

## Central Bank steps in to stop KBZ panic

Central Bank 'is standing behind all private banks', says senior official

By Aye Thidar Kyaw, Kyaw Hsu Mon and Stuart Deed

THE Central Bank of Myanmar last week stepped in to quell a rumour-fuelled run on one of the nation's largest lenders, Kanbawza Bank.

The panic prompted customers to withdraw K8 billion from the bank's branches in Yangon and Mandalay on October 5, up from the daily average of K1-2 billion, officials said.

In order to restore calm, the Central Bank of Myanmar issued a statement on the evening of October 5 backing the bank and dismissing the rumour.

U Win Thaw, the deputy director general of the Central Bank's Yangon office, said at a press conference on October 6 that none of Myanmar's banks were in danger of going under.

"This is only a rumour ... the Central Bank can guarantee that all private banks [are healthy]. We've tightly restricted all private banks and ensured they follow the rules of the Central Bank. We've investigated all [owners of] private banks before they were allowed to open to

check whether their money has been legally acquired," he said.

"All private banks have to show their financial statistics every day to the Central Bank ... the banks even complain that we place too many restrictions on them.

"The Central Bank is standing behind all private banks. We're fully backing them."

The panic began after rumours spread through social media early last week that a Kanbawza Bank truck filled with contraband - allegedly drugs - had been intercepted by police, and the bank's chairman, U Aung Ko Win, had been arrested.

As a result, many people rushed to Kanbawza Bank branches to withdraw their savings, with large queues seen outside several branches in Yangon.

U Win Thaw suggested the rumours were the work of "underground saboteurs" who "don't want the banking sector to develop" and were probably designed to harm the industry as a whole, rather than just Kanbawza.

"Banking sector development is a foundation of the country's development.

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### A hero returns

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi waves to supporters after arriving at Yangon International Airport late on October 4 following a two-week tour of the United States that saw her receive the Congressional Gold Medal and meet President Barack Obama. Full story page 3. Pic: Boothee

More page 4

## Internal conflict threatens to derail USDP assembly

By Win Ko Ko Latt and Ei Ei Toe Lwin

UNION Solidarity and Development Party officials said last week the party would hold its national conference from October 14 to 17, as part of efforts to rebuild following a disastrous showing in the April by-elections.

The party plans to promote active members to more senior positions, introduce a new structure, assess the party's annual reports and hold discussions on future strategy, said spokesperson U Tint Zaw.

Leadership positions will also be selected through a vote for the first time, he said.

"Before, party leaders were appointed by order. But now the party plans to appoint them through a vote, based on the desire of the party's members."

The USDP lost 44 of the 45 seats it contested in the by-elections, after winning almost 80 percent of seats on offer in the 2010 general election.

General secretary U Htay Oo said last week that executive members would retain their positions but "we will boost our party by promoting people who are respected" in their communities. While there will be changes in personnel, he said policy would remain the same.

However, the conference will be held amid a vicious internal conflict in Ayeyarwady Region, where party MPs have threatened to sack the regional government, whose members are also from the USDP.

The dispute has spread from the delta to Nay Pyi Taw, with U Htay Oo in trouble for comments he made to Ayeyarwady Region Hluttaw representatives in August.

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## How a Vietnamese spy played the Aussies for fools



ASIAN FOCUS  
**INSIDE COVER**  
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Roger Milton

ENCOUNTERS with espionage agents are always edgy and intriguing. Aside from the thrill of a clandestine rendezvous, there is also the fact that many are rather dishy in person and often have hefty expense allowances.

Modesty and concern for my safety preclude me naming names but over the past quarter century some of my most spectacular lunches have been courtesy of the station chief of various foreign intelligence services.

Personal experience aside, the subject of spooks reared its quirky head last month in a startling way, both to the east in Vietnam and down under in Australia.

In a case that beggars belief, a suave and highly educated spy called Luong Ngoc Anh, not only took an alleged US\$20 million off the Australians, but ravished one of the country's top trade envoys.

Only now, more than 10 years later, are details of the gigantic state-backed sting unfolding in the Melbourne Magistrates Court.

Colonel Anh, whose name is pronounced "Ang", works in the Ministry of Public Security – the polite name for Vietnam's national intelligence agency – and he has political connections right up to the Politburo level.

Although a poor country boy by birth his natural abilities set him apart

and, after being spotted by cadres in the ruling Communist Party, he was sent off to study at Melbourne's Monash University.

He focused on communication technology, and after returning to Hanoi, his spymasters helped him set up a front organisation called the Company For Technology & Development.

Its purpose, aside from gathering data on other countries, was to attract foreign investment in sensitive sectors like banking, defence services and information technology.

Anh excelled in all these areas, but his greatest coup came when he met the senior trade representative for Australia, a blonde bombshell called Elizabeth Masamune.

Soon after she was posted to Hanoi in June 1999, she met Anh, who quickly appreciated the delectable opportunities she offered.

He showered her with gifts, including perfume, a DVD player and a television, according to court disclosures, and he had Masamune between the sheets before you could say "Strewth, what a ripper!"

At that time, as Masamune admitted in court last month, she was "having problems in my marriage and I liked Anh". He had more than sex on his mind, however.

He knew Masamune's career hinged on winning contracts for Australian companies in Vietnam and he knew he could persuade his ministry to steer some deals her way.

Because of the kudos such deals would bring

her, he knew that she would be even more beholden to him.

Plus, he knew that she had access to classified Australian government briefings that his intel chiefs would love to learn about.

Most piquant of all, he knew that he could ask for a meaty commission on any of the deals he lined up for Masamune.

His big pay-off came when Securrency, a subsidiary of the Reserve Bank of Australia, made a bid for a contract to print new plastic banknotes for Vietnam.

Anh told Masamune that he could ensure Securrency got the contract, but that they would have to pay him a little sweetener first.

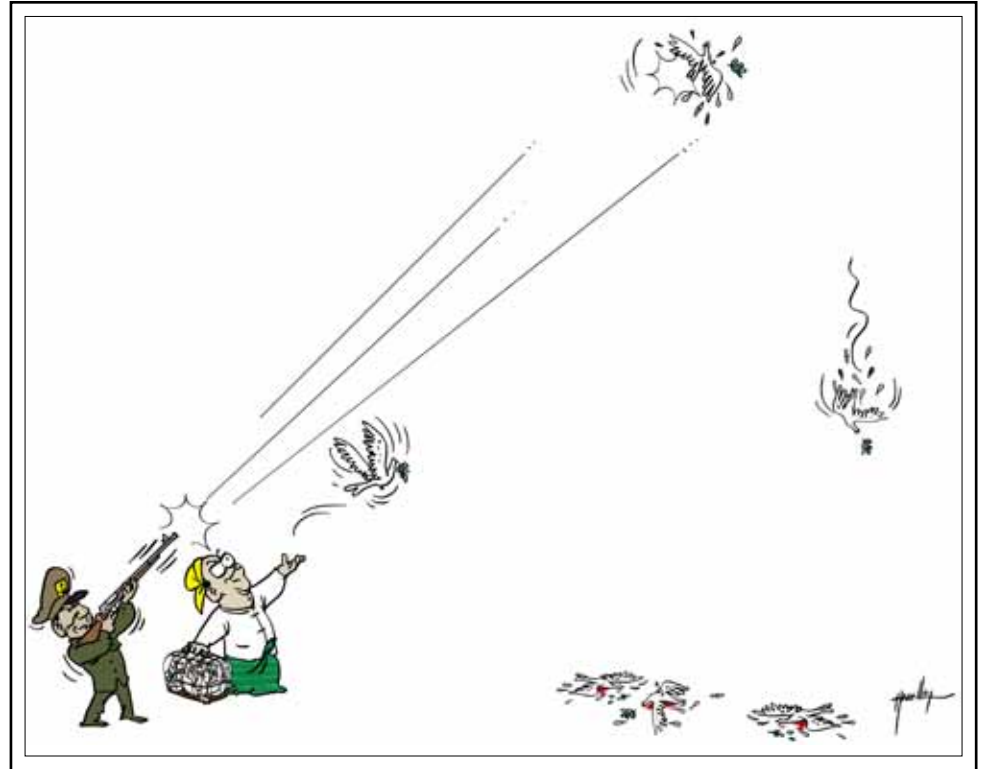
Relaying this to Securrency, the enraptured trade envoy said this was the price of doing business in Vietnam – and so the company, according to police allegations, paid around \$20 million in bribes to Anh.

More perplexing than the way an Australian government-linked company would consider making illicit payments of such magnitude is the fact that Canberra knew Anh was a spy long before he met Masamune.

Well, to cut to the chase: Securrency got the contract, Masamune got a performance bonus, Anh got his hefty "tip" – and possibly, although we will never know for sure, some secret information.

Masamune has now been taken to court, but none of her superiors in the ministry or the intelligence services has yet been summoned.

No action, of course, has been taken against Anh.



## Don't dodge ethnic grievances, Daw Suu

By Nehginpao Kipgen

DAW Aung San Suu Kyi has been received with warmth and enthusiasm on her 17-day visit to the United States, which began on September 17. Her years of perseverance and dedication to the cause of democracy have deservedly earned such recognition.

The thought of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi receiving a standing ovation from members of the US Congress and holding a meeting with a US president at the White House seemed unlikely until just a few months ago.

As Myanmar progresses with its democratic reforms, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi will have to manage the high expectations of her. In the history of the country's democracy movement, two statements, one from the National League for Democracy and another from her father, continue to linger in the minds of the people of Myanmar, especially ethnic minorities.

The statement, "If Burma receives one kyat, you will also get one kyat," was made in the year before the country's independence in January 1948. Bogyoke Aung San, founder of the Burmese Independence Army and father of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, said these historic words in an attempt to convince other nationalities to join what would become the Union of Burma.

The objective of the statement was to guarantee equal rights for all nationalities in the newly independent Burma, regardless of their religious and ethnic backgrounds.

That assurance convinced the Chin, the Kachin, and the Shan leaders to sign the Panglong Agreement on February 12, 1947 and join the interim government led by General Aung San. The day is still observed each year as the country's Union Day.

However, 60 years after independence, the grievances of ethnic minorities remain mostly unresolved. In the past 18 months ceasefires have been reached with most of the armed ethnic groups but tension remains high in some areas, particularly in the Kachin state. The core issue of autonomy is also uncertain.

In a commencement address delivered on her behalf to American University in Washington in 1997, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said: "Please use your liberty to promote ours." The objective was to garner the support of the international community.

During her recent tour to the US, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was asked on minority

NLD has a majority in the national parliament.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's apparent reticence could encourage the country's ethnic minorities to question her leadership and credibility. As she once famously implored others, she must use her freedom to promote the freedom of others and stress the need for equality of rights for all ethnic nationalities, as her late father envisaged.

The US government's recent decision to lift more economic sanctions should give a new impetus to both the U Thein Sein government and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi-led opposition to address ethnic conflict and human rights violations in minority territories.

A democracy that does not resolve minority problems will not bring durable peace and stability to Myanmar. Building mutual trust is essential to strengthen the relationship between the majority Burman and the minority groups.

As the daughter of General Aung San and a Nobel Peace Prize recipient, and because of her connections with the Western world and her relentless commitment to the pursuit of democracy and human rights, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has a level of respect that no contemporary politician in Myanmar enjoys. She must use this unique position to win the hearts and minds of ethnic minorities in order to build a unified and vibrant multi-ethnic society.

(Nehginpao Kipgen is general secretary of the United States-based Kuki International Forum. His research interests include political transition, democratisation, human rights, ethnic conflict and identity politics and he has written numerous peer-reviewed and non-academic articles on the politics of Myanmar and Asia.)

**'A democracy that does not resolve minority problems will not bring durable peace and stability to Myanmar.'**

issues, particularly in Kachin and Rakhine states. In similar responses she emphasised the need for rule of law but refrained from condemning the Myanmar military.

The majority-minority issue has plagued Burma's post-independence era and ethnic minorities have accused the majority group of adopting a Burmanisation policy and exhibiting Burman chauvinism.

As someone who receives almost unflinching support from ethnic minorities, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi needs to speak up on the problems minorities face. The issue cannot wait until she becomes head of the national government or when her

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# Thanlyin farmers take land dispute to parliament body

By Noe Noe Aung

FARMERS from Alwan Sut village in Thanlyin township have submitted a complaint to a parliamentary committee investigating land disputes.

The farmers have been embroiled in a dispute with No 1 War Vessel Group since May, when the Navy unit bulldozed their freshly sown farmland. The farmers have been unemployed since.

"We reported this case to every kind of office that can help us right up to the president. But we didn't receive any response," said U Thaug Myint, who lost 40 acres of land.

They submitted the case to the parliamentary committee on September 28.

The 200 acres of disputed farmland was acquired by No 90 Infantry Regiment in 1998. About 20 farmers received compensation of K5000 an acre, they said.

"They gave us other places to farm and live. But these places were not good for cultivation so we begged for permission to cultivate the original farmland. At that time, the regiment was



Farmers from Alwan Sut village in Thanlyin. Pic: Ko Taik

not using the land and they allowed us to farm it but we had to give 10 baskets of paddy for each acre - a total of 2000 baskets a year," said U Hla Myint, who lost 13 acres.

For almost 15 years the farmers rented the land until the No 1 War Vessel Group, which acquired the fields from No 90 Infantry Regiment, informed them on May 11 that the agreement was no longer valid. Two days later the fields were bulldozed.

"No 1 War Vessel Group moved here couple of years ago and we couldn't cultivate this year," U Hla Myint said.

"They said they were going to start their project. But from what I could see, there is no construction there yet. They just built a small garage after the argument in May and built some poles around the farmland to make [a fence]," he said.

Daw Hla Hla Aye, who lost 21 acres, said her husband died of a heart attack when he heard the military would no longer allow them to cultivate the land.

"And now I have four children to bring up. I don't own any farmland and have nowhere else to farm. I want permission to cultivate if they don't do anything on this farmland or I want

the authorities to let us cultivate somewhere else," said

"We waited a long time after we reported our difficulties to the authorities but no one did anything to help us so we applied to the commission because we think we can rely on it," she said.

Daw Khin Wine Kyi, an Amyotha Hluttaw representative and member of the land investigation commission, said MPs from Yangon Region hoped to resolve the dispute quickly and would visit the area before the next hluttaw session starts on October 18.

"According to farmers, this farmland is usually productive during both the rainy season and summer. So if the hluttaw can make a fair decision for them quickly they can cultivate again soon," she said.

"We are going to meet with No 1 War Vessel group. The farmers said they were forced to sell their farmland so we are going to investigate if that is true and we will also investigate whether the money the military gave at the time was fair or not. We are going to report everything we find."

# Crowds cheer Suu Kyi on return from landmark US tour

YANGON - National League for Democracy leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was greeted by thousands of supporters as she arrived back in Myanmar on October 4 after a triumphant trip to the United States where she was also given a hero's welcome.

The pro-democracy leader, who spent a total of 15 years under house arrest until her 2010 release, received the Congressional Gold Medal and travelled to New York, Kentucky, Indiana, San Francisco and Los Angeles during a busy two-week tour.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi also had an emotional reunion with her eldest son Alexander Aris, who lives in the US and had not seen his mother in years, a source close to the veteran dissident said.

Several thousand supporters cheered Daw Aung San Suu Kyi at Yangon airport after her return late on October 4, shouting "Long live Mother Suu" and holding signs reading "Welcome home Mother Suu".



A child waits for the arrival of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi at Yangon International Airport late on October 4. Pic: AFP

"I'm very happy to see her with my own eyes. She is the one who can bring development for us. I want to tell her that I love her so much," said Chit Chit Hlaing, a 17-year-old NLD member.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi later told supporters outside her home: "We have to remain united during hard times and cannot rest."

Her historic trip coincided with a US visit by President U Thein Sein during which Washington announced it would ease a ban on imports from Myanmar. - AFP

# Indonesia to help government draft defence white paper

By Nan Tin Htwe

INDONESIA will work with Myanmar on overhauling the Tatmadaw as part of its support for the reform process, Indonesia's foreign minister said last month.

Mr Marty Natalegawa said Indonesia and Myanmar had agreed to draft a white paper on Myanmar's military needs to guide changes to the Tatmadaw, which he said were a critical component of overall reforms in Myanmar.

"[It would be] military-to-military cooperation but not in the traditional sense. [Rather] how our military can inform the Myanmar military [on] reform within the military," he said during a meeting with journalists from Myanmar, Indonesia, Cambodia, Laos, Brunei, Vietnam and Timor-Leste at Jakarta's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

"There is no such thing as a one-size-fits-all [policy for defence]. Myanmar must determine its specific needs without being driven by providers of assistance," he said.

"Myanmar is being showered with attention from the international community. Everyone wants to be part of the

reform process and to be seen helping Myanmar."

Mr Natalegawa said Indonesia's experience could serve as useful guidance for Myanmar as it looks to cement reforms.

"We have no monopoly on wisdom; we have our failings. But that makes [our] conversation even more relevant," he said.

Following the resignation of President Suharto in 1998 after 30 years in power, Indonesia's political and governmental structures underwent major reform.

One change was removing the formal military presence from Indonesia's parliament. However, according to economist Theodore Friend, author of *Indonesian Destinies*, the Indonesian military's "political influence remains extensive".

Mr Natalegawa said Indonesia also plans to support other aspects of the reform process and will invite representatives from the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission, civil society, presidential advisory board and the Union Election Commission to visit Indonesia.

"[The visits will] provide an opportunity to learn from Indonesia's experience of reform," he said.

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A Qatar Airways plane arrives at Yangon International Airport on October 4. Pic: Thiri

## After four years, Qatar resumes Yangon service

By Zaw Win Than

AFTER a break of more than four years, Qatar Airways resumed flights to Myanmar with the launch of scheduled services to Yangon on October 4.

While flights will initially operate from Doha to Yangon on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Sundays, with return flights on Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays, the service will increase to daily frequency from October 28.

"We wanted to enter with daily services from day one. From October 28, I am delighted to announce that the Doha-Yangon route will be served daily, [which will

be] a great boost indeed for the local economy, for the local tourism industry, and for the people of Myanmar looking to travel with more choice to destinations overseas," Qatar Airways chief executive officer Mr Akbar Al Baker said at a press conference in Yangon last week.

"Myanmar's domestic and international markets have both shown rapid growth since 2008 with international passenger numbers nearly doubling through the main gateway Yangon over the last four years."

Qatar Airways senior vice president for East Asia and the Southwest Pacific, Mr Robert Yang, said

Yangon was the airline's 10<sup>th</sup> gateway in the ASEAN region.

"Given the huge potential size of the Myanmar market, the recent growth represents just the tip of the iceberg. Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore have until now been the main gateways for long-haul traffic into and out of Myanmar," he said.

"As Myanmar opens up more, a large influx of business and leisure long-haul traffic is expected from Europe, Middle East, Africa and the Americas. Through our strategically located hub in Doha, we will provide easy access to Yangon and look forward to making this route a huge success."

### From page 1

## Central Bank steps

The intention of targeting the banking sector is to harm the country's development, not only Kanbawza," he said.

He said he was confident Myanmar was not heading for a repeat of the 2003 banking crisis, which occurred "because banks were not following the monetary rules", he said.

"Now the Central Bank is handling all private banks carefully and that is why there won't be any closures or bankruptcies. The 2003 crisis happened because enforcement was weak at that time."

The previous evening, the Central Bank issued a statement through state-run television channels denying the rumour.

A small notice was also printed on the back page of the state-run *New Light of Myanmar* newspaper on October 6 that did not name Kanbawza but described the rumour as "hearsay". It called on citizens to trust the banks.

"With respect to those news, the Central Bank of Myanmar announced that they are mere rumours aired by those with ill will to harm the interests of banks, and not true; that private banks are operating in line with banking procedures and rules and regulations under the systematic management of the Central Bank of Myanmar and thus, citizens can trust all the private banks," the notice said.

Kanbawza Bank vice chairman U Than Lwin, a former deputy governor of the Central Bank, said depositors in Yangon and Mandalay had withdrawn K8 billion on October 5 but the bank still had enough cash to pay out more deposits.

He said the bank has about K100 billion in capital, and each branch has at least K700 million. The bank controls about one-third of the overall private banking sector, he said, and was also the second-highest income tax paying firm in the 2011-12 financial year, the Ministry of Finance and Revenue announced in June.

"We've found that the most worried people are small depositors, those who have K100,000 to K500,000," he said at the October 6 press conference.

He said the Central Bank had given Kanbawza permission to start offering deposit insurance and this would further improve the bank's reputation with customers.

He said the rumours were unlikely to have been started by a rival bank because of the risk the panic could spread throughout the industry.

"If a bank falls down, all other banks will be affected. We've seen this before in the 2008 global financial crisis and 1997 Asian financial crisis, where it started in Thailand spread to other Asian countries," U Than Lwin said.

He said the Central Bank had introduced strict controls following the 2003 banking crisis to strengthen the sector and these had been stringently enforced.

"We are operating transparently, we never manipulate our audits, we accept international financial institutions to check our audits every time," he said.

"The Central Bank has taken steps so there won't be a repeat of 2003. It strictly manages the private banks. I have said [in interviews with the media] that the Central Bank over regulates ... I want to tell the public now through the media, don't believe the rumours," he said.

Earlier in the week, U Aung Ko Win presided over the opening of the bank's 79<sup>th</sup> branch, in Yangon's Thingangyun township, on October 4.

U Than Lwin said U Aung Ko Win had wanted to attend the October 6 press conference but could not because he had to attend a meeting with President U Thein Sein in Nay Pyi Taw.

## USDP assembly

The former minister for agriculture and irrigation told MPs in Patheingyi on August 5 that they needed to solve the disagreement with the government through negotiation, arguing that the region hluttaw was like "a smaller house built inside a bigger one".

## Hospitality and tourism forum planned for February 2013

By Zaw Win Than

MYANMAR Tourism Federation and Singapore-based company Sphere Conferences will hold a tourism investment conference from February 26 to 28, 2013.

The signing ceremony for the conference was held on October 2 at Traders Hotel in Yangon, which will also be the venue for the event.

"We lack experience in promoting Myanmar's tourism industry, which is why we signed this agreement for its future promotion," said MTF chair U Yan Win.

The Myanmar Hospitality and Tourism Conference 2013 will involve investors, owners, developers and operators, as well as government officials, industry associations and leaders.

The conference will aim to showcase Myanmar's potential "to position itself as a major tourist destination", according to Sphere's website.

"This is a wonderful collaboration. Our goal is to understand the needs of the tourism and hospitality sectors in Myanmar and to forge links with businesses to promote growth," said Mr Chua Wee Phong, chair of Sphere Conferences.

A recent study by Asian Development Bank (ADB) said Myanmar's GDP could grow by as much as 7 to 8 percent in coming years, and tourism is considered a potential driver of both economic growth and poverty alleviation.

Sphere Conferences said in a statement that Myanmar has "untapped tourism potential, with less than a million tourists having visited Myanmar in 2010, as compared to the 16 million tourists who visited Thailand in the same year."

He also told MPs they should not necessarily do everything that the public wants, in comments that were recorded and later released.

U Htay Oo said last week he had only been relaying a message from the party's Central Executive Committee and it did not necessarily reflect his personal views.

He said the aim was "to end disagreements inside the party, and between those inside and outside the party".

But Ayeyarwady Region Hluttaw Speaker U San Sint late last month accused the party's leaders of pressuring MPs and encouraging party centralisation. Speaking at a press conference in Patheingyi, he said they had also tried to stifle questions and motions from representatives in the Ayeyarwady Region Hluttaw.

"I wasn't even informed that the general secretary had called a meeting. They should have informed the hluttaw before inviting MPs," U San Sint said.

He described the meeting as potentially "unlawful" and pointed out that under the State and Region Hluttaw Law, the speaker has the power to take action against those who hurt the dignity of the hluttaw or "distort" its activities.

"If this happens in future, we will take legal action," U San Sint said, adding that Ayeyarwady MPs owed allegiance to the state and the people over their party.

Pic: Yadanar



Women wait at Yangon International Airport for President U Thein Sein on October 1.

## President U Thein Sein returns to warm welcome

By Naw Say Phaw Waa

POLITICAL groups, national and regional government ministers, diplomats and business leaders gathered at Yangon International Airport on October 1 to show their support for President U Thein Sein on his arrival back to Myanmar following a landmark visit to the United States.

A crowd more than 1000 people waving Myanmar flags gathered at the airport for the president's arrival, including Minister for the President's Office U Aung Min, Minister for Transport U Nyan Tun Aung, Yangon Region Chief Minister U Myint Swe, Commander of Yangon Command Major General Hsan Oo, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs U Thant Kyaw and the dean of the diplomatic corps, Mr Robert Chua, the Singaporean ambassador to Myanmar, according to the President's Office website.

Democratic Party (Myanmar) chairman U Thu Wai told *The Myanmar Times* members of his party joined the gathering to express support for the president's efforts to improve relations with the international community.

"When he attended the United Nations General Assembly, [President U Thein Sein] explained the reforms taking place in Myanmar to the international community. He can explain to all countries and they found it acceptable. If the international community accepts the reforms, the support we need will be forthcoming. The president could talk with American leaders and other leaders to build trust for the future," U Thu Wai said.

"He was able to create trust with the international community. We support and welcome that. That's why we honoured him by going to the airport to welcome

and encourage him to keep on this path," he said.

Members of the National Democratic Force (NDF) and Union Solidarity and Development Party were also present.

NDF senior official U Thura said about 20 members from the party went to the airport to welcome the president but did so in a personal, rather than official, capacity.

