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Daw Khin Win's daughters sit inside their family home in the village of Moe Kyo Pyin on January 6.



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PHOTO: YU YU

After death at Letpadaung, a family seeks answers

The shooting of Daw Khin Win by police near the Letpadaung copper mine on December 22 has galvanised opposition to the project among area residents, who say they are not interested in offers of compensation for their ancestral lands. On January 14, the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission recommended that police involved in Daw Khin Win's death face legal consequences, but her sister-in-law has been stopped from filing charges against police and government officials.

NEWS 8

Dirty water scandal

The Food and Drug Administration is under pressure to reveal purified water brands that failed safety tests.

BUSINESS 30

Multilevel marketing: Buyer beware?

The steady rise of multilevel marketing amid a weak legal framework has created concerns about the potential for pyramid schemes.

Tourist arrival figures: They just don't add up

The government says 3 million tourists visited in 2014 – but its figures are inflated by the including of nearly 2 million border visitors, as well as business and social visa holders. **NEWS 4**

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Page 2

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THE INSIDER: The local lowdown & best of the web

Once was Burma...

Archival material courtesy of Pansodan Gallery

First floor, 286 Pansodan, upper block, Kyauktada township, Yangon



The cover of *Shu Daung (Perspective)* magazine, 1971. A very Brady assembly of General Ne Win's revolutionary socialist council.



Obese Yangon cat that went viral on social media last week (image via Yoe Yar Lay)

Page 2 Review: *The Interview*

Reports surfaced last week about Yangon authorities cracking down on sales of *The Interview*, the controversial Sony production about an undercover US assassination attempt on North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, generously referred to as a "political satire" on its Wikipedia page.

The New York Times reported that an SB officer claimed North Korean ambassador Kim Sok-chol had voiced a complaint about the film's distribution in a meeting with the Yangon's chief minister over a week ago, and had provided a list of bootleg DVD outlets selling it in order to expedite its removal from shelves the city over.

Through a carefully cultivated network of nefarious characters and ne'er-do-wells, Page 2 managed to obtain a copy of the film in question and, with that, here marks the launch of a new section I'll call "Watching films so you don't have to".

The Interview, by virtue of it being about assassinating the current leader of an autarkic and nuclear-capable state, caused a stir upon release.

Vague threats were made about repercussions for cinemas screening it, and a cyber unit believed to originate in North Korea carried out a major hack on production company Sony – all of which served as an invaluable source of what publicists call "buzz", and made people want to see it more.

Which is probably what will happen with the film being removed from shelves in Yangon, like *Rambo IV: John Rambo* before it.

So, to the film itself. The plot that involves talk show host (James Franco) and his hapless producer, played by Seth Rogen, scoring an interview with the Dear Leader then promptly being roped into a CIA plot to eliminate him via a ricin-laced handshake in order to facilitate an already-brewing coup d'état.

Directors Rogen and Evan Goldberg deploy satire as an elegant means of exploring the genesis of the present-day North Korea, illuminating the complex nature of the regime's power structure and the foundations of what many observers call a personality cult, as well as highlighting pressing issues such as food security and the dilemma faced by the UN et al in engaging with a regime accused of grave human rights abuses – all this, peppered with sometimes overwhelmingly technical explanations of North Korea's nuclear program.

Just kidding. While they do manage to sneak some facts in that might inadvertently be absorbed

by the slaving masses, it's mostly lazy racial and homophobic gags, dick jokes and explosions that manages to be so extraordinarily boring that it actually took me three goes to finish the whole thing because I kept falling asleep.

The immediate comparisons that spring to mind are *Team America: World Police*, and *Harold and Kumar Escape from Guantanamo Bay* – and unfortunately, this doesn't hold a candle to either! It's not that I'm a prude, or not fond of the stoner comedy canon: It's just a dumb and pointless movie that, if balloon-dropped into NoKo as some are threatening, would only serve to confound. In a statement provided to *The Myanmar Times*, Human Rights Watch roundly condemned the film.

"It just doesn't do justice to Pineapple Express"

David Scott Mathieson
Human Rights Watch

So, in conclusion: *The Interview* would have been good if it was better. It would have been better if it was good. Cumulatively, I lost around three hours of my life to this film and so heartily endorse the North Korean embassy's push to stem its spread. No stars.

In brief:

Expat already behind on New Year's resolution to "really make an effort with [his] Burmese this year", having actually managed to forget one of the eight words he learned last year

Observers optimistic for Union Day ceasefire deal saying 24 days is "plenty of time" to resolve lingering issues such as decades of mistrust, land rights, resource ownership, the future role of ethnic armed groups, the 5000-odd militias, and the whole drugs thing.

Next week:

Intha fishermen get savvy, signing on with modeling agency, in a move photographers say "threatens the Myanmar coffee table book industry as we know it"

Alleged English teacher demonstrates alarming inability to construct a proper sentence in latest inane Facebook status update.

10

The number of people beheaded in judicial killings so far by Saudi Arabia in 2015.

This includes Myanmar woman *Lalia Bint Abdul Muttalib Basim*, whose gruesome execution in Mecca was spread on YouTube last week.

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FEATURE



A spraypainted ring indicates the spot where Daw Khin Win was killed by police on December 22, with the Letpadaung mountain in the background. Photo: Yu Yu

Daw Khin Win’s death during a protest last month has only further entrenched opposition to the controversial Letpadaung project



**FIONA
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BY the time Daw Khin Win, a 56-year-old widow, finally made it from her village to the protest at the Letpadaung mine site in Sagaing Region on December 22, police had already swapped their rubber bullets for real ones.

Neighbours say Daw Khin Win, who had trouble walking because of a knee injury, had been reluctant to join the demonstration, which had begun around 8am that morning. But after hearing rumours that her land was being fenced off by the firm developing Letpadaung, she set off to the site to see for herself.

When she arrived at the dusty field beneath the copper-rich mountain at about 2pm, events had already taken a bloody turn. A small group of farmers armed with slingshots was facing scores of armed police, who had been instructed to protect mine workers as they moved in with bulldozers and coils of wire to fence off about 3000 acres for the US\$1 billion project.

Daw Khin Win soon found herself helping a man with a gunshot wound to his arm, resident U Yar Zar said. He recalled seeing her sit down on the ground at about 2:30pm to light a cigarette to calm her nerves.

This was when a police bullet smashed into her skull, killing her instantly. It was so sudden that the cigarette was still smouldering between her fingers when U Yar Zar reached her body. “She’d heard about the shooting and didn’t want to come, but she changed her mind,” U Yar Zar said.

“It was actually just a small corner

of her land that was being enclosed in the fenced-off area,” he added, pointing to the spot where Daw Khin Win died.

The field, which residents say is now the subject of a section 144 curfew, was silent last week, but still littered with polystyrene lunch boxes the police left behind, as well as the occasional bullet. A white circle marked the spot on the ground where Daw Khin Win was sitting when she was shot. Within it lay a small pile of sticks, an empty plastic water bottle and a desiccated red rose. Barbed springs of metal wire edged the newly fenced land behind it.

‘They took 8 acres from me. That is all I had. They have turned me into a beggar.’

Daw Than Mya
Moe Kyo Pyin village resident

But in Daw Khin Win’s village of Moe Kyo Pyin, voices are once again being raised against the mine and the land confiscation. And this time the farmers were not alone: their cause is being backed by Myanmar’s increasingly mobile civil society movement.

Veteran 88 Generation activists, lawyers, and other campaigners operating under the Myanmar Alliance for Transparency and Accountability (MATA) banner flocked to Monywa from across the country earlier this month to support the farmers around Letpadaung.

“It’s our right to find out the truth

about the shooting. It’s our right to raise our voice against the oppressors,” they chanted together with local farmers at a January 5 demonstration through downtown Monywa.

Later that day, senior activists travelled to the local hospital to meet those injured in the December 22 shootings, as well as Daw Khin Win’s relatives and neighbours, where they again joined residents in calling for justice.

The circumstances and tone of the activist-led demonstrations were far different from the bloodshed on December 22, which farmers said was an impromptu response to the fencing of their land – and not the work of outside agitators, as has since been claimed by authorities.

“[The December 22 protest] started when the local people saw the bulldozers destroying our land,” said Ko Kyaw Myint Thein, 33, who was shot in the arm during the protest.

Speaking from his hospital bed, he added, “At first it was true that they used rubber bullets, but then they started using real ones.”

Protests over land grabs have broken out sporadically at Letpadaung since Chinese firm Wanbao – a subsidiary of arms manufacturer Norinco – and army-owned Myanmar Economic Holdings Limited signed an agreement to develop the mine in 2010.

Most notoriously, in November 2012, police raided a protest camp and left scores of demonstrators, including monks, with severe injuries. It was later revealed that the police had employed white phosphorous in the raid.

The outcry prompted the government to form an investigation commission led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, which submitted its findings in early 2013. Controversially, it backed the continuation of the mining project, provided certain conditions were met,

including a renegotiation of the financial terms.

However, farmers say not all of the commission’s recommendations have been implemented – a claim also made by the National League for Democracy leader in a speech shortly after Daw Khin Win’s death.

Often the focal point of anti-mine demonstrations, Myanmar Wanbao has over the past two years ramped up its public relations in an attempt to head off criticism of the project. (A spokesperson for Myanmar Wanbao said company representatives at Letpadaung were “too busy” to meet journalists last week and referred *The Myanmar Times* instead to its website.)

The morning of the day Daw Khin Win was shot, Myanmar Wanbao sent out an upbeat press release with colourful graphics that indicated 70 per cent of those living around the mine supported the project.

News of her death was reported on the company’s website. “Yesterday,

we lost a member of the extended Letpadaung family, Daw Khin Win,” it said. “Our hearts and prayers are with her family.”

It is unlikely Daw Khin Win would have felt much kinship with Myanmar Wanbao. However, neighbours and relatives say she was not someone who would be expected to take part in a potentially violent demonstration.

She was known, however, to have sheltered other land protesters when they were being sought by police following demonstrations in 2013, and her love of the land was one of her defining characteristics, according to friends and family.

“We tried so many times to persuade her to come and live with one of us in Mandalay,” said Ma Win Khine, 30, the elder of Daw Khin Win’s two daughters. “But she wouldn’t. She’d stay for a few days and then say she wanted to come back here.”

MORE ON NEWS 4



Daw Khin Win’s daughter, Ma Win Khine, cries outside her mother’s home in Moe Kyo Pyin village, near the Letpadaung mine. Photo: Yu Yu



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CONTINUED FROM NEWS 3

While Myanmar Wanbao has promised compensation and jobs, Daw Khin Win was one of many in the area who are not willing to sign away their ancestral lands at any price.

Daw Than Mya, 48, sits inside the house of Daw Khin's neighbour, U Win Kyaw. She talks by candlelight because members of the community have refused Wanbao's offer to provide electricity.

"Please - we want people to understand that we just want to stay on our land," Daw Than Mya said. "They took 8 acres from me. That is all I had. They have turned me into a beggar. Now I have to ask my neighbours to give me enough food for my cows so they don't die. I am worried that the animals and people will all die."

U Win Kyaw is a mixture of anger and despair. His fist hits the wooden table and his eyes fill with tears as he discusses the impact of the mine on area residents. Before the latest land confiscation he had been financially comfortable, he said, and had recently started building a bigger house.

"I don't know what I am going to do now," he said. "It has happened so fast. My second cousin [Daw Khin Win] is dead and they have taken the last of my land. How am I going to feed my children?"

The land Wanbao had recently fenced off has been in his family for generations. Farming, he said, is all he knows how to do or wants to do. He is insistent that compensation or a job from the mining firm could never replace the security of land ownership for his children and grandchildren.

"They took 6 acres from me last year. Now they have taken my last 9 acres. They didn't even give me time to harvest the crops I had growing on it. I don't want their job or compensation. I just want my land back," he said.

"It is the land of my childhood. I love this land a lot. It was this land that got me the money to get married and [have] a very happy life. I feel I have lost everything."

Not all in Sagaing Region think the farmers' opposition is worthwhile. As the campaigners marched through the streets of Monywa on January 5, one middle-aged woman watching the crowd shook her head. "Land is not worth dying for," she said. "They should just take the compensation."

Back at Daw Khin Win's home, her family are still in mourning - but they are not interested in compensation. Instead, they want "the truth" about the land confiscation - that the land was taken against their will - and a proper inquiry into her death.

"The government spoke to me [on January 6] to ask if I would consider compensation for my mother's death. They did not say how much. But what I feel is if they think they can shoot someone's mother and then just give them money to solve the problem, the same thing should happen to them and they can see how they feel," said Daw Khin Win's younger daughter, Ma Win Khine.

"My mother [took no] action against the law. It was too much for her to be shot." - *Additional reporting by Yu Yu*

Why Myanmar's tourist nu

Myanmar's tourist arrival figures were swelled by the inclusion of border visitors, but experts warn that the



EI EI THU

THOMAS KEAN

WHAT is a tourist and why does it matter? These are the questions being asked in the travel industry following the government's announcement that Myanmar welcomed more than 3 million tourists in 2014.

What should be a cause for celebration is quickly becoming one of concern, with observers urging the government to aim lower and focus on inclusivity and sustainable development. The growth in tourism has sent prices for hotel rooms and tour guides soaring, while domestic flights remain expensive relative to the region. Experts warn that once the "opening-up" lustre wears off, Myanmar will have earned itself a reputation as poor value for money, and in turn scare off potential new visitors.

48%

Arrivals at Yangon International Airport in 2014 that had a tourist visa

"Myanmar is quite expensive to travel in, and people are still willing to pay for it because of its exotic character, but this might change in two, three or four years," said Nicole Haeusler, who works on behalf of German government as an adviser to the Myanmar Tourism Federation.

These price pressures will only be exacerbated by increased demand. So far, however, calls for moderation have gone unheeded, with the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism announcing a target of 4.5 million to 5 million visitors for 2015.

The numbers game

For decades Myanmar's tourism leaders have been obsessed with achieving ever-higher arrival figures. Previous ministers would regularly exhort private-sector businesses to ignore the reality of the tourism boycott and invest in marketing and infrastructure to reach the magical 1 million mark.

But why are tourism arrivals important to the government? Sean Turnell, an economist at Australia's Macquarie University, said one attraction is that they can be used as an "objective" or "hard data" metric

of success - one reason why President U Thein Sein trumpeted the 2014 total in his New Year address.

The sanctions and the tourism boycott campaign give them an added "contextual relevance" to Myanmar, Mr Turnell said, but economic factors are the "most important".

"Tourism brings in not just income, but foreign exchange. It is highly labour-intensive, hence generates disproportionate employment opportunities," he said, adding that they tend to benefit the tertiary-educated middle classes - "a politically and economically important cohort".

This desire for growth was also evident during the development of the Tourism Master Plan 2013-2020, which was released to much fanfare at the World Economic Forum in June 2012.

While those drafting the report advised that the middle-growth scenario - 2.2 million visitors in 2015 and 5 million in 2020 - was the most likely based on regional experience, the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism insisted on going for high-growth: 3.09 million international visitors in 2015 and 7.48 million by 2020. This would see tourism receipts increase from US\$534 million in 2012 to \$10.18 billion in 2020, by which time the industry could comprise 1.49 million jobs.

Now, even that high-growth scenario seems to have been thrown out the window. But how did the ministry break the 3 million barrier so soon?

According to the Pacific Asia Travel Association, Myanmar's tourist arrivals shot up sharply in 2013, when border arrivals from India, Bangladesh and Laos were counted alongside those from China and Thailand.

This means that border arrivals, which had hovered between 400,000 and 500,000 a year for a decade, rocketed to 1.144 million in 2013. Overall arrivals surged to about 2 million.

But the fact is that Myanmar did not receive more than 3 million international tourists last year - at least according to most international standards. Far from it: Almost two-thirds of the 3 million figure - about 1.9 million visitors - were day-trippers from Thailand, China, India, Laos and Bangladesh, according to PATA. The World Tourism Organization defines tourists as those who spend at least 24 hours in-country, while PATA counts only overnight visitors.

Numbers of genuine tourists have certainly increased, and sharply. Arrivals through international airports - primarily Yangon, but also including Mandalay, Nay Pyi Taw, Myeik and Mawlamyine - rose from 593,000 in 2012 to 885,000 in 2013 and 1.08 million last year. The



Tourists and Myanmar visitors watch the sun set from the top of a temple at Bagan.

ministry counts all of these arrivals as tourists, even though only 48.2 percent of those who passed through Yangon International Airport in 2014 did so on a tourist visa.

One of the best indicators of genuine tourist arrivals is entrance ticket sales at Shwedagon Pagoda, and these increased from 400,852 in 2013 to 505,351 - a rise of 26pc that roughly mirrors the 22pc growth in air arrivals and the 24pc increase in visitors to Inle Lake.

4.5 million - a viable dream?

This relatively sluggish growth in air arrivals last year suggests that reaching 4.5 million, even by lumping in non-tourists, could be a major stretch. Even with the liberalisation of the policy on border arrivals - foreign visitors can now enter at four crossings on the Thai border and continue to other parts of Myanmar - these are unlikely to grow fast enough to sustain 50pc growth in overall arrivals. PATA chief executive officer Mario Hardy said last week the target "may not be achievable" but that Myanmar as still expected to enjoy strong growth of about 20pc in overnight visitors, which it expects to rise to 1.37 million.

But Ministry of Hotels and Tourism director U Myo Win Nyunt defended the target, saying it could be reached by upgrading airports, opening new border gates and promoting new destinations, such as the three Pyu cities that were inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in June. Hotel room rates are also likely to moderate during the year, he said, due to the opening of new properties.

"We have more than 40,000 rooms in the whole country and also new hotels will open this year, so there will be no shortage as a result of growing tourist numbers and

room prices won't increase," he said.

Another uncertainty is Myanmar's political situation, particularly given the general election is scheduled for the start of the peak tourist season. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's tourism boycott hobbled the industry for the best part of two decades, and political turbulence could again dampen arrival numbers.

"Tourism is very sensitive and depends on the political situation," said U Khin Aung Tun, secretary of the Myanmar Tourism Federation. "If the country lacks stability - whether it's because of politics, conflict, [human rights] abuses or disease - it will impact on the tourism industry."

'I believe it would be more healthy - and responsible - for leisure tourism ... to follow rather a conservative or mid-range [growth] scenario.'

Nicole Haeusler

Myanmar Tourism Federation adviser

U Naung Naung Han, managing director of Radiant Travels and Tours, said he expected arrivals to reach somewhere between 3.5 million and 4 million. He said more attention should be paid to ensuring visitors get value for money, as this will encourage them to return for additional visits and also to

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Numbers don't add up

push for high growth at any cost could have negative long-term impacts for sector



Photo: Yu Yu

recommend the country to others. Improving airports, expanding online visa services and marketing new destinations would also stimulate growth.

“I would like to reach [the government’s] target but hotel rooms and services do not offer good enough value for money yet,” he said.

“If travel expenses are reasonable ... then more tourists will come.”

Quality vs quantity
The push for rapid growth has

obscured information about who actually visits Myanmar – data that is needed by both the government and the private sector to meet existing and future demand for services, according to experts.

Ms Haeusler said visitors should be broken down into leisure, long-term and short-term business, and border visitors. “For example, do we need to construct in the future more business hotels in Yangon and Mandalay, or rather holiday hotels for bigger tour groups?” she said.

She also called for a review of the annual target and questioned why high-growth tourism had been accepted as the best option, with apparent disregard for the Tourism Master Plan.

“Maybe we have to go back to the question: Do we want to offer more quantity in terms of tourism numbers or more quality service in Myanmar in the upcoming years? It is challenging to work on both tasks at the same time,” she said.

“I believe that it would be more healthy – and responsible – for leisure tourism ... to follow rather a conservative or mid-range scenario in the upcoming years.”

It has also driven up prices, which Ms Haeusler said was “gamble” that Myanmar could take for one or two years - “but then they’re going to lose”.

“If Myanmar is then not offering the same rates as neighbouring countries, but also competitors like Egypt

– culture, sea – and Mexico – culture, nice beaches ... they might have a lot of problems to withstand international competition,” she said.

“I assume that in three or four years’ time tourism numbers might go down again as Myanmar will lose it exotic character. Nevertheless, such a phase would give them the opportunity to recover and get again a new – and well-defined – market.”

Growth will also be moderated by the speed – or lack thereof – with which infrastructure and services can be rolled out.

Mr Hardy from PATA said infrastructure requirements are not being built “fast enough to meet demand”, while tourism businesses are struggling to find staff with the required skills.

“PATA has some concerns regarding human capital development and the need for more formal education programs to develop the talent required to fulfil the job demand,” he said.

He also urged restraint and a focus on ensuring the benefits of tourism are spread throughout the country and not just at a few destinations.

“As Myanmar tourism is still in its infancy, there is an opportunity for the country to ensure it develops sustainable tourism ... [so that] wealth is widely spread [to] help the development of various communities throughout the country.”

Yangon airport arrivals hit record in 2014: govt

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TOURIST arrivals through Yangon International Airport hit a record high in 2014, rising more than 20 percent, figures from the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism show.

The number of foreign visitors arriving through the Yangon gateway increased 21.11pc to 972,597, up from 803,014 in 2013.

About 698,206 visitors, representing more than 70pc of total arrivals, were from Asian countries, including 165,661 from Thailand, the largest single group, followed by Japan with 78,606 and China with 78,109.

European nationals accounted for 166,981 travellers, representing 17.16pc of total arrivals. France led the way with 34,505 visitors, followed by the United Kingdom with 33,944 and Germany with 26,564.

The figures also showed a 74.33pc rise in package tourists, with 48,304 people arriving in 2014, up from 27,707 the previous year. Tourist visa arrivals made up 468,484, or about 48pc, and were up almost 10pc overall. Meanwhile, the number of free independent travellers (FIT) showed a modest rise of about 5pc to 420,180, from 400,381 in 2013.

The ministry announced recently that tourist arrivals through all major gateways including Yangon, Mandalay, Nay Pyi Taw and Bagan airports and

border checkpoints, made up more than 3.05 million tourists in 2014 and earned US\$1.14 billion in direct revenue.

Tourism numbers have been on the rise since the country began to open up as the military regime gave way to democratisation following the 2010 election.

The ministry also predicts about 5 million tourist arrivals for 2015, and it plans to open up more coastal areas and ethnic regions in addition to the traditionally popular destinations in the centre of the country, such as Bagan, Mandalay and Inle Lake.

U Phyo Wai Yar Zar, chair of Myanmar Tourism Marketing (MTM), said the shortage of hotel rooms at major tourist destinations and the lack of a well-trained workforce would be the major challenges for the sector in 2015.

He spoke of the need to promote new destinations such as Loikaw in Kayah State and Thandaung near Taungoo, Bago Region, to relieve the influx of arrivals on the established sites.

Ma Su Su Tin, managing director of Exotissimo Travel in Yangon, said her company’s business grew about 5pc in 2014.

“I think Myanmar is still considered as an expensive destination, and the hotel room shortage remains, but a lot more hotels in different destinations are ready to open this year. I believe overall growth will continue in 2015,” she said.

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WAI ONE



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DISPLACED persons living in camps in Rakhine State told the visiting UN special rapporteur for human rights last week that they want documents to allow them to leave the camps.

During her January 9 visit, Yang-hee Lee heard that the IDPs have been living in the camp since communal violence broke out in 2012 and are forbidden to travel outside, leaving them with no access to jobs, education or healthcare.

"Whether they call me Bengali or Rohingya, what I need is a citizenship card," said Daw Cho, 49, who is active in women's affairs in Taungpaw IDP camp, Myebon township.

Ms Lee met with Rakhine State Chief Minister U Maung Maung Ohn to discuss progress toward peace, stability and the rule of law, including the implementation of the Rakhine Action Plan. She also met with community leaders to discuss reconciliation efforts.

At a press conference on January 16, she said her discussions in the camp had illustrated that the citizenship issue is “more complex than the Rohingya/Bengali debate”.

"When I spoke to persons in the Myebon Muslim camp who had declined to participate in the citizenship verification process, they informed me it was because they were Kaman Muslims or Buddhists married to Muslims. They verified this by showing me their identity cards. Yet they could not leave the camp, either out of fear or lack of authorization. This illustrates the severe level of tension and fear that remains," she said.

U Khin Soe, director general of the state's Department of Immigration, said Ms Lee had asked about the status of citizenship for the

Rohingya. “We told her that citizenship does not depend on race or religion,” he said.

The Rohingya – officially referred to as Bengalis – are not recognised as automatic citizens under the law because they were not present in 1824, at the outbreak of the first Anglo-Burmese War.

However, they can qualify for naturalised citizenship if they can prove they have lived in Myanmar for three generations. The government also requires them to renounce the name Rohingya and instead register as Bengali.

Rakhine MP U Aung Win said freedom of movement had been restricted for security reasons. "Intercommunal tensions are still high, and we need time to build trust," he said, adding that the Muslim community's insistence on the use of the term "Rohingya" exacerbated the issue.

‘Whether they call me Bengali or Rohingya, what I need is a citizenship card.’

Daw Cho
IDP camp resident

On January 14, the NGO Human Rights Watch urged President U Thein Sein to accept UN calls to amend the law that deprives many Rohingya Muslims of citizenship.

Under a government pilot project, more than 1000 people applied for citizenship last September, of which 209 have been granted full or naturalised citizenship under the 1982 law, including 40 identified as Bengalis and 169 as Kaman.

There remain more than 140,000 internally displaced Rohingya in camps throughout Rakhine State.

Lives of IDP camp residents not yet improved, concludes United Nations special rapporteur,

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O'TOOLE



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UNITED Nations human rights envoy Yanghee Lee has reiterated her warning that Myanmar is in danger of backsliding in some rights areas, and again drew attention to the dire human rights situation in Rakhine State.

"I feel assured that in some areas, the government is continuing to progress in its reform program," Ms Lee said on January 16, at the end of her second visit. "However, in some areas I have not observed progress since my last visit."

Ms Lee said her 10-day visit, which took her to Rakhine State, northern Shan State, Yangon and Nay Pyi Taw, featured “frank, open, sometimes passionate but always welcoming” discussions.

At the conclusion of her first visit in July 2014, Ms Lee made headlines when she warned that the government appeared to be “backsliding” in several areas of human rights.

In her remarks last week, Ms Lee doubled down on her assessment and urged the government to do much more to improve the human rights situation throughout the country.

In Rakhine State she visited IDP camps in Sittwe as well as Myebon, where the government recently conducted a citizenship verification pilot program. Ms Lee met IDP residents who had received citizenship documents but said their “lives ... have not changed”

"They remain inside the camp with minimum food rations, limited access to health care and to other essential services," she said.

While the government has allowed increased humanitarian access to IDP camps – NGOs can now visit the Myebon camp three times a week, instead of one – she said the situation “remains at crisis stage”.



UN Special Rapporteur on Myanmar Yanghee Lee talks during a press conference in Yangon on January 16, 2014. Photo: AFP

“Humanitarian access is still minimal and high-risk,” she said.

She added that she had been promised a copy of the government's updated Rakhine Action Plan but it had not yet been given to her.

Communal tension in Rakhine State has been one of the thorniest issues for Ms Lee and her predecessor Tomas Quintana, and both have been accused of bias toward the state's Muslim population.

As her press conference was taking place, demonstrators gathered at

Sule Pagoda to protest against this alleged bias. Ms Lee was also greeted by protesters on her arrival to Sittwe on January 8.

When asked about the demonstration, Ms Lee struck a diplomatic note, saying she took it as a heartening sign of freedom of expression.

She was less upbeat about the space for freedom of expression and assembly in her remarks, when she warned that "positive gains risk being lost".

"Indeed, the possible signs of



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Rakhine: UN

calling the situation still at “crisis stage” after second visit

backtracking I noted in my first report have gained momentum in this area,” she said.

As evidence, she pointed to several recent cases of peaceful demonstrators and activists being arrested or otherwise harassed, including protesters at the Letpadaung copper mine.

‘Positive gains risk being lost ... The possible signs of backtracking I noted in my first report have gained momentum.’

Yanghee Lee
UN special rapporteur

“At the end of 2014, official figures were that 27 political prisoners remained in prison. However, I consider that the 78 farmers charged with trespassing during land protests have also been arrested for politically motivated reasons,” she said.

The special rapporteur also highlighted the case of Brawn Shawng, a Kachin activist who has been on trial for two years for

allegedly making “false charges” against the military. The charges were filed after he submitted a complaint to the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission over the death of his daughter, who was killed during an encounter with a Tatmadaw patrol.

Ms Lee said that, as a parent, she was “particularly touched” by his story.

“If Myanmar is truly serious about transitioning to democracy, it must allow persons aggrieved by its actions to express their frustrations without being punished,” she said.

In her comments on the national ceasefire process, Ms Lee said the government remains “confident” that the accord can be signed in February, and urged all sides to compromise for the greater good.

However, she said the actions of both sides in conflict areas, particularly Kachin State, risked undermining the agreement.

“The stepping-up of attacks in Kachin State over this past month is not conducive to negotiation of a comprehensive ceasefire agreement.”

While Ms Lee was originally scheduled to visit several IDP camps in northern Shan State, she said that some of these trips had to be cancelled at the last minute due to security concerns.

Ms Lee will submit her full findings in a report to the Human Rights Council in March.

Rakhine party to shun international dialogue

Accusing the United Nations and other international groups of bias, the Rakhine National Party says it will no longer cooperate on Rakhine State-related issues

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THE Rakhine National Party will boycott international organisations it believes are biased in favour of Muslims, party chair U Aye Maung told *The Myanmar Times* last week. He also accused the United Nations of interfering in Myanmar’s internal affairs over the issue of inter-communal violence.

Since the first outbreak of violence in 2012, Rakhine people have cooperated with local and international organisations, said U Aye Maung, including UN special rapporteur for human rights Tomas Quintana and his successor, Yanghee Lee.

But Ms Lee’s latest visit to Rakhine State on January 8-10 was the final straw, the Amyotha Hluttaw representative said.

He said Ms Lee had spent most of her trip meeting the Muslim community and during her one meeting with Rakhine leaders she had urged them to accept the state’s Muslims as citizens.

“They never listened to our concerns, but only paid attention to the other side. They issued biased reports,” he said.

International representatives visiting Rakhine met with local people “just for show”, he said. “They take photos of themselves with us to show how fair



Protesters wait for Yanghee Lee in Sittwe on January 8. Photo: Than Tun (Sittwe)

they are. But we’re just the backdrop. That’s why we decided to sever relations with all international organisations,” he said.

On January 13, the party formally conveyed its decision to Rakhine State Chief Minister U Maung Maung Ohn. Meanwhile, the RNP urged local residents, including monks, to boycott international organisations operating in the state. The party – which holds a majority of elected seats in the Rakhine State Hluttaw, as well as 14 Rakhine State-based seats in the national parliament – has instructed its members to shun their meetings and projects.

U Aye Maung accused Ms Lee of trying to pressure Myanmar into complying with UN resolutions urging Myanmar to offer “full citizenship to the Rohingya community”.

The government responded by

reiterating its stance that there are no “Rohingya” people in Myanmar – it refers to them as Bengalis – and that citizenship issues should be resolved in accordance with the 1982 Citizenship Law.

U Aye Maung said his party and local people believe the UN is trying to interfere in Myanmar’s internal issues. “We don’t accept their resolution, but we do agree to grant citizenship to those eligible under the 1982 law,” he said.

On her second tour of Myanmar, Ms Lee travelled to Rakhine State to assess whether conditions had changed since her first visit, in July 2014. She was greeted at Sittwe airport by hundreds of demonstrators, who had waited throughout the afternoon for her delayed flight to arrive.

On January 10, she met with local people and authorities at the Emergency Coordination Centre – a body comprising representatives of the government, Rakhine civil society and international NGOs – to urge them to respect the human rights of people living in displaced persons camps.

