation. Photo: Kyaw Phone Kyaw

found looked like it was burnt by fire. Similarly, he said experts had told him that the surface of the land over the Letpadaung copper resource does not grow toddy trees.

U Tay Za said that while he wasn't sure where Myanmar is at regarding UN agreements on nuclear energy, "I want the government to use it for the security of the state." He added he paid K50 million for the total 3.5 viss uranium sample he acquired. Most of the sample is now with the Ministry of Science and Technology, though the remainder is in his house, he claimed.

While U Tay Za said he is suffering from signs of radioactive poisoning, the two men who sold him the stones - Ko Aung Naing and Ko Tun Wai - are not seriously affected.

When asked how they feel by journalists, one answered; "We suffer a bit of a problem." Further questions were cut off as U Tay Za's staff separated the journalists and the two men.

U Tay Za did not detail his plans for further uranium searches, but said he will not excavate the resource if he finds it. "If we did excavate, our company will be too notorious," he said. "I just want to help in the search as the mark of Htoo Company's 25th anniversary. My father-in-law and brothers-in-law also want to help."

"Our company is notorious because of coverage by journalists - but actually, we are responsible."

U Tay Za added it has been difficult to do business for five years, as the government neglects him due to the crony label.

- Translation by Thiri Min Htun



IN BRIEF

Foreign investment triples in 2014

Foreign direct investment tripled in the 2014 calendar year compared to the previous year, according to official statistics.

Total projects worth US\$8.6 billion were given the green light in 2014, from \$2.9 billion in 2013, the data shows.

A Directorate of Investment and Company Administration official said that figures are also higher than expected this year.

In 2014, transport and communications claimed \$2.72 billion, or 32 percent of the total. Some \$2.62 billion in oil and gas investment was improved, while manufacturing, real estate travel and tourism and livestock and fisheries made up the rest.

Singapore was the largest source of FDI, with \$3.8 billion. Hong Kong and the Netherlands were close followers with about \$400 million.

Chinese investment also bounced back somewhat. After totalling on \$50 million in 2013, it totalled \$250 million in 2014. – *Sandar Lwin*

Kanbawza inks Cathay United deal

Kanbawza Bank has received US\$80 million to lend to local businesses from Taiwan's Cathay United Bank, according to a press release. The deal was inked on January 13 at the Sedona Hotel. Cathay United is one of Taiwan's largest banks, with 160 bank branches on the island, along with overseas branches and representative offices. It also vied for a banking licence in Myanmar last year, but no Taiwanese bank was among the winners.

Kanbawza Bank is Myanmar's largest private bank, and has been looking to increase its links with international financial institutions. – *Ko Ko Aung*

Hooters considers local restaurants

American restaurant chain Hooters has put Myanmar on a list of Southeast Asian countries it is keen to expand to in the next six years. The chain, known for its well-endowed waitressing staff and chicken wings, will target opening 30 outlets in the region, after launching in Phuket, Thailand. Its immediate emphasis will be on further Thailand expansion as well as concentration in Philippines and Hong Kong in the coming years. There are currently 415 Hooters restaurants in 42 US states and 26 countries, according to a press release. – *Jeremy Mullins*

Myanmar, Japan joint cards coming

Myanmar citizens will be able to sign up for a debit card co-branded by the Myanmar Payment Union (MPU) and Japan Credit Bureau (JCB), according to a press release.

JCB is a global payment brand of one of Japan's largest credit card issuers. It has been connected with MPU since 2012. The new cards will be issued by domestic banks belonging to the Myanmar Payment Union and will be accepted through the Japan Credit Bureau network of 27 million merchants in 190 countries and territories, a press release said.

Currently, MPU has about 3000 Point of Sales machines around the country, which will now be open to JCB card holders. – *Aye Thidar Kyaw*

Taiwanese see local potential

Myanmar came in as the market with the most potential in a report released by the Taiwan External Trade Development Council on January 12.

The report looked at the export potential of 40 countries around the globe, with Myanmar coming on top, followed by neighbouring Bangladesh and then Mozambique, in Africa.

U Aung Naing Oo, secretary of the Myanmar Investment Commission, said trade will increase in the years ahead. Taiwanese firms are particularly strong in garments, electronic, manufacturing and agriculture, he said.

Taiwan's exports to Myanmar likely reached about US\$200 million in 2015, with major exports including steel and related products, ICT products and machinery. – *Ko Ko Aung*

Trade deficit to rise while inflation a concern: Kan Zaw



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THE trade deficit will reach K4 trillion (US\$3.9 billion) by the end of next financial year, Minister for National Planning and Economic Development U Kan Zaw said last week.

Inflation is also pegged to average 6.83 percent in 2015-16 compared year-on-year, though could rise as high as 8.11pc by March 2016, he added.

U Kan Zaw revealed the figures while laying out the government's 2015-16 financial forecast at a session of the new hluttaw.

The K4 trillion trade deficit will be the result of exports in 2015-16 reaching K13.15 trillion and imports of K17.34 trillion, he said.

The trade deficit is higher than an earlier projection made by the International Monetary Fund. In October 2014 it said the 2015-16 trade deficit was projected to be K3.2 trillion, though the current accounts deficit –

a measure which covers trade flows, as well as international transactions in other areas like services and income – was projected to be K3.77 trillion.

While the trade deficit appears headed for an increase, parliamentarians said they were most concerned by the possibility of inflation.

Amyotha Hluttaw representative U Phone Myint Aung said he is watching estimates that inflation could reach 8.11 percent by March 2016 compared year-on-year may be too high, adding it was near recent inflation records.

U Kan Zaw minister said he admitted increased government spending may put add inflationary pressure, but added it was necessary to tackle several priority areas. He highlighted low-price and affordable housing, increasing downtown office space and highway improvement, as well as a salary increase for about 500,000 civilian and military staff in government service, as earmarked for increased expenditure.

The business community has also been keenly watching the possibility of inflation. U Khin Maung Lwin, a businessperson from Nay Pyi Taw's

Pyinmana township, said, "People are worried about rising prices," adding that a proposed minimum wage could be a headache for small and medium-sized businesses.

Others are concerned that other reforms could further increase the cost of doing business.

U Ko Oo, who runs a roasted beans enterprise, said, "If a minimum wage is brought in at the same time as civil service salaries are raised, small enterprises like mine will have a big headache. We can't raise wages unless we make more profit."

Average inflation rate based on consumer prices was 2.82pc in 2011-2012, 2.85pc in 2012-2013 and 5.67pc in 2013-2014, according to government statistics. As of last March it had reached 5.7pc, Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Public Accounts Joint Committee reported last August, at a time when the exchange rate against the US dollar was K964.

The International Monetary Fund said in October 2014 that inflation is likely to remain under control at about 6pc for the medium term, though noted it could become a risk.

– *Translation by Thiri Min Htun*

U Kan Zaw's estimates for 2015-16
Trade deficit: K4 trillion
Exports: K13.15 trillion
Imports: K17.34 trillion
Inflation (year-on-year): 6.83pc
Inflation high (in March 2016): 8.11pc
2016FY projections by the IFC, made in October 2014
Trade deficit: K3.2 trillion
Current account deficit: K3.77 trillion
Exports: K16.66 trillion
Imports: K19.86 trillion
Inflation: 6.3pc
2015FY projections by the IFC, made in October 2014
Trade deficit: K2.47 trillion
Current accounts deficit: K3.47 trillion
Inflation: 6.6pc

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SINGAPORE

Timepiece buyers watch Swiss franc

ROLEXES and other Swiss luxury watches are flying off the shelves in Singapore after the Swiss franc surged against other currencies, retailers said on January 20.

Enthusiasts and investors are splurging on the fine timepieces before retailers adjust their price tags to reflect the strengthening franc.

The franc has shot up 20 percent against the euro and the US dollar since January 15 after the Swiss central bank stunned global markets with its bombshell decision to abandon the minimum rate of 1.20 francs against the European common currency.

Sales staff at Singapore luxury watch retailer The Hour Glass said they

had experienced an increase in sales of Swiss brands, with Rolexes thriving in particular.

Most of its retail outlets located along Orchard Road, Singapore's main shopping district, sold from 25 to 30 Rolex watches a day on Saturday and Sunday, compared to the usual four to five daily.

One Rolex retailer located at a five-star hotel said that Datejust and GMT Rolex models sold briskly and stocks were thinning.

Another shop at a high-end shopping mall along Orchard Road sold 10 Franck Muller watches per day over the weekend, a sharp increase over its usual one or two, sales staff said. — AFP



IN PICTURES

Photo: AFP

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang attends a session of the World Economic Forum annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland, on January 21.

OPINION

After Swiss move, is the Hong Kong-dollar peg the next to fall?

WILLIAM PESEK

SOON after the Swiss shocked the world by abandoning their currency's peg to the euro, Hong Kong's Financial Secretary John Tsang hit the airwaves. His very clear message: The city's US dollar peg would hold firm.

Mr Tsang, however, has credibility issues. In recent years, he's cited Switzerland's commitment to capping its currency as inspiring his own. That sounded fine until Swiss National Bank President Thomas Jordan unexpectedly freed the franc. Speculators very quickly drove the Hong Kong dollar toward the top of its trading band.

More importantly, Hong Kong's 32-year-old peg may now be fueling social discontent. Last year's Umbrella Revolution had as much to do with surging inequality as democracy — a problem captured most vividly by stratospheric property prices that have put homeownership out of reach for many citizens. Hong Kong's undervalued dollar has made that problem worse, by attracting tidal waves of Chinese money.

In 2013, Hong Kong received US\$47 billion of direct-investment inflows from the mainland, and another \$342 billion from the British Virgin Islands, a favourite haven among ultrarich Chinese.

Has the policy currency outlived its usefulness? There are many reasons to think Hong Kong won't go rogue the way Zurich did.

Any decision to scrap the peg would be made in Beijing, where Hong Kong Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying's political bosses reside. And at least some of the

Communist Party elite care more about ready access to Hong Kong's property market than the anxieties of the city's middle class.

Hong Kong's financial regulators are themselves a decidedly risk-averse bunch that sees the peg as a reassuring backstop. "It can be called a magic needle for calming the sea of the Hong Kong economy," Mr Tsang said earlier last week. It's also worth noting the

Hong Kong's 32-year-old peg may now be fueling social discontent. Last year's Umbrella Revolution had as much to do with surging inequality as democracy.

differences between Switzerland — which essentially was manipulating its currency — and Hong Kong's formal lock to a specific US dollar value.

But the peg also limits the government's room to manoeuvre. Even with curbs introduced to cool demand, real-estate prices surged 12 percent in the first 11 months of 2014 to a record. The city's 5.1pc inflation rate is double the Asian

average. While an undervalued currency isn't the sole culprit, it's surely one of the main factors driving up prices. Of course, the peg works both ways. Capping the dollar helps exports, supporting economic growth. And amid talk China may begin devaluing the yuan, Hong Kong's capital-inflow challenges may recede in the short run. They're sure to return, though.

To ease the strain, Hong Kong could try something drastic: pegging its dollar to the yuan. More realistically, it could adopt a gradualist course and link the dollar to a Singapore-like basket of currencies. Perhaps the highest-level call in recent months for the city to study its options came from Peter Wong, Asia-Pacific CEO for HSBC. Along with the above-mentioned possibilities, Mr Wong raised the idea of letting the Hong Kong dollar float, or even naming the yuan as legal tender.

In his 2013 book 'Street Smarts', investor Jim Rogers warned January 16's Swiss shock was coming. I checked with him last week and asked if Hong Kong might be next. "It will happen," he replied, "but I keep thinking it will be after the [yuan] is completely convertible." Trouble is, there's no guarantee when that might happen, especially as China's growth slows and officials in Beijing worry about capital flight.

At the very least, the Swiss surprise should spur a public debate about the pros and cons of Hong Kong's peg. If scrapping it can help ameliorate the city's socioeconomic tensions, perhaps it's time for Hong Kong to shock the world, too.

— Bloomberg

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- **Policy Dialogue and Donor Coordination:** Support the Bank's energy sector policy dialogue with relevant stakeholders in the Southeast Asia region with a focus on Myanmar, particularly with regard to sector organization and policy, access to modern energy services, energy efficiency, renewables and climate change. S/he will also support donor coordination activities in the energy sector;
- **Business Development:** (i) Support the Bank business development in line with the Bank's country sector strategy and in close collaboration with other units at the Bank, (ii) provide inputs to Country Partnership Framework and other cross-sectoral products, (iii) as a technical specialist in the energy sector, make a substantial technical contribution to both investment project and analytical and advisory activities; and, (iv) liaise with the country team and the Global Practice Manager to oversee and review the operational and budgetary aspects of ongoing and proposed investment projects;
- **Project Preparation:** Support task teams in project identification, design and preparation by: (i) advising clients on feasibility studies, technology choice studies, cost-effectiveness analyses and implementation reports; (ii) reviewing and assessing implementation capacity of project implementation counterparts and supporting institutions/agencies; (iii) defining appropriate benchmarks/indicators and establishing project assessment and monitoring frameworks to assess progress and outcomes; and (iv) carry out stand-alone tasks as agreed with the team lead and practice manager.
- **Project Implementation Support:** Provide implementation support to the Bank clients for projects and programs under implementation to ensure implementation quality and timeliness and consistency with project objectives. Implementation requirements will cover financial, disbursement, procurement, social and environmental guidelines and agreements typical of World Bank supported projects/programs;
- **Client and Stakeholder Network:** Coordinate/participate as part of the World Bank Group's team at national forums, workshops and conferences focusing on energy issues. The selected candidate will establish and maintain networks with public, civil society, academic and private sector professionals in order to expand the World Bank's dialogue on the energy agenda in the Southeast Asia region with a focus on Myanmar.

Selection Criteria:

- Academic qualifications of a minimum of a Master's Degree, with training that supports engineering and technical, financial and economic skills applied to the energy sector;
- At least five years relevant operational experience following a graduate level education, of which most should be in the energy sector, especially electric power;
- Knowledge of broader energy sector issues including drivers and determinants of energy demand and supply from a technical economic perspective, and regulatory, financial and institutional considerations;
- Familiarity with energy systems both on-grid and off-grid technologies as well as the institutional arrangements;
- Proven track record of innovation in Bank operational or AAA work and active engagement in knowledge sharing across countries and regions;
- Exceptional ability to identify long-range goals and objectives, develop strategic approaches, and conceptualize a multi-year plan to operationalize these strategies;
- Proven ability to build client relationships involving multiple stakeholders;
- Demonstrated ability to effectively coordinate activities involving multiple disciplines and organizational units, as well as to maintain high service standards under pressure, meet deadlines, and accommodate simultaneous demands from various sources;
- Proven teamwork and leadership skills, working with multi-disciplinary teams across different sectors, across operational boundaries within the World Bank Group and outside it;
- Skill at managing donor engagements; and
- Excellent oral and written communications skills in English and Myanmar languages.

Details (vacancy #150017) are available in the World Bank Careers website: www.worldbank.org/careers. All applications must be submitted through this website. The World Bank Group is committed to achieving diversity in terms of gender, nationality, culture and educational background. Individuals with disabilities are equally encouraged to apply. **Closing date is February 12, 2015.**

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2. National Officer for Public Administration (SC-9) based in Nay Pyi Taw.

To Apply [http://jobs.undp.org/cj_view_job.cfm?cur_job_id=49293]

Requirements: Masters degree in relevant field with two years of relevant experience, or a Bachelor's degree with four years of experience. Fluency in Myanmar and English, with good written and verbal communication skills.

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Applications close on **04 February 2015**.

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The detailed announcement including Job Description is available on the websites:

<http://www.themimu.info/jobs-for-myanmar-nationals> and <http://www.myanmar-network.net/profiles/blog/list>.

The application deadline will be **1st February 2015**. (Please note that only shortlisted candidates will be contacted for interviews.)



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- 1) **Senior Field Assistant PN 10003152 (GL-5, UNHCR Contract - FTA, Maungdaw)**
- 2) **Assistant Protection Officer PN 10023100 (NOA, UNHCR Contract - FTA, Sittwe)**
- 3) **Assistant Legal Officer PN 10003178 (NOA, UNHCR Contract - FTA, Yangon)**
- 4) **Associate Public Information (PI) Officer (P2, UNOPS Contract – IICA, Yangon)**
- 5) **Assistant Community Services Officer PN 10003171 (NOA, UNHCR Contract – Temporary Appointment, Yangon)**

Closing date: 04 February 2015

The detailed Terms of Reference for these positions are available on request from UNHCR offices in Yangon, Maungdaw, Buthidaung, Sittwe, Myitkyina, Bhamo, Mawlamyine, Hpa-An, Loikaw, Dawei and Taungoo.

www.unhcr.org

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Prepaid market cools, say property insiders

KO KO AUNG

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THE steep rise in property prices has paused, say real estate experts, and a slowdown is especially marked in the advance purchase market for apartments under construction.

Most people still looking to buy apartments before they are completed are now speculators rather than potential residents, industry observers say.

During 2013-2014, developers say they could sell up to 70 percent of the apartments in a proposed building before completion. But the flow of buyers began to dry up in the fourth quarter of last year, a trend which has continued into 2015.

The cooling of the property market is being partially attributed to more thorough enforcement of property transaction taxes, as well as uncertainty in advance of the general election scheduled for later this year and an increasing number of projects in the market.

U Min Cho Oo, a general manager with Moe Lwin Real Estate Services, said, "Most buyers are dealers. Now because of the property tax and the political climate, the real estate market is cooling down."

Another factor is growing mis-

trust in contractors or developers, as the Yangon City Development Committee investigates quality standards in recently completed buildings. Several have been demolished in Thingangyun township after being discovered to have been built at an inadequate standard, while others have been investigated.

One contractor requesting anonymity said it has become much harder in recent months to receive a building permit, while potential unit buyers have been scared off by the possibility of unsafe buildings or demolitions.

These factors have helped put people off the advance purchase market.

"If the economy is good, the real estate market will be good too. Now the market is cooling, and advance purchases are getting the worst of it despite the lower prices. Prices will not fall but would-be buyers are waiting until after the election," said U Than Oo of Madaing Real Estate Services. The election is scheduled to take place in late October-early November.

Land values in Yangon have risen dramatically in recent years. The government has taken action to slow the market, such as more strictly enforcing property taxes.

MANDALAY

Large price increase near U Bein Bridge unexplained by locals

MG ZAW

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LAND prices have shot up near historic U Bein Bridge in Mandalay, and locals are at a loss to say why.

Property near Amarapura township's Taung Thaman Lake, the site of the bridge, is now worth up to 30 times the price of only a few months before, say locals.

"We are being offered prices higher than we have ever heard of," said U Soe Win, a local resident. "Land prices were once relatively low - we don't know why the price became surprisingly high."

Land had sold around K1 million only a year or two ago, but since about September has been fetching as much as K40 million an acre.

Particularly hot is land to the south of the lake, away from Mandalay and near the Yangon-Mandalay highway. Even flooded farmland is included in the price spike.

One woman from Htan Taw village said she sold an acre for K27 million on the south side of the lake - even though the land is submerged most of the time and therefore no good for agriculture.

U Aye Ko, another local villager, said it's a strange situation. "Transactions are done even though the land doesn't seem valuable, and we don't know why."

The buyers are a mix of foreign and local agents.

Farmland near the lake is traditionally used for seasonable crops such as watermelon, paddy and dry-season crops. - Translation by Zar Zar Soe

A turning point for Yang

Experts call for heritage law as rapid development of the city and poor state of many



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FOR years now, Yangon's old buildings with rich backgrounds have languished without the money or the will to let them shine.

The city is fortunate to be left with buildings dating from the British era, including department stores, colonial offices and banks. Yet their post-World War II history has been tumultuous, and experts are pushing for action, unless they disappear entirely.

The government during the General Ne Win regime nationalised many companies and institutions, and repurposed their buildings to house various ministries.

Though they were in use for most of the second half of the 20th century, they were often not well maintained. When the government offices surreptitiously packed up for Nay Pyi Taw in 2005, many of these beautiful old buildings were abandoned - lonely and silent, but their former grandeur did not fade.

Yet not all survived subsequent development. Some heritage buildings were demolished for modern high-rises and new structures, as Yangon land prices began to boom and housing demand continued to grow.

Yangon Heritage Trust president U Thant Myint-U said over the last few years alone, perhaps five or ten buildings have been lost.

Still, sentiment that historic

sites are worth preserving is picking up among the public. However, so far there are few formal rules enforcing heritage preservation, but rather conservation relying on popular opinion and support by NGOs.

The Yangon City Development Committee did officially register 189 heritage buildings in 1996. Later in 2012 it announced it would control the extension, demolishing, renovating and conservation of heritage buildings without their permit.

'In the last three years, literally three dozen buildings have not been demolished due to active decisions made by the government.'

U Thant Myint-U
Yangon Heritage Trust

Although many support heritage preservation, it faces prac-



Gandhi Hall is one of Yangon's heritage buildings that was at risk of demolition, until local groups petitioned YCDC to preserve it. Photo: Ko Taik

tical challenges on the ground. For instance, the 100-old-year old Gandhi Hall was threatened to be demolished by its trustees and turned into a shopping mall and apartments. An official from YCDC's Building Department said the current mayor decided to halt the project after a public outcry, though the decision could eventually be reversed by a new mayor.

Gandhi Hall, on the corner of Merchant and Bo Aung Kyaw St, once housed *The Rangoon Times*, one of the most influential newspapers in British Burma.

In 1951, it was purchased by Prime Minister U Nu and the Indian ambassador to Myanmar, MA Rauf. They named it the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Trust and handed it to a board of trustees to manage.

Michael Slingsby, an advisor on urban development and poverty with UN Habitat, said developers are not always aware how important these old buildings are.

"So what is important is we need creation of law, building the skill in people to understand how old buildings can be restructured and how they can be repaired," he said.

Tourism industry players are particularly keen to see Yangon's heritage preserved, hoping it can draw in future visitors.

"I joined the tourism industry, starting my business 21 years ago," said Daw Khin Sanda Win, managing director of Sanda Hotel and Services. "So I've seen many beautiful colonial buildings disappear."

Colonial buildings are often too expensive to renovate, meaning it is easier to simply tear them down.

Organisations like the Yangon Heritage Trust are urging the conservation of the city's heritage buildings, but it will take action from government organisations like YCDC to provide a bright future for the old buildings.

The World Monuments Fund held a forum with Yangon Heritage Trust on January 15 to 17 at the historic Strand Hotel, on Kanna Road. Focused on preserving heritage buildings, it aimed to bring together key decision makers and stakeholders, such as urban development professionals, planners and government officials to discuss ways to protect the city's buildings while ensuring a vibrant future.