"It is not a party decision, they just went of their own volition as Myanmar citizens. The president has done a lot of democratic reforms. We welcome him as he deserves to be honoured for his achievements," he said.

Also present was the head of the Union of Myanmar of Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry and senior members, chairman of the Myanmar Motion Picture Organisation, chairman and executives of the Myanmar Music Association and well-known actors.

## Monywa investors court the press to refute allegations

By Soe Sandar Oo

IN the latest surprising development at the Monywa copper mine, officials from the Chinese and army-owned firms involved in the project have taken the rare step of holding a press conference to rebut the accusations of residents and activists.

The normally media-shy Union of Myanmar Economic Holdings Limited (UMEHL) – whose officials have for years responded to requests for interviews by insisting the company does not speak to the press – invited journalists from eight major Myanmar media organisations to the mine site late last month. Journalists were also given a tour of the mine, which is normally off limits to outsiders.

The step highlights the seriousness with which the project's investors, which also include a subsidiary of Chinese weapons manufacturer Norinco, are taking the growing outcry and protests over alleged corruption, environmental damage and unfair land acquisitions at the mine.

"Everything that is being said about the land [acquisitions], environmental [impacts] and [workers] insulting local people are just rumours," U Maung Maung Tint, project director of Myanmar Wanbao Mining Copper Limited, said at a September 26 press conference.

He said K5 billion compensation had already been paid to farmers for crops lost due to the expansion, while the company will pay K3 million a kilometre annually to the government in rent. No compensation was given for land acquired for the project, however.

Company officials also responded to accusations that most of the workers at the mine would be Chinese.

While he did not say what the composition of the workforce is at present, U Maung Maung Tint said after the US\$1 billion Letpadaung expansion, which will enable the mine to produce about 100,000 tonnes of 99.9 percent pure copper a year, 78pc of workers will be Myanmar.

"Chinese technicians will train Myanmar workers and they will leave after transferring knowledge to Myanmar workers," he said.

"We will fully employ only Myanmar citizens after they [are trained]," said Mr Geng Yi, managing director of Myanmar Wanbao Copper Mining Limited.

U Ko Ko Myint, the head of environmental affairs at the mine, said the project's

environmental impact was audited by a foreign company every three years.

"The water pollution in Yamar river that is near Kantkaw village is not because of the project but because of [artisanal miners]. They take raw acid from the leaching heap and process copper ... this is unsafe for health. They keep pots of acid near their houses and wells," he said.

Project manager U Myint Aung from UMEHL said the government would get the most profit from the venture, followed by UMEHL and Wanbao Mining but did not give exact figures.

The Monywa mine was previously owned and operated as a joint venture between Canadian firm Ivanhoe Mines and state-owned Mining Enterprise 1. Ivanhoe, since rebranded as Turquoise Hill, says on its website it received \$103 million for its share in the mine but it is unclear what, if anything, the government received for the ME1 stake.

As the negotiations and sale of went through before the transition to U Thein Sein's government and establishment of parliament,

no details about the transaction were ever publicly released for independent scrutiny.

However, the sale did mention in a controversial auditor general's office report into corruption in government ministries and state-owned enterprises that was assessed by the Pyithu Hluttaw Public Accounts Committee earlier this year.

Just days after Myanmar Wanbao Copper Mining Company courted the media in Monywa, opponents of the mine, including residents of 26 villages in the area, held a press conference at Royal Rose Restaurant in Yangon. Also in attendance were members of the 88 Generation student group, environmental groups, lawyers and other politicians.

"The government should conduct an urgent investigation into this issue in collaboration with environmental experts. They should cancel the project if it is going to have a disproportionate negative impact on the nearby residents and the environment," said 88 Generation spokesperson Ko Tun Myint Aung.

He said the group welcomes foreign investment that supports poverty alleviation but believes projects need to be transparent. "In this case, the government needs to listen to the voice of the public so that our country develops in a balanced way," he said.

More coverage  
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### FIRST DEATH ANNIVERSARY

(October 3, 2011)

Daw Mu Mu (Grace Gyi) Beloved widow of Sithu U Khin Nyunt  
Mother of Daw Wynn Wynn Nyunt and mother-in-law of Mr. Norberto Ong  
Mother of Daw Khin Swe Nyunt and General Kyaw Than (Air Force)  
She lived a life filled with generosity and compassion towards others.  
She is missed deeply by her children, only surviving sister Daw Ni Ni Nyunt,  
her nieces, nephews, grandchildren, and great grandchildren,  
as well as by all who knew her.

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# Where crops once grew near Monywa, now copper is extracted

By Thomas Kean and Minh Zaw

THE smooth graded road is lined by a metre-high earthen wall planted with young eucalypts. These trees – the only greenery for hundreds of metres in every direction – provide neither respite from the heat nor a barrier to hide the scene of desolation around us.

The wall of the Monywa copper mine looms over the barren landscape, where locals walk across tailings dotted with mounds of soil, pools of water and small shacks. With no trees in this area the heat of the midday sun is almost overpowering. Ma Aye Aye – her face covered by the shade from her wide-brimmed bamboo hat – squats beside one of the small ponds. This clearly isn't drinking water. The pond, about 3 metres long by 1.5m wide, is filled with empty cans bought from the local teashop that have begun to disintegrate, leaving behind a purple element: copper.

Many of the people here were farmers who cultivated the land before the mine began operating almost 25 years ago, says Ko Tin Maung.

"This was our land," he says, pointing to the clusters of huts and mounds of dirt, "where we grew our crops that we sold in the city."

"After the mine opened, the tailings mixed with the chemical they used to get the copper were spread over our land. Nothing would grow, the farmers could not cultivate paddy or other crops on the land anymore," he says.

"Later, some smart old men who had knowledge of copper mines gave us the idea of how to get copper using the tailings and water. We soak empty condensed milk cans in ponds filled with water that has been mixed with the mine tailings," he says. "To get the water for the ponds, people make their own pumps and then mix the groundwater with the tailings before filtering it."

Ma Aye Aye says they collect the cans from teashops in Monywa,

## About this article:

This article was rejected for publication from the August 11, 2008 edition of *The Myanmar Times* by Press Scrutiny and Registration Division..

about 15 kilometres east, across the Chindwin River. Each pond contains more than 32 cans, weighing about one viss (1.6 kilograms), which are soaked for a month, changing the water twice each day.

There are ponds everywhere: More than 1000 people live in the tailings area, eking out a living from the copper they make. Each pond generates about K100,000 worth of copper – more than crop cultivation, admits Ko Tin Maung.

The ponds are usually tended by the entire family and small children can be seen carrying buckets of water. He says people know it's not a good environment to live and work in but, with the land unable to support the growing of crops, they have no other source of income.

"We are not permitted to work here but the company understands that we have no work and face many difficulties just to survive, so they let us produce small amounts of copper. Although it earns more than farming, we are not rich people."

He says the people who work among the tailings get clean water from a well in a nearby village. "We do not have any kind of health problems like cholera or other diseases," he says.

Ko Tin Maung dips his hand into a pond to retrieve a copper-covered can – so brittle it bends like paper – and almost on cue the water bubbles caustically.

"But we know working in this area is dangerous because the water is not suitable to drink, we know it contains chemicals from the mine."

The Monywa copper mine is operated by Myanmar Ivanhoe Copper Company Limited (MICCL), a joint venture between a local subsidiary of Canadian-

based company Ivanhoe Mines Ltd and the state-run Mining Enterprise (1), or ME1.

Ivanhoe, which "divested" itself of its 50 percent stake in MICCL in February 2007 by putting it in an independent trust pending its sale, has admitted that environmental problems exist at the site.

But the company says MICCL "was part of the remedy; Ivanhoe most certainly did not contribute to the creation of the degraded conditions".

Rather, the company pointed the finger of blame at a previous joint project at the copper mine – between Yugoslavian company RTB Bor and ME1 – that used a different extracting process.

Ivanhoe says that up the end of 2005 more than 225 hectares were rehabilitated since MICCL took over the site from RTB Bor in 1998 but that 150 hectares remain, where locals "engage in unauthorised, unregulated hand-mining on the tailings spill area".

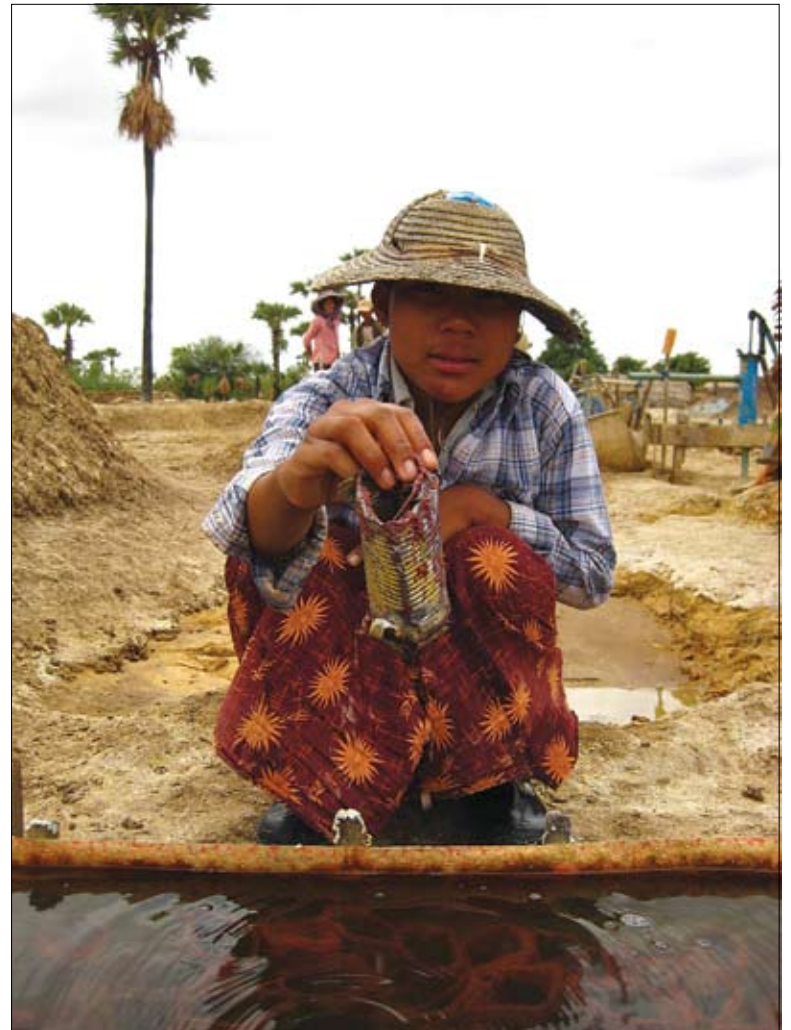
Glenn Ford, the acting general manager of MICCL, told *The Myanmar Times* last week that the area where people are hand-mining is outside the lease area of the mine site and therefore the company has no authority to improve the site.

However, he denied claims that there was any contamination of the water supply or that the area had previously been farmland.

"The area where those guys are working, there's no farmland and has never been farms. You'll see areas close to there where there have been farms and they continue to farm.

"And the crops they grow are pretty healthy and they still sell them on the local market," he said. "On the recent [environmental] audits and test hole boring done around the site, there was no [copper] sulphide in the water. Everything was within acceptable limits."

Mr Ford said that the rehabilitation work at the mine site has been "ramped up" since April, when the mine ceased production indefinitely.



Ma Aye Aye demonstrates the process of extracting copper from ponds at a mine site near Monywa in 2008. Pic: Minh Zaw

"In the last six or nine months we've increased a lot of the rehab work. If you go to the mine now, a lot of the area's been cleaned up and some land has been turned back into farmland for people. And again, if you look around the site, you'll see there are farmers all around it. If the groundwater was polluted, you wouldn't see too many healthy crops," Mr Ford said.

But Ivanhoe has received a significant amount of criticism for its operations in Myanmar, not least the environmental impact of the Monywa mine.

In *Grave Diggers: A Report on Mining in Burma*, author Robert Moody dedicates one of the four chapters solely to Ivanhoe's operations, and alleges that wells have been contaminated by MICCL operations.

However, the report – sponsored by MiningWatch Canada and

published in 2000 – lacks evidence to back up these claims. On the environmental side it fails to address whether the problems were caused by MICCL or the previous joint-venture partner RTB Bor, prompting Ivanhoe to condemn what it called "disinformation tactics".

Mr Ford says he is surprised at reports that are highly critical of MICCL's operations in the country.

"I think most of the reports are written by people who have never been there, never spoken to any of the locals or never actually looked at the site. You talk to the auditors, SGS Group, they're people from Australia who come every six months and inspect the whole site. They put their name and stamp on the report. So that

More page 7

# NGO investigates pollution at Monywa

By Bill O'Toole and Phyo Wai Kyaw

ENVIRONMENTAL activities have joined the chorus of opposition to a proposed expansion of a copper mine in Sagaing Region, alleging that the project appears to be responsible for health and environmental issues.

Mandalay-based environmental group Seinyaungso made the claims after sending a team to Monywa township on September 13. The mine site has been wracked by unrest for months, with many residents refusing to leave homes scheduled for demolition to make way for the planned expansion.

U Tin Thit, the leader of the team and head of Seinyaungso, said he had been immediately confronted by heavy air pollution when visiting

the site.

"A visitor can feel it clearly when they reach [Monywa]," he said.

The group visited villages in and around the copper mine at Sabetaung in Monywa, including Kankone, a village of 700 households directly opposite the mine.

U Tin Thit said an open air copper plant, less than 500 metres from the local high school, sprays sulphuric acid to separate copper from the ore. The acid is allowed to either dissolve into the air or seep into the earth, he said.

Villagers told the team from Seinyaungso that the water in their wells had been polluted since at least 2003, and many pointed to the plant as the source of the problem. Residents of Kankone and several other villages in the Sabetaung area have taken part in many protests against the

proposed expansion of the mine, most recently on September 26 several miles away in Seitel Village.

U Bon Than, a farmer from Kankone, told *The Myanmar Times* that water polluted by the acid waste had spread beyond the village, affecting a ring of farmland 800m from the village's edge.

"The polluted water entered the fields during the rainy season and ruined the farm lands," he said last week.

U Tin Thit and his team also reported seeing buildings at the mine dump their wastewater into Namar Creek, which flows into the nearby Chindwin River, a tributary of the Ayeyarwady River.

For drinking water, at least, the people of Kankone have some alternatives. Many travel to a lake about 3 kilometres from the village, while others use

a water purifying station built by Canadian mining company Ivanhoe Mines, which was a partner in the Monywa mine until 2011.

However, U Bon Than said that there are still many people who use the polluted water from the wells as they believe it is safe.

U Tin Thit and U Maung Maung, secretary of Seinyaungso, said they encountered about 10 villages suffering from various forms of cancer during their visit, while many small children in the area are suffering from birth defects.

"We assume that the water and air pollution is to blame," said U Maung Maung.

But until a group with the necessary resources could conduct laboratory tests on the water supply or a larger environmental impact assessment on the

effects of the mine, he said Seinyaungso could only speculate based on its observations.

U Tin Thit said the group has appealed to both the regional government and the owners of the mine to conduct an environmental assessment but they have not received a reply from either.

In the meantime, the group has drafted a report detailing its concerns about the mine's environmental and health impacts. U Tin Thit said the group's next step will be to travel to other villages in Sagaing Region to raise awareness about the situation in Monywa. The first of these trips, to Shamemakar, took place on September 30.

The Monywa copper mine is a joint operation between Chinese-owned Myanmar Wanbao Mining company and the military-owned Union of Myanmar

Economic Holdings Ltd.

It was formerly operated by Myanmar Ivanhoe Copper Company Limited (MICCL), a joint venture between a local subsidiary of Ivanhoe Mines and the state-run Mining Enterprise (1), or ME1.

Ivanhoe, which "divested" itself of its 50 percent stake in MICCL in February 2007 by putting it in an independent trust pending its sale, has admitted that environmental problems exist at the site.

But the company says MICCL "was part of the remedy; Ivanhoe most certainly did not contribute to the creation of the degraded conditions".

Rather, the company pointed the finger of blame at a previous joint project at the copper mine – between Yugoslavian company RTB Bor and ME1 – that used a different extracting process.

## From page 6

these people – who have never been here – can sit there and write a report, it surprises me.”

According to Ivanhoe, MICCL has been awaiting approval from the authorities to expand the clean-up area at Monywa. But Mr Ford admits he can't guarantee the rehabilitation programs will continue if and when Ivanhoe's stake in MICCL is sold.

“I can't speak for the government or any new owners who do come in but certainly from MICCL's point of view, we'll continue the rehab work as per our schedule.”

“The programs are still ongoing and, as I said, the rehab work has actually been accelerated because I wanted to clear up all the existing areas that we've touched. So basically, if and when Ivanhoe walk out of here everything would be as per the audits and specifications, we'd just leave the site clean and tidy.”

If rehabilitation work is extended, it may include the area being trawled by Ko Tin Maung, Ma Aye Aye and many others – who remain oblivious to the politics and business dealings that may decide their livelihoods.

These “illegal” miners could be evicted at any time or, as Ko Tin Maung fears – somewhat ironically given the damage they claim the mine has inflicted on their farmland and water supply – the chemicals they rely on to salvage small amounts of copper could dry up.

“At the moment, we have been left alone to earn a living here in the tailings – we really depend on the mine for our income,” he says. “But we are worried what happens when the ground has no chemical elements left and we cannot produce copper. We can't grow crops here. How will we survive?”

The Monywa copper mine.  
Pic: Soe Sandar Oo



## NLD rep calls for cooperation on mine

By Phyo Wai Kyaw

A NATIONAL League for Democracy hluttaw representative has urged the nation to support protesters at the Monywa copper mine and raise awareness about its social and environmental effects.

Daw Khin Sann Hlaing, the representative for Pale in Sagaing Region, made the comments after visiting villagers near the mine in mid September.

She said the air pollution in the area had been palpable as soon as she stepped out of her car in Kankone village, about 500 metres from the mine site.

“I got the smell of acid and the villagers also explained to me about the sulfuric acid factory,” Daw Khin Sann Hlaing said.

“I heard about a number of health problems, including high rates of miscarriage, skin problems and birth defects. The colour of the water is blue and people are also suffering from diarrhoea. The acid factory is so near to the school and it is deeply worrying situation for the children. We don't know what the future effect on the children will be,” she said.

The NLD representative visited five villages in the area on September 12 to help secure the release of some villagers who had been arrested for protesting after securing permission from Sagaing Region Chief Minister U Thar Aye.

“My observation is that we all need to cooperate on the Monywa mine issue as national-level activity,” Daw Khin Sann Hlaing told *The Myanmar Times*.

“The smell of acid is everywhere in [Kankone] village. I want environmental activists and even famous people liked film stars to participate and raise awareness about this issue to the people.”

She said that she met the chief minister after her visit and told him what she had found. U Thar Aye replied that he would handle some of the issues and raise the rest with the appropriate authorities.

She said villagers had told her that water tests had been conducted but she was unable to find out what the results were or who had conducted the tests. Meanwhile, households displaced by a planned expansion had been given new houses to compensate

for the loss of their homes but these were poor quality, she said.

“Now the villagers from Kankone village are suffering from the consequences of the mine project and we have to question what will become of the other 26 villages in the area in the future.”

Sayadaw Virathu from Masoe Yein Monastery in Mandalay, who also visited the mine area in mid September, said he plans to campaign for the protection of a monastery named after the famous monk Ledi Sayadaw, which is inside the boundary of the planned mine expansion.

“The Monywa mine issue is important for our country,” he said. “I will make activities not to lose our Buddhist heritage, such as pagodas [at Sete village] and Ledi Sayadaw's monastery. The [mining company] just left Ledi Sayadaw's building and all the land around it was dug up. I am planning to collect signatures for a petition about this issue and submit it to the regional authorities. The environment is absolutely ruined in that area,” he said.

## Kachin peace talks will continue, says president

By Kyaw Hsu Mon

PRESIDENT U Thein Sein hopes to continue peace talks with the Kachin Independence Army towards reaching a ceasefire, he told journalists in New York last week during his historic visit to the United States.

The president made the comments to reporters from foreign-based broadcasters as well as the Myanmar International network on September 28, shortly before returning to Myanmar.

He also said Tatmadaw soldiers had adhered to an order to stop fighting but the KIA had not. He said Tatmadaw units had recently been ambushed while bringing supplies to the frontline.

“They started the fighting and it still has not ended yet,” U Thein Sein said.

“We stopped fighting and requested them to stop as well but there are still some conflicts at the ground level. After ending this fighting we want to meet and discuss peace,” he said.

“The key point to stop the war depends on them and whether they will ensure all their soldiers stick to an

order to stop fighting. Then we will negotiate patiently with the KIA leaders for a ceasefire agreement.”

U Thein Sein's comments contradict those of the KIA, whose leaders say the Tatmadaw has ignored a December 2011 directive from the president to halt attacks on the Kachin troops.

The president said the KIA had demolished bridges, roads and electric towers in the past year and this had affected not only Kachin residents but the development of the country as a whole.

“The most sad news is that Kachin residents have left their properties, their jobs in those [affected] areas and they are now in refugee camps,” he said.

“It has been more than a year since the fighting with the KIA began and although we're caring for them in the camps, it will not be as good as their native place.”

About 90,000 people are believed to have been displaced by the Kachin conflict, with some living in camps in government-controlled areas, the majority in KIA-controlled areas and some across the border in China.

## UNESCO to host HIV course

By Yamon Phu Thit

A YOUTH training course about HIV will take place in Yangon's Central Hotel from November 19 to 23.

The course is supported by UNESCO and aims to equip participants with the skills necessary to become future leaders in the HIV response effort.

All people aged between 18 and 27 are welcome to attend

the course and members of HIV-affected populations, such as men who have sex with men, transgender people, intravenous drug users, sex workers and people living with HIV are encouraged to participate.

The application deadline is October 15.

For further information call UNESCO on (01) 542-910-19 (extension 111) or email newgenmyanmar@gmail.com.

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## Monsoon leaves north, central and delta areas

By Aye Sapay Phyu

THE monsoon is forecast to withdraw from Myanmar on October 10, after leaving the northern and central parts of Myanmar in late September, the Department of Meteorology and Hydrology said last week.

The department said the monsoon withdrew from the northern part of the country on September 24, followed by central Myanmar on September 27 and the delta area, including Yangon, on October 3. It forecast the monsoon would leave the remaining areas of the country by October 10.

During the monsoon withdrawal, Pakokku township in Magwe Region and Yamethin township in Mandalay Region received the largest amounts of rain.

The 4.45 inches (113 millimeters) that fell in the 24 hours to 9:30am on September 3 at Yamethin beat the old record of 4.17 inches (106mm) set in 1974.

Meanwhile, Pakokku received 5.35 inches (135mm) in the 24 hours to

9:30am on September 20, the new daily maximum for September, above the 5.08 inches (129mm) achieved in 1998.

"Thundershowers, isolated heavy rain and strong winds are common during the monsoon advance and withdrawal periods because of unstable conditions in atmosphere," the department official said.

Meanwhile, the department said a low pressure system that formed in the west central Bay of Bengal in late September had dissipated by the evening of October 2.

According to the department, two low pressure areas are forecast in October and one of them could intensify into a depression.

The department also said parts of Myanmar can expect rain in the post-monsoon period due to the effects of storms in the Bay of Bengal and remnants of storms from the South China Sea.

Above-average rainfall has been forecast for upper Sagaing and Tanintharyi regions, and Kachin, Shan and Rakhine states in October.

# Rains over, but flooding still a problem in Mandalay

By Phyo Wai Kyaw and Hlaing Kyaw Soe

HUNDREDS of villagers have been living in temporary shelters underneath and near Mandalay's Yadanarpon Bridge since August, after flooding made their homes unliveable, they told *The Myanmar Times* last week.

Most of those displaced said they had been shifted to new villages in 2001 to make way for the construction of the bridge. However, the land given to them as compensation is on a floodplain so they have to leave their homes each rainy season, creating both economic hardship and health problems, they said.

The floodwater is likely to leave them stuck in their temporary homes for another two months, they said.

"We moved from our villages and have been staying here [in temporary huts] for the past month-



A resident paddles on a tyre tube in Padanmyar village. Pic: Phyo Wai Kyaw

and-a-half," said Daw Mya Mya, 55, from Padanmyar village. "We moved to Padanmyar in 2001, we were given that land as compensation after losing our homes in Kwaeson ward because of the bridge. I don't think we'll ever have the chance to move somewhere better."

Ma Nay Chi Moe, a 24-year-old housewife, said most of the 150 households in Padanmyar village had been forced to relocate this rainy season.

"After the flooding recedes we normally suffer from illness and need to repair our houses again. We also faced some flooding problems when we stayed in Kwaeson ward but here is much more difficult for us. People in the [three] villages to the east of Padanmyar, near the Mandalay-Sagaing Road, have it even worse than us," she said.

More than 200 households from those three villages, which are known as Shwe Lay, left their homes in August.

Most previously earned a living from making bamboo products, such as matting and walls for bamboo homes, but are now labourers.

"Our villages are also on the floodplain. We were moved there from along Strand Road, near Yadanarpon Bridge, in 2001. We get overflow from both the Ayeyarwady River and also Dokhtawaddy River, which is to the south. The water level is up over the roof of our homes," labourers U Soe Maw and U Tin Maung Myint said.

"No officials told us not to stay beside the road. We normally get some free healthcare support after the flooding but not enough and we don't get any other help."