“She wants us to live together with the Muslims peacefully and to work freely with them. But we told her it would be impossible right away. It needs more time,” said Sittwe township elder U Than Tun, adding that local residents had urged Ms Lee to issue a “fair” report.



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Calls grow for release of dirty drinking water names

Alpine owner urges FDA to take action against unsafe brands, while FDA chief distances himself from findings



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PRESSURE is growing on the Food and Drug Administration to make public a secret report on Yangon’s dirty drinking water. FDA researchers discovered two years ago that 44 percent of popular drinking water brands in Yangon were contaminated with dangerous bacteria, but the results were revealed only last month at a health conference.

Now the owner of soft drinks giant Loi Hein, which produces market leader Alpine drinking water, has publicly called on the FDA to recognise its own research and take immediate action to guarantee the safety of drinking water.

Dr Sai Sam Htun told *The Myanmar Times* last week he found it “unbelievable” that consumers were drinking contaminated water because although FDA researchers had found bacteria in samples the FDA had refused to name the brands concerned.

“Water is essential for a healthy life. People need to know that the water they drink is pure. The FDA should take immediate action to ensure this,” he said.

Consumer Protection Association chair U Ba Oak Khaing also called on the FDA to name the brands of water found to be tainted. “Why has the FDA kept this quiet for so long? We’ve been drinking dirty water for two years,”

he said, adding that the association had received complaints about water quality.

The matter came to light at the 43rd Myanmar Health Research Congress, held from January 5 to 9, when FDA researchers revealed they had found that nearly half the purified water on sale in Yangon was dangerous to health.

The study of 50 brands of 20-litre bottles of purified drinking water was conducted between April 2012 and March 2013. It found that only 28 brands met health standards, while 22 – or 44 percent of the total – were unsatisfactory because of bacteriological contamination.

The study used 92 samples collected from a range of Yangon townships, according to FDA official Daw Thin Su Kyaw, who conducted the research with eight colleagues. The research was carried out at the FDA laboratory and Yangon University of Medicine. The 22 brands ruled unsatisfactory failed FDA standard tests, with some found to contain E coli bacteria.

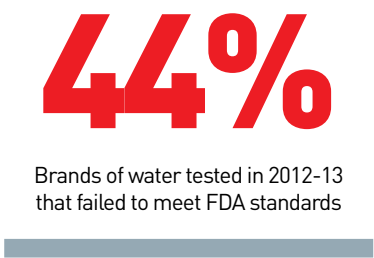
Daw Thin Su Kyaw refused to name the brands concerned, citing “ethical” concerns, but said they were very popular. She said contamination was mostly the result of poor hygiene on the part of staff engaged in the filling, sealing, storage and transportation of the bottles.

“This water is not safe to drink. It will cause vomiting, diarrhoea and dizziness,” Daw Thin Su Kyaw said. “We took samples from grocery shops and on the street across the city. Some suppliers are registered with the FDA

and some are not.”

However, in a bizarre twist, the head of the FDA has distanced himself from the research results, and said he was unaware it had even been conducted. Director Dr Tun Zaw said the research was “not significant” and that while he knew the names of the brands he would not release them publicly because the research was conducted in 2012-13 and therefore “no longer applicable”.

He defended the FDA’s efforts to regulate the burgeoning purified water industry.



“We regularly check water purification factories and warn them if we discover their products are unsafe,” he said.

He refused to give any more information on how the FDA maintains standards, including what action it takes if factories sell dangerously polluted water.

But FDA director general Dr Min Than Nyunt told *The Myanmar Times* on January 15 that the administration would soon release the names of more

than 70 unregistered brands of purified water that were being sold in the market. It later plans to release the names of brands that fail quality tests, he said.

While describing his colleagues’ research as “reliable”, Dr Min Than Nyunt defended the FDA’s failure to take action against the companies that failed to meet its standards.

“We warn the factories if we discover bacteria in their bottles and then provide them with technical support to improve their products,” he said. “But we do not have the answer to solve this problem though because it is difficult to control.”

“It is the owners’ responsibility to ensure that they maintain the hygiene of their products.”

The use of bottled water has grown considerably since factories were first set up in the mid-1990s, and the use of reusable bottles is widespread. While the FDA has refused to say how many brands it has approved for sale, it says the number of bottled water factories in Myanmar rose from 320 in 2008 to 657 in 2013, with 250 of these in Yangon.

Daw Than Than, a housewife who lives in 25th Street, Kyauktada township, said she had been shocked to learn that drinking water was unsafe.

“We were spending a lot of time and money boiling water to make it safe, so finally we started using bottled water. Sometimes it smells strong, but we don’t know why,” she said, adding that she thought the FDA should release the names of the dirty water companies.

Food, cosmetics testing lab to open in Nay Pyi Taw

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A TESTING laboratory to ensure product quality is being built in Nay Pyi Taw, the government has announced. The lab, which will test domestically produced foodstuffs and cosmetics, is attached to the Research and Development Section of the Small-scale Industries Department, Ministry of Cooperatives.

U Swe Tint, director of the department, said he hoped the lab would be

operational by September. “Construction will be complete in May, and then we will install the equipment,” he said last week.

The laboratory will test products from neighbouring Magwe and Bago regions and Shan State, including Yedashe, Taungoo, Pinlaung and Taungdwingyi townships. At present, the ministry has laboratories in Yangon and Mandalay to test products prior to distribution, as well as market samples.

“We test products for which

registration is sought under small-scale industries regulations. The law requires us to inform the manufacturer if we have a question about the ingredients,” he said.

Imported goods and other products produced by large manufacturers are tested by Food and Drug Administration laboratories.

Research and development labs examine soft drinks, jams and jellies, pickled tea leaves, fish paste, oil and oil products, and milk and dairy products from small-scale industries, as

well as cosmetics and commodities.

Many small-scale industries produce traditional goods whose ingredients may contain chemical products that could attract the department’s attention.

U Khin Maung Lwin, who sells foodstuffs in Pyinmana township, Nay Pyi Taw, said there were many products on sale that are not tested. “In summer, for example, iced lollies go on sale,” he said, “but nobody knows where they come from or what they contain.” – *Translation by Emoon*

Crackdown begins on errant monks

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MORE than 40 mendicant clergy, including imposters masquerading as Buddhist monks, have been detained following a crackdown by religious authorities against fraudsters profiting from public veneration for monks.

The crackdown was launched last month after a spate of reports of shaven-headed men in clerical robes soliciting money under false pretences, particularly in tourist areas. Some would change back into ordinary clothes and go home to their families at night, while others slept in gangs at the railway station.

Another version of the scam involved abbots sending novice monks from the countryside into Yangon's popular tourist sites and then taking the money they received back to the abbot.

Such activities are illegal under laws protecting the status of religion.

"Monks would go around town begging and then take a break in

the teashop. Some were seen soliciting alms at Sule Pagoda. They come to downtown Yangon from townships in the countryside," said U Surundhana, a member of the Pabedan township Sangha Rules Preservation Committee.

Some of those arrested come from as far away as Myawaddy, Paung, Pegu, Pyay, Maungmya, Hintada town and Mon State.

"The Sangha Rules Preservation Committee arrested 10 monks who were sleeping at Yangon railway station. These monks are not attached to a monastery," said U Gunarlinkarra, the deputy chair of Yangon Region Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee.

"They go round town begging for food, then they drink alcohol and sleep in the station."

By January 5, less than two weeks after the crackdown was launched, 43 errant monks or imposters had been detained, the deputy chair said, adding that the figure could rise when additional information came in from outlying townships.



IN PICTURES

PHOTO:

THANDAR KHINE

An ethnic Kachin woman attends the opening ceremony of the Manaw Festival in Myitkyina, Kachin State, on January 8. The celebration of traditional Kachin culture was last held in 2011, with subsequent years seeing cancellations due to conflict in the area between government troops and ethnic armed groups. The revival of the January 8-11 festival this year was opposed by some Myitkyina residents, who believed it was inappropriate to hold the event until after peace has returned to the region.

Parties to join forces for Kayah State vote

THREE parties based in or near Kayah State have decided to work together to increase their chances of success in the elections scheduled for later this year. The Kayan National Party (KNP), the Kayah Unity Democracy Party (KUDP) and the All Nationals Democracy Party Kayah State (AND) have formally agreed to stand as an alliance following a tri-party meeting last week in Kayah State.

Spokespersons for the parties said their cooperation was aimed at securing important government positions.

"We have come up with the conclusion of uniting as an alliance. Politically, our cooperation will be important as a way of gaining more seats in the state government," said KUDP chair U Saw Daniel.

The focus of the agreement is to avoid running candidates in the same constituencies, which under Myanmar's first-past-the-post voting system would likely harm their chances of winning.

Despite the accord, U Solomon of the AND said some matters were still subject to negotiation.

"There is give and take, but exactly how to do so on a formal political platform is yet to be discussed ... When selecting candidates and constituencies, we will go step by step," he said. "In Loi-kaw and Demawso, the Kayan population is quite strong."

Although the KUDP and the AND are based in Kayah State, the KNP has its headquarters in southern Shan State's Pekon township.

KNP chair U Khu Eugen said Kayah State was a focus for his party as ethnic Kayan people are the second-largest ethnic group there. "Historically, Kayan people have always been active in politics. We want to participate in state-building in Kayah State," he said.

One resident welcomed the emergence of the alliance. "I hope their co-operation will benefit the ... people of Kayah State," said Loi-kaw resident U Aung Naing Oo. - *Lun Min Mang*

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US rights rep cautions MPs over religion bills

Also urges “non-discriminatory” citizenship assessment in Rakhine following visit

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TOP United States human rights official Tom Malinowski has warned that the divisive use of religion in upcoming elections would be like “playing with fire”. Speaking on January 16 at the end of a six-day visit, he said a proposed package of religious laws put forward by Buddhist nationalists could also inflame tensions between religious groups.

He urged MPs to reject the laws, which would place restrictions on interfaith marriage and religious conversion.

“We expressed a concern that the use of religion, in particular to divide people whether it is done for political or any other purposes, is incredibly dangerous, particularly in an election year,” Mr Malinowski said.

“We expressed a concern that this is really playing with fire and exposes the country to dangers that it is not prepared to handle.”

The US human rights official’s trip coincided with the 10-day visit of UN special rapporteur on human rights Yanghee Lee, who also expressed concern over the four bills.

The bills, which are likely to be discussed during the parliament

session that begins on January 19, have been widely criticised by local and international rights groups, who say they fail to meet international human rights norms.

On the issue of Rakhine State, Mr Malinowski said he asked the government to establish a “non-discriminatory” pathway to allow minority people in Rakhine State to obtain citizenship.

**‘The use of religion
... to divide people
... is incredibly
dangerous,
particularly in an
election year.’**

Tom Malinowski
US human rights official

“The question we suggested in assessing citizenship should not be, ‘What is your race?’ It should not be, ‘What is your colour?’ [or] ‘What is your religion?’ It should be, ‘What are you prepared to do to help build this country?’ he said.

He also called for humanitarian groups to be granted to those affected by conflict in Kachin State and northern Shan State as soon as possible.

“Whoever you blame for this conflict, whatever your interpretation for why this is happening, IDPs should not be punished.”

The delegation led by Mr Malinowski visited Kachin State and met with civil societies in Yangon before taking part in the “US-Myanmar Human Rights Dialogue” in Nay Pyi Taw on January 14 and 15.

The two sides discussed a full range of human rights issues and democratic reforms, he said, including political prisoners, media freedom, land rights, protecting civilians in conflict areas, legal and constitutional reforms, combating discrimination and military reforms.

He described the dialogue as “extremely constructive and productive” but acknowledged concerns about the reform process and human rights-related issues.

“There is a great deal of scepticism in some quarters about whether the reform process is continuing, and fears about tensions and other problems that might arise in a year in which the election will be first and foremost in people’s minds,” he said.



U Tin Lin Maung grabs a flag during a student protest on January 13. Photo: Mg Zaw

Deputy rector snatches student flag during rally

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STUDENTS in Mandalay have complained that Mandalay Technological University deputy rector U Tin Lin Maung seized their flag during a mini-demonstration last week.

The students – three from MTU and one from Kyaukse Technological University – were protesting against the National Education Law on January 13.

“It was a peaceful protest,” said student union member Ko Yeyint Paing Hmu. “But he followed us in his car and blocked us. The journalists who were there saw how dangerously he was driving.”

The students said they would continue to protest against the law, which was enacted last year, and that there would be more of them next time.

– Translation by Thiri Min Htun



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Budget concerns hobble pension expansion proposal

Pension planned for over-65s could be limited to just centenarians because of fears it will blow the budget

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A PLAN to pay a monthly pension to the elderly may initially be restricted to people aged over 100 - because there is not enough money in the budget to pay everyone over 65, as the government had initially proposed.

The exact numbers and proportions of over-65s and -100s will be known more clearly in May, when the final results of last year's census are published.

The pension scheme is part of a national-level strategic social protection plan to be launched in April, said Daw San San Aye, deputy director general of the Department of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement.

TRILLION KYAT

1.145

Estimated budget in 2015-16 for a social protection plan for the elderly

The plan aims to provide a secure income for the elderly, taking into account their medical needs, and was originally intended to provide K25,000 a month to every citizen over the age of 65.

But Daw San San Aye told *The Myanmar Times* in an exclusive interview last week that it would be restricted initially to people aged over 100 because of insufficient funds. The plan has allocated K1.145 trillion (US\$1.17 billion) for the social pension program in 2015-16, including existing civil service pensions.

"The pension amount was originally set in the plan at K25,000 a month,



A former civil servant collects his pension after the government raised payments dramatically in 2011. Photo: Staff

but if it is limited to those over 100 years then they will almost certainly receive more than that," she said, declining to state an exact figure.

Retired civil servants will receive

the national pension in addition to their civil service pensions, said Daw San San Aye. She said the pension program was initially supposed to focus only on poorer people, but the

government decided that the expense and complexity of means-testing made it cheaper and simpler to pay everybody. "Maybe K25,000 is not significant for the rich but it will be a good support for the poor," she said.

While welcoming the plan to pay pensions to all older people, Amyotha Hluttaw MP U Phone Myint Aung said it was not enough to only pay pensions to those over 100 years of age.

"I hope it will be approved because if elderly people do not have enough income they cannot be healthy and will become a financial burden on their families," he said.

"I think it should be for all over-65s, and we need to offer them other types of support too. But if the government doesn't have enough money, I think it should be limited to over-75s instead ... If so I will gladly support the plan."

Daw Moe Moe, of Nay Pyi Taw's Lewe township, who takes care of her aged mother, said a K25,000-a-month pension could be really useful for poorer families. "Daily wage labourers earn barely K3000 a day," she said.

The program has already been approved by the government, and is now being scrutinised by the Union financial commission, which will decide whether or not to apply it to all those aged 65 and older, or just to people aged over 100.

On Independence Day, 569 persons aged 100 and over received a K200,000 bonus funded by a 25 percent cut applied to the monthly allowances of the president, vice presidents, Union ministers and their deputies.

According to a forecast produced in connection with the 2014 International Day of Older Persons, 9pc of Myanmar's population is aged 60 or over, and the proportion is expected to rise to 15pc by 2020.

U Kyaw Lin Htet, deputy director of Department of Social Welfare, said that figure could change when the results of the March 2014 census are released. "That figure was calculated by United Nations based on a population of 54 million but the 2014 census found a population of just over 51 million," he said. "We will know the percentage of people aged 65 or older in April when the census results come out."

The plan anticipates that the population of older persons will increase to 3.5 million by 2019, requiring expenditure of 1.3pc of GDP. Currently, Myanmar spends less than 0.5pc on social protection and other services, the lowest in the ASEAN region. Almost all of that goes to civil service pensions.

- Translation by Zar Zar Soe

Market vendors protest lottery for new stalls

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STALLHOLDERS in the old Thiri Yadanar Sanpya Market in Mandalay Region's Pyin Oo Lwin township say they are prepared to demonstrate against a plan that would deny many of them places in the new market unless they win a lottery.

Of the more than 400 retailers doing business in the temporary market, only 220 have been allocated stalls in the new market now under construction. Others will have to draw lots for the chance of a place, alongside outsiders who now have no stalls.

U Soe Win, deputy chair of the market stallholders' committee, said last week that the retailers had originally been promised places in the new market. "But now some vendors will have to draw lots for a permit to buy a stall, as if they were outsiders."

The new market, located on a municipal-owned 1.6 hectare (4-acre) site near Thiri Padaythar bus terminal in Padaythar new town, is expected to open in June with a total of 934 shops of varying sizes.

"We want to allocate stalls according to the goods they sell. The smaller spaces are not suitable for some types of goods, but the chief minister didn't respond to our complaint about the inconvenience. We also approached the township management committee for the market. Retailers will demonstrate if there is no change in their position," said Daw Mon Mon Shein, secretary of the market committee.

But the assistant director of Pyin Oo Lwin City Development Committee, U Khin Maung Tint, refused a request to discuss the matter over the phone. "If you want to know about the market, you have to come to Pyin Oo Lwin in person," he said.

Depending on size, a vendor's plot can cost from K1.5 million to K9 million. Only stallholders granted an allocation have the right to buy. The stalls will be sold on instalments, with a 50 percent down payment and subsequent payments of 10pc monthly. - Translation by Thiri Min Htun

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Jan 12 talks ‘a waste of time’: opposition

Almost 50 people took part in the government-organised meeting in Nay Pyi Taw, with talks focusing on the peace process and constitution



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OPPOSITION parties have criticised President U Thein Sein for calling a meeting of nearly 50 political leaders, describing it as another effort to avoid proposed six-way talks.

The meeting at the president's residence in Nay Pyi Taw on January 12 brought together 48 individuals, including the president, Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Union Election Commission chair U Tin Aye, leaders of registered political parties and 28 ethnic affairs ministers.

Participants focused on three

topics: the transition to democracy; political dialogue with armed ethnic groups; and a general election planned for later this year. Each was given five minutes to discuss the three topics, and most focused on the peace process, amending the 2008 constitution and issues related to a proposed federal union political system.

The seven-hour meeting took place a week before the start of the next Pyidaungsu Hluttaw session, and some participants said the president was trying to deflect attention away from parliament's proposal for six-way talks.

In November, MPs passed a proposal for a meeting between U Thein Sein, Thura U Shwe Mann, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, U Tin Aye, National League for Democracy leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and an ethnic minority leader, later identified as Rakhine National Party chief U Aye Maung.

The President's Office will be forced to reply to the proposal after the session opens on January 19. The government has said that it prefers "all-inclusive" discussions with a larger number of participants, but its opponents say this is a tactic to ensure the meetings yield no results.

Participants at the January 12 meeting said there were no "tangible" results and no common agreement

‘These meetings should not be held to avoid six-way talks.’

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi
NLD leader

between the government and opposition groups on key issues, including which sections of the constitution should be amended as a priority and whether to proceed with the signing of a proposed nationwide ceasefire if not all armed ethnic groups agree to sign.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said it was a "general meeting" and she was "unclear on the basic purpose".

"This meeting is not like the six-way talks. The ethnic ministers, who are members of the [regional] governments, were also involved, although they are neither leaders of political parties nor members of parliament.

"As I said before, these meetings should not be held to avoid six-way talks," she said.

However, Chin ethnic affairs minister for Sagaing Region U No Htan Khet said he was "very satisfied" with the meeting.

He said the reason no joint statement was released at the end of the talks was because some were against a proposal to hold a follow-up meeting.

"When the question was asked about holding another meeting, most agreed to it but 20 people disagreed," U No Htan Khet said.

U Khun Htun Oo, leader of the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy, said the large number of participants made the meeting "a waste of time".

"I won't attend another meeting if there is unlikely to be any tangible result," he said.

However, presidential spokesperson U Ye Htut rejected these criticisms at a press conference following the meeting and insisted that the president was not trying to avoid a six-way meeting. "The president arranged the meeting [this way] because he wanted it to be all-inclusive," he said.

Yangon court rejects suit over Kempinski-linked hotel

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YANGON Region High Court has rejected an application to sue the Myanmar Investment Commission, Yangon's chief minister and private investors over a controversial hotel project on Strand Road linked to global hotel chain Kempinski.

The decision, announced in the first week of January, was the second time the court had refused an application from the Lawyers' Network to file a case under section 42 of the Specific Relief Act.

It comes as one of the companies behind the project, Flying Tiger, revealed it had hired a heritage consulting firm, Purcell, to draft a conservation management plan for the site - a move seemingly aimed at addressing concerns the overhaul will not respect the building's original features and purpose.

Advocate U Kyee Myint, a member of the Lawyers' Network, said the court gave no reason for throwing out the case and the network plans to submit another application this month.

"I think there is so much corruption in the judiciary. The court should have told me what the reason for rejecting this case was," said U Kyee Myint.

In November 2014, U Kyee Myint, together with fellow advocates U Than Tin and U Ohn Maung, lodged complaints against Yangon Region Chief



A member of the Lawyers' Network leads a protest against a hotel project in Yangon on October 2012. Photo: Ko Taik

Minister U Myint Swe, former head of the Myanmar Investment Commission U Zeyar Aung and two private Myanmar-owned companies, Flying Tiger Engineering Company and Prime Residence over the proposed hotel.

Flying Tiger won a tender in 2012

to turn the Small Claims Court on Strand Road into a five-star hotel. According to a letter that the president sent to parliament in July 2012, annual rent will be 7 percent of hotel revenue, while the company will also pay a fee of US\$14.4 million for land use and

invest at least K20 billion. The company is also prohibited from making major alterations to the original structure.

In December, Flying Tiger said it would submit a conservation management plan to the non-profit Yangon Heritage Trust for review.

Flying Tiger managing director U Thauang Htike Min said last week his company had commissioned Hong Kong-based Purcell to draft the conservation management plan, which is due for completion next month.

However, the project has faced opposition virtually since the tender results were announced. In October 2012 the Lawyers' Network staged a protest against the project, arguing it was not appropriate to repurpose a court as a hotel. A second protest was held in May 2014 but work has continued at the site.

In July last year, Flying Tiger officials told *The Myanmar Times* they had reached an agreement with Swiss chain Kempinski AG under which the building would open in 2017 as the Kempinski Yangon with 239 rooms.

In October, Thailand's Siam Commercial Bank announced it was providing \$60 million in financial support for the renovation of the building.

The Nation reported that the renovation will be handled jointly by Thailand-based Kanok Furniture and Decoration and Myanmar's JL Group, which is the parent company of Flying Tiger.

"The renovation ... is in preparation for tourism and service industry growth in Myanmar, with the project slated for completion by 2016," the bank was quoted as saying.

Thailand Crown Property Bureau is the single largest shareholder in SCB and also has a majority holding in Kempinski.

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CRIME IN BRIEF

Father Land owner in court

The owner of Father Land Construction, U Kyaw Myint, appeared in a Kyauktada courtroom on January 13 facing charges of cheating and forgery.

Landowner U Soe Min Htet filed a case against U Kyaw Myint in September after hiring him to develop a 12-storey building on a 100-by-60-foot lot on the middle block of Pansodan Street, Kyauktada township, four years ago. U Kyaw Myint allegedly forged the signature of the land owner and construction remains incomplete. In a separate case, Botahtaung police say he is being charged with misusing K300 million in funds.

U Kyaw Myint, who has previously absconded periodically from court hearings, is scheduled to return to court on January 28. Yangon's Western District Court has requested the case files, but the township judge said no application for a change of venue has yet been made.

Teacher hospitalised after robbery

Kamaryut police were called January 11 after Chinese national Duo Qing, 24, arrived at Yangon Hospital with several

wounds. Duo Qing, a Chinese middle-school teacher, hired a taxi in front of Sedona Hotel in Yankin township. When she was opening her purse, the driver allegedly got out, throttled her neck and hit her with the car door. When she collapsed, the driver drove off with K30,000, a laptop, a pair of shoes and a mobile phone. Police say they are looking into the case but the victim was unable to recall the taxi's licence number.

Taxi goes over railing

A taxi plunged off a bridge January 8, sending the driver and passengers to hospital. U Soe Paing, 22, of Thaketa township was driving a Honda Fit taxi when it stuck the railing of Min Ye Kyaw Swar bridge while driving from Tarmwe to Thingangyun and went over the edge. The driver sustained injuries to his right thigh, while passengers U Tin Aung Soe and Daw Theingi Myint of Thingangyun township received multiple injuries and were rushed to Thingangyun Central Hospital. Tarmwe police are charging the driver under section 338/279 of the Penal Code.

— Toe Wai Aung, translation by
Thiri Min Htun and Khant Lin Oo

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Dated: 19 January 2015

Thailand prisoner plan prompts protest

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NEARLY 50 human rights groups have released an open letter to the Thai government criticising a proposed program that would put prisoners to work on fishing boats in the Andaman Sea.

The January 15 letter was signed by 45 Thai and international human rights groups, including Human Rights Watch, the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations, and the Bangkok-based Migrant Workers Rights Network.

The groups said the program "poses a serious threat" to the human rights of the prisoners.

"[U]se of their labour will violate international human rights standards and codes of conduct of many international companies," the letter said.

First announced in December 2014, the program has been touted by the Thai military government as a solution to a labour shortage that officials claim is driving many fishing companies to rely on human trafficking networks to find workers for their vessels.

The letter notes that several investigations in recent years have documented widespread abuse and exploitation of workers on Thai fishing vessels. The vast majority of these workers are undocumented migrants from Myanmar and Cambodia.

These investigations "exposed horrific working conditions, including human trafficking, debt bondage, physical abuse, murder, non-payment of wages, confinement and 20-hour working days on some Thai fishing boats. These brutal and inhumane working conditions are the most significant reason why there is a prevailing labour shortage in the fishing industry."

"Simply replacing vulnerable



Labourers fix a fishing net aboard a trawler at a port in Pattani, southern Thailand, in September 2013. Photo: AFP

migrant workers with released prisoners will not solve the abusive working conditions present in the Thai fishing industry."

While the Thai government said only prisoners who volunteer will be put to work on the boats, rights groups say the Ministry of Labour's failure to uphold basic rights in the

industry casts doubt on this promise.

"The Thai government is not in a position to fulfil the [Ministry of Labour's] claims that prisoners placed on these ships will be treated in line with Thai labour law, nor can it provide reasonable assurances that these prisoners will not end up in conditions of forced labour."

As of 2014, Thailand is designated as a "Tier 3" nation in the US State Department's annual *Trafficking in Persons Report*, which is reserved for countries "whose governments do not fully comply with the minimum standards and are not making significant efforts to do so," according to the State Department. Other Tier 3 nations include North Korea, Syria and the Central African Republic.

The statement said the fishing program could "threaten any possible upgrade" of Thailand's ranking on the list.

"If implemented, this initiative could strengthen arguments that the Thai government is unwilling to take serious steps to address human trafficking on fishing boats," it said.

'Simply replacing vulnerable migrant workers with released prisoners will not solve the abusive working conditions.'

Open letter signed by 45 Thai and international human rights groups



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Vocational schools set for overhaul

Myanmar's 180 state-run vocational schools will be given a new focus to support the needs of employers



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VOCATIONAL education and training institutes are to be realigned with the needs of the private sector under a proposed reform plan. Seven ministries are working on the plan, which is designed to raise skills and provide job opportunities in the regions.

U Swe Tint, a director in the Ministry of Cooperatives, said the institutes would be tailored to local needs. "The training courses opened at the moment do not match with the human resource needs of local business," he said last week. "So in Inle and Bagan, for instance, we plan to train people in hotel and tourism skills."

U Kyaw Khine Khine Aung, an information officer with the Ministry of Science and Technology, said the plan had not been finalised but there is a "strong possibility" it will be implemented.

The Ministry of Science and Technology is taking the lead in the project, together with the ministries of hotels and tourism; social welfare, relief and resettlement; livestock, fisheries and rural development; construction; and education, as well as the Ministry of Cooperatives.

Input was also received from the ministries of commerce, industry, environmental conservation and forestry, border affairs, and agriculture and irrigation. In December, officials visited the regions where the institutes are to be established to hold talks with regional governments to get suggestions on how to improve the training programs.

Last April, a committee chaired by Minister for Science and Technology U Ko Ko Oo was formed to develop the technical education sector in line with the government's

national education policy. The committee has been drawing up a draft education law covering agriculture, livestock, industry, mining, energy, trading, investment and services, in consultation with partner organisations, including donors.

The Technical and Vocational Education and Training bill is due to be submitted to parliament during the upcoming session, which begins on January 19.

The committee was also put in charge of setting direction for existing state-run vocational training institutes, which had previously been run independently of each other by individual ministries.

There are more than 180 state-run education and training institutes across the country, with 24 in Sagaing Region alone. Mandalay Region has 23, while Ayeyarwady Region has seven, and Rakhine State only six.

It remains unclear whether these schools would remain under their current ministries or shifted to a single ministry, such as the Ministry of Science and Technology.

But U Win Than, the Pyithu Hluttaw representative for Thabaung in Ayeyarwady Region, said the government's "sprawling" vocational education and training system was sorely in need of an overhaul.

He said the sector's focus should be on enabling young people and those without a formal education to get the skills necessary to secure a job, while at the same time developing the human resources needed for the country's development.

"This would help to increase their income and in turn reduce poverty," he said.

The committee has also been listing training institutes run by private companies in the states and regions in an effort to meet demand from foreign investors for skilled workers. The intent is to issue certificates that would be recognised by other ASEAN countries.

- Translation by Thiri Min Htun



Memorial stones dating to the late 19th century – shortly after the final Anglo-Burmese War – have fallen into disrepair at the British military cemetery in Ywar Thar Yar, Mandalay Region. Photo: Si Thu Lwin

Mogok residents urge upkeep of historic British war cemetery

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A CENTURY-OLD burial spot for British dead in Mandalay Region has fallen into disrepair and needs a clean-up, according to those who live nearby. They say the cemetery, located just under 15 kilometres (9 miles) north of Mogok, at Ywar Thar Yar, should be properly maintained and also promoted as a tourist site.

"Since foreign visitors were allowed to visit Mogok, more and more foreigners come to the cemetery almost every day," Pan Lin ward administrator U Chit Aung said.

"But the cemetery is no longer in good condition. Soil erosion from mining works in the area are ruining the land and its memorial stones."

Myanmar hosts three well-known British World War II military graveyards, near Hanthawaddy Roundabout in Yangon, at Taukkyaung north of Yangon and at Thanbuzayat in Mon State. These hold Allied dead from

the two World Wars, and are carefully maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

The site at Ywar Thar Yar, however, goes back a half-century earlier, to the 1880s and 90s.

It memorialises soldiers who fell in the aftermath of the third and final Anglo-Burmese War, which sparked a long-running insurgency against colonial rule.

U Chit Aung said that so far no one from Myanmar or abroad has

taken official action to prevent damage to this site. If it was protected, he said, it could become an attraction and bring an economic boost to the area.

Previously off-limits, Mogok opened to foreign tourism in 2013. While visitors still require government permission, this can be attained relatively easily through Myanmar Travels and Tours.

U Maung, 72, said only 20 of the gravestones remain, and that residents have taken responsibility themselves for rejuvenating the site.

"In order to make the cemetery look beautiful like before, locals have cleared bushes and thorns as much as possible," he said, adding it would be better if authorities stepped in and took over.

Ywar Thar Yar was called Bernard-myo, after British commissioner of Upper Burma Sir Charles Bernard, until it was officially renamed by the former military government.

- Translation by Zar Zar Soe

20

Number of headstones left in the cemetery at Ywar Thar Yar, which contains the remains of British soldiers killed in the 1880s and 90s

Police arrest five with alleged links to mystery terrorist group

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YANGON police have arrested five men accused of illegally importing 4550 kilograms (10,000 pounds) of potassium nitrate, the active ingredient in gunpowder. Police say the men have links to a terrorist group and previously helped the outfit buy weapons.

Police initially arrested three men – a 55-year-old man from Kayin State's Kawkaik township; a 61-year-old man from Yangon's Mingalar Taung Nyunt township; and a 42-year-old man from Yangon's Kyauktada township – who are accused of hiding 182 25-kilogram bags of potassium nitrate in a Tarmwe township apartment. They have been charged under an import law.