"Especially for the buildings in downtown, it means thinking about the history of the city,



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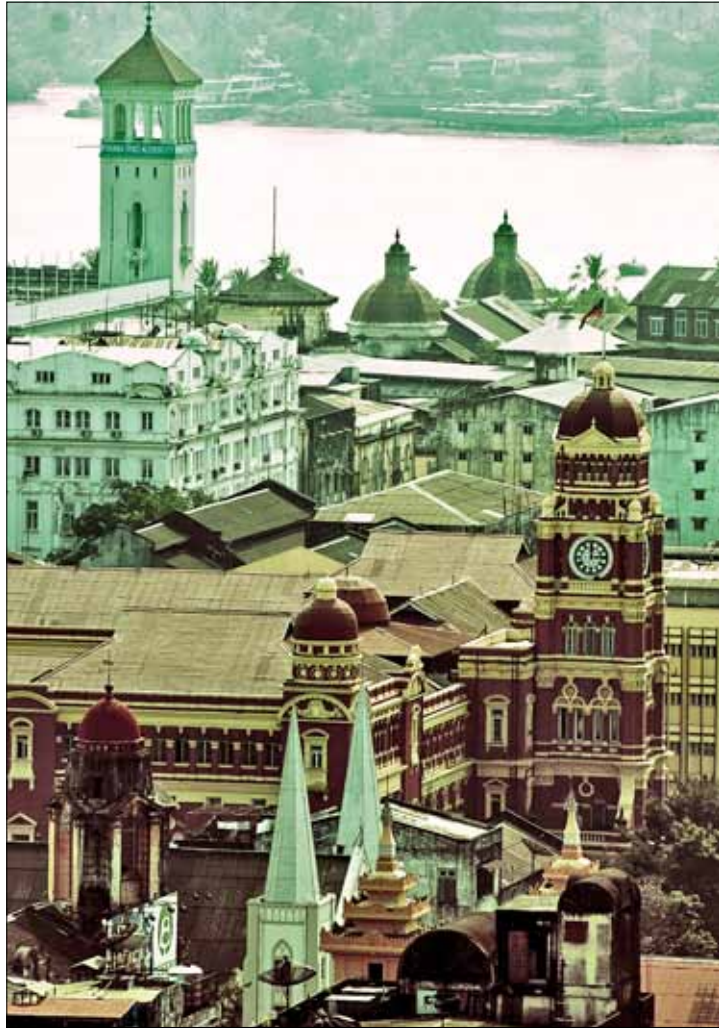
- U Tay Za

Bali Nine out of luck in appeal against death sentences

WORLD 40

on's heritage

of its buildings puts many historical sites at risk



Yangon is fortunate to be full of historic buildings, though many of the structures are at risk. Photo: Ko Htet

and the interesting and powerful history of the buildings,” said U Thant Myint-U.

“In the last three years, literally three dozen buildings have not been demolished due to active decisions made by the government. Many inappropriate developments, especially downtown, have not taken place because of decisions that have been made practically,” he said.

“I think we have to appreciate how far things have come in making that sort of progress.”

Government officials say a heritage conservation law is in the works.

U Soe Thein, minister of the President's Office, said the government and President U Thein Sein is aware of the need for a heritage law, and is looking at different ways to bring it about.

The law may be national in scope, or may be implemented

on a regional level.

“We will give support to organisations promoting heritage conservation in Yangon, especially Yangon Heritage Trust,” he said.

Daw Moe Moe Lwin, a director with the trust, said a heritage law is a priority for the building's future.

Yangon differs from many Southeast Asian countries by having a range of old buildings, and it is important they are conserved, she said.

While the organisation is trying to be active without any law, it is an important step for conservation.

As development picks up in Yangon, there is more need now than ever to ensure the city's heritage buildings are preserved, though it must be balanced against the needs for the city to grow into the future.

HOUSE OF THE WEEK

A house with a hint of Italy

A simple roof can make a mundane residence into a truly charming home.

This week's house is a case in point. Its clay-style roof has accents of southern Italy, a stand-out feature compared to many of the city's homes.

In fact, it recalls an early dream of both *House of the Week* and Bernard Black to run a quirky taverna in Sicily. Ultimately that dream was not to be. So, *House of the Week* figures, if we can't have the taverna, we can at least have the roof.

It caps off a large, detached home in Hlaing township near Parami road. It's a total of 4000 square feet on a 5400-square-foot compound. The home is designed for a medium-sized family, with one master bedroom, two smaller bedrooms, and a living room, kitchen, and uniquely, another kitchen located outside.

There's also a backyard of proper, well-maintained grass – a nice



switch from too-frequent concrete. Besides, quirky tavernas in Sicily probably have lawns, and this one is a great place for outdoor activities.

The home is fully furnished, though some distance away from downtown. The price is certainly not unreasonable, and worthwhile to assuage dreams of Italian living.

- Tin Yadanar Tun

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PHH is the most famous international standard hospital located in the Pun Hlaing Golf Estate, Yangon.

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An aerial night view of a city, likely in Southeast Asia, featuring a prominent, illuminated pagoda in the background. The city is filled with modern buildings, some of which are brightly lit. A large, curved road with light trails from traffic is visible. The overall scene is a vibrant, high-angle shot of a modern urban landscape at night.

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E-Top up hits Orange



Electronic top-up cards, now at Orange Supermarket.
Photo: Aung Kyaw Nyunt

AUNG KYAW NYUNT
newsroom@mmmtimes.com

ORANGE Supermarket launched electronic top-up services for customers in Yangon last week. The new system allows users to quit scratching away at top-up cards, according to U Pyae Phyo Latt, Orange Supermarket merchandising director.

The service, backed by e-payment firm Red Dot Network, began January 22nd at all eight branches of Orange Supermarket in Myanmar's most populous city.

Myanmar's Red Dot Network is responsible for the technology behind the electronic top-up service and helped with putting the new system in place, according to a press release.

To top up phones, customers scan electronic top-up cards at checkout in Orange stores. Then they receive receipts with instructions and a PIN code, the release said.

"With electronic top-ups, customers don't need to scrape PIN codes from top-up cards. This is a strong point of this service," U Pyae Phyo Latt said.

On offer are top-ups from MPT for GSM phones, Telenor, Ooredoo, and MEC for K5000 and K10,000, as well as top-ups for RedLink internet at K16,000 and K36,000.

Top ups in various increments - K1000 and K3000 from Telenor and Ooredoo, and K1000, K3000, K10,000 and K20,000 from MPT - will come to the service soon, a press release said.

As Orange keeps the electronic top-up cards and customers walk away with the directions to get credit on receipts, the company doesn't need to refill top-up stock from telcos.

"We no longer have to juggle multiple denominations of top-up cards, and best of all, our stock is now unlimited," U Pyae Phyo Latt said in a statement. "By becoming early adopters of this technology, we are delighted to be able to offer our customers this exciting new top-up experience before it is available at any other retail chain in the country."

The company also looks to bring its new service to Mandalay, where Orange has two outposts, U Pyae Phyo Latt said.



The rise of mobile could endanger internet cafes in Myanmar. Photo: Staff

Mobile could kill cafes



AUNG KYAW NYUNT

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INTERNET cafe owners say the rise of mobile in Myanmar has meant game over for shops.

But they will remain important to internet gamers, according to a prominent local games designer, who said the explosion of users on the internet has brought more people to play online games on phones and PCs.

"People playing mobile games are also playing PC games because they are totally different experiences," said Total Gameplay Studio chief technology officer U Myint Kyaw Thu. "Mobile internet has helped increase the number of gamers playing both PC and mobile games."

The flood of users to the mobile internet comes on the tide of telcos rollouts from competing operators in the now semi-privatised Myanmar market. The price of SIM cards famously fell from more than US\$150 to K1500 after international telcos arrived to challenge state-owned Myanma Posts and Telecommunications for customers.

"The general population of gamers has increased exponentially due

to the mobile phone becoming a commodity," U Myint Kyaw Thu said.

The rise of the mobile internet and of mobile gaming has gone hand in hand. U Myint Kyaw Thu predicts the mobile games market will at least double in size this year, he said.

But not all have benefitted from mobile developments. U Khin Maung Oo, who owns Best Solution internet cafe in Kyauktada Township, said gamers still visit - but in fewer numbers than before.

'Mobile internet has ... increased the number of gamers playing both PC and mobile games'

U Myint Kyaw
CTO, Total Gameplay Studio

"Gamers play Dota in the cafe but now, the rate of gamers [coming in] has decreased," he said.

U Khin Maung Oo blames better tech being available to customers. "There are more mobile gamers now because smart phone quality is high in the latest handsets," he said,

adding he plans to change his business from an internet cafe.

He is not the only one. Beyond gaming, mobile's influence has affected the market for internet cafes, limiting the number of users they see.

An official from Cyber Shine internet cafe, like U Khin Maung Oo, resolved to revise their business plans. "Internet users use the web on mobile phones ... so my internet cafe closed," the official said. "I will do another business."

While one cafe still sees gamers coming in, an official said other internet users have dropped off as people head online with phones.

"Facebook users, Gmail users and other web users don't come to internet cafes [anymore] because mobile phone users go online with their phones," said an official from Exact internet cafe.

It may be too soon to tell how massive mobile rollouts will impact the internet cafe industry. But U Myint Kyaw Thu said mobile gaming will have a limited impact on cafes and games shops - especially as they provide services users might not be able to afford.

"PC games require huge download sizes, so it would be very expensive to download them using mobile internet," he said. "Internet cafes and games shops will still play a major role."

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Making the virtual a reality



CATHERINE TRAUTWEIN

newroom@mmtimes.com

A MEETUP for technology tinkers called “makers” at Phandeyar last week showed attendees another world through Google-developed goggles made of cardboard.

Software industry vet and part-time “maker” Jim Powers brought his Google Cardboard “low-cost virtual reality goggles” by the downtown innovation lab on January 22.

Though Myanmar’s makers might not currently have the resources to construct their own virtual realities, a glimpse at the technology sparked ideas about how it be used here.

Virtual reality technology seems to be coming of age this year, Mr Powers said. Perhaps the industry’s best-known brand, Oculus Rift, started as a project crowd funded on Kickstarter and ended up acquired by Facebook for US\$2 billion last year. And though companies like Sony and Oculus Rift have emphasised the tech’s potential impact for gaming, its possibilities seem as endless as the worlds developers choose to create.

“A teacher could have their students looking through the human body,” Mr Powers said. “There’s talk of, say, a surgeon in the UK performing surgery by robotics on somebody in Kenya. They’ve got the VR goggles on, that’s [as if] they’re there, they can look around the surgery.”

Google Cardboard’s goggle recipe calls for magnets, lenses, cardboard, an NFC tag and smartphone. The California-based giant doesn’t sell the gear for making the goggles, but instead makes the plans available for building them. Mr Powers got his set from a kit sold through a third party, which cost about \$20.

Though he bought a kit, Mr Powers said users could DIY the goggles. “The exciting thing is, it’s a phone



A man stares into another world through Google Cardboard goggles, pictured above. Photo: Catherine Trautwein

and a piece of cardboard,” he said.

He also said Google Cardboard began as one of the search giant’s “20 percent” projects – meaning employees devoted one day a week to the initiative as a passion project. Now, the firm has a team behind its development and upward of 500,000 goggles have been put together, he continued.

Google Developer Group Yangon community manager Ko Ye Lin Aung, who attended the event, said acquiring equipment constrained what people can do in Myanmar. “Even this technology is not widely available yet,” he said. “For right now, it’s a little bit hard to get some accessories especially for this country.”

“Another thing is that people here

don’t really appreciate technology yet because we don’t have any proof of how it can help. You can use software or you can hire two people, which is cheaper,” he laughs.

What goggles become capable of can hinge on their availability, according to Mr Powers.

“As these VR goggles become cheaper and more available and the tools to develop the software become available, then you’ll start seeing more creative things and they’ll be more accepted,” Mr Power said.

He sees potential use cases for VR tech in Myanmar for tourism or conservation.

Ko Ye Lin Aung also spoke about travelling via Google Cardboard, specifically by capturing Shwedagon

Pagoda through special pictures that would yield an immersive view of the sacred Buddhist site. “You feel that surrounding. It’s totally like you are there,” he said.

“The future is virtual reality, because you don’t necessarily have to go to somewhere just because you want to see it.”

Virtual reality technology could also link people as much as places. Kids across continents could become VR pals rather than pen pals, he said.

“You could have educational sharing with other countries,” he said. “People aren’t really aware of what’s going on here, and [people in Myanmar] have been living in their own world here for so long, and it would open up for them.”

BarCamp returns to Yangon

CATHERINE TRAUTWEIN
newroom@mmtimes.com

BARCAMP is back, and this year the Yangon tech-centred “unconference” will run under the theme of building open communities.

Every year, the local event attracts thousands of people. Team leader Ko Thaung Su Nyein said organisers anticipate between 3000 and 5000 participants to show up this year, adding the lion’s share will be students.

Though the organising team spends around two months prepping for the event, its content – what will be discussed and by whom – remains undecided until BarCamp has begun.

The morning of the first day, the topic board – a “big massive board” with room numbers and time slots – will be empty, Ko Thaung Su Nyein said. With 10 rooms, two days and about seven sessions each day, BarCamp will see about 120-140 topics covered this year, he explained.

It is an administrator’s job to field coloured papers with topics and other info from “all potential speakers”, according to Ko Thaung Su Nyein.

“You don’t have to be anyone or know anyone, you can just take piece of paper and submit it and it gets posted on the [board],” he said.

The admin delegates which topic goes where on the board “and that there’s no overlapping,” Ko Thaung Su Nyein said. “It’s very adhoc.”

The only major rules: Topics can’t deal with hate speech or religious speech, according to assistant coordinator Ko Pyae Sone.

“People want to get free speech, so we target that this BarCamp is building open communities,” Ko Pyae Sone said.

BarCamp Yangon will take place January 31 and February 1, 8am-5pm, at MICT Park.

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World

WORLD EDITOR: Fiona MacGregor

SANA'A

Yemen in turmoil as leader resigns

YEMENI leader Abdrabuh Mansur Hadi has handed in his resignation following a standoff with a powerful Shiite militia in control of the capital, throwing his country deeper into political turmoil.

In his letter of resignation on January 22, Mr Hadi, a key US ally in the fight against al-Qaeda, said he could no longer stay in office as the country was in "total deadlock".

"I believe that I have not been able to achieve the goals for which I took up my duties," he said, adding that Yemen's political leaders had failed "to lead the country to calmer waters".

Prime Minister Khalid Bahah also tendered his resignation, saying he did want to be part of the collapse of the country.

A senior official told AFP that Yemen's parliament had rejected Mr Hadi's resignation.

"Parliament ... refused to accept the president's resignation and decided to call an extraordinary session for [the next] morning," the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The shock announcements came after the militia, known as Huthis, tightened their grip on Sana'a lastweek after seizing almost full control of the capital in September.

They had maintained fighters around key buildings on January 22 and continued holding a top presidential aide they kidnapped the previous weekend, despite a deal to end what authorities called a coup attempt.

The potential fall of Mr Hadi's Western-backed government will raise serious concerns of strategically important but impoverished Yemen collapsing into complete chaos.

The country is an important power base for al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), the Yemeni and Saudi branch of the international jihadist network.

AQAP is considered al-Qaeda's most dangerous affiliate and claimed responsibility for this month's deadly attack on French satirical weekly *Charlie Hebdo*.

Yemen has allowed the United States to carry out repeated drone attacks on al-Qaeda militants in its

territory.

Mr Hadi is from Yemen's formerly independent south and in recent days southern officials have taken steps to back his rule, including closing the air and sea ports in the main city of Aden.

The security and military committee for four of south Yemen's provinces, including Aden, said in a statement later on January 22 saying it would not take orders from Sana'a following Mr Hadi's resignation.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon was "seriously concerned" by the developments and called on all sides "to exercise maximum restraint and maintain peace and stability", his spokesperson said in a statement.

In Washington, State Department spokesperson Jen Psaki said the United States was assessing the fast-moving events.

"We continue to support a peaceful transition. We've urged all parties and continue to urge all parties to abide by ... the peace and national partnership agreement," Ms Psaki told reporters.

A senior State Department official said staffing at the US embassy, already thin after most of the diplomatic personnel were ordered to leave in September, would be further reduced.

After heavy fighting between government forces and the Huthis this week that killed at least 35 people, the UN Security Council and Yemen's Gulf neighbours had all voiced support for Mr Hadi's continued rule.

The Huthis swept into Sana'a last year from their stronghold in the far

north, demanding a greater say in the country's affairs, and refused to abandon the capital despite a UN-negotiated deal.

The situation escalated on January 17 when the militiamen seized top presidential aide Ahmed Awad bin Mubarak in an apparent bid to extract changes to a draft constitution, which the Huthis oppose because it would divide Yemen into six federal regions.

The militiamen say it would split the country into rich and poor areas.

In the ensuing days pitched battles erupted, with the Huthis eventually seizing Mr Hadi's offices in the presidential palace, attacking his residence and surrounding the home of the prime minister Mr Bahah.

"We do not want to be a party to what is happening and what is about to happen," Mr Bahah said in his letter of resignation, adding that the government refused "to take responsibility for the actions of others".

There had been hope the crisis would be resolved after the nine-point deal was struck late on January 21.

In return for concessions over the disputed draft constitution, the Huthis agreed to vacate the presidential palace, free Mr Mubarak, withdraw from areas surrounding the residences of Mr Hadi and Mr Bahah, and abandon checkpoints across the capital.

But on January 22 officials said they were not yet honouring the deal.

The UN envoy to Yemen, Moroccan diplomat Jamal Benomar, had arrived in the country that day for talks with the political rivals, but they were swiftly overtaken by events.

Yemen has been riven by instability since an uprising forced strongman Ali Abdullah Saleh from power in 2012.

Mr Saleh has been accused of backing the Huthis, who are from the same Zaidi sect of Shiite Islam as the former leader, as has Shiite-dominated Iran.

The turmoil has raised fears that Yemen, which neighbours oil giant Saudi Arabia and lies on the key shipping route from the Suez Canal to the Gulf, may become a failed state similar to Somalia.

— AFP

'We ... continue to urge all parties to abide by the peace and national partnerships agreement.'

Jen Psaki

US State Department



RIYADH

Saudi's King

SAUDI Arabia's elderly King Abdullah died on January 23 and was replaced by his half-brother Salman as the absolute ruler of the world's top oil exporter and the spiritual home of Islam.

The royal court said in a statement that Abdullah, believed to be around 90, died at 1am local time, expressing its "great sadness and mourning".

Salman, 79, had been defence minister and previously governor of the capital Riyadh.

Another of the late monarch's half-brothers, Moqren, was named the new crown prince.

Abdullah was due to be buried later on January 23 following afternoon prayers, and citizens would be invited to pledge allegiance to the new monarch and the crown prince at the royal palace, the statement said.

The royal court did not disclose the cause of the king's death, but he was hospitalised in December suffering from pneumonia and had been breathing with the aid of a tube.

Under Abdullah, who took the throne in 2005, Saudi Arabia has been a key ally of Washington in the Arab world, most recently joining the US-led coalition carrying out air strikes against the Islamic State group in Syria and Iraq.

US President Barack Obama was quick to pay tribute to Abdullah as a valued ally.

"As our countries worked together to confront many challenges, I always valued King Abdullah's perspective and appreciated our genuine and warm friendship," Mr Obama said in a written statement shortly after the monarch's death.

"The closeness and strength of the partnership between our two countries is part of King Abdullah's

legacy."

As the top producer in the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, Saudi Arabia has been the driving force behind the cartel's refusal to slash output to support oil prices, which have fallen by more than 50 percent since June.

The two main global crude contracts surged on January 23 following the king's death, amid uncertainty over whether the new king would maintain that policy.

The kingdom is also home to Islam's holiest sites, Mecca and Medina, and its role as a spiritual leader for Sunni Muslims has seen it vying for influence with Shiite-dominated Iran.

Behind his thick, always jet-black moustache and goatee, Abdullah had a shrewd grasp of regional politics.

Wary of the rising influence of Islamist movements, Saudi Arabia has been a generous supporter of Egyptian leader Abdel Fattah al-Sisi since the army's ouster of Mohamed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood.

It has also played a key role in supporting opposition to Iran-backed President Bashar al-Assad of Syria, allowing US troops to use its territory to train rebel fighters.

Salman, the new king, is widely expected to follow closely in Abdullah's footsteps, in foreign and energy policy as well as in making moderate reforms to the deeply conservative kingdom.

Abdullah pushed through cautious changes while in power, challenging conservatives with moves such as including women in the Shura Council, an advisory body.

He promoted the kingdom's economic development and oversaw its accession to the World Trade

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Yingluck impeached and facing criminal charges in Thailand

WORLD 41

China's ageing population crisis continues to grow

WORLD 42



Vietnamese turn backs on old-school education

WORLD 45



IN PICTURES

Photo: AFP

A kitemaker poses with kites adorned with images of US President Barack Obama and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Amritsar, India, on January 21. Mr Obama was due to arrive in India last weekend for an unprecedented second visit by a serving US president.

Abdullah dies

Organization, tapping into the country's massive oil wealth to build new economic cities, universities and high-speed railways.

But Saudi Arabia is still strongly criticised for a dismal human rights record, including the imprisonment of dissidents. It is also the only country in the world that does not allow women to drive.

Salman is a stalwart of the royal family credited with transforming Riyadh during his half-century as governor from a backwater to a thriving capital.

Recent years have seen concerns over his health after operations on his back, but Salman took on an increasingly high-profile role as Abdullah's own health issues forced him from the limelight.

Abdullah named Moqren as deputy crown prince last March, in an unprecedented move aimed at smoothing succession hurdles.

Moqren, a former intelligence chief, was a trusted confidant of Abdullah with a reputation as a liberal.

A former air force officer born in 1945, Moqren is the youngest son of King Abdul Aziz bin Saud, the founder of Saudi Arabia.

Since King Abdul Aziz's death in 1952 the throne has systematically passed from one of his sons to another.

Abdul Aziz had 45 recorded sons and Abdullah, Salman and Moqren were all born to different mothers.

The new king will face some major hurdles, especially as falling oil prices cut into state revenues.

Saudi Arabia has managed to avoid the social upheaval that has shaken many of its neighbours in recent years, thanks in large part to massive public spending.

The country has amassed enormous financial reserves, but has already projected a huge deficit of \$38.6 billion for this year.

Many Saudis turned to social media to mourn the king. One Twitter user, Shaima, said, "We didn't lose a king, we all lost a father".

— AFP



Saudi King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz al-Saud, who died on January 23, confers on June 27, 2014, with US Secretary of State John Kerry at the king's private residence in the Red Sea city of Jeddah. Photo: AFP

ATHENS

Anti-austerity party on track for election victory in troubled Greece

GREECE on January 25 headed into a general election that could sweep the anti-austerity Syriza party to power and determine whether the country remains in the eurozone.

After a six-year recession in which the national output shrank by a quarter, Greeks are being called on to determine whether to stick with spending cuts demanded by their international creditors, or demand a new deal on the country's huge debts.

The election, the second in three years, comes with Greece still locked in talks with its EU-IMF creditors for a 7.2 billion-euro (US\$8.3 billion) tranche of bailout loans the state needs to stay afloat.

Syriza, who have a steady lead in opinion polls over conservative New Democracy, the party formerly in government, want to redraft the EU-IMF bailout which they say has brought nothing but misery for the past five years.

They intend to erase over 50 percent of Greece's 318-billion-euro debt, and divert funds that are currently being used to repay state bonds to help the country's economic recovery instead.