Meanwhile, the water level of the Ayeyarwady River at Water Guard Station 1, near Mayanchan jetty in Chanayetharsan township, was 1218cm on September 1, still below the warning level of 1260cm, and had declined to 1084cm by October 5.

## President U Thein Sein expected to visit South Korea

By Zaw Win Than

PRESIDENT U Thein Sein will visit South Korea in the near future at the invitation of President Lee Myung-Bak, the state-run *Mirror* reported on October 4.

While a date has not yet been publicly confirmed, the visit is expected to take place this week.

President Lee spent two days in Myanmar last May, providing an opportunity for the leaders to discuss ways to strengthen economic ties.

South Korea offered to expand loans and aid to Myanmar, while U Thein Sein gave assurances Myanmar would cease buying conventional weapons from North Korea.

President Lee's office said discussions also focused on human resource development, education, infrastructure, industrial development,

environmental conservation, tourism, transportation, communications, science and technology, energy and mining.

President Lee was the first South Korean head of state to visit Myanmar in almost three decades.

In 1983, North Korean agents attempted to assassinate the then-South Korean President Chun Doo-hwan during a visit to Yangon.

Seventeen South Koreans, including cabinet ministers, and four Myanmar officials were killed.

U Thein Sein's reciprocal visit will aim to further strengthen bilateral relations, state media reports said.

According to official statistics, South Korea is Myanmar's fourth largest foreign investor. It injected US\$2.95 billion into Myanmar's economy between 1988 and July 2012.

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# President tipped ahead of Nobel Peace Prize on Oct 12

By Thomas Kean with AFP

PRESIDENT U Thein Sein has been tipped as a possible candidate for this week's Nobel Peace Prize, raising the prospect of Myanmar having two winners after Daw Aung San Suu Kyi received the prestigious award in 1991.

A total of 231 nominees are in the running and, although the prize committee never discloses the nominees' names, Bill Clinton, Helmut Kohl, the EU and WikiLeaks suspect Bradley Manning are known to be on the list. The prize will be announced at 4:30pm Myanmar time on October 12.

The head of the Peace Research Institute of Oslo, Kristian Berg Harpviken, follows the work of the Peace Prize committee closely and each year publishes his own shortlist of possible winners.

He listed President U Thein Sein among the five frontrunners for "spearheading a gradually evolving peace process in the country".

Since coming to office in March 2011, U Thein Sein's government has reached ceasefire agreements with 10 of 11 non-state armed groups. However, analysts agree the peace process remains fragile and much work remains to be done to transform the ceasefires into lasting peace after decades of civil war. In Kachin State, fighting continues and has displaced up to 90,000 people and resulted in an unknown number of deaths.

While Mr Harpviken acknowledged that awarding the prize to U Thein Sein "would stir controversy", he said "the [Nobel] committee



President U Thein Sein speaks during the United Nations General Assembly at the UN headquarters in New York on September 27. Pic: AFP

has often insisted that the prize is not to be for saints only, and has in recent years been particularly eager that it makes a difference in processes unfolding, even if that may carry high risk."

But he said the decision would also be "complicated by the fact that the main opposition leader, Aung Sang Suu Kyi, has already received the prize".

Among Mr Harpviken's other tips for the prize are Gene Sharp, an American political theorist and expert on non-violent revolution, Russian rights group Memorial and its founder Svetlana Gannushkina, and independent Russian media outlet Echo of Moscow and

its chief editor Aleksei Venediktov.

A Nigerian duo campaigning against the misuse of religion, Archbishop John Onaiyekan and Mohamed Sa'ad Abubakar, Sultan of Sokoto, are also on it, along with Afghan human rights activist, ex-minister and burka opponent Sima Samar.

But even if U Thein Sein misses out, there could still be a Myanmar winner: Mr Harpviken said exile broadcaster Democratic Voice of Burma and the monks who organised the 2007 protests also have an outside chance.

In May, Dr Nicholas

Farrelly, a research fellow at the Australian National University and co-founder of the New Mandala website, told *The Myanmar Times* there is probably a "Nobel Peace Prize waiting for whoever manages to finally end Burma's tragic history of civil war".

He later clarified: "For the moment, at least, I don't actually think President Thein Sein is in the running for a Nobel Prize. But I can foresee circumstances where that changes quite quickly... I could imagine a joint Nobel Peace Prize for any political leaders who can bring lasting peace to Burma. And that might include U Thein Sein."

## Legislation needs to be relevant to ensure rule of law

By Sandar Lwin

EXPERTS have again urged lawmakers and members of the government to examine the relevance of existing laws, by-laws, rules and regulations before enacting new legislation.

U Tin Maung Than, a writer and senior researcher at the Myanmar Development Resources Institute, said all levels of Myanmar society ignored existing legislation and rules.

"To define the lack of rule of law, in my opinion we need to analyse how irrelevant existing laws are to the real situation ... and how much people's lack of [respect for the law] contributes to [lack of the rule of law]," he said at a seminar at the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry on September 30.

"If we want the laws to rule, these laws need to be relevant to the real situation of those affected in order for them to abide by them. Without relevance to the real situation and being convenient to follow ... what point are these laws? I think the situation of the existing laws in Myanmar is such that we need to question their relevance to the reality on the ground," he told an audience of about 150 people.

"That's why the first step in driving rule of law in the country should be examining existing laws, rules and regulations for their relevance to the real situation of those they are supposed to affect."

Two other speakers, Professor Kyaw Zaw Naing

and political writer U Kyaw Win, also discussed rule of law at the seminar.

U Tin Maung Than, who is also a senior associate at Vahu Development Institute, suggested each law be examined through the prism of what problem does it try to solve, does it define that problem clearly and can the law solve it well.

"The phenomenon of rule of law is primarily based on the confidence of society in the laws," he said. "Without clarity ... people will not abide by those laws because they differ from their real lives."

"The more of those laws there are in a society ... the more the society distances itself from the laws and people gradually practise their own way of ignoring the laws. This is happening here," he said.

A public servant from the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation agreed that most of the orders and aims of top-ranking officials in her ministry do not reflect the real situation on the ground. The atmosphere in the ministry hinders public servants from reporting the real situation, she added.

"I'm not sure if it is because of the rules and regulations but when the real conditions are different from those that the top-ranking officials want ... it will not be good for us if we report that accurately. Then we lie and make up data for the official report. There are some attempts to reform our department but it is just on paper and hasn't happened in practice yet. Almost all parts of the public service face the same situation," she said.

## Ministry allocates K2 billion for HIV treatment

By Yamon Phu Thit

THE Ministry of Health plans to spend K2 billion (about US\$2.3 million) on HIV/AIDS medicine this financial year, a ministry spokesperson told *The Myanmar Times* last week.

The ministry is planning to buy large quantities of anti-retroviral therapy (ART) drugs to distribute through the state health system, via the National AIDS Program, as part of efforts to scale up HIV prevention and treatment services in Myanmar, Department of Health deputy director Dr Saw Lwin said.

It will be the largest amount the government has spent on ART in a single financial year.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) says that ART suppresses the HIV virus and stops it from progressing when at least

three types of the drug are taken in combination.

According to a report published by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) in February 2012, between 15,000 and 20,000 people in Myanmar die every year because they do not have access to life-saving ART drugs.

The increased spending on ART is part of an overall four-fold increase in funding for the Ministry of Health this year, Dr Saw Lwin said, adding that 4 percent of the health budget is allocated to HIV, while 10pc is spent on fighting tuberculosis and 7pc on malaria.

According to ministry figures from 2010, more than 230,000 people in Myanmar are HIV-positive and more than 76,000 urgently require ART to boost counts of a type of white blood cell that fights infection, known as CD4.

Despite the increased provision of ART drugs,

Dr Saw Lwin said many patients would still miss out.

"Governments in developing countries struggle to pay for enough ART to supply everyone with HIV. We will continue to rely on donors for assistance," he said.

On World AIDS Day in December 2011, Minister for Health Dr Pe Thet Khin said that although rates of HIV infection had decreased, ART needed to be made more widely available for those already infected.

The shortfall in supply of ART treatment is still too wide, agreed a spokesperson from Myanmar Positive Group, a network of 214 self-help groups formed by people living with HIV and AIDS.

Until 2010, only 29,825 people received ART – just 39pc of those who required it.

ART treatment is needed when a person's CD4 cell

count is below 200 but WHO recommends it be given when the CD4 cell count drops below 350.

If the latter figure is used, an estimated 120,000 people in Myanmar need ART treatment.

In Myanmar, MSF is the largest provider of ART, distributing the medicine to about 23,000 people every year.

The government's National AIDS Program is designed to boost efforts to control and prevent HIV and AIDS in Myanmar and is active in more than 250 townships.

A spokesperson for the ministry would not disclose how many patients would receive ART from the K2 billion funding or how much the ministry allocated in the previous year.

But the deputy director said the ministry plans to be more transparent about its ART provision activities, including the number of people it supports.

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# Four more peace activists face court

By Ei Ei Toe Lwin

ANOTHER four peace activists appeared in court on October 5, two weeks after they were charged with breaking the peaceful protest law following a march in Yangon.

The inspector from Hlaing township police station charged Ko Moe Thway, Ko Bo Bo, Ma Khin Sandar Nyunt and Ma Phwe Yu Mon under section 18 of the Peaceful Assembly and

Peaceful Procession Law.

The four allegedly helped organise a peace march through the streets of Yangon on October 21, the International Day of Peace, despite police rejecting applications to hold the event.

Hlaing Township Court summoned the four activists on October 5.

"We went to court ... but we requested to move the trial date because we haven't prepared anything to face trial. The judge accepted to move the date so

the next day of the trial will be on October 15," said Ko Moe Thway, who is a member of Peace Network.

All four activists face 10 charges of breaking the peaceful protest law, one for each of the townships the march passed through.

"We heard Sanchaung township court plans to summon us next week," said Ko Moe Thway.

Two other activists, Ko Jaw Gun and Ma May Sabae Phyu of Kachin Peace Network, appeared

in Dagon Township Court on September 28 and Sanchaung Township Court on October 3.

"We face difficulties to defend ourselves because we are still finding lawyers. We requested both courts move the trial start date. We will be in Dagon Township Court on October 10 and Sanchaung Township Court on October 15," said Ma May Sabae Phyu.

Altogether nine people are facing 10 charges for their alleged roles in the peace march.

All were bailed after signing a pledge to appear whenever they are summoned to a township court.

"We requested the Lawyers Network to help and advise us and they agreed. We made an appointment to meet with members of the Lawyers Network on Monday [October 8] before we face court again. All of us are young so we lack knowledge about the law and we need advice and help from lawyers," said Ko Moe Thway.

## JICA gives equipment for malaria, tuberculosis research

By Shwe Yee Saw Myint

RESEARCHERS from the Department of Medical Research will work together with a government anti-malaria program to contain the spread of an artemisinin-resistant strain of the disease, Dr Myo Khin, acting director general of the department's lower Myanmar branch, said last week.

The anti-malaria efforts will be aided by equipment from Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), he said at a ceremony to hand over the equipment, valued at US\$100,000, on October 3.

"Malaria is one of the priority diseases in Myanmar and is endemic in 284 of 330 townships, mostly in rural areas and border areas. Sixty-eight percent of the total population is living in areas at risk of malaria," he said.

More than 421,000 malaria cases and 564 malaria-related deaths were reported in 2011, he said, adding that the situation "has shown some improvement" over the past decade "as a result of scaling up preventive and curative tools".

However, Dr Myo Khin said this progress is at risk because of the rise of parasites resistant to artemisinin, the main weapon against malaria, in certain parts of the Greater Mekong Sub-region, including the Thai-Cambodian border and Thai-Myanmar border.

In addition to the equipment, JICA will also provide support for research activities on diseases of national importance, such as malaria and tuberculosis.

The Department of Medical Research (Lower Myanmar) collaborates with the Department of Health on studies of malaria and tuberculosis and the new equipment will support their research activities, Dr Myo Khin said.

It will also support research into other important diseases, such as dengue hemorrhagic fever and hepatitis, he said.



Karen National Liberation Army commander-in-chief Lieutenant General Mutu Say Poe (left) during ceasefire negotiations with the government in Kayin State in January. Pic: Kaung Htet

## KNLA spokesperson denies leader sacking

By Ei Ei Toe Lwin

AN OFFICIAL from the Karen National Liberation Army has denied reports that its commander-in-chief, Lieutenant General Mutu Say Poe, and two other senior members were sacked by the Karen National Union on October 2 for violating KNU protocol.

"We heard a lot of news about our leader but all of it is just rumours. Some websites stated a variety of comments and all of these comments are incorrect," said Major Saw Shee Sho, who is also head of the KNU liaison office in Hpa-an, Kayin State.

"We don't have any official order or information until now," he said on October 5.

The KNU reportedly announced on October 3 that Lt Gen Mutu Say Poe, along with David Taw and Roger Khin, had been sacked after they travelled to Hpa-an to open a liaison office on September 29 without approval from KNU headquarters.

The September 29 ceremony was also attended by government officials, including Minister for the President's Office U Aung Min, the head of the government peace negotiation team.

The KNU headquarters issued a statement on September 27 saying that the trip was not approved by the KNU or KNLA. The KNLA is under the command of the Defense Department, one of 14 KNU departments.

"It is a misunderstanding between the heads of both sides. Actually the plan to open a liaison office in Hpa-an had already been approved at a meeting and now we implemented the order of our officers. We opened the liaison office to better communicate between KNLA brigades," Maj Saw Shee Sho said.

"Both sides are preparing to hold a meeting to clarify these problems. It might be held around October 10."

But Chiang Mai-based news group *The Irrawaddy* reported on October 4 that KNLA Brigade 5 commander Brigadier General Baw Kyaw Heh had been appointed acting commander-in-

chief following the dismissal of Lt Gen Mutu Say Poe, citing sources close to the Kayin rebels.

But Maj Saw Shee Sho insisted the relationship between the KNU and KNLA remained "good".

The liaison office was opened following a third round peace discussion between the government and KNU in September.

Before the meeting, KNU general secretary Naw Zipporah Sein, who led the KNU delegation, told leaders of Kayin civil society groups that the KNU would open more liaison office in convenient locations to prevent further outbreaks of violence and help the Kayin people.

The KNU has been fighting the central government since 1949 but signed an initial ceasefire agreement with President U Thein Sein's government in Hpa-an in January.

On April 4, at a second round of talks, the KNU agreed to open liaison offices in Kyaukgyi, Dawei, Three Pagoda Pass, Myawaddy and Hpa-an.

## Mandalay govt looks at power supply options

By Si Thu Lwin

THE Mandalay Region government is investigating possible means of providing electricity to the region all year round, chief minister U Ye Myint said last week.

He said the government was considering a range of methods of generating electricity but was conscious of keeping prices down for consumers.

"We are negotiating with a number of companies. One company has proposed generating power from garbage at a cost of about K350 a unit," he said. "Another one has offered to do it with solar panels at K450 a unit but it would not be affordable to the public. We will consult with companies for cheaper ways of generating power."

One unit of electricity – a kilowatt hour – costs K35 for residential customers and K70 for industrial use.

In October 2011, the regional government sent a proposal to the union government to provide adequate electricity supply to Mandalay's seven districts, U Ye Myint said. However, regular power cuts during the summer sparked a wave of protests and the government resorted to using large generators. Demand for electricity in Mandalay Region is estimated at 300 megawatts, while supply fluctuates depending on the amount of water in the nation's hydropower dams.

"If electricity runs 24 hours in all three seasons, it's okay. But if the rates double or triple to provide that electricity, the price of products will inevitably go up. The price of power needs to be affordable," said Ko Latt, who runs a car workshop in Mandalay.

Meanwhile, U Ye Myint said about 280 new transformers are needed in Mandalay Region, while much of the existing cables also needs to be replaced. – *Translated by Thit Lwin*

# 'Nobody can predict the result of the 2015 election'

Twenty-four years after the National League for Democracy was founded on September 27, 1988, *The Myanmar Times*' Deputy News Editor **Kyaw Hsu Mon** sat down with party patron and co-founder, journalist **U Win Tin**, to discuss plans for the NLD general assembly, the 'rubber stamp' hluttaw and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's relationship with President U Thein Sein

**The NLD plans to hold its first general assembly later this year and I have heard that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is hoping to use it to push forward young leaders for the party's future. As one of its founders, do you think now is the right time to hand over leadership duties to a new generation?**

It depends on the public's attitude, whether they will support young leaders or not. We can't do it unless the public is also in favour. We also can't do it straight away - it won't happen just by saying that we want to introduce more youth into the leadership. The NLD has said we will try to foster young new leaders because most party members are older people; some are more than 90 years old.

Selecting a new leader isn't like assigning someone to a post in the bureaucracy. Successful politicians don't appear through training alone. These people are born with an aptitude for the job and also have political know-how.

The NLD hluttaw representatives are relatively young people but the leader should be selected by the members. At our age we can't do a lot for the party. I don't participate in the party commission [for organising the general assembly] but I am still helping in some ways. [Patron] U Tin Oo is also 86 years old now. He also has to assist the party. But in my opinion young people really need to get involved in politics. Bogyoke Aung San did it at an early age.

Most people say the leader should be young person. When people are getting old, their personality changes, it decreases and decays. But the party's general assembly must assign leaders from the lower levels to highest level, selecting people for each quarter, each township and then the head of the party, step by step.

**Recently the NLD headquarters refused to acknowledge the NLD branch in Patheingyi and more generally there are a number of conflicts between branches and the head office. Why is this happening?**

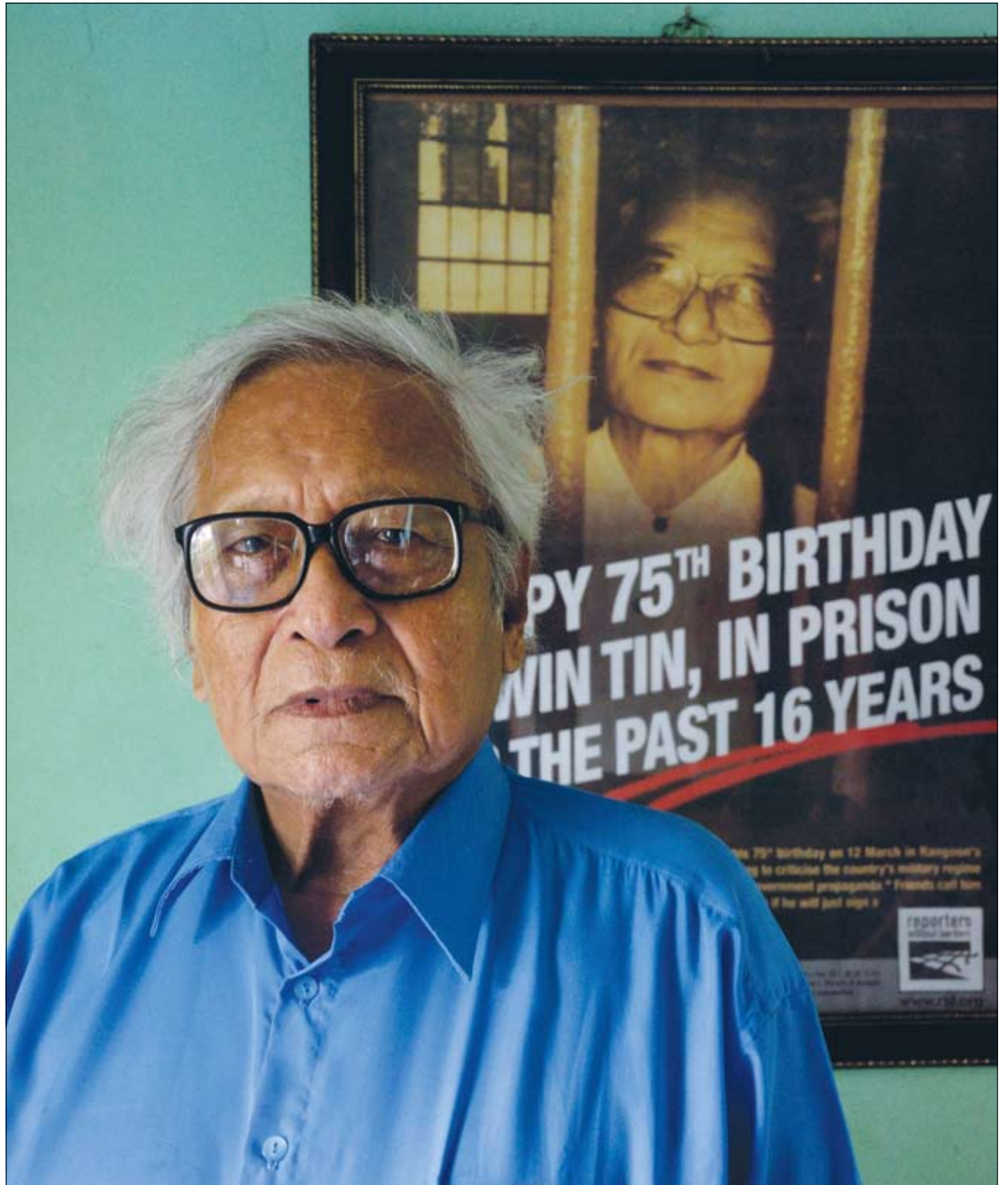
Well, the party commission [for organising the general assembly] has to handle that issue. I'm not participating in the commission so you had better ask U Tin Oo or U Nyan Win from the head office. If party members have complaints they should submit them to the commission directly. There are always personality clashes. It's normal in politics.

**What are your main activities in the NLD now?**

I'm a member of the Central Executive Committee. Actually, I don't want to take part in it ... if possible but I must help the party if the members ask me. At the moment I am also assisting *D Wave Journal*. I don't get involved in the day-to-day matters of the party though.

**Why don't you want to be a part of the party anymore?**

As I said earlier, I am getting old so I don't want



National League for Democracy Patron U Win Tin. Pic: Nyein Maung

to be in the party anymore. But I have to help if the party members ask me to help them. Now, of the founders only U Tin Oo, Daw Suu and I remain. The other founders don't participate anymore.

**In an interview with Voice of America last week, when asked whether the hluttaw was a rubber stamp, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi answered that it wasn't because the NLD is there. As a journalist, what is your assessment of the party's performance in the hluttaw so far?**

It's simple. You can see the hluttaw is still a rubber

stamp. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is speaking as a politician. Frankly, the government has exploited us politically because they can show that the NLD is in parliament, and that they allow the opposition into the discussion. But we didn't do much. We barely have 40 representatives. It's only 6 percent of the whole hluttaw.

**President U Thein Sein encouraged Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to return to the formal political process. Can we say his political strategy has been successful?**

We can't say it is just U Thein Sein's idea. His

party [the Union Solidarity and Development Party] is behind him. Although he has the most power in the government, it doesn't mean he just does whatever he wants. There are also two national hluttaws, the state and region hluttaws and then the members of his party. They come from the military forces. They have made reforms because they feel the reforms are needed.

**The NLD came into the hluttaws saying it would amend the constitution. If this doesn't happen before 2015, will there be any consequences for the party's credibility?**

We will have to let the people decide. In 2015, our party will be in the election and we expect strong support; we expect our candidates across Myanmar can be elected and will outnumber any other group. There is speculation that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi might be president but according to the constitution she is not allowed because her sons are foreign citizens. We can't say what will happen or who the people will elect. Nobody can guess what will happen in the next three years. - Translated by Thiri Min Htun

# NLD to hold first general assembly in 2012

By Kyaw Hsu Mon

THE National League for Democracy plans to hold its first general assembly later this year, more than 24 years after the party's establishment, founder U Win Tin told *The Myanmar Times* last week.

U Win Tin, a well-known author and politician, said he expected the assembly would be used to inject fresh blood into the party's leadership.

"Now a commission to organise the assembly has already been formed, with U Tin Oo the chairman and U Nyan Win general secretary. They will ensure all levels of party members are involved. I hope that we will see many youth members [take on leadership roles] ahead of the 2015 election," he said.

"We can expect that young leaders will be chosen at this general assembly," he added.

He said he was unsure how many people would attend or

where the meeting would be held.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi remains the NLD's only effective leader but her overwhelming popularity both at home and abroad has made it difficult for younger leaders to come to the fore, prompting some observers to predict a potential "leadership crisis" when she retired from the party.

Formed on September 27, 1988, the NLD has never been able to hold a general assembly because of government repression, with

its leaders as well as many rank-and-file members spending much of the past 24 years in prison or, as in the case of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, under house arrest.

Only three of its nine founders are still actively involved in the NLD: Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, U Win Tin and U Tin Oo.

In a reshuffle ahead of the by-elections in April, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi took over as chair from U Aung Shwe, while U Tin Oo and U Win Tin were made party patrons.

NLD Youth member Ko Aung Aung, 26, said expectations were high in the party that the assembly would see senior positions handed over to younger members.

He said the party headquarters is encouraging branch offices around the country to prepare to send delegates to the assembly but added that he isn't sure it will be possible to hold it in 2012.

"I don't think the party will hold the assembly before the end of this year. It might be a little bit later," he said.

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# Nay Pyi Taw residents destroy homes to avoid prison sentences

By Soe Than Lynn

ABOUT 250 Nay Pyi Taw residents accused of squatting have agreed to demolish their homes rather than face prison terms but allege the legal process was unfair and gave them no chance to defend themselves.

The residents of Ookyay village in Pynmana township were charged with squatting by the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation's Settlements and Land Record Department (SLRD) in 2011 and have since appeared in court 30 times. SLRD initiated proceedings to evict the residents in 2008 after an adjoining 4-acre plot was confiscated because it was the site of an unregistered brickworks.

They said they only agreed to pull down their homes because of the "trauma and stress" and economic hardship the court case had caused.