The men later confessed to purchasing a number of weapons in

support of a terrorist group based in Kayin State's Myawady township that police said is called "Al Yankee". Police provided no further information on the group.

The men said they supplied the group with six AK-47 assault rifles, six M16 rifles, four carbines, two 40mm grenade launchers, one 45-calibre pistol, one rocket-propelled grenade launcher and 20 hand grenades.

Police said the trio had received weapons training in Thailand, along with two other men – a 34-year-old man from Pyinmana township in Nay Pyi Taw and a 27-year-old man from Yangon's Tarmwe township – who were also arrested.

Major Kyaw Zaw Aung of national intelligence unit Military Affairs Security opened the case on January 8.

- Translation by Thiri Min Htun

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Rights commission urges charges against Sagaing police

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POLICE bullets killed a local resident who died in a protest that turned violent last month, the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission has announced. Daw Khin Win, 57, was shot dead and nine Chinese workers and 11 villagers wounded in clashes that broke out as local villagers pursued their long-running protest against the Letpadaung copper mine project.

The commission's January 14 investigation report urged the government to take effective action against the police for failing to abide by approved security procedures in suppressing the December 22 protest, which erupted as workers for the China-backed Wanbao company tried to fence off farmland in preparation for an expansion of the project.

The report cited medical evidence that Daw Khin Win died from a gunshot wound to the head.

Now, on instructions from the authorities of Sagaing Region's Salingyi township, the local police have stepped in to suspend a court action launched by the victim's sister-in-law, Daw Khin Mar Aye. "The police are saying it isn't important if people are executed," she said.

Daw Khin Mar Aye's complaint cites U Hla Sein of Myanmar Economic Holdings (UMEHL), Gang Yee and Lao Zue of Wanbao, Police Colonel U Nay Tun of Sagaing Region, Police Major U Tin Moe of Yinnabin township, Pol Maj U Aung Kyaw of Salingyi township and Sagaing Region Minister for Security and Border Affairs Colonel Kyi Naing, Sagaing Region police were responsible for the security of the fencing operation.



Letpadaung area residents hold a poster with a photo of Daw Khin Win during a protest in Monywa on January 6. Photo: Yu Yu

U Aung Thein of Myanmar Lawyers' Network said township-level law officers had no power to suspend a murder case. "We will take the case to the next level if they continue to block it," he said, adding that about 70 local villagers were being sued by Wanbao for allegedly stealing company property in connection with the fence incident.

Salingyi police declined to comment on the case.

Ma Mee of the 88 Generation linked the situation in Salingyi

township with delays in the investigation into the shooting death of the journalist Ko Par Gyi, who died on October 4 in military custody.

She said the response to violence perpetrated by security contrasted with swift government action against activists, protesters, journalists and farmers. "There is no rule of law in this country because the government misuses the law to arrest people who resist them," she said.

The police told the commission they were forced to resort to the use

of firearms during the protest because they had inadequate equipment, such as water cannon, to disperse the crowds.

The Myanmar National Human Rights Commission set up their investigation, carried out by U Zaw Win, U Nyan Zaw and U Soe Phone Myint, on December 29. Their report concludes that the police action violated international human rights provisions governing the right to life, liberty and the security of the person.

Civil society submits suggestions on election observers

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CIVIL society organisations have submitted proposed changes to a draft code of conduct and registration process for electoral observers to the Union Election Commission.

The UEC distributed the drafts during a meeting with election-focused civil society groups in Yangon in December 2014 and invited feedback.

Daw Zin Mar Oo of the Myanmar Network For Free Elections said her organisation submitted both comments and suggested changes.

"For example, a section of the draft says observers need to register 15 days before election day. That's not enough - the period should be extended," she said.

Daw Zin Mar Oo said her organisation also disagrees with a provision that requires registered groups to submit a report after the election to the UEC outlining what they observed. "CSOs are not working under the UEC. We are independent," she said.

U Thant Sin of the New Myanmar Foundation said his group had suggested several changes but declined to give specifics.

During the December meeting, election commission officials promised to consider suggestions from civil society when finalising the draft.

The UEC said in a statement earlier this month that the election would be held in October or November.

Tatmadaw, KIA clash in Hpakant

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VIOLENT clashes broke out anew between the Tatmadaw and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) near Hpakant on January 15, several sources in the region have confirmed.

The fighting erupted as the KIA detained the Kachin State minister for transport and his three-man police bodyguard during an inspection tour of the road linking Mong Kaung, Kamine and Hpakant.

The minister has now been released, but the three police officers are still being held by the KIA.

The area is a jade-rich region of Kachin State about 130 kilometres (80 miles) northwest of Myitkyina. Local people say the Tatmadaw wants to secure the mines for Myanmar Economic Cooperation, a military-owned company.

The KIA said the fighting started at 6:30am in Kanse village, near the base of the KIA's No 6 Battalion, with an artillery attack by the Tatmadaw.

The Peace-talks Creation Group (PCG) said they were negotiating with the Kachin State government, the Kachin Independence Organisation technical team and Myanmar Peace Center (MPC) to resolve the conflict.

"We should resolve this issue quickly because residents are very afraid," said PCG coordinator U La Maing Gun Jar.

Hpakant is now quiet after the capture of the KIA battalion headquarters by the Tatmadaw, but a local resident told *The Myanmar Times* that people were afraid to leave their homes.

"Hundreds of local people are seeking the protection of the church," said U Daung Khar, the leader of the KIO technical team in Myitkyina.

'We should resolve this issue quickly because residents are very afraid.'

U La Maing Gun Jar
Peace-talks Creation Group

U Zaw Htay, a director in the President's Office, said he had no information on the clashes and declined further comment.

U Hla Maung Shwe, senior advisor at the MPC, said he doubted the clashes would affect ongoing peace talks, which are expected to resume in the last week of January.

According to the United Nations and Kachin ethnic organisations, more than 100,000 people have been displaced by the conflict, many living in isolated and impoverished IDP camps.

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Traditional medicines and a goat's head (below) are displayed for sale at stalls in Kyaikhtiyo. Photos: Thomas Kean

At Kyaikhtiyo, wildlife trade on open display



AYE SAPAY
PHYU

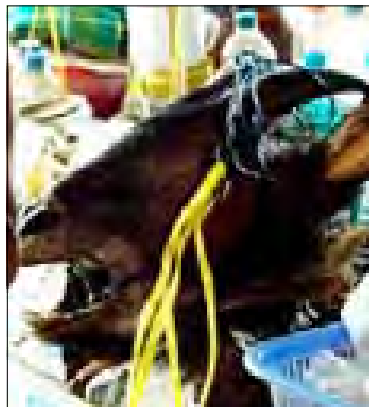
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THE end of the rainy season brings with it a business boom at Kyaikhtiyo Pagoda in Mon State, as thousands of pilgrims and tourists descend to pay homage at the site known as Golden Rock.

But between the food and souvenir shops selling bamboo toys and fruit jam, there is another, darker trade taking place, in the body parts of endangered animals.

Items on offer - normally sold as ingredients for traditional medicine - include the remains of elephants, snakes, sambar deer, barking deer and bears.

Julia Niggebrugge, an expatriate who recently visited Kyaikhtiyo with friends from Germany, said she had been "shocked" at how openly body parts of endangered species were on sale at the pagoda.



"Poaching and the trade with endangered wildlife in Myanmar is a well known fact. Nevertheless, we were shocked that it was so openly conducted in proximity to what is a Buddhist site and a major tourist attraction. Obviously, the vendors are not concerned about repercussions," she added.

She said one shop owner drew the group's attention to eight sun bear paws, and rattled off an itinerary of products for sale that resembled the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) list of endangered species.

"He went on to offer us tiger testicles - for a much higher price and which, to our relief, looked rather fake," Ms Niggebrugge said.

The sale of wildlife in Myanmar is regulated by the 1994 Protection of Wildlife and Protected Areas Laws and

the Protection of Wildlife and Protected Areas Rules enacted in 2002.

However, enforcement is weak and, in some areas, non-existent. According to the Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry, from January 2010 to September 2014 there were 129 cases of illegally selling animal parts, of which 81 were in border areas.

The trade thrives on a combination of poverty, ignorance and greed, but is also being driven by the growth of the middle class in China, where animal body parts are often used in traditional medicine.

At a workshop in Yangon last month, experts from wildlife trade monitoring network Traffic described the trade as a threat to national security and stability because of its links to the drug trade, environmental effects, global health risks and other negative impacts on society.

Authorities are aware of the problem at Kyaikhtiyo and in other parts of the country, said a spokesperson from the Nature and Wildlife Conservation Division at the Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry, but can do little to stop the wildlife trade without cooperation from the community.

"We let the shop owners know that the wildlife trade is illegal. We also discussed it several times with the [pagoda] trustees, who rent the spaces to the shops, to try and get their cooperation to control the trade, but no one cares," said the official, who asked not to be named.

Raids have also proved ineffective, he said, because vendors learn of the authorities' plans in advance and hide their genuine animal parts from view. "When we arrive at their shops, they just display the fake products," he said.

U Htay Win, the chair of the pagoda's board of trustees, said that officials at Kyaikhtiyo collaborate with forestry officials to control the wildlife trade but some traders may sell products when they are not watching.

"We do not allow the killing or selling of any wildlife in the 6698-acre religious zone, which begins near base camp," he said. "But some cases may be missed."

He said that trustees allow traditional medicine shops at Kyaikhtiyo and these can sometimes be mistaken for wildlife traders because they display snakes or the heads of rams to attract customers.

"Traditional medical shops have been existed in this area for a long time so it's hard to stop them from running," he said.

Because the concept of wildlife conservation is relatively new in Myanmar,

some organisations are trying to work with communities so they understand the consequences.

U Zau Lunn, the marine program coordinator at Flora and Fauna International, said a combination of improved law enforcement, poverty reduction and better public awareness are needed.

"Demand is not the only cause of the wildlife trade. Another important fact is [poverty]. If people have difficulties with their livelihood, they will find [other] ways to earn [income]. I believe poverty reduction activities can keep the wildlife trade down," he said.

One specific poverty reduction initiative that could have a positive impact on the wildlife trade is community-based ecotourism.

"If residents realise they can get advantages from ecotourism, they will participate in conservation work. Community-based tourism, such as home stays, should be developed," U Zau Lunn said.

'We were shocked that it was so openly conducted ... Obviously, the vendors are not concerned about repercussions.'

Julia Niggebrugge
Visitor to Kyaikhtiyo

At Kyaikhtiyo, the impact of the illicit trade in animals is clear in other ways. The area was once home to a range of animals that have since become rare due to hunting: sambar deer, barking deer and wild pig for food, and bears and snakes for medical purposes.

However, improvements to transportation over the past 20 years have made it much more accessible, leading to an explosion in visitor numbers.

While tigers are now only found in shopkeepers' stalls, U Maung Maung, a retired government official, said when he visited the pagoda about two decades ago they could be heard growling in the nearby jungle.

"We spent the night on Yethay mountain, which is next to Kyaikhtiyo Pagoda," he said. "We could hear the tigers growling at night so we dared not go out to the toilet" - *Additional reporting by Myint Kaythi*

Hidden murals revealed at Ananda

An India-backed project is removing layers of lime from Ananda Pagoda’s whitewashed walls – the legacy of an ill-advised restoration campaign



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PAINSTAKING work to strip off layers of lime to reveal ancient murals is proceeding at Bagan’s Ananda Temple, halfway into a six-year project being undertaken by the Myanmar and Indian governments. The project aims to restore and preserve the temple’s artwork – and undo the damage done by an ill-advised restoration campaign launched two decades ago.

The murals were whitewashed from 1975 as part of a military government-initiated restoration program that has been described by some archaeologists as “catastrophic”. Along with whitewashing, pagodas were renovated with commercial materials and in some cases completely rebuilt, often on top of the original foundations.

The program was partly responsi-

ble for Bagan being left off UNESCO’s World Heritage List. In 2005, a UNESCO official told the *International Herald Tribune* that “a Disney-style fantasy version of one of the world’s great religious and historical sites is being created by (the military) government. . . . They use the wrong materials to build wrongly shaped structures on top of magnificent ancient stupas.”

Government officials defended the works as being in line with the wishes of private and commercial Myanmar donors, who helped fund the program.

In 2010, the Myanmar and Indian governments signed an agreement to restore Ananda in line with international standards and more than US\$3 million has been allocated to the project, according to the Indian embassy in Yangon. A team from the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) is working at the site alongside staff from the Ministry of Culture.

Department of Archaeology, National Museum and Library deputy director U Soe Soe Lin said the Indian

team was providing help on chemical and structural conservation.

The team checks the lime-painted walls to assess the possible presence of a mural beneath. In some places, there are four layers of lime above the artwork. “In some places murals have been revealed and cleaned. There is much more to be done,” he said.

Lime has already been removed from the lower and upper precincts, a drainage channel, and the inner spaces of the four corner gates, one at each point of the compass. A waterproofing system has been installed in the upper precinct, iron grids fixed to the windows to keep out birds, and tiered roofs restored at Thagyar Paya and Tha Saung Paya, two smaller pagodas in the Ananda compound.

The work also entails repaving marble slabs at the northeast and southwest platforms, replanting the lawn at the northeast corner, and strengthening the corner walls.

The pagoda, built in 1105 AD, is one of four surviving temples in Bagan constructed during the reign of King Kyansittha (1084-1113).



A Buddha image looms over visitors inside Ananda Pagoda. Photo: Seng Mai



Murals on the walls of Ananda Pagoda have been uncovered through a project to remove layers of lime applied following an earthquake in 1975. Photo: Myo Swe Than

Historian and archaeologist Tampawaddy U Win Maung said the whitewashing of art-covered pagoda and temple walls was common not only at Bagan but also sites dating to the Inwa, Pinnya and Konbaung eras.

He said more restoration projects should be undertaken in collabora-

‘There are many priceless murals in Bagan’s temples, but most are covered with lime because some incompetent conservators had no idea what the murals meant.’

Tampawaddy U Win Maung
Historian and archaeologist

tion with the board of trustees at each pagoda to reveal murals hidden by “incompetent” conservators.

“There are many priceless murals in Bagan’s temples, but most are covered with lime because some incompetent conservators had no idea what the murals meant. All they know is to paint the temples sheer white, which destroys the authenticity,” he said.

“Removing the lime from the paintings can restore [some] of their authenticity but it is better not to [whitewash] them in the first place.”

Retired department director general U San Win said the former government’s restoration program was aimed at repairing pagodas damaged in a 1975 earthquake but the ministry did not have enough staff at the time to properly oversee the project.

“Donors were too dedicated to renovating the pagodas and they wanted to make [the entire pagoda] like new, regardless of whether there were mural paintings,” he said.

“We had a limited number [of staff] to guide the renovation project, so it ended up like this.”

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Views

Shackled press hinders Vietnam's progress



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A WEEK ago, senior members of the ruling Vietnam Communist Party gathered in Hanoi to thrash out several crucial issues, although the people of that nation and others across the region knew little about it.

That was partly because Vietnamese affairs, including the names of people and places, are difficult to convey and hence receive scant coverage. Mostly, though, it is because the country's media is harshly repressed.

The smidgen of real political, economic and military news that is officially released is fed only to the local media, which is entirely owned and controlled by the Communist Party.

A statement issued after last week's meeting said, "The government must ensure that the press is not purely run for profit, nor influenced by interest groups, nor must it be allowed to fall into private hands."

Furthermore, said the party's leadership, "The press should effectively meet the public's demand for information, while uniting society and contributing to the development of the country and its people."

Fine words, but sadly misplaced, because the ever-tightening shackles imposed by the Hanoi regime mean that neither of these meritorious goals can be realised.

That point was made in a recent article published in the foreign media by Nguyen Cong Khe, a former editor-in-chief of the best-selling daily newspaper, *Thanh Nien* (Young Adults).

Headlined "A free press in Vietnam", it was one of the boldest and most trenchant commentaries ever written by a Vietnamese journalist, who remains, at least for the moment, out of jail.

In the interest of full disclosure, let me say that I know Khe and met him several times when I ran a news bureau in Hanoi.

His name had originally been given to me by one of the party's younger and more open members, who rightly said that Khe was the bravest journalist in Vietnam.

In many ways, his recent article goes to the core of the same issues that the party's top brass sought to resolve at last week's conclave, except of course that Khe made his conclusions public - and did so in



Workers prepare a flower display ahead of Independence Day celebrations in Hanoi in 2012. Photo: AFP

the more liberal Western media. That takes some guts.

He kicked off by stating the obvious: the Communist regime's dwindling popularity, and its maladministration of the country's economy, can only be reversed if the media is allowed to operate freely.

Instead of taking this route, however, the party has gone the other way and increased the number of topics deemed sensitive, so that stories dealing with the behaviour of top leaders, land disputes and ties

The state press is reduced to printing sterilised news, which causes readers to turn to foreign publications, social media and blogs.

with China are severely circumscribed, if not totally vetoed.

Consequently, the state press is reduced to printing sterilised news, which causes readers, especially younger ones, to turn to foreign publications, social media and blogs.

As well as students, some intellectuals and even former VCP members now have their own well-known blogs where they chastise the regime and draw thousands of hits each day.

Naturally, Hanoi throws up firewalls, but they are easily circumvented and the blogosphere's views are widely disseminated, as occurred when it was discovered that last week's party meeting had held a vote to judge the performance of the 16 members of the Politburo.

No official information was given to the state media about the vote, but several internet sources soon revealed the result: strong disapproval of many party leaders.

Those receiving negative or could-do-better ratings included PM Nguyen Tan Dung, defence minister Phung Quang Thanh, public security

minister Le Hong Anh, and party boss Nguyen Phu Trong.

The online condemnations, mostly related to alleged corruption and nepotism, were rumour-based, of course, but such is the public's lack of trust in the state media that the speculative blogs carry more credence, even if their language is often intemperate.

A recent item in one popular blog called *The Work Report* described PM Dung as "ignorant, greedy, sinful and cruel"; while *The Secret Palace* asserted that "all the Communist Party leaders, without exception, are ignorant, greedy and despicable".

The content may be scabrous and scurrilous, but - in a salutary lesson to other repressive governments in this region - it tends to be believed.

For, whenever the press is censored, people pass on news at home and in teashops, and what they whisper in private is invariably condemnatory - and one day the private becomes public and regimes topple. It can take years, or decades, but it is incontestable.

In the meantime, it is no wonder that Trong approved a decision to veto publication of the result of the vote and authorised the continued, but ultimately futile, detention of bloggers and other dissidents.

Vietnam is the world's fifth-worst jailer of journalists - a record that draws castigation from governments around the world and stymies Hanoi's attempts to improve its image.

And that upsets party leaders and caused them to concede, in a rare public comment about last week's deliberations, that they must "make stronger efforts to stop political and moral degradation within the party".

Corruption and crony capitalism continue to be the prime bugbears, of course, and are to blame for Vietnam's huge public-sector debt, high rates of non-performing loans and inefficient state enterprises.

Image improvement has taken on new importance as Hanoi seeks allies around the world to help counter China's seemingly unstoppable attempt to control Vietnam's offshore territories.

But it cannot happen until the media is unshackled.

Having said that, Vietnamese reporters must accept some of the blame. Their situation is similar to that of their Indian colleagues in 1975 when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi declared a state of emergency and imposed harsh media controls.

Most reporters abjectly obeyed, causing the irate opposition leader LK Advani to remark, "You were merely asked to bend, but you chose to crawl."

Aside from Khe and a few other exceptions, journalists in Vietnam have made the same wretched choice.

What d



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IT'S not every day that an interview in *Global Times* - an English-language mouthpiece for the Chinese government - sends shockwaves through Myanmar's political world.

That's what happened recently though when the paper published an interview with Kokang leader Pheung Kya-shin, who fled his territory in 2009 when his Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army was attacked by the Tatmadaw.

Global Times removed the interview soon after it was posted to its website but this did little to stop the repercussions from spreading. It is still readable online on some websites.

In the interview, Pheung Kya-shin said that he is fighting against the Myanmar government for the rights of ethnic people and that he has managed to recruit about 1000 new soldiers since he left Kokang in 2009.

His new recruits are attacking the Tatmadaw in alliance with the Kachin Independence Army and the Ta'ang National Liberation Army. His troops have killed more than 100 government soldiers, he said, adding that he would retake his Kokang territory in cooperation with the KIA.

It would not be unusual if such an interview appeared in an independent foreign news agency. However, because it was in *Global Times*, it has prompted some to question whether it was published because the Communist Party of China and Beijing want to send a message to Myanmar.

The interview was published during tense negotiations over a draft nationwide ceasefire agreement. The perception is that China wants to show Myanmar it has power over the peace process.

At this point, it's worth looking at the history of relations with China.

Myanmar was one of the first countries to recognise the People's Republic of China after the CPC won the civil war in 1949. Subsequently, Myanmar's military forces had to drive out the remnants of the Kuomintang army, which had crossed into Shan State at the end of the war.

Relations between Myanmar and China were good at the time, as seen in the fact they were able to demarcate their shared border.

Myanmar-China relations began



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Views

Does Beijing want from Myanmar?

deteriorate after the 1962 military coup, when the dictator General Ne Win took office.

In June 1967, anti-Chinese riots broke out and a number of Chinese were killed and injured. The Chinese embassy was also attacked.

In early 1968, a Chinese volunteer army flying the flag of Burma Communist Party staged attacks in the Shan State border areas.

Because of these attacks, the BCP could establish a foothold in north-eastern Shan State.

Later, however, U Ne Win tried to improve ties with China. After Deng Xiaoping took office in 1978, China stopped its assistance to the BCP, leading to its eventual collapse.

In 1989, ethnic BCP soldiers, including Wa, Kokang and Kachin, staged a coup against the BCP leadership and formed their own groups. The leader who initiated the coup was Pheung Kya-shin.

The ethnic soldiers broke away from the BCP, formed their own groups, such as the United Wa State Army and MNDAA, maintained their hold on former BCP territory and signed ceasefires with the government.

By this time, the military dictators who seized power with a bloody crackdown in 1988 were enjoying good ties with Beijing. China completely supported them in the face of economic sanctions levelled for appalling human rights abuses.

In return, China was able to get its hands on much of Myanmar's timber, jade, natural gas and other mineral resources. It also benefited from the opening of border trade, most of which was made up of Chinese exports. While official relations with China were excellent, Myanmar people despised Beijing.

Shortly after President U Thein Sein came to power, he ordered the temporary suspension of the Myit-sone Hydropower Project, which had been approved by the former military government. While natural gas and oil pipelines linking Rakhine State with Yunnan Province were completed, Myanmar people bitterly opposed the Letpadaung copper mine.

China has also been unable to start work on a proposed Muse-Kyauppyu rail and road project, as well as the Kyauppyu Special Economic Zone that Beijing wants in order to develop



Members of the Kachin Independence Army stand to attention in Laiza during peace talks in November 2013. Photo: Boothee

its Two-Ocean Strategy.

At the same time, the government wants to sign a nationwide ceasefire but some ethnic armed groups, including the Kachin Independence Organisation, are opposed to the deal. Other groups that want to sign are reluctant to split the ethnic bloc.

In this context, the Chinese government plans a very important role. The KIO can only take on the financial means to buy weapons and other supplies. Almost all of its income comes directly or indirectly from China. Illegal gems extraction, logging and other trading is all done with China and almost all weapons are bought from China, too.

If Beijing really wants to build

peace in Myanmar, it can start by showing the KIO that while it is in conflict with the government it is totally dependent on China for its survival.

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Myanmar-China bilateral trade in the first nine months of 2014, according to official Chinese figures

But rather than encouraging ethnic armed groups to sign the ceasefire, China appears to be aiding an old warlord, Pheung Kya-shin. Some may see it as similar to China's historical support for the BCP.

It reinforces the perception within the government that Beijing only wants to gain advantage for China and its economic interests when dealing with Myanmar.

It should be noted that the Myanmar government has lately been arresting Chinese timber smugglers in Kachin State.

More than 140 Chinese nationals were arrested, including 120 in a single day. This figure is larger than all of the foreigners arrested for illegal logging over the preceding

four years.

We can't know if the decision to publish an interview with Pheung Kya-shin in state media is related to the arrest of Chinese smugglers by the Tatmadaw. If the two cases are connected, we can say it's a poor development for China-Myanmar relations.

But the fact is Beijing needs to help Myanmar build peace if it wants to implement its Two-Ocean Strategy, to bring economic benefits for both countries and to promote mutually friendly relations between people of both countries.

It shouldn't carry fire in one hand and water in the other, and it's time to review its policy toward extraction of Myanmar's natural resources.

- Translation by Thiri Min Htun



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ANALYSIS

Experts cautious on stock market appeal



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THE planned stock market will likely not be a success straight out of the starting gate, though could eventually emerge as a worthwhile destination for investment, according to experts.

While the Yangon Stock Exchange is slated to open in October 2015, it will need to prove its performance before it can capture trust – and capital – from potential investors.

A host of challenges confront the exchange, and would-be investors will need assurance the market is fair and well-regulated before they will participate. There are also few public companies that will be able to meet the listing criteria, meaning few stocks to choose from, particularly in the early years.

Asia Green Development Bank executive director U Soe Thein, who is also former managing director of Myanmar Securities Exchange Centre, said the government's performance setting up the exchange has been hasty so far, and it is unlikely to develop as quickly as some would wish.

Although the Securities Exchange Law was passed in July 2013, much of the legal structure that is to back the exchange hasn't been released. U Soe Thein said that the market will have difficulty developing until processes and rules are clear.

Regulators in particular must ensure that listed companies are transparent and investors are educated and provided with relevant information, or they risk being cheated.

Shares in YSX-listed firms will need to compete with other capital investments like bonds, as well as high interest rates on deposits offered by local banks.

"It might be the wrong message if someone says a share's value always goes up; we cannot refer only to the

situation on the New York stock exchange," he said.

Deputy finance minister U Maung Maung Thein has said market participants such as brokers and underwriters will be invited to begin applying the month.

However, the crucial rules governing the conduct and ethics of these participants have also not been released, said U Soe Thein. He added, "The market will be impacted depending on their ethics."

Myanmar Oriental Bank chair U Mya Than said it is unlikely the stock market will initially attract much money that is currently stored in bank accounts.

Bank deposit interest rates start at 8 percent, providing an attractive return, particularly in a low-inflation environment. U Mya Than said some of the

heat is now leaving the property market, meaning many are leaving their money in deposit accounts.

In order to attract money from deposit accounts into the stock market, it is important that international account standards are followed by reliable auditing firms. There also need to be choices of different companies – regional stock markets in Laos and Cambodia have had difficulty attracted interest from companies in participating, which has kept investors away.

So far Asia Green Development bank, First Myanmar Investment and Myanmar Agri-business have declared intention to list soon after the YSX's launch. Other companies are considering listing, with some putting their books in order to meet regulatory and investor scrutiny, though have not yet made a commitment to list.

Myanmar Agri-business Public Company (MAPCO) managing director U Ye Min Aung said it has been preparing to list on the YSX since the Myanmar Security Exchange Law was passed in June 2013.

"Although MAPCO could work as a public company without a need to be listed, we [the Board of Directors] want to be a big, strong company that can compete on the international market – that's why we're trying to list," he said. "But we know there are many challenges ahead."

The Central Bank of Myanmar is currently working on a reliable settlement system for the Yangon Stock Exchange, which is being developed in conjunction with Japan International Cooperation Agency.

A central bank official said it is important Myanmar puts its potential

capital to productive use.

"The Central Bank should encourage development of the capital markets, rather than encouraging investment into things like gold, which becomes dead money," he said.

Officials have sought to play up the market's importance ahead of its launch. Deputy finance minister U Maung Maung Thein said stocks are an important alternative for those concerned about inflation.

"Inflation risk is terrifying for investors, but stock values rise as much as inflation rates," he said at a seminar on the Yangon Stock Exchange on January 9. "Every business has its risks, but stocks have one of the least amounts of business risk."

U Maung Maung Thein said other assets such as government bonds, US dollars and property are often at risk of inflation. He also pointed out that while the price of gold increased only 0.07pc last year on local markets, world stock markets provided a 10 to 12pc return.

Although government officials are keen to tout the potential of the stock market, experts said investors should ultimately choose assets with a profile that suits them.

Economist U Khine Htun said real estate may be more beneficial for many at present, particularly in the short run, as the stock market will take time.

Stock markets attempt to channel savings into capital that companies can use to expand, though are at the mercy of a company's honesty and business success. Listed companies must be transparent in their figures, though only "a few companies are willing to disclose their profile, which will be a challenge in the early stages," he said.

"Stocks may be similar to gambling, but it's also predictable – the more information, the less risk."

The Yangon Stock Exchange may also benefit from tapering interest in the domestic property market, as rumors abound about a possible bubble, while other alternatives like gold are quiet. – Additional reporting by Zaw Htike and Kyaw Phone Kyaw

Stock exchanges in CLMV countries			
	Cambodia		Laos
Cambodia Securities Exchange (CSX) Opened 2011 with no listings Currently two listed companies Market capitalisation at end of 2014: US\$155 million		Lao Securities Exchange (LSX) Opened in 2011 with two listed firms Currently four listed companies Market capitalisation at end of 2013: US\$1.02 billion	
	Vietnam		Myanmar
Hochiminh Stock Exchange (HOSE) Opened in 2000 with two listed firms Currently has over 300 listed companies Market capitalisation at end of 2013: US\$39.8 billion		Yangon Stock Exchange (YSX) To open in October 2015	
Source: Compiled from exchange websites			



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Halt to liquor licences

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A CLAMPDOWN on unlicensed liquor shops and a ban on new licences have created a robust secondary market for liquor licence permits and done comparatively little to prevent problem drinking, according to businesspeople.

The Ministry of Home Affairs last year raided about 2000 liquor shops to check on licences, making it increasingly important that shops have a licence when doing business.

Yangon Region parliament also significantly raised the annual fees to be paid by licensed shops in 2014, as well as halting the issue of new licences.

Shop owners have responded by not turning in their liquor licences when they no longer need them, but instead sell them directly to a different shop through an informal secondary market.

Although Yangon Region no longer officially allows local authorities to simply transfer licences, in reality many local offices have still processed licence transfers. Some local offices also have continued selling new licences despite

the official ban.

Myanmar Retailers Association general secretary U Nay Myo Thant Tin said the current arrangement forces shop owners to look to informal sources for permits. In turn it becomes more difficult to regulate the industry, leading to more illicit activities.

Fake alcohol products are prevalent on the market. Many are shipped across from border areas and others are local products simply poured into bottles with famous international branding and revealed to fool consumers.

"Restrictions should be relieved for us, to allow us to do business in a formal way, paying regular tax," said U Nay Myo Thant Tin.

Authorities had raised fees and cut down on licences to reduce problem drinking, said Yangon Region parliamentary representative U Nay Myo Aung. However, he said restricting the number of licences may not be the best way of approaching the problem, and instead suggested following other existing rules such as not allowing liquor buyers to be under 18 years old.