The leftists also pledge to raise salaries and pensions, halt layoffs and freeze the privatisation of state assets. That would mean abandoning key elements of reforms demanded by the European Union and the International Monetary Fund.

"The path we have chosen demands determination, conviction and resolution for major confrontation," the party's 40-year-old leader Alexis Tsipras told a closing rally in Athens on January 22.

"We will not hesitate, we will not be afraid, we will not turn back," he told the crowd.

The party maintains that Greece's creditors will agree to renegotiate the bailout when faced with a leftist government elected with a strong popular mandate.

"As of Monday [January 26], we will have a government with its own program, not the copy of a program imposed by the Europeans," the party's senior economist Giannis Dragasakis told To Vima radio last week.

Such talk has sparked concern among officials in the European Union, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund, who are mindful that Greece benefited from a drastic debt cut just two years ago.

IMF chief Christine Lagarde on January 19 warned that to renegotiate debt carried "consequences" for the countries attempting it.

"Collective endeavours are welcome but at the same time a debt is a debt and it is a contract," Ms Lagarde told the *Irish Times* during a visit to Dublin.

But observers note that it is impossible for the leftist party to apply its aims without consequences for the Greek economy.

"Staying in the euro, being in power and undoing the bailout program is an 'impossible trinity' for Syriza, in our view," investment bankers Morgan Stanley said in a note this week.

"That's inconsistent, so one of these three has to give," they said.

There was also concern that with

the electorate highly polarised, no clear victor would emerge on January 25 and a repeat ballot – as in 2012 – would be required, with dire consequences for the economy.

The conservatives of outgoing Prime Minister Antonis Samaras have painted a doomsday scenario in the event of Syriza coming to power.

A New Democracy advert warns that international creditors would "call Syriza's bluff", the Greek economy would be starved of funds, and the country would face a petrol and medicine shortage.

Syriza hit back with sarcasm: "On January 26, an asteroid will pass close to Earth, the sun will rise at 7:34, and banks and shops will open after 8am," a party ad said.

Mr Tsipras has promised to forge a "common struggle ... with the people and workers of all the European Union to remove the noose of disastrous austerity".

Over 9.8 million voters will participate in the snap ballot prompted by parliament's failure to elect a president last month. Polls have shown that the vast majority of Greeks want to stay in the eurozone. — AFP



Syriza leftist party supporters attend an election meeting in central Athens on January 22, 2015. Greeks go to polls for general elections on January 25. Photo: AFP

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SHANGHAI**Families slam New Year crush compensation offer**

RELATIVES of the 36 people killed in a New Year's Eve crush in Shanghai criticised official compensation plans last week, as a newspaper called for greater accountability by the Chinese city's government.

Authorities in Huangpu district, which includes the historic waterfront Bund area where the accident took place, said late on January 21 that each family would receive 800,000 yuan (US\$131,000).

"Do you think a life is worth that much?" one relative said. "I am not in it for the money. I demand an accounting [from the government]."

The compensation announcement came on the same day the city government said it would punish 11 district and police officials, removing four from their posts, over the accident, which was caused by massive overcrowding and inadequate safety measures.

The English-language *China Daily* newspaper on January 22 urged Shanghai mayor Yang Xiong to make a public apology.

"No municipal-level officials have been punished so far as the investigators concluded that only 'those directly responsible' for the disaster should be held accountable," the government-published newspaper said in an editorial.

"There is more than enough reason for the mayor to give a public apology on behalf of the municipal government," it said.

Huangpu district authorities did not reveal how the compensation was calculated, saying only that the level was based on the law.

'Do you think a life is worth that much? I'm not in it for the money.'

Relative of crush victim

The relative of another victim said the amount was too low.

"This level of compensation is not even close to enough. With the cost of living so high in Shanghai, what can this little bit of money do?"

In comparison, families of the victims of a 2011 train crash near the Chinese city of Wenzhou received 915,000 yuan, according to state media, based on 20 years' average salary in Zhejiang province, where the accident occurred.

The high-speed rail accident, which killed 40 people, was blamed on design flaws and poor management.

The official investigation report for the stampede laid the blame on Huangpu district authorities and said they only planned to post 350 police on the Bund and a nearby road.

Police numbers rose to 510 minutes before the crush occurred, the report said, but with the crowd reaching at least 310,000 that evening, that was equivalent to fewer than one officer for every 600 people.

- AFP

DENPASAR**Australian 'Bali Nine' loses final appeal against death penalty**

AN Australian drug smuggler on death row in Indonesia has lost his appeal for presidential clemency, an official said on January 22, meaning he could soon face the firing squad alongside a compatriot also convicted of trafficking.

The news came after Jakarta last weekend executed six drug offenders, including five foreigners, prompting Brazil and the Netherlands, whose citizens were among those put to death, to recall their ambassadors.

Indonesia's new president has been a vocal supporter of capital punishment for drug offenders, and fears have been growing the two Australian leaders of the "Bali Nine" drug-smuggling gang, Andrew Chan and Myuran Sukumaran, could be next.

The news on January 22 that President Joko Widodo had rejected Mr Chan's appeal for clemency, typically the last chance of a death row convict to avoid the firing squad, removed the final hurdle for authorities to put the pair to death.

The Indonesian government, which enforces some of the toughest punishments for drug traffickers in the world, previously said that Chan and Sukumaran had to be executed at the same time as they had committed their crime together.

Mr Sukumaran's appeal for presidential clemency was rejected last month, and authorities had been waiting for the outcome of Mr Chan's appeal.

Following news Mr Chan's appeal had been rejected, a spokesperson at the Indonesian attorney general's office said no date or location had been fixed for their executions.

Mr Chan and Mr Sukumaran, as well as other members of the drug-smuggling group, were arrested in 2005 for attempting to traffic 8 kilograms (18 pounds) of heroin out of the popular Indonesian resort island of Bali.

Both men were sentenced to death in 2006, and sought presidential clemency after losing appeals to Indonesia's Supreme Court in 2011. They are jailed in Bali's Kerobokan prison.

The other seven members of the



Convicted drugs smuggler Andrew Chan attends a previous appeal hearing in Denpasar, Bali, on September 21, 2010. Photo: AFP

"Bali Nine" were given lengthy jail terms.

A spokesperson for the district court in the Balinese capital Denpasar said he had received a "presidential decree on the rejection of clemency for Andrew Chan".

The letter, which was signed on January 17 and seen by AFP, said, "After careful consideration of the clemency appeal of the convict as listed in the presidential decree, it is assessed that there is not enough reason to grant clemency to the convict."

Following the previous week's executions, Australian Foreign Minister Julia Bishop said that Canberra would "continue to make representations at the highest level" to save the two Australian drug smugglers.

While an appeal for presidential clemency is normally the last avenue open to death row convicts, Mr Sukumaran's lawyer said on January 22 he was making the unusual move of seeking a fresh judicial review of the case.

Speaking in Denpasar, Todung Mulya Lubis said he was trying to sort out "technicalities" and hoped to file the fresh appeal this week, adding he did not believe authorities had given a good reason to reject the clemency appeal.

Mr Lubis is also the lawyer for Mr Chan. However, he made the remarks about the fresh appeal before news emerged that Mr Chan's clemency request had been rejected, and could not immediately be contacted for further comment. - AFP

BANGKOK

Criminal charges against Yingluck after impeachment

THAILAND'S junta-stacked parliament voted on January 23 to impeach former premier Yingluck Shinawatra, hours after prosecutors announced plans to indict her for corruption.

The verdict and plans risk reigniting the country's bitter divisions.

The successful impeachment of Ms Yingluck, the kingdom's first female premier and the sister of former leader Thaksin Shinawatra, carries an automatic five-year ban from politics while the criminal charges could eventually see her jailed for up to a decade.

Experts say the impeachment and criminal charges are the latest attempt by the country's royalist elite, and its army backers, to nullify the political influence of the Shinawatras, whose parties have won every election since 2001.

But the junta's pursuit of the family could also disturb the uneasy calm that has descended on Thailand since the military took over.

The Shinawatras' "Red Shirt" supporters, who have lain low since the coup, will be enraged by the twin decision -- although widespread street protests are unlikely given martial law banning political gatherings remains in place.

Both the impeachment and corruption charges revolve around her administration's controversial rice subsidy program, which funnelled cash to her rural base but cost billions of

dollars and inspired protests that felled her government.

A successful impeachment needed support from three-fifths of the 220-seat National Legislative Assembly, a figure easily obtained with 190 voting in favour.

Ms Yingluck, 47, was toppled from office by a controversial court ruling shortly before the army staged a coup in May last year.

She now faces years frozen out of Thailand's political landscape.

"The prospect of a jail term would be much more threatening and damaging to her than impeachment," Pavin Chachavalpongpun, a Thai academic at Kyoto University, said.

"The primary aim is to prevent her and the Shinawatras returning to politics should the military be forced to step down and call an election. They simply cannot compete when it comes to electoral politics," he added.

Both Mr Thaksin and Ms Yingluck are loathed by many Thais in the upper and middle classes, but still command huge loyalty from much of the rural poor -- particularly in the Shinawatras' northern strongholds, where rice farming is a mainstay of the local economy, in what is one of the world's largest rice exporters.

The rice subsidy scheme, which purchased the crop from farmers at around twice the market rate, was

Yingluck Shinawatra

Thailand's former prime minister



Photo: Christophe Archambault

Leader of Puea Thai Party, which won 263 seats out of 500 in the parliamentary vote of July 2011

Sister of the fugitive ex-premier Thaksin Shinawatra, who was ousted in a coup in 2006 and lives in exile

Dismissed from office by Constitutional Court in May 2014, ruling that she abused power, army takes power later in the month

January 23, 2015
Junta-backed parliament votes to impeach her, banned from politics for 5 years

AFP

hugely popular among the Shinawatras' vote base but economically disastrous, leaving Thailand with huge unsold stockpiles as regional competitors undercut their exports.

Prosecutors had spent months deciding whether Ms Yingluck should face separate criminal corruption charges over her subsidy scheme.

"We agree that the case substantiates a criminal indictment charge against Yingluck," Surasak Threeratkul, director-general of the Office of the Attorney General, said on January 23, adding that an indictment is expected in early March.

During the impeachment hearings, which lasted a fortnight, Ms Yingluck

defended the rice scheme as a necessary subsidy to help poor farmers who historically receive a disproportionately small slice of government cash.

She also attacked the legality of impeaching someone from a position that she had already been removed from.

Analysts said it was always unlikely that the NLA, which is stacked with junta appointees, would save Ms Yingluck's political career.

Prominent protest leaders have warned against supporters hitting the streets given the ban on public gatherings. Junta leader Prayut Chan-O-Cha has also warned against such action.

"But in the medium to longer term,

the grievances within the Yingluck/Thaksin side will accumulate and become more virulent when they eventually surface," Thitinan Pongsudhirak, director of the Institute of Security and International Studies at Bangkok's Chulalongkorn University, said.

The decision to impeach will delight the coalition of upper and middle class Thais who led the protests that eventually toppled Ms Yingluck's government.

Since Mr Thaksin swept to power in 2001, Shinawatra governments have been felled by two coups and bloodied by the removal of three other premiers by the kingdom's interventionist courts. -- AFP

BANGKOK

Thai-China rail on track

CONSTRUCTION on a US\$12 billion Chinese-backed railway through Thailand will begin in September, officials said last week, as part of plans to overhaul the country's notoriously creaking network.

"The first two phases will start by September or October at the latest this year and will take around two-and-a-half years to complete," said Thailand's Transport Minister Prajin Juntong.

Thailand currently has only 250 kilometres (155 miles) of dual-track

railway, making train travel painfully slow. With Chinese help, Bangkok plans to lay down two new dual track lines, part of a wider regional network that Beijing hopes will link China's southwestern hub city of Kunming with Asia's second busiest port of Singapore by 2020.

The largest line will cut 734 kilometres through Thailand, from northern Nong Khai province -- which borders Laos -- to the coastal industrial estate of Map Ta Phut, southeast of Bangkok. -- AFP

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BEIJING

A father holds his baby in his arms at a furniture store in Beijing on January 20. Photo: AFP

Ageing population crisis in China worsens

CHINA'S working-age population continued to fall in 2014, the government said last week, as Beijing struggled to address a spiralling demographic challenge made worse by its one-child policy.

Mainland China's total population stood at 1.37 billion at the end of 2014, according to the National Bureau of Statistics, an increase of 7.1 million over the end of 2013. It remains the world's largest, although India has been catching up in recent years.

The working-age population, which China defines as those between the ages of 16 and 59, dropped to 915.8 million last year, the NBS said, down 3.7 million from the end of 2013.

The population aged 60 and over, by contrast, rose by more than 10 million to 212.4 million, or 15.5 percent of the total population.

Projections show that one in four

of the population, or 350 million Chinese, will be aged 60 or older by 2030, compared with just 5 percent as late as 1982.

China introduced its controversial family planning policies, which limit most couples to only one offspring, in the late 1970s in an effort to rein in population growth.

But an ageing and increasingly male populace is now starting to pose fundamental demographic challenges that officials have been trying to address.

The ruling Communist Party moved to relax the rules in late 2013 to allow couples to have two offspring so long as at least one of the parents is an only child. Yet far fewer couples have applied to have a second child than expected.

Nearly 116 boys were born for every 100 girls in 2014, while the sex ratio in the total population was 105

men to 100 women.

China's migrant population has swelled by 8 million in the past year to 253 million, the NBS said.

China also released its official Gini coefficient, a key inequality statistic, for 2014 on January 20.

The figure is a commonly used measure of income inequality, with 0 representing perfect equality and 1 total inequality. Some academics view 0.40 as a warning line.

Beijing did not release the figure for several years before resuming two years ago. In 2014 it declined to 0.469, the NBS said, from 0.473 in 2013.

China's wealth gap and population imbalances are major concerns for the ruling Communist Party, which places huge importance on preserving social stability to avoid any challenge to its grasp on power.

- AFP

TOKYO

Fukushima execs will avoid charges

JAPANESE prosecutors said on January 22 that executives in charge of the Fukushima nuclear plant will not be charged, setting up a possible showdown with a citizens' panel that wants someone brought to book for the disaster.

The move is the latest in a tussle between legal authorities and an angry public over who should take responsibility for the tsunami-sparked reactor meltdowns in 2011 that forced tens of thousands from their homes.

A parliamentary report has said Fukushima was a man-made disaster caused by Japan's culture of "reflexive obedience", but no one has been punished criminally.

A groundswell of opinion holds that the cozy ties between the government, regulators and nuclear operators have insulated executives of plant operator Tokyo Electric Power (TEPCO).

But prosecutors have repeatedly refused to bring charges against them, citing insufficient evidence and the unlikelihood of securing a conviction.

Although the March 11 earthquake and tsunami killed 18,000 people, the nuclear disaster it caused is not officially recorded as having directly killed anyone.

An independent judicial review panel made up of ordinary citizens in July called for criminal charges to be brought against three former executives at Fukushima Daiichi, forcing prosecutors to re-examine the case.

Presenting their findings last week, they said TEPCO's managers could not have predicted the size of the huge tsunami triggered by

the 9.0 magnitude earthquake, and could not have protected the plant against its effects.

"We conclude that there is not enough evidence to suggest that Tokyo Electric executives could have predicted or could have avoided [the accident]," said Ryoichi Nakahara, deputy chief prosecutor of the Tokyo District Public Prosecutor's Office.

He said prosecutors had questioned a wider group of experts following the July panel ruling but reached the same conclusion.

Under Japanese law, if the judicial review panel challenges that decision a second time, a group of court-appointed lawyers would then be compelled to press charges.

The three are former chair Tsunehisa Katsumata, then-vice president Sakae Muto and former vice president Ichiro Takekuro.

Campaigners have called for about three dozen company officials to be held accountable for their failure to take proper measures to protect the site against the tsunami, which sparked the worst atomic crisis in a generation. - AFP

'We conclude there is not enough evidence [against] Tokyo Electric executives.'

Ryoichi Nakshara
Chief prosecutor



STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP TAKES MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTING TO GREATER HEIGHTS IN MYANMAR

The Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Office of the Auditor General of the Union Myanmar to create opportunities for accounting professionals in Myanmar. Chief Accountants and Senior Accountants from the public sector will be pursuing the CIMA Professional Qualification to become Chartered Global Management Accountants (CGMA). CGMA is a professional designation valued by employers around the world.

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JAKARTA

Bodies recovered from AirAsia wreck

INDONESIAN divers on January 22 recovered six bodies, some still belted into their seats, near the main section of an AirAsia plane that crashed into the Java Sea last month, but failed again to reach the fuselage.

Flight QZ8501 went down on December 28 in stormy weather with 162 people on board as it flew from the Indonesian city of Surabaya to Singapore. The discovery brought the total numbers of bodies recovered from the crash to 59.

"We have found six bodies, four of whom were females and two males, all adults," SB Supriyadi, a rescue agency official coordinating the search, said.

He said they were found among debris, with some still strapped into their seats, not far from the jet's

main section.

The bodies were flown to Pangkalan Bun town on Borneo island, the search headquarters.

The main body of the Airbus A320-200 was spotted on the seabed by a military vessel last week following an arduous search in shallow Indonesian waters, but strong underwater currents and rough seas have prevented divers from reaching it.

Search and rescue teams again failed to reach the fuselage on on January 22, Mr Supriyadi said.

The jet's black boxes, the cockpit voice recorder and flight data recorder, were recovered the previous week, and investigators have been analysing them.

Indonesian Transport Minister Ignasius Jonan said last week that

the plane climbed abnormally fast before stalling and plunging into the sea.

Just moments before the plane disappeared off the radar, the pilot had asked to climb to avoid a major storm but was not immediately granted permission due to heavy air traffic.

The revelation pointed to "striking" similarities between the Java Sea accident and the 2009 crash of an Air France jet, analysts said last week.

Indonesian Transport Minister Ignasius Jonan said the Airbus A320-200 was ascending at a rate of 6000 feet (1800 metres) a minute before stalling.

"In the final minutes, the plane climbed at a speed which was

beyond normal," he told reporters on January 20.

That ascent is about two to three times the normal climb rate for a commercial jetliner, according to experts.

While they stressed the difficulty of drawing conclusions without seeing the full black box data, analysts said the accident had strong echoes of the crash of Air France flight 447 into the Atlantic in 2009, with the loss of 228 lives.

"The similarities are pretty striking," Daniel Tsang, founder of Hong Kong-based consultancy Aspire Aviation, said.

In that case, the Airbus A330 en route from Rio to Paris vanished at night during a storm. The aircraft's speed sensors were found to have malfunctioned, and the plane climbed too steeply, causing it to stall.

As with the AirAsia disaster, the accident happened in what is known as the "intertropical convergence zone", an area around the equator where the north and south trade winds meet, and thunderstorms are common.

The investigation into AF447 found that both technical and human error were to blame. After the speed sensors froze up and failed, the pilots failed to react properly, according to the French aviation authority who said they lacked proper training.

Mr Jonan on January 20 likened the doomed plane's ascent to a fighter jet, although experts noted that warplanes can climb considerably faster, as much as 10,000 feet per minute when at altitude.

However, Tom Ballantyne, Sydney-based chief correspondent for *Orient Aviation* magazine, said the rate of climb of the AirAsia jet was "just phenomenal", adding, "I'm not sure I've heard of anything that dramatic before."

He said it would be unusual for weather alone to cause such a rapid ascent, but added it was possible if the jet hit "some bizarre unprecedented storm cell".

"It is possible that the aircraft

could have got caught in some sort of updraft that lifted it thousands of feet," he said.

However, while saying the rapid ascent showed that there was "something very wrong", Gerry Soejatman, a Jakarta-based independent aviation analyst, added it was too early to have a firm read on the cause of the crash.

"Although there are similarities with Air France, and the weather seems to be a factor, we can't make any conclusions that this is caused by the weather or icing. It's too early," he said.

59

Number of bodies recovered from the wreck of AirAsia flight QZ8501 by January 22



A member of Indonesia's search and rescue team walks past wreckage of AirAsia flight QZ8501 in a warehouse for investigators in Kumai, Central Kalimantan, Borneo island, on January 19. Photo:AFP

PHNOM PENH

Court hears accounts of Khmer Rouge cannibalism

A WITNESS has told Cambodia's UN-backed court Khmer Rouge soldiers slit prisoners' throats and ate their gall bladders during the 1970s, as the genocide trial of the two most senior surviving leaders resumed last week.

Nuon Chea, 88, known as "Brother Number Two", and former head of state Khieu Samphan, 83, face charges over the killing of ethnic Vietnamese and Muslim minorities, forced marriage and rape during the 1975-1979 regime that left up to 2 million people dead.

In August the pair were given life sentences for crimes against humanity -- the first top Khmer Rouge figures to be jailed -- after a two-year trial focused on the forced evacuation of Cambodians from Phnom Penh into rural labour camps and murders at one execution site.

The genocide trial, which began last July, has faced repeated delays due to boycotts by the defendants' lawyers and most recently because of the brief hospitalisation of Khieu Samphan.

He attended the hearing on January 2, but shortly before court was adjourned received permission to follow proceedings from a holding cell, like Nuon Chea, with both men citing ill health.

The prosecution's first witness, Meas Sokha, told the court that he saw

Khmer Rouge soldiers kill hundreds of inmates at Kraing Ta Chan prison in Takeo province, around 80 kilometres (50 miles) south of Phnom Penh, where he was detained along with 11 other family members.

"While I was tending cows and buffaloes, I could see how prisoners were killed. Most of them had their throats slit," said the 55-year-old.

"Two [Khmer Rouge guards] would hold a prisoner tight and another would slit the throat of the prisoner," he said, adding that the Khmer Rouge played music through a loudspeaker "to hide the sounds of the killing".

He told the court that at least 20 prisoners were killed per day after a week of starvation at the prison, where he was held for more than two years from 1976. His father and younger siblings also died at the jail.

The witness added that soldiers killed small children by throwing them against a tree before dropping their bodies into the mass grave at the prison.

He also told the court that Khmer Rouge cadres would eat the gall bladders of executed prisoners after drying them in the sun.

"Whenever there were killings, the guards would drink wine together with gall bladders," said Meas Sokha. "I knew these gall bladders were from

humans. There were many gall bladders dried in the sun near the fence."

Scenes of cannibalism committed by Khmer Rouge soldiers have previously been described by other witnesses at the tribunal during the leaders' first trial, including of cadres eating the livers of murdered inmates.

The complex case against Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan was split into a series of smaller trials in 2011 to try to obtain a faster verdict against the pair given their advanced ages and frail health.

They deny all charges against them and are appealing their life convictions.

Somewhere between 100,000-500,000 ethnic Cham Muslims and 20,000 Vietnamese were believed to have been killed during the regime's rule.

Led by "Brother Number One" Pol Pot, who died in 1998 without ever facing justice, the Khmer Rouge dismantled modern society in Cambodia in their quest for an agrarian Marxist utopia.

In its historic debut trial, the court in 2010 sentenced former Tuol Sleng prison chief Kaing Guek Eav to 30 years in prison, later increased to life on appeal, for overseeing the deaths of 15,000 people.