About 200 homes were knocked down last week in Ookyay, and more than 50 in nearby Ohboe had already been demolished, residents said.

"When we went to the court, the plaintiff from Ministry of

Agriculture and Irrigation didn't come. We haven't seen the plaintiff at all during the whole 15 months. In the subpoena, we were told to defend ourselves. In reality, we were never given any chance and at the end, the judge returned a ruling to demolish the houses, saying we would go to jail if we didn't," said resident U Win Naing.

He said another Ookyay resident, a baker who is also named U Win Naing, was jailed two months earlier because he hadn't demolished his home.

"There are four courts in Pynmana but the decisions vary from court to court," U Win Naing said.

"Settlements and Land Records Department say that if a home isn't demolished, they will charge the head of the household. If the home isn't demolished by the time the head of the household is out of jail, they'll charge his wife. If the home still isn't demolished, they'll charge everyone in the household over 18 years of age. They won't stop," he said.

U Myint Lwin said he had agreed to demolish his house

for the sake of his children.

"Almost every family in the village has school-age children, from primary school to distant [university] learning," he said. "Being litigated like this and brought to trial for such a long time hurt us not only economically but also affected the students' ability to study. They are no longer interested in learning. We demolished our homes only so that the case would be over," he said.

"We had to make three trips to the township law office on the same day [that we demolished our homes] and were forced to sign a statement that we had voluntarily demolished our homes. Because we didn't want to go to jail, we had no choice but to do it."

Neighbours U Than Tun and U Than Hteik, who were also forced to demolish their homes, said they had purchased the land in 1974.

"We have lived here for more than 40 years. This is land where no crops can grow because it is hot, sandy soil," they said. "We don't have anywhere else to go." Many of those forced to



Residents of Ookyay village in Pynmana township point to where their home stood before they were ordered to destroy it or face prison time. Pic: Soe Than Lynn

demolish their homes are living in the same compound with their possessions, while others who have been forced to move have relocated to plots just a few metres away, they added.

U Win Naing said he and other residents had paid municipal taxes on their buildings and land and possessed household lists.

"We bought the land as residential land in 1974 with a contract. We have Form 66

and a list of family members. We paid municipal tax and electricity tax. We have heads of 10 households and 100 households and even the village administrator lives here. But the administrator was the only one not charged."

Copies of these documents were taken by Captain Aung Ko Latt from the Pynmana Township General Administrative Office on July 7 but the township court later

ruled that the homes should still be demolished because no orders were received from higher authorities.

"We want to keep living here. Because we don't have any place to go after demolishing our home, we are living under a makeshift awning leant against a nearby tree. And if we have to move we should get a replacement plot within the municipal area of Pynmana.

- Translated by Thit Lwin

# Trial begins as farmers evicted in capital

Farmers seek parliament support to secure tenure rights to more than 40 acres at centre of ownership dispute

By Soe Than Lynn

MORE land disputes are emerging in Nay Pyi Taw, with a farmer late last month charged with trespassing after his land was confiscated and awarded to an unknown company.

U Kala from Shwepyiaye village tract in Lewe township was charged with trespassing under section 447 of the penal code following a complaint from two men, U Kyi Hlaing and U Nyein, who are not known to people in the area. The legal action comes after an unknown group allegedly destroyed 500 mango and banana trees on the disputed land in 2011.

U Kala faced Lewe Township Court on September 24, with a second hearing on October 3, said U Maung Maung, a lawyer from a legal support group that is assisting the defendants.

He described the charges against U Kala as a "test case" for how the plaintiffs would proceed against other farmers in the area.

"The disputed land is 42.70 acres and it belongs to six farmers, including U Kala, who owns 12 acres. U Kala was charged after cultivating crops like the rest of the villagers did the same," he said.

"The charge relates to trespassing on another's land but in this case the land owner is U Kala. We

have no idea what organisation the plaintiffs represent and what evidence they have.

He said a group of 15 Settlements and Land Records Department (SLRD) staff and police had visited the village in August and "in a rather forceful way" had set concrete posts and measured the land.

They didn't identify which organisation they were measuring the land for but left when the villagers started taking photos of them. Shortly afterwards, U Kala was charged.

"If this lawsuit is successful, they will probably charge the other five [farmers] so it can be considered a test case," he said.

At Lewe Township Court on September 24, the two plaintiffs entrusted power of attorney to their lawyer.

However, U Kala has already taken steps to mobilise the legislature against the confiscation. After the mango and banana trees were destroyed in 2011, he filed a letter to the president and a parliamentary complaints committee.

He told *The Myanmar Times* that the committee's chairman, U Aung Nyein, had responded in a letter, stating that when the committee reviewed the case, it found that U Kala and the five other farmers were still recorded as the owners on SLRD maps.

"This 12 acres has been in my family for generations," U Kala said on September 27. "I can't give up my land. I can't survive without it. I don't want to move even with compensation but I will consider [leaving] if I am offered suitable replacement land."

For now, the land sits behind a fresh red sign that reads: "State-owned land. No trespassing. 42.70 acres. By Nay Pyi Taw Development Committee."

Another of the land owners, U Win Zaw Moe, said the villagers had received conflicting messages from government departments about why the land was to be acquired.

On March 2, the deputy head of SLRD for Lewe, U Htein Win, visited the site and said it was to be acquired for an international airport project and told the six farmers to sell it to the government or request replacement land. The land is about 15 kilometres from Nay Pyi Taw International Airport.

"But on August 24, a barbed wire fence with concrete posts and signs were built on the disputed land. When we asked them, the township office member U Thant

Zin Linn said, "This is not a land acquisition; we're just doing as our superior ordered," U Win Zaw Moe said.

U Kyaw Swe Latt, a member of the legal support group helping the farmers, said the SLRD officials and police had visited on September 10 to measure the land.

"When the farmers stopped them, saying that they should negotiate, they forcibly entered the land but when a dispute broke out, they left. The next day they arrived along with three policemen and a land measuring clerk. When the farmers asked who they represented, they declined to answer. When asked what evidence they had for land acquisition, they said nothing. They even didn't answer when we asked their names," he said.

The police soon left but the SLRD officials started measuring the land, he said.

"When we videoed them, they fled and hid their faces - not along the way they had come but along another route with a lot of small hills. Afterwards, we filed a complaint with Lewe township police but they haven't done anything. And we got no help when we informed the village chairman. Finally, U Kala ended up being charged."

The farmers said they hoped a newly formed parliamentary investigation commission comprising 65 MPs would take up the issue.

For each complaint, the commission will investigate 23 issues, such as whether acquisition was carried out according to existing laws; whether the land and its maps were correct; if it was a project, whether its objectives were implemented; whether it was logical; whether there was negotiation with farmers; and whether a reasonable amount of compensation or other support was given. - Translated by Thit Lwin

# Tat Lan forced to halt Pekon plantation

By Myat May Zin

THE government has ordered a construction company to suspend a wood plantation project in Pekon township in southern Shan State after receiving complaints from Kayan residents, who say they use the land for rotational cultivation.

Tat Lan Company acquired 150 acres beside the Loikaw-Pekon Highway on a 30-year lease for K100 an acre after assuring the government the land was unoccupied.

The company planted hardwood trees but also planned to use the land for a commercial wood plantation, residents and a company official said.

"Actually it is not forest land. Those lands are subject to rotating cultivation; we plant here this year and move to another place next year. [Tat Lan] told the government the lands was empty.

Currently the government has told the company to halt the project," said U Lwei Si Nyein, a resident of Pekon township.

"Officials from the Ministry of Forestry and U Nyi Nyi from Tat Lan Company came and discussed the issue with local residents. U Nyi Nyi said they will try to solve the issue in a way that is fair for all," he said.

He said residents complained after they discovered the company was going to plant plantation crops.

"Government gave the land to the company for just K100 an acre per year. After the construction of Moe Byae Dam, most land in the area is flooded so we have just a small amount of cultivable land and local people refused to accept the company's forestry so they suspended it."

U Shein Win, chairman of Tat Lan Company, said at a recent press conference in Yangon the company did not "get the land for

our benefit". He said the company was also implementing social development and religious projects in Pekon township.

"Yes, I got the land for K100 an acre but to plant the trees in those lands is costly; I estimate it was more than K 100 million," he said. "We just tried to plant forests for this township. We will plant hard trees for the forest and will also plant commercial trees as part of our long-term development plan."

A spokesperson from the Ministry of Forestry said the land had no registered owner.

"Actually that land is not owned by anybody except the government. Before the government gave the company the concession, we already checked if the company could actually plant [the hardwood forest] and implement this project and then gave the company a 30-year lease. But for now we asked the company to suspend the project until we can solve the complaints."

# Workshop tackles a tough issue

Rakhine conflict dissected, with suggestions to inform efforts to build trust between communities

THE target was bold, as its convenors acknowledged.

"Our aim in holding this workshop is to resolve the conflict in Rakhine State," said U Ko Ko Hlaing, an adviser on political affairs to President U Thein Sein.

Held on September 22 and 23, the Workshop on Rehabilitation, Resettlement, Rule of Law and Sustainable Development in Rakhine State was jointly organised by Ministry of Border Affairs, UN agencies and Myanmar Development and Resources Institute (MDRI).

It was split into five topics – security, the rule of law and tranquillity; relief and humanitarian aid; temporary settlements and rehabilitation; reconciliation and amity; and sustainable socio-economic development.

But Minister for Border Affairs Lieutenant General Thein Htay clarified that the workshop wasn't expected to result in a quick fix; rather, it was held to identify problems and challenges and work out short and long-term plans to defuse the long-running tension.

Minister for Border Affairs Lieutenant General Thein Htay said lessons from the current crisis and the past showed the lack of mutual trust and engagement between the two

## IN DEPTH

with  
Win Ko Ko Latt



communities had to change. He said another "pressing" issue was the "widening gap" between residents and humanitarian organisations operating in the area.

Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Kham said the "root cause" of the conflict was lack of development. "Despite its richness in natural

resources, Rakhine State is

under developed with higher percentage of poverty and scarcity of job opportunities caused by less human resource development," he was quoted as saying in the state-run *New Light of Myanmar*.

The vice president "stressed the need for promoting the socio-economy and bringing the development into the state as part of efforts for preventing conflicts between the two cultures," the report said.

**'We have taken an important step by discussing the issues in a constructive manner.'**

"Only when the socio-economic life of both sides are improved, can the two societies stay together,"

he was quoted as saying. Dr Wah Wah Maung, deputy director general from Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development, said 43.5 percent of the Rakhine State population is below the poverty line. She said infrastructure development as well as growth in the tourism, weaving and fisheries sectors should be encouraged.

Police Lieutenant Colonel Kyaw Win said emphasis needed to be placed on security, law enforcement, tranquility and human rights.

time went by," he said. Retired Police Colonel U Kham Aung said that just as dialogue between the two communities is needed, dialogue between people within the same community who hold different views is also needed. United Nations resident and humanitarian coordinator Mr Ashok Nigam said: "We cannot solve this conflict instantly, and we cannot solve it in Nay Pyi Taw or Yangon alone. We have heard that durable solutions, which address the root causes of the conflict, require actions at all levels for reconciliation and long-lasting development to take place. This will take time, particularly since we have to take the people of Rakhine State and the nation along, under the vision of the leaders in government, and the civil society. But we have over the last two days taken an important step by discussing the issues in a constructive manner."

Lt Gen Thein Htay said he was confident that the ideas expressed in the workshop would contribute to the "peaceful and sustainable development" of Rakhine State and help to build mutual trust between the two communities.

"Every governmental body has a responsibility [for rehabilitation work] and will have to take a leading role," he said. – *Translated by Thit Lwin*

## Rakhine team given extra two weeks for conflict report

By Win Ko Ko Latt

A TEAM investigating riots in Rakhine State in May and June has been given a two-week extension to file a report on the violence, a member said last week.

"We will submit the report to the president on November 14 so we are trying hard to have it done on that day," said U Thura, better known as Zaganar.

He said president U Thein Sein had agreed to the extension because the investigation commission, formed on August 17, had been given such a short deadline. It has been tasked with submitting a report with suggestions on how best to proceed so as to avoid a repeat of the violence.

"The commission has already visited almost the entire state. We are still in the initial stages," U Thura said, adding that a second visit was planned soon.

"We will collect data carefully during our trip," he said.

While the team found most places had returned to relative normality, he said there were concerns for future stability in some areas, particularly where Rakhine were significantly outnumbered by Muslims.

– *Translated by Zar Zar Soe*

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## Yangon MP calls for new Aung San monument

By Kyaw Hsu Mon

A MEMORIAL monument to Bogyoke Aung San should be built in People's Park in Yangon, representative for Thingangyun U Kyaw told the Yangon Region Hluttaw on September 27.

Acknowledging that there was already a statue of Bogyoke Aung San in Yangon, U Kyaw said the People's Park statue would be an appropriate sign of respect for the independence leader and would be close to the Yangon Region Hluttaw and Shwedagon Pagoda.

"As far as I know foreign countries also regularly build statues of their leaders in public areas," he said.

The Bogyoke Aung San statue on Natmauk Road is about 8 feet (2.4 metres) high and was commissioned in 1956 by Dr Ba Oo, a former president, and made by several renowned artists.

Yangon Mayor U Hla Myint said while he welcomed the proposal he believes it should be submitted to the national government for approval.

He said there were many public areas named after Bogyoke Aung San throughout the country and thought should be given to whether more monuments were appropriate.

"It should be considered by the Union Government; we will submit this to the union level," he said.

Yangon Region Chief Minister U Myint Swe said Revolutionary Park, near the People's Park and Shwedagon Pagoda, would be an appropriate site for the statue, as it was where Bogyoke Aung San gave a famous speech to the Burma Independence Army in 1945.

"We should consider where [the statue] should be [located] and the Union government should also think about it," he said.

# New trust to build on 3DF foundations, say donors

By Yamon Phu Thit

THE new US\$300 million Three Millennium Development Goals Fund will build on the foundations established by its predecessor, the Three Diseases Fund, inaugural chair Ms Veronique Lorenzo of the European Union said at a recent launching ceremony.

The multi-donor trust will focus primarily on the promotion of maternal and child health to 2016, and replaces the 3DF, which was established in 2006 and distributed some \$115 million between 2007 and 2011.

"About 70 percent of the fund will focus on making basic health services available for poor and vulnerable mothers and children in the whole part of the country," Ms Lorenzo said at Chatrium Hotel on September 25.

3MDG will continue to fund activities to fight HIV, tuberculosis and malaria. "For these diseases, we will continue to [provide] support in specific areas that have not been covered by the Global Fund," she said.

In addition to these components, Ms Lorenzo said 3MDG has an "ambitious program" that aims to support the government to strengthen its health system. "In the long term, this is where responsibility lies for delivering services to the public.

"The 3MDG will support the government to address the Millennium Development Goals related to health," she said.

3MDG's donors will be the same as for 3DF: Australia's AusAID, Denmark, the European Union, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom's Department for International Development.

Minister for Health Dr Pe Thet Khin said at the ceremony the government was "very eager" to work with 3MDG and was pleased that the fund's donors had decided to help strengthen the public health system.

"We need to improve rural health [systems] because 70pc of the population resides in rural areas. Although HIV, TB and malaria are major diseases, we have much to do [tackle] other diseases," he said.

Dr Saw Lwin, deputy director of the Department of Health, said the ministry's budget had increased four-fold in the 2012-13 financial year, with 4pc, 10pc and 7pc of the budget allocated to tackling HIV, TB and malaria respectively.



A patient at the Yangon office of a non-government organisation supported by the Three Diseases Fund. Pic: Supplied

Since 2007 3DF worked with 35 implementing partners in more than 60 projects. But a spokesperson for Burnet Institute, one of the fund's implementing partners for HIV/AIDS support, care and training programs,

**'Now 3DF is gone and we are worried that there will be a shortage of funding for HIV projects in the future.'**

said she was concerned about a possible "funding gap" for HIV/AIDS.

"With the support of 3DF, our project has helped oversee the development of civil society organisations working on HIV and AIDS. However, now [3DF] is gone and we are worried that there will be shortage of funding [for HIV projects] in the future," she said.

"3MDG funding will mainly focus on maternal and child health but I think there are still requirements in the HIV sector," she said.

Burnet Institute received US\$3 million from 3DF between 2007 and 2011, she said.

Dr Khayay Htun of World Concern, which implemented HIV and malaria projects in Kachin, Shan and Mon states with 3DF support, said the fund had been a "valuable" source of funding.

"We have done many things and got tangible outcomes when we worked with it," she said. "Awareness of people in the project area about HIV and malaria is increasing. We were able to reduce malaria-related deaths and help prevent HIV infections there."

Ms Shaanti Sekhon, AusAID's representative on the 3DF board, said on September 25 that the fund had provided voluntary counselling and HIV testing to almost 60,000 people from high-risk groups, provided anti-retroviral treatment to more than 19,000 HIV positive people, distributed more than 30 million needles to injecting drug users, provided tuberculosis treatment to patients free of charge throughout the country, supported the Myanmar artemisinin containment strategic framework and treated 1.8 million malaria cases.

"Without the fund there would have been no way to meet the health needs of thousands of people in Myanmar," she said. "3DF has provided a foundation for future."

## Briefs

### Natmataung gets Heritage Park status

NATMATAUNG National Park in Chin State became the 32<sup>nd</sup> ASEAN Heritage Park on September 26, the ASEAN Secretariat said in a press release.

The park surrounds Natmataung, formerly known as Mount Victoria, and at 10,200 feet (3109 metres) above sea level, it is the highest mountain in Chin state and the fifth nationally.

The decision was made during an ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in Bangkok, which involved parties to the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution.

Natmataung is Myanmar's sixth park to receive official status under the ASEAN Declaration on Heritage Parks. - *Nan Tin Htwe*

### Peace Centre to open this month

THE Myanmar Peace Centre will officially open this month, Union Minister U Aung Min said recently.

The centre is on U Wisara Road in Yangon and was established with the support of the Peace Donor Support Group, comprising Norway, the European Union and United Nations agencies. An inauguration ceremony was held in July.

"The peace centre will be a place where everybody has the chance to loudly say what they think. There's no need to go out on the road. We are trying to open it officially in October," U Aung Min, head of the government peace negotiating team, said last month.

The centre aims to provide technical support to the peacemaking process in Myanmar.

"It is a place where the government and ethnic group can hold discussions," U Aung Min said.

"We need assistance from international donors for the peace-building process because our country is not rich." - *Ei Ei Toe Lwin*

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# Ministry flags shift in aged care, readies bill for parliament

By Tim McLaughlin

MYANMAR marked International Day of Older Persons on October 1 by honouring its oldest citizens and detailing a plan to care for this quickly growing demographic.

At a ceremony in Nay Pyi Taw, Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Myat Myat Ohm Khin stressed the importance of healthy elderly citizens to the overall social well-being of the country's people.

In her opening remarks at the event, which was co-organised with HelpAge International and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), she outlined Myanmar's efforts to properly care for the country's sizeable and ageing population.

"The life quality of older people can be promoted by establishing a mechanism which includes UN agencies, INGOs, NGOs, local organisations, scholars from academic bodies and paying more attention on gender perspective and special need of older women," she said in her opening remarks.

Ministry figures show that the proportion of Myanmar's population aged 60 or older increased from 8.7 percent in 2007 to 9.1pc in 2010. The ministry projects that by 2050 one in four people in Myanmar will be elderly.

The ministry's focus on elderly care shifted in 2004 from a centre-based care system to home care and it now operates home care services in 154 townships throughout the country. This policy movement towards greater independence has been assisted by HelpAge International, a non-government organisation focused on helping older people claim their rights and overcome poverty and discrimination.

In conjunction with HelpAge, the Ministry

has since 2009 formed 128 Older People Self-Help Groups, which aim to build the self-esteem of members through livelihood programs. U Tin Win, president of the Older People Self Help Group in Htin Kwin village, Kyaik Latt township, Ayeyarwady Region, said the group's activities have had a positive impact on the entire community, not only its older members.

"We are playing the role as a bridge among the older people, community members and patrons of the community. We implement the activities to make sure that the older people enjoy their rights and primary health care. We want the young generation to take example of how these activities are very supportive to the community," he said.

Due to the ministry's slim budget, the self-help group project – like most undertaken by the ministry – is almost wholly reliant on partnerships with international NGOs. Deputy director general U Aung Tun Khaing acknowledged this was a problem, particularly given the country's growing needs.

"We [the ministry] are trying to extend our strength," he said.

U Aung Tun Khaing said he hopes this expansion will come through the National Plan of Action on Ageing, which he said could be approved in "the coming financial year".

The legislation will create a pension system for the elderly but its introduction will depend on the state of the government's finances, U Aung Tun Khaing said.

While the pension program will fulfill at least one of the requests submitted by U Tin Win on behalf of his Older People Self Help Group, other demands include courses for school-aged children on respect and traditional values, discounted transportation fares for the elderly, low interest loans and subsidised health care.

# Jade trader offers replacement land to stonecarving workshops

By Phyo Wai Kyaw

A JADE trader has thrown struggling stonecarving businesses a lifeline after reading about their plight in *The Myanmar Times*, business owners said last week.

Mandalay City Development Committee (MCDC) instructed the stonecarving workshops to leave the Kyauksittan area by September 9 but the owners of the businesses said it would be impossible to find a new location without support.

On September 12, U Soe Naing of Aye Aye Khaing jade trading company offered the businesses a 1.5 acre plot near Myin Hmu village in Amarapura township, about 16 kilometres south of central Mandalay, said workshop owner Ko Hlaing.

"He read about our difficulties in *The Myanmar Times* in early September and called us to meet with him. He said he wanted to donate his 1.5 acre worksite to us," Ko Hlaing said.

The 1.5 acres adjoins an 11.51-acre site U Soe Naing donated for "International Mineral Jewellery Market (Mandalay)", which,



Stonecarving workers shifting a final item on 84<sup>th</sup> Street on September 28. Pic: Phyo Wai Kyaw

according to a recent report in *The Voice*, the regional government plans to complete within two years.

"[U Soe Naing] said he hopes that if the stone carving businesses move there it would be convenient for customers attached to the jade market," Ko Hlaing added.

Despite the offer, not all business owners are keen to make the move, preferring the more central Kyauksittan location, on 84<sup>th</sup> Street near the west gate of Mahamuni Pagoda and the Sagaing-Mandalay Road.

"Some still hope we can get

a new location from MCDC," business owner Ma San San Win on September 28.

Not all closed their workshops by the September 9 deadline but Ko Hlaing said MCDC officers had visited the area on September 27 and warned them to finish their projects and leave the area.

Business owners also sent a letter to the president, local and regional authorities requesting help to relocate but have so far received no reply.

MCDC said the workshops had to move because they are too noisy, block the road and spread dust particles.

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# Miners plan to charge MNPCC

By Naw Say Phaw Waa

MINERS in the Moehti Moemi gold mining area of Yamethin township say they are preparing to file charges against a mining firm for alleged forced labour and breach of contract.

The plan to file a complaint against Myanmar National Prosperity Public Company comes after the company filed charges against 17 miners on September 2, alleging they committed an obscene act and criminal intimidation.

"We are finding a lawyer to initiate proceedings against the company for forcing people to work, breaking a promise to give compensation that has already been negotiated and threats by the company's security staff," said Ko Han Win Aung Political Prisoners' Families Beneficial Network, which is helping the workers.

Daw Na Di Lwin, chief executive officer of Myanmar National Prosperity, said the workers have been trying to press charges against them for the past two months but they "don't have any evidence or proof".

"They can try to charge use according to the law and we are prepared to defend ourselves," he said.

The workers also applied to

protest on September 24, 25 and 26 in Yamethin to "let people know their difficulties" but police rejected the application because exams were taking place at the technological university, said Ko Youte Kyi, one of the charged miners.

"They rejected [our application] on September 19 for two reasons. The first is that there are university exams on between September 24 and 26 and the second reason is that the workers don't need to protest anymore because they have already protested against the company and the two sides already reached an agreement on June 14. So the police suggested the workers just file a lawsuit instead," said Ko Han Win Aung.

Under the peaceful protest law, if township police reject the application to protest the applicant can appeal to region-level police. The miners did this September 25 but the Mandalay Region Police Department replied on September 27 that the proposal was insufficient. "That's why we are going to analyse our proposal and apply again. If for a second time they don't allow us to protest, we will apply to the Yangon Police Department," Ko Youte Kyi said.

A group of workers also met hluttaw representatives from Yamethin on September 21 to discuss the case.

# More river vessels needed for tourist influx

By Khin Su Wai and Shwe War Lwin

MORE private vessels are needed to meet demand from foreign tourists on Myanmar's busy Bagan-Mandalay route, an association of ferry operators based in Mandalay said last week.

The number of passengers in the year to the end of August was up about 50 percent on the preceding 12 months, said U Thet Tun, the chairperson of the Foreigners River Transport Association at Mayanchan jetty.

There are plans to expand the jetty by 100 feet, from its current length of 250 feet, to accommodate more vessels, he told *The Myanmar Times*.

The manager of Malikka River Cruise, Ko Myo Win Nyunt, said his company was already booked out for the rest of the financial year, which ends on March 31. It expects to sell about 5000 tickets in 2012-13, up from just 1877 in 2008-09.

The increase in cruise passengers reflects the overall rise in tourists visiting Mandalay, a spokesperson from the city's hotels and tourism office said.

In the year to the end of August 12,596 tourists visited the city, up from just 5908 in the preceding 12 months.