"Liquor shops are now located every

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(Reg: Nos. IV/7873/2008 & IV/3341/2013)

in respect of :- “Beer, carbonated drinks (refreshing beverages), fruit juices, vegetable juices, whey beverages, extracts of hops for making beer” - Int’l Class: 32
“Alcoholic, beverages (except beer)” - Int’l Class: 33



(Reg: Nos. IV/7874/2008 & IV/3340/2013)

in respect of :- “Beer, carbonated drinks (refreshing beverages), fruit juices, vegetable juices, whey beverages, extracts of hops for making beer” - Int’l Class: 32



(Reg: Nos. IV/7348/2008 & IV/10556/2013)

in respect of :- “Edible oils and fats; margarine; milk products; milk beverages, milk predominating; lactic acid drinks; lactic acid bacteria drinks; drinking yogurts; butter; cheese; curd; cream (dairy products); yogurt; powdered milk (not for babies); condensed milk; meats for human consumption (fresh, chilled or frozen); eggs; fresh, chilled or frozen edible aquatic animals (not live); frozen vegetables; frozen fruits; processed meat products; charcuterie; meat extracts; processed fisheries products; gelatine for food; processed vegetables and fruits; tomato juice for cooking; dried vegetables; vegetable juices for cooking; dried fruits; tomato puree; weed extracts for food; jams; peanut butter; marmalade; abura-age (fried tofu pieces); kohri-dofu (freeze-dried tofu pieces); konnyaku (jelly made from devils’ tongue root); soya milk (milk substitute); tofu; natto (fermented soybeans); white of eggs; yolk of eggs; powdered eggs; processed eggs; soups; preparations for making soups; bouillon; preparations for making bouillon; bouillon concentrates; broth; broth concentrates; vegetable soup preparations; curry, stew and soup mixes; ochazuke-nori (dried flakes of laver for sprinkling on rice in hot water); fui-kake (seasoned powder for sprinkling on rice); side-dish made of fermented soybean (name-mono); raw pulses; protein for human consumption; albumen for food; casein for food; hydrolyzed protein used as a food additive or food filler” - Class: 29

“Sausage binding materials; thickening agents for cooking foodstuffs; binding agents for ice-cream (edible ices); meat tenderizers, for household purposes; preparations for stiffening whipped cream; teas; tea-based beverages; iced tea; tea-based beverages with fruit flavoring; coffee; cocoa; coffee-based beverages; cocoa based beverages; cocoa products; chicory (coffee substitute); chocolate-based beverages; cocoa beverages with milk; coffee beverages with milk; chocolate beverages with milk; vegetal preparations for use as coffee substitutes; artificial coffee; seasonings; condiments; chemical seasonings; seasonings containing meat extracts, fish extracts; wine-based seasoning sauce, sake-based seasoning sauce, hydrolyzed proteins for seasoning purposes; sauces (condiments); tomato sauce; meat gravies; ketchup (sauce); soya sauce; vinegar; dressings for salad; mayonnaise; sugar; maltose; honey; glucose for food; molasses for food; natural sweeteners; Worcester sauce; vinegar mixes; soba-tsuyu (seasonings soy sauce); white sauce; sauce for barbecued meat; cube sugar; fructose for food; crystal sugar (not confectionery); maltose for food; glucose for food; powdered starch syrup for food; starch syrup for food; spices; flavorings, other than essential oils, for beverages; aromatic preparations for food; vanilla (flavoring); mint for confectionery; essences for foodstuffs, except etheric essences and essential oil; ice; edible ices; confectionery, bread and buns; pastries; ice cream mixes; sherbet mixes; unroasted coffee; cereal preparations; farinaceous foods; almond paste; gyoza

(Chinese stuffed dumplings, cooked); sandwiches; shumai (Chinese steamed dumplings, cooked); sushi; takoyaki (fried balls of batter mix with small pieces of octopus); niku-manjuh (steamed buns stuffed with minced meat); hamburgers (prepared); pizzas (prepared); box lunches (prepared); hot dogs (prepared); meat pies (prepared); ravioli (prepared); yeast powder; koji (fermenting malted rice); yeast; baking powder; ferments for pastes; yeast in pill form, not for medical use; malt extract for food; instant confectionery mixes; mixes for making bakery goods; by-product of rice for food (sake lees); husked rice; husked oats; husked barley; flour for food; soya flour; starch for food; gluten for food” - Class: 30

“Alcoholic beverages, except beer; japanese liquors (in general); shochu (Japanese white liquor); shochu-based mixed liquor (mirin); western liquors (in general); alcoholic beverages containing fruit; chuhai; cocktails; prepared vodka cocktails; prepared shochu cocktails; distilled beverages; digesters (liqueurs and spirits); fruit extracts, alcoholic; alcoholic beverages of fruit; Chinese liquors (in general); flavored tonic liquors; alcoholic extracts; alcoholic essences” Class: 33

KIRIN

(Reg: Nos. IV/7346/2008 & IV/10559/2013)

in respect of:- “Chemicals; adhesives (not for stationery or household purposes); plant growth regulating preparations; fertilizers; ceramic glazings; priming putty; higher fatty acids; nonferrous metals; non-metallic minerals; photographic supplies; chemical test paper; artificial sweeteners; flour and starch for industrial purposes; unprocessed plastics (plastics in primary form); pulp; agricultural chemicals, except fungicides, weedkillers, herbicides, insecticides and parasiticides; chemical preparations for analyses in laboratories, other than for medical or veterinary purposes; artificial resins, unprocessed; bacterial preparations other than for medical and veterinary use; biological preparations, other than for medical or veterinary purposes; chemical preparations for scientific purposes, other than for medical or veterinary use; chemical reagents, other than for medical or veterinary purposes; meat tenderizers for industrial purposes; cultures of microorganisms other than for medical and veterinary use; preparations of microorganisms other than for medical and veterinary use; chemical additives for foods (other than for medical use); chemical agents for improving food quality (other than for medical use); ferments for chemical purposes; chemical products for the fresh-keeping and preserving of food; activated carbons; beer-clarifying and preserving agents; calcium salts; lecithin (raw material); plasticizers; curdlan chemical for the food industry; hydrolyzed proteins; enzymes for use in the food industry; enzymes for industrial purposes” - Class: 1

“Pharmaceutical, veterinary and sanitary preparations; pharmaceutical preparations for treatment of anemia; pharmaceutical preparations for treatment of leukopenia; pharmaceutical preparations for treatment of thrombocytopenia; pharmaceutical preparations for mobilization of hematopoietic progenitor cell into peripheral blood; pharmaceutical preparations for treatment of hyperphosphatemia; pharmaceutical preparations for treatment of hyperparathyroidism; pharmaceutical preparations for treatment of cancer; pharmaceutical preparations for treatment of leukemia; pharmaceutical preparations for treatment of influenza; pharmaceutical preparations for treatment of HIV; pharmaceutical preparations for treatment of myelodysplastic syndrome; pharmaceutical preparations for treatment of infectious diseases; pharmaceutical preparations for treatment of autoimmune diseases; pharmaceutical preparations for conditioning treatment prior to hematopoietic stem cell transplantation; pre-filled syringes; pharmaceutical preparations for treatment of malignant lymphoma; pharmaceutical preparations for treatment of hypertension; pharmaceutical preparations for treatment of renal parenchymal hypertension; pharmaceutical preparations for treatment of angina pectoris; pharmaceutical preparations for treatment of allergy; pharmaceutical preparations for treatment of epilepsy; pharmaceutical preparations for thrombolytics; pharmaceutical preparations for improvement of gastrointestinal motility; pharmaceutical preparations for improvement of circulatory insufficiency;

pharmaceutical preparations for treatment of enuresis; pharmaceutical preparations for treatment of parkinson’s disease; pharmaceutical preparations for treatment of bowel disease; pharmaceutical preparations for treatment of cancer pain; blood coagulation inhibitor; air freshening preparations; depuratives; bouillons for bacteriological cultures; media for bacteriological cultures; vitamin preparations; cultures of microorganisms for medical and veterinary use; diagnostic preparations for medical purposes; thermal water; pharmaceutical preparations sold in pre-filled syringes; chemical reagents for medical or veterinary purposes; fungicides; insecticides; herbicides; oiled paper for medical purposes; sanitary masks; pharmaceutical wafer; gauze for dressing; empty capsules for pharmaceuticals; eye patches; ear bandages; menstruation bandages; menstruation tampons; sanitary napkins; sanitary panties; absorbent cotton; adhesive plasters; bandages for dressing; clodion for pharmaceutical purposes; breast-nursing pads; paper for mustard plasters; gum for medical purposes; moleskin for medical purposes; lint for medical purposes; wadding for medical purposes; adhesive tapes for medical purposes; adhesive bands for medical purposes; cotton for medical purposes; surgical tissues; scapulars for surgical purposes; vulnerary sponges; bunion pads; compresses; antiseptic cotton; chemical conductors for electrocardiograph electrodes; corn rings for the feet; first-aid boxes, filled; aseptic cotton; dental materials; alloys of precious metals for dental purposes; porcelain for dental prostheses; molding wax for dentists; dental amalgams; dental mastics; dental lacquer; dental abrasives; teeth filling material; bracelets for medical purposes; anti-rheumatism rings; surgical implants (living tissues); articles for headache; incontinence diapers; fly catching paper; mothproofing paper; lactose (milk sugar); powdered milk for babies; albuminous milk; semen for artificial insemination; dietetic beverages adapted for medical purposes; dietetic foods adapted for medical purposes; food for babies; malted milk beverages for medical purposes; soft drinks for babies; fruit juice for babies; edible plant fibers, non-nutritive” - Class: 5

“Medical machines and apparatus; infusion pumps for medical purposes; injection device for pharmaceuticals; injectors for medical purposes; injection needles; blood transfusion apparatus or device; infusion apparatus or devices for therapeutic purposes; medical infusion connectors; lure connectors; pre-filled syringes; pacifiers for babies; ice bag pillows for medical purposes; triangular bandages; supportive bandages; surgical catguts; feeding cups for medical purposes; dropping pipettes for medical purposes; teats; medical ice bags; medical ice bags holders; baby bottles; vacuum bottles for nursing; cotton swabs; finger guards for medical purposes; feeding bottle valves; feeding bottle teats; water bags for medical purposes; contraceptives (apparatus); artificial tympanic membranes; prosthetic or filling materials (not for dental use); esthetic massage apparatus for industrial purposes; electric massage apparatus for household use; gloves for medical purposes; urinals for medical purposes; bed pans; commode chairs; ear picks” - Class: 10

the goods in Class: 29 and 30 as shown above under Reg. No. IV/10556/2013,

“Wreaths of natural flowers; fishing baits; hops (unprocessed); edible aquatic animals (live); edible seaweeds; vegetables, fresh; tea leaves (unprocessed); sugar crops; fruits (fresh); copra; malt (not for food); foxtail millet (unprocessed); proso millet (unprocessed); sesame (unprocessed); buckwheat (unprocessed); corn (unprocessed grain); Japanese baynard millet (unprocessed); wheat, barley and oats (unprocessed); unprocessed rice; sorghum (unprocessed); grains (cereals); protein for animal consumption; pet food; beverages for pets; animal foodstuffs; additives to fodder, not for medical purposes; yeast for animals; seeds and bulbs; trees; grasses; turf (natural); dried flowers; seedlings; saplings; flowers (natural); pasture grass; bonsai (potted dwarfed trees); live mammals, fish (not for food); birds and insects; silkworm eggs; cocoons for egg production; eggs for hatching; urushi tree seeds; rough cork; palm tree leaves (unworked or partly worked material); aromatic sand for pets (litter)” - Class: 31



(Reg: Nos. IV/7347/2008 & IV/10560/2013)

Continued to page 27



Cars wait in line for the Max Energy petrol station on Thein Phyu Street. Photo: Yu Yu

Petrol station problems lead to constant Thein Phyu queues



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THERE is nearly always a line-up of cars waiting at the Max Energy petrol station on Thein Phyu Road. Often the queue stretches a few hundred metres south along the street, as drivers patiently wait for a chance to fill up.

It's not location that drivers say attracts them to the station - while there are fewer stations downtown than other areas, there are several stations around the corner. It's also not price - the station's rates are similar to others in the area.

Instead, what's drawing the drivers to the queue on Thein Phyu

Road is quality.

The Max station has gained a reputation as an honest broker, not mixing water in its fuel, according to drivers.

'If station staff do not take care of storage, there will be moisture.'

U Kyaw Zay Myint
Max Energy

"I buy my petrol from the station because it's of good quality," said Ko Zin Myo, a Tarmwe township taxi driver. "Other shops mix in water

and that damages the car."

While word has spread among taxi drivers and car owners that the station is honest and not mixing water into its fuel, representatives from Max Energy say the problem people encounter at different pumps is generally not related to honesty.

Max Energy executive director U Kyaw Zay Myint said in an interview that since the combination of water and fuel do not make a homogenous mixture, it is usually not true that stations are deliberately mixing the two. Rather than deliberately trying to bilk customers, poorly stored petrol can capture moisture and debris, which causes the problems for car engines.

"If station staff do not take care of storage, there will be moisture in the fuel," he said.

U Kyaw Zay Myint said Max Energy is careful with the petrol it imports, with shipments coming

directly from Singapore, but other shops are not always so meticulous.

While drivers say they are queuing at Max to avoid watered-down fuel at some other stations, it is actually poorly-stored petrol they are avoiding.

Government officials have said they are taking aim at shops with poor-quality fuel. From September 2012 to June 2013, inspections teams caught 65 filling stations with impure fuel, out of 195 tested stations

In November 2014, deputy energy minister U Aung Htoo announced the ministry had imported six mobile fuel laboratories that will carry out roving inspections through the 1300 stations in the country.

Citizens will be able to complain about specific stations and then have them inspected by the teams, he added.

No relief yet for air travellers

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PLUNGING jet fuel prices have not yet brought relief to domestic airfare, even as some international carriers have begun cutting ticket prices.

Officials from Myanmar Airways International, Asian Wings and Yangon Airways all said they have not yet cut ticket prices despite crude oil's drop by over 50 percent last year, which has also led to a decline in jet fuel costs.

Myanmar Airways International is already offering tickets at promotional rates, so cannot immediately reduce tickets, said its marketing and public relations manager Daw Aye Mra Tha.

"We will reduce prices a little if the fuel price decline continues," she said.

Daw Aye Mra Tha said that since the airline - unlike most firms in the market - competes on international routes, it must keep up with foreign firms.

Myanmar Airways International purchases its jet fuel from the different locations its services, including Singapore, Bangkok and Myanmar - where government-owned Myanmar Petroleum Products Enterprise holds a monopoly on jet fuel.

"We fill up at the convenient airport. Sometimes MPPE is more reasonably priced than fuel at foreign airports," she said. Daw Aye Mra Tha added that declining fuel prices will on the whole be good for airlines.

However, experts say domestic airlines have been reluctant to reduce ticket prices even though the cost of jet fuel is on the decline.

U Min Thein, joint secretary general of the Union of Myanmar Travel Association, said domestic airline tickets are expensive due to a shortage of aircraft in the country, while existing planes often have small capacities. He added airlines should look at reducing ticket prices as jet fuel costs decline.

"If hotel rooms and air tickets became cheaper, more tourists will come to Myanmar," he said.

Some foreign airlines servicing Myanmar say they have reduced prices.

Vietnam Airlines will cut its fuel surcharge it adds to each ticket for its Yangon to Japan flights on February 1, said the firm's sales and marketing executive Daw That Hninn Wai.

"The new fuel surcharge will be US\$194 for a round trip, from \$256 currently," she said.

Continued from page 26

in respect of:- the goods in Class: 30 as shown above under Reg. No. IV/10556/2013,

"Beer; low malt beer; non-alcoholic beverages; carbonated drinks (refreshing beverages); aerated water; mineral water; seltzer water; waters (beverages); fruit flavored water; non-alcoholic fruit juice beverages; soy-based beverages, not being milk substitutes; extracts of hops for making beer; whey beverages; vegetable juices (beverages); non-alcoholic fruit extracts; preparations for making beverages; preparations for making liqueurs; syrups for beverages; pastilles for effervescing beverages; powders for effervescing beverages" - Class: 32

the goods in Class: 33 as shown above under Reg. No. IV/10556/2013.

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Dated: 19th January, 2015



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Overcoming ridicule to snap up selfie sticks



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LOVE them or hate them, everyone has an opinion on the selfie stick.

The devices allow people to take photos of themselves with their phones at more than arm's length, improving the snapshot. Some mobile users are snapping them up, while others see them as an object of ridicule – though so far there haven't been enough naysayers to stop the selfie stick boom.

Shop owners say the sticks are catching on in Myanmar just as they are in the rest of the world.

Users, especially young people, enjoy taking photos of themselves with different backgrounds to share on social media. The selfie stick makes it easier to include more people in a group photo or get the picture-perfect background by extending the camera up to 60 centimetres further away from a selfie-taking subject than would otherwise be possible. Although the photos might be better as a result, users must battle through the perception that they look a little ridiculous.

"I like my selfie stick because it lets me take photos without help. If I'm travelling alone, this stick helps make memories and is my good partner," said Ma Cho Lae Yee, 18.

Other users like them because they cut out the photographer – often a friend with poor photography

skills – and allow them to take the photo themselves.

A selfie stick – generally made in China and imported to Myanmar – costs about K10,000 at local shops, though different models range between K8000 and K20,000.

Ko Htun, owner of one Yangon mobile shop, said there is more business in selfie sticks compared to other phone accessories like cases and headsets.

"This month, selfie stick sales have been brisk," he said. "Youth are buying and selling them faster than you think."

'Sometimes I see young girls taking 7 or 10 photos ... so much that it makes me go cross-eyed.'

Daw San San Htwe

Not on-board with the selfie trend

It is not only Yangon that saw a sudden spike in sales of selfie sticks recently. Ko Zarni, owner of Tar Tar Mobile shop and also a distributor of products outside Yangon, said they have been catching on in other places.

Ko Zarni said he sells about 30 sticks a week, with the majority of buyers being young men and women between 18 and 25.



A grim-faced photographer wields a selfie stick in Bagan. Photo: Thiri Lu

Not everyone is so keen on the new devices, however.

Daw San San Htwe, 35, said it's a young person's tool. She added it is a little embarrassing to even watch them in action.

"I don't like taking selfie photos, let alone using a selfie stick," she said. "Sometimes I see young girls taking 7 or 10 photos in different

positions in a restaurant, so much that it makes me go cross-eyed."

Others are keen on selfies, but haven't yet come to terms with the addition of a stick.

Ma Nay Chi, 20, said she often sneaks a selfie when no one is watching, but is too shy to wield a stick in the public's view, unless joined by friends.

Still, a stroll around Myanmar's scenic places or gatherings of friends is likely to reveal a selfie stick. Mobile shop sellers hope the trend is here to stay, and that other mobile users can overcome their fear of embarrassment when using a selfie stick in favour of taking that perfect picture destined for social media.

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Budget shortfall to exceed forecast

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THE government will rake in less revenue for the current fiscal year than it initially expected, members of the Financial Commission said in Nay Pyi Taw on January 14.

Increase state revenue has been a central goal of officials since the new government took office in the 2011-12 fiscal year, when it generated revenues of about K6 trillion (US\$5.8 billion).

This year, government accounts are likely to underwhelm particularly due to declining receipts from natural resources.

"The amount of revenue is not as we expected this year because income from natural gas declined due to fluctuations in international oil, the telecom operators have finished paying their license fees, electricity subsidisation continues even though power generation is expensive, and the trade deficit," said President U Thein Sein during the meeting, according to state media.

About K16.9 trillion (US\$16.4 billion) will be collected this fiscal year, a slight improvement on last year's K14.2 billion, but not as much as previously hoped.

The January 14 meeting by the government's Financial Commission discussed the coming year's budget, aiming to put forward a report to the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw in the coming session. The shortfall arrives as the government faces difficulties increase salaries for government employees, compensation for Hluttaw representatives, increasing the education and health budgets and investing in infrastructure, the president said.

Civil servant and parliamentary salaries are due to be increased on 1 April, at the start of the 2015-16 fiscal year. The government has also planned to spend K1.16 trillion on education and K709 billion on health this year, from K892 billion and K485 billion last year. It has also pledged to implement free high school education this year, while free middle- and primary school has already been announced.

Myanmar consistently faces a budget deficit.

The current year's fiscal deficit is expected to be about K2.5 trillion, as expenditures are set to hit about K19.4 billion.

Caution urged before joining multilevel marketing firms

While some multilevel marketing companies offer legitimate ways for people to get involved in business, others stray dangerously close to pyramid schemes – and in Myanmar it's usually buyer beware



JEREMY MULLINS

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EARNING a modest monthly wage of US\$250 has left Ma Poe Poe searching for opportunities to supplement her income from different work.

She had been looking into other sideline jobs, but the offer that came from a multilevel marketing company seemed a perfect fit.

After investing about \$1000 in products at a firm, she became a member of the company's sales force and began selling in her free time.

"I believed my life would get better in a short time by investing in multilevel marketing, so I made that investment," said Ma Poe Poe.

She is one of thousands across Myanmar who have joined multilevel marketing firms. Yet the business model is both successful and controversial – not just here, but around the world.

Multilevel marketing operates by having individuals sell products, often through direct sales. Typically, distributors earn commissions not only for their sales but also sales made by the people they recruit, according to the United States' Federal Trade Commission.

Yet not all multilevel marketing firms are legitimate businesses.

"If the money you make is based on your sales to the public, it may be a legitimate multilevel marketing plan. If the money you make is based on the number of people you recruit and your sales to them, it's not. It's a pyramid scheme," the commission's website says.

"Pyramid schemes are illegal [in the United States], and the vast majority of participants lose money."

Despite these warnings, Ma Poe Poe has joined Unicity, one of many multilevel firms that have set up in Myanmar in recent years.

Her current income from Unicity reaches up to \$300 a month. This comes from her sales, but also depends on how many people in her downline – people she has recruited

– have sold products.

Ma Poe Poe hopes that this will steadily increase to the one point where she can quit her current job and move to marketing full-time, although she is reluctant to make the jump just yet.

Unicity International grew out of two merged American nutrition companies that have a combined operating history of 250 years, Myanmar representatives said in an email to *The Myanmar Times*. It officially opened in Myanmar on December 13, 2014, though representatives have previously been in the country.

'A Myanmar young entrepreneur has to literally do his or her own due diligence.'

Eric Rose
Lawyer

It manufactures and sells a range of nutritional products, and relies on word of mouth and individual entrepreneurs rather than mass-market advertising and a big retail model, it said.

The firm insists it follows all government regulations and internationally recognised best selling practices. It also maintains a 100 percent return policy which "means that there is little, if any, risk for anyone interested in becoming a Unicity Distributor".

"Dishonest people and companies in any industry are less likely to flourish where good companies like Unicity are allowed to operate and

compete freely," it said. "The bottom line is that Unicity's philosophy is 'to make life better', not take advantage."

Indeed, business observers say multilevel marketing can be a great job creator, particularly for young entrepreneurs with few assets.

"It's been shown it's just another way of being able to distribute products. This is not a magic wand. It is a way of being able to set yourself in business with a proven product and very little capital," said Eric Rose, lead director at Herzfeld Rubin Meyer and Rose legal firm.

But he also cautioned the potential employees must be careful – particularly in Myanmar, which doesn't always have the legal protections other countries enjoy.

As is the case in other countries transitioning from non-market economies, Myanmar lacks the laws to protect the interests of small investors, which is what members of multi-level firms are, he said.

"A Myanmar young entrepreneur has to literally do his or her own due diligence. That means asking questions, finding out specifically who they are, talking to other people who are involved in that business," Mr Rose said. "Is it just [another] way to flip product?"

While Myanmar has passed a consumer protection act, there is much more to be done to protect everyday consumers.

"One has to be very careful understanding what these organisations are and what they are not," he said.

Anecdotal evidence indicates there are a range of multilevel and network marketing firms operating in Myanmar. Besides Unicity, representatives of up to 10 companies like Aim Star Network and Jeunesse Global have been advertising in the country.

U Aung Kyaw, an economics lecturer at Monywa University, said Myanmar people are interested in multilevel marketing for two reasons.

One is a lack of employment opportunities: Some view marketing jobs as an opportunity to escape from poverty. The other is that people, particularly those who are not well-educated, are willing to trust a high-status individual like a doctor, who signs them up for the programs.

Some developing countries have avoided multilevel marketing and have limited them by law, he added.

U Aung Kyaw said he is particularly concerned that some unscrupulous companies could be selling defective and possibly dangerous products, such as goods claiming medical benefits. He urged the Food and Drug Administration and the Ministry of Commerce to focus more attention on customer protection issues. Mr Rose said it will be a piece-by-piece process to improve consumer protection in Myanmar.

Although Ma Poe Poe is happy so far with her experience, not all are so enamoured.

Ma Tin Zar, who lives in North Okkalapa township, worked in multilevel marketing for five years, selling cosmetic goods.

Although initially successful, she said new owners took over and selling products became difficult. In the end, she said, "I lost money from the company."

Ma Tin Zar said she is now sceptical of the schemes, and notices that many firms seem more focused on attracting new members than selling goods.

The practice has also spread outside of Yangon.

Ko Myat Thu, a resident of Zalon village in Rakhine State, said he has multilevel marketers in his village as well.

Many are brokers and traders from town, and seem to prey on villagers who are not particularly well educated.

"Some farmers lost interest in farming and switched to just marketing, selling their farms to join the businesses because they hoped they would become rich," he said.

He estimates that up to half of the 700 households in his village have at least one member who has joined a multilevel marketing company, with others watching and wavering about whether or not to join.

Ko Myat Thu counts himself as a sceptic, however.

"I do not believe multilevel marketing will make our lives better in a short time," he said. "My cousins and relatives have done this job for over three years, but it hasn't changed their life."

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IN BRIEF

Mega-dams worth the cost, says Cambodian leader
Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen defended controversial Chinese-funded hydro-electric dams as he opened the energy-starved country's largest-ever power plant, despite warnings from activists of environmental costs.
China Huadian Corporation has invested nearly US\$500 million to build the 338-megawatt dam in Stung Russey Chrum Krom, a protected forest area in the southwestern province of Koh Kong.
At the plant inauguration the premier justified his government's decision to use dams to bring power to the country, where only around a quarter of households have access to reliable electricity.

SpiceJet founder buys in to save the struggling airline
Beleaguered Indian budget airline SpiceJet announced plans for a change of ownership in a bid to turnaround the carrier's fortunes after months of struggling to stay afloat.
Co-founder Ajay Singh has agreed to buy a majority stake in SpiceJet from its billionaire owner Kalanithi Maran and his KAL Airways as part of plans to revive the no-frills airline, one of India's leading carriers.
The deal will still need approval from the civil aviation ministry as part of SpiceJet's "reconstruction and revival" plan, the airline's board said in a January 15 statement to the Bombay Stock Exchange.

World Bank optimistic on developing countries
The World Bank predicted a pick-up in economic growth for developing countries, spurred by falling oil prices and despite a slight slowdown in global engine China.
Developing countries' growth in gross domestic product (GDP) – the broad measure of a country's output of goods and services – was expected to hit an annual pace of 4.8 percent in 2015, up from 4.4pc last year, and surge to 5.3pc in 2016, according to the bank's latest forecasts.

Taiwan infuriated by Chinese plans for overflights
Taiwan slammed a unilateral move by China to open four new flight routes over the Taiwan Strait as "unacceptable" Tuesday, saying it risked allowing planes to fly too close to aircraft on existing routes.
China on January 12 announced it would start flying four new routes from coastal Zhejiang province and the cities of Fuzhou and Xiamen in Fujian province over the Taiwan Strait.
While China had consulted with Taiwan over one of the new routes, M503 – without reaching an agreement – it had not discussed the other three flight routes W121, W122 and W123, due to start operations from March 5.

Swiss unleash franc tsunami
The Swiss franc surged the most on record and reached its strongest-ever level against the Euro as cash flooded over the border after the Swiss National Bank removed a cap on the currency on January 15 that had held back inflows for more than three years.
The SNB had imposed its limit on the exchange rate as an exodus from euro assets during the region's debt crisis in 2011 strengthened the franc and raised the prospect of deflation. While defending the cap pushed up Switzerland's foreign-exchange reserves, the limit was pierced only once, in April 2012.
"Very few saw this coming," said Neil Jones, head of hedge-fund sales at Mizuho Bank Ltd. "The market price action suggests that without a floor, euro-swiss has no bid and will likely push lower."

– Bloomberg

MACAO

Casinos double down for 2015

GAMBLING billionaire Lawrence Ho expects Macau's casino revenue to grow in 2015, betting his new resort and other openings will help lift the industry from last year's doldrums.
Melco Crown Entertainment, headed by Mr Ho and his Australian billionaire partner James Packer, on January 12 said it plans to woo vacationing Chinese with a family entertainment centre it will open with Time Warner at its new US\$3.2 billion Macau casino. This is part of the company's plan to shift resources away from high rollers, Mr Ho said.
Casino operators including Melco, Galaxy Entertainment Group Ltd and Sands China Ltd are targeting mass market gamblers from China as the city diversifies its economy that largely relies on casino gambling for government revenue. Macau suffered the worst year in 2014 as Chinese President Xi Jinping's anti-graft drive turned away high-end players who contributed to a majority of the city's gambling takings.
"If you look at China, how many more billionaires are going to drop out of trees in the next 10 years?" said Mr Ho, Melco's chief executive officer and co-chair. "It is going to be the rise of the middle-income earnings demographics. These are the younger people who want to travel,



Residential and commercial buildings can be seen in Macau, top, from the Zhuhai district of China. Photo: Bloomberg

experience the world."
Melco rose 1.2 percent to close at HK\$63.2 in Hong Kong trading on January 13. Galaxy led the rally in other casino stocks with shares up 2.7pc.
Mr Ho, the son of 93-year-old Macau gambling mogul Stanley Ho, expects the casino industry to recover in the second half of the year and end

has been curbing money flows to the territory over concern that illegal funds are being taken out of the mainland. It's restricting the use of China UnionPay Co's debit cards at casinos and tightening rules on junket operators, the middlemen that provide credit and arrange trips for Chinese high rollers.
Mr Ho said he hasn't seen any further restrictions and that China's anti-corruption campaign "is directed at government officials" which is affecting consumption appetite of people from the mainland. "It's a good time to stay low-profile," he said.
"Once people figure out what the new normal is, then ultimately the population base and the consumption power is so great that it's all going to come back," Mr Ho said. "The problem is nobody knows what is the new normal right now."
The company hopes Macau will allow it to put more gambling tables with such non-gaming elements at the new resort in line with government guidelines, he said.
Chinese president Xi had called on Macau, the only Chinese city that legally allows casino gambling, to nurture new growth areas and turn the city into a world tourism and leisure centre.

– Bloomberg

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AUNG SHIN

koshumgtha@gmail.com

WHAT should the fuel price be?

Drivers have heard tales of oil's tumble on international markets, falling by 50 percent a barrel last year. Yet prices at the domestic pumps have not fallen nearly as far, losing about a quarter of their value in 2014, eliciting tea-shop talk about whether drivers are getting a fair deal.

Industry insiders say there are a range of factors that influence local petrol prices. While crude prices are a key component, demand from all the new cars, investment dollars and logistical concerns are also of prime importance.

Myanmar importers generally buy fuel with short-term contracts due to a lack of storage space. This means importers are more exposed to international costs.

Brent, a benchmark crude, dropped to US\$48 a barrel early last week, a 5-and-a-half year low. It had previously spent much of 2014 above \$100 a barrel on international markets.

There has been talk by commentators that this drop ought to drive fuel-importing economies, such as Asian countries. For drivers, however, they are most concerned with when the prices are coming down.

Low-grade fuel costs K180 a litre less now than it did six months ago,



MYAT NOE OO

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selling in Yangon last week at around K730 a litre.

U Kyaw Zay Myint, executive director of Max Energy, said the domestic market is based not only on the international price of crude, but a range of other factors.

"Our petrol is imported from foreign countries. We have to think about these charges. That's why the price is falling not as much as it is worldwide, even though it has declined somewhat," he said.

With minimal refining capacity in the country, finished petroleum products must be imported from places such as Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand.

About 173.621 million gallons of petrol and 293.644 million gallons of diesel were imported from January 1, 2014 to January 5, 2014, according to Myanmar Petroleum Products Enterprise.

"It's hard to say what the price at the pumps should be," said U Myint Zaw, a director at Myanmar Petroleum Products Enterprise, a state-owned firm.

While previously the government controlled the industry, it privatised state-own petrol stations and began allowing the imports and distribution of most petroleum products in 2010.

Myanmar Petroleum Products Enterprise currently handles only government's supply, with the price for most consumers out of its hands.