— AFP



In a photo released on January 21, former Khmer Rouge leader "Brother Number Two" Nuon Chea (centre) sits in the Extraordinary Chamber in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) during his hearing in Phnom Penh. Photo: AFP

HANOI

Vietnamese reject old-school education system

WEARIED by the rampant cheating, endless rote learning and mandatory Leninist ideology classes, Vietnam's middle-classes are fleeing the country's school system for overseas education.

Every year, Vietnamese parents spend more than US\$1 billion sending their children to schools and colleges abroad, according to data from independent monitors, shunning a local system so backwards that experts say it is impeding economic growth.

From teenagers sent to secondary schools in Singapore to university students studying at prestigious American institutions, at least 125,000 Vietnamese students are studying overseas, according to ICEF Monitor, which tracks the international education industry.

The figure represents just a fraction of the nation's near-17 million school and university students, but it is growing fast and is up 15 percent year-on-year in 2013 alone.

Civil servant Nguyen Thi Thu sold family property to cover the hundreds of thousands of dollars needed for her two sons to study overseas.

"I had to get my kids out of this education system which is all pressure and cheating," she said.

When her sons, who both now study in the UK, were attending state

schools in Hanoi, Ms Thu says she had to regularly miss work to take them to additional private classes held by poorly-paid state teachers.

"Once, my son asked me why he never got the top score even though he performed better than his friend. I couldn't explain that his friend's mother took better care of the teacher, giving her much money," she said.

Vietnam's Confucian lineage means education is something of a national obsession, but experts say schools are failing students, leaving parents desperate to get their children into western institutions to gain the qualifications they need to find employment.

Some 20,000 Vietnamese now study in Australia, 16,500 in the United States and 5000 in the UK. These are small but significant numbers from a communist country where only the elite have traditionally had access to foreign education.

Vietnam's state education does score well in some indices. The country ranked 17th out of 65 for mathematics and science according to the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) chart, ahead of many wealthy western countries including the US.

But top officials have warned these test results do not accurately reflect the quality of overall education in



Students from a local college pose during a graduation ceremony at the temple of literature, Vietnam's first university, in Hanoi on November 18. Photo: AFP

a nation where central control has cramped policy innovation.

Four decades after the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, officials have yet to fully reform an education sector, which critics say still works to promote the Party rather than create skilled workers.

Authorities have kept in place a system heavy on rote learning, regurgitation of facts to pass exams, and obedience to authority, leaving little room for critical thinking.

Students rely on outdated, leaden text books, cheating is routine in exams while underpaid teachers are renowned for withholding chunks of the syllabus to instead impart in private classes they can charge for.

"University education is so bad.

Text books are full of unnecessary, tedious theory," former education minister Pham Minh Hac said, warning that the books were so information-heavy they turned students off studying.

As a result of these shortcomings, Vietnamese state schools and universities are not producing graduates companies want to hire. Some 147,000 post graduates could not find work this year, according to official statistics.

"These graduates can't meet the demands of the labour market," Mr Hac said, blaming the school system for "teaching knowledge not wisdom." Instead staff for management positions are often imported from Korea, China and the US.

With very few top-quality private schools in Vietnam, escaping the dys-

functional state education system is a priority for the better off.

"They have changed a lot in their thoughts, their lifestyle, their performance, behaviour and viewpoints," businessman Nguyen Quang Thinh said of his two sons studying in the US at a cost of \$40,000 a year.

Unless communist Vietnam is prepared to let the education system be run by experts not politicians, things are not going to change, renowned teaching expert Pham Toan warned.

"You can do nothing ... when education is in the communist party's resolution," he said, referring to a paper passed in 2013 that calls for a "comprehensive renovation" of the education system, without specifying changes. — AFP



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IN PICTURES

Photo: AFP



Bangladeshi toddler Safir, 2, who suffered burn injuries from an attack on a bus during a nationwide strike called by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)-led alliance, recuperates at a hospital in Dhaka on January 21. Violence triggered by the nationwide blockade has left 29 people dead.

SINGAPORE

Blogger convicted for 'scandalising' judges

THE High Court in Singapore has convicted a prominent dissident blogger of contempt of court for "scandalising" the judiciary in an online commentary, an offence punishable by jail time.

Alex Au, 61, was found guilty on January 22 of insulting the judiciary in an October 5, 2013, post that insinuated that hearing dates on a constitutional challenge to a law criminalising gay sex between men had been rigged. "I am satisfied that the Attorney-General has established beyond reasonable doubt that [the article] as a whole poses or would pose a real risk of undermining public confidence in the administration of justice in Singapore," Justice Belinda Ang said in a written judgement.

"I therefore find the respondent guilty of scandalising contempt in respect of that article," she said.

Ms Ang said sections of the article had suggested that "as the Chief Justice wanted to hear one case, the Supreme Court deliberately delayed the determination of another case so that the outcome of the first case would likely have an influence on the outcome of the second case".

The judge added that the article had also suggested that two senior justices had acted "in a way that was contrary to the fundamental principles of

judicial independence".

Ms Ang however ruled that a second article flagged by prosecutors, in which the blogger had said "my confidence in the Singapore judiciary is as limp as a flag on a windless day", did not contravene the law.

A sentence is expected to be handed down at a later date.

Contempt of court carries a possible jail sentence, a fine or both. There is no maximum penalty specified under the law.

Mr Au's lawyer Peter Low told AFP he was "disappointed" by the ruling.

Mr Au, well-known in Singapore for his commentaries critical of the long-ruling People's Action Party (PAP), is also a leading gay-rights

activist who has called for the repeal of Section 377A of the penal code, which criminalises sex between men.

First introduced by British colonial administrators in 1938, the law is not actively enforced by authorities.

But the government says it has to remain on the books because most Singaporeans are conservative and do not accept homosexuality.

Singapore's highest court, the Court of Appeal, in October upheld rulings by lower courts that it was up to parliament to repeal Section 377A.

The Singapore government has taken a strong stand against attacks on the judiciary, saying they undermine public confidence in the institution.

In 2010, British author Alan Shadrake was given a six-week jail term for publishing a book critical of the administration of the death penalty, which was ruled an insult to the judiciary.

Governed by the PAP since 1959, Singapore prides itself in its stability, low levels of corruption and high standard of living.

But freedom of speech advocates have routinely accused the government of using the judiciary to stifle dissent and sideline political opponents. — AFP

'My confidence in the Singapore judiciary is as limp as a flag on a windless day'

Alex Au
Convicted blogger

MANILA

South China Sea island claim 'threatens' the whole of SE Asia

CHINA'S reclamation of land in disputed South China Sea waters is a "threat" to all nations in Southeast Asia, the Philippines' foreign minister said last week.

Albert del Rosario on January 22 repeated a warning from last year that Beijing was reclaiming land around isolated reefs in the South China Sea to turn them into islands which could hold fortified positions or even airstrips.

The Philippine foreign secretary said the Chinese actions in the Spratly islands would impact freedom to navigate the strategic mineral-rich waters, through which large volumes of the world's trade pass.

"I will re-emphasise this and invite the concern of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations [ASEAN] states because it is a threat to all of us,"

Mr del Rosario told reporters.

Manila accused Beijing last year of reclamation work in the Cuarteron, Johnson, Johnson South and Gaven reefs in the Spratly group, which the Chinese call Nansha.

China claims almost all of the South China Sea, a claim which conflicts with those of ASEAN members Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam as well as non-member Taiwan.

Beijing has previously rejected Philippine protests that the land reclamation was being conducted in its territory, with a People's Liberation Army Major General Luo Yuan defending it as "justifiable" in state media.

While the Philippines and Vietnam have been vocal in accusing China of aggressive actions, other ASEAN members have been reluctant to

criticise the regional giant.

Mr del Rosario said he would raise the issue at an upcoming meeting of ASEAN foreign ministers, pushing for countries involved in the dispute to adhere to a code of conduct to not increase tensions in the maritime region.

He said the Philippines hoped to receive a positive decision by early next year to the formal plea it filed to the United Nations last March challenging China's claims.

A US official attending a strategic dialogue with the Philippines on January 21 also expressed concern over China's behaviour in the South China Sea.

"We believe bigger nations can't bully the small," assistant secretary of state Daniel Russel told reporters after the two-day dialogue. — AFP



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Hooked on heroin



NYEIN EI EI HTWE

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KO Thura was only 14 years old when he tried heroin for the first time.

He blames peer pressure. "My friends said if I was a real man I wouldn't be afraid to use heroin. In the end, I decided to taste it," said Ko Thura, who is now 32.

The youngest of four children, Ko Thura lost his father when he was 10 years old. His mother worked away from home during the week, only returning at weekends. Ko Thura was no stranger to drugs, even as a child. His elder brother was a heroin addict and regularly used other drugs such as tabs and diazepam.

"When my mother found out my brother was using drugs she sent him to hospital, but she didn't know I was starting to use heroin at the same time," he said.

Ko Thura has little memory of his schooldays. He dropped out after failing to complete 10th grade and soon afterward his life became consumed by drug use. But as a young child, finding the money to buy drugs was difficult. "Back then, we were just young kids and we had no income except for our pocket money," he said.

It wasn't long before Ko Thura and his friends were forced to find other ways to fund their habit. One of his friends told him about some bronze vases in a shrine at his family's home, and Ko Thura helped him steal them and replace them with cheap enamel replicas.

"We sold the bronze vases to a shop and bought heroin with the money. But it turned out they were heirlooms from the colonial era, and when his family found out we'd stolen them they punished us," he said with a laugh.

A few months later, however, Ko Thura was shocked to learn that his friend had died from an overdose of heroin. His friend's family blamed Ko Thura for their son's death and, overcome with guilt, Ko Thura vowed to give up the drug.

But his addiction had too strong a hold over him, and he found it impossible to stop. "I knew it was not good for me, but I couldn't live without it. I also knew people looked down on me for it, so I decided to stay away from those people. Anyone can make a mistake. I certainly did," he said.

His obsession with drugs destroyed his other interests. Once a keen footballer, he lost interest in the game. "You play great on heroin, but when you come down from the drug, you're twice as exhausted," he said.

Another hobby was playing the guitar and singing songs. He said playing the guitar while on heroin was like flying.

The low point for Ko Thura was when his beloved mother saw him handcuffed by the police. "She had no idea I was using drugs. She came home from work to see me in chains," he said.

He was sentenced to three-and-a-half years at Insein Prison, and says the worst thing about his imprisonment was being deprived of his fix. "The first year was the worst.

Ko Thura has been battling with heroin addiction since he was a child. He speaks to The Myanmar Times about the dark side of drug use, and his struggle to get clean



A man injects himself with heroin in the jade mining area of Phar Kant in Kachin State. Photos: Kaung Htet

My blood demanded heroin and I couldn't live without it."

After his release, Ko Thura went back to live with his mother and found a job working for a non-government organisation (NGO). But his attempts to escape the cycle of drug use proved short-lived, and after two years he was back on heroin.

"I don't have many friends, and most of them are users, so I had no way of getting out," he admitted.

When one of his user friends was arrested, Ko Thura and other friends decided to run away. He relocated to a small village in Myeik township, Tanintharyi Region, where he lived with a family who, like him, were Karen. Since there was no school, he taught the local children how to read and write.

Then came news that his elder brother had died. As he missed his mother, Ko Thura decided to go back to Yangon and live with her.

Now he works for an international NGO as a distributor of clean, disposable needles in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

"I told them at the interview I was well qualified for the job because all my friends are drug users," he said.

But Ko Thura's is still unable to forget his background as a drug user. When he started working at the NGO, many suspected him of introducing young people to drugs through his work, while his old associates accused him of being a police informer.

"My work became really dangerous because the drug-

users hated me and they were afraid I would set the police on them," he said, adding that he told suspicious friends he no longer used heroin because he had suffered kidney damage, and was trying to raise money for an operation.

Every day, Ko Thura commutes to work by train, getting home in time to eat the dinner his mother makes for him and to chat with her. She is over 60 now, and no longer works outside the home.

"She is happy now looking after me. She likes to talk about what she's been doing during the day, and about her grandchildren." His two surviving brothers, drug-free, are now married with children, who rarely see their uncle Ko Thura.

He becomes embarrassed when his mother suggests he should get married and settle down with a family of his own.

"I can't do it. I spent all my strength on drugs when I was younger," he responded.

His spare time is spent reading and listening to music, but he is still eager to teach children.

He tries to maintain a positive outlook, applying to the difficulties that confront him the experience, often bitter, that he has gained.

"If I'd never used drugs, I wouldn't know about all those bad things, and wouldn't be able to help other people with their own bad experiences," he said. "I try to be optimistic."





Ko Aung My Kyaw, who is deaf and speech-impaired, communicates with his chef using sign language. Photo: Yu Yu

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AS if enclosed in her own private island of silence amid the frenzied heat and bustle of the hotel kitchen, a young woman quietly working at a table in the corner applies herself intently to her task: decorating desserts with slices of fruit.

The chef, passing by to inspect her work, flashes a thumbs-up sign to show his approval. This is how he communicates with Ma Thandar Thwe, who is deaf and speech-impaired.

For years, Ma Thandar Thwe – trapped in low-paid work – could see no way out because of the disabilities that barred her from finding a decent job.

But in December 2013, Yangon's Sule Shangri-La Hotel employed her as a trainee commis chef, and she is now earning about K150,000 a month in the pastry kitchen.

Responding to a written question about her work from *The Myanmar Times*, Ma Thandar Thwe, 22, pencilled the words “very happy”. Two of her colleagues in the kitchen are also deaf and speech-impaired.

Since the Sule Shangri-La Hotel (formerly Traders) opened, the

management policy has been to recruit a diverse workforce, including staff with disabilities. The policy has inspired entrepreneurs and other organisations to follow their lead in providing employment opportunities for disabled workers.

Currently, 10 people with disabilities – around 2 percent of Sule Shangri-La's 500 strong staff – are working in different hotel departments including food and beverages, laundry, security and human resources.

“I have found no difference in intelligence, memory or learning ability between Ma Thandar Thwe and the other staff, aside from the difficulties in communication,” said the assistant pastry chef responsible for training Ma Thandar Thwe. Her co-workers, who cannot use sign language, have learned to interpret her gestures and she has learned to understand the chef's instructions as he uses hand signals to demonstrate points she cannot understand from reading the recipes.

“Deaf workers are not distracted by noise, and excel in concentration. They confine their attention to the task at hand and their productivity is higher,” said Daw Ma Ma Naing, director of human resources.

“I have attended conferences

arranged by organisations aiding people with disabilities, and talked about jobs at my hotel. The parents ask me if the hotel would accept workers with any kind of disability. They contacted me when their children expressed the desire to apply for a job in the hotel,” Daw Ma Ma Naing said.

The hotel accepts people with any kind of disabilities, as long as they are physically fit. Applicants visit all departments and sections to decide where they want to work after passing the interview.

“They still fit into society. But society has to provide a platform for their hidden talent,” said Daw Ma Ma Naing.

A steward who is mildly physically disabled was recently transferred to Sule Shangri-La's sister hotel in Dubai, a promotion, in recognition of his diligence and skills.

“I am very happy because I can play a role in a grand and internationally famous hotel,” Ko Aung Myo Kyaw, 28, who was born deaf and speech-impaired, wrote on a slip of paper.

Before starting at the hotel in 2013, he operated a small-scale slipper business at home, producing footwear to order. “But I couldn't earn enough money to support my family,” he wrote.

Disabled need not apply

Sule Shangri-La is opening its doors to disabled applicants who have long been excluded from employment

While he was scraping a living making slippers, the headmaster of the deaf school he had graduated from found him a job in the hotel. Now he is able to support his wife, who is able-bodied, and their baby.

“Before I started working here, I thought I would be the only deaf and speech-impaired employee, and I was worried. But when I was introduced to my workplace, I felt very happy to meet my colleagues,” he wrote.

His hard work quickly earned him a place at the hotel and he is now working as a commis in the cold kitchen.

One of his colleagues, Ko Thet Paing Soe, works in the hotel laundry. Though he had a wide range of jobs before joining Sule Shangri-La, including packing betel, sowing mushroom seeds and working in a restaurant, he could not earn enough money from any of them, and he felt embarrassed by having to wipe glasses in a restaurant.

“My co-workers are very kind and helpful. They treat me well and teach me the work. They always show willingness to work with me and I've made friends here. That's why I am very happy to work in this hotel,” Ko Thet Paing Soe wrote. “I am very motivated,” he added.

Laundry manager Ko Aung Hein, who trained Ko Thet Paing Soe, said, “We communicate in writing. He works harder than the others at any task I give him, though it's best if he concentrates on a single job at a time. I find him very dutiful, and he never wastes time at work. All the other staff treat him like a member of their family.”

Ko Wai La Kyi Win, who suffers from cerebral palsy, first worked on a casual basis at the hotel in 2012, but his hard work soon earned him a place in the human resources department. He is now working full-time as a service associate.

“When I first started working here, people couldn't grasp what I was saying but I kept on trying until they understood. It's all about my co-workers and senior staff because they have great patience with me. They've inspired me to rise to a higher position,” said Ko Wai La Kyi Win.

“One of our policies is to give equal opportunities to physically challenged applicants who want to pursue a career in the hospitality industry. All Shangri-La hotels follow this policy,” said Caroline Cheah, general manager of the hotel.

The hotel looks at the attitude of the applicants, she said, and are ready to train all who are willing to learn.

Speaking up to end discrimination

Young activist Mai Naomi Thang has devoted her career to changing the lives of women in the isolated region of Chin State

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AS the eldest of two daughters, Mai Naomi Thang has always felt unwanted by her parents.

“They wanted boys, so my mother was always unhappy and felt she had made a mistake,” she said.

According to Chin tradition, when Mai Naomi Thang and her sister marry they will be forced to live by the rules and customs of their husband's ethnic group and, with no sons to inherit, her parents' ethnic heritage will die out from the family.

The Chin, who live in the isolated, mountainous region of western Myanmar, believe that women are inferior to men and, as a result, women face discrimination throughout their lives. Chin women are unable to inherit property from their parents and face barriers to rights such as health and education. The Christian beliefs of most Chin reinforce this stigma.

As a respected teacher in his village, Mai Naomi Thang's father was adamant that his daughters follow in his footsteps and become

teachers. While she was studying at university, Mai Naomi Thang participated in the 2012 Chin Youth Forum, an event organised by Chin young people to discuss issues such as education, employment and human rights. Representatives of the forum, including Mai Naomi Thang, later attended the 2012 Myanmar Youth Forum in Yangon, where she learned about gender issues and became interested in women's rights.

To the disapproval of her parents, Mai Naomi Thang decided to stay in Yangon and pursue her interest in gender and public policy. When she told them she wasn't going to become a teacher her parents refused to support her financially, but she knew she had made the right decision.

“I knew that as a teacher I wouldn't be able to do anything to improve the lives of Chin women,” she said. “I told my parents I would stand on my own two feet.”

Mai Naomi Thang, 22, is currently studying for a Master's degree in community development studies at the Myanmar Institute of Theology. She also works for the Young Chin

Association, where she trains women on gender issues and campaigns on behalf of women in nine townships across Chin State. As a member of the Chin National Democratic Party, she is devoted to increasing awareness of gender issues and to the protection and promotion of issues related to Chin women.

“My only wish is that all women, including Chin national women, can have confidence and be educated,” said Mai Naomi Thang.

However, she has faced disapproval from many Chin people who want to preserve time-honoured customs.

“People believe these customs were made by God so, even if they are unfair, they don't want to change them,” she said. “Older people don't want to discuss the issue of Chin women being unable to receive inheritance as they think younger girls like me are destroying traditional culture.”

Mai Naomi Thang recalls an incident in which she spoke to a pastor about her work to improve the lives of Chin women. “He just laughed at me,” she said. “I cried when I saw



Mai Naomi Thang works for the Young Chin Association, campaigning on behalf of Chin women. Photo: Aung Htay Hlaing

him laughing. I said that if there is no improvement in the rights of Chin women, there won't be any improvement in Chin State.”

According to campaigners, discrimination against women goes beyond local beliefs and is entrenched in Chin law. In October, women's groups' representatives, including Mai Naomi Thang, wrote to the Chin State government to request amendments to the Chin Special Division Act, claiming that certain provisions in the 1948 act are outdated and oppress Chin women. They are yet to receive a response.

Mai Naomi Thang said she often feels discouraged but knows that if

she gives up, no one will take her place.

But she does believe things are changing.

“Some of the girls I speak to about gender awareness and women's rights were afraid to speak out at first. But now some of them have started speaking up and are now discussing these issues openly,” she said.

Even Mai Naomi Thang's family have started to show an interest, and her father recently contacted her to ask her about her campaign work.

“I was so happy that he was interested. I hope he will come to accept me soon.”

Meet Myanmar's movie music maker, Tin Win Hlaing

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HIS humility is characteristic. “Winning the Academy Award wasn’t my doing,” said pianist Tin Win Hlaing, winner of the Best Music Award at the recent Myanmar Academy Awards for *Kyel Sin Maw Kun*. “It was down to [director] Pangyi Soe Moe.” But despite being tipped to win a raft of awards, the only prize awarded to *Kyel Sin Maw Kun* was for Best Music.

Myanmar’s longest-performing musician of film soundtracks, Tin Win Hlaing is now approaching his 70th birthday. He started his musical career at 18, but last month’s academy award was his first.

Tin Win Hlaing first showed an interest in music when he was only three years old. His father was selling gramophone records and sewing machines. His company name was

“Freedom” and he exported vocal recordings to Germany.

“We had a Telefunken recorder at home that was worth K500. At that time, the basic salary was about K6, so most people would not have been able to afford something like that. Musicians who wanted to broadcast their performances on Myanmar national radio used to come to our house to record,” he said.

Tin Win Hlaing’s home was always filled with composers, singers and musicians. His first teacher was pianist Chit Swe, who was working for his father’s company as a singer.

“They taught me how to play various versions of different songs. They didn’t actually intend to teach me, they were just playing with me because I was a child. I remember Chit Swe was really surprised when I played different versions of a song on the piano the next day,” he said.

Tin Win Hlaing started playing professionally as a teenager studying at St Paul’s High School. In his spare

time, he worked with Chit Swe producing movie theme music.

“At that time there were no recording rooms, let alone computers,” he said. “The screen was a square of cloth, and musicians played live as they watched the action.”

Tin Win Hlaing continued playing movie background music with his teachers, AI’s Khin Maung and Ahlin Kar Kyaw Swar Shwe Pyi Aye, and got his first screen credit for *Myin San Chin The Hla Dawei* in 1973 at the age of 28. He has now performed musical scores for about 200 movies.

In 1990, Tin Win Hlaing decided he could no longer continue. “The producers wanted us to work harder but they didn’t want to pay us reasonable salaries. So I decided to stop working,” he said.

But 15 years later he was tinkling the ivories again in the 2005 movie *Mingalarbar*.

“I’m very choosy about the movies I write soundtracks for. *Kyel Sin Maw Kun* was only the second one



Tin Win Hlaing collects the Best Music Award at the Academy Awards last December. Photo: Aung Htay Hlaing

I worked on after going back to the industry,” he said.