"In 2008 and 2009 there were fewer tourists due to political problems. But after July 2010, the number of arrivals has continued to increase. This year looks as though it will be the busiest yet," the spokesperson said.



A vessel docked at Mayanchan jetty in Mandalay. Pic: Khin Su Wai

About six cruises operate daily during the tourist season, which runs from October to January, and up to 20 vessels use the port at one time.

"Foreigners pay US\$43 for a cruise from Mandalay to Bagan, while Myanmar nationals pay K20,000 [US\$23]. However locals rarely take a cruise along the Ayeyarwady River, because it's considered expensive. They usually skip the sightseeing en route and travel straight to Bagan by car instead," Ko Myo Win Nyunt from Amara said.

"Foreigners enjoy exploring the areas around scenic Sagaing Hill and watching pottery being made using traditional techniques in Yandabo village," Ko Myo Win

Nyunt said.

In the hottest months of April and May, water levels drop and sometimes vessels need to be anchored overnight, which occasionally results in delaying the scheduled length of a cruise. U Thet Tun said the increased activity at the jetty had created some undesirable side effects.

"Mandalay is one of Myanmar's top tourist destinations. However, littering by locals at the port is becoming a problem and street children are asking tourists for money. This is also a problem," U Thet Tun said.

Most river cruise passengers are from the United States, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Japan and South Korea, he said.

# Responsible tourism policy goes to cabinet

By Yu Yu Maw

A RECENTLY drafted responsible tourism policy has been approved by the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism and will go before the cabinet for approval, a tourism expert involved in the creation of the policy said last week.

The policy was officially approved by the ministry on September 27 and will be used as the foundation for a tourism master plan, said Mr Achim Munz, the resident representative of Hanns Seidel Foundation, which helped draft the document.

The policy has nine major aims, including spreading the benefits of tourism broadly, integrating the industry into national development plans, maintaining cultural diversity and authenticity, conserving the environment, training the local work force and minimising unethical practices.

Mr Munz said the wide participation in drafting the policy, including more than 350 tourism industry stakeholders from both the public and private sector, was an essential element for its success.

"Sustainable tourism development can only come if we take responsibility [for implementation]. ... The policy itself will do nothing ... it's the stakeholders that support the policy that make things happen. The policy should provide guidance and direction [for the industry]," Mr Munz said last week.

He said he hoped that all tourism stakeholders would embrace the policy and use it as a "guiding instrument".

"A very important thing to highlight is the process of [drafting the] policy. We discussed it with many ministries, the approach was very participatory. I don't think there is a country in Southeast Asia

of the public," Mr Munz said.

The policy survived the removal of tourism minister U Tint Hsan, who was replaced by U Htay Aung in a reshuffle last month.

Speaking at a conference on responsible tourism in Nay Pyi Taw on June, U Htay Aung, the then-deputy minister said the

to think about how to encourage domestic tourism as well. "Some domestic visitors are likely to spend twice as much money as international visitors ... this is very important as a solid base for economic growth. Stakeholders need to realise that."

Mr Suki Singh, general manager of Inle Lake Hotel, said tourism needed to "be sensitive towards the environment, the culture, traditions and preservation of both natural and cultural attributes".

He said the new policy was a "critical step" for the industry, as it came at a time when Myanmar appears likely to embark on a sustained period of economic growth.

"I believe all stakeholders will be mindful of their individual and collective responsibilities of how to contribute towards sustainable tourism. The policy is a guideline and will evolve over time and improve," Mr Singh said.

**'I don't think there is a country in Southeast Asia where officials from more than 20 ministries have sat down to discuss a policy like this.'**

where officials from more than 20 ministries have sat down together to discuss a policy like this. It is a start and a platform to work from," he added.

"The ministry can't develop tourism on its own; it needs support from other ministries, the private sector and civil society."

Hanns Seidel Foundation, Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, Myanmar Tourism Federation and individuals from the private and public sectors drafted the policy following consultation meetings across the country. The draft was then presented and discussed at a conference in Nay Pyi Taw on June 5.

"We went to some tourist destinations such as Bagan, Inle Lake, Taunggyi and Yangon and talked directly with hoteliers, travel companies and members

ministry was conscious of the need to spread the benefits of tourism.

"We are fully aware that the success of tourism can be judged by ... the net benefit to the country and its people," he said.

Mr Munz said industry stakeholders also needed

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# How Japan Inc stole a march on

By Antoni Slodkowski

TOKYO – Japan Inc is charging into Myanmar. The rush began one night last October, when Myanmar's new president rolled out a map after dinner to show an aging Japanese power broker a prize that could be Tokyo's to develop - a swathe of land nearly as big as Macau.

President U Thein Sein, 67, a former general, had been president of Myanmar's civilian government for just six months. He had won cautious praise for reconciling with democracy icon Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and opening Myanmar's economy after five decades of army rule. Now he was seeking investors to develop Asia's second-poorest country.

After a Chinese-style banquet at the presidential residence in the capital of Nay Pyi Taw, U Thein Sein turned to Hideo Watanabe, 78, a Japanese politician with an enduring interest in Myanmar. The new president offered a deal: Japan could develop a special economic zone at Thilawa, a spot near both Myanmar's largest city and a port on the Indian Ocean - if it came up with the money.

"I told him I would figure something out," recalled Watanabe, a former cabinet minister and top aide to ex-Japanese Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone.

Watanabe was as good as his word. A fast-track deal negotiated in less than a year has paved the way for Japan to provide at least US\$18 billion in aid, investment and debt forgiveness from government and private sources.

## Gold rush embrace

In addition to this deal, *Reuters* has learned that Japan will provide up to \$3.2 billion in new lending to build another special economic zone and deepsea port in Dawei, in southern Myanmar, which would be developed into Southeast Asia's largest industrial complex.

The deals have made Japan a major player overnight in the opening of Myanmar. The part of the Thilawa package that includes debt forgiveness and refinancing adds up to nearly \$5 billion, dwarfing the \$76 million in aid from the United States in 2011 and 2012 and a two-year package of \$200 million the European Union has pledged.

In reconstructing how Japanese government and business leaders moved from cautious re-engagement with Myanmar to a gold-rush embrace over the past year, *Reuters* spoke to more than 50 officials, executives and politicians involved in the effort on both sides. They described how a small group of well-connected Japanese



Supporters hold pictures of President U Thein Sein awaiting his arrival at Yangon International Airport last week.

pushed Tokyo's bureaucracy and aid agencies to fast-track key decisions, even while Myanmar's laws on investments were still being debated in its nascent parliament.

At stake is influence in Asia's last frontier market. The Japanese pounced as Myanmar's leaders were looking for allies to blunt China's enormous influence in Myanmar. Japan's push back into Myanmar has vaulted it ahead of the United States and the European Union, which have been more cautious in unwinding trade and investment restrictions put in place in the 1990s. One likely result is a big leg up for Japanese trading houses, banks, contractors and engineering firms.

"We are lucky because the US was kind enough to introduce economic sanctions - that's why Western financial firms have so far no presence in Myanmar," said Shigeto Inami, who manages Myanmar operations for Daiwa Institute of Research. The think tank runs Myanmar's tiny stock exchange and has plans to transform it into a thriving bourse by 2015.

US and European diplomats said they don't necessarily see the Japanese

win as disadvantageous to Western multinationals. Washington has been urging allies, including Tokyo, to enter Myanmar to buttress the economy and thereby the reformist wing of the military-backed government, a senior State Department official told *Reuters*.

A handful of US giants - including GE and Coca-Cola - already have returned. In Thilawa, Western power firms such as GE and Siemens and construction giants such as Bechtel and Balfour Beatty could win subcontracts from the Japanese, business analysts say.

"Many of our competitors have been in that market for many years, so we're already late to the game," said John Goyer, senior director of Southeast Asia for the US Chamber of Commerce. But "there's clear interest and desire on Myanmar's part to have US companies there".

## The Myanmar lobby

Japan's rush carries risks. The deals call for Japanese companies to do business with a tycoon blacklisted by the United States, exposing them to potential reputational damage.

And Japan has pledged to develop the 2400-

hectare (5930-acre) special economic zone in Thilawa before ownership questions surrounding the land have been resolved. So far, Thilawa is most notable for its emptiness. Rice paddies fill land earmarked for factories. Workers collect clay in baskets as trucks haul gravel to drop into the soggy ground.

"Welcome to our new El Dorado," said Myint U, a former government official who now connects foreign investors to Myanmar ministries, as he drove a visitor through the emerald plain.

Japanese executives believe the risks are big and the upside even bigger. "If I started writing down a list of problems, I could write a checklist with 50 or 60 lines," said Yasuhiro Morimoto, manager of strategy in Asia and Oceania at project investor Marubeni Corp. Still, he added, the potential benefits outweigh the perils for the trading house.

Myanmar has long been seen as a prize. A land mass as large as Britain and France combined, it shares borders with 40 percent of the world's population in India, China, Bangladesh and Thailand. Its ports on the Indian Ocean and Andaman Sea sit just north

of the Malacca Strait, one of the world's busiest shipping lanes.

China remains Myanmar's biggest patron. Led by investments in energy, China and its companies pledged more than \$14 billion for Myanmar in the fiscal year ended March 2011, nearly 70pc of total foreign investment. Japanese companies invested just \$212 million in Myanmar between 1988 and 2011.

Yet Tokyo has an ace up its sleeve: Japan's ties with Myanmar have been unusually warm, despite the brutal Japanese occupation of the country during World War Two.

Myanmar was the first Southeast Asian country to settle reparations claims against Japan after the war. Independence leader Aung San (Suu Kyi's father) and former dictator Ne Win were members of the "Thirty Comrades" movement against British rule, which was educated and trained by Japanese army officers.

Unlike the West, Japan never imposed trade and financial sanctions against Myanmar. As a result, Japan Inc already has a significant presence in the country. Major banks such as Mitsubishi UFJ,

Sumitomo Mitsui Financial and Mizuho Financial Group have branches in the commercial hub of Yangon. The time has come to "monetise" strong Japan-Myanmar relations, a top bank executive told *Reuters*.

## Tokyo's point man

Watanabe's emergence as Tokyo's man on Myanmar represents a second act in a career marked by an ability to cultivate influential friends across the political spectrum.

Watanabe was 11 when World War Two ended. His older brother was one of the last "kamikaze" pilots to die in the battle for Okinawa, a memory he sometimes shares in public speeches.

He embarked on a long career as a conservative politician and in the 1990s was head of Japan's Posts and Telecommunications Ministry. His first involvement with Myanmar came in 1987, when he hosted junta generals in Tokyo as deputy chief cabinet secretary to Nakasone. Even after the generals cracked down on student protesters and put Daw Aung San Suu Kyi under house arrest two years later, Nakasone urged Watanabe to develop and deepen Japan's unofficial ties to Myanmar.

Watanabe's support for the junta never wavered, though the crackdown had made the regime a pariah. "Myanmar had no choice but to introduce a military regime to preserve internal law and order," he wrote this year on the website of the Japan-Myanmar Association, a group he launched to rally support for the wave of investment.

He met U Thein Sein in 1996 during a trip to carry medical equipment to Myanmar in Shan State, where the Burmese general was regional military commander. Afterward, the general invited him to play a round of golf.

"That was the only fun we had," Watanabe recalled in an interview with *Reuters*. "He was pretty good at golf. And back in the day, with the army uniform on, he was awe-inspiring."

It's not the usual description of U Thein Sein, who was born to humble rice farmers and held mostly bureaucratic jobs in a four-decade military career that culminated in his 2007 appointment as interim prime minister. The bookish-looking general became the first civilian president in 49 years, after overseeing a new constitution in 2010 that guarantees the military a place in government.

## Brokering diplomacy

Watanabe's personal diplomacy has sometimes left Japan's foreign ministry scrambling to keep up.

On October 21, Japanese Foreign Minister Koichiro

# competitors to enter Myanmar

Gemba hosted a dinner in Tokyo for Myanmar's foreign minister. It was the first meeting between the two nations' top diplomats in 16 years. Gemba pledged new investment from Japan – provided that Myanmar show “substantial progress” in democratic reforms.

That same night, Watanabe was poring over a map in Myanmar's capital with President U Thein Sein. But the senior Japanese power broker sent a very different signal about the pace of rapprochement.

The new president told Watanabe an attempt to build the Dawei economic zone with Thailand was floundering. U Thein Sein had also just stopped a Chinese-funded hydroelectric project, after protests by people in the area whose livelihoods it threatened. That opened the door for Japan.

“[U] Thein Sein said, ‘Watanabe-san, I have something for you’. He sent his secretary out to come back with the documents. And that's how we came to Thilawa,” said Watanabe.

The Myanmar embassy in Tokyo and the president's office in Nay Pyi Taw did not respond to requests for U Thein Sein's account of the meeting with Watanabe.

When he returned to Tokyo after the October 2011 meeting, Watanabe said, he got in touch with Foreign Minister Gemba.

“I told Gemba: ‘You have to go to Myanmar on an official visit before year-end to tell them we are looking into the Thilawa deal closely’. If he didn't do that, it wouldn't have become an official government initiative, right?” said Watanabe.

To pressure Gemba to act, Watanabe says he persuaded Japan's trade minister, Yukio Edano, together with Yoshito Sengoku, an influential politician in the ruling Democratic Party of Japan, to go to Myanmar as soon as possible.

“Then I went back to the foreign ministry and told them about Edano's promise to visit Myanmar,” Watanabe said. “If the trade minister went to Myanmar before the foreign minister, Gemba would lose face.

That's why he went there in December.”

The Japanese foreign ministry and the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry declined to comment on Watanabe's account of the meetings.

#### Debt forgiveness

In March, Watanabe launched the Japan-Myanmar Association. Founding members included Nakasone and former Prime Minister Taro Aso, known for his forceful line toward China. The association also includes retired government bureaucrats and executives from trading houses Marubeni Corp and Mitsubishi Corp. It provided the impetus for a government study group to coordinate an aid package that would take shape over the summer.

Watanabe also went to work lobbying for debt forgiveness, using connections in the Ministry of Finance. On April 21, six months after his dinner in Nay Pyi Taw, the finance ministry announced a deal to waive more than 60pc of Myanmar's debt to Japan. Watanabe said he had pushed for a full

waiver but was told that was impossible because of resistance from the Paris Club of creditor nations.

People involved in arranging the package say Tokyo has agreed to waive \$3.7 billion of debt and is putting together a \$900 million bridge loan to cover Myanmar's arrears to the World Bank and the Asia Development Bank, through a consortium of Japanese banks led by Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ.

Officials at the International Monetary Fund “were very surprised at the speed of Japan's waiver”, said a Japanese government official directly involved in the talks. “They said they've never seen anything like that before.”

Japan has since struggled to persuade other donors that its approach on a debt waiver is the best way to encourage reforms in Myanmar, and has invited other parties to discuss the issue next week in Tokyo, the official said.

#### Blacklisted tycoons

In March, Tokyo politicians also got a first-hand look at one of Japan Inc's new business partners

in Myanmar: U Win Aung, a businessman blacklisted by the United States.

The tycoon visited Japan to speak at the opening of Watanabe's Japan-Myanmar Association, where he rubbed shoulders with Edano, Sengoku and Nakasone.

“Industrialisation is essential for the development of Myanmar,” U Win Aung said in his speech. “That's why I'm extremely happy that Minister Edano has shown his support” for Thilawa.

U Win Aung runs construction firm Dagon International Ltd and heads Myanmar's chamber of commerce. His firm was one of eight that won contracts to build the new capital of Nay Pyi Taw. He allegedly exported timber to China from protected areas after winning contracts because of his military ties, according to confidential US diplomatic cables published by Wikileaks.

U Win Aung did not respond to an email seeking comment. He remains on the US Treasury's “blocked persons” list, meaning Americans are prohibited from doing business with

him.

It is U Win Aung who will determine who forms the Myanmar side of the consortium to develop Thilawa.

According to one person involved in the talks, the roster is expected to include U Zaw Zaw, an industrialist with close ties to the regime whose businesses range from timber to rubber plantations and construction. He, too, is on the US Treasury blacklist. U Zaw Zaw built his fortune exporting used cars from Japan to Myanmar, and his Max Myanmar-brand trucks and banners are already visible in Thilawa.

#### Wooing Suu Kyi

Among those who aided Watanabe in the Myanmar opening is Yohei Sasakawa, who runs the Nippon Foundation, a major philanthropic organisation. The foundation was founded by Sasakawa's wealthy father, a powerful figure in postwar Japan who championed far-right political causes.

Sasakawa, who also has a longtime interest in Myanmar, joined Watanabe and Sengoku

during another round of negotiations on Thilawa with U Thein Sein in July in Nay Pyi Taw. There, Sasakawa offered to conduct charitable activities in ethnic-minority areas that had long been in conflict with the junta. He said it is essential the minorities understand that the new administration has peaceful intentions. Myanmar's conflict zones did not take part in the 2010 elections.

The broad agreement between the two countries was signed in August. The Myanmar side is now working on the details of the industrial consortium to be led by U Win Aung, while Japan is drafting infrastructure plans.

Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy said it isn't concerned about whether the proposed investment would pay political dividends for the military-backed government. Suu Kyi has thrown her support behind a bill on foreign investment now before parliament and is calling on the West to further ease sanctions.

“We are not worried about it at all,” said U Han Tha Myint, a member of the party's central executive committee. “What matters most for us is whether these investments and aids are beneficial for the people or not.”

The Japanese trade ministry wouldn't comment on the reputational risk Japanese companies may face in partnering with former junta cronies in the Thilawa project.

“The Thilawa development project started from a request from the government of Myanmar, and the two governments are considering it,” ministry spokeswoman Asagi Sakai said. “No concrete decisions have been reached on the shape of Japan-Myanmar cooperation in Thilawa.”

Back in his Tokyo office, Watanabe shrugged when asked about the risks of being an early investor in Myanmar. “If there are any companies that are worried about such things, they might as well stay in Japan,” he said. “It's their choice.” – Reuters

‘We are lucky because the US was kind enough to introduce economic sanctions – that's why Western financial firms have so far no presence in Myanmar.’



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## Commodity spotlight: pigeon pea

By U Kyaw Myint

PIGEON pea is mainly sown in Myanmar's central dry zone, which includes parts of Mandalay, southern Sagaing and Magwe regions, as well as hilly zones countrywide where its resistance to drought makes it an attractive cash crop.

Most domestic pigeon pea is consumed by Myanmar of Indian descent, Indian restaurants and by the farmers and residents in the areas where it is grown.



Traders inspect red pigeon pea at a warehouse in Yangon. Pic: Archive

Pigeon pea comes in multiple colours, such as red, white and mixed but the red variety is most valued by traders, who buy it with the intention of exporting the crop to India, by far the largest export market for Myanmar's beans and pulses crops.

Last financial year the harvested area of pigeon pea was 1.59 million acres, of which 92 percent (1.48 million acres) was sown in the central dry zone, which resulted in a total harvest amounted of about 849,000 tonnes.

Pigeon pea export volumes between 2004-05 to 2010-11 ranged from 194,000-495,000 tonnes.

Peak exports occurred during the 2008-09 year as a result of strong demand from India, where poor weather severely depleted domestic production.

However, Myanmar also faces strong competition for the Indian market from African countries such as Tanzania, Mozambique and Malawi.

In some years when international prices are low, pigeon pea is stockpiled in the hope that prices the following year will be higher.

Pigeon pea is usually sown during monsoon in May and harvested in December. Not

long after it is harvested, new supplies begin entering markets in the central dry zone region. The export season normally runs from December through November.

Exporters buy pigeon pea from wholesalers or agents in Mandalay, Monywa, Myingyan, Pakokku and Taunggyi, paying a commission of about 1 percent of value of the shipment, which is then sent to warehouses in Yangon by truck or river boat. Traders in Yangon then on-sell pigeon pea to Indian trading houses at a pre-arranged free on board (FOB) price, although some exporters sell directly to clients in Mumbai and Chennai.

Myanmar's pigeon pea exports command a price premium of about 23pc over African competitors, which is representative of its higher quality.

Prices in Yangon and the major markets in Mumbai are closely linked because traders in Yangon use every means at their disposal, including websites such as [www.commoditiescontrol.com](http://www.commoditiescontrol.com), to monitor prevailing rates in India.

Prices in 2012 started high in January but gradually declined through to late April before stabilising. In



Brokers in Mandalay. Pic: Phyto Wai Kyaw

June, prices started rising before increasing quickly in July as weak monsoon rains led many agronomists to predict that India's beans and pulses crops would be smaller than usual. In fact, India has suffered from three consecutive years of below-average monsoon rains.

According to Business Standard Information, a commodities trading website in India, the area of pulses sown by August 24 was 8.83 million hectares (21.82 million acres), compared to the five-year average of 9.93 million hectares (24.54 million acres).

As a result, demand for pigeon pea and other

beans and pulses, such as black and green gram, is increasing.

However, the different crops fluctuate in price against each from year to year: In 2011 the black gram price remained above pigeon pea but that situation reversed in 2012.

Domestically, the red pigeon pea price has been below-average for much of the year. In the first six months it was down month-on-month against 2011 but rose in July following strong demand from India.

As a result farmers in pigeon pea growing areas faced low prices at harvest time but sold off their crops

to pay off the debts they had accrued. Unfortunately, when prices increased, farmers did not have stock in hand and could not profit from the higher prices.

*U Kyaw Myint is a former civil servant, consultant with the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organisation's Market Information Service Project and consultant with the Agriculture Market Information Service (AMIS) as well as eTrade Myanmar. U Kyaw Myint will write a series of articles for The Myanmar Times to explain the movements and price fluctuations of key commodities.*

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# ADB reduces forecasts for developing Asia

By Beh Lih Yi

HONG KONG - The Asian Development Bank on October 3 slashed its growth estimates for the region's emerging economies to the lowest level since 2009, citing a slowdown in powerhouses China and India.

The bank also warned of significant risks caused by the effects of the European debt crisis and continued weakness in the United States, both of which are major export markets.

China's gross domestic product (GDP) was tipped to expand 7.7 percent this year before bouncing back to 8.1pc in 2013, but still well below the 9.3pc achieved last year, the bank said in an update to its Asian Development Outlook 2012 report.

India would see GDP growth slow to 5.6pc in 2012 before picking up to 6.7pc next year.

"Dimming global growth prospects and soft domestic demand in the region's two largest economies are slowing the pace of developing Asia's expansion," the Manila-based lender said.

The bank cut its 2012 growth forecast for developing Asia, which comprises 45 nations, from 6.9pc in April to 6.1pc - the lowest since 2009 when the region expanded 6pc.

It also revised downward the 7.3pc growth outlook for 2013 to 6.7pc. The region expanded 7.2pc in 2011.

"Developing Asia is slowing down much more than we expected," ADB chief economist Changyong Rhee told reporters in Hong Kong as the bank released the report.

"The years of two-digit growth in Asia are coming to an end," he said, but added that there was no

need for "panic".

"This is a natural adjustment to a more sustainable growth pace," he said.

The eurozone debt crisis and a looming fiscal cliff in the United States - a predicted huge cut in the budget deficit and corresponding slowdown in the economy - could have "disastrous spillovers" to the rest of the world, and remain the biggest risks for emerging Asia, he said.

Rhee added that the region - long seen as an oasis of opportunity on the gloomy global economic landscape - "must brace for a prolonged period of moderate expansion" after years of rapid growth.

He urged countries to diversify their revenue sources, paying particular attention to job-creating services. The service sector accounted for almost half the region's GDP in 2010.

East Asia was still the fastest-growing sub-region, with forecast growth of 6.5pc this year and 7.1pc in 2013.

Growth in Southeast Asia would be resilient, mainly due to Thailand's recovery from the severe flooding in 2011 and higher government spending in Malaysia and the Philippines.

"Overall we are very optimistic that Asia will maintain its growth momentum, even though we may not be able to expect two-digit growth rates as we have seen in the past two decades," Rhee said in a statement on the ADB's website.

The ADB said the projected slowdown however was likely to ease price pressures, with inflation expected to fall from 5.9pc in 2011 to 4.2pc in 2012 and 2013, if there are no spikes in commodity prices. - AFP

# Foreign energy giants line up for tender, says official



IN DEPTH with Aye Thidar Kyaw

LEADING oil and gas companies from the West and Japan, recently freed from US economic sanctions, are looking closely at Myanmar's upcoming oil and gas tender, Ministry of Energy sources said last week.

A ministry official said the date of the tender would be announced after the foreign investment law, which was recently sent back to the huttaws by President U Thein Sein with comments, is enacted.

The official added that the ministry is seeking suggestions from experts and parliamentarians on improving the transparency of the tender as well, following comments from some foreign firms on the matter during an energy summit in September.

He said the ministry would prioritise companies that work only in the oil and gas field, adding that Western firms such

as Esso (also known as Exxon Mobile), Chevron, ConocoPhillips, Statoil and Shell, as well as other EU and Japanese companies are trying to invest in Myanmar's oil and gas sector and had been talking with officials on possible investment.

A Ministry official announced in August that the tender would be

considering what share foreign partners should be allowed in blocks because US and Japanese companies have said they are only interested in the offshore blocks if they have 100pc control," he said.

A Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise official said in July 2011 that all new exploration projects - onshore and

parliament to approve the heavily debated foreign investment law when it meets again in October.

"We have set criteria for responsible foreign direct investment in Myanmar, including corporate social responsibility projects. Concerning the mining and oil and gas sectors we are looking at joining the Extractives Industry Transparency Initiative, which involves a step-by-step process of transparency in revenue processes," he said at the Asia Society in New York on September 27.