"We can't fix the fuel prices at private stations. It's private business. They can import and sell fuel at whatever prices they like."

"It can be said the public's fuel price is not lowered to the most suitable price [at present]," he said.

The state firm still imports petroleum products to supply the government's needs, which requires imports of nearly four million gallons annually. It then sells surplus to the private sector, though not a large amount.

The Myanmar Petroleum Trade Association is the industry body that regulated licences to import and distribute fuel. The association is chaired by businessperson U Tay Za, and counts other prominent entrepreneurs on its central executive committee. It currently has about 70 members allowed to import and distribute petroleum products.

Association secretary U Win Myint said the association itself does not

control prices, but rather the individual companies themselves which determine prices.

"Anyone can take part in this business after applying for an import licence," he said. "Our association aims to deliver advantages for the country and its entrepreneurs. We handle the quality and quantity of the fuel market, and would like to be allowed to sell more premium products."

U Win Myint said the price is determined not only by the cost of imports, but also transportation, storage and tax. Some firms are also able to take advantage of economies of scale, while other smaller firms often rely on wholesales.

"Actually, the price isn't falling as people expected because there is not enough competition," he said, pointing to challenges gaining investment in the infrastructure needed to import and distribute fuel.

There are 1163 private filling stations in the country, according to data from Myanmar Petroleum Products Enterprise. Yet with much of the supply chain outside Myanmar's grasp, it can be difficult grasping value from falling oil.

Max Energy's U Kyaw Zay Myint said adding refining capacity through the planned Thanlyin refinery renovations will go a long way to improving the situation.

"If the refinery is here the price will go down, and we can compete with worldwide price," he said.

Until this happens, though, local drivers looking for a cheap fill-up are reliant on international forces.

'We can't fix the fuel prices at private stations. It's private business.'

U Myint Zaw
MPPE

INTERNATIONAL companies will be invited to join state-owned Myanmar Petroleum Products Enterprise (MPPE) in running its existing facilities, according to a senior official.

Tenders for joint venture partnerships with MPPE are in the planning stage, with announcements expected soon, as state firms come under growing pressure to modernise.

"We are going to announce a tender for joint venture partnerships with foreign companies, and they can look at our existing facilities," said an MPPE official. "It will happen soon."

MPPE is one of the largest downstream players in the country. Parts of it have been privatised, such as its state-owned petrol stations which were sold in 2010, while its monopoly on fuel imports has been broken, with foreign companies allowed to enter the business. The firm once has over 260 stations, but was left with only 12 after the 2010 privatisations. Since then, about 70 private companies have been licenced to import and distribute petroleum products.

Currently, MPPE is handling the government's supply of petroleum products as well as selling surplus products to private companies.

"We will be able to extend our business facilities with the joint venture with a foreign firm," the official said. MPPE also recently announced Singapore's Puma Energy was the winner of a tender to join it in the jet fuel business. — Aung Shin

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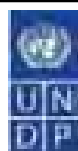


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For further details, please see the vacancy announcement posted at UN billboard, No.6, Natmuk Road, Yangon and also at UNFPA website (<http://myanmar.unfpa.org>)

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Job Watch

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HONG KONG

Li Ka-Shing losing status as bellwether, says state media

A CHINESE newspaper close to the ruling Communist Party on January 14 said Hong Kong tycoon Li Ka-Shing's days as a "bellwether" for China's economy were probably over, down-playing a major corporate reshuffle.

Billionaire Mr Li, 86, announced a sweeping re-arrangement of his vast business empire in January.

Hong Kong developer Cheung Kong Holdings, his flagship firm, will take over its separately quoted subsidiary Hutchison Whampoa and the combined entity will be split into two, creating a focused property firm and an international conglomerate, including interests in telecoms, utilities and ports.

Investors cheered the deal, sending both firms' shares jumping on January 12, but China's *Global Times* tabloid said Mr Li has previously sold some real estate assets on the mainland and "increased his holdings in Europe".

It cited "rumours" the corporate revamp signals he is about to remove assets from China and Hong Kong in a huge bet against yuan-denominated assets - and insisted such a move would mean little given changes to China's economy and the rise of a new class of entrepreneurs, such as the founder of Internet giant Alibaba.

"Li has created miracles for his generation, but the younger generation of Jack Ma may be more capable of catching up with the changes happening in China and possess the ability to make adventurous interactions," the paper said in an editorial.

"Li's investment is a drop in the ocean compared to the huge size of the Chinese economy," it added. "There have been numerous pessimistic predictions about China, but they all proved to deviate from reality."



Li Ka-shing gestures, though not at China state media. Photo: AFP

Mr Li had been Asia's richest man since 2012, but was surpassed by China's Internet entrepreneur Ma in December, *Bloomberg News* reported.

The paper praised Mr Li for having contributed to China's economic reforms and opening to the outside world, but said his role as a weathervane has likely withered.

"He is worthy of the nickname 'Superman,' but he may not be suitable as a bellwether for the future," it said. "We should now look to other benchmarks."

Mr Li, who is worth US\$28.2 billion according to Bloomberg's Billionaires Index, started out in business as a plastic flower-maker.

The revamp is also expected to pave the way for Mr Li's retirement and comes amid speculation of a handover to his son Victor. - AFP

MANDALAY

Tada-U developers sta

Large-scale project attempts to overcome difficulties raising funds and acquiring land



MYAT NYEIN AYE

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CONSTRUCTION is now under way at a large project near Mandalay aiming to first service the city's growing tourism industry.

Developers Myanmar Tourism Development Co were given the green light to start the project in Tada-U township, Mandalay Region in 2012, though construction had not begun because of the time it took to purchase land.

Work has now begun on the 2000-acre project, which is slated to include a hotel zone along with industrial, residential and park land, according to the firm's chair U Yan Win.

'We agreed to take the compensation money and we welcome the project ... Acutally our land is not good for agriculture.'

U Hla Thein
Local villager

"We have been negotiating with local villagers for two years to obtain land since we received a permit from the Mandalay Region government," he said. Myanmar



Work has begun at the Tada-U site in Mandalay Region. Its developers have big dream

Tourism Development has now acquired the rights to 2180 acres from villagers in return for compensation, though had initially targeted acquiring 5422 acres when it announced the project in 2012.

The first step of the large development is a Hotel Zone, which will be built over the next two years. U Yan Win said up to 20 high-quality hotels could eventually be located at the site.

The development is located

south of Mandalay near tourism sites, such as the historical cities of Innwa, Sagaing and Amarapura. The project hopes to take on a local feel, in part by developing only 65 percent of the total area, with the rest left fallow.

Development was slated to cost about US\$560 million in total when it was announced in 2012. As a public company, it has been selling shares, and has so far raised about K50 billion (\$48.5 million).

HOUSE OF THE WEEK

Location key to Kan Street home

Transportation is so important for happy Yangon living. Seeking to reduce time spent in a traffic jam is a major concern for nearly everyone, and unless you're nocturnal or own a blimp, that boils down to location.

Pyay Road is a major north-south throughfare, and this week's house is on Kan Street, which connects Pyay with Insein Road, right near Inle Lake.

Although it's almost never easy to commute during the day, a Kan Street location is a strong choice for getting where you want to be.

The house is two-and-a-half stories, not overly large for a home but big enough for a family of five people. There's also some room in the compound to be used for a garden or a playground, and a garage for a vehicle.

The seems a bit worn from the exterior, but inside it is grandly decorated. The rooms are neatly constructed and well-decorated - and also come fully furnished. The teak parquet flooring is a particular draw.

The compound is 4200 square feet, while the home's interior has not shortage of space. There are four large bedrooms, two small bed-



Location : Kan Street, lane off of Pyay Road, near Inya Lake
Price : \$8000 per month (negotiable)
Contact : Estate Myanmar Enterprise Ltd.
Phone : 09-43118787

rooms, five bathrooms and a kitchen. The owners are asking US\$8000 a month to rent. It's a lot, but you're also paying for a great location, and will be a good match for employees of large firms and the more successful variety of entrepreneur.

- Myat Nyein Aye

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“The [petrol] price isn’t falling as people expected because there is not enough competition.”

- U Win Myint, Myanmar Petroleum Trade Association

Cambodia’s PM marks 30 years as country’s leader

WORLD 40

rt on hotel zone

to build a major project in Mandalay Region



ms, though they’re starting with a hotel zone first. Photo: Myat Nyein Aye

Mandalay hotel zone chair U Myint Aung said the faster the firm is able to acquire land, the quicker the project can be developed.

“We give K10 million in compensation for 1 acre,” he said. If farmers hand over 3 acres, they will get 2400 square feet of space in the project area.”

The company had initially offered K5 or K7 million an acre, but has upped its offering to attract more villagers to sell their land.

Local villagers generally told *The Myanmar Times* they are in favour of the project.

U Hla Thein, a villager who has sold his land to the company, said his land had not been particularly good for farmer, adding the project will hopefully improve the area.

“We agree to take the compensation money and we welcome the project,” he said. “Actually our land is not good for agriculture and we weren’t turning a consistent profit each year – some years we lost money.”

Others were more reluctant to sell land, however.

U Thein Soe, a farmer located on more prosperous land near the Ayeyarwady River, said K10 million wasn’t enough for his high-yield land.

“I have 6 acres beside the river. I will give 3 to the company at K10 million an acre,” he said.

“Our land is worth more than K10 million, as it is very good for cultivating, so business is good. So I’m not sure whether I’ll hand over the rest.”

Winner postponed for Kyaukphyu

NYAN LYNN AUNG
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THE winners for the first stage to build the Kyaukphyu special economic zone will not be announced until February, after management officials had previously targeted December 2014.

U Aung Kyaw Than, joint-secretary of the Bid Evaluation and Awarding Committee, said the process sensitive and must be fair for all competitors, requiring the delay to February.

“We need to take more time because this is a sensitive step. We want to make sure we are on pace, and don’t want to make nonsense of them,” he said.

The 12 competing companies were

interviewed by the committee over the past few weeks, with further discussions to be held in February. Three of the firms will be chosen to participate in the SEZ’s first phase, which includes an industrial park, deep sea port and residential area, said committee member U Ba Shwe, who is also chair of the SEZ’s Observation Group.

‘We need to take more time because this is a sensitive step.’

U Aung Kyaw Than
Bid committee

A final decision will be made by the SEZ’s central committee, which is chaired by deputy railways minister U Myint Thein, he said.

Local firms have complained of a lack of domestic competitors in the final round, with most of the 12 finalists hailing from China or Singapore.

“We demand to get the chance for 51 percent when cooperating with the awarded developers, because otherwise there will not be enough influence by developers,” said Golden Land Development Public Company executive director U Phoe Cho.

The large SEZ in Rakhine State was announced in September 2013, the third major projects along with Thilawa and Dawei SEZs. A project master plan was revealed by CPG Consultants in June 2014.

SAO PAULO

Cuba could emerge as the next hot property deal, says billionaire

MIAMI billionaire Jorge Perez says an end to a US economic embargo on Cuba could help turn Havana into a mecca for real estate investment.

Mr Perez, who was born in Argentina to Cuban parents, oversees a global condo empire with US\$20 billion in assets as chair of Related Group.

The US Agriculture Coalition for Cuba, with more than 25 companies and farm trade associations, was created January 15 in Washington to urge repeal of a 1996 law that placed permanent sanctions on Cuba after Fidel Castro seized power in a revolution.

In an interview at his Miami office, Mr Perez said he favours a lifting of the embargo even after Cuban exile groups organised protests in Miami’s Little Havana neighbourhood last month to oppose US President Barack Obama’s easing of restrictions in place for more than 50 years.

“We should’ve opened our eyes a long time ago,” the 65-year-old said. “Opening up trade and the exchange of ideas would further the democratisation of Cuba. Demand for second homes will be much bigger than the Bahamas, Puerto Rico or Dominican Republic.”

US President Barack Obama’s move to end a half-century-long estrangement with Cuba raises the prospect that American developers and hotel operators such as Marriott International and Hilton Worldwide may be able to enter the tourism-rich market only 90 miles (145 km) from Florida’s coast. They face a long road of navigating a region with unclear property laws and government control, making it probable they will proceed with caution, Mr Perez said.

Tourist arrivals to Cuba rose almost 12 percent year-over-year in October to 187,311 visitors, according to the Cuban National Statistics Office. About 2.9 million tourists visited the island in 2013, almost a third of them from Canada. The second-most visited Caribbean country behind the Dominican Republic, Cuba has about 200 hotels with at least 35,000 hotel rooms, according to Jones Lang LaSalle hotel group.

Mr Perez said he visited the island two years ago, taking a charter flight after he wasn’t able to obtain a US permit to fly his private plane.

If an opening occurs, Mr Perez said he’d be interested in creating joint ventures with Cuban companies

to help cultivate an entrepreneurial class, teach people how to operate in a free market economy and encourage them to keep income from the projects in Cuba to help the country grow. He’s also interested in getting involved in the restoration of historic Havana.

Inside his office, Mr Perez has a coffee mug stamped with Bill Clinton’s name and a photo of him standing next to Mr Obama. Most of the campaign donations Mr Perez and Related Group made in 2012 and 2014 elections went to campaigns of Democratic party members, according to OpenSecrets.org.

Mr Obama last month used the limited flexibility allowed by the law to ease travel, trade and finance with Cuba. Still, the economic embargo, in place since the early 1960s, needs congressional action to be removed.

“I don’t think that Raul Castro is going to wake up tomorrow and call free, general elections,” he said. “The lifting of the embargo is going to be a fight, though not impossible. A lot of the farm states are clamoring to lift this thing so we can sell products to Cuba. You’re going to get a lot of economic pressure.” – *Bloomberg*

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MPT picks up speed in telecoms race

STATE-OWNED telco Myanma Posts and Telecommunications lost its monopoly on the telecoms market last year, joining a three-horse race with international entrants Ooredoo and Telenor. As the incumbent, MPT was first out of the starting gate. After signing a partnership with Japan's KDDI Corporation and Sumitomo Corporation, it has quickly moved to modernise its operations and launch new tariff deals. Its latest mobile plan, Swe Thahar, cuts voice and SMS prices and changes the way MPT charges customers for internet usage, from by-the-minute to by-the-megabyte.

CATHERINE TRAUTWEIN
newsroom@mmtimes.com

How many subscribers does MPT have now?

We have nearly 11 million currently active SIM customers. After the joint operation, 5 million SIM cards were distributed to the market. We don't know how many SIM cards we sold before the joint operation. Among the 5 million SIM cards we distributed, average activation rate would be 90 per cent. If people don't use them for a while,

[SIM cards] expire. So now including those who already lost their right to use [SIMs], we have 11 million activated users.

Why has MPT decided not to match competitors' prices under its new Swe Thahar plan?

Not only in Myanmar, but in other countries telecom markets were opened and new operators challenged incumbent carriers with lower prices because their network coverage and more wasn't big enough in comparison to the incumbent's.

We don't think we can charge more than others because we're incumbent. We think we have to provide our service at affordable prices. MPT is still a part of the government, and has a big responsibility to Myanmar.

In Laos, Cambodia, and India, telecom operators started price wars early on. Then they can't keep investing in their network. A large area still remains on 2G. It means the failure of the liberalisation of the market itself. If that kind of situation happens, the customer suffers the most. MPT thinks that in Myanmar, the nationwide network has not been completed yet. Our first priority should be to

establish a nationwide network, and next, to provide services at affordable prices. We would like to contribute to My-

anmar customers by providing better services, or new services. We should not be satisfied with higher prices than competitors, but we need to keep improving and providing better customer experiences. If we go now into a "price war", we are worried that we cannot invest in area expansion and other necessary services.

Can you explain MPT's new internet tariff on Swe Thahar?

In many countries the technology has advanced and we need to charge by volume. It's an international standard. Also, with time-based charges, we can ensure fair charges if the speed is really slow. Once the speed becomes very fast, we cannot ensure fair charges if we charge by time. Some people might watch videos and occupy a large portion of the line.

[The new tariff] compared to the previous tariff with the slow speed, it's really similar, or depends on the situation.

How fast is the internet with Swe Thahar?

The maximum theoretical speed [when the network is used by only one person] will be 21Mbps for the moment. Very soon we will introduce 42Mbps. As of now you can enjoy 2-4Mbps in downtown, and more than 5Mbps in Yangon suburban areas like Mayangone.

What distinguishes MPT from its competitors?

Technically, like regarding [the 3G technology] HSPA+, there are not big

differences between ourselves and Ooredoo and Telenor. The radio frequency allocated for each carrier is also limited.

Then what will be the difference made by the carrier's effort? Area coverage and quality of services.

We have been improving by designing the best placement of base stations, adjusting the angle of antenna, etc. We will continue making efforts for better network experiences.

One area where there may be a difference is land use. Does MPT have privileged access to government land for tower-building?

Not only competitors but we, MPT, are also struggling to build new towers. We are not getting special benefits from government for building new towers.

As long as the land is used by MPT right now, we can use it. But other government land, they may charge a little much, maybe. [laughs]

In the future, what percentage of MPT's towers will be shared?

Tower quality should be the big problem for the tower-sharing. We are now making many, many big [improvements] for many, many towers.

So in the future, we may share almost all the towers [if] required from other places, but right now ... a very limited number of towers can be shared. Still, we are now talking with other operators, Ooredoo and Telenor, to share these towers. Maybe. Less than 100.

Regarding tower sharing, we have been assessing our towers' robustness because existing MPT towers are fragile and cannot bear heavy weight to share them with others. Once these assessments are finished, MPT will start sharing.

How will MPT address CDMA phones?

CDMA requires special development so we haven't prepared for it right now. We will announce separately how to deal with CDMA. But one thing that we want to say is that we don't plan to terminate CDMA.

MPT has been paying income taxes and a contribution to the government, but is it collecting the 5 pc tax on telecoms?

No. We are waiting for some instructions to be issued by the government. If the government orders us to collect a tax from our end users, we may need to do so. But right now, no.

Have there been freezes on B2B fibre installation?

It takes a very long time to complete the installation. But right now, we haven't stopped system installation. [Last year] it was very slow, so it takes a very long time to complete that job. But right now, we're gradually improving. We are thinking to do some fibre services to consumers also, but some years or some [time] later.

[We are] not signing up [new customers], we have tons of back-orders. So that should be the problem.

Will MPT launch more branded shops, as it currently has one?

We have divided Myanmar into 17 regions, and each region will open two branded shops.

In the future, will MPT provide LTE service?

We will provide for LTE. However, the licence for LTE will be issued much later. We may need to wait maybe from two to three years to get the right to apply. Still we will prepare for the situation. ... maybe five years or something.



KSGM managing director
Takashi Nagashima.
Photo: Catherine Trautwein

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Dated: 19 January 2015

Ooredoo rolls out to Mon State

AUNG KYAW NYUNT

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OOREDOO Myanmar has extended their 3G network to more of Myanmar, including townships in Mon State.

The Qatar-based telco expanded 3G service to six townships in Mon State: Pound, Mudon, Belin, Mawlamyine, Kyaik Hto, and Thaton. It will roll out to another four townships in the area soon, the company said.

The firm also plans to start covering Kyaikhtiyo Pagoda this year.

Mon State chief minister U Ohn Myint said in a statement that he welcomed the telco to the area.

"If there is better telecommunications systems there will be better business and social status," he said.

Ooredoo, like its fellow foreign competitor Telenor, has made almost total coverage of Myanmar its aim.

"If we expand our network quickly, I think that Ooredoo Myanmar will deliver communication services to 97 percent of the population in five years," said Daw Thiri Kyar Nyo, Ooredoo Myanmar senior PR manager.

The firm also announced last week it would introduce its mobile money service "very soon".

Fighting hate speech with tech



CATHERINE
TRAUTWEIN

newroom@mmtimes.com

CIVIL society organisations, technologists and others came together last week in Yangon to find ways to answer hate speech and dangerous speech with technology.

Though the old saying goes that sticks and stones break bones and words can't hurt, there's no question one can lead to the other. To help counter the problem, newly minted innovation lab Phandeeyar, Myanmar ICT for Development Organisation (MIDO) and United States Institute of Peace (USIP) hosted a PeaceTech Exchange in Yangon's community and tech hub, SuleTech.

Connectivity has helped enable both freedom of expression and the spread of hate speech and dangerous speech, which spurs concerns about what happens when millions more get connected in Myanmar.

"If 10 percent [connectivity] is already driving [speech issues], what will 75pc drive?" said Noel Dickover, senior program officer at the PeaceTech Lab at USIP.

While some might propagate problematic speech without ill intent - by sharing information online without weighing its veracity - others have dedicated themselves to its spread. "We have some groups that are intentionally spreading hate speech and trying

to start violence. They have technology, funding, the big backer," said MIDO executive director Ko Nay Phone Latt.

"On the other side we have some of civil society working for peace and against hate speech, but our weakness is that ... they don't know how to use the technology for their needs or have the funding," he continued.

The three-day PeaceTech Exchange, which saw international and local technologists connected with more than 70 civil society organisations, sought to remedy these two problems through networking, technical training, group sessions and finally, a workshop on applying for grants. At the event, CSOs boiled down challenges for technologists, resulting in particular "problem statements" that dealt with issues like the dissemination of bad information and spreading peaceful stories across Myanmar. Next came strategies for taking on issues with technology.

"One recurring theme is that there are many examples of communities working together in peace and harmony, and many civil society groups feel those stories aren't being very well told if, at all," said Phandeeyar founder David Madden.

The event centres on teaching people how to use tech tools to promote a healthier information ecosystem, Mr Madden said, adding participants had been learning about practices such as fact-checking and photo verification.

MIDO program manager Htaike Htaike Aung highlighted three elements - monitoring, reporting and rapid response - some CSOs included in

projects combating dangerous speech. The measures could involve actions like watching over media and event mapping. "For rapid response, some are thinking of having this mechanism where people can respond to rumours and speeches or false news that could incite violence," she said.

Ma Htaike Htaike Aung said mainstream media access and high levels of connectivity help fortify urban areas against speech-related incidents, though violence did break out in Mandalay. But "the pattern is always around rural areas where it's hard for people to get rapid response in terms of dangerous speeches or rumours," she said.

The digital divide between Myanmar's urban and rural communities can make it hard to use technology in the battle against hate speech. Ma Htaike Htaike Aung said a Karen state CSO couldn't oppose offline sermons by monks and doctored photos from the web spread via CDs, pamphlets and posters with online solutions. "In terms of using the internet to kind of counter that message, it's impossible," she said.

Ko Nay Phone Latt said answers to issues need to consider both online and

offline approaches. Phandeeyar program manager Ko Yan Naung Oak said a range of technologists at the event had particular advice for the majority of attendees hailing from outside Yangon. Tech touched on spammed SMS and radio to data visualisation. "There's a whole spectrum," he said.

CSOs had the chance on the event's last day to learn how to put plans to paper for grant proposals. USIP has US \$100,000 to \$200,000 available to fund organisations whose high-calibre, speech-oriented proposals receive approval from its board.

"The hope is we get projects in place with funding such that there's almost this counter approach in monitoring that goes with the trend line moving upwards," Mr Dickover said.

At the PeaceTech Exchange, a large, diverse crowd that counted youths, monks, techies and more worked together in a downtown tower overlooking one of the city's most diverse corners, with City Hall, Sule Pagoda, a Baptist church, a mosque and Independence Monument 11 storeys below.

"We got independence because of everybody fighting for independence," Ko Nay Phone Latt said.

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Shaping the future through education

World

WORLD EDITOR: Fiona MacGregor

MANILA

End ‘scandalous’ inequality, says Pope as he visits Philippines

POPE Francis has demanded leaders in the graft-plagued Philippines end “scandalous social inequalities”, as he called on them to show integrity and reject corruption.

He made the comments on January 16 in his first major speech of a five-day visit to the Catholic Church’s Asian stronghold, where tens of millions live in deep poverty, after arriving to a rapturous reception the day before.

“The great biblical tradition enjoins on all peoples the duty to hear the voice of the poor. It bids us break the bonds of injustice and oppression which give rise to glaring, and indeed scandalous, social inequalities,” the pope said in the speech at the presidential palace.

Francis said that the Philippines, “together with many other countries in Asia”, faces the challenge of building a modern society that respects “our God-given human dignity and rights”.

To help the poor in the Philippines, Francis demanded that

leaders and all other members of society fight corruption.

“It is now, more than ever, necessary that political leaders be outstanding for honesty, integrity and commitment to the common good,” he said.

He challenged “everyone, at all levels of society, to reject every form of corruption, which diverts resources from the poor”.

He said reforming social structures to end poverty required a “conversion of mind and heart”.

Francis had moments earlier met President Benigno Aquino, who has waged a high-profile campaign against corruption that has seen his predecessor and three senators detained.

Aquino also orchestrated the impeachment of the Supreme Court’s chief justice on corruption charges, and he has won international plaudits for his efforts.

But critics of Aquino, the son of democracy heroine Corazon Aquino, have accused him of focusing his

anti-graft campaign only on opponents and not allies.

And, despite some of Asia’s strongest economic growth, Aquino’s more than four years in office have failed to make a major dent on poverty.

About 25 million Filipinos, or one-quarter of the population, live on the equivalent of 60 cents a day or less, according to the latest official poverty surveys.

The poverty has forced about 10 million Filipinos to head overseas in search of a better life.

Francis said one of the main purposes of his trip was to visit survivors of Super Typhoon Haiyan, known in the Philippines as Yolanda, which left 7350 people dead or missing in 2013.

The pope was due to spend January 17 in areas of the central Philippines that were devastated by the typhoon, which smashed into coastal communities with the strongest winds ever recorded on land.

“In a particular way, this visit is meant to express my closeness to our brothers and sisters who endured the suffering, loss and devastation caused by Typhoon Yolanda,” he said.

Francis enjoyed a hero’s welcome when he arrived in the Philippines on the night of January 15, with hundreds of thousands of people crowding the streets of Manila to get a first glimpse of him as he travelled in a motorcade.

The Philippines has long been the Church’s stronghold in the region, with 80 percent of the former Spanish colony’s 100 million people members of the faith.

The high point of the pope’s trip was expected to be an open-air mass on January 18 at a park in Manila, with organisers preparing for up to 6 million people.

If as big as expected, the crowd would surpass the previous record for a papal gathering of 5 million during a mass by John Paul II at the same venue in 1995. It is Francis’ second trip to the region in five months, signalling the importance the Vatican places on Asia’s growth potential for the Church. — AFP



Philippine President Benigno Aquino welcomes Pope Francis upon his arrival at the presidential Malacanang Palace in Manila on January 16. Photo: AFP



IN PICTURES

Photo: AFP

The coffin of Bernard “Tignous” Verl, cartoonists, is carried out of the town 15. Twelve people were killed, including chief editor Bernard Maris, when gun fire in the Paris offices of *Charlie Hebdo*

BRUSSELS

Terror raids as

BELGIUM was on high alert on January 16 after two suspected jihadists were killed in a police raid, while German and French police made fresh arrests to put Europe on edge a week after the Islamist attacks in Paris.

The series of raids across the continent highlighted fears about young Europeans travelling to fight holy war with the Islamic State and other extremist groups in the Middle East, and then returning to launch attacks on Western targets.

In Belgium, officials said they had averted “imminent” large-scale attacks on police targets after raiding a terror cell in the eastern town of Verviers, near the German border, whose members had recently come back from Syria.

Police shot dead the two suspects in a gun battle after they opened fire on officers with heavy weapons, and arrested a third man, while there were several search operations in Brussels and its suburbs.

Prime Minister Charles Michel raised Belgium’s terror alert to its second highest level, security was tightened and Jewish schools in the port city of Antwerp closed on January 16 due to fears of further trouble.

The raid and a series of related search operations across Belgium

were now “over” but authorities were now seeking to “exploit the information” they had obtained, Foreign Minister Didier Reynders said. “The threat was to the police forces,” he said of the planned attacks.

Europe has been on alert since the Islamist attacks on January 7 on the French *Charlie Hebdo* satirical magazine, which printed cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed, and a Jewish supermarket in Paris in which 17 people were killed.

With France still reeling from the attacks which targeted its cherished traditions of free speech, US Secretary of State John Kerry was to lay wreaths on January 16 at both the magazine’s offices and the grocery during a visit to Paris.

It follows criticism of the US for not sending a top representative to a march in Paris on January 11,

‘The threat [in Belgium] was to the police forces.’

Didier Reynders
Belgian foreign minister



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Hun Sen marks 30 years as Cambodian leader

WORLD 40

Vietnam chiefs embrace Facebook

WORLD 42



Bali body in suitcase trial begins

WORLD 43



hac, 57, one of the French satirical weekly *Charlie Hebdo's* hall of Montreuil, near Paris, during his funeral on January cartoonists Charb, Wolinski, Cabu and Tignous and deputy men armed with Kalashnikovs and a rocket-launcher opened on January 7.

Europe on alert

which drew 1.5 million people and dozens of world leaders in the wake of the attacks.

The funeral of Stephane Charbonnier, alias Charb, the editor-in-chief of *Charlie Hebdo*, was also due to take place that day.

Police in France meanwhile detained 12 people overnight in the suburbs of Paris in connection with the attacks, carried out by Islamist brothers Said and Cherif Kouachi and Amedy Coulibaly.

The nine men and three women were to be questioned about "possible logistic support" they may have given to the gunmen, in particular weapons and vehicles, the source said.

In Germany an alleged leader of a group planning to carry out an attack in Syria was arrested in raids on suspected Islamist sites in and around Berlin by more than 200 police officers, officials said.

The arrested man is a 41-year-old man of Turkish origin and is suspected of "leading an Islamist extremist group made up of Turkish and Russian nationals from [the Caucasus regions' of] Chechnya and Dagestan," the police said in a statement, adding that "there is no indication that the group was preparing attacks inside Germany."

While there were no direct links

between the arrests across the three neighbouring countries, it came on the heels of calls for greater anti-terrorism cooperation across the EU.

Belgian prosecutors said they had found "no link at this stage" to the Paris attacks but earlier said they suspected a Belgian man could have supplied Jewish supermarket gunman Coulibaly with his weapons.

The suspect, Neetin Karasular, had bought a car belonging to Coulibaly's partner Hayat Boumeddine, who has since fled France, apparently reaching Syria. He handed himself in to police on January 13.

Belgium has one of the largest number of extremists who have returned from Syria relative to its population, with a large Muslim community that suffers from high unemployment and disenfranchisement.

Belgium was also the first country to suffer an attack by a suspected former Syria fighter after four people were shot dead at the Brussels Jewish museum in May 2014. Frenchman Mehdi Nemmouche has been charged with murder.

The verdict in a major trial of an Islamist group, Sharia4Belgium, accused of sending young Belgian fighters to Syria is due to be delivered next month. – AFP

LAGOS

Boko Haram massacre condemned

US Secretary of State John Kerry branded a Boko Haram massacre in northern Nigeria a "crime against humanity" last week as satellite images suggested massive destruction in the two towns reported razed by its fighters.

"What they have done ... is a crime against humanity, nothing less," Mr Kerry said on January 15 as the first images of what is feared to be the worst atrocity of the six-year Islamist insurgency emerged.

Hundreds of people, if not more, are reported to have been killed in attacks on the towns of Baga and Doron Baga on the shores of Lake Chad in Borno state, according to Amnesty International.

Boko Haram was "evil" and a serious threat "not just in Nigeria and the region but to all of our values", Mr Kerry said during a visit to Bulgaria. He said he had spoken earlier to his British counterpart Philip Hammond, who was also in Sofia, about the possibility of "a special initiative with respect to Nigeria and with respect to Boko Haram".

Amnesty and New York-based watchdog Human Rights Watch published separate satellite images on January 15 claiming to show massive destruction in the adjacent towns, adding to fears they may suffered the deadliest strike yet in Boko Haram's bloody campaign.

Amnesty's images showed aerial shots of the towns on January 2, the day before the attack, and January 7, after homes and businesses were razed.