In *Kyel Sin Maw Kun*, most of the music was taken from classic patriotic songs not widely known among young people. Tin Win Hlaing said it was not difficult to create the music for the movie because he knows so many of the classics by heart.

The director of *Kyel Sin Maw Kun*, Pangyi Soe Moe, said Tin Win Hlaing was the obvious choice when it came to playing the score. “He is the longest-acting creator of movie soundtracks, and I had no doubt that he should be the one to play the music for the movie,” he said. “My choice was right.”

What's on

ART

Jan 26-Mar 31 “Global City: Yangon’s Past, Present and Future” Exhibition of photographs capturing Yangon’s past, present and future. Yangon Heritage Trust, 1st floor, 22 Pansodan Street (lower block) 9am-5pm daily.

Jan 21-Feb 21 “Muted Consciousness.” An exhibition of black & white photographs, paintings and documents from the 1950s. TS1 Gallery, between Lanthit Jetty and Kaing Dan, Transit Shed 1, Oo-Pa-Sa Street 10am-6pm

Jan 23-27 “January Morning.” 100 paintings of scenes from Yangon and Bagan by 13 local artists. Think Art Gallery, 23 Nawadday Street, Dagon 9am-6pm

Jan 24-30 “Illusion.” Watercolour paintings by Nay San. Yangon Gallery, People’s Park, Ahlone Road, Dagon 10am-6pm

FILM

Start times at Mingalar (1, 2), Top Royal, Shae Shaung (1,2) and Nay Pyi Taw cinemas are 10am, noon, 2pm, 4pm, 6pm and 8pm.

Start times at Junction Square and Junction Maw Tin are 10am, 1pm and 4pm daily and 7pm and 9:30pm on Friday and Saturday.

Start times at Mingalar San Pya are 10am, 12:30pm, 3:30pm, 6:30pm and 9:30pm.

Nay Pyi Taw Cinema, near Sule Pagoda *Seventh Son*. Directed by Sergei Bodrov. Fantasy film.

As Above So Below. Directed by John Erick Dowdle. American horror film.

I Fine Thank You Love You. Directed by Mez Tharatorn. Thai comedy drama.

Mingalar Cinema 2, at Dagon Center 2, Myaynigone *Seventh Son*.

Shae Shaung Cinema, Sule Pagoda Road, Kyauktada *Taken 3*. Directed by Olivier Megaton. Action thriller film.

Night at the Museum: Secret of the Tomb. Directed by Shawn Levy. Adventure filled family film.

Junction Square Cineplex, Kamaryut *Spirit of Evil*. Directed by Oleg Stepchenko. Dark fantasy film.

Dinosaur Island. Directed by Matt Drummond. Science fiction adventure film.

JANUARY 26 - FEBRUARY 1

Got an event? List it in What’s On! whatsonmt@gmail.com

Junction Mawtin, Lanmadaw *Dinosaur Island*.

Mingalar San Pya Cineplex, Phone Gyi Street and Anawrahta, Lanmadaw *Taken 3*.
I Fine Thank You Love You.

MUSIC

Jan 26 Monday Blues. Mojo Bar, 135 Inya Road, Bahan, 9:30-11:30pm

Jan 30 Jazz and blues night. Gekko, 535 Merchant Street, Kyauktada 7pm

Jan 31 Orchestra for Myanmar. Local orchestras perform with British-German-Chinese violinist Sebastian See-Schierenberg. National Theatre, Myoma Kyaung Street, Dagon 7pm

MISC

Jan 7-Feb 28 Myanmar cultural show. An enchanting evening of Myanmar performing arts, taking you on a journey into the very heart of Myanmar history and culture. Sein Lann So Pyay Garden, Inya Road, Kamayut 7-9pm. Tickets US\$13-19

Jan 20-27 Space Week – promotion on books about space, planets, astronauts, space shuttles and even aliens. Bookworm Book Store, 2nd floor Waizayantar Orange Shopping Centre, Waizayantar Road, Thingangyun.

Jan 27 Gallery conversation and drinks. Pansodan Gallery, 289 Pansodan Street, Kyaukada, 7pm- late

Jan 30 Library talk, “The Writer at Work” with Dr Andrew Graham. Dr Graham is the son of a well-known novelist – Winston Graham – and will be speaking about his father’s books, and more generally on historical novels and writing. British Council Library, 78 Kanna Road 6pm

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Living Well in Myanmar

Helping women protect their hearts

CHRISTOPH GELSDORF, MD

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EVERY six months or so, I write an article about the importance of lifestyle in preventing disease. This is because medical interventions are typically more effective in preventing the onset of illness than treating illness itself. When it comes to long-term health, a patient's decision to change one of their day-to-day habits is better than any drug.

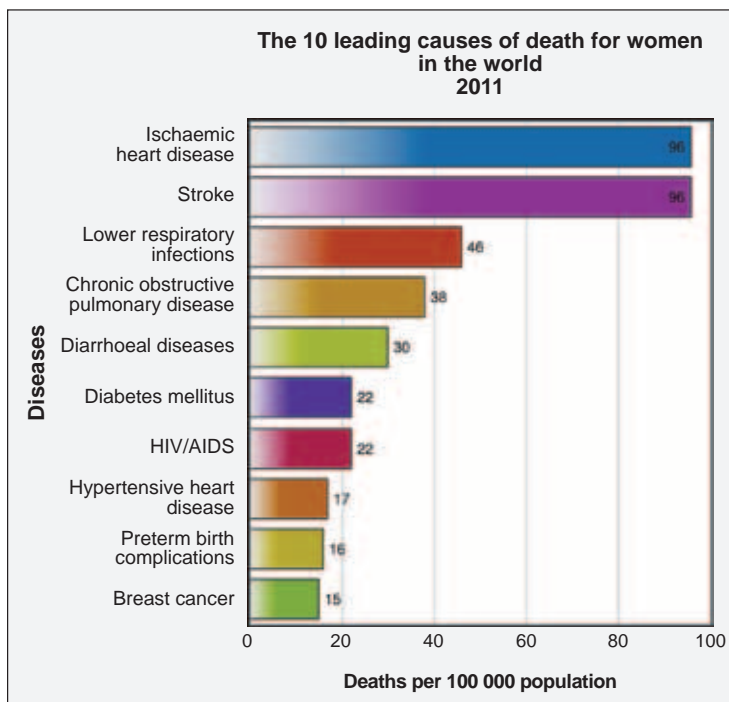
Medical research continues to support this premise. What if I told you that you, your mother, or your sister could reduce the odds of heart disease by 90 percent by following six recommendations for healthy-living? As a doctor, if I diagnose heart disease I certainly do not have any pills that can reduce the chance of a bad outcome by 90pc.

A significant study published this month in the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology* followed the habits of 90,000 nurses between 1991 and 2011. Researchers looked at six lifestyle factors:

- Not smoking
- Exercising 2.5 hours per week
- Maintaining a normal weight
- Watching less than seven hours of television per week
- Eating a healthy diet
- Drinking no more than around one alcoholic drink per day

After 20 years, the researchers found that coronary vascular disease – the most common heart problem – was absent among almost all women adhering to all six factors. Furthermore even women with established cardiac risk factors such as hypertension, high cholesterol or diabetes were found to be less likely to develop heart disease if they adhered to these healthy-lifestyle guidelines.

This study joins a growing family of analyses (some of which I've covered previously in *Living*



Source: World Health Organization

Well in Myanmar) that teach us how lifestyle influences all of the world's major longevity threats. The fact that these studies on prevention are increasingly showing up in the major medical journals is illustrative of how health promotion is becoming one of the leading disciplines in medical thinking. Now that we're becoming more certain of what people need to do to combat the biggest killers, the next frontier of research is learning how to get people exercising, eating well and not smoking.

The medical establishment has historically shown sex-bias in its notion that heart disease more commonly threatens the health of men. The typical heart attack victim is imagined to be a 68-year-old male who is overweight and smokes, and rushes into the emergency room clutching his chest and having difficulty breathing. As a result, many doctors and their female patients are not as assertive in looking out for the risk factors and symptoms of heart disease. The fact is that heart disease is also the number-one cause of death in women around the world and, therefore, studies such as

this one that provide research and recommendations specifically for women are important.

In Myanmar we face the dreaded "double burden" of disease. This means that while we continue to struggle with the big infectious diseases such as malaria, TB and HIV, we are simultaneously seeing an absolute rise in noncommunicable diseases that are driven by the lifestyle factors described above. Data published by the World Health Organization in 2014 estimated that 30pc of women in Myanmar are overweight. So, primary care doctors and public health officials face the double challenge of disease treatment and lifestyle promotion in a population that is largely experiencing both for the first time.

Christoph Gelsdorf is an American Board of Family Medicine physician who sees patients in Yangon and California (www.gelsdorfMD.com). He is a member of the General Practitioner Society of the Myanmar Medical Association. Reader thoughts and questions are welcomed.

Yangon to host third Myanmar International Fashion Week 2015

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THE third annual Myanmar International Fashion Week is to be launched on February 6 at Dagon City 1 in Yangon.

Organised by John Lwin (Star Event Production), the three-day event is being held to develop the talent of local designers and boost Myanmar's modelling industry.

Fashion lovers will view creations by well-known local designers including Mogok Pauk Pauk, May Myat Waso, Min Khant and Phyo Pyae, who will be collaborating with international designers to showcase their designs – worn by over 100 models from Yangon agency Stars & Models International along who will be joined by seven European models.

"I want to show that the local fashion and modelling industry has improved in recent years. Fashion is changing every year," said John Lwin. "The fashions will be modelled by local models as well as international models, so our local models will be able to learn from them," he added.

Both international and local fashion brands will feature at the event, which will include performances by DJ Thaw Thaw and dancers from the Star Int'l Dance Studio.

Myanmar International Fashion Week runs February 6 to 8 at the Dagon City 1 Gallery Show Room in Yangon. Free tickets are available at www.myanmarinternationalfashionweek.com

The Global Gossip



US actor Johnny Depp arrives for the UK premiere of the film *Mortdecai* in London on January 19. Photo:AFP/Leon Neal



Actress Gwyneth Paltrow attends the premiere of *Mortdecai* on January 21 at the TCL Chinese Theatre in Hollywood. Photo: AFP/Jason Kempin

LONDON

Topless page three returns to Britain's 'The Sun'

British tabloid *The Sun* published a photo of a winking topless model on January 22, shooting down reports that it had ended the controversial tradition that has featured in the newspaper since 1970.

Newspaper *The Times*, which like *The Sun* is part of billionaire media tycoon Rupert Murdoch's News UK group, reported on January 20 that the page three feature had been shelved and the news was welcomed by government ministers.

However, *The Sun* featured a photo of a bare-breasted blonde woman in its January 22 edition under the words "clarifications and corrections".

"Further to recent reports in all other media outlets, we would like to clarify that this is Page 3 and this is a picture of Nicole, 22, from Bournemouth," the photograph caption read.

"We would like to apologise on behalf of the print and broadcast journalists who have spent the last two days talking and writing about us."

The No More Page 3 campaign, which had triumphantly celebrated the apparent change earlier in the week as "a great day for people power", was forced to backtrack.

"It seems the fight might be back on. Thanks to @TheSunNewspaper for all the publicity they've given the campaign," it tweeted.

SWITZERLAND

Pharrell Williams heads up 'Live Earth' global climate concert

More than 100 artists will take part in a global "Live Earth" concert on June 18 to galvanise demands for climate action, former US vice president Al Gore said on January 21.

"We are going to have one event all over the world on all seven continents," he announced at the World Economic Forum in Davos.

Singer-songwriter Pharrell Williams, responsible for the planet-wide hit "Happy", will be the show's musical director.

Gore predicted a TV, radio and online audience of 2 billion for the extravaganza.

It will seek to ramp up pressure on governments over a UN climate pact, due to be concluded in Paris in December.

"This is the year of climate," Gore said during a presentation on global warming and its impacts.

"The Paris negotiation is crucial. If we're to ensure success, we need the political will."

The event will be organised by US producer Kevin Wall, who also took charge of the 2007 Live Earth concert to boost climate awareness.

Wall said the June 18 event would comprise concerts "in major stadiums".

"We start in China; Sydney, Australia; Rio de Janeiro; Cape Town, South Africa; New York City; in Paris, we're ending at the national stadium," he said.

"We have major, major artists, some of the biggest artists ever collected, with one message: 'Take climate action now,'" said Wall.

– AFP



Pharrell Williams speaks during a session of the World Economic Forum annual meeting on January 21 in Davos, Switzerland. Photo: AFP/Fabrice Coffrini



Models showcase locally designed fashions. Photo: Staff

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WEEKLY PREDICTIONS

JANUARY 26 - FEBRUARY 1, 2015

AUNG MYIN KYAW

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AQUARIUS | Jan 20 - Feb 18



Demonstrate goodwill this week, but don't try to get involved in the business of others. You will be faced with a stressful situation, but remember that anxiety is caused not by the event itself but by your response to it. Approach the week with a broad mind so that you don't miss opportunities that are coming your way.

PISCES | Feb 19 - March 20



Strive for excellence, as wealth and other blessings are on the horizon. You may be feeling unclear about the path ahead but focus on making wisdom your provision, for it is a more certain support than anything else you can acquire. Keep a cool head when dealing with an unexpected challenge toward the end of the week.

ARIES | Mar 21 - Apr 19



You will be required to do some problem-solving this week. Try to see the question from all sides without bias, for clarity will not be gained by approaching it only from one side. A positive romantic development is on the horizon but be wary of jumping in with both feet as hot love can turn cold very quickly.

TAURUS | Apr 20 - May 20



This week, do not be upset when things go wrong. Learn from the error and resolve not to repeat it. Someone close to you may try to challenge your self-worth but know that self-worth cannot be verified by others. Expand your opportunities by doing something new, and you will be rewarded handsomely.

GEMINI | May 21 - June 20



Opportunities for success are right in front of you, but by staying in the dark you are preventing yourself from seeing the light. Your past negative experiences may be stopping you from moving forward, but do not let what has happened before stop you from achieving your future goals. Do something radical this week to take you a step closer to your objective.

CANCER | June 21 - July 22



Take some time for self-reflection this week. Learning more about yourself and understanding your emotional needs can be a wonderful source of strength. A positive change in social relationships will bring new opportunities if you keep an open mind. Financially, you will see some reward around the 30th.

LEO | July 23 - Aug 22



This week, small decisions you make will have a profound impact on your day-to-day life as well as the long term. You may face difficulties in matters of love, but know that the key to a successful relationship is emotional understanding. Keep your mind open, as you will receive an important sign to guide you in the right direction.

VIRGO | Aug 23 - Sept 22



You may find yourself facing interference from many directions this week. Let clarity guide you, and try to keep a sense of perspective. Do not be afraid to try something new, as it will open up a whole new world of life-changing possibilities. Be wary of falling prey to greed, for no good will come of it.

LIBRA | Sept 23 - Oct 22



Concentrate on clear communication this week, especially when it comes to making financial agreements and investments. You will be rewarded for doing a good deed mid-week. Remaining optimistic will result in positive developments on the road to finding love, but be alert, as you may find what you are looking for when you least expect it. Take care to balance work and play.

SCORPIO | Oct 23 - Nov 21



Deal with challenges faced this week in the knowledge that they are nothing more than a chance to make improvements. As well as striving for positive changes in yourself, try to also focus on the wider society. Don't be enslaved by the power of lust as it cannot create love. Instead, focus on strengthening your relationships with those close to you.

SAGITTARIUS | Nov 22 - Dec 21



A disagreement with someone close to you may cause anxiety this week. Always speak your own truth, but act with grace and be prepared to listen to the other person's point of view. Creatively you may be feeling uninspired but focus on playing the long game to fulfill your creative talents.

CAPRICORN | Dec 22 - Jan 19



It's time to start laying the foundations for positive future changes. Get into shape. Approach your work with enthusiasm. Volunteer to help those around you. Take on heavy responsibilities with an optimistic outlook and you will find yourself on the path to success. Do not let doubt may creep in toward the end of the week.

PARK CITY

Sundance opens with post-Paris freedom vow

MICHAEL THURSTON

THE Sundance Film Festival opened on January 22 with movie legend Robert Redford proclaiming it a safe haven for freedom of expression, in the wake of the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks in Paris.

Redford said the deadly cartoonist shootings were a "wake-up event" for all who believe in the right to free speech, including filmmakers gathered for the 11-day independent cinema showcase.

The 78-year-old vowed that the festival, which features edgy and sometimes provocative films as opposed to more mainstream Hollywood movies, would be a "safe place" for all films, regardless who they offend.

"We believe in diversity, and freedom of expression is very much fundamental to us ... You see a lot of films here that are going to upset other people, but that is OK, it's diversity."

Of the Paris attacks, he said, "That was a sad event, it was a shocking event. I also have a hunch it was a bit of a wake-up event," adding that "to try to create a safe place for filmmakers ... is what I think Sundance represents."

Some 200 films will be screened at the festival - held annually in the Utah ski resort of Park City, and now in its 31st year - between January 22 and February 1.

The schedule kicked off with *What Happened, Miss Simone?* a biopic of jazz legend Nina Simone using previously unreleased footage to tell her

story of musical genius and tortured melancholy.

Also up on the first night were screenings of *How to Change the World*, about the birth of environmental giants Greenpeace, and a documentary about the tough life of a former star gymnast, *The Bronze*.

Future filmmaking stars are regularly born at Sundance, which Redford famously named after his character in the 1969 classic *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*.

Boys n the Hood and *Whiplash*, for example, which debuted at the film festival 12 months ago, both won Golden Globes this month and have multiple nominations for this year's Academy Awards.

On January 23, Redford made an appearance in front of the camera at the premiere screening of *A Walk in the Woods*, based on US travel writer Bill Bryson's book of that name.

The veteran actor said he originally wanted his *Butch Cassidy* co-star Paul Newman to join him in the movie, about a long-distance hike along America's Appalachian Trail.

He tried for years to get the project off the ground, but Newman's faltering health decided the matter. "He said, 'Look, Bob, at my age, I don't think I can do this.' So he had to let it go," Redford said. Newman died in 2008.

At Thursday's opening press conference Redford said that he had long had a rule that his own movies would not feature at Sundance - but he said festival director John Cooper defied him this year.

"He went out of bounds," he said.

- AFP

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Photo: Phyo

SNOW PEA SALAD WITH POMEGRANATE VINEGAR

- 6 servings
- 200g snow peas
 - 1 tablespoon pomegranate vinegar
 - 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
 - ¼ teaspoon brown sugar
 - Salt and ground black pepper

Blanch the snow peas in salted boiling water for 2-3 minutes. Do not cover the pan.

Refresh the peas by placing in ice water for a few minutes. Drain well and pat dry.

For the dressing, add the pomegranate vinegar, oil and sugar to a jar and shake well to combine.

Put the snow peas in a bowl and pour over the dressing. Toss well. Add salt and ground black pepper to taste.

THIS week, one of my friends asked me for party food suggestions for the birthday party he was hosting. I recommended a variety of finger foods, light meals and nibbles, one of which was meatballs. Most meat-eaters will have tried pork or beef meatballs but, for a variation on an old theme, I suggested he try these fried mutton meatballs to impress his guests.

While out shopping a few weeks ago, I came across pomegranate vinegar. Unlike apple cider vinegar, the pomegranate variety has a mildly sour taste but is not sweet. I had been planning to cook some red meat with it and this mutton recipe gave me the perfect opportunity to try it out.

I made this recipe for an

evening meal but the meatballs can also be kept in the fridge after cooking and make great fillers for the little one’s lunch box – or the big one’s, of course.

FRIED SPICED MUTTON BALLS WITH POMEGRANATE VINEGAR

- 6 servings
- 500g mutton mince
 - 1 tablespoon dried rosemary
 - 1 tablespoon cumin powder
 - 1 small onion (diced)
 - 2 large onions (sliced thinly)
 - 1 tablespoon mustard seeds
 - 2 cloves garlic (crushed)
 - 1/3 cup vegetable oil
 - 2 tablespoons pomegranate vinegar
 - 1 tablespoon roasted pine nuts or ¼ cup salted roasted cashew nuts
 - ½ teaspoon salt

Blot the mince with kitchen paper to absorb excess water from the meat. Mix the mince in a bowl with the garlic, diced onion, mustard seeds, rosemary and cumin powder to combine. Add salt to taste.

Roll the mixture into tablespoon-sized balls (approximately 3 centimetres in diameter) and refrigerate for 2 hours.

Add half of the vegetable oil to a wok and heat over a medium heat. When the oil is hot enough (dip the tip of a chopstick or spatula into the oil and, if it is ready, you will see bubbles form around it), fry the meatballs (in batches if necessary) until they are golden in colour. Transfer the meatballs onto a plate and set aside.

Leave around 3 tablespoons of oil in the wok and fry the sliced onions. When they start to turn golden in colour, add the meatballs to the wok along with the pomegranate vinegar. Next, add 2 tablespoons of water and cover the wok with a lid. Turn down the heat and simmer. When the water has evaporated (after about 4 minutes), turn the heat back up to medium. Add the roasted pine nuts or cashew nuts to the wok and stir well. Fry for 2 more minutes before serving.

Serve the meatballs with salad and couscous or in wraps for a quick lunchtime snack. Drizzle a chapatti with a generous amount of olive oil before sprinkling over *zatar* (Arabian spice mixture), hummus (chickpea paste) or tomato sauce. Layer over the meatballs along with salad leaves and sliced tomatoes and roll up into wraps.

Restaurant Review

A taste of Bollywood at Bawarchi

MONTANA J. MCGILLICUTTY

JUST a few days before the New Year, the Bangkok-based Bawarchi Indian restaurant chain announced a “splendor opening” of its first outlet in Myanmar’s “most commercially major city Yangon”.

The press statement promised “mouthwatering truly authentic” north Indian and Indian-Chinese

fusion cuisine, as well as “stunning ambience and service” – all adding up to a splendiferous venue sure to “impress a date”.

Always keen to find new ways to dazzle my wife, I thought it might be worth giving Bawarchi a try during one of our irregularly scheduled date nights.

As soon as we passed through the restaurant’s front door, I knew I had made the correct decision.

It wasn’t the ostentatious décor typical to middling-to-upscale Indian restaurants – in this case, tables laid with red napkins, orange and blue drinking glasses, and crystal vases holding plastic flowers; furniture upholstered with red, gold and black velvet fabric; and walls decorated with mirrors, wood carvings, elephant-shaped lamps and other attractive elements.

No, it wasn’t Bawarchi’s death-to-minimalism interior that supplied the point-scoring X-factor, but rather the Bollywood music playing over the speakers that helped set the evening’s cheery tone. My wife, as it happens, is a huge fan of Bollywood music and dance, and she could barely sit still or stop smiling throughout our dinner.

As for the service, it was a tad short of stunning, but just a tad. We were shown to our table, cloth napkins were unfolded onto our laps, menus were promptly opened and placed before us, and our orders were taken as soon as we were ready.

It was a bit disappointing that our Myanmar waiter could not seem to comprehend the words “naan” and “lassi” until we pointed to them on the menu, and even more disappointing that he returned and reported that the evening’s lassi batch was “too sour” for consumption.