Meanwhile, Japanese and South Korean companies are already researching the possibility of building a new crude oil refinery plant in Yangon's Thanlyin township, which is also attracting interest from Asian countries such as China, India, Malaysia and Singapore.

The oil and gas sector attracts the most foreign investment of all the sectors. As of June 2012 the industry had attracted about US\$14 billion from 113 enterprises, according to the MIC data.

**'US and Japanese companies have said they are only interested in the offshore blocks if they have 100pc control.'**

called in September but in the following months the European Union and then the United States eased economic sanctions - opening up the tender to big Western firms.

Minister for Energy U Than Htay said during an energy summit in early September that the tender would be held at the "appropriate time" - likely before the end of 2012.

"Now the ministry is

offshore - will require the foreign company to take on a domestic partner. However, the ministry official said the cost of offshore exploration and production are vastly higher and few domestic companies had the capital for such work.

U Soe Thein, a minister of the President's Office and head of Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC), said he expected

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The duty statement can be obtained from the Australian Embassy, 88 Strand Road, Yangon, Myanmar, or at the Australian Embassy website: <http://www.burma.embassy.gov.au/rang/aboutus.html>

Closing date for the applications will be 4PM (Yangon time) 24 October 2012.

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Mr Kohei Watanabe during a press conference held by the Japan Chambers of Commerce and Industry in Yangon last week. Pic: Thiri Lu

# Japanese companies edge closer to broad Myanmar investment

By Aye Thidar Kyaw

JAPANESE companies are likely to enter Myanmar en-masse to do business soon, a Japanese Chambers of Commerce and Industry spokesperson said on September 28.

The comments were made by JCCI vice president U Nyan Htun following a visit by 93 Japanese JCCI members that met senior Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) and Ministry of Commerce officials in Nay Pyi Taw on September 27.

The delegation also held a business matching session with Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI) members in Yangon on September 28.

The visit was the ninth joint UMFCCI-JCCI meeting.

The two sides discussed possible investment in agriculture, the food processing industry, manufacturing, tourism and infrastructure.

Officials said Japan wants to support Myanmar in its human resource development, as well as provide technical assistance and financial support for the development of the small- and medium-sized enterprise (SME) sector.

Mr Tadashi Okamura, JCCI chairman, said there are many Japanese companies that want to come to Myanmar and the mooted easing of the United States' import sanctions last week would help to spur economic growth.

However, he said Japanese businesspeople had so far been reluctant to invest in Myanmar because of the lack of soft infrastructure, such as a clear investment policy, taxation and intellectual property laws, as well as hard infrastructure, such as reliable electricity supplies, roads and ports. "If Myanmar can solve these kinds of problems it has plenty of labour resources that will attract Japanese investors," he said.

He said that Myanmar is in a transition period but the reforms enacted in the past year have not been enough to satisfy many

potential investors but voiced confidence that the situation would improve soon.

"Although they [investors] have been reluctant in the past, they will show greater interest from now on, which will benefit SMEs," he added.

Japan stands as a relatively modest investor in Myanmar, with only US\$211 million invested in the country since 1988, compared with about \$20 billion from China, MIC statistics show.

Meanwhile, Japan and Myanmar have signed an agreement to develop the Thilawa Special Economic Zone in Yangon's Kyauktan/Thanlyin township and will begin implementing a master plan by the end of 2012, said JCCI's deputy head, Mr Kohei Watanabe. He added that the development would be a joint government-private effort that would be supported by the governments of both nations.

He added that the Japanese government will likely provide financing for the Dawei SEZ, which is being developed by Italian-Thai Development Company.

## Choosing the right independent financial adviser



PERSONAL FINANCE with Andrew Wood

MANY expats would really like to use a professional financial adviser but they are either scared by the industry reputation or have suffered a bad experience. This is often exacerbated by friends sharing their own sometimes unfortunate and exaggerated past experiences.

In reality the industry has a number of unwanted people who ruin the reputation of true professionals. This has become apparent in countries where there are no formal regulations leaving it open to the cowboys who were once used car salesmen or electrician types before they spent a week on an intensive course to become an independent financial adviser (IFA). Little wonder these relative few spoil it for the majority of serious advisers.

So, what should you look for in an IFA? How do you go about trying to find someone who is going to give you worthwhile

professional advice and top-drawer service?

The answer is not easy, and this results in many being either confused or undecided, which results in them not doing anything to manage their financial affairs. This is sad because it results in individuals not achieving lifetime financial goals that they could have met with professional help.

I also hear the sceptics amongst you saying that an IFA is capable of having a similar affect. This has some truth but if you select your adviser carefully and know that he is a professional you will not suffer from the pitfalls that exist amongst the unethical faction.

First you need to find some candidate adviser firms to qualify in order to progress the selection. This is not a difficult task. Perhaps recommendations from friends or colleagues may help. It is also worthwhile to look for advisers who are clearly stable, visible and well known. The internet is great for sorting the wheat from the chaff – and a quick Google search will show up advisers worth avoiding.

Remember also that one of

the keys to success will be the personal relationship you have with the individual consultant within the firm you choose. You must be totally comfortable with the individual who is looking after you and your money.

One of the other factors that could be relevant is the performance result you are looking for. Are you looking for a dynamic, fast moving firm that keeps up with developments or a more traditional organisation with a conservative approach?

One of the difficulties in the industry is the fact that regulations are stringent in some countries but loose or non-existent in others. A key area to consider is whether your potential adviser firm is regulated. If there are no specific local regulations, such as those laid down in places like Hong Kong, Singapore and the UK, ask whether any other regulations are voluntarily followed. A positive answer will at least give you the comfort that the firm you are talking to is serious about giving professional advice.

Ask yourself whether the adviser you are talking to is well versed in expatriate affairs

and if he or she has decent life experience. Perhaps someone with some time under their belt will be a better bet for you than a smart young person who is keen to lay out products in front of you for the sake of simply enhancing their own reputation as a skilled salesman in his firm.

Good advice is available but you need to be careful to ensure you choose it properly. One positive thing to point out is that clients don't have to live with their choice of IFA firm forever. If the relationship, quality of service or investment performance ends up falling short of expectations you are quite within your rights to change investment servicing rights to a new adviser. The exercise of getting a second opinion often proves useful and costs nothing so what are you waiting for?

Andrew Wood has been an expat in Asia for 33 years and is executive director of PFS International, helping clients in Southeast Asia. Questions to the author can be directed to PFS International on +66 2653 1971 or email to [enquiriesmyanmar@fsplatinum.com](mailto:enquiriesmyanmar@fsplatinum.com).

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# Car market cool: traders

By Aye Thidar Kyaw

THE used car market has been quiet since late September as rumours surrounding possible import policy changes continue, brokers and traders said last week.

Import permits are selling for about K8.5 million for cars bearing *balachaik* prefixes on their number plates, K7.5 million for *bagone* prefixes and from K9-9.5 million for *1-kagyi* to *8-kagyi* plates, said Hantharwaddy-based broker U Kyaw Nyunt.

There are two methods that consumers can use to import a newer vehicle: the first being the overage car import program (started in September 2011) whereby the importer can bring in a car made from 1996-2006. Under the second program, people with foreign currency bank accounts can import a 2007-2010 model vehicle, with significant tax reductions available to those who import a car with an engine 1350 cubic centimetres in capacity or smaller.

"Car trading is cool at both sales centres and Hantharwaddy - people are waiting to see if Customs duties will be cut for imports from ASEAN," he said.

According to the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA) system, importers are only charged 5 percent Custom's duty on imported vehicles, compared with the 30-40pc levied through the government's overage car import substitution program.

According to Yangon Region's Road Transport Administration Department (RTAD), there are about 4200 *balachaik*-plated cars on the road, and about 2500

have already been accepted for import substitution.

After the department has finished accepting *balachaik* cars the import substitution program will begin accepting *la-*, *tha-* and *ah-* prefix plates before moving onto *1-kagyi*.

U Kyaw Nyunt said popular models, such as Toyota Probox and Vitz and Honda Fit, with engines 1350cc or less in capacity, are selling for between K10 million and K13 million. However, 2010 models are selling for up to K18.5 million.

He added that buyers had also lost interest in cars with larger engines, such as Toyota Mark II sedans. Prices have fallen to K20 million for 2004-05 model cars, he said.

U Tun Aye, a spokesperson for Shwe Yamon car sale centre, said that people who want to buy late model cars face the challenge of opening banks accounts, securing letters of credit and order the vehicle from an import company. As a result, prices are not coming down, he said.

He added that even if cars made in ASEAN members such as Malaysia or Thailand, both of which have home-grown automobile sectors, they would have to compete in quality with Japanese imports.

A Ministry of Commerce official said that even though the ministry announced on its website several months ago that importers could use the ATIGA system, no company had yet filed import applications.

"People are only interested in Japanese cars and the sales centres already have agreements with Japanese companies already," he said.

# Fish farmers swallow monsoon losses

By Myat Nyein Aye

CARP farmers hit by heavy flooding in the Ayeyarwady delta have been forced to accept heavy costs this year, the general secretary of the Myanmar Fisheries Federation said during a weekly meeting on October 2.

"Many ponds were flooded during heavy monsoon rains and the fish escaped," he said. "But lots of farmers have restocked their ponds with fingerlings, which of course cost them money at a time when they don't have a lot of money."

"Others have had to halt their businesses because they could not afford to keep running," he added.

However, he said the farmers that had been able to restock might now benefit from rising prices as a result of the decreased production.

U Mya Thein, the owner of a fish farm in Ayeyarwady Region's Maubin township, said his company had been forced to spend about 50 percent more



A dock worker unloads carp in Yangon recently. Pic: Kaung Htet

on fish stocks this year.

"We are not going to reduce our production this year but we lost about 100,000 fish during the flooding, and had to spend about K15 million to buy more," he said.

"Normally we spend about K30 million a year to buy fish. But I know that some farmers did not have enough

money to buy more fingerlings and have stopped operating.

"I'm quite sure this means overall production will be reduced," he said.

Daw Toe Nanda Tin, a member of the Myanmar Fisheries Product Processors and Exporters Association, confirmed that carp (called *rohu* locally) prices are rising - but only for larger fish.

She said fish weighing from 2-3 kilograms had increased by K50 a viss (1.6 kilograms or 3.6 pounds) to K2100 in a week, while 3-4kg fish are selling for K2200, up from K2150 last week.

Fish weighing 4-5kg increased to K2300 a viss, up from K2250 last week, she said. U Aye Lwin, the owner of Fish Lake in Maubin township, said many farmers were expecting to reduce their yields by 15-30 percent.

"In a good year farmers harvest 3000 fish per acre but I'm only going to get about 1000 this year because we lost so many fish during monsoon floods. And feed prices have also increased by up to 40pc this year to K5600-6000 a viss, up from K3500 last year," he said.

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## FMI residents body confronts developer

By Noe Noe Aung

A RESIDENTS association at FMI City held a press conference last week to object to the developer raising maintenance fees, removing cash from a maintenance fund and redeveloping public space into new housing.

U Thein Aung, a spokesperson for the FMI City House Owners Association, said the residents wanted to know, in part, how monthly maintenance fees are spent.

"We don't want to complain about the amount of money the developer is collecting," said U Thein Aung. "As a house owner who pays this monthly fee, I think I deserve to know why the fee has been raised and how the money is being spent."

"The fee was doubled on July 23 to K9200 for 4800-square-foot properties. It's a reasonable fee but we object to the fee doubling without any consultation with house owners."

"We were just informed via letter that the fee would be increased," he added.

He added that FMI is also trying to withdraw funds from a fund that was established to repair damaged houses and maintain the development.

U Khin Maung Win, the



Workers perform roadworks at FMI Housing in Hlaing Tharyar township last week. Pic: Boothee

association's secretary, said that many home owners who moved to the development in 2001 discovered flaws with the construction of their houses that included leaking or collapsed roofs.

The sinking fund was mandated by the Department of Human Settlement and Housing Development (DHSHD) to cover future repairs.

"The developer has to inform DHSHD when a project is finished. At that time, the housing association had to take over responsibility for maintaining the project

and DHSHD had instructed house owners to form an association for this purpose.

"The sinking fund was formed to support the activities of the association, which means the developer should not be allowed to withdraw money from the account with the association's permission - it's a part of the contract," he added.

"Many house owners have complained about the quality of construction work, so FMI chairman U Thein Wai discussed the issue with us and raised K30 million as a fund placed in a joint-

account at Yoma Bank in September 2001.

"When he got 85 percent of maintenance fees from house owners, he added another K20 million later. With the interest accrued over that time the balance is K112.3 million, although the company is trying to withdraw that money," U Khin Maung Win said.

He said the management office announced on September 7 that the funds would be withdrawn from the joint account because the monthly maintenance fees

were insufficient to cover the whole development.

"They [FMI] doubled the maintenance fee in July and there are 1600 families living in the development who are paying the fee. In September, FMI said it's not sufficient for the whole development but did not explain why."

"We sent an objection that day but have not received any reply as yet," U Khin Maung Win said.

U Sein Hlaing, the association's president, said another complaint residents have lodged is that the developer has redeveloped

common-use recreational spaces as housing plots.

"The company told buyers that FMI City would include public parks, nurseries, a fire station and markets, just like a small city. And except for the fire station, the other amenities had existed. But starting from several months ago the developer pulled down the park and dug up the nursery to develop new houses."

"Many residents are upset to see these places destroyed, especially the park," U Khin Maung Win said.

"We complained to the Yangon Region government and the Ministry of Construction, both of which instructed FMI to rebuild the park but that has not happened yet," he added.

Daw Lai Lai Win, an FMI director, told *The Myanmar Times* on September 27 that the company could not approve the comments made by the housing board.

"I would say that their statements [the housing board] do not represent the thoughts of all house owners at FMI City, just the thoughts of a small group," she said.

"As a company we are working with the authorities to solve these problems. After we can solve this issue, everybody will know the truth," she added.

## Tokyo Station rooftop domes cap \$645m redevelopment

TOKYO - Tokyo Station, the main hub for the city's business district, unveiled its new rooftop domes on October 1, marking the completion of a 50 billion yen (US\$645 million) refit for the nearly 100-year-old building.

The two domes, which return the station to how it looked before damage in World War II, were added during more than five years of construction. The work also included expanding the station's hotel, adding a new department store annex, and replacing 10,000 pine stakes used to secure foundations against earthquakes.

"The station will be the face of Tokyo," station manager Yasuyoshi Umehara said during a press tour.

Train operator and station owner East Japan Railway Co refitted the red-brick building in Tokyo's Marunouchi district as part of a wider push to boost retail sales. The station, the city's main bullet-train hub, handles about 380,000 mainline train passengers a day, including workers at the headquarters of Japan's biggest banks and tourists visiting the nearby Imperial Palace. Trains also link the station with Narita airport.

"JR East knows they have a good location," said Masayuki Kubota, who oversees the equivalent of \$1.9 billion in assets at Daiwa SB Investments Ltd. "They are making progress in their goal of becoming a conglomerate in lifestyle, transportation and finance."

The operator cancelled a ceremony for the unveiling of the domes scheduled for October 1 because of typhoon Jelawat.

The number of rooms at the JR East-owned Tokyo Station Hotel, which reopened October 3, has more than doubled to 150 following a refit that included rebuilding a third floor and the construction of two new underground floors. There are 10 restaurants and cafes, serving Japanese, French, Italian and Chinese food, along with three banquet rooms.

The property, an official hotel for an International Monetary Fund meeting this week, charges from 30,030 yen (\$383) a night, according to its website. Its Royal

Suite costs at least 808,500 yen (\$10,333). The hotel already has several bookings for the most expensive suite, Fuminori Kaneda, executive director of operations, told reporters on September 24.

Daimaru Inc will expand its department store at the station with the opening of the annex on October 5. It will be housed in a 13-storey building with 13,800 square metres (148,500 square feet) of retail space.

Work in the main station included the addition of dozens of shops and restaurants, as well as new ticket and tourist information counters. Passengers will have free Wi-Fi access.

The domes, at the northern and southern ends of the building, were restored to their original 1914 design. On the inside, they are painted egg-yolk yellow with reliefs of the 12 animals of the Chinese zodiac. The original structures were replaced by angled roofs after World War II.

"The symmetry is beautiful," said Noriko Kobayashi, 36, a finance-industry worker, who was taking photos of the station September 28. "Its oldness among all these modern buildings lends a certain weight to it."

The 335-metre-long station, designated as an important cultural property, was designed by Kingo Tatsuno, who also designed the Bank of Japan building, according to Japan's National Diet Library. The station withstood the Great Kanto Earthquake in 1923, which destroyed about 293,000 structures.

JR East will light up the station's exterior at night to help attract tourists.

The railroad plans to increase the share of revenue it gets from shops, hotels and office buildings to almost 40 percent by the year ending March 2019 from 30pc in the year ended March 2011. Tobu Railway Co. also completed the world's tallest tower in Tokyo this year, while another train operator, Tokyu Corp, has opened a 34-storey entertainment complex.

"The station is from a period in Japan's history when there was a heightened sense of purpose," JR East president Tetsuro Tomita. "We hope it will lift Japan's spirits and those of JR East." - *Bloomberg News*

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## In Dubai, signs of a recovery

By Ali Khalil

DUBAI – Dubai's property sector, which went into free fall when the global financial crisis hit, might be on a path to recovery, with prices starting to bottom out and a few developers daring to roll out new projects.

At the annual Cityscape Global show, which served over years of property frenzy as a launch pad for grandiose projects, a handful of developers displayed scale models for seaside and desert developments to test the appetite of the market.

The three-day international show began on October 2.

"We have seen demand increasing since the beginning of 2012," said Mohammed al-Khayat, commercial director at Meydan Group, owned by Dubai ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, as he unveiled proposed new projects.

Hadaeq (Gardens of) Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid is planned to cover about 5.09 million square metres (54.8 million square feet) and is slated to feature neighbourhoods such as "those found in the English and French countryside and the Japanese gardens of the East", the company boasted in a statement.

Another of Meydan's projects is the Meydan Tower, a new "vertical community" with a combination of offices, retail, serviced residential units and a hotel.

But the proposals remain at a concept stage.

The group, which built the emirate's grandiose new Meydan Racecourse as part of its Meydan City in the middle of the Gulf emirate's desert, sold 40 percent of 63 plots for signature villas in less than a year recently, Khayat said.

"The market is picking up ... There is a heavy traffic of tourists. Many are from Saudi Arabia," he said, adding that many tourists with time decide to buy secondary property in Dubai.

The increase in visitors could be behind a new seaside retail project that broke ground recently and is being built by Meraas, another developer owned by Dubai's ruler.

When the global financial crisis hit Dubai in 2009, bringing to a grinding halt work on many projects, Meraas shelved a number of larger-than-life projects announced shortly beforehand.

Since 2009, Dubai's regulatory authority RERA has cancelled more than 200 projects and imposed new rules to control supply as the sector still struggles to reduce vacancy rates.

This time round, Meraas revealed its plan for The Beach retail centre that will occupy the last empty plot in the upmarket district known as The Walk, which sits on the shores of the Gulf.

Property prices in the glitzy emirate took severe

beating when the crisis hit, shedding more than half of their peak values registered in mid 2008 after five years of breakneck-speed growth fuelled by speculative investments.

But investors are back on the look and have pulled prices up in different areas.

There is also talk around town that people escaping Arab Spring countries, mainly Egypt and Syria, have pushed prices up by choosing to move to the stable emirate.

"We do see a recovery. It is a selective or partial recovery and certainly not across the market," said Craig Plumb, head of Middle East and North Africa research at Jones Lang LaSalle property services firm.

He said demand for offices remains stagnant, while the residential, retail and hotel sectors have bottomed out and are in the recovery stage. He warned, however, that recovery depends on the quality of assets and cannot necessarily be expected across board.

"It is not for every asset, but for the best-quality projects in each of those classes," he said.

The company said the buying prices of apartment units in prime buildings increased by 4pc in the third quarter of 2012 from a year earlier, while rental rates were up 5pc.

But prices of villas jumped 23pc year-on-year and are expected to continue their upward trend in prime areas, it said in a report. Reports said that prices of villas stand now at their 2007 levels.

Sales are concentrated in ready units, contrary to the situation before the crisis, when off-plan property was selling briskly on the day of launch.

High-end signature projects appear to be an exception and already attracting investors.

Last month, the giant developer Emaar launched a new Address hotel, featuring also residential apartments. It is in Downtown Dubai, where the world's tallest tower, Burj Khalifa, and one of the world's largest shopping centres, Dubai Mall, are located.

The units were sold out in one day.

But Plumb warned developers against becoming overly optimistic about recovery and launching projects that are not economically feasible.

"There is always a room for new projects, but we are a bit concerned that people are getting carried away. There is still a lot of supply in the system and it is still coming on. I think a new project has to be very well targeted at a particular niche," he said.

"We do hope they won't start until they have about 60pc pre-sales," he said, speaking of projects announced at Cityscape.

He said hoped that "lessons of the previous boom have been learnt". – AFP



Shanghai's iconic 1930s-era racing club building in Shanghai seen on September 27. Pic: AFP

## Historic Shanghai building faces an uncertain future

By Bill Savadove

SHANGHAI – Shanghai's 1930s-era racing club building, a symbol of the city's heady years before communist party rule, is facing an uncertain future as its current tenant prepares to move out.

The Shanghai Art Museum has occupied the clubhouse of the Shanghai Race Club for the past 12 years but will relocate in December as it is absorbed into the new China Art Museum, which opened on October 1.

In its heyday, the building was a centre of the cosmopolitan city's social life and its love of sport and gambling, even after Japan invaded in 1937.

The Communists took power in 1949 and from the 1950s until the 1990s the building remained largely

untouched while it was used as Shanghai's history museum and library.

But the art museum then renovated the building, leaving few traces of its original purpose, except for the metal horse heads on its stairway railing.

Shanghai has cleared huge tracts of land in its race for development, but some buildings have survived for government, residential or commercial use as the city awakens to the value of conservation and potential for profit.

A government official said future use of the building, which has been protected as a historical landmark since 1989, was still under debate.

"It has not been decided yet. The city is still studying and discussing it," said Li Lei, executive director of the Shanghai Art Museum.

Historical conservation supporters say the building will certainly survive, but they worry its character could be damaged.

"I have serious reservations about what will become of that fine old building," said Tess Johnston, a historian and writer who featured the clubhouse in her book *A Last Look – Western Architecture in Old Shanghai*.

"But maybe they will realise that it is of more value if not trashed in another renovation."

The clubhouse, which opened in 1934, was known for its eight-storey-high clocktower overlooking the race course on major commercial street Bubbling Well Road, now known as Nanjing Road.

"It was one of the most revered buildings in the whole city for what it stood

for," said Peter Hibbard, historian and author of *The Bund Shanghai: China Faces West*.

"Racing was something that was very dear to the hearts of the British and Chinese communities."

Former Shanghai resident Ellis Jacob recalled going to the clubhouse in the early 1940s because his father owned four horses that he raced at the track – Tattle Tale, Chatterbox, Gossip and The Sneak.

"He spent a lot of time there," Jacob said. "The halls were spotlessly clean, with white walls, and the halls were long, with many doors housing the various groups there."

The private club once had bowling alleys and tennis courts, Turkish baths, a wood-panelled breakfast room and a separate staircase for women. – AFP

## British home prices likely to stagnate

LONDON – British house prices fell in September and will at best stagnate over the next year as a weak labour market undermines confidence, Nationwide Building Society said on October 2.

The average cost of a home dropped 0.4 percent from August, the Swindon, England-based lender said in a statement. From a year earlier, values fell 1.4pc to an average 163,964 pounds (US\$264,700). Separately, construction output fell for a second month in September, the first back-to-back contraction in almost three years.

The data adds to evidence of an uneven recovery after reports last week showed lending fell in August and manufacturing shrank in September. A report on October 3 showed growth in services probably slowed last month and the Bank of England is seen maintaining its bond-purchase plan a

day later as policymakers assess the outlook for the British economy and the euro-area debt crisis.

"Given the fragile nature of the economy, the huge squeeze on real incomes and offsetting impact of ultra-low interest rates, this gradual downward drift in house prices makes sense," Ed Stansfield, an economist at Capital Economics in London, said in a research note. "Boosting confidence will take a much stronger growth in the economy and real incomes, both of which seem some way off."

Bank of England markets director Paul Fisher said last week that third-quarter economic growth will be "very strong." Still, that will partly reflect a rebound from the impact of an extra public holiday on gross domestic product in the second quarter. The British Chambers of Commerce said on October 2 that "UK economic

performance remains weak and inadequate".

The Nationwide data showed that house prices fell 0.5pc in the third quarter compared with the previous three months. Property research company Hometrack Ltd on October 1 said home values declined for a third month in September, slipping 0.1pc.

Nationwide chief economist Robert Gardner said he expects a gradual economic recovery in the coming 12 months, with house prices "remaining relatively flat or declining only modestly over the same period".

"Labour-market developments will remain of paramount importance," he said. "There are grounds for caution on this front, as the unusual combination of rising employment and declining economic activity that was evident in the first half of 2012 is unlikely to be sustained." – Bloomberg News

## ADB to help MPT to draft telecoms by-laws: official

By Htoo Aung

MYANMA Posts and Telecommunications will work with the Asian Development Bank to write by-laws to govern the telecoms sector, the Minister for Communications, Posts and Telegraphs said last week.

Minister U Thein Tun made the comments at the start of the ASEAN Telecommunications and IT Senior Officials and Telecommunications Regulators' Council leaders retreat in Bagan on October 1.