The group said the images suggested "devastation of catastrophic proportions", with more than 3700 structures – 620 in Baga and 3100 in Doron Baga – damaged or completely destroyed.

HRW said 11 percent of Baga and 57pc of Doron Baga was destroyed, most likely by fire, attributing the greater damage in Doron Baga to the fact that it houses a regional military base.

Nigeria's military, which often downplays death tolls, said that 150 died and dismissed as "sensational" claims that 2000 may have lost their

lives in the attacks.

Local officials have said at least 16 settlements around Baga were burnt to the ground and that at least 20,000 people fled.

HRW said the exact death toll was unknown and quoted one local resident as saying, "No one stayed back to count the bodies."

"We were all running to get out of town ahead of Boko Haram fighters who have since taken over the area."

Amnesty said Boko Haram were believed to have targeted civilian vigilantes helping the army after they overran a Multinational Joint Task Force base for troops from Nigeria, Niger and Chad who have been involved in operations against them.

Harrowing testimony has been emerging from survivors about the scale and brutality of the assault in Baga, included one woman reportedly killed while in labour.

Witnesses who spoke to AFP described seeing decomposing bodies in the streets and one man who escaped after hiding for three days said he was "stepping on bodies" as he fled through the bush.

Amnesty said on January 15 it had

received accounts from survivors of Boko Haram fighters killing a woman as she was giving birth, during indiscriminate fire that also cut down small children.

"Half of the baby boy [was] out and she died like this," the unnamed witness was quoted as saying.

A man in his fifties added, "They killed so many people. I saw maybe around 100 killed at that time in Baga. I ran to the bush. As we were running, they were shooting and killing."

Another woman said, "I don't know how many but there were bodies everywhere we looked."

Medical charity Doctors Without Borders (MSF) said on January 13 that its team in capital of Borno state, Maiduguri, was providing assistance to 5000 survivors of the attack.

The UN refugee agency has said that more than 11,300 Nigerian refugees fled into neighbouring Chad.

Amnesty said the witness accounts and images reinforced fears the attack was Boko Haram's "largest and most destructive" in its fight to establish a hardline Islamic state in northeast Nigeria, which has killed over 13,000 people since 2009. – AFP



A satellite image made available by Human Rights Watch shows evidence of large-scale destruction following a Boko Haram attack. Photo: AFP

By Chit Khin Khin (Khalid)

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NEAK LOEUNG

Hun Sen celebrates 30 years in charge, as rights groups call for him to step down

CAMBODIAN strongman Hun Sen marked three decades as premier on January 14 hailing his role in rebuilding the war-torn nation, as rights groups lambasted him for using “violence, repression and corruption” to cling to power.

The former Khmer Rouge cadre became the world’s youngest prime minister when he took office on January 14, 1985, at the age of 32, his humble backstory and sharp wit aiding his reputation for being in touch with ordinary Cambodians.

But his administration has been widely criticised for graft, while Hun Sen stands accused of ignoring human rights abuses, stamping out dissent and rigging elections.

In a report released on January 13, Human Rights Watch accused the 62-year-old of ruling through violence, control of the security apparatus and manipulated elections to become the world’s sixth-longest serving political leader.

“For three decades, Hun Sen has repeatedly used political violence, repression, and corruption to remain in power,” said Brad Adams, HRW Asia director, in a statement.

“Cambodia urgently needs reforms so that its people can finally exercise their basic human rights without fear of arrest, torture, and

execution. The role of international donors is crucial in making this happen,” he said.

When Cambodia collapsed into civil war in 1970, Hun Sen became a foot soldier for what later emerged as the Khmer Rouge, the genocidal regime that killed up to 2 million people.

He rose to the rank of deputy regional commander before defecting to Vietnam, eventually returning with Vietnamese troops to oust the regime in 1979 and later climbing to the top of the Hanoi-installed government in Cambodia.

“I thank people who say I am bad. I thank people who say I am good. I thank all of them,” Hun Sen said at ceremony to mark construction work on a bridge over the Mekong River, in Neak Loeung, 60 kilometres (40 miles) southeast of Phnom Penh.

“Without Hun Sen’s hands, there would have no Paris peace agreement,” he said, referring to the 1991 deal giving the UN authority to supervise a ceasefire and democratic elections after years of bloody civil war.

“If Hun Sen did not enter the tigers’ hole, could we arrest the tigers?” added the premier, heralding his role in eradicating Khmer Rouge strongholds. “Indeed I have made some mistakes. But please balance the right and wrong ones.”

As Cambodia emerged from conflict, Hun Sen abandoned the communist dogma of his Vietnamese patrons, embracing the free market and seeking out alliances with more powerful nations.

Yet while Cambodia now enjoys relative stability, the authoritarian premier “has nurtured a system in which political power is based on alliance to the ruling party,” said Sopheap Chak, executive director of the Cambodian Center for Human



Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen greets people during a ceremony for casting concrete to connect Neak Loeung bridge in Kandal province on January 14. Photo: AFP

Rights in Phnom Penh.

“The government has failed to establish the rule of law or combat impunity ... serious human rights violations regularly occur,” she said.

Rising discontent over forced evictions and growing inequality in Cambodia, one of the world’s poorest countries, have led to a surge in support for the opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP).

The CNRP boycotted parliament for nearly a year after accusing Hun Sen of rigging the 2013 general election that returned his Cambodian People’s Party to power. They only took up their seats in July in return for a promise of electoral and parliamentary reforms.

“Any country, for the sake of democracy and progress, has to renew its leadership,” CNRP leader Sam

Rainsy said, adding that even communist countries like China and Vietnam change their leaders every few years.

But on January 14 Hun Sen said he would stay in power until at least 2018, when the next general election is scheduled, and that any longer would depend on voters.

He has previously vowed to rule until he is 74. — AFP

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Hun Sen

Cambodian prime minister

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BANGKOK

Surrogates move to have babies returned

THE surrogate mothers of nine babies fathered by a Japanese man and taken into care by Thai authorities last year have launched legal proceedings to regain custody of the infants, an official said last week.

The alleged father, who at the time was reported by Japanese media to be the son of an IT millionaire, left Thailand as a surrogacy scandal erupted in August following the discovery of nine babies in a Bangkok apartment.

Tests revealed he is the biological father of at least 15 babies born to surrogates in the kingdom, although his motives for fathering so many children remain unclear.

Thai social services have been caring for the nine infants for the last six months, although the mothers have been allowed regular visits.

Six of the mothers, who police said were each paid around US\$12,500 to be surrogates, have now launched civil proceedings to get their babies back.

“They are seeking custody of the children,” Suvanna Pinkaew, an official from the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, said on January 13.

‘We never said the mothers cannot get the children back ... but they need to pass through the ministry’s process.’

Suvanna Pinkaew
Ministry of Social Development

Their lawsuit, filed at a juvenile and family court, alleges that authorities are failing to care for the children adequately, she added, though she rejected the accusation.

“We never said the mothers cannot get the children back ... but they need to pass through the ministry’s process,” Ms Suvanna said.

That process includes proving they can care for the children and have a child-safe family background, the official added.

Thailand’s shadowy commercial surrogacy industry was thrust into the limelight in August 2014 following accusations that an Australian couple abandoned a baby born with Down’s syndrome, but took his healthy twin sister.

The couple denied deliberately leaving the boy, called Gammy, with the Thai surrogate mother, who was paid around \$15,000 to carry the twins.

Paid surrogacy is officially banned by the Medical Council of Thailand and authorities moved to close several IVF clinics in the weeks after the scandal.

A new law to tighten loopholes is also under consideration by the kingdom’s National Legislative Assembly.

It carries tough penalties that could see anyone found guilty of involvement in the trade jailed for 10 years.

Dozens, possibly hundreds, of foreign couples are thought to have been left in limbo after entering into surrogacy arrangements through clinics in the kingdom before the summer’s scandals.

– AFP

BEIJING



Zhou Youguang poses at his home in Beijing on January 11. Photo: AFP

Father of Pinyin still dissenting as he marks his 109th birthday

BORN when a Qing dynasty emperor was on the throne, the man who helped invent the Pinyin system used for writing Chinese worldwide turned 109 last week. But Zhou Youguang’s outspoken support for democracy means his works are still censored by the ruling Communist party.

“After 30 years of economic reform, China still needs to take the path of democracy,” Mr Zhou said, his wrinkled face topped with a patch of white hair. “It’s the only path. I have always believed that.”

Mr Zhou is commonly known as the “father of Pinyin”, a system for transliterating Chinese characters into the Roman alphabet introduced in the 1950s and now used by hundreds of millions of language learners in China, as well as abroad.

But in his cramped third-floor apartment in Beijing, where dog-eared books,, including dozens by Zhou himself, line the walls, the writer who celebrated his birthday on January 12 was modest about his achievements.

“I don’t have any feeling of pride. I don’t think I’ve achieved very much,” he said, speaking lucidly but slowly and with obvious effort. “My birthday is of no importance at all.”

Born to an aristocratic family in 1906, Mr Zhou experienced the last years of the Qing dynasty and its revolutionary overthrow, before studying at elite universities in Shanghai and Japan.

When Japan launched a full-scale invasion of China in 1937, Mr Zhou moved with his wife and two children to the central city of Chongqing, where he endured constant air raids but made contacts with leaders in the then comparatively weak Communist party.

After Japan’s defeat he avoided

China’s civil war between the Communists and Nationalists by going to work for a Chinese bank on Wall Street, twice meeting Albert Einstein while visiting friends at Princeton.

But following the Communist victory in 1949, Mr Zhou returned home to teach economics and became a close associate of the party’s number two, Zhou Enlai.

“I came back for two reasons: because I thought the country had been liberated, and had a new hope. Also, because my mother was in China,” he wrote in a 2012 autobiography.

‘When you encounter difficulties you need to be optimistic. The pessimists tend to die.’

Zhou Youguang
Inventor of Pinyin

He was attracted to Mao Zedong’s Communists because “at that time they promoted themselves as democrats”, he wrote.

An amateur linguist who had taught himself some Esperanto, Mr Zhou was assigned in 1955 to co-chair a committee tasked with increasing literacy by reforming the Chinese language.

He eventually backed a system based on one developed in the Soviet Union, using Roman letters to represent pronunciation alongside marks to indicate tone.

The proposal, named Pinyin (putting together sounds), is used in schools across China and has been instrumental in boosting the country’s literacy rate from around 20 percent in the 1950s to more than 90 percent today.

Though systems for transcribing Mandarin into the Roman alphabet already existed, including Wade-Giles, produced by two British diplomats in the 19th century, Pinyin is regarded as simpler.

“With Chinese characters, you can’t tell the pronunciation just by looking. So Pinyin was useful in teaching,” said Luo Weidong, a professor at Beijing Language and Culture University. “Pinyin made a big contribution to the literacy movement in China.”

In recent decades, Pinyin has become key to the easy creation of Chinese characters on computers.

But Mr Zhou’s contributions did not save him from the chaos of Mao’s decade-long Cultural Revolution from 1966, during which intellectuals were persecuted.

Mr Zhou, then in his 60s, was sent to work at a labour camp in faraway Ningxia for more than two years, separated from his wife and son.

“I had never slept on an earth bed before,” he wrote of the experience, adding, “When you encounter difficulties, you need to be optimistic. The pessimists tend to die.”

He has described the two decades from 1960 to 1980 as “wasted”, adding, “In all honesty I haven’t got anything good to say about Mao Zedong.”

He has a higher opinion of Mao’s successor Deng Xiaoping, who launched market-style reforms which helped transform China into the world’s second-largest economy.

But since retiring aged 85, Mr Zhou has written dozens of books

arguing that Mr Deng’s reforms are insufficient without political change.

“Chinese people becoming rich isn’t important,” he said. “Human progress is ultimately progress toward democracy.”

Mr Zhou, probably China’s oldest dissenter, marked his birthday with friends and family, enjoying dishes including braised sea cucumber and a date and mushroom soup, his editor Ye Fang said.

Sleeping takes up an increasing proportion of his time as his health flags, but he is still a voracious reader. Confucius and Socrates remain his favourite thinkers.

Age appears to have been no barrier to a harsh crackdown against critics of the party overseen by China’s current President Xi Jinping.

Scores of journalists, lawyers and academics have been arrested and dozens jailed, among them 71-year-old journalist Gao Yu, tried last year for leaking state secrets, and writer Tie Liu, 81, detained since September.

Mr Zhou’s books have also come under more intense scrutiny, with topics which could be tackled just a few years ago now taboo.

Censors demanded that his latest book, due out next month, be purged of some references to anti-intellectual movements, as well as a 1950s famine which killed tens of millions as a result of Mao’s “Great Leap Forward”.

“The restrictions on publishing have got tighter. No one knows if it’s a short-term thing or a long-term change,” said Mr Ye.

Sitting beneath peeling paint in his flat, Mr Zhou said the leader was not the issue.

“I don’t think it’s a problem of individuals,” he said. “It’s a problem with the system. We don’t have freedom of speech in China.”– AFP



IN PICTURES

Photo: AFP

A member of the Thai military watches over a child as he aims a gun during National Children's Day at a military base in Bangkok on January 10. Thailand celebrates National Children's Day on the second Saturday of January every year.

KUALA LUMPUR

Southeast Asia new piracy hotspot

PIRACY on the high seas fell last year to an eight-year low worldwide but the number of successful ship hijackings increased due to rising numbers of attacks in the waters off Southeast Asia, a piracy watchdog said last week.

The International Maritime Bureau said in an annual report that 245 pirate attacks were recorded globally in 2014, down from 264 the year before.

The number is nearly half of the 445 reported in 2010 when piracy off Somalia was raging.

Global piracy incidents have tumbled since then due to a multi-national naval patrol effort launched off East Africa, as well as improved onboard security.

But the seas off Southeast Asia, particularly the waterways between Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia, have steadily emerged as a new hotspot, with attacks on small tankers rising.

Worldwide, 21 vessels were hijacked last year - 16 of which were in Southeast Asia - compared to 12 in 2013, according to the report released by the IMB's Kuala Lumpur-based piracy monitoring centre.

Pirates killed four crew members, injured 13 and kidnapped nine from their vessels globally, it said.

"The global increase in hijackings is due to a rise in attacks against coastal tankers in Southeast Asia," IMB Director Pottengal Mukundan said in a statement accompanying the report.

"Gangs of armed thieves have attacked small tankers in the region for their cargoes, many looking specifically for marine diesel and gas oil to steal and then sell."

HANOI

PM has about-face on issue of Vietnam's Facebook access

PRIME minister Nguyen Tan Dung has conceded it is impossible for Vietnam to ban social media, urging officials in the communist country to instead embrace websites like Facebook to spread the government's message.

Sites such as Facebook have at times been difficult to access in Vietnam, an authoritarian country which routinely imprisons bloggers and dissidents for criticising the regime.

"You here have all joined social networks. You've all got Facebook up on your phones to read information. So we must make this information correct," Mr Dung told senior officials on January 15, the *Thanh Nien* newspaper reported.

"We cannot ban it," he said at the meeting in Hanoi.

Over the last few years, Vietnam has had one of the fastest rates of Facebook uptake in the world, and now around a third of the country's population of 90 million have an account on the social network.

The government has always denied blocking the site, and for at least a year Facebook has been easily accessible in Vietnam without a VPN or other measures.

Mr Dung said top officials need to use social media to engage with the population more.

"We must publish accurate information online immediately ... Whatever is being said online, people will

believe official information from the government," he said.

Vietnam's communist party controls all newspapers and television networks, and many citizens prefer to get their news online from blogs or social media, which contain less propaganda.

But the quality of the blogs and social media postings is uneven. Some dissident-run sites offer nuanced reporting on sensitive political topics, other online commentators spread sensational rumours.

Earlier this month, in a rare move, authorities denied widespread rumours that a popular senior communist party official Nguyen Ba Thanh, a former top official in

central Danang City, had been poisoned with radioactive material by a political rival.

"Incorrect information creates social distraction," Mr Dung said, adding that the government would ask ministries to address incorrect information circulating online.

In the past, Mr Dung has driven through bans on particular blogs, but the move has usually backfired, triggering a surge of interest in the prohibited sites.

The harassment, arrest and prosecution of online activists remain widespread in Vietnam, which is holding scores of bloggers in jail, according to watchdog Reporters Without Borders. - AFP

141

Number of pirate attacks in Southeast Asian waters last year

The Southeast Asian attacks made up the bulk of incidents reported globally.

The region saw 141 piracy incidents - the vast majority of them in Indonesian waters - in 2014. These included hijackings, boardings and attempted attacks that were thwarted.

That compares to 128 total in incidents in the region in 2013.

Pirates have plagued Southeast Asian waters for centuries, but stepped-up regional cooperation and maritime patrols had significantly reduced the problem in recent years.

The IMB has warned recently that effort needs to be strengthened once again.

The region is home to vital shipping lanes such as the South China Sea and the Malacca Strait separating Malaysia and Indonesia, through which one-third of global trade passes.

Waters off Somalia saw just three incidents in 2014, down from 160 in 2011, the IMB said.

The global total of 245 incidents is the lowest since 263 were recorded in 2007.

- AFP

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DENPASAR

Bali 'body in suitcase' couple appear in court

AN American man and his teenage girlfriend went on trial on Indonesia's resort island of Bali on January 13 charged with murdering the woman's mother and stuffing her body into a suitcase outside an exclusive hotel.

Heather Mack, who is pregnant, and Tommy Schaefer could face the death penalty if found guilty of the premeditated murder of Sheila von Wiese Mack, 62, whose body was found in the case in the boot of a taxi in August.

Prosecutors alleged that Mr Schaefer, who wept as he entered court, "blindly hit" Von Wiese Mack with a bowl in a fit of rage after she directed a racial slur at him during an argument. Mr Schaefer is black.

"The defendant, overwhelmed with emotion and anger, picked



Heather Mack waits inside a holding cell before her trial for murder at a court in Denpasar on Indonesia's resort island of Bali on January 14. Photo AFP

up the glass fruit bowl and swung it at her face," prosecutor Eddy Arta Wijaya told the district court in the Balinese capital Denpasar, as he read out the 21-year-old's indictment.

"Wiese tried to push the handle towards Schaefer and it hit his mouth, making him angrier and more emotional. Using both hands, Schaefer blindly hit her as hard as he could between her eyes and nose with the fruit bowl."

He then continued hitting her face on the bed "until she stopped moving", he added.

The indictment said that 19-year-old Heather Mack hid in the bathroom during the attack before the couple stuffed the victim's body in a suitcase.

Mr Mack and Ms Schaefer, who went on trial separately, declined to speak to reporters after the trial. The next hearing will be on January 21. — AFP

'The defendant, overwhelmed with emotion and anger, swung [the fruit bowl] at her face.'

Eddy Arta Wijaya
Prosecutor

JAKARTA

Indonesia sets weekend date for drug executions

INDONESIA was due to put to death six drug convicts, including four foreigners, last weekend, the first executions to be carried out under new President Joko Widodo's government.

Mr Widodo, who took office in October, has insisted that there will be no pardons for those convicted of drugs offences on death row, disappointing activists who had hoped the reformist leader would take a softer line on capital punishment.

The foreigners, from Brazil, Malawi, Vietnam and Nigeria, will be executed by firing squad on January 17, said attorney general HM Prasetyo.

The two others to be executed are an Indonesian and a man whose nationality authorities said was unclear, though the Dutch government later said Jakarta had confirmed the second convict was a Dutch citizen.

Local Dutch news reports identified the man as Ang Kim Sui, who was sentenced to death in 2003 for his involvement in producing the drug Ecstasy.

"This will send a message to members of drugs syndicates. There is no mercy for drug dealers and traffickers," Mr Prasetyo told reporters.

"For those who disagree with the death penalty, hopefully they can understand that what we are doing is simply to save our nation from the threat of narcotics."

Jakarta halted executions for five years from 2008 but resumed them again last year, prompting outrage

from rights groups.

All six of those to be put to death had their appeals for clemency to the president, their last chance to avoid the firing squad, rejected on December 30, he said.

Five will be executed on an island housing a large prison off the coast of main Java island, while the sixth will be executed at a jail in central Java.

Two Australians, part of the "Bali Nine" group caught trying to smuggle heroin into Indonesia, and a British grandmother are on death row but were not among those due to be executed at the weekend.

One of the Australians, Myuran Sukumaran, also had his appeal for clemency rejected last month.

But Mr Prasetyo said the law stipulated that he must be executed with the second Australian, his accomplice Andrew Chan, as they had committed their crime together.

Mr Chan is still waiting for the outcome of his clemency appeal.

After Mr Sukumaran's appeal was rejected, Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott urged Indonesia not to put him to death. The Dutch government also condemned Mr Ang's planned execution.

"We'll go to the highest levels to try prevent it from happening," said Dutch foreign affairs spokesperson Friso Wijnen in The Hague.

Indonesia enforces some of the world's toughest punishments for narcotics offences and there is strong public support for putting drug traffickers to death. — AFP

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BANGKOK

Ousted Thai prime minister Yingluck Shinawatra speaks at the first hearing of impeachment proceedings in Bangkok on January 9. Photo: AFP



Yingluck misses trial

A THAI anti-graft official said ousted prime minister Yingluck Shinawatra must face a "political punishment" for a costly rice subsidy scheme, as calls for her impeachment gathered steam last week.

Ms Yingluck, the kingdom's first female premier and the sister of former leader Thaksin Shinawatra, was toppled from office by a controversial court ruling shortly before the army staged a coup in May.

She faces impeachment by the military-appointed National Legislative Assembly over her administration's loss-making rice program, which funnelled cash to her rural base, but cost billions of dollars and was a driving force behind protests that felled her government.

The former businesswoman did not appear at her second hearing on January 16 sparking indignation among anti-Shinawatra assembly members who refused to hear from former ministers sent to represent her.

Experts say the impeachment move is the latest attempt by Thailand's royalist elite, and its army backers, to nullify the political influence of the Shinawatras, whose parties have won every election since 2001.

A guilty verdict on January 23 would bring an automatic five-year ban from

politics, but also risks enraging her family's "Red Shirt" supporters who have laid low since the coup.

"Although she is no longer in her position she still has to face a political punishment," said Vicha Mahakhun, NACC commissioner.

His body led the probe into the rice scheme which paid farmers up to twice the market rate for their grain but left Thailand with a mountain of unsold rice.

A successful impeachment needs three-fifths of the 250-strong assembly to vote in favour when they meet on January 23.

"We warned the government twice [over the rice scheme] but the government ignored us," Mr Vicha said, adding

'I ran the government with honesty and in accordance with all laws.'

Yingluck Shinawatra
Former Thai prime minister

he hoped the Attorney-General would "agree" to also pursue a criminal charge against her over the scheme.

Earlier this month, Ms Yingluck defended the scheme as a well-intentioned attempt to support Thailand's rural poor, who historically receive a disproportionately small slice of government cash.

"I ran the government with honesty and in accordance with all laws," she told the assembly.

But her failure to attend on January 16 sparked sharp criticism from members known for their loathing of the Shinawatra clan, who bitterly divide opinion in Thailand.

"All of our questions are clearly and directly put to Yingluck ... She should come to answer," said assembly member and renowned anti-Thaksin figure Somchai Saweangkarn.

The assembly ruled that Ms Yingluck would have to answer their questions this week ahead of the vote.

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.

The Shinawatras' rise has coincided with the declining health of Thailand's revered 87-year-old King Bhumibol Adulyadej. - AFP

SYDNEY

PNG detainees swallow razor blades

AUSTRALIAN Immigration Minister Peter Dutton said on January 16 he was worried about a "volatile situation" at a Papua New Guinea asylum-seeker camp after reports that detainees were swallowing razor blades and washing powder.

Australia sends asylum-seekers who try to enter the country by boat to offshore detention centres on Papua New Guinea and Nauru in the Pacific with no prospect of being settled on the mainland, even if they are genuine refugees.

More than 400 boatpeople on Manus Island in PNG have gone on hunger strike protesting against their detention, living conditions and the possibility of being permanently resettled in the Pacific nation, refugee advocates and reports said.

"I think this is a very serious situation," Mr Dutton told reporters.

"I'm worried about developments over the course of the last 24 hours. I'm concerned about what I've learnt in the last hour or so. And the situation is volatile there's no question about that."

He would not elaborate on what the developments were, but refugee advocate Ian Rintoul said up to 40 men had sewn their lips together, while three others had swallowed razor blades and four had consumed washing powder.

The Australian Broadcasting Corporation said it had video from inside the detention centre showing what appeared to be two men being taken away on stretchers after consuming washing powder.

Other footage showed asylum-seekers chanting for freedom.

Mr Dutton, who took on the immigration portfolio in December after a cabinet reshuffle, called on the asylum-seekers to resolve their concerns peacefully and said his appointment did not reflect a shift away from the government's hard-line policies.

"Whilst there has been a change of minister, the absolute resolve of me as the new minister and of the government is to make sure that for those transferees, they will never arrive in Australia," he said.

"I ask people to listen to the directions that they are being given by the staff and by the officers on the ground, so that we can deal with issues peacefully."

The minister would not comment on individual cases, but confirmed there were a "number of incidents of self-harm within Manus" and the asylum-seekers involved were provided with medical help and support.

The protests come a month before the first anniversary of a riot at the camp left one dead and 69 injured after tensions flared among inmates about their fate.

The violence was described in a parliamentary report in December as "eminently foreseeable" and mostly caused by delays in processing refugee claims.

Some 1035 men are held on Manus Island, according to immigration figures ending December 31. No women and children are detained in the facility.

A total of 895 asylum-seekers, 596 men, 164 women and 135 children, are held on Nauru. - AFP

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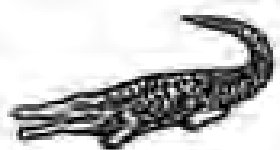
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Class 14

Alarm clocks; buckles of precious metal; chains (watch); chronographs (watches); chronometer; clips (tie); clocks, electric clock and watch; chronometrical instruments; cufflinks; costume jewellery; dials (clocks and watch making); hunting watches; skeleton watches; jewellery; key rings (trinket or fobs); movement for clocks and watches, shoe ornaments (of precious metal); sport watches; stopwatches; straps for wristwatches; tie pins; watches; wristwatches; its parts and fittings for all the aforesaid goods all included in class 14.

Class 16

Office stationery, address books; activity books; bags (envelopes, pouches) of paper or plastics, for packaging; books; comic books; colouring pencils; computer printers (inking ribbons for); cutters (paper); calendars; cards; catalogues; chalk (marking); exercise books; holder (passport); ink; inking pads; inking ribbons for computer printers; document files (stationery); drawing instruments; drawing materials; drawing pads; erasing products; forms (printed); fountain pens; greeting cards; handbooks (manuals); mechanical pencils; magazines; note books; office requisites except furniture; pads (stationery); pads (writing); paintbrushes; pamphlets; paper; pastels (crayons); pencil holders; pencil leads; pencil sharpeners (electric or non-electric); pencils; pen holders; pens (office requisites); periodicals; postcards; printed matters; painting sets; pictures; posters; rulers; scrap-books; staples for offices; stationery; story books; typewriter ribbons; typewriters; diaries; wrapping papers; water colours; its parts and fittings for all the aforesaid goods all included in class 16.

Class 18

Goods made of leather, imitations of leather or combination thereof: travelling bags, travelling sets, luggage, travelling trunks, garments bags for travel, travel cases for toiletries, make-up cases, overnight bags, shoulder bags, handbags, shopping bags, rucksacks, backpacks, knapsacks, haversacks, school bags, school satchels, satchels, duffle bags, sports bags, beach bags, shoes bags, briefcases, attache cases, suitcases, portfolios,

key cases [leatherware], key holder, key fobs, vanity cases [not fitted], wallets, purses, pouches, bank notes cases, bags for campers, bags for climbers, cases for cards, umbrellas, frame for umbrellas, umbrellas covers, umbrellas handles, umbrellas ribs, umbrellas sticks, parasols, parasol ribs, walking sticks, belts (leather shoulder), waist belts, its parts and fittings for all the aforesaid goods all included in class 18.

Class 24

Bed linen, bedroom linens, bed clothes, bed covers, bedspreads, bed sheets, bed blankets, bolster cases, bolster protectors, beach towels, bath towels, covers for cushions, curtains of textiles or plastic, comforters, comforter covers, coasters, eiderdowns [down coverlets], face towels, hand towels, handkerchiefs of textile, knitted fabric, mattress covers, mattress protectors, napkins and serviettes, pillowcases, pillow shams, pillow protectors, table cloths, table mats, quilt covers, shower curtain of textile or plastic, quilts, sleeping bags, table and household linen, table cloths, its parts and fittings for all the aforesaid goods all included in class 24.

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Clothing for men, ladies, children and infants; apron (clothing); babies' diaper of textile; babies pants; bath robes; bathing caps; bow ties; bath slippers; bathing suits; bathing trunks; beach clothes; beach shoes; belts (clothing); berets; bibs; blouses; boots; bermudas; boxer shorts; briefs; brassieres; camisoles; caps (headwear); cap (shower); cummerbund; cravats; clothing for gymnastics; clothing of imitation leather; clothing of leather; coats; coats (top); combination (clothing); corselets; corsets; cardigans; chemise; clogs; dresses; dressing gowns; ear muffs (clothing); footwear; furs (clothing); girdles; gloves (clothing); handkerchiefs; hats; headbands; headgear for wear; hosiery; jackets (clothing); jerseys (clothing); jeans; jumpers (shirt front); knitwear (clothing); lingerie; mittens; muff (clothing); neckties; night gowns; overcoats; pajama pants; panty girdles; panties; petticoats; pullovers; polo-shirts; panty hoses; ready made clothing; romper suits; raincoats; sandals; scarves; shawls; shirts; shoes; singlets; skirts; sleepwear; slippers; slips (undergarments); sock suspenders; socks; sneakers; sports shoes; sports jerseys; slacks; shorts; stocking suspenders; stockings; suits; sun visors; suspenders; sweaters; swimsuits; tee-shirts; tights; trousers; tank tops; underclothing; underpants; underwear; uniforms; vests; wristbands; wind jackets; its parts and fittings for all the aforesaid goods all included in class 25.

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the pulse

Sex in the city

PHOTO: THAIDDI

According to 2013 figures from UN agency UNAIDS, there are an estimated 70,000 sex workers in Myanmar and around 8.1 percent of them are living with HIV. Under Myanmar law, both prostitutes and their customers are committing an offence. An attempt in 2013 in Pyithu Hluttaw to legalise the sex trade following concerns about public health and the plight of sex workers was rejected.

NYEIN EI EI HTWE

MA Thida still fears the madams and the pimps. Now an employee of the World Health Organization, the former prostitute has not forgotten her terrifying experiences at the hands of those who control Myanmar's sex workers. Ma Thida's work takes her out into the streets, and to the houses of ill repute, to advise on how to avoid HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, and to hand out condoms. Sometimes she persuades a woman to come for a blood test. But the hardest job is getting around the "head of the house".

"Pimps and madams never want us to meet with the girls, even though the girls want to meet with us. They will dock a girl's wages for talking to us," said Ma Thida.

It's the head of the house who sets the working conditions and the rules, including how many times each night a sex worker will have to submit to clients.

"Five sessions a night doesn't mean just having sex with five men. Sometimes a session can mean having sex with two or three men. Sometimes you get so tired that you can't complete five sessions in a day, and your salary is docked," Ma Thida said.

Not meeting the quota also means being confined to the house until you have finished your work the next day.

"If you want to go out to visit your family or your boyfriend, you have to accept every client even if you are tired or they don't have a condom," she said.

When a girl is arrested or has to appear in court, the head of the house will deal with the police and pay the fine. But then they charge the girls double, said Ma Thida.

"The girls are afraid of them and have nowhere to turn, so they just keep working until their contract is finished and repay the heads with interest on any loans they've received," she said.

But former sex worker Ma Khin Wine, 38, disagreed. The girls know all about their terms of employment before they take the job, and receive support from the heads of houses, she said.