But we refused to allow lassi-gate to ruin our evening, and as we mulled other beverage options, it was nice that our waiter volunteered the information that while the pineapple and watermelon juices were fresh, the orange juice came from a can. We both opted for pineapple juice (K3000), which was indeed fresh and frothy upon delivery.

We massively over-indulged in the food department, ordering chicken tikka masala (K6500); lahori paneer, described on the menu as a “splendid amalgamation of onion, bell pepper and cottage cheese, with spicy preparation” (K4000); and lasooni

Bawarchi Indian Restaurant

La Pyayt Wun Plaza, Level 1
Alan Paya Road, Dagon township, Yangon
Tel 09-2535-00002
Open 11am-11pm

Restaurant Rating
★★★★★

Food	8
Beverage	7
Value	7
Service	8
X-factor	8

palak, or “blanched spinach leaves cooked gently, tempered with garlic/ sesame” (K4000). We skipped rice in favour of two orders of curry-sopping garlic naan (K1500).

It was all quite splendid from the first to the last bite: Like magic, the naan was firm and crispy but managed at the same time to be flexible enough to scoop up delicious bits of masala’d chicken. The aromatic curries had been spiced and cooked to flavorsome perfection.

We devoured the food in an undisciplined flurry of gustatory chaos, leaving little extra to take home with us as we had planned. My wife happily admitted that the Bollywood music had given her the perfect excuse to burn a few calories even as we were stuffing our faces.



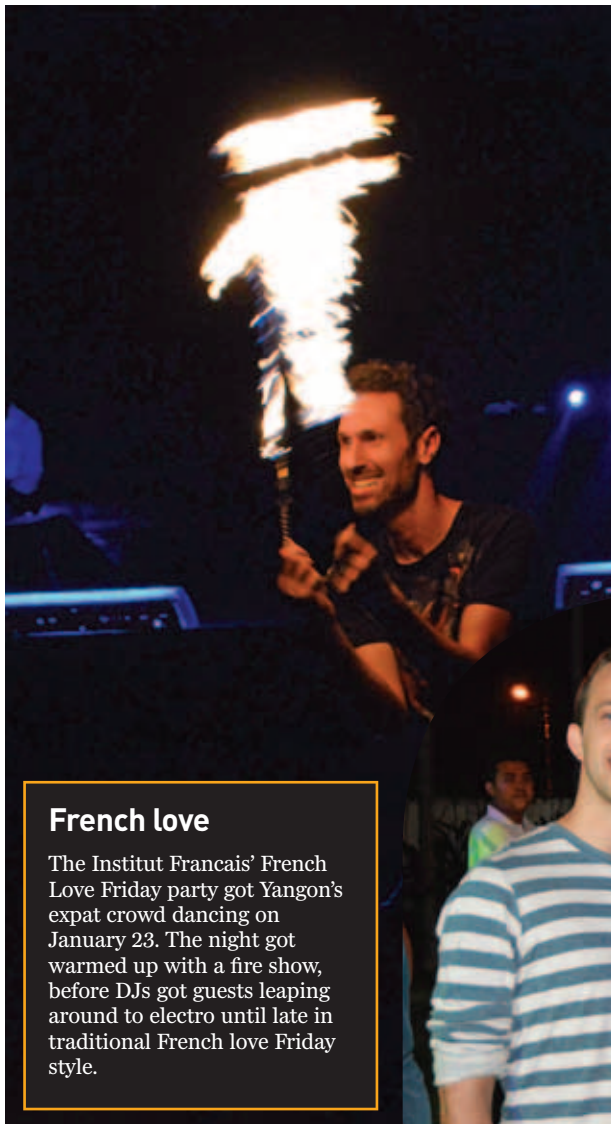
Photo: Montana J. McGillicutty



Carrie, Kristina and Kristin



Selim, Theresa, Maud, Matthew, Nadia and Ingrid



French love

The Institut Francais' French Love Friday party got Yangon's expat crowd dancing on January 23. The night got warmed up with a fire show, before DJs got guests leaping around to electro until late in traditional French love Friday style.



Demelza and Liam



Morley, Simon and Charles



Jesse and Georgia



Getting Yangon giggling

Comedians from around the world took to the mic on January 20 at the international comedy showcase hosted by the folks over at 50th Street bar. The show was headlined by Hong Kong International Comedy Competition finalist Anto Chan from Canada/Hong Kong.



Anto Chan



Gabrielle Paluch



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New beauty brand launches

Guests got glammed up for the launch of Lolane cosmetics at the Sedona Hotel on January 19.



Wunna Phyto, Pyae Tan Kun and Zwe Ko Tun



Zun Pwint Phyu

Easy on the eye

Guests mingled with models at the launch of Maple Model Management in North Dagon on January 17.



Daybreak in Myanmar

Photography buffs flocked to the British Council on January 19 to hear photographer Geoffrey Hiller speak about his time spent photographing Myanmar from 1987 to 2015 for his new book, *Daybreak in Myanmar*.



Geoffrey Hiller



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DOMESTIC FLIGHT SCHEDULES

YANGON TO NAY PYI TAW				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
FMI A1	1,2,3,4,5	7:15	8:15	
FMI B1	1,2,3,4,5	10:45	11:45	
FMI C1	1,2,3,4,5	17:00	18:00	
FMI A1	6	8:00	9:00	
FMI A1	7	15:30	16:30	

YANGON TO MANDALAY				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
Y5 775	Daily	6:00	7:10	
YH 909	2,3	6:00	7:40	
YH 917	5	6:00	7:40	
YJ 891	Daily	6:00	8:05	
K7 282	Daily	6:00	8:10	
YH 917	1,2,3,4,6,7	6:10	8:30	
YH 909	6	6:15	8:35	
W9 201	Daily	7:00	8:25	
YJ 811	3	7:00	8:25	
YH 835	1,7	7:00	8:40	
YH 826	3	7:00	8:40	
YH 831	4,6	7:00	8:40	
YH 829	5	7:00	11:05	
7Y 131	Daily	7:15	9:20	
K7 266	Daily	8:00	10:05	
8M 6603	4	9:00	10:10	
YJ 211	5,7	11:00	12:25	
YJ 601	6	11:00	12:25	
YJ 201	1,2,3	11:00	12:25	
YH 911	2	11:00	12:40	
YJ 761	1,2,4	11:00	12:55	
YJ 233	6	11:00	12:55	
YH 729	2,4,6	11:00	14:00	
YH 737	3,7	11:15	13:25	
YH 727	1	11:15	13:25	
W9 251	2,5	11:30	12:55	
YH 737	5	11:30	13:40	
7Y 941	1,3,4,6	11:45	13:10	
7Y 841	2,5	11:45	13:10	
7Y 943	7	11:45	13:10	
K7 822	4,7	12:30	16:55	
K7 622	1,3,5,7	13:00	14:25	
K7 226	2,4,6	13:30	14:55	
7Y 241	Daily	14:30	16:25	
YH 731	Daily	15:00	17:10	
Y5 234	Daily	15:20	16:30	
W9 211	4	15:30	16:55	

YANGON TO NYAUNG U				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
K7 282	Daily	6:00	7:20	
YJ 891	Daily	6:00	7:20	
YH 909	7	6:00	7:35	
YH 909	2,3	6:00	8:25	
YH 917	5	6:00	8:25	
YH 917	1,2,3,4,6,7	6:10	7:45	
YH 909	6	6:15	7:50	
YH 909	1,5,4	6:30	8:05	
YJ 881	4,7	6:30	7:50	
YJ 881	1,2,5,6	6:45	8:05	
K7 242	Daily	7:00	8:20	
7Y 131	Daily	7:15	8:35	
7Y 121	1	8:20	9:40	
Y5 649	Daily	10:30	11:50	
K7 264	Daily	14:30	16:40	
7Y 241	Daily	14:30	17:10	
YH 731	Daily	15:00	17:55	
W9 129	1,3,6	15:30	17:35	
W9 211	4	15:30	17:40	

YANGON TO MYITKYINA				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YH 835	1,7	7:00	10:05	
YH 826	3	7:00	10:05	
YH 831	4,6	7:00	10:05	
YH 829	5	7:00	9:40	
YJ 201	1,2,3	11:00	13:50	
W9 251	2,5	11:30	14:25	
7Y 841	5	11:45	14:35	
K7 622	1,3,5,7	13:00	15:55	

NAY PYI TAW TO YANGON				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
FMI A2	1,2,3,4,5	8:35	9:35	
FMI B2	1,2,3,4,5	13:30	14:30	
FMI C2	1,2,3,4,5	18:20	19:20	
FMI A2	6	10:00	11:00	
FMI A2	7	17:00	18:00	

MANDALAY TO YANGON				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YH 910	2,3	7:40	9:45	
Y5 233	Daily	7:50	9:00	
K7 283	Daily	8:25	11:30	
YJ 891	Daily	8:20	10:15	
YH 918	1,2,3,4,6,7	8:30	10:45	
YH 910	6	8:35	10:00	
W9 201	Daily	8:40	10:35	
YJ 811	3	8:40	10:05	
YH 918	5	9:10	11:05	
7Y 132	Daily	9:35	11:30	
K7 267	Daily	10:20	12:25	
YH 830	5	11:05	14:55	
YJ 761	4	13:10	17:00	
YH 836	1,7	13:20	14:45	
YH 832	4,6	13:20	14:45	
YH 827	3	13:20	14:45	
YJ 212	7	15:00	16:25	
YJ 212	5	15:00	17:05	
YJ 752	5	15:05	16:30	
YH 912	2	15:30	17:25	
YJ 202	2	15:30	16:55	
YJ 202	1,3	15:30	17:35	
YJ 602	6	15:40	17:35	
YJ 762	1,2	16:35	18:00	
7Y 242	Daily	16:40	18:45	
YH 728	1	16:45	18:10	
Y5 776	Daily	17:10	18:20	
W9 211	4	17:10	19:15	
K7 823	2,4,7	17:10	18:35	
YH 732	Daily	17:10	19:15	
8M 6604	4	17:20	18:30	
K7 227	2,4,6	17:20	18:45	
8M 903	1,2,4,5,7	17:20	18:30	
YH 738	3,7	17:25	18:50	
K7 623	1,3,5,7	17:40	19:05	
YH 738	5	17:40	19:05	
YH 730	2,4,6	17:45	19:10	
YJ 234	6	17:45	19:10	
W9 252	2,5	18:15	19:40	

NYAUNG U TO YANGON				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YJ 891	Daily	7:35	10:15	
YH 917	1,2,3,4,6,7	7:45	10:45	
YH 910	6	7:50	10:10	
YJ 881	4,7	8:05	10:10	
YH 910	1,4,5	8:05	10:10	
YJ 881	1,2,5,6	8:20	10:25	
YH 917	5	8:25	11:05	
YH 910	2,3	8:25	9:45	
K7 242	Daily	8:35	11:45	
7Y 131	Daily	8:50	11:30	
YH 910	7	9:25	10:45	
K7 283	Daily	10:10	11:30	
Y5 650	Daily	13:55	15:15	
YH 212	5	15:45	17:05	
YH 202	1,3	16:15	17:35	
K7 265	Daily	16:55	18:15	
7Y 242	Daily	17:25	18:45	
W9 129	1,3,6	17:50	19:10	
YH 732	Daily	17:55	19:15	

MYITKYINA TO YANGON				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YJ 202	2	14:05	16:55	
YJ 202	1,3	14:05	17:35	
YH 836	1,7	11:55	14:45	
YH 832	4,6	11:55	14:45	
YH 827	3	11:55	14:45	
YH 830	5	12:30	14:55	
K7 623	1,3,5,7	16:10	19:05	
YJ 234	6	16:20	19:10	
W9 252	2,5	16:45	19:40	

YANGON TO HEHO				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YJ 891	Daily	6:00	8:50	
K7 282	Daily	6:00	9:00	
YH 909	7	6:00	8:30	
YH 917	1,2,3,4,6,7	6:10	9:35	
YH 909	1,4,5	6:30	9:00	
YH 881	4,7	6:30	8:45	
YH 881	1,2,5,6	6:45	9:00	
K7 242	Daily	7:00	9:15	
W9 201	Daily	7:00	9:10	
7Y 131	Daily	7:15	10:05	
K7 266	Daily	8:00	9:15	
7Y 121	Daily	8:20	10:35	
Y5 649	Daily	10:30	12:45	
YH 505	1,2,3,4,5,6	10:30	11:55	
YJ 751	7	10:30	11:40	
YJ 751	3,5	10:45	11:55	
YJ 601	4	10:30	11:40	
YJ 761	1,2,4	11:00	12:10	
YH 727	1	11:15	12:40	
YH 737	3,7	11:15	12:40	
YH 737	5	11:30	12:55	
7Y 941	1,2,4,6	11:45	13:55	
K7 828	1,3,5	12:30	13:45	
K7 822	2,4,7	12:30	13:45	
K7 264	Daily	14:30	15:45	
7Y 241	Daily	14:30	15:40	
YH 731	Daily	15:00	16:25	
W9 129	1,3,6	15:30	16:40	

YANGON TO MYEIK				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
Y5 325	1,5	6:45	8:15	
7Y 531	1,5	7:00	8:38	
K7 319	2,4,6	7:00	9:05	
Y5 325	2	15:30	17:00	

YANGON TO SITTWE				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
W9 309	1,3,6	11:30	12:55	
K7 422	Daily	13:00	14:55	

YANGON TO THANDWE				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
K7 242	Daily	7:00	10:35	
YH 505	1,2,3,4,5,6	10:30	13:10	
W9 309	1,3,6	11:30	13:50	
7Y 122	Daily	12:15	13:05	
K7 422	Daily	13:00	13:35	
Y5 421	1,3,4,6	15:45	16:40	

YANGON TO DAWEI				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
K7 319	2,4,6	7:00	8:10	
7Y 531	1,5	7:00	7:48	

YANGON TO LASHIO				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YJ 751	7	10:30	12:45	
YJ 751	3,5	10:45	13:00	
YH 729	2,4,6	11:00	13:00	
7Y 741	1,5	11:30	13:18	
K7 828	1,3,5	12:30	14:50	

YANGON TO PUTAO				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YH 835	1,7	7:00	11:00	
YH 831	4,6	7:00	11:00	
YH 826	3	7:00	11:00	
W9 251	2,5	11:30	15:25	

YANGON TO CHIANG MAI				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
Y5 251	2,4,6	6:15	8:05	
7Y 305	1,5	11:00	12:50	
W9 9607	4,7	14:30	16:20	

HEHO TO YANGON			
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
YH 910	7	8:30	10:45
YJ 881	4,7	9:00	10:10
YH 910	1,4,5	9:00	10:10
YJ 891	Daily	9:05	10:15
K7 283	Daily	9:15	11:30
YJ 881	1,2,5,6	9:15	10:25
W9 201	Daily	9:25	10:35
K7 243	Daily	9:30	11:45
YH 918	1,2,3,4,6,7	9:35	10:45
YH 918	5	9:55	11:05
7Y 132	Daily	10:20	11:30
7Y 121	Daily	10:50	14:10
K7 267	Daily	11:10	12:25
YH 506	1,2,3,4,5,6	11:55	14:00
YJ 9601	4	12:10	17:30
YJ 752	5	14:20	16:30
YJ 762	4	15:50	17:00
YJ 762	1,2	15:50	18:00
7Y 241	Daily	15:55	18:45
K7 829	1,3,5	16:10	17:25
YH 728	1	16:00	18:10
YH 732	Daily	16:25	19:15
YJ 602	6	16:25	17:35
K7 264	Daily	16:30	18:15
YH 738	7,3	16:40	18:50
YH 738	5	16:55	19:05
YJ 752	7	16:45	17:55
W9 129	1,3,6	16:55	19:10
YJ 752	3	17:00	18:10

INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT SCHEDULES

YANGON TO BANGKOK			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
PG 706	Daily	6:05	8:20
8M 335	Daily	8:40	10:25
TG 304	Daily	9:50	11:45
PG 702	Daily	10:30	12:25
TG 302	Daily	14:50	16:45
PG 708	Daily	15:20	17:15
8M 331	Daily	16:30	18:15
PG 704	1,2,3,4,5,6	18:20	20:15
PG 704	7	19:30	21:45
Y5 237	Daily	19:00	20:50
TG 306	Daily	19:50	21:45

YANGON TO DON MUEANG			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
DD 4231	Daily	8:00	9:45
FD 252	Daily	8:30	10:20
FD 256	Daily	12:50	14:40
FD 254	Daily	17:35	19:25
FD 258	Daily	21:30	23:15
DD 4239	Daily	21:00	22:55

YANGON TO SINGAPORE			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
8M 231	Daily	8:00	12:25
Y5 2233	Daily	9:45	14:15
TR 2823	Daily	9:45	2:35
SQ 997	Daily	10:25	15:10
3K 582	Daily	11:45	16:20
MI 533	2,4,6	13:35	20:50
MI 519	Daily	16:40	21:15
3K 584	2,3,5	19:30	0:10+1

YANGON TO KUALA LUMPUR			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
AK 505	Daily	8:30	12:45
MH 741	Daily	12:15	16:30
8M 501	1,2,3,5,6	14:00	18:00
MH 743	Daily	16:00	20:15
AK 503	Daily	19:05	23:20

YANGON TO BEIJING			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
CA 906	3,5,7	23:50	0550+1

YANGON TO GUANGZHOU			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
8M 711	2,4,7	8:40	13:15
CZ 3056	3,6	11:35	15:55
CZ 3056	1,5	17:40	22:10

YANGON TO TAIPEI			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
CI 7916	Daily	10:50	16:10

YANGON TO KUNMING			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
CA 416	Daily	12:30	15:55
MU 2012	3	12:40	18:50
MU 2032	1,2,4,5,6,7	14:50	18:15

YANGON TO HANOI			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
VN 956	1,3,5,6,7	19:10	21:25

YANGON TO HO CHI MINH CITY			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
VN 942	2,4,7	14:25	17:05

YANGON TO DOHA			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
QR 919	1,4,6	7:55	11:40

YANGON TO SEOUL			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
OZ 770	4,7	0:50	8:50
KE 472	Daily	23:55	07:45+1

YANGON TO HONG KONG			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
KA 251	Daily	1:10	5:25

YANGON TO TOKYO			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
NH 914	Daily	22:10	06:45+1

YANGON TO DHAKA			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
BG 061	2	11:45	13:00
BG 061	5	19:45	21:00

YANGON TO INCHEON			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
PG 724	1,3,5,6	12:50	14:45
W9 607	4,7	14:30	16:20

YANGON TO GAYA			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
8M 601	3,5,6	10:30	11:50

MANDALAY TO BANGKOK			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
PG 710	Daily	14:15	16:40

MANDALAY TO SINGAPORE			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
MI 533	2,4,6	15:45	20:50
Y5 2233	1,2,4,5,6	7:50	14:15

MANDALAY TO DON MUEANG			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
FD 245	Daily	12:50	15:15

MANDALAY TO KUNMING			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
MU 2030	Daily	13:50	16:40

NAY PYI TAW TO BANGKOK			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
PG 722	1,2,3,4,5	19:45	22:45

BANGKOK TO YANGON			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
TG 303	Daily	8:00	8:45
PG 701	Daily	8:45	9:40
Y5 238	Daily	21:30	22:20
8M 336	Daily	11:55	12:40
TG 301	Daily	13:05	13:50
PG 707	Daily	13:40	14:30
PG 703	1,2,3,4,5,6	16:45	17:35
PG 703	7	17:55	18:45
TG 305	Daily	18:05	18:50
8M 332	Daily	19:20	20:05
PG 705	Daily	20:15	21:30

DON MUEANG TO YANGON			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
DD 4230	Daily	6:30	7:15
FD 251	Daily	7:15	8:00
FD 255	Daily	11:35	12:20
FD 253	Daily	16:20	17:05
FD 257	Daily	20:15	20:55
DD 4238	Daily	19:25	20:15

SINGAPORE TO YANGON			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
TR 2822	Daily	7:20	8:45
Y5 2234	Daily	7:20	8:50
SQ 998	Daily	7:55	9:20
3K 581	Daily	9:10	10:40
MI 533	2,4,6	11:30	12:45
8M 232	Daily	13:25	14:50
MI 518	Daily	14:20	15:45
3K 583	2,3,5	17:20	10:40

KUALA LUMPUR TO YANGON			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
AK 504	Daily	6:55	8:00
MH 740	Daily	10:05	11:15
8M 502	1,2,3,5,6	19:10	20:10
MH 742	Daily	13:55	15:05
AK 502	Daily	17:20	18:25

BEIJING TO YANGON			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
CA 905	3,5,7	19:30	22:50

GUANGZHOU TO YANGON			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
CZ 3055	3,6	8:35	10:35
CZ 3055	1,5	14:40	16:40
8M 712	2,4,7	14:15	15:50

TAIPEI TO YANGON			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
CI 7915	Daily	7:00	9:50

KUNMING TO YANGON			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
MU 2011	3	8:25	11:50
CA 415	Daily	11:10	11:30
MU 2031	1,2,4,5,6,7	13:30	14:00

HANOI TO YANGON			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
VN 957	1,3,5,6,7	16:40	18:10

HO CHI MINH CITY TO YANGON			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
VN 943	2,4,7	11:45	13:25

DOHA TO YANGON			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
QR 918	3,5,7	19:45	0459+1

SEOUL TO YANGON			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
KE 471	Daily	18:30	22:30
OZ 769	3,6	19:30	23:40

HONG KONG TO YANGON			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
KA 252	2,4,6	22:20	0015+1
KA 250	1,3,5,7	21:50	23:45

TOKYO TO YANGON			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
NH 913	Daily	11:45	17:15

DHAKA TO YANGON			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
BG 060	2	8:30	10:45
BG 060	5	16:30	18:45

INCHEON TO YANGON			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
PG 723	1,3,5,6	11:00	11:55
W9 608	4,7	17:20	18:10

GAYA TO YANGON			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
8M 602	3,5,6	12:50	16:00

BANGKOK TO MANDALAY			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
PG 709	Daily	12:05	13:25

SINGAPORE TO MANDALAY			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
Y5 2234	Daily	7:20	16:30
MI 533	2,4,6	11:30	14:50

DON MUEANG TO MANDALAY			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
FD 244	Daily	10:55	12:20

KUNMING TO MANDALAY			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
MU 2029	Daily	12:55	12:50

BANGKOK TO NAY PYI TAW			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
PG 721	1,2,3,4,5	17:15	19:15

International Airlines	
Air Asia (FD) Tel: 09254049991-3	
Air Bagan Ltd.(W9) Tel: 513322, 513422, 504888. Fax: 515102	
Air China (CA) Tel: 666112, 655882	
Air India Tel: 253597-98, 254758. Fax 248175	
Bangkok Airways (PG) Tel: 255122, 255265. Fax: 255119	
Biman Bangladesh Airlines (BG) Tel: 371867-68. Fax: 371869	
Condor (DE) Tel: 370836-39 [ext: 303]	
Dragonair (KA) Tel: 255320, 255321. Fax: 255329	
Golden Myanmar Airlines (Y5) Tel: 09400446999, 09400447999 Fax: 8604051	
Malaysia Airlines (MH) Tel: 387648, 241007 [ext: 120, 121, 122] Fax: 241124	
Myanmar Airways International (8M) Tel: 255260. Fax: 255305	
Nok Airline (DD) Tel: 255050, 255021. Fax: 255051	
Qatar Airways (QR) Tel: 379845, 379843, 379831. Fax: 379730	
Singapore Airlines (SQ) / Silk Air (MI) Tel: 255287-9. Fax: 255290	
Thai Airways (TG) Tel: 255491-6. Fax: 255223	
Tiger Airline (TR) Tel: 371383, 370836-39 [ext: 303]	
Vietnam Airlines (VN) Tel: 255066, 255088, 255068. Fax: 255086	

Airline Codes	
3K = Jet Star	
8M = Myanmar Airways International	
AK = Air Asia	
BG = Biman Bangladesh Airlines	
CA = Air China	
CI = China Airlines	
CZ = China Southern	
DD = Nok Airline	
FD = Air Asia	
KA = Dragonair	
KE = Korea Airlines	
MH = Malaysia Airlines	
MI = Silk Air	
MU = China Eastern Airlines	
NH = All Nippon Airways	
PG = Bangkok Airways	
QR = Qatar Airways	
SQ = Singapore Airways	
TG = Thai Airways	
TR = Tiger Airline	
VN = Vietnam Airline	
Y5 = Golden Myanmar Airlines	
Subject to change without notice	

Day	4 = Thursday
1 = Monday	5 = Friday
2 = Tuesday	6 = Saturday
3 = Wednesday	7 = Sunday

BEIJING



Chinese tourists are being warned not to misbehave when travelling abroad. Photo: Shutterstock

Beijing plans to ‘publicly shame’ unruly Chinese tourists

ADAM TAYLOR

CHINESE state media reported on January 16 that Beijing was taking new measures to combat a growing problem: the embarrassing behaviour of Chinese tourists when abroad.