"As we transform our telecoms sector we are encouraging more private sector participation," he said. "Very soon, we will have more telecom operators competing. As an initial step for the reform process, we have sent out an invitation for consultancy to assist us in preparing, inviting, evaluating and ... selecting the tender. The consultancy may also assist us in the business model for the current government operator, MPT.

"We are already at the final stage of selection for the consultant. Any transformation of any sector needs to be harmonised with regulatory sequencing. For this, our new telecommunications law, which has already been reviewed by the Attorney General Office and the President's Legal Advisory Committee after discussion in the cabinet, will be tabled at the next parliament session," he said.

"By-laws must be promulgated within 90 days but we can't wait that long so we will publicise it within two weeks with ADB's cooperation," he said.

U Thein Tun said the International Telecommunication Union had warned him that regional experience showed that Myanmar would face difficulties in privatising its telecoms sector if it failed to lay down strong legislation before.

Interest from international companies in Myanmar's telecoms sector is strong, with upwards of 50 companies vying for the four licences that will reportedly be issued by MPT.

U Kyaw Aung, a 45-year-old businessman who lives in Hlaing township, said MPT had held a monopoly on telecoms services for too long and privatising the sector would lower costs for consumers - particularly for mobile phone SIM cards, which remain hugely expensive compared with neighbouring nations.

# Protests in the Philippines as cybercrime law takes effect

MANILA - The Philippine government faced a barrage of internet protests on October 3 as a cybercrime law went into effect that could see people given long jail terms for posting defamatory comments online.

Major news outlets, bloggers, rights activists and other critics turned their social media profile pages black to express their outrage over the law, which also allows the government to close down websites without a warrant.

Thousand of furious tweets were posted on Twitter, with the hashtag #notocybercrimelaw becoming the top trend on the microblogging site in the Philippines on October 3, said two trend mapping websites.

"They signed and implemented this law because government officials can't handle criticism," said one tweet from @PmlFlrs.

Senator Teofisto Guingona, one of the few members of parliament who opposed the bill that President Benigno Aquino signed into law last month, also stepped up his campaign to have it overturned.

"The implementation of the law ... will take back our citizens to the Dark Ages where freedom of speech and expression were not recognised," he said.

Many provisions of the cybercrime law aim to fight a



Customers at an internet cafe look at Facebook profiles that have turned black as part in Manila on October 3. Pic: AFP

range of online crimes not deemed controversial, such as fraud, identity theft, spamming and child pornography.

However, one provision makes any libellous comments posted online a criminal offence, with the penalty of up to 12 years in jail much tougher than for traditional media.

The Department of Justice also has the power to close down websites and monitor online

activities, such as email or messaging, without a warrant.

The Philippines has one of Asia's most vibrant democracies. But critics say the law echoes tactics to silence and monitor critics used by dictator Ferdinand Marcos when he imposed martial law in the 1970s.

Aquino's spokespeople have repeatedly defended the law as necessary to fight cybercrime, while insisting his administration

would uphold freedom of speech online.

But amid the backlash, some of the politicians who voted for the bill said they were willing to get rid of the controversial provisions.

"We should be humble enough to admit we made a mistake and amend the law," said Congressman Sonny Angara, whose father, Senator Edgardo Angara, wrote the bill. -AFP

## SIMs for sale by instalment in rural areas, says MPT

MYANMA Posts and Telecommunication started selling mobile telephones in rural areas via instalment starting October 1, an official from the Telecommunications and Postal Training Centre told *The Myanmar Times* last week.

U Kyaw Soe, head of the centre said: "I hope it [selling mobile phones in rural areas] would directly help to improve the socio-economic situation of rural people."

He added that buyers would be required to pay a K40,000 downpayment and K10,000 a month in instalments.

U Kyaw Tint, a Pyinmana township administrator, said: "We held a meeting with ward and village administrators on October

2 and explained to them the plan, and made lists of applicants. But we did not take any money - applicants must pay the money into banks," he said.

U Ko Ko, administrator for Kan Oo village in Mandalay Region, said officials told them the phones would be available within 10 days.

And while people who attended the meeting welcomed the news that they would be able to buy phones by instalment, several said the calling charges are too high.

U Hla Kyaw, a resident of Kan Oo village, said few people could afford the charges.

"Our incomes are quite low and K50 a minute is a lot of money for us. We would like

the charges to be reduced," he said.

U Kyaw Soe said buyers would be given SIM cards after they paid the downpayment but would not be given ownership documents until all instalments have been paid. Those who fail to pay their fees in a timely manner will have the line blocked, he said.

He added that the applicant had to finalise payment themselves and could not sell it to somebody else before all payments had been made.

U Kyaw Soe said the centre would pay 2 percent of each fee to the Township, Ward and Village Administration Office to start a development and supervisory fund.

- Win Ko Ko Latt

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## Turkey fires back at Syrian targets

AKCAKALE, Turkey – Turkey launched retaliatory strikes on Syrian targets and lawmakers authorised further military action on October 4, but Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said it was not a mandate for war.

Officials said Syria had apologised for the shelling that killed five Turkish nationals the previous day in the border town of Akcakale, sending tensions soaring, and had pledged that such an incident would not happen again.

Parliament met behind closed doors to discuss new military options. Erdogan said there was no intention of going to war with Syria, though he insisted that his nation's borders and citizens would be defended.

"No country should dare test our determination on that," he said, after observers indicated that several Syrian troops died in Turkey's military response on October 4.

The UN Security Council condemned Syria "in the strongest terms" for its deadly shelling of Turkey and UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urged "maximum restraint."

In Ankara, parliament's emergency session agreed to the government's request to authorise military operations inside Syria, with a year-long mandate receiving 320 votes in the

**'The Syrian regime is playing a dangerous game.'**

550-seat chamber.

Close Damascus ally, Russia, said Syria had acknowledged the deadly shelling was "a tragic accident."

"The Syrian regime is playing a dangerous game," said Riad Kahwaji, who heads the Dubai-based Institute for Near East and Gulf Military Analysis, suggesting that the flare-up could tip events in favour of

the rebels fighting to bring down President Bashar al-Assad's regime.

"Turkey can considerably change the balance of power in favour of the rebels, even (if) it doesn't deploy troops into Syria."

Ankara was infuriated by the attack in which a mother and her three children were among the five civilians killed.

The shell blasts marked the first time that Turkish citizens had been killed by Syrian fire since the uprising against Assad's regime began in March 2011.

Syrian soldiers were killed in the Turkish riposte, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights watchdog said, without giving exact figures.

In Syria, clashes between the army and rebels left at least 21 members of the regime's elite Republican Guards unit dead in Damascus province, the Syrian Observatory said.

– AFP



It has quills like a porcupine, a parrot-like beak and fangs like a vampire and it's a newly identified species of plant-eating dinosaur. The tiny creature, which lived about 200 million years ago, measured less than 61 centimetres long and weighed less than a house cat. Its finding as a new species, named *Pegomastax africanus*, was reported on October 3 in the online journal *ZooKeys* by Paul Sereno, a paleontologist and dinosaur specialist at the University of Chicago. Pic: AFP/University of Chicago

## Malaysia probes 130,000-guest wedding

KUALA LUMPUR – Malaysia's anti-graft body is investigating the wedding of a top state official's son – attended by about 130,000 people – after opposition politicians questioned the celebration's funding.

The wedding on September 30 of Ridhwan Ali, 26, eldest son of Ali Rustam, chief minister of the southern state of Malacca, reportedly lasted eight hours and made it into the *Malaysia Book of Records* for its massive turnout.

Opposition politicians have since

questioned whether state funds were used for the event, and several lodged a report with the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission.

A senior commission official confirmed to AFP on October 5 that an investigation had been launched.

"(The opposition) should not be jealous of the huge crowd... The wedding was my own family arrangement and has nothing to do with the state government," Ali was quoted as saying by *The Star* daily newspaper.

– AFP

## Guessing game starts for the Nobel prizes

STOCKHOLM – The winners of the 2012 Nobel Prizes will be announced this week, with no clear frontrunners emerging for the much-talked about peace and literature prizes.

Chinese author Mo Yan and Japan's Haruki Murakami shared the top spots last week on two Swedish betting sites for the literature prize, while Coptic Christian Maggie Gobran of Egypt, who helps the poor in Cairo's slums, was favoured for the peace prize.

The medicine prize will be announced on October 8, followed on successive days by the prizes for physics and chemistry, with the peace prize on October 12 and the economics prize on October 15. The literature prize is tentatively due to be announced on October 11.

The creation of the prizes was ordered in the will of inventor and scholar Alfred Nobel (1833-1896), who made a fortune from inventing dynamite in 1866.

His 1895 testament stipulated his fortune be placed in a fund destined to honour "those who, during the preceding year, shall have conferred the greatest benefit on mankind."

He died a year later in San Remo, Italy.

He decreed that most of his estate should be invested in "safe securities," and as a result, some 31.5 million Swedish kronor, the equivalent today of about 1.5 billion Swedish

kronor (US\$225 million) was used to create the Nobel Foundation.

Nobel's will specified that the prizes should be divided into five equal parts, for the physics, chemistry, medicine, literature and peace prizes.

But when Nobel died childless and the will was read, the contents surprised many, including his own family. The document was challenged by two nephews who tried to have it declared null and void, and even King Oscar II of Sweden opposed Nobel's wishes, saying they were not "patriotic minded."

Adding to the confusion, Nobel had not appointed an executor for the will, nor had he consulted the various institutions he had assigned to award the prizes to ensure that they were willing to undertake the task.

After more than three years of haggling, the Nobel Foundation was created to manage the capital in Nobel's estate and the five institutions agreed to award the prizes as Nobel had wished.

Since 1901, the year the first Nobel prizes were awarded, the Foundation has funded the prestigious awards created by their namesake.

The Nobel Prize for Economics, the only award not included in Nobel's will, was funded by the Swedish Central Bank, which created the prize at its tercentenary in 1968. It was first awarded in 1969. – AFP

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# Tycoon triumphs in Georgia

TBILISI - Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili's party on October 3 rejected calls for him to resign following the stunning opposition election victory that will transform the country's political landscape.

The victory of the Georgian Dream coalition of billionaire Bidzina Ivanishvili in parliamentary elections on October 1 will give Georgia a new government and may cool tensions with its top foe Russia, which cautiously welcomed the result.

Saakashvili had gracefully admitted to a surprise defeat in the election and promised to facilitate the formation of the next government.

But the opposition leader, who may himself become prime minister, called on the president to resign immediately - although he later retracted the demand which Saakashvili's party warned could cause confrontation.

Despite his party's defeat, Saakashvili is due to remain in office until presidential polls in a year.

Ivanishvili on October 3 offered dialogue with Saakashvili and said that



**Bidzina Ivanishvili**  
Georgian billionaire and possible future prime minister

Aged 56. Married with 4 children



<b>1956</b>	Born to poor family in central Georgia	<b>March 2012</b>	Is listed by Forbes as the 153rd richest person on the planet
<b>1982</b>	Obtains PhD in economics from Moscow State University	<b>April 2012</b>	Creates Georgian Dream, a coalition of opposition parties
<b>1990s</b>	Co-founds Russian Credit Bank. Amasses a fortune in mining, metallurgy, pharmacy, real estate and farming in Russia's post-Soviet chaos	<b>June 2012</b>	Is fined 90 million dollars for alleged vote buying
<b>Oct 2011</b>	Is stripped of his Georgian nationality after announcing plan to enter politics	<b>Oct 1 2012</b>	Georgian Dream wins parliamentary elections. Ivanishvili seeks post of prime minister

he was not issuing any "political ultimatums".

"We are ready for constructive relationships with representatives of the current authorities, including with the incumbent president," he said in a statement.

Georgia's arch foe Russia, which has refused to speak to Saakashvili since the brief war between the two countries in 2008, said it hoped the opposition win would help to restore

diplomatic relations.

Unlike the president, Ivanishvili has personal ties to Russia, where he made his colossal fortune in the 1990s and resided until 2003.

He has promised to maintain Georgia's pro-Western orientation and continue with its bid to join NATO but also to mend ties with Russia.

But the next government is unlikely to stop calling for the return of two Georgian breakaway regions, Abkhazia

and South Ossetia, where thousands of Russian troops have been stationed since Moscow recognised the rebel provinces as independent states after the war.

Ivanishvili also said on October 3 his first foreign visit would be to Washington, which he called Georgia's "main partner and friend".

The election, which set the scene for a rare peaceful transfer of power in the former Soviet Union, was described as an "important step" for Western-backed Georgia's fledgling democracy by international election observers.

Ivanishvili says he intends to become prime minister, a role that will take on wide-ranging new powers when the presidency's remit is reduced in constitutional changes that go into force after Saakashvili steps down in 2013.

But under the constitution, he will have to be nominated for the role by his rival Saakashvili whose United National Movement party has ruled since the 2003 "Rose Revolution" but which will now go into opposition.

# Vatican police tell trial of pope's former butler about seized documents

VATICAN CITY - Vatican police testifying on October 3 at the trial of Pope Benedict XVI's former butler said they had found documents in code, research on spying and papers the pope had marked "Destroy" in his apartment.

More than 1000 documents - including copies and originals - out of 82 boxes of material seized from Paolo Gabriele's flat were considered relevant to the investigation into what has been dubbed the "Vatileaks" scandal.

The documents were many more than have been leaked and included some signed by the pope, along with letters from cardinals and politicians, officers said.

Gabriele, 46, is being tried for aggravated theft and faces up to four years in prison for allegedly leaking confidential documents that revealed claims of fraud and intrigue at the heart of the Catholic Church.

Vatican spokesman Federico Lombardi said a verdict in the trial could be delivered on October 6 after prosecution and defence make their closing arguments and Gabriele is given a chance to make a final statement.

"There are more than 1000 documents of interest including both photocopies and originals and some documents with the signature of the Holy Father," said inspector Silvano Carli, one of four Vatican gendarmes who testified on October 3.

"There were papers where the Holy Father had written 'Destroy' in German," said Stefano De Santis, one of the gendarmes who took part in the search. De Santis said the search on May 23 took around eight hours and told the court: "There were many more documents than were published in the book," referring to a book revealing Gabriele's alleged leaks published in May.

"There were also documents in code," he said.

Judge Giuseppe Dalla Torre explained to the court that the code was likely one that is traditionally used in communications by the Secretariat of State, the main administrative body of the global Catholic Church.

"There were dozens and dozens of documents about the Holy Father, about the Secretariat of State and about the other Congregations, about the total privacy and family life of the Holy Father," De Santis added.

"There were letters from cardinals making proposals and asking for advice or responses from the pope to the cardinals," he said.

"All these documents were mixed in with everything else, they were hidden."

The trial is taking place under laws that date to the late 19th century in an area of the Vatican that is off limits to the millions of tourists who visit the world's smallest state every year.

On October 2, Gabriele told judges that he was innocent of theft but admitted to being guilty of abusing Benedict's trust.

He had acted because he believed the pope was being "manipulated."

"Inevitably my role allowed me to see many situations from both sides - from what the people thought and what the powers that be thought," he said.

"What really shocked me was when I would sit down for lunch with the Holy Father and sometimes the pope asked about things that he should have been informed on," he said, adding: "I was the layman closest to the Holy Father."

"It was then that I became firmly convinced of how easy it was to manipulate a person with such enormous powers," Gabriele told the court.

Vatican watchers say Gabriele is expected to receive a pardon if convicted. - AFP

# Prosecutors drop Strauss-Kahn rape probe

LILLE, France - French prosecutors on October 2 dropped a probe into whether former IMF chief Dominique Strauss-Kahn took part in a gang rape in the United States, but kept open another one into alleged pimping.

Strauss-Kahn had denied any criminal wrongdoing in

the incidents investigated, which involved evenings with prostitutes and took place in Washington in late 2010 while he was still International Monetary Fund boss.

The Belgian woman who was allegedly raped wrote to French police in August to say she had consented to sex

acts and was not pressing any charges, the prosecutor's office in Lille said.

It added in a statement that as no offence had been committed, a preliminary investigation was being shelved.

Another hearing in the pimping investigation is due at the end of November

but Strauss-Kahn's lawyer, Henri Leclerc, said he was confident his client would ultimately be cleared of any wrongdoing.

Strauss-Kahn's career collapsed spectacularly after his arrest last year on accusations he sexually assaulted a New York hotel maid. - AFP

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## Briefs

**Drone strike kills five in Yemen**

ADEN, Oct 4, 2012 (AFP) - A drone air strike blasted two cars carrying suspected al-Qaeda gunmen in the southern Yemeni province of Shabwa on October 4, killing five of them, a witness said.

"Five militants belonging to Ansar Al-Sharia (Partisans of Islamic Law) were killed in a drone strike" in Shabwa, said Abdulmajid al-Awlaqi, a tribal chief.

The US is the only country that has drones in the region and in recent months has carried out strikes on al-Qaeda targets in the south and east of Yemen.

**Israeli FM predicts 'Persian Spring'**

JERUSALEM - Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman said on October 4 he believes "the Arab Spring will be followed by a Persian Spring," with international sanctions against Iran leading to renewed domestic unrest.

His remarks came a day after scuffles broke out in central Tehran in the first sign of unrest over Iran's plunging currency.

"The Arab Spring will be followed by a Persian Spring, instability is spreading in Iran, and not just in Tehran," Lieberman told Israeli military radio.

**Another NATO term for Rasmussen**

BRUSSELS - NATO chief Anders Fogh Rasmussen on October 4 won a fifth year at the helm of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, leaving him in place to help oversee a difficult withdrawal from Afghanistan.

"Following a process of consultations, Allies approved today Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen's fifth year in office, thus extending his mandate until July 31st 2014," the alliance said in a statement.

Rasmussen, 59, served as Danish prime minister from 2001-09 and is NATO's 12th secretary-general.

**Taj Mahal replica planned in Dubai**

DUBAI - A US\$1 billion replica of India's world-famous Taj Mahal, four times the size of the original, will be built in Dubai as a venue for luxury weddings, one of its developers said on October 4.

The copy, to be known as the Taj Arabia, is expected to take two years to build.

"Currently Dubai is not regarded as a wedding destination. People go to Bali and other exotic places to marry. Now they will come to Taj Arabia," Arun Mehra, chairman of sub-developers Link Global Group, told *Gulf News*. - AFP

# Feisty Romney has Obama reeling

WASHINGTON - Mitt Romney regained momentum in the first debate by aggressively standing up to Barack Obama, analysts said, but it remains to be seen how much he can budge the needle in the White House race.

Obama spoke longer during the 90-minute showdown in Denver on October 3, but the Republican challenger landed more blows against an often-subdued president in their first of three debates ahead of the November 6 vote.

"I don't think there's any doubt... that Romney won," G. Terry Madonna, director of the Center for Politics and Public Affairs at Franklin and Marshall College, who has monitored elections since 1960, told *AFP*.

A flash poll conducted by *CNN* bore that out: adult viewers of the debate said by a 67-25 percent margin that Romney won.

Similarly, a *CBS News* instant poll had undecided voters proclaiming Romney the victor by a two to one margin.

"The president certainly wasn't on the top of his game tonight," Madonna said.

Romney was more aggressive "without being pugnacious or provocative or combative," hitting the president on his economic record while steadily returning to the theme that a Romney presidency would create more jobs and stimulate faster economic growth than the current administration.

"Was it a huge victory? No. Did the president fall flat on his face? Of



Republican presidential challenger Mitt Romney and President Barack Obama during their debate at the University of Denver, in Denver, Colorado, on October 3. Pic: AFP

course not," Madonna said. "But what Romney had to do was get up on the stage, be the aggressor, make his points and instill a sense of confidence among Republicans that he can still win an election... and I think he accomplished that."

Romney, a former governor of Massachusetts, is desperate to turn around poll numbers that show him trailing the president going into the home stretch.

From the beginning he challenged Obama on taxes and federal spending, insisting that the president's claim that Romney would bring US\$5.4

trillion in tax cuts geared towards the wealthy was "inaccurate."

But Obama seemed to shy away, adopting a far less confrontational tone than many of the attack ads his campaign has been running.

"He didn't hit Romney very hard. He didn't bring up the 47 percent, for example," said Clyde Wilcox, a government professor at Georgetown University.

Romney has been badly stung in recent weeks after a video emerged showing him disparaging nearly half of Americans who pay no federal income tax, saying they were self-

described "victims" who depended on government handouts.

Thomas Mann, a congressional expert at the Brookings Institution think-tank, said Obama's "decision not to go for the jugular on the 47 percent" was a surprise.

"Liberals wanted more blood on the floor and Obama didn't draw it from Romney," he added. "This is beginning to take shape as a Romney win, and I suspect it will gather force."

Romney's own campaign was quick out of the gate claiming the upper hand.

"If this was a boxing match, it would have been called an hour into the fight," boasted Romney political adviser Eric Fehrnstrom.

Even Obama senior strategist David Axelrod acknowledged Romney took the battle to the president.

"What you saw tonight was what we saw during the primaries, which is (that) governor Romney is a very eager and willing candidate on the attack," Axelrod said in Denver.

Analysts expected a one or two percentage point bump for Romney.

"I think that he has still an uphill battle," Wilcox said. "Maybe in two or three days you'll see him ahead in Virginia, maybe in Florida," he added.

But Obama leads in nearly all other battlegrounds, including in Ohio and Wisconsin, and the question is whether Romney can claw his way back in any of those states to give him a realistic chance at winning on November 6. - AFP

## US court rules against controversial voter ID law

PHILADELPHIA, Pennsylvania - In a win for President Barack Obama's Democrats, a judge in Pennsylvania ordered state officials October 2 not to enforce a controversial voter ID law in the coming presidential election.

Republican backers portrayed the law, requiring voters to show photo identification at the polling station, as an anti-fraud measure. Democrats and civil rights groups said it could dissuade many

traditional Democrat supporters, including the poorest and some non-whites, from casting ballots.

The ruling by Commonwealth Court Judge Robert Simpson means that voters in the state who had been having difficulty acquiring identification in time will probably be able to vote on November 6.

The ruling did not repeal the law but it effectively meant the measure was

likely to be suspended at least until polling day.

Secretary of State Carol Aichele, the Pennsylvania official charged with enforcing the law, said voters would "be asked for ID, but it will not (be) required."

The National Conference of State Legislatures says 17 US states have passed laws requiring identification at the polls, citing concerns about voter fraud or voting by non-citizens.

Critics say that in-person

voter fraud is rare and that the most common fraud involves absentee ballots.

Civil rights groups also oppose the laws, which were mostly passed in Republican-controlled legislatures, saying they are designed to keep away poor, non-whites and the elderly - all typical Democratic supporters.

Those concerns were heightened in Pennsylvania after the legislature's Republican leader, Mike Turzai, seemed to see the law as a direct boost for

Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney.

"Voter ID is going to allow Governor Romney to win the state of Pennsylvania. Done," he said.

Estimates vary as to the number of voters who would be unable to obtain identification, thereby eating into Obama's support.

State officials said just one percent of voters would not be able to cast ballots, while opponents of the law said that figure could be as high as nine percent. - AFP

## Tycoon cops hefty fine for Arctic party cruise

OTTAWA - Canadian authorities revealed last week they had imposed fines totalling US\$10,000 on an Australian tycoon for a booze-fueled party cruise.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police boarded a 34-metre, seven-stateroom luxury yacht, the *Fortrus*, when it was moored in Cambridge Bay, Nunavut on September 7 and charged its owner, Paul McDonald, 51, with providing liquor to a minor and being in possession of liquor without a permit.

The federal police seized 200 bottles of liquor, as well as illegal fireworks, said an RCMP statement issued on October 2.

The *Nunatsiaq News* said the resource tycoon from Noosa, Australia and his crew ignored warnings not to shoot off fireworks in the pristine Arctic environment, harassed muskox, and allowed an

underage girl to "dive off the side of the yacht during a wild party" into icy waters.

A cheque written to cover the fines bounced, it reported.

McDonald, who is helming the yacht on a circumnavigation of North America, is scheduled to appear in court on November 15, in the Nunavut community of 1500 where alcohol is banned.

A website chronicling the yacht's journey says the *Fortrus* entered the Pacific Ocean via the Bering Strait a week after leaving Cambridge Bay and traversing the famed Northwest Passage. It is headed for the Panama Canal.

A post on trackingfortrus.com said the passengers and crew saw sea otters, whales and sea lions as well as "spectacular northern lights" during their Arctic voyage. - AFP

## US, UK universities losing ground to Asia, list shows

LONDON - US and British universities continue to dominate in academic excellence but Asia is catching up fast, said an influential education rankings report published on October 3.

The California Institute of Technology kept its top spot in the *Times Higher Education World University Rankings* for 2012-2013 which also saw the University of Oxford rising two positions - ahead of Harvard - to jointly share second place with Stanford University.

The United States retained the overall number one spot with 76 of its universities securing a place in the top 200 institutions, followed by Britain.

The University of Cambridge slipped one place to seventh while the Imperial College London

held on to the eight spot.

France has seven institutions in the top 200 compared to five last year.

A closer analysis of the rankings, however, showed many US and British institutions losing ground in contrast to Asia.

Universities in China, Singapore, Taiwan and especially South Korea witnessed a surge in performance in what was described as evidence of a power shift from the West to the East.

Dirk Van Damme, head of the Innovation and Measuring Progress Division at the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), said: "Academic excellence is gradually shifting away from the 20th-century hubs to the 21st-century centres. The US and the UK still dominate the absolute summit, but they face a

severe loss of total position in the top 200 list."

The ranking system warned of Britain slipping into global mediocrity within a generation due to funding cuts, higher tuition fees and rising global competition.