Ma Khin Wine, who worked in the sex trade for over 12 years and now sells vegetables for a living, said the head of the house in Ayeyarwady Region where she used to work was fair to her and the other girls in the house.

"He would take K5000 per session, but if we earned K10,000 or K15,000, that extra money was ours to keep," she said, adding that a considerate head of house would make sure customers were evenly distributed among the girls to ensure that each had a steady income.

However, Ma Khin Wine admitted that she hated the brokers who deal in young girls. She was sold to a house when she was in her 20s by a pimp who took a cut of her earnings until her "debt" was paid.

"They take advantage of girls like me who want to be beautiful and to spend more than we earn, and they would sell us to a house. Even once we'd paid back the debt, we were stuck doing sex work because that was all we knew," she said. Brokers are often well known in their

neighbourhoods, and know all the girls who might be susceptible to such an approach, she said.

For another sex worker, Ma Hnin Si, the crooks are neither the heads of houses nor the pimps, but the police.

"They know who we are and what we do. Sometimes we have to give them money. Mostly, we try to stay away from them," said Ma Hnin Si, who said she tries to memorise the officers' faces in case they approach her in plain clothes.

"They can arrest us even in our personal time when we're not working. They force us to confess by threatening a longer jail sentence - three years instead of one. We have no idea what the judge is saying, but we know everyone in court is looking down on us for what we are," said Ma Hnin Si.

And policemen in uniform can be just as bad - because some of them are not even policemen. Uniformed tricksters sometimes demand money and gold from the girls, beat them and use them for sex, then disappear.

"When my friends found out the 'officers' who were harassing them were fake, the men robbed and beat them. How can we go to the real police, when they would arrest us for prostitution?" said Ma Hnin Si.

In Myanmar, the police can arrest a woman for carrying a condom in her handbag if it is taken as evidence of prostitution.

Ma Zar Chi now works for an NGO-run clinic, but still finds herself being targeted by police.

"Once I had to go to the Ayeyarwady delta. At Hlaing Tharyar bus station, the police were checking bags and found condoms in mine," she said. "They took me to the station for questioning. I told them I was distributing condoms to help prevent HIV. They accused me of being a prostitute." Though she escaped a charge by telling the police she used condoms with her husband because she is HIV-positive, Ma Zar Chi said most sex workers avoid using condoms because customers prefer it that way.

"Clients who are drunk and who know nothing about HIV refuse to wear a condom. Since we are afraid to carry them, we have to do without," said sex worker Ma Thiri, adding that many working girls are reluctant even to buy condoms because vice squad officers keep the shops under surveillance.

And as for publishing their plight, sex workers are wary of journalists. Though some believe reporters campaigning with NGOs on HIV-related matters want to do the right thing, stories that accurately identify sex workers and their places of employment tend to be followed up by police raids - and not because the police want to track down the men who beat or robbed the girls.

"Some articles even identify the street or the bus-stop where we work, so it doesn't take great powers of detection to find us," said Ma Thiri. "If we don't want to be arrested, we have to give up work for a couple of days after the story comes out."

Names have been changed to protect identities.

Prodigy revives the ancient art of puppetry

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SINCE the age of two, Thet Paing Htwe Oo has been going to work with his father, the founder of the Htwe Oo marionette theatre, U Khin Maung Htwe. As a small child, he would watch the show intently, and he became a regular in the audience at the shows performed twice a day.

At the age of six, U Khin Maung Htwe gave Thet Paing Htwe Oo his first string puppet as a toy. To U Khin Maung Htwe's astonishment, instead of playing with the puppet, he took to pulling the strings with the skill of an old hand.

"He had never practised puppetry before that day. I was so surprised when I saw him moving his head and hands like a master," recalled U Khin Maung Htwe.

Neither of Thet Paing Htwe Oo's parents was trained in the ancient art. His father was a former sailor with a passion for puppetry. Home from the sea, he founded the Htwe Oo traditional puppet theatre in 2006 and enlisted veteran practitioners to train young performers.

When he discovered his son's talent, U Khin Maung Htwe asked veteran puppeteer U Maung Kyi to teach him how to perform to music. Thet Paing Htwe Oo showed a great interest in learning and soon became a skilled performer. By the age of eight, he was able to join his father's troupe, and they have performed daily shows together

ever since.

"Though he is a child, he never gets bored with performing every day. Even if he's tired, he livens up when he hears the sound of music," his father said.

U Khin Maung Htwe, who regards his theatre as a platform for older puppeteers struggling to survive financially, was initially hesitant about allowing his son to perform.

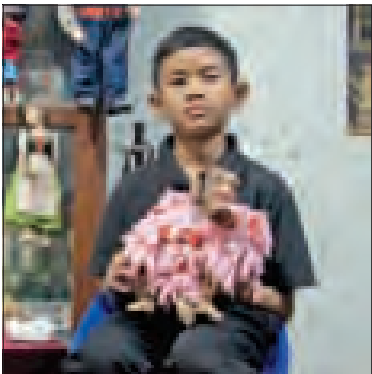
"When I was six years old, my father didn't allow me to operate the puppets on stage so I danced as a pageboy in the show instead. When I was eight, he let me start pulling the strings. I love the marionettes and I enjoy performing," the 10-year-old said.

U Khin Maung Htwe said, "I didn't believe he would have the courage to perform in front of audiences because he is a shy boy. But I granted him his wish. His first performance went well and the audiences were impressed by his talent."

In Myanmar, there are traditionally 28 human and animal characters in a puppet troupe, including the ogre, alchemist, king, prince, princess, minister, hermit, tiger, parrot, monkey and pageboy. The performance is accompanied by a traditional music band and background presenters who satirise, sing and talk but do not appear.

Over time, the number of characters has been reduced to as few as six, and most shows no longer include a live band or presenters due to cost and space. Instead, troupes use recordings and a single narrator.

U Khin Maung Htwe's troupe



Thet Paing Htwe Oo has been performing at his father's marionette theatre since he was 8 years old.

Photo: Yu Yu

includes only six characters, and That Paing Htwe Oo is the youngest.

When one of the members died last year and others left, Thet Paing Htwe Oo's mother and elder sister learned the art and joined up. Now, three of the troupe are family members, and the other three are experienced veterans.

As his son's talent blossomed, U Khin Maung Htwe took him to international puppet shows held in Singapore, the United Arab Emirates, the United States and Thailand to perform.

"We have a deep-seated ideal that we have to value the old masters and promote their work. But we have no sense of paving the way for young people with talent," U Khin Maung Htwe said. "But it's important to encourage the younger generation who inherit the art so that we can preserve it."

Puppetry, now in decline, has a long and central tradition in the country. In the colonial era, it was puppeteers who inspired audiences to resist British rule. But these days the authorities don't encourage the art or support enthusiasts' endeavours to revive it.

Aside from pulling strings, Thet Paing Htwe Oo has become interested in sculpting the characters. When his father took him to a puppet-maker's workshop, he tried his hand at shaping the wood and painting the puppet.

"I thought at first he was just playing. But he's young enough to learn to use the tools. When he grows, I will let him learn puppet-making," he said.



Puppeteers perform a traditional marionette show at the Htwe Oo theatre.

Photo: Supplied

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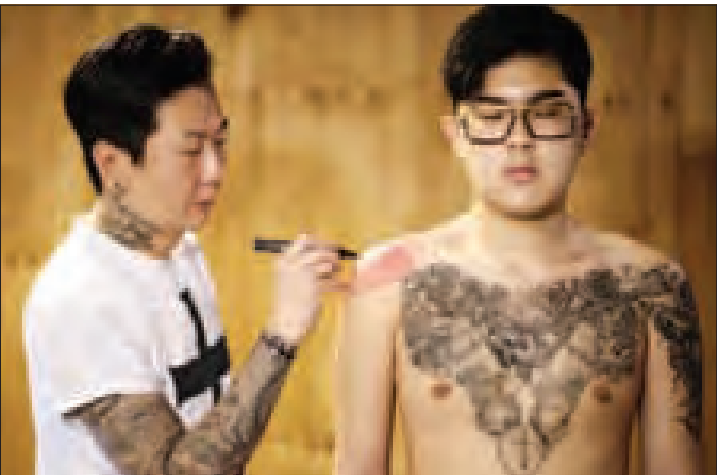
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SEOUL

Korea's outlaw tattoo artists ink on



Tattoo artist Jang Jun-Hyuk inks customer Suh Hyun-Woong at his tattoo studio in Seoul on November 21.

Photo: AFP/Ed Jones

WHEN Suh Hyun-Woong showed his mother his first tattoo, she burst into tears.

"She couldn't understand why I would want to do that to myself," Suh laughed. "But now she's pretty much accepted it."

Which is probably just as well given that the 19-year-old student's body is a growing monochrome canvas of fantasy designs.

Once associated almost exclusively with organised crime members, tattoos are going mainstream in South Korea, championed by sporting heroes, K-pop stars and other celebrities. But the law has failed to keep pace, leaving the growing number of Korean tattoo artists vulnerable to prosecution on the whim of local authorities.

Tattooing itself is not illegal in South Korea, but the law states that it can only be carried out by a licenced medical doctor.

"So if you want to get a tattoo, you're supposed to go to a hospital? It's just absurd," said Jang Jun-Hyuk, the owner of Tattooom, a tattoo parlour in central Seoul.

Officials say the law as it stands is justified by health considerations, including the risk of hepatitis or HIV infection from improperly sterilised needles.

Nevertheless, the government does appear to be considering change, and commissioned a study in October on the possibility of permitting legal tattoo parlours.

In the meantime, tattoo artists continue to inhabit a professional world not dissimilar to sex workers - technically illegal but largely ignored by the authorities as long as they stay under the radar.

Most Korean parlours, like Jang's Tattooom, are literally "underground" - basement studios with unmarked doors whose locations are spread by word-of-mouth.

Jang, 42, was a 20-year-old student at fashion college in Seoul when he saw his first tattoo sported by a friend and decided to train as an artist. The friend had got his tattoo in Mexico and, given the lack of options at home, that's where Jang went to train.

"In Korea at that time, nobody was using a tattoo machine. It was really just criminals using needles on themselves, and the results were pretty ugly," he said.

The organised crime stigma was so great that, until recently, having a large tattoo would result in exemption from South Korea's mandatory military service.

After several years in Mexico, Jang returned to Seoul and set up his first illicit tattoo studio. There was no sign, and with advertising

not an option, attracting customers was a struggle.

"In the first three months, I probably got about 10 customers," he recalled. "But it was a good time. There were only about 10 parlours in Seoul, and we all encouraged each other. It's all a bit competitive now."

There's no real consensus on when attitudes began to change, but a pivotal moment in 2003 involved footballer and national hero Ahn Jung-Hwan. After scoring in a match against Japan, Ahn peeled off his shirt to reveal a shoulder tattoo declaring his love for his wife.

"That started things off," Jung said. "Suddenly there were all these movie stars and K-pop singers getting tattoos as well."

Business picked up and the number of tattoo parlours mushroomed, but the legal issue remained.

Five years ago, Jung's parlour was targeted in a raid and he ended up in court, where he was fined US\$3000 and given a one-year suspended jail sentence for violating public health codes.

Despite sporadic crackdowns, the number of studios has continued to grow.

'So if you want a tattoo you're supposed to go to a hospital? It's absurd'

Jang Jun
Tattoo artist

Francis Kim, a 31-year-old chef, said his tattoos still draw a mixed response.

"I get a lot of compliments from younger people, but older people tend to look at me as if I must be a gangster or just a loser who doesn't fit in," Kim said.

Suh Hyun-Woong, meanwhile, seems intent on pushing his mother's tolerance to its limits, with an eclectic choice of tattoos that includes the baffling acronym WGUMCD emblazoned on his stomach.

"What Goes Up Must Come Down," he explained. "It's my life motto." - AFP

Exhibition captures Yangon's vibrant past

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FROM war to natural disasters, political upheaval to struggles for independence, Yangon has been an historical landscape of national and international importance since its founding in 1755. It is a city that has inspired books, films and poetry, and hosted famous visitors from Rudyard Kipling to Mahatma Gandhi. It also has the greatest surviving collection of colonial architecture anywhere in Southeast Asia.

Now the story of Yangon's colourful history is told through a collection of rarely shown photographs – including a remarkable photo of the great science fiction writer HG Wells, author of War of the Worlds, at the Rangoon University Boat Club in 1938 – as part of an exhibition that provides a unique insight into the city's cosmopolitan heritage.

Global City: Yangon's Past, Present and Future, which will be open to the public until the end of March, showcases more than 120 photographs which reveal Yangon as the centre of key events in the history of Myanmar.

Among the other gems on display is a photograph of the old Smart & Mookderdum bookshop on Sule Pagoda Road – the city's pre-eminent English-language bookshop and a favourite of George Orwell – which was destroyed in the 1990s.

The exhibition, organised by Yangon Heritage Trust and held at their beautiful, airy office space on lower Pansodan Street, aims to raise awareness of the unique nature of the urban heritage of Yangon. The Trust says the rare photographs have generated an encouraging amount of interest, including among local residents.

"This is not just a photo exhibition. Visitors have the opportunity to see Yangon's past, the challenges of Yangon's present days and our vision for the city's future. The visitors' catalogue provides the background story of each and every photo," said Shwe Yinn Mar Oo, the Trust's senior communications officer.

"The photos also offer an insight into the fashions and culture of the past, such as the so-called 'Omega' hairstyle of the 1970s and the traditional costumes of the late 1800s," she said.



The exhibition showcases over 120 photographs reflecting on Yangon's cosmopolitan past and present. Photo: Charlotte Rose

Established in 2012, Yangon Heritage Trust promotes the conservation of Yangon's heritage buildings. A highlight of the exhibition is a screening of *Restoring Rangoon*, an Al Jazeera documentary exploring the city's colonial architecture, including a rare glimpse inside the famous Secretariat building, which alone makes it worth the visit.

A rare and much-needed addition to the city's cultural scene, *Global City: Yangon's Past, Present and Future* captures the imagination. Visitors with even the mildest of interest in Yangon's history will be charmed by some of the quirkier finds such as US Vice President Richard Nixon in Burmese costume in 1953.

The Trust did not comment on plans for future exhibitions but one can only hope a permanent display of this kind will be amongst them.

Global City: Yangon's Past, Present and Future is open to the public every day from 9am until 5pm until the end of March at the Yangon Heritage Trust office on the 1st floor of 22 Pansodan Street (lower block).



Burmese beauty contestants pose in 1949. Photo: Supplied

New York exhibition to show Myanmar Buddhist art for first time

NANDAR AUNG
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OPENING in New York City on February 10, the Asia Society Museum's *Buddhist Art of Myanmar* will be the first exhibition of its kind to include loans from collections of Buddhist art in Myanmar. Comprising approximately 70 works spanning the 5th through the early 20th centuries, many of the works on view have never been seen outside Myanmar before.

The groundbreaking exhibition is the cornerstone of a series of programs on Myanmar being presented by the Asia Society – a global non-profit educational organisation dedicated to strengthening partnerships between Asia and the United States – with related public lectures, panel discussions, film screenings and musical performances taking place throughout the spring.

The Buddhist artworks on display – including stone, bronze and wood sculptures, textiles, paintings and lacquer ritual implements – explore how Buddhist narratives were communicated visually and represent a multiplicity of regional styles.

Buddhist Art of Myanmar includes loans from the national museums in Yangon and Nay Pyi Taw, the Bagan Archaeological Museum, the Sri Ksetra Archaeological Museum and the Kaba



Mara's Demons Ca. 1479 is one of the works on display at the Buddhist Art of Myanmar exhibition. Photo: Sean Dungan

Aye Buddhist Art Museum as well as works from the public and private collections in the United States.

Buddhist Art of Myanmar will be displayed from February 10 until May 10 at the Asia Society Museum, 725 Park Avenue, New York City. For more information visit www.AsiaSociety.org/museum

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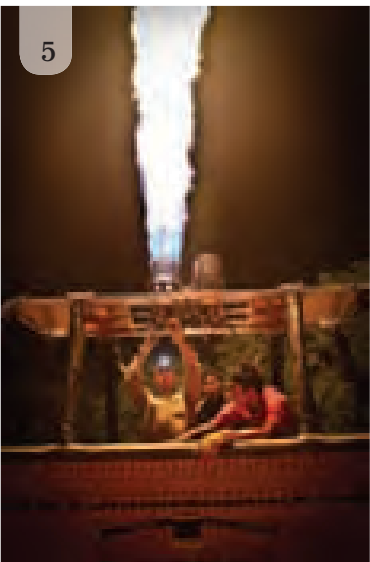
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Photo Essay



A bird's-eye view of Bagan

YU YU doublewaine.jan@gmail.com

AS a shutterbug with wanderlust, I am attracted to any trip with sights to see and room for relaxation. Bagan has to be high on anyone's list of Places to Visit, and I do happen to have such a list. Every New Year, I resolve to tick off some more items. This year, Bagan was one of them, but with a twist – I wanted to see it from a bird's-eye view.

Arriving in the afternoon, I was too excited to sleep, and eager for the dawn. Already in the early morning the landing site was bustling with crews preparing their giant balloons, resplendent with colours in the rising sun. Boarding was like stepping into a dream. As we ascended, the breeze lifted my hair and caressed my cheeks. The view of temples at sunrise that slowly unrolled beneath our feet was breathtaking. Gusty winds seized us, prompting the captain to announce that we would be landing by the Ayeyarwady River. Our debarkation point turned out to be a glistening sandbank.

I could barely contain my mixed feelings of happiness and sadness as we drifted to earth and landed on the sand bank. The memory of Bagan in the dawn light, the scarlet and gold of the great balloons, and the feel of the wind in my hair as we drifted aloft will never leave me.

- 1) The huge balloon is wrapped up after landing.
- 2) The crew wrap up the balloon after landing on the sandbank of the Ayeyarwaddy.
- 3) The balloon is folded after landing near Dhamayangyi Pagoda. The landing spot is different according the wind direction.
- 4) A bird's-eye view of Dhamayangyi Pagoda.
- 5) The pilot and crew check the burner before the flight.
- 6) When the balloon is about to land, the crew follows the flight path by communicating with the pilot to determine the landing spot.
- 7) The amazing view over Bagan from the air.

Photos: Yu Yu



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Prize**



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**2nd
Prize**



BMW BRAND NEW

**3rd
Prize**

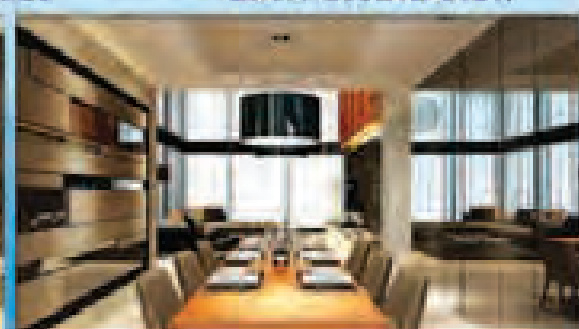
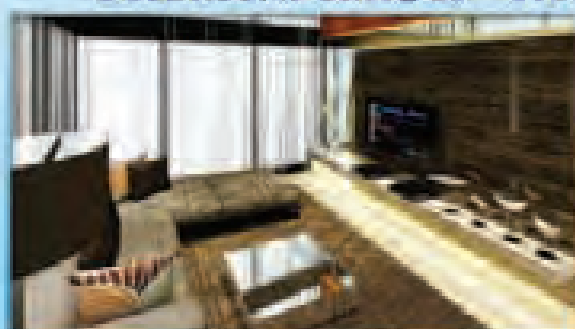


3 CARAT GIA DIAMOND

INSTALLMENT PROGRAM AVAILABLE

**ENTITLED TO STRATA FREEHOLD LAND
TITLESHP AS PER CONDOMINIUM LAW**

**FOUNDATION AND BUILDING DESIGN WHICH CAN
STAND FOR (8) RICHTER SCALES EARTHQUAKE**



SHOWROOM

44/A SAYAR SAN ROAD,BAHAN TOWNSHIP,YANGON, MYANMAR.

09-4202 88025, 09-4253 10993, 09-730 40513, 09-4500 21758, 09-540 7541, 09-2501 41060

OPEN DAILY

ROOM TYPES	SQFT.
1 BEDROOM	750 Sqft
2 BEDROOMS	1000 - 1100 Sqft
2 BEDROOMS + STUDY	1200 - 1300 Sqft
3 BEDROOMS + STUDY	1300 - 1500 Sqft
DUPLEX (3 BEDROOMS + 1)	2100 Sqft
DUAL KEY (2 BEDROOMS + 1 BEDROOM)	2500 Sqft

East meets West fusion

MY husband loves curry and rice but, as an Australian, he's not as keen as I am on eating it every day. He thinks we eat too much rice at home. I think he eats too much bread. Cooking dinners that satisfy us both isn't easy, but one solution I've found is to cook Western "fusion" dishes that combine Asian ingredients with a Western style of cooking.

This week's recipe is a quick and easy fusion dish that is ideal for a weekday dinner. No one wants to spend ages cooking after work, and this dish can be whipped up in under 20 minutes, leaving you plenty of time to wind down with your loved ones after a hard day.



PHYO ARBIDANS
phyo.arbidans@gmail.com

I love king oyster mushrooms – also known as Eryngii mushrooms – as their texture is similar to scallops. In this recipe, I use fennel butter for a twist on typical fried mushroom dishes.

Now is a great time to cook using fennel – you can buy locally grown fennel in the supermarket, which is much cheaper and fresher than the imported equivalent available throughout the rest of year. To make the most of this seasonal herb, I've also created a simple fennel and apple salad with balsamic dressing to accompany the fish dish.

PAN FRIED BARRAMUNDI FISH AND KING OYSTER MUSHROOMS IN FENNEL BUTTER
6 servings

- Approximately 500-550g Barramundi fish fillets (I bought mine from Pro-mart as they cut and debone the fillet)
- 80g butter
- 2 cloves garlic

- 400g king oyster mushrooms
- Approximately 1 tablespoon chopped fennel sprigs
- 1 lemon (cut into wedges)
- Salt and ground black pepper

Lay the fish fillets on some kitchen paper and season with a few pinches of salt and ground black pepper. Roughly chop the fennel.

Cut the stalks off the king oyster mushrooms and slice into pieces about 1 centimetre thick. Cut the mushrooms lengthways into similarly sized pieces.

Add 1/3 of the butter to a frying pan and melt over a low heat. Add the fennel to the butter. Next, add the mushrooms to the pan ensuring they are distributed evenly over the pan. Cover the pan and fry the mushrooms for 3 minutes. Turn the mushrooms and cover again to fry for another 3 minutes.



Photos: Phyo

Transfer the mushrooms onto a plate and set aside. Keep in a warm oven or flash-fry the mushrooms again before serving to reheat them.

Add the remaining butter to the frying pan and melt. Add the garlic and fish fillets (skin side down) and fry for around 3 minutes. Next, turn the fish over in the pan and reduce the heat to low. Fry for 2-3 minutes. Finally, turn the heat back up to medium and fry for 3 more minutes until the skin of the fish is crisp. I love a crispy skin on my fish so I fry mine for a few minutes more.

To check it is cooked through, insert the tip of a fork into the fish. If the fish is cooked, the fork should pierce the fish easily.

Arrange the fish fillets on plates along with the mushrooms. Serve with lemon wedges, salt and pepper.

APPLE AND FENNEL SALAD
6 servings

- 2 medium fennel stalks
- 2 medium red apples
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- A couple of pinches brown sugar



Cut the stalks off the fennel. Wash and drain the stalks, and keep the green fennel sprigs aside to use as a garnish (or to make the herb butter in this week's other recipe).

Slice the fennel stalks length ways very thinly. Core the apple and cut into thin slices. Leave the sliced apple to soak in slightly salted water before serving to prevent it from oxidising.

To make the dressing, add the olive oil, sugar and balsamic vinegar to a small bottle or jar and shake well to combine.

Prepare the salad just before serving so it stays fresh. Arrange the fennel and apple slices in layers on a plate. Pour over the balsamic dressing.

Add salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste.

If you have any walnuts, try adding a few to the salad for a delicious variation.

Restaurant Review

CHARLOTTE ROSE
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THE newest addition to Yangon's growing list of international restaurant chains, Tony Roma's is well-known across America for its so-called "legendary" ribs and mammoth portion sizes. As someone who has what my mother describes as an "unladylike" affection for meat, I was seated in one of the generic faux-leather chairs faster than you can say "filet medallions and ribs combo".

Make no (rib) bones about it – this probably isn't the place to bring your vegetarian friends. Amongst the butchered animal products on offer are pork and beef ribs, filet medallions and rib-eye steak. Even the mashed potatoes are topped with bacon. Bibs

are available for messy eaters, but if you aren't a fan of the cave-man-chic look there is also a range of seafood and pasta options on the menu.

As Tony Roma and his trophy wife beamed down at us from the wall, we turned our attention to the drinks menu. I learned long ago that tequila is best left to the Mexicans, but Tony clearly had a different experience on his high-school skiing trip because every one of the signature cocktails is laced with the stuff. I ordered a "SuperBerry" (K6500) – composed of tequila and acai extract – while my guest opted for a "Cadillac Top-Shelf" (K6500). Served in huge, inelegant glasses that my guest said made him "feel like a giant", both tasted like the kind of drink you would expect to be served at a children's birthday party –

sweet, fruity and watered down with mountains of ice cubes. Grown-ups would be best advised to stick to the wine list, from which I sampled a superb Chenin Blanc (K8000).

As an appetizer – which in meat-sweat-induced hindsight was completely unnecessary – we shared a "Kickin' Shrimp" (K14,000) – fried shrimp in a spicy cream sauce which was exactly what it said on the (imported) tin. Tasty enough, but perhaps a little heavy on the cream.

Excited to try what Tony Roma's website claims have been called "the best ribs in America", I ordered a full rack of the "Original Baby Back Ribs" (K22,500), while my guest selected the 10oz rib-eye steak (K25,500). Disappointingly, both dishes were served cold, and the steak – which my guest had ordered medium-rare – was a little on the raw side. Having sent both plates back to the kitchen, they were quickly returned to us in a mildly improved, lukewarm state. You'd be forgiven for thinking an established American chain might know better.

That said, the steak was rich and flavourful and, my guest commented, the best he'd had in Myanmar. The ribs were meaty, though somewhat nondescript, and I've never been a fan of the sickly sweet barbeque sauces beloved by restaurant chains.

The only thing I love more than meat is dessert and, on that front at least, Tony Roma's won me over. Despite having an "out of a box"



Photos: Charlotte Rose

taste that seems impossible to avoid in chain eateries, the apple cobbler (dessert trio K8500) was delicious – a definite must for Westerners looking for a taste of home.

Overall, the food was tolerable but the saving grace – as so often in such establishments – was the staff, who were friendly, helpful and responsive to our picky requests.

If you're looking for quantity over quality and are prepared to pay through the nose for ubiquitous chain restaurant food (our bill came to almost US\$120), Tony Roma's is your place. Unless you're a steak fanatic or a reckless spender, however, it's probably worth giving this one a miss.



Tony Roma's

42A Sayar San Road, Yangon

Restaurant Rating
★★★★★

Food	6
Beverages	5
Value	4
Service	8
X-factor	4



Julia Jung, Jin Young Choi and Sarah Jung



Bulgogi Brothers in Yangon
Guests celebrated the official opening of the Yangon branch of Bolgogi Brothers Korean BBQ restaurant on January 9.



A steak-tacular night
Guests celebrated the opening of the Yangon branch of restaurant chain Tony Roma's in Golden Valley on January 11.



Model



Ko Phone and Pwint Phyu



Canmake anniversary party
At Canmake Tokyo's 3rd anniversary party at the Sedona Hotel on January 16, guests watched as models strutted their stuff on the runway in before enjoying dazzling performances by Phyu Phyu Kyaw Then and Sandi Myint Lwin.



Nan Thida Kyaw and khin Soe



A royal event
The opening of the Royal Golden Hotel in Yangon on January 10 gave guests the chance to nosy around the new bedrooms.



UTMA
Guests attended the UTMA dinner at White Rice on January 10.

Myo Thwin, Sai Kham Hlaing, Ma Mya Sandar Aung and Kaung Min Khant



Infinity team



Ma Hnin Ei Lwin



Model



Ma Nilar Htike and Ma Cho



Model

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	1,2,3,4,5,6	6:00	7:40
YJ 891	Daily	6:00	8:05
K7 282	Daily	6:00	8:10
YH 917	1,2,3,5,6	6:10	8:30
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
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
YJ 761	1,2,4	11:00	12:55
YJ 233	6	11:00	12:55
YH 729	4,6	11:00	14:00
YH 829	5	11:00	15:05
YH 911	2	11:00	12:40
YH 737	3,5,7	11:15	13:25
YH 727	1	11:15	13:25
W9 251	2,5	11:30	12:55
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	1,2,3,4,5,6	6:00	8:25
YH 917	1,2,3,5,6,7	6:10	7:45
YH 909	7	6:30	8:05
YH 917	4	6:30	8:10
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	1,2,3,4,5,6	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	1,2,3,5,6	8:30	10:45
W9 201	Daily	8:40	10:35
YJ 811	3	8:40	10:05
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	3,5,7	17:25	18:50
K7 623	1,3,5,7	17:40	19:05
YH 730	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 918	1,2,3,5,6,7	7:45	10:45
YJ 881	4,7	8:05	10:10
YH 910	7	8:05	10:10
YH 918	4	8:10	10:15
YJ 881	1,2,5,6	8:20	10:25
YH 910	1,2,3,4,5,6	8:25	9:45
K7 242	Daily	8:35	11:45
7Y 131	Daily	8:50	11:30
7Y 121	Daily	9:55	14:10
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 917	1,2,3,5,6,7	6:10	9:35
YH 917	4	6:30	9:05
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	3,3,5,7,5	11:15	12:40
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
YJ 881	4,7	9:00	10:10
YJ 891	Daily	9:05	10:15
YH 918	4	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	1,2,3,5,6,7	9:35	10:45
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	3,5,7	16:40	18:50
YJ 752	7	16:45	17:55
W9 129	1,3,6	16:55	19:10
YJ 752	3	17:00	18:10

MYEIK TO YANGON			
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
Y5 326	1,5	8:35	10:05
7Y 532	1,5	10:45	12:18
K7 320	2,4,6	11:30	13:35
Y5 326	2	17:15	18:45

SITTWE TO YANGON			
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
W9 309	1,3,6	13:10	14:55
K7 423	Daily	15:10	16:30

THANDWE TO YANGON			
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
K7 243	Daily	10:50	11:45
YH 506	1,2,3,4,5,6	13:10	14:00
7Y 122	Daily	13:20	14:10
W9 309	1,3,6	14:05	14:55
K7 422	Daily	14:10	16:30
Y5 422	1,3,4,6	16:55	17:50

DAWEI TO YANGON			
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
K7 320	2,4,6	12:25	13:35
7Y 532	1,5	11:30	12:18

LASHIO TO YANGON			
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
YJ 752	5	13:15	16:30
K7 829	1,3	15:05	15:55
K7 829	5	15:05	17:25
YJ 752	7	15:40	17:55
YJ 752	3	15:55	18:10
7Y 742	1,5	16:00	17:48
YH 730	2,4,6	16:45	19:10

PUTAO TO YANGON			
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
YH 836	1,7	11:00	14:45
YH 832	4,6	11:00	14:45
YH 827	3	11:00	14:45
W9 252	2,5	15:45	19:40

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

Exploring Myanmar’s far south by road



Spectacular stretches of unexplored coastline await visitors to the far south. Photo: go-myanmar.com

MANNY MAUNG
manny.maung@gmail.com

WE had never pictured ourselves zipping through the streets of a pirate stronghold in a side-car, trying to outrun a procession of dancing bananas. But that’s exactly where I and my friends found ourselves on the last day of an extraordinary road trip south of Yangon.