After a spate of incidents involving Chinese nationals abroad, Li Jinzao, head of China’s National Tourism Administration, was reported to have said that records will be kept of problem tourists, with tourists ranked on the severity of their misbehaviour. These tourists will receive messages reminding them to behave when they land at their destination. If they disobey, they will be punished.

Li also announced a new tactic to improve tourists’ behaviour: public shaming. He encouraged Chinese tourists to take photos or video of bad behaviour they spot and pass it on to authorities. The evidence would then be publicised.

Over the past few years, the behavior of some Chinese citizens when abroad has become a source of ire for the nation. Online, many stories of Chinese tourists showing a lack of civility or behaving selfishly have become viral sensations: There was the teenager who defaced a 3,500-year-old temple in Egypt, for example, and the group of tourists who washed their feet at the Louvre in Paris.

Just last month, a group of Chinese passengers threw hot water on a flight attendant on an AirAsia flight from Thailand, prompting international outrage. The state newspaper *China Daily* said the tourists were “behaving like barbarians”. A few weeks later, Chinese passengers on a moving China Eastern flight opened the emergency doors after growing impatient about delays and a lack of ventilation.

For a rising superpower, such stories are apparently embarrassing, and the Chinese government has made a number of pleas for tourists to behave. In 2013, Chinese Vice Premier Wang Yang criticised the “uncivilized behaviour” of his fellow nationals when travelling abroad. Later that year, China adopted its first “tourism law”, which required tourists travelling abroad to

respect local customs. China’s state-run broadcaster, China Central Television, even aired a public service video that used “bad pandas” to show what to not do abroad.

The pleas reached the top levels of government. After reports that high-end resorts in the Maldives were removing kettles from their rooms in

Universal Crossword

Edited by Timothy E. Parker

GO THE DISTANCE By Perry E. Holcomb

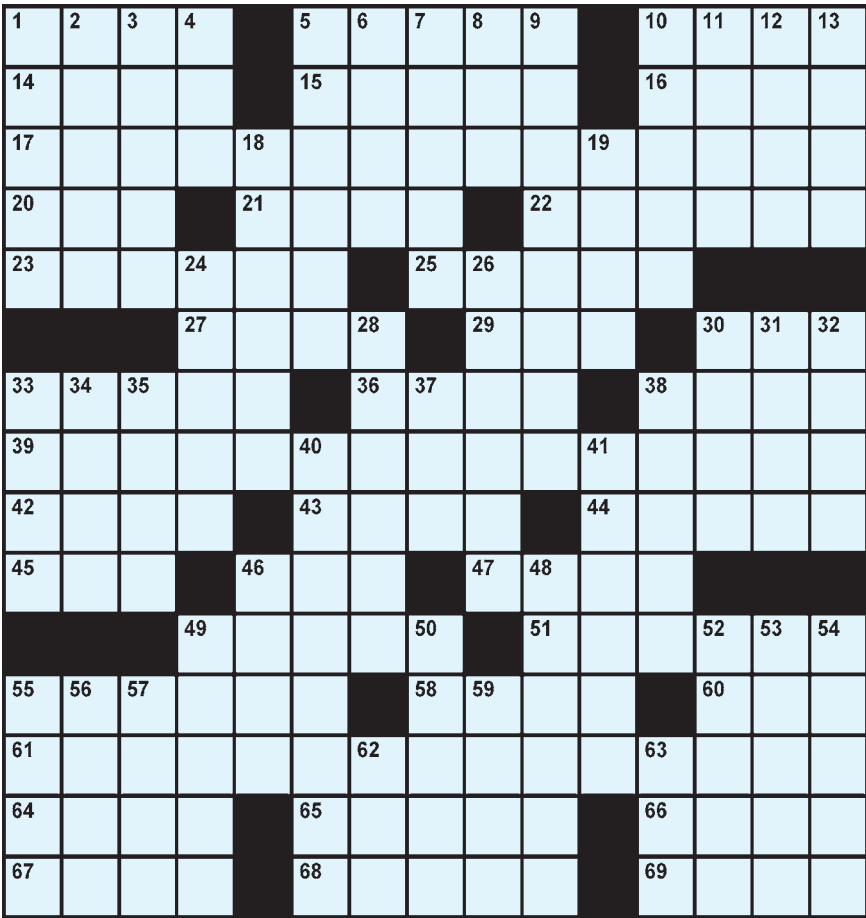
- ACROSS**
- 1 Landing gear part
 - 5 Supplemented
 - 10 Where the coin goes
 - 14 Hebrew month before Nisan
 - 15 Embarrassing turnout
 - 16 One for the books?
 - 17 Part of an audiophile's system
 - 20 Hawaiian paste
 - 21 Asian sauces
 - 22 Charlemagne's capital
 - 23 Horseshoer's workshop
 - 25 Third canonical hour
 - 27 Firefighter's need
 - 29 To the ____ degree
 - 30 Write-____ (some nominees)
 - 33 Change
 - 36 A smattering
 - 38 "Go away, feline!"
 - 39 Unbelievable tale
 - 42 Event in a prison movie
 - 43 St. Louis 11
 - 44 From this moment on
 - 45 Not evenly divisible by two
 - 46 Domino dot
 - 47 "Let the Sunshine In" musical
 - 49 What some crooks crack
 - 51 Microscope parts
 - 55 Mouse wheel function
 - 58 Solar panel unit
 - 60 Former figure skater Babilonia
 - 61 Vision problem
 - 64 In couch-potato mode
 - 65 "You can't be serious!"
 - 66 Aardvark's entree
 - 67 Golf platforms
 - 68 Things to strive for
 - 69 Flower in a pocketful?

- DOWN**
- 1 Packs down tightly
 - 2 A way of saying things

- 3 More than one spoke
- 4 Blow it
- 5 Aggravates
- 6 Item in a roundup (Var.)
- 7 Performs, old-style
- 8 "The Nanny" has three of them
- 9 Took off
- 10 Parker's need
- 11 Cardinal number (5th power of 10)
- 12 "S"-shaped molding
- 13 Gull cousin
- 18 On leave, for a swabbie

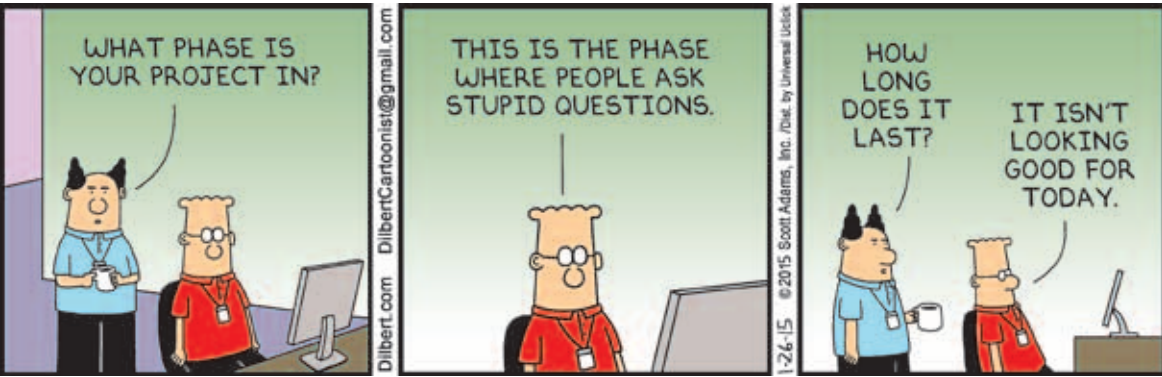
- 19 Word on a price tag
- 24 Burglary
- 26 Catch, as in a net
- 28 Make a jailbreak
- 30 Clickable image
- 31 DEA agent
- 32 Eyelid trouble
- 33 Spherical hairstyle
- 34 ____-back (easygoing)
- 35 Stepped heavily
- 37 Its symbol is an omega
- 38 Stem's opposite
- 40 Not worth considering
- 41 Gladiator's protection

- 46 Fast friends
- 48 Narrow backstreets
- 49 Sources of pain
- 50 Inverted "e"
- 52 Dictation taker, briefly
- 53 Bridge positions
- 54 Spacek of the screen
- 55 Huffy state
- 56 Throw in the towel
- 57 Abnormal breathing
- 59 Abbr. at the end of a list
- 62 Bit of baby talk
- 63 Toddler's midday event



DILBERT

BY SCOTT ADAMS



PEANUTS

BY CHARLES SCHULZ



CALVIN AND HOBBS

BY BILL WATTERSON

SUDOKU PACIFIC

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains every digit from 1 to 9 inclusively.



1/29

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

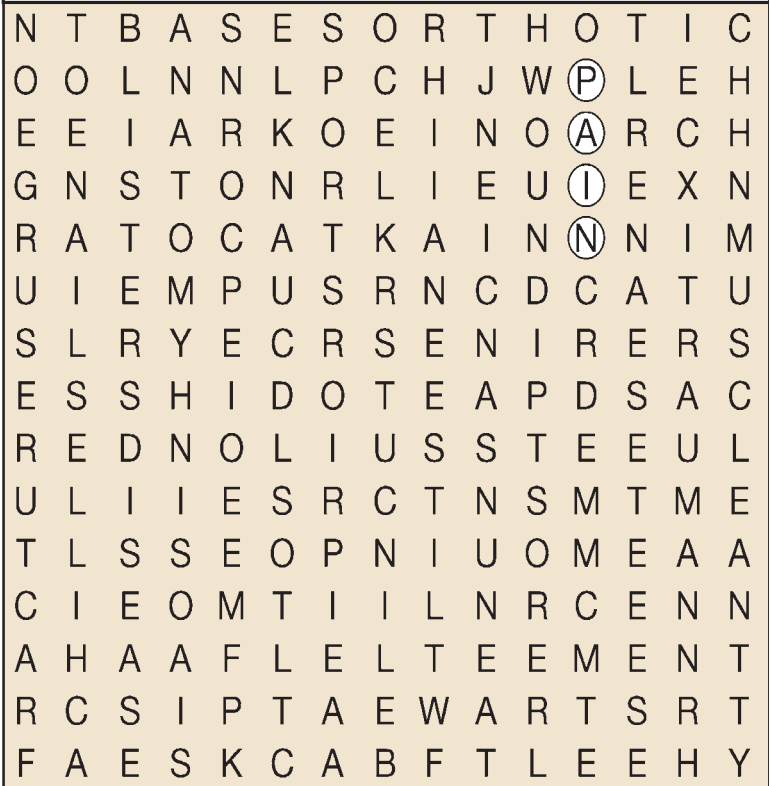
WONDERWORD

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD. The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

CHIROPODISTS AND PODIATRISTS

Solution: 9 letters



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1/26

Achilles, Anatomy, Ankle, Arch, Assessment, Back, Blisters, Calluses, Clean, Clinic, Corns, Diet, Disease, Feet, Fractures, Heel, Help, Hospital, Insoles, Joints, Medical, Medicine, Muscle, Neuroma, Orthotic, Pain, Reconstruction, Science, Skin, Soft, Splints, Sports, Sprain, Surgeon, Therapy, Toenails, Trauma, Treatment, Warts, Wound

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PUZZLE SOLUTIONS



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The Essentials

EMBASSIES Australia 88, Strand Road, Yangon. Tel : 251810, 251797, 251798. Bangladesh 11-B, Than Lwin Road, Yangon. Tel: 515275, 526144, email: bdootygn@mptmail.net.mm Brazil 56, Pyay Road, 6 th mile, Hlaing Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 507225, 507251. email: Administ. yangon@tamaraty.gov.br. Brunei 17, Kanbawza Avenue, Golden Velly (1), Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 566985, 503978. email: bruneiemb@bruneiemb.com.mm Cambodia 25 (3B/4B), New University Avenue Road, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 549609, 540964. email: RECYANGON @mptmail.net.mm Canada 9 th Floor, Centerpoint Towers, 65 Sule Pagoda Road, Yangon, Tel : 01-384805 , Fax :01 384806, Email : yngon@international.gc.ca China 1, Pyidaungsu Yeiktha Road, Yangon. Tel: 221280, 221281. Denmark , No.7, Pyi Thu St, Pyay Rd, 7 Miles, Mayangone Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 01 – 9669520 – 17. Egypt 81, Pyidaungsu Yeiktha Road, Yangon. Tel: 222886, 222887, Egyptembassy86@gmail.com France 102, Pyidaungsu Yeiktha Road, Yangon. Tel: 212178, 212520, email: ambaf rance. rangoun@diplomatie.fr Germany 9, Bogyoke Aung San Museum Road, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 548951, 548952, email: info@rangun. diplo.de India 545-547, Merchant St, Yangon. Tel: 391219, 388412, email:indiaembassy @mptmail.net.mm Indonesia 100, Pyidaungsu Yeiktha Rd, Yangon. Tel: 254465, 254469, email: kukygn @indonesia.com. mm Israel 15, Khabauing Street, Hlaing Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 515115, fax: 515116, email: info@yangon.mfa.gov.il Italy 3, Inya Myaing Road, Golden Valley, Yangon. Tel: 527100, 527101, fax: 514565, email: ambyang. mail@esteri.it Japan 100, Natmauk Rd, Yangon. Tel: 549644-8, 540399, 540400, 540411, 545988, fax: 549643 Kuwait 62-B, Shwe Taung Kyar St, Bahan Tsp. Tel : 01-230-9542, 230-9543. Fax : 01-230-5836. Laos 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, email: mwkyangon@mptmail.net.mm Nepal 16, Natmauk Yeiktha, Yangon. Tel: 545880, 557168, fax: 549803, email: nepemb @mptmail.net.mm Norway , No.7, Pyi Thu St, Pyay Rd, 7 Miles, Mayangone Tsp,Yangon. Tel: 01 – 9669520 – 17 Fax – 01- 9669516 New Zealand No. 43/C, Inya Myaing Rd, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel : 01-2306046-9 Fax : 01-2305805 Netherlands No. 43/C, Inya Myaing Rd, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel : 01-2305805 North Korea 77C, Shin Saw Pu Rd, Sanchaung Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 512642, 510205 Pakistan A-4, diplomatic Quarters, Pyay Rd, Yangon. Tel: 222881 (Chancery Exchange) Philippines 50, Sayasan Rd, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 558149-151,Email: p.e. yangon@gmail.com Saudi Arabia No.6/S, Inya Yeiktha St, 10 th Qtr, Mayangone Tsp, Yangon, Tel: (951) 652-344, 652-344, Fax: (951) 657-983 Russia 38, Sagawa Rd, Yangon. Tel: 241955, 254161, Serbia No. 114-A, Inya Rd, P.O.Box No. 943, Yangon. Tel: 515282, 515283, email: serbemb @ yangon.net.mm Singapore 238, Dhamazedi Road, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 559001, email: singemb _ygn@_sgmfa.gov.sg South Korea 97 University Avenue, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 527142-4, 515190, fax: 513286, email: myanmar@mfat.go.kr Sri Lanka 34 Taw Win Rd, Yangon. Tel: 222812, Switzerland No 11, Kabaung Lane, 5 ½ mile, Pyay Rd, Hlaing Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 534754, 507089. Thailand 94 Pyay Rd, Dagon Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 226721, 226728, 226824 Turkey 19AB, Kan Yeik Thar St, Mayangone Tsp,Yangon. Tel : 662992, Fax : 661365 United Kingdom 80 Strand Rd, Yangon. Tel: 370867, 380322, 371852, 371853, 256438, United States of America 110, University Avenue, Kamayut Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 536509, 535756, Fax: 650306 Vietnam Bldg-72, Thanlwin Rd, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 511305 UNITED NATIONS ILO Liaison 1-A, Kanbae (Thitsar Rd), Yankin Tsp, Tel : 01-566538, 566539 IOM 318 (A) Ahlone Rd, Dagon Tsp, Yangon.Tel – 01-210588, 09 73236679, 0973236680, Email- iomyangon@iom.int UNAIDS 137/1, Thaw Wun Rd, Kamayut Tsp. Tel : 534498, 504832 UNDCP 11-A, Malikha St, Mayangone tsp. Tel: 666903, 664539. 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. UNIAP Rm: 1202, 12 Fl, Traders Hotel. Tel: 254852, 254853. UNIC 6, Natmauk St., Bahan, tel: 52910~19 UNICEF 14~15 Flr, Traders Hotel. P.O. Box 1435, Kyauktada. Tel: 375527~32, unicef.yangon@unicef. org. UNODC 11-A, Malikha Rd., Ward 7, Mayangone. tel: 01-9666903, 9660556, 9660538, 9660398. email: fo.myanmar@unodc.org UNOPS 120/0, Pyi Thu Lane, 7 Miles, Mayangone Tsp. Tel: 951-657281~7. Fax: 657279. UNRC 6, Natmauk Rd, P.O. Box 650, TMWE Tel: 542911~19, 292637 (Resident Coordinator), WFP 5 Kan Baw Za St, Shwe Taung Kyar, (Golden Valley), Bahan Tsp. Tel : 2305971~6 WHO No. 2, Pyay Rd, 7 Mile, Mayangone Tsp, Tel : 650405-6, 650416, 654386-90. ASEAN Coordinating Of. for the ASEAN Humanitarian Task Force, 79, Taw Win st, Dagon Tsp. Tel: 225258. FAO Myanma Agriculture Service Insein Rd, Insein. tel: 641672, 641673.	
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For more information about these listings, Please Contact - classified.mcm@gmail.com

Emergency Numbers

Ambulance ☎tel: 295133. Fire ☎tel: 191, 252011, 252022. Police emergency ☎tel: 199. Police headquarters ☎tel: 282541, 284764. 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. HOSPITALS 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 POST OFFICE General Post Office 39, Bo Aung Kyaw St. (near British Council Library). ☎tel: 285499. INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT Yangon International Airport ☎tel: 662811. YANGON PORT Shipping (Coastal vessels) ☎tel: 382722 RAILWAYS Railways information ☎tel: 274027, 202175-8.	
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General Listing

ACCOMMODATION- HOTELS

**ASIA PLAZA HOTEL**
YANGON
No. 277, Bogyoke Aung San Road, Corner of 38th Street, Kyauktada Township, Yangon, Myanmar.
Tel : (951) 391070, 391071.
Reservation@391070 (Ext) 1910, 106.
Fax : (951) 391375. Email : hotelasiaplaza@gmail.com

**BEST WESTERN**
Green Hill Hotel
No. 12, Pho Sein Road, Tamwe Township, Yangon
Tel : (95-1) 209299, 209300, 209343 Fax : (95-1) 209344
bestwestern.com/
greenhillhotelyangon.com

**Clover hotel**
No.7A, Wingabar Road, Bahan Tsp, Yangon.
Tel : (951) 546313, 430245. 09-731-77781~4.
Fax : (01) 546313.
www.cloverhotel.asia.
info@cloverhotel.asia

Clover Hotel City Center
No. 217, 32nd Street (Upper Block), Pabedan Tsp, Yangon, Myanmar.
Tel : 377720, Fax : 377722
www.clovercitycenter.asia
Clover Hotel City Center Plus
No. 229, 32nd Street (Upper Block), Pabedan Tsp, Yangon, Myanmar.
Tel : 377975, Fax : 377974
www.clovercitycenterplus.asia

**Eden Palace Hotel**
No. [356/366], Kyaukkasan Rd, Tamwe Township, Yangon, Myanmar.
Ph: 542826, Fax: 545650
Email: reservation@edenpalacehotel.com

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email: contact@horizonmyanmar.com

International Montessori Myanmar
English Education Centre Nursery - Primary (15 months - 12 years)
55 (B), Po Sein Road, Bahan Township.
Tel : (951) 546097, 546761.
Email: imm.myn@gmail.com

KINGS
No.695, Mahabandoola Road, (Between 19th & Sint Oh Dan Street), Latha Township, Yangon.
Ph: 01-395816, 396817

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American Curriculum.
117, Thumingalar Housing Thingangyun Tsp Yangon, Myanmar.
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Fax : 95 1 578604
Website : www.yismyanmar.com

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COMMUNITY Partners International, Yangon office relocated to the following address- No. (12/B), Hnin Si Lane, Parami Road, Chawdwin gone, Yankin Township, Yangon, Myanmar. Ph: + 95 1 657909

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Employment

UN Positions

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Ingo Position

(1)**LEGAL ADVISOR** (Nay Pyi Taw / Yangon) 1 Post (2)**Logistics Development Officer** (NayPyiTaw) 1 Post (3) **Restoring Family Link (RFL) Coordinator** (Nay Pyi Taw / Yangon) 1 Post. Please send application letter, CV & related documents to Myanmar Red Cross Society (Head Office) Yazatingaha Rd, Dekkhinathiri, NayPyiTaw. Ormrchshrrcruitment@gmail.com www.Myanmarredcrosssociety.org

MYANMAR Red Cross Society is seeking (1) **Resorting Family Links Officer** 1 post in Nay Pyi Taw/ Yangon : Relevant University Degree or other relevant area. Well developed computer skills, (English & Myanmar). (2)**Bench Worker** 1 post in Hpa-an : High school level. (3) **Field Assistant** 1 post in Nansan : Minimum high school level. Excellent knowledge of local language such as Shan, Pa Oh is highly desirable. Red Cross Volunteers are preferable. Please send application letter, CV & related documents to Myanmar Red Cross Society Head Office, Yazathingaha Rd, Dekkhinathiri, NayPyiTaw. Or mrchshrrcruitment@gmail.com, Closing date: 30-1-2015.

(1)**COMMUNICATION OFFICER** (NayPyiTaw) 1 Post. (2)**Program Coordinator** (NayPyiTaw/Yangon) 1 Post (2)**Logistics Officer** (Myitkyina) - 1 Post. Please send application letter, CV & related documents to Myanmar Red Cross Society (Head Office) Yazatingaha Rd, Dekkhinathiri, NayPyiTaw. Ormrchshrrcruitment@gmail.com www.myanmarredcrosssociety.org

MYANMAR Red Cross Society is seeking (1)

Admin Assistant 1 post in Yangon : High school & professional education or technical diploma. 2 years experience. Proven computer skills in both Myanmar & English. (2) **Monitoring & Evaluation Officer** (Child Protection) -1 post in Nay Pyi Taw : University Degree or advanced education. Effective both Myanmar & English skills. Effective computer knowledge. (3) **Dissemination Officer** - 1 Post in Nay Pyi Taw/ Yangon: University degree & Diploma related to the position. Good computer literacy. Red Cross Volunteers are preferable. Please send application letter, CV & related documents to Myanmar Red Cross Society Head Office, Yazathingaha Rd, Dekkhinathiri, NayPyiTaw. Or mrchshrrcruitment@gmail.com, Closing date: 26-1-2015.

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(1)**ADMIN Assistant** (Ygn) 1 post (2)**M & E Officer** (Taunggyi) 1 post. Please send application letter, CV & related documents to Myanmar Red Cross Society (Head Office) Yazatingaha Rd, Dekkhinathiri, NayPyiTaw. Ormrchshrrcruitment@gmail.com www.myanmarredcrosssociety.org

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to send Curriculum Vitae with updated relevant educational certificates showing highest level of educational attainment to Air France - KLM Office(Yangon) : Rm 404-405, 4 Flr, La Pyayt Wun Plaza, 37, Alanpya Phayar Rd, Dagon Township, Yangon. Ph: 377 903, 377 905.no later than 9am-16pm, Friday, 28 Jan 2015

ENGLISH speaking & writing staff for English magazine. cnucontents@hanmail.net ph: 09-4500-65916

GYMBOREE PLAY & Music is seeking **Marketing** : at least 1 year experience, Good English speaking, Basic computer skill, Good character & responsibility. Job Details: to initiative business development activities. Conduct market research Contacting prospects, negotiation and clients visit. Job Location: Pearl Condo, Kabar Aye Pagoda Rd, Yangon. Type of Employment: Full time. JAbout the company: Gymboree Play & Music is the world's leading parent-child interactive play, music and arts program for children ages newborn to five years. Address : Block C, Pearl Condo, 2 Flr, Bahan tsp. Ph: 09-259-999113.

EXO TRAVEL is seeking (1)**French Speaking Travel Consultant** : 2 years experience in Tourism Industry or Related field, Pro-active, team spirit, good organisational & problem solving skill, Strong sales & customer service focus, Possess computer proficiency : MS office, Excellent command of written & spoken in French. (2) **English Speaking Travel Consultant** : 2 years experience, Pro-active & Team spirit, good organizational and problem solving skill, Excellent interpersonal skills & communication skills, Strong sales & customer service focus, Possess computer proficiency. Good communication in English. (Only those with a genuine interest in joining a professional travel company for long-term commitment need apply.). Please send a detailed resume mentioning the reason of leaving and attached recent photo and other relevant documents to HR Manager at memecho@exotravel.com.

GOLDEN HILL Tower is seeking **F&B Manager** - M/F 1 post : Proficient in English four skills. Proven experience using computers especially Office Application. A university degree holder. 2-3 years experience. Excellent interpersonal & communication skills. Able to work under pressure. Commencing Salary -US\$600 Please submit to HR Dept of

Golden Hill Tower No. 24-26, KabaAye Pagoda Rd, Bahan Tsp

GOLDEN HILL Tower is seeking **Bell Driver** - M 1 post : Proficient in English conversational skills. Skillful at driving and must be valid Driving License in hand. Matriculation passed and 1-2 years experience is required. Please submit to HR Dept of Golden Hill Tower No. 24-26, Kaba Aye Pagoda Rd, Bahan Tsp, not later than 31st January 2015.

AUNG Chan Tha Trading Co., Ltd. is seeking (1) **Sales Executive** - M 5 Posts : Any graduate (More Preferable BE or B Tech (Mechanical). 3 years experience. Age 25-30. (2)**Sales Engineer** - M/F 10 Post : Any graduate (More Preferable A.G.T.I or B Tech). Age 20-25. (3) **Engineer Trainee** - M 10 Posts : BE, B Tech or AGTI (Fresh graduate). Age 20-25. (4)**Office Driver** - M 2 Posts : 5 years experience. Kha - valid driving license. 30-40 years. Interested applicants are requested to mail covering letter, curriculum vitae, 2 passport photo & photocopies of the graduation certificates, national registration card, labor registration card, police clearance, household census list to HR Manager, Aung chan tha Trading Co., Ltd. 54 A, Kaba Aye Pagoda Rd, Near Nawaday Intersection, Mayangone, Yangon within 2 weeks.

BULGOGI BROTHERS Korean BBQ Restaurant is seeking (1)**Kitchen Staff** - M/F 15 posts (2) **Service Staff** - M/F 15 posts (3)**Cashier** - F 2 posts (4)**Driver** - M 1 post. All post have basic English and work experience in similar field. No.135/5, Mawyawaddy Lane, 8.5 Mile, Mayangone, Yangon. Ph: 01-667061, 09-796-307128, 09-730-90465. Email: bulgogibrothers.myanmar@gmail.com

MACHINERY & Solutions Co.,Ltd is seeking (1) **Project Manager (Government & Foreign Investment Project)** -Any University Graduate with MBA. Min: 5 years experience in Engineering Field. Age 35 ~ 45. (2)**Logistics Manager** - 3 years experience in Logistics/ Freight Forwarding Field. Well conversant in English. (3) **Business Development Executive** - BBA or B.A (English). Age 21 & above. (4) **Management Trainee** - Any engineering graduate. Fresh graduate are encourage to apply. (5)**Project/ Proposal Engineer (Mechanical/ Electrical/ Petroleum/ Electronic)** - Any engineering graduate or technical diploma holder. Min: 1 year experience in engineering field. (6) **Site & QS Engineer (Civil)** - AGTI or BE (Civil). Min:

1 year experience in construction industry. (7)**Jnr. Geologist** - B.Sc (Geology) Graduate. Ability to learn independently. (8)**Accountant** - Any graduate with LCCI Level 3 Holder. 1 year experience. Experience or Training in Computerized Accounting Software. (9)**Finance Manager** - 5 years experience in Finance field. ACCA, CP/ CPA qualification. (10) **Engineer/ Technician (Valves Repair Service)** - Experience in Valves Repair Service. Prefer with overseas experience. (11)**Travel Coordinator** - Any graduate with Travel & Tour Experience. Mainly, Fluent in English. (4 skills). Age 20 ~ 40. (12)**Drivers** - 3 years driving experience. Accommodation can be provided. All are local positions only and competitive salary shall be provided to relevant personnel with experience. Please send complete resume with expected salary to hr.mnsenergy@gmail.com, by 15th February, 2015

HORIZON International School is looking for (1).**Translator** - M/F 1 post (for Shukhinthar Campus): Age under 30, Bachelor's Degree in any field or Diploma in the relevant field, Sufficient work experience in the related field, Good command of translation and typing skill (English to Myanmar and Myanmar to English) Pleasant and helpful personality. Interested candidates can come

for between the office hours. Please bring your CV along with a copy of your credentials (NRC copy, House whole list, Police Recommendation Letter, Township Recommendation letter etc. to 235, Shukintha Myo Patt Rd, Taketa, Yangon. Ph: 450396, 450397, Application forms can be submitted from 8:00am to 4:00pm until February 07, 2015.

YANGON International School (YIS) is looking for candidates for the following position. **Teacher Assistant** Requirements: A bachelor degree holder, good command of both English and Myanmar languages and ability to work with expat teachers. Please send a CV and a brief cover letter to twphyo@yismyanmar.com or YIS, 117, Thumngalar Lannmagyi, Thumngalar Housing, Thingangyun Township, Yangon. Ph: 01 578171, 01 573149. The position is open until filled.

OUR ORGANISATION is a leading provider of Project Engineering and Engineering Supply based in Myanmar. We are in collaboration and develop joint venture with MNCs in Power, Real Estate, Dairy Farm and Agriculture Sector is seeking (1) **Project Planning Manager** (Special Project) (3)**Business Development Manager** (4)**Personal Assistant to CEO** (Male Only) (5) **Operation Manager** (Trading / Power Industry) (6)**Project Sales Manager**. Please

send CV & cover letter, including your salary expectations, to Email- hr.stcl@supreme-companies.com. You can see more details of Job Descriptions from www.myanmarjobsdb.com, www.myanmar-network.net, www.work.com.mm. The successful candidates can expect high competitive salary and benefits.

WE are looking for **tuition teacher** Subject: Mathematics (International School Syllabus), Language: Must be teach in English. Standard: Grade 9 (Year 10), Ph: 556899, 553759, 543376. Daw Khin Myo Myat: 094210-26116.

WE are seeking **Admin Staff** : Female 1 Post, Any Degree Holder, Japanese speaking is preferable, English speaking is also OK, Good computer proficiency, Able to work independently with high integrity. Interested Candidates can able to send the email to myatthazin.fujita@gmail.com or sent the CV to No (37), Rm (810) 8th Flr, La Pyayt Wun Plaza, Alan Pya Pagoda Rd, Dagon Tsp, Ph: 373634.

LOLC Myanmar Microfinance Company Ltd is seeking **HR Manager** 1 Post in Yangon Office: Possess minimum of 2 - 3 years of managerial level experience. Age 30 to 50. A degree in HR or any equivalent professional qualification is a must. A strong competency in spoken and written English is essential. Interested and qualified candidates are to submit a cover letter & CV to

Careers@lolcmyanmar.com,

WE are one of most promising construction equipment companies in Myanmar, seeking (1) **Sales Executive** - M 5 Posts, Any graduate (More Preferable BE or BTech (Mechanical), 3 years experience. Age 25-30. (2)**Sales Engineer** - M/F 10 Post : Any graduate (More Preferable A.G.T.I or BTech). Age 20-25. (3) **Engineer Trainee** - M 5 Posts : BE, BTech or AGTI (Fresh Graduate). Age 20-25. Can travel. (4)**Office Driver** - M 2 Posts : 5 years experience, Kha - valid driving license. 30-40 years. Can travel. Applicants are requested to mail covering letter, CV, 2 passport photo & necessary documents to Aung Chan Tha Trading Co., Ltd, HR Manager : 54 A, Kaba Aye Pagoda Rd, Near Nawaday Intersection, Mayangone, Yangon, Tel: 657066, 657067, Email: act-hr@act.com.mm, hr.aungchantha@gmail.com to within 2 weeks.

FU XING Brother Group of Companies (Trading) is seeking (1)**Secretary** - F, Age 21 ~ 28, Chinese language four skills, computer skills, driving skill, 2 years experience, (2)**Receptionist** - F, Age 21 ~ 24, Chinese language, good communication skill, 1 year experience. (3)**Sales Drive** - M, Age 20 ~ 30, 3 years experience, holding valid driving license. Ph: 09-310-56674, 554140. Add : U Chit Mg Housing, U Chit Mg Rd, Tamwe.



PASTAMANIA!



Root Of Asia Company Ltd,
Job Vacancies Announcement

Job opportunities exist for professional in a well known Franchise Fast Food Chain Restaurant "Pastamania" coming soon in Yangon. Root of Asia Co., Ltd. is seeking skilled professional for the following positions:

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2. Marketing Manager - Degree/Diploma in Marketing and/ or Public Relations - Financial Planning and Strategy, Marketing Concepts, Positioning, People Management, Territory Management, Sales Planning, Competitive Analysis, Understanding the Customer, Product Development, Client Relationships, Creative Services - More than 5 years of relevant work experience, with at least 2 years in a supervisory/managerial role, preferably in the F &B or hotel industry - Excellent command of written and spoken English and local Language.	F/M (1)Post
3. Operations Manager - Minimum Diploma in Food & Beverage Management and/ or Hospitality and Tourism. - At least 2-3 years experience as Area or Operations Manager of a multi-chain restaurant - Effective in managing cost - Effective problem solving skill - Required to work on off - office hours as and when required	M (1)Post
4. Corporate Chef - Minimum Diploma in Culinary with electives include in areas of HR, F&B Cost Control, Sanitation and Safety - Professional Certificate Preferably accredited by the Culinary Associations or Institute of the Local authority - 2 years' experience as Area Chef in Italian food, with involvement in designing menu and controlling costs - Keen to Listen to customers' and staff comments - Has good exposure to different type of food - Able to lead, train, manage and motivate - Required to work on off - office hours as and when required	M (1)Post

Please submit the resume with two photos, labour registration card, copy of NRC, copy of educational certificates, copy of household registration and recommendation letter from police station to the below address and / or email to hr.bawgaheiddhi@gmail.com within one month.

No.97, Kabaraye Pagoda Road, Bahan Township. Yangon, Ph : 01 - 557 663 / 430 106

NEW YORK

Patriots used flaccid footballs in playoffs: reports

A CHEATERS tag continued to swirl last week around the Super Bowl-bound New England Patriots amid reports the NFL found they used under-inflated American footballs in a playoff rout last on January 18.

The Boston Globe and ESPN reported the ongoing league investigation has found the Patriots used the softer balls - making them easier to grip, throw and catch in the prevailing cold and rainy conditions - during a 45-7 home playoff romp over Indianapolis.

The Patriots, already infamous over the 2007 "Spygate" scandal in which they spied upon an opponent and lost a first-round NFL draft choice as punishment, now enter the Super Bowl on February 1 against defending champion Seattle on the heels of "Deflate-Gate."

Each NFL team provides 12 footballs that its offensive unit uses in a game - balls that are checked by referees before the game to ensure they meet proper inflation levels and other NFL standards. They are then given to approved attendants for each club who maintain custody of the balls until they are needed.

The Globe said that it received a letter from the NFL saying officials inspected the balls used by the Patriots at half-time and found some that were improperly inflated, using different pressure gauges on each to confirm the finding. ESPN reported that 11 of 12 game balls were un-inflated by about 2 pounds (0.9 kg) below the 12.5-13.5 pound level mandated under NFL rules.

The NFL probe into just how the balls became deflated continues, league officials declining comment until the findings are complete, which is expected before the Super Bowl teams head to Arizona for their final workouts ahead of the annual championship spectacle.

The Patriots have vowed total cooperation with the NFL investigation.

Newsday reported that Indianapolis linebacker D'Qwell Jackson became suspicious about air levels after intercepting a pass from New England quarterback Tom Brady in the second quarter.

While some point to the lopsided final score and say the air levels did not impact the outcome, the Patriots led only 17-7 at half-time.

Before the first play from scrimmage in the second half, officials switched out game balls, as if noticing something were wrong. The Patriots went on to produce 28 unanswered second-half points.

The Patriots won the 2002, 2004 and 2005 Super Bowls but lost in 2008 and 2012 to the New York Giants. They have long been a title contender under coach Bill Belichick, but his tenure has not been without controversy.

In 2007, the Patriots were caught videotaping the New York Jets defensive coach's signals. Belichick admitted a violation of NFL rules but said there was no intent to try and hide what was being done. He was fined US\$500,000, twice the fine the team was hit with, but the Patriots also lost their next first-round NFL draft pick in Spygate. - AFP



New England Patriots coach Bill Belichick (left) celebrates after defeating the Indianapolis Colts in Foxboro, Massachusetts, on January 18. Photo: AFP

TAIZICHENG



A student carries a snowboard at the Shijinglong Ski Field in Yanqing, in the suburbs of Beijing, on January 16. Photo: AFP

China has mountain to climb with 2022 Winter Olympics bid

HIGH on a barren mountainside, a red flag marks the spot where China hopes ski jumpers will launch themselves to glory at the 2022 Winter Olympics. But hosting the Games would require a giant leap of its own.

For now, the bitterly cold valley is home to Taizicheng, a sleepy community of about 100 houses where traditional Chinese music drifts on the biting wind. On the opposite hillside - where biathletes would race and shoot - peasants weighed down by loads of firewood are the only sign of life.

According to Beijing's bid document, the site would see 30 gold medals decided in the nordic skiing events and become the base for a bustling Olympic village, complete with a newly erected bullet train station.

Six months ahead of the International Olympic Committee making its decision, Beijing 2022 has emerged as the frontrunner in the race after a string of European cities withdrew, leaving it facing off against only the Kazakhstan city of Almaty.

The Chinese capital has financial muscle and the kind of political support that only a one-party state can provide, and officials say public backing is overwhelming.

But the country has few top-class facilities for outdoor events, little snow in the bid area, and even less of a tradition in winter sports.

Only about 1 metre (3.3 feet) of snow falls annually in the mountains north of Beijing, leaving an average depth of 21 centimetres (8 inches) in Zhangjiakou, the city that includes Taizicheng, and just over 5 centimetres in Yanqing, where the alpine skiing events would be held.

"I think from a natural conditions point of view this is definitely not the best place to have a big winter activity, at least for snow sports," said Fabio Ries, the general manager of the nearby Dolomiti Mountain Resort.

But officials have outlined a bold plan to carve world-class skiing facilities into desolate mountainsides and weave a bullet train system through the rugged terrain - and they claim to be confronting the notorious smog of China's northern rustbelt.

According to the bid document, if Beijing wins, a new resort will be built on Yanqing's Xiaohaitou mountain, including a piste with a vertical drop of 830 metres, just scraping in over the International Ski Federation's minimum for a top-class men's downhill race.

'This is definitely not the best place to have a big winter activity, at least for snow sports.'

Fabio Ries

Dolomiti Mountain Resort

It will have an elaborate artificial snowmaking system and be a tourist destination "on a par with Tokyo's Fuji", said Beijing planning official Ma Jinghua.

Yanqing would also gain a bobsled track. There is virtually no bobsled infrastructure in China at present, nor does it have a national team.

President Xi Jinping has said 300 million new winter sports enthusiasts will be created on the back of the Games, a new generation of skiers and skaters Beijing vice mayor Zhang Jiandong described as a "contribution to the Olympic movement".

"Our existing national conditions and facilities will meet the requirements of the Winter Olympic Games," Zhang added confidently,

but admitted that the pollution that regularly blights northern China remains an issue.

Authorities have in the past ordered widespread factory closures to ensure clear skies for major events, but last year a stage of the Tour of Beijing cycling race between Chongli - the county that includes Taizicheng - and Yanqing was cut short because of the smog.

"We say that we will spare no efforts to improve the air quality," said Zhang. "We still need the blessing from heaven, and many people wonder if we can get that luck."

Beijing would become the first city to host both the summer and winter Games if it won the bid, with the Chinese capital itself hosting the ice sports.

A total of 11 venues from Beijing's spectacular 2008 Olympics would be put to use, including the Bird's Nest stadium for the opening and closing ceremonies, and the Water Cube for curling.

Authorities say using existing venues would help the candidate city keep to a slender budget of US\$3.9 billion, a fraction of the \$51 billion Russia spent on last year's Sochi Games.

But much of the infrastructure improvements are not included in the total costs, including a high-speed rail line - to be built in any case - which will cut travel times between Beijing and Zhangjiakou, around 200 kilometres (124 miles) away, from more than three hours to a mere 50 minutes.

There were "pros and cons" over holding the Games, said the Dolomiti resort's Ries, who has been involved in skiing in China since 1985.

But he raised concerns over a tendency for Olympic hosts to build new facilities where none previously existed and there was no demand, "especially some sports which are commercially a nonsense like bobsledding, skeleton, ski-jumping and so on".

The Italian added, "For some disciplines, you can't move mountains."

- AFP

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Sport

Bayern Munich in hot water
over human rights gaffe

SPORT 67

It's all about timing: Aus Open inconvenient

Rafael Nadal grapples with high-pressure tour schedule

RAFAEL Nadal would like to see the Australian Open start later in the year to allow players more down-time, but admits it is not likely to happen.

From the end-of-season ATP Tour Finals to the start of the new year, many of the top players barely had five weeks off before having to start all over again.

Roger Federer revealed that he took just eight days off during the off-season, with exhibitions and other commitments narrowing his free time considerably.

He was sensationally knocked out of the Australian Open last week in the third round by unseeded Italian Andreas Seppi.

Nadal said it was natural for players who travel the world constantly to want to stay at home with family around the Christmas and New Year period, but most have tournaments starting early January to prepare for Melbourne.

The Spanish world number three, who is on the comeback trail after a three-month injury layoff, said it would be better to start the opening Grand Slam of the year later, perhaps in February.



Nadal reacts to a shot at the Australian Open. Photo: AFP

'It is true that if we went two weeks [later], it would be better.'

Rafael Nadal
World number three

"For us, it is important to spend the new year at home. It important to spend Christmas at home with family. Those dates are very important," he said.

"Players have family, players have small kids. You want to spend that time with them.

"With this calendar, it is tough to have and enjoy this period of time with your family. It is true that if we went two weeks [later], it would be better."

He also said playing just one warm-up tournament ahead of a gruelling Grand Slam was not ideal.

"Two tournaments would be the right period of time before the tournament to play," he said, while admitting that for all the talk, nothing would change.

"Today we are talking for talking, because I don't see a change in that calendar for the future."

Calls to change the dates of the

massively popular Australian Open have been raised in the past, but dismissed with the tournament falling during the school holidays, guaranteeing huge crowds and a party atmosphere.

Nadal, who battled dizzy spells and stomach cramps in an epic five-set second-round match at Melbourne Park, plays big-hitting South African Kevin Anderson for a place in the quarter-finals on January 25.

Myanmar to tour Europe ahead of U-20 World Cup

KYAW ZIN HLAING

kyawzinhlaing.mcm@gmail.com

AIMING for an impressive debut on the world scene, Myanmar's Under-20 men's football team will undergo training bouts and play a series of friendly matches in Europe in preparation for the FIFA U-20 World Cup, to be held in New Zealand from May 25 to June 20.

The team qualified for the World Cup by reaching the semi-finals of the Asian Football Confederation U-19 Championships, which were held in Yangon in October.

The team will play five friendly matches in Turkey from January 17 to February 2 before taking part in the Four Nations Tournament in Mandalay February 15-19, against Fiji, Uzbekistan and another country yet to be selected.

"The team will undergo joint training and friendly matches in Turkey, England, Germany and Australia before the World Cup," said Myanmar Football Federation director U Soe Moe Kyaw.

The three friendly matches in England will take place from March 31 to April 7. Training and friendly matches will be held in Germany April 8-30 and May 14-24, followed by joint training in Australia. Myanmar and three other national teams will participate in the Youth Invitational Cup from May 5-11.

"This practice will help us confront stronger teams in the World Cup," said U-20 coach Gerd Friedrich.

Team captain Nanda Kyaw said the team was expecting tough competition at the World Cup.

"The World Cup is more difficult than the AFC U-19 Championship. We will do our best at the world level," he said.

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