We were squashed, the eight of us, into a metal cart fixed to the side of a motorbike. Said vehicle – which appeared to be stuck on a top speed of “slow”– had already broken down once before as it tried to haul our combined holiday weight up a minor incline. It was our final night in Myeik, Tanintharyi Region, after 10 days on the road. In a mini-van hired from Yangon (US\$1080 from Yangon to Dawei), our original company of nine had set off on an ambitious 924 kilometre (574 mile) road journey via Hpa-an, Mawlamyine, Ye, Dawei, Maungmagan and then Myeik, after which we planned to fly back to Yangon.

Whispers of the road to Myanmar’s southern coastline opening to foreigners began circulating in late 2012 and came into fruition in early 2013. As it turned out, the “road” after Mawlamyine is still being built. The stretch between Ye and Dawei is mostly sandy red earth cut into the Tanintharyi mountains – winding around the valleys, barely kissing the deep crevasses that yawned up from below. At one point, after many hours of lurching over the uneven course, I saw a group of men sprinting in our direction, waving furiously for us to stop.

The ground shook with repeated explosions. The crew up ahead were dynamiting the road. A large coach carrying passengers heading north passed us in a cloud of ochre dust. I wondered how the unsealed road would fare during monsoon. The road to Dawei is contentious. Officials at the checkpoints are still wary of visitors, especially foreigners travelling in large groups who are not part of organised tours. The road isn’t really being opened to encourage overland tourism, but more to accommodate the development of one of the largest industrial economic zones planned in Southeast Asia. The Dawei Special Economic Zone is earmarked to be completed by 2016. A deep seaport and industrial complex built over 250 square kilometres (96 square miles), it is supposed to relieve some of the pressure of deep-sea traffic to

Universal Crossword

Edited by Timothy E. Parker

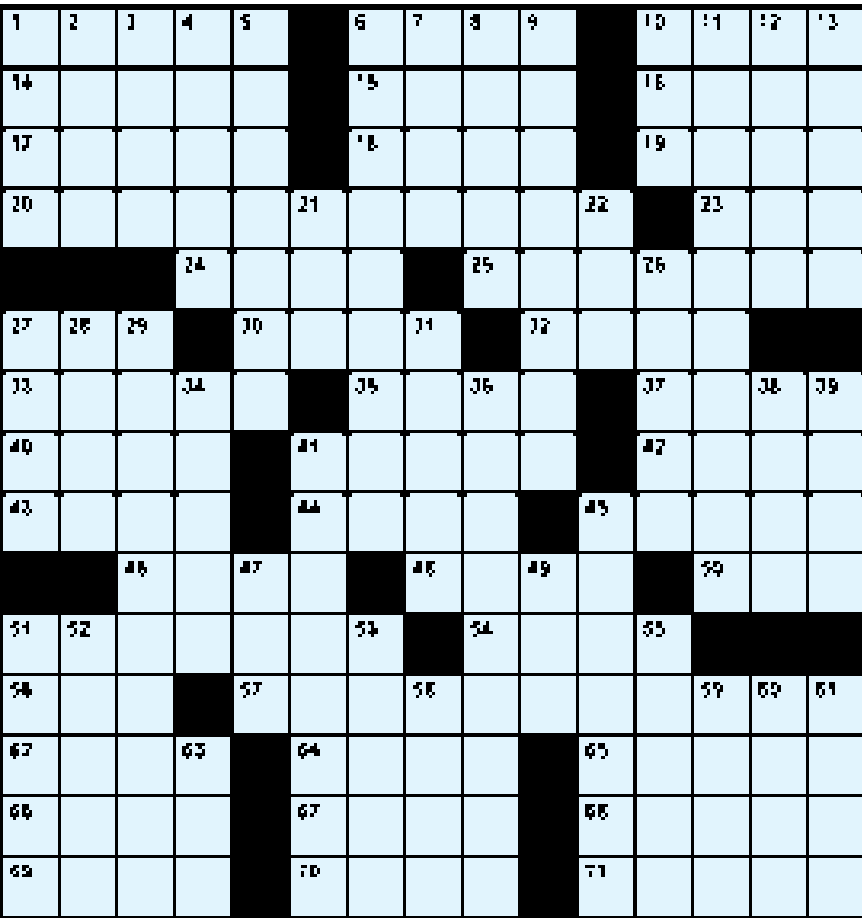
TRUE BEGINNERS By Lester J. White

- ACROSS**
- 1 Lovable dog
 - 6 Bit of a pencil
 - 10 Close to closed
 - 14 Shop shaper
 - 15 Lifestyle of the rich and famous, perhaps
 - 16 Ford's running mate
 - 17 Aquatic animal
 - 18 Gave a pink slip to
 - 19 Death notice, for short
 - 20 Abbott and Costello's baseball classic
 - 23 Sash for M. Butterfly
 - 24 Wedding cake feature
 - 25 Marker brand
 - 27 Play-_____ (kiddie clay)
 - 30 Cranny colleague
 - 32 Great Lakes city
 - 33 Cockamamie
 - 35 Informal negative
 - 37 Fly in the ointment
 - 40 11,000-foot Italian peak
 - 41 Get to work
 - 42 Drug shipment, sometimes
 - 43 Broadway's "Sweeney _____"
 - 44 Emerald, for one
 - 45 Irish dramatist John Millington _____
 - 46 Noted Chinese dynasty
 - 48 Pallid-looking
 - 50 Nitrous oxide, e.g.
 - 51 Musician's sweet potato
 - 54 Leaders of the mongrel hordes?
 - 56 _____ Beta Kappa
 - 57 The "K" of JFK, e.g.
 - 62 Beach sweeper
 - 64 Change in Roma, once
 - 65 Everybody's opposite
 - 66 Brain's creation
 - 67 Famous garden
 - 68 Mounted, as a horse
 - 69 Penny
 - 70 Dexterous
 - 71 Antelope with spiral horns

- DOWN**
- 1 Deere implement
 - 2 Pledge of Allegiance, e.g.
 - 3 "Beetle Bailey" dog
 - 4 Storage container
 - 5 Courageous woman
 - 6 Parts of coastal towns
 - 7 Airplanes do it
 - 8 Computer owners
 - 9 It may be fit for a queen
 - 10 Much of a stir
 - 11 Hirer's posting
 - 12 Literally, "in another place"

- 13 Make a new knot in
- 21 Prefix meaning "new"
- 22 Road paving goo
- 26 Far from a sure thing
- 27 Count calories
- 28 Not deceived by
- 29 Personal female attendant
- 31 Aussie marsupial
- 34 Low point
- 36 Having foresight
- 38 Microscopic pond life
- 39 Leaves
- 41 Indicated a turn

- 45 Hypodermic needle
- 47 Shutout score, in soccer
- 49 Attila, e.g.
- 51 Fiber-_____ cable
- 52 Admonish
- 53 Comment to the audience
- 55 Bar staple
- 58 Not kosher
- 59 Infinitesimal amount
- 60 Abbreviated mystery writer?
- 61 "Borrow" antonym
- 63 Have today's special



DILBERT

BY SCOTT ADAMS



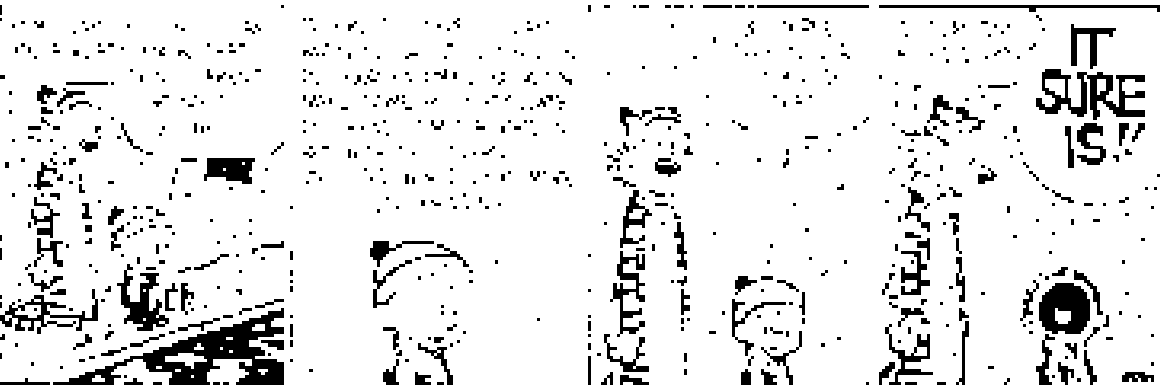
PEANUTS

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.



1/22 DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

WONDERWORD

By DAVID CUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle. Some are 10 letters long, some are 11 letters long. Find them all! CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORDS. The letters are listed in the order they appear in the puzzle.

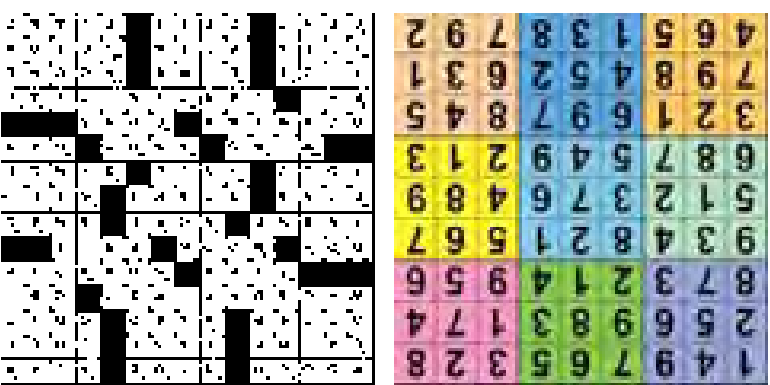
CHASE YOUR DREAMS Solution: 10 letters



Achieve, Attention, Bizarre, Career, Clarity, Color, Deep, Delight, Desire, Dreamscape, Drive, Emotion, Excite, Family, Fantasy, Fears and Future, Gem, Goal, Hope, Idea, Images, Joy, Long, For, Magic, Marvel, Memory, Mind, Mystery, Pursuit, Revere, Sleep, Spontaneous, Surreal, Thought, Trace, Treasure, Visual, Wild, Want, Wish, Wonder, Yearn

To purchase WONDERWORD books, visit www.WonderWordBooks.com, or call 1-800-642-6486

PUZZLE SOLUTIONS



QUICK GUIDE

FAX : 951-254158
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WWW.MMTIMES.COM



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], Kyaikkasan Rd, Tamwe Township, Yangon, Myanmar.
Ph: 542826, Fax: 545650
Email: reservation@edenpalacehotel.com

**GRAND PALACE HOTEL**
M-22, Shwe Htee Housing, Thamine Station St., Near the Bayint Naung Point, Mayangone Tsp., Yangon Tel : 522763, 522744, 667557. Fax : (95-1) 652174
E-mail : grandpalace@myanmar.com.mm


**MK HOTEL**
No.1, Wut Kyaung St, Yay Kyaw, Pazundaung Tsp, Yangon, Myanmar.
Ph: 01-8610640, 01-202187, www.mkhotelyangon.com

**Excel Treasure Hotel**
Yangon
No.520, Kaba Aye Pagoda Road, Bahan Township, Yangon, Myanmar.
Tel: 01-559150 to 7
Fax: 01-559150

Excel River View Hotel
No.(3) Block (1 to 4), Near Thanlyin Bridge, Thanlyin Township, Yangon Myanmar.
Tel: 056-22550, 09-8601892, Fax: 056-22546,

Excel Palace Hotel
No.(25, D1), New University Avenue Road, Bahan Town-ship, Yangon, Myanmar.
Tel: 01-544491, 01-556601
Fax: 525028, 01-544604
excel@myanmar.com.mm
autospeed123@gmail.com
www.exceltreasurehotel.com

Hotel Grand United (Chinatown)
621, Maharbandoola Rd, Latha Tsp, Yangon.
Tel: (95-1) 372256-58
(21st Downtown)
66-70, 21st Street (Enter from Strand Rd), Latha Tsp, Yangon. Tel: (95-1) 378201
(Ahlone Branch)
35, Min Ye Kyaw Swar Rd, Ahlone Tsp, Yangon.
Tel: (95-1) 218061-64;
Email: grandunited.head@gmail.com, www.hotelgrandunited.com

**HOTEL YANKIN**
186, Lu Nge Thitsar Street, on Thitsar Road, Yankin Township, Yangon, Myanmar. Ph: +951-8550 283, +951-8550 284, +959-2540 63632, E-mail: enquiry@hotelyankin.com, www.hotelyankin.com

MGM Hotel No [160], Warden Street, Lanmadaw Tsp, Yangon, Myanmar. +95-1-212454-9.
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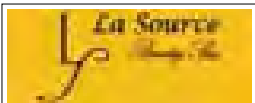
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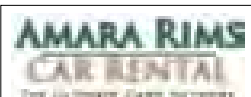


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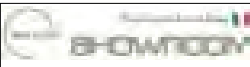
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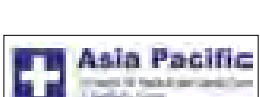
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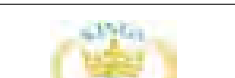
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Horizon Int'l School
235, Shukhinthar Myo Pat Rd, Thaketa Tsp, Yangon, Ph: 450396-7, 25, Po Sein Rd, Bahan Tsp, Yangon, Ph: 543926, Fax: 543926, email: contact@horizonmyanmar.com



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Email: imm.myn@gmail.com

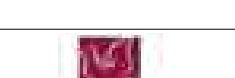


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Ph: 01-395816, 396817



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General

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MYAYNIGONE, Newly decorated apartment, good lighting and ventilation <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ventilation_%28architecture%29>, high floor, clear view to Shwe Dagon Pagoda at quiet location, walking distance to Myay Ni Gone City Mart, Dagon Centre, close to Uwisara Road. Rental fee \$1,000/month. Ph: 09-2500-84265, 09-2500-84265, 09-4306-7111.

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THE UNITED Nations World Food Programme, is seeking (1)**Programme Officer/Head of Sub Office** (NO-A), Hakha (Re-advertise) Please visit to <http://www.themimu.info/jobs-for-myanmar-nationals>. Please Email the applications with UN P-11 to wfpmyanmar.vacancy@wfp.org COB 27 January 2015.

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Ingo Position

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THE INT'L Rescue Committee (IRC) is seeking **Project Officer** 1 post in Hpa-an & Hpapun, Kayin State: 3 years of professional experience in related work, community mobilization. Minimum of 3 years of experience in project implementation.

Fluency in English. Please submit a Cover letter & CV to the HR Department by email at: WaiMarNaing@rescue.org. Closing date : 27th January 2015.

THE INT'L Rescue Committee (IRC) is seeking (1)**M&E and MIS Officer** 1 post in Tatkon, Naypyitaw: Academic degree in economics, public policy, political science or a related field and at least three years or experience in monitoring & evaluation, preferably under development projects, or 5 years of relevant M&E experience. Fluency in English. (2)**Senior M&E Officer** - 1 post in Hpa-An, Kayin State: University degree in data management & analysis, project management, statics or relevant sector. 3 years experience. Fluency in English. (3)**Infrastructure & Safeguards Specialist** - 1 post in Tatkon, Naypyitaw: Academic degree in civil engineering or equivalent. 4 years experience in design, construction, supervision or management of infrastructure projects, preferably for community infrastructure. Fluency in English. Please submit a Cover letter & CV to the HR Department by email at: WaiMar.Naing@rescue.org Closing date : 27 January 2015.

(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, Nay Pyi Taw. Or ormrcshrrcruitment@gmail.com www.myanmarredcrosssociety.org (1)**DISSEMINATION Officer** - Naypyitaw/ ygn 1 post (2)**M & E Officer** (Taunggyi) 1 post (3) **Engineer** (Mindat/ Matupi) 2 posts. Please send application letter, CV & related documents to Myanmar Red Cross Society (Head Office) Yazatingaha Rd, Dekkhinathiri, Nay Pyi Taw. Or ormrcshrrcruitment@gmail.com www.myanmarredcrosssociety.org.

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FU XING Brother Group of Companies (Trading) is seeking (1) **Secretary** - Female, age 21-28, Chinese language four skills, computer skills, driving skill, 2 years experience, (2) **Receptionist** - Female, age 21-24, Chinese language, good communication skill * 1 year experience. (3) **Sales Drive** - Male, age 20 - 30, 3 years exp, holding valid driving license. Ph: 09-310-56674, 554140. Add : U Chit Mg Housing, U Chit Mg Rd, Tamwe.

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IKON Trading Company Ltd is seeking **HR Manager** - M/F 1 Post: Any graduate, Diploma in HRM is preferred, 5 years experiences at Manager level in related field, Age over 35, Fluent in English & Myanmar, Knowledge about labor laws & Social welfare is an asset, Basic knowledge in Accounting, While all applicants

required : Application together with update CV & related documents, Labour registration card & police force to 328/A, Pyay Rd, Sanchaung, Yangon. (Near Mahar Myaing Hospital) Ph: 01 534216, 527705, 501429, 503914, Email: hr.ikonmart@gmail.com Within 2 weeks.

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(7) **Bell Driver** (Salary + others) above-250000 M/F 3 Posts (8) **Sales & Marketing Asst: Manager** - M/F 1 Post (9) **Sales & Marketing Assistant** - M/F 1 Post (10) **Purchasing Supervisor** - M/F 1 Post (11) **Painist** - M/F 1 Post (12) **Villinist** - M/F 1 Post (13) **Guitarist** - M/F 1 Post. CV form to be submit to HR Department: No. 6, Botahtaung Jetty, Seikkan Tsp. Ph: 09-2544-43327. **WE** are seeking (1) **GM/ Sr. Manager** (Special Project) (2) **Personal Asst:** To CEO (Manager Level) (3) **Planning & Control Manager** (4) **Operation Manager** (Trading) (5) **BD Manager** (Structural Steel) (6) **Marketing Manager** (Dairy Farm). Please send CV & cover letter, including salary expectations to Email : thelondoner007@gmail.com. You can see more details of Job Description from www.myanmarjobsdb.com, www.myanmar-network.net, www.work.com.mm. The successful candidates can expect high competitive salary and benefits.

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CAPITAL DIAMOND Star Group Co., Ltd is seeking (1) **Area Sales Manager** - M/F 5 Posts : Any graduate, Age 20 ~ 30. Ability to use of MS Office 2000 Internet and email. (2) **Admin/HR Manager** - M/F 5 Posts : Any graduate. Age 30 ~ 40 years. Ability to use of MS Office 2000 or Internet and email. (3) **Secretary** - F 3 Posts: Any graduate with dip in secretary cretificate. Age 25 ~ 35 years. Able to use Microsoft office & Internet Email effectively. Must have Excellent in English both written and oral. Please submit to email: capital.srhr@gmail.com

MYANMAR ACCESS Int'l Co., Ltd is seeking **Marketing Executive** : 2 year experience in the Marketing field, Age above 25 years, Must be able to speak and write English, Must be able to use Ms & Power point, Well organized & result-oriented, Contact uzinminpon@gmail.com, sunandar91072@gmail.com. Ph: 09-2530-62042, 09-7324-0764

KH HOTEL Yangon is currently seeking (1) **Receptionists** - M/F 5 Posts : Any graduated, English language skill, Computer literate, 1 year experience, (2) **Reservation** - F 1 Post : Any graduated, English language skill, Computer literate, 1 year experience. (2) **Bell Boy** - F 2 Posts : Any graduate, 2 years experience, (3) **Accountant** - F 3 Posts: Any degree or diploma in accountancy, 1 year experience in accounting. (4) **Purchaser** - M 1 Post: 2 years experience. (6) **Housekeeping** - M/F 5 Posts : 1 year experience. (7) **F&B Service Mngar** - M 1 Post : Any graduate, 3 years experience, Must work shift duty, (8) (F&B Service) **Waitress** - F 3 Posts : Can speak English conversational, 1 year experience. Please submit CV with relevant documents to 28, 7 Miles, Pyay Rd, Mayagone, Yangon. 01-652989, 01-653358.



HOTEL Shwe Gone Daing, Yangon, (1) Kitchen Department: **Commis I, Commis II, Commis III, Kitchen Helper, Steward, Dimsum**, (2) HK Department: **HK Supervisor, Room Attendant, PA Attendant, Laundry Supervisor, Laundry Attendant, Linen Attendant**, (3) F & B Department: **F & B Manager, F & B Supervisor, F & B Ass: Supervisor, F & B Cashier, F&B Waiter**, (4) Entertainment Department: **Cashier, Waiter, Bar Waitress, Cleaner, Bell Boy**, (5) FO Department: **FO Supervisor, Receptionist, Bell Boy**, (6) Finance Department: **Driver, Store Supervisor, Storekeeper, Logistics**, (7) IT Department: **CCTV Operator**, (8) M & E Department: **M & E Operator**. Hotel Shwe Gone Daing, No. (273/A), Shwe Gone Daing St, Bahan, Yangon. Ph: 552583, 552585, Email: monyeekyaw@gmail.com

VINTAGE LUXURY Yacht Hotel is seeking: (1) **Executive Sous Chef** - M/F 2 Posts (2) **Chef de Partie** - M/F 1 Post (3) **Front Office Manager** - M/F 1 Post (4) **Duty Manager** - M/F 1 Post (5) **Front Office Supervisor** - M/F 2 Posts (6) **Reservation Supervisor** - M/F 1 Post

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G STAR HOTEL (Yangon) is seeking (1) **HR Manager** - F 1 post (2) **Assistant HR** - F 1 post (3) **Accountant** - M/F 2 posts (4) **Chief Account** - F 1 post (5) **HK Supervisor** - M 1 post (6) **Security** - M 3 posts. Please submit to 20/B, C, Thukhawati St, West Yankin. Ph: 09-3210-9590, 09-3210-9591

PARKWAY CANCER Centre is seeking **Medical Doctor** - F 1 post : M.B.B.S Graduate with SA MA registration, 2 years experience in medical field, Good in English, Able to use computer, internet and Microsoft application

LOS ANGELES

US pair relish historic Yosemite free climb



The El Capitan rock formation. Photo: AFP

TWO US free climbers who completed a historic climb of a sheer 900 metre (2950 feet) rock face in Yosemite National Park called their 19-day journey a “spiritual experience.”

Tommy Caldwell and Kevin Jorgeson completed the ascent of one of California's most iconic features, the El Capitan rock formation, on January 14.

The two made the journey up the previously untraversed Dawn Wall, a sheer granite rock face on the massive formation considered one of the most difficult free climbs in the world.

“It felt like a very spiritual

experience the whole time. Even now it feels a bit surreal to me,” Caldwell told reporters following the climb.

Jorgeson added: “When you would grab that last hold you could literally feel all of the hope, desire and stress drop off of you.”

Free climbing involves climbing with only the hands and feet. The only ropes are fixed from below as a safety precaution.

The two had trained for years and planned months in advance, carefully studying their route up the Dawn Wall.

And during the journey Caldwell and Jorgeson slept in small tents affixed to the rock face and climbed up the ropes to where they had left off for

a new day of climbing.

“I think that the camaraderie that we had was crucial,” Caldwell said.

As the two neared the end of their journey, they attracted international attention for the incredible feat.

Dozens of news outlets covered the finale of the climb when Jorgeson and Caldwell were greeted by friends and sprayed with champagne.

US President Barack Obama tweeted words of congratulations with a photo of himself in front of a painting of the notable rock face.

“You remind us that anything is possible,” Obama wrote.

The critical moment for Jorgeson came at the beginning of the month about halfway up the free climb.

Their climbing was divided into sections or “pitches” between which their safety ropes were strung.

On pitch 15, Jorgeson reached an impasse.

The taller climber needed to reach out with his full wingspan, and hold with just two fingers of one hand to pull himself to the next hold and finish the pitch.

But his fingers, worn down after days of climbing in the cold winter nights, were cracked and cut and he couldn't reach the hold the slighter Caldwell had already completed.

Giving up crossed Jorgeson's mind, and he considered telling Caldwell to continue ahead without him.

“The idea of topping out without

Kevin was something I didn't want to think about,” Caldwell told reporters.

Fortunately, the weather stayed cold and dry, best for climbing because of the friction, and Caldwell said they would stay as long as they needed until Jorgeson could make the spread-eagle move.

Jorgeson had the film crew following him splice together all his failures on pitch 15. He studied his mistakes, corrected his technique and Jorgeson made the difficult grab.

“Everything really had to come together for that to work out,” he said reflecting on the moment.

“You are just hanging there in silence and relief and joy and it's like the coolest feeling.” – *AFP*

Fourth National Sport Festival date postponed until mid-February

PYAE THET PHYO

pyaethetphyo87@gmail.com

TO the surprise of the event's organisers, the Ministry of Sport announced last week that the fourth national Sports festival will be postponed until mid-February.

“We don't know why the government instructed us to put off the festival,” said U Htay Aung, director of the Mass Sport and Education section in the Ministry of Sports. “[W]e think that they instructed us to postpone the date of the festival because it is conflicted with other projects they have planned to do in January.”

While he and his staff hope to begin the tournament on February 13, U Htay Aung said his superiors at the Ministry of Sport have not yet approved the proposed date.

“We will inform State and Region governments about the date when the approval is granted,” he said.

The delay is likely to have an effect on the number of athletes who will chose to compete, as many state and regional sports clubs stopped training in early January in anticipation of starting on the original date, according to U Htay Aung.

Delays have become a standard feature of the National Sport Festival, which was first held in 1992. The second and third festivals were held

in 1994 and 1997, and then the whole event was put on hold due to a lack of budget.

The 2015 festival was meant to be a triumphant return that would hopefully see the tournament become an annual tradition.

According to organisers, the fourth National Sport Festival will include

‘We don't know why the government instructed us to put off the festival.’

U Htay Aung
Director of Mass Sport and Education Section

27 events: track and field, badminton, basketball, billiards, snooker, body building, boxing, chess, cane ball, cycling, football, futsal (male/female), golf, judo, karatedo, traditional boat race, sepak takraw, swimming/diving, traditional boxing, table tennis, takaedo, taekwando, tennis, Myanmar martial art, volleyball, weight-lifting, wushu, triathlon and cricket.

– Translation by Thiri Min Htun

NAIROBI

Kenya's Jeptoo attends doping hearing, decision delayed

DISGRACED Kenyan drugs cheat Rita Jeptoo appeared before a disciplinary hearing on January 15, although officials said a decision on her suspension from distance running would be delayed pending further investigations.

Jeptoo, once considered the world's top female marathoner, was busted for using the banned blood-boosting hormone EPO during an out-of-competition drugs test last year, and faces a ban of at least two years plus the loss of a string of recent titles.

Athletics Kenya officials, who had urged Jeptoo to “spill the beans” on how she acquired and was administered the drug, said the athlete testified for more than two hours in what was a “very productive hearing.”

“We have garnered a lot of information,” Athletics Kenya medical commission member and chief executive Isaac Mwangi told reporters at the end of 12 hours of closed-door testimonies and deliberations.

“This case has not been concluded simply because there is a lot of information that has come about through the hearing and we have to go back and consult,” he said, adding that Jeptoo remained on suspension pending a final decision.

He also said Athletics Kenya needed to consult with the International Association of Athletics



Jeptoo arrives in court. Photo: AFP

Federation (IAAF) on whether Jeptoo should be punished with a two-year ban or with the new mandatory four-year ban that came into force from January 1.

Another hearing will take place in two weeks, he added.

Jeptoo is the biggest name in Kenyan athletics to have been caught cheating, and the scandal has cast a

shadow over the astonishing achievements of the east African distance running powerhouse.

The athlete, aged 33 and the winner of the last two consecutive Boston and Chicago marathons, kept her eyes to the ground and made no comment to reporters as she entered and exited the Athletics Kenya headquarters – maintaining her public silence over the scandal.

Jeptoo's manager Federico Rosa and coach Claudio Berardelli, both of whom have distanced themselves from the athlete, also appeared before the hearing.

Her estranged husband Noah Busienei – who has implicated Jeptoo in doping offences dating back to 2011 – was also called to testify.

Jeptoo has already been denied the US\$500,000 prize for winning the last World Marathon Majors series, and may also be forced to pay back other prize money that has already been paid out.

Kenya's sports bosses have been accused of inaction on the doping issue, which has cast a shadow over the record-breaking and medal-winning achievements of its fabled distance runners.

They have blamed the current crisis on dishonest foreign agents and managers who are “corrupting” Kenyan runners. – *AFP*

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Sport

National Sports Festival delayed yet again

SPORT 66

LUSAIL

Handball cup showcases Qatar sporting ambitions

MOST countries hosting sporting events build several new stadiums and refurbish a few old ones, but such an approach was never likely for uber-ambitious Qatar.

The super-rich Gulf state has gone considerably further by beginning work on building an entire new city from scratch in the desert - Lusail - that will eventually host the football World Cup final in 2022.

Last week the US\$45 billion project, some 15 kilometres (10 miles) north of the capital Doha, faced its first high-profile test the World Handball championships kicked off.

Twenty-four teams will contest for a cup made of pure gold. France, Denmark and Spain are among the favourites and Qatar's national team is predicted to make the quarter-finals.

But it is what happens off the handball court that is arguably far more important for Qatar's sporting ambitions.

The tournament provides a chance for Qatar not only to show that it can successfully host a World Cup, but also begin to reverse the negative press which has surrounded its sporting ambitions, especially in the West, said Simon Chadwick, professor of sports business strategy at Coventry University.

"The established perception needs to be changed and reversed," he told AFP. "What Qatar needs is tangible proof that its strategy [of investing in sport events] is working."

The handball provides an opportunity for people to "get to know Qatar for running high-profile sports events rather than being a country in the desert with lots of money and accused over FIFA scandals", Chadwick added.

It is the Lusail Multipurpose Hall which will provide that litmus test for Qatar's aspirations.

The opening ceremony, opening game, final and many of the major games that take place between January 15 and February 1 will all be played at the hall, a dome-like \$300 million structure that rises improbably out of the Qatari sands.

A somewhat bizarre sight, it is surrounded at present - like a small

airport - by little more than vast car parks, and tended to by hundreds of workers making last-minute preparations for the start of the tournament.

Beyond the very modern structure lies desert. But in a few years' time the stadium, which holds more than 15,000 fans, will be just one tiny part of a gigantic urban development.

The scale of the project, even in a country where building works take place 24 hours a day, is unmatched.

It is the largest single development ever undertaken in Qatar and one of the largest under way anywhere in the world.

When finished in 2019, more than 200,000 people will call Lusail home.

It will be the first green city in Qatar, a 38-square-kilometre (15-square-mile) metropolis that will be home to 22 hotels, 36 schools, luxury waterfront homes, a blue lagoon, two golf courses, an underground metro link, tunnels carrying chilled water pipes to cool buildings and shopping malls.

At its heart will be the 86,250-seat Lusail Iconic Stadium that will host football's 2022 World Cup final.

Inevitably, Lusail has become embroiled in the continuing scandal over dangerous work practices in the Qatar construction sector.

A report last November in British daily *The Guardian* said forced North Korean labourers working seven days a week and paid a pittance were behind Lusail's spectacular rise from the desert.

The same newspaper alleged a year earlier that migrant Nepalese workers were dying at the rate of one a day working on the Lusail project, largely from on-the-job accidents.

The head of the handball organising committee, Thani al-Kuwari, told AFP there had been no fatalities among the 26,000 workers who had worked 31 million man hours to build the stadium where the final will be played.

"Such events as the handball are important for Qatar to demonstrate it can manage high-profile events," he said. - AFP

3rd Yangon Marathon

Clocking in at 2 hours, 22 minutes and 46 seconds, Kenyan runner Joseph Gitau Kariuk (pictured below) won his third consecutive Yangon Marathon's 42-kilometre male event last week.

Fellow Kenyan Mary Wangui Kiguru won the female event, with local runner Myint Myint Aye coming in second.

In the 21 km half marathon, local favorites Ko Nyi Nyi Aung and Nway Nadi Soe placed third in their respective events.

Altogether around 4100 runners from all over the world were competed in the day's races.

- Kyaw Zin Hlaing





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