"Outside the golden triangle of London, Oxford and Cambridge, England's world-class universities face a collapse into global mediocrity," Phil Baty, editor of the *Times Higher Education* rankings, said.

"Huge investment in top research universities across Asia is starting to pay off. And while the sun rises in the East, England faces a perfect storm," he added.

The *Times* used 13 performance indicators to evaluate more than 700 universities including on research, teaching, knowledge transfer and international outlook. - AFP

# Storm clouds gather over Africa's 'Rainbow Nation'

**Analysis**  
by Andrew Beatty

JOHANNESBURG – A toxic mix of government stasis, creaking infrastructure and social unrest is prompting doubts about South Africa's stability in a continent with too many economic scare stories.

It may, in the end, be events on a dusty patch of Highveld two hours' drive from Johannesburg that ended South Africa's 18-year post-apartheid honeymoon.

In the weeks since dozens were killed in clashes between police and miners at Marikana, a wave of violent strikes has swept South Africa.

Long pent-up anger at the slow pace of economic reform has come to the fore. More militant unions and political populists are mining a rich seam of discord.

"Things are not rosy" said Mohammed Nalla, an economic analyst at Nedbank Capital in Johannesburg. "(The outlook) is deteriorating, we've got institutional decay and structural decay in the economy that is setting in."

Nalla and others say the root of the problem is a lack of accountability at the top.

With no serious electoral rivals, the ruling ANC is accused of being too concerned with the accumulation of wealth and power.

Today ANC members are squarely focused on a December meeting that will select their next leader and, de facto, the next leader of the country.

Unpopular President Jacob Zuma faces a potential challenge from Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe. Neither man is

risking difficult decisions that could upset their power base.

That political drift is starting to eat away at investor confidence and the timing could hardly be worse.

Just as the financial world seems ready to give Africa a shot at replicating the growth that transformed Southeast Asia and Latin America, some are wondering if Africa's economic talisman is going to the dogs.

The cruel irony of the situation was underscored late last month. South Africa was welcomed into an elite group of bond issuing countries – opening the door to a new set of foreign investors – while at the same time having its bond rating cut.

Moody's downgrade on September 27 left South Africa, rated at Baal – around the level of peers Russia, Brazil and Thailand. But the diagnosis was bleak and a further ratings cut is likely.

Moody's said South Africa's twin fiscal and trade deficits were a serious worry, but the more immediate problem was a government that is unwilling and, increasingly, unable to tackling mounting economic problems.

If that sentiment takes root South Africa could be in serious trouble quickly.

Thanks to the country's mineral wealth and because of low returns to be had in the developed world, investors have been happy to seek out profits in more risky but growing markets such as South Africa.

As a result South African debt and the rand are still well liked by traders, helping keep the country's



Protesters demonstrate at Marikana on October 1 during a visit by members of a commission of inquiry appointed by the government to investigate the killing by police of 34 striking mine workers on August 16. Pic: AFP

already large trade deficit and tattered public finances under control.

"That momentum does not last forever, we know that these things come to end," said Nalla.

A significant slowdown in investment would be a double whammy for South Africa, which is highly dependent on both foreign inflows of capital and foreign imports.

"We are not seeing the 'Zimbabwe' situation in South Africa. That is not what is happening. We are not seeing investors run away with their hands in the air," said Peter Attard Montalto of Japanese investment bank Nomura.

"What is happening is a slow grind of under-performance, (South Africa) not realising its full potential and that is a result of policy

and the politics that are going on."

South Africa may be saved, at least for now, by the few institutions that still work well, he added.

"The problem is, investors go to see the SARB (South African Reserve Bank), they go to see the National Treasury and these are amazing world-class institutions that are on a par with, or even better than, some developed markets.

"People don't actually go and interact with the education ministry, the labour ministry – that's where you see the real issues (and) at the provincial level, where the vast majority of provinces are highly inefficient, with large amounts of corruption."

If political stasis allows that type of institutional decay to spread, South Africa could be in for a rough time ahead. – AFP

## N-program to go on, vows Ahmadinejad

TEHRAN – Iran will press on with its nuclear program despite the problems caused by Western sanctions, including a dramatic slide in the value of its currency, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said on October 3.

"We are not a people to retreat on the nuclear issue," he told a news conference in Tehran.

"If somebody thinks they can pressure Iran, they are certainly wrong and they must correct their behaviour," he said.

Ahmadinejad's comments came amid an accelerated slide in Iran's currency, which has lost more than 80 percent of its value compared with a year ago – with 17pc of its value shed on October 1.

The rial slipped another four percent on October 2 to close at 36,100 to the dollar, showed exchange tracking websites.

Ahmadinejad said the

plunge was part of an economic "war" waged by the West on the Islamic republic and "a psychological war on the exchange market."

Iran, he said, had sufficient foreign currency reserves.

Those reserves were estimated at about US\$100 billion at the end of last year, thanks to surging oil exports.

At the news conference, Ahmadinejad backtracked on hints he had made during a visit to New York at the UN General Assembly that Iran could consider direct negotiations with the United States on the nuclear issue.

"Direct negotiation is possible, but needs conditions, and I do not think the conditions are there for talks," he said.

Hardliners in Iran criticised Ahmadinejad on his return for opening the door to the possibility of talks with the United States. – AFP

## Zimbabwe court grants Mugabe's election wish

HARARE – Zimbabwe's high court has granted President Robert Mugabe's wish to postpone by-elections until next year, when the country will vote a successor to its shaky power-sharing government.

Justice George Chiweshe ruled on October 2 that parliamentary by-elections for three seats left vacant for three years should be held by 31 March 2013, the date Mugabe has suggested for general elections.

In a court filing, Mugabe argued there was no money to hold the by-elections – which his party is almost certain to lose – given the country had to pay for both a constitutional referendum and a general election in coming months.

The filing contained the first mention of a possible

date for the vote to end the uneasy power-sharing deal between Mugabe and arch-rival Morgan Tsvangirai, who has argued the poll date is too soon.

In the pact between Mugabe and Tsvangirai which gave birth to a power-sharing government in 2009, the parties agreed to a series of reforms and crafting a new charter before new elections.

In his court papers Mugabe said the election date would be proclaimed "at the appropriate time" while a referendum on a new draft to pave way for new elections was expected in November.

The country's electoral commission said on October 2 it needs US\$104 million to organise the referendum, and required at least six weeks to arrange the vote. – AFP

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# Chinese land deals anger Cambodians

By Andrew Higgins

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia – When China’s President Hu Jintao visited Cambodia earlier this year, Tep Vanny, 32, a housewife fighting eviction from her family home in central Phnom Penh, set off down Mao Tse-Tung Boulevard to try to deliver a plea for help to the Chinese embassy.

Among thousands of residents in the Boueng Kak Lake district of the capital whose land has been targeted for redevelopment by a Chinese-financed real estate company, Vanny carried a letter explaining the “sadness and suffering” caused by the project – which has turned Phnom Penh’s biggest lake into a barren, arid expanse of sand – and begging the Chinese leader to “intervene for a fair resolution of our land dispute problems.”

The letter never got delivered. Vanny was driven from the embassy gate by a phalanx of security guards. Other would-be petitioners with land gripes were chased away by police on motorbikes.

China professes a policy of never interfering in the internal affairs of foreign lands. But in Cambodia, growing public fury over land grabs to make way for development projects involving Chinese investors has pushed Beijing to the centre of one of this Southeast Asian nation’s most sensitive social and political issues.

“I had hoped that Chinese companies would help bring prosperity and development, but instead they brought only problems,” said Vanny, who has helped spearhead a long campaign against forced evictions in the capital. The campaign has been surprisingly effective, mobilising a wide array of people against the Boueng Kak Lake project, which is at a standstill. It is unclear why construction has been halted and when it will resume.

On an official level, relations between Beijing and Phnom Penh are at their warmest since the 1970s, when China pumped aid, arms and advisers into Cambodia to help the Khmer Rouge, which ruled here from 1975 to 1979 and abolished all land rights in a murderous communist revolution that dotted the country with “killing fields” and left up to a third of the population dead.

That shared revolutionary ardor faded long ago, replaced in recent years by the bonds of profit between Cambodia’s corrupt governing elite and Chinese companies looking for land to build on, rivers to dam, highways to pave and forests to cut down. Parts of this burgeoning economic alliance have brought undoubted benefits



Duong Kear, a former resident of Phnom Penh’s Boueng Kak Lake district, squats on an expanse of sand that covers the site of his family home. Pic: The Washington Post/Andrew Higgins

to ordinary Cambodians, most notably hundreds of miles of new roads and tens of thousands of jobs in Chinese-owned factories.

But the partnership has also stirred widespread public anger as Chinese investment has helped push hundreds of thousands from their homes. In the southwest of the country, a real estate company from Tianjin is building a casino and resort complex on what was supposed to be protected forest land. At the other end of Cambodia, Chinese investors have been given rights to mine for gold and develop plantations. In all, shows data collected by human rights activists in a survey

country mercilessly during the Vietnam war and is still pressing it to repay loans granted in the early 1970s – to help Cambodia recover from decades of conflict.

China has written off many old debts and provided hundreds of millions of dollars in new low-interest credits to fund the construction, mostly by Chinese companies, of government buildings, dams, roads, bridges and ports.

“The building where we sit is Chinese,” said Phay Siphon, referring to a shiny new complex that houses the offices of hundreds of officials. Chinese companies, meanwhile, have invested nearly \$9 billion in Cambodia since 1994, show official Chinese reports – compared with just \$77.8 million in American investment registered during the same period.

China, by far Cambodia’s biggest foreign investor, has become such a vital partner for Cambodia, particularly for politicians and officials who have business ties with Chinese companies, that authorities here have sometimes taken extraordinary steps to protect Chinese interests. When workers at three garment factories operated by companies from China and Taiwan in the city of Bavet staged a protest in February to press for higher pay, the local governor, furious at the disruption, turned up with a gun and shot into the crowd, said witnesses. Three female workers were wounded. The governor lost his job but has not been jailed. Garment-making is Cambodia’s biggest industry, employing some 300,000 people.

Two months later, an environmental activist,

Chut Wutty, was shot to death, apparently by military police, during a visit to the Cardamom mountain region to collect evidence that a Chinese dam project – one of six new hydro-power projects undertaken in Cambodia by China – had opened the way to a rash of illegal logging.

Cambodia has also worked hard within the Association of South East Asian Nations to protect China’s diplomatic interests, particularly in relation to territorial disputes in the South China Sea.

Of all the Cambodian controversies involving China, however, none has stirred as much public outrage as the development of Boueng Kak Lake, which had been one of Phnom Penh’s most cherished urban landmarks. Though badly polluted after decades of neglect, it still attracted throngs of people to its waterfront pathways, cafes and guesthouses.

Today, the area is an eyesore – and an emblem of the damage wrought by Cambodia’s China-assisted dash for development. “The policy of the government is to cut poverty, but all these evictions only make people homeless and poor,” said Pung Chhiv Kek of Licadho.

Under the terms of a 99-year lease granted in February 2007 by Phnom Penh Municipality, a Cambodian company called Shukaku gained the right to turn the lake and a swath of surrounding land into a new residential and business district. Shukaku agreed to pay \$79 million for the 328 acres of prime real estate,

far less than the market value of such a large piece of land in the centre of the capital city.

The company is controlled by Lao Meng Khin, a wealthy senator for the ruling Cambodian People’s Party and a close ally of Cambodia’s long-serving leader, Prime Minister Hun Sen. Shukaku executives declined to be interviewed. Government spokesman Phay Siphon said Boueng Kak Lake had been a smelly health hazard and needed to be turned into “a developed place.”

After two false starts with Chinese companies, Shukaku’s effort now has the backing of the Inner Mongolia Ordos Hong Jun Investment Corp, a joint venture between two Chinese entities.

While workers moved in to drain the lake and pump in sand in 2008, armed police stood guard as most of the area’s more than 4000 families – who were offered either land outside the city or modest cash payments – were ordered to

leave. But hundreds of other residents, including Vanny, refused to budge and began organising protests. They also started writing letters to the Chinese embassy. All went unanswered. But, in an interview with a state-owned Chinese newspaper, the embassy’s commercial attaché, Jin Yuan, defended Chinese investors, saying they had played no role in evictions, which he said were solely the work of local authorities.

After repeated clashes between residents and police, the World Bank announced in August last year that it would suspend lending to Cambodia until authorities halted the evictions and agreed to fair compensation. Stung by the mounting criticism, Prime Minister Hun Sen ordered that part of the area leased to Shukaku be registered as the property of more than 700 families still living in the area. But protests continued, and authorities cracked down hard. In May this year, Vanny and a dozen other women were arrested during a rally near a cluster of demolished homes and sentenced to 2 1/2 years in prison for “illegally occupying public land.”

The stiff sentences drew widespread condemnation and a plea for the women’s release from Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Cambodia’s Appeal Court overturned the jail sentences. The crackdown, however, has since resumed, with two anti-eviction activists arrested early this month.

The future of the project meanwhile is mired in uncertainty. A high concrete wall has been built around the sand-filled lake, but there is no sign of any construction work. The sand is too soft to build on and could take up to a decade to settle sufficiently. Residents complain that draining of the lake has caused flooding during the rainy season and led to sewage leaking. Liu Xueming, an official with Ordos Hong Jun Investment in Phnom Penh, said he couldn’t discuss current plans for the vanished lake. “This project is a little bit sensitive,” he said.

– The Washington Post

**“The policy of the government is to cut poverty, but all these evictions only make people homeless and poor.”**

**China has done far more than the United States...to help Cambodia recover from decades of conflict.**

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## Karzai vows to bow out

KABUL – Afghan President Hamid Karzai pledged last week that he would step down as required by the constitution at the end of his second term in 2014 and that nothing would prevent presidential elections being held.

The election coincides with the scheduled withdrawal of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) forces from Afghanistan and questions have been raised about whether the security situation could make it impossible for the

vote to go ahead.

But the Western-backed Karzai, who has been the only elected head of state in Afghanistan since the 2001 US-led invasion brought down the Taliban, said no security reasons would prevent the elections.

Karzai's re-election in 2009 was accompanied by widespread fraud.

The international community sees the next vote as one of the last major hurdles before NATO combat troops withdraw at the end of 2014. – AFP

# Singh pushes ahead with reform agenda

NEW DELHI – India's embattled government pushed ahead last week with its make-or-break reform agenda, approving contentious new measures to open up the insurance and pensions sectors to foreign investors.

Despite fierce resistance from opposition parties which are threatening to bring down the coalition in the next parliamentary session, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh unveiled the measures aimed at reviving economic sentiment.

A cabinet meeting on October 4 gave the green light for foreign companies to own up to 49 percent in Indian insurance companies – up from 26pc previously.

In the pensions sector, previously closed to outside investors, foreign groups will be able to buy up to 26pc under the proposed changes, which must now be approved by parliament, an official in the prime minister's office told AFP.

A new Companies Bill was also adopted, which would introduce concepts such as corporate social



Manmohan Singh...a huge gamble. Pic: AFP

responsibility, class action suits and a fixed term for independent directors.

Singh and his reformist new finance minister, P. Chidambaram, have stressed the need to encourage foreign and domestic investment to get India's economy moving again after a slump in growth and worries about the budget deficit.

Last month, in a blitz of measures heralding an end to years of policy deadlock, the cabinet changed the law to allow foreign supermarkets

into the retail sector and opened up the broadcasting and aviation industries.

Singh, and his political boss Sonia Gandhi, the leader of the ruling Congress party, face a broad coalition of opposing forces, ranging from political parties hostile to foreign companies to trade unions worried about job losses.

But for the time being, Singh has succeeded in changing the mood in India after years of criticism of his ponderous policy-making and a string of corruption scandals that sapped the government's energy.

Subhash Agrawal, the head of think-tank India Focus, said that the Congress party, traditionally focused on the rural poor, was now targeting the emerging middle classes which was "slipping away" amid frustration over the mishandling of the economy.

"It is a huge gamble by the Congress," said Neeraj Chowdhury, a political commentator in New Delhi. "What goes in Singh's favour is the support of his own party." – AFP

## Briefs

### Dozens charged in 'banking plunder'

DHAKA – Bangladesh's anti-corruption agency on October 4 filed charges against 27 top bankers and business leaders in the country's biggest banking scandal, officials said.

The embezzlement of 16 billion taka (US\$192 million) is alleged to have taken place through Sonali Bank, Bangladesh's largest state-run bank, between 2010 and May this year.

"This is the biggest banking plunder in the country's history," deputy director of the Anti-Corruption Commission Zainul Abedin Shibli told reporters.

### Bangladeshi mission stoned by protesters

COLOMBO – Protesters threw stones at the Bangladeshi diplomatic mission in Sri Lanka on October 4 as monks demonstrated against Muslim mob attacks on Buddhist temples in Bangladesh.

Police dispersed a crowd of about 500 monks and lay people after windows were broken at the Bangladesh High Commission during the protest against attacks on Buddhist temples in Cox's Bazaar.

The violence in Bangladesh began on September 29 after claims that a Buddhist has posted photographs defaming the Koran on Facebook.

### Landslide kills 18 children

BEIJING – All 18 school children who were buried when a landslide engulfed their primary school in remote and mountainous southwestern China have died, state media reported on October 5.

The landslide, triggered by sustained rains, buried the school and three farmhouses in Yunnan province the previous day as children arrived to make up classes lost due to deadly earthquakes in the area last month that killed 81 people.

### 300 North Koreans in SKorean missions

SEOUL – Nearly 300 North Korean refugees are staying in South Korean diplomatic missions after fleeing their homeland, the foreign ministry said in a report to parliament on October 4.

The ministry said 295 North Korean citizens were being housed in South Korean embassies and consulates – most of them in Southeast Asia.

Since the end of the 1950-53 Korean War, more than 23,500 North Koreans have arrived in the South, mostly via China. – AFP

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"Coffee brewing machines electrically heated; Electrical cooking appliances; Electrical ranges, stoves (ovens) and hot plates and plate warmers; Hair driers; Electric range hoods; Electric toasters; Electric ice makers; Electric fans; Electric grills; Electric refrigeration machines; Air conditioning devices and installations; Air humidification devices; Air dehumidification devices; Ventilation devices and equipment; Heat pumps; Heat exchangers; Central heating systems equipped with heat pumps and/or solar collectors as well as their components such as evaporators, liquefiers, pipes and control and regulation devices; Brine distributors (parts of heating installations); Gas heating devices and installations; Fuel cells and heating equipment operated by fuel cells; Systems for heating and treating service water using different energy sources; particularly the combination of heat pumps with solar collectors or photovoltaic modules; Systems for electric power generation using different energy sources, particularly fuel cells and photovoltaic modules; Solar-powered cooling equipment, particularly adsorption heat pumps; Sun collectors as well as their installation and mounting units; as far as contained in class 11"

"Disinfection and sterilization apparatus; Filters for domestic or commercial installations, particularly for drinking water; Filtering devices for water; Gas treatment apparatus; Gas condensers, except machine parts; Drink cooling units; Pasteurising machines; Water treatment equipment and installations; Water softening apparatus and installations; Water cooling installations; Water purifying devices and machines; Water supply systems; Cooling units and cooling systems for water, liquids and air"

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U Kyi Win Associates  
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P.O. Box No. 26, Yangon.

Phone: 372416 Dated: 8<sup>th</sup> October, 2012

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## BLACK LABEL

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the above two trademarks are in respect of:-  
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## CARLING BLACK LABEL

(Reg: No. IV/2156/2012)

in respect of:- "alcoholic brewery beverages including beer, ale, lager, port and stout"

## BLACK LABEL Label Crest

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U Kyi Win Associates  
for **Molson Coors Brewing Company (UK) Limited**

P.O. Box No. 26, Yangon.

Phone: 372416

Dated: 8<sup>th</sup> October, 2012

## Philippines tables plan for sharing information

MANILA – The Philippines has proposed an information-sharing system for Southeast Asia to help protect its waters from security challenges such as piracy, illegal fishing and drug trafficking.

The proposal was tabled on October 3 at the start of a three-day Association of Southeast Asian Nations maritime forum attended by deputy foreign ministers and senior foreign ministry officials.

The objective is to "provide timely, relevant and material information to appropriate action agencies to enable them to combat non-traditional security threats at sea", said the proposal, copies of which were given to reporters.

These threats include drug trafficking, gun smuggling, human trafficking, illegal fishing and weather disturbances, the proposal said. The Philippines noted more than half of the world's annual merchant tonnage passed through Southeast Asia's waters, making cooperation vital.

The proposal did not mention territorial disputes involving some ASEAN countries that experts say threaten regional stability.

China is embroiled in territorial disputes with the Philippines, Vietnam and some other Southeast Asian nations over the South China Sea. – AFP

# Hong Kong mourns ferry crash victims

HONG KONG – Flags flew at half mast and leaders observed three minutes of silence on October 4 as Hong Kong mourned the 38 victims of a ferry collision that shocked the Asian financial centre.

Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying led senior officials in a memorial service at the harbourside government headquarters, while schools and other public institutions also fell silent.

Hong Kong's worst maritime accident in 40 years saw a high-speed ferry, the *Sea Smooth*, collide with a pleasure craft, the *Lamma IV*, carrying around 120 passengers on a company trip to watch national day fireworks on the evening of October 1.

The *Lamma IV*'s left rear was torn open in the impact, throwing scores of passengers into the sea. The vessel's stern was flooded within minutes, trapping passengers in

the submerged cabin.

Shock and disbelief that such an accident could have happened in one of the world's busiest ports, which prides itself on its state-of-the-art transport infrastructure, gave way to grief as the traditional mourning period began.

About 500 people attended a memorial service at St John's Cathedral, where Hong Kong Electric executives paid tribute to staff who died on the *Lamma IV* in what was meant to be a holiday cruise for employees and their families.

Hong Kong Electric is part of the business empire of Asia's richest man, Li Ka-shing, who offered HK\$200,000 (US\$25,800) to the families of each of the deceased.

Pharmacist Katherine Chow was one of many members of the general public who attended the service.

"No one anticipated this kind of disaster. No one," she said.

She said she did not know any of the dead, but wanted to attend the service "because I'm part of Hong Kong – the disaster bonds everyone together".

Investigators pored over the salvaged wreck of the *Lamma IV* seeking clues as to how two large, seaworthy vessels could have crashed into each other on a clear and relatively calm night.

Police arrested the captains of both vessels on October 2 along with five crew, pointing to possible human error as the cause of the accident.

Criticism has also been levelled at ferry operators for increasing the frequency of services during the holiday period, placing unreasonable strains on captains and crew.

Authorities have said that in a six-month probe, investigators will try to determine why the *Lamma IV* sank so quickly, whether there was adequate safety equipment on



The *Sea Smooth* docked at Lamma island on October 3, two days after the collision. Pic: AFP

board and if the captains followed the rules of the sea.

Prakash Metaparti, an assistant professor in Logistics and Maritime Studies at Hong Kong Polytechnic University, said the deadliest maritime accident in the territory since 1971 was probably a case of

human error.

"They should be able to navigate even in zero visibility with the radar. It's surprising that they didn't see each other...they should have seen each other," he said. "Most likely they misunderstood each other's intentions." – AFP

## Reef study highlights loss of coral cover

SYDNEY – The Australian government admits the Great Barrier Reef has been neglected for decades after a study showed it has lost more than half its coral cover in the past 27 years.

Environment Minister Tony Burke said research released on October 2 by scientists from the Australian Institute of Marine Science and the University of Wollongong should be setting off alarm bells throughout the country.

"We've all heard about damage to the reef over the years, but that 50 percent figure, I think, rang a warning bell loud and clear for many people," he told ABC television late on October 2.

The study said coral cover on the heritage-listed reef – the world's largest – could halve again by 2022 if trends continued.

Intense tropical cyclones – 34 since 1985 – were responsible for much of the damage, accounting for 48 percent, with outbreaks of the coral-feeding crown-of-thorns starfish linked to 42pc.

Two severe coral bleaching events in 1998 and 2002 due to ocean warming also had "major detrimental impacts" on the central and northern parts of the reef, the study

found, putting the impact at 10pc.

Burke said the government was addressing some of the issues raised but "there's no doubt that there's been a level of neglect for decades which, if it had been dealt with otherwise, we'd be in a much better situation now".

While little could be done about cyclones, Burke said the problem caused by the large, poisonous and spiny crown-of-thorns starfish, which feasts on coral polyps and can devastate reef cover, was being tackled.

The study said improving water quality was key to controlling starfish outbreaks, with increased agricultural run-off such as fertiliser along the reef coast causing algal blooms that starfish larvae feed on.

Burke said the government, through its Reef Rescue program, had contributed hundreds of millions of dollars to addressing the issue over the past five years.

"The main work – and that's where \$200 million has gone into – is working to avoid the impacts of run-off (from) land," he said.

The study findings were drawn from the world's largest ever reef monitoring project involving 2258 surveys over 27 years.

– AFP

## Spill ship firm to pay \$31m

WELLINGTON – The Greek owners of the ship at the centre of New Zealand's worst maritime environmental disaster agreed on October 2 to pay up to NZ\$38 million (US\$31 million) towards the cost of the clean-up.

Although damage from the toxic oil spill and recovery of shipping containers has so far cost New Zealand nearly NZ\$50 million, Transport Minister Gerry Brownlee said the offer from Daina Shipping was "the best

possible outcome".

The *Rena*, carrying 1368 containers, slammed into an offshore reef 12 months ago spewing more than 300 tonnes of toxic fuel oil that killed thousands of sea birds and fouled beaches in the North Island's pristine Bay of Plenty.

Daina Shipping is to pay NZ\$27.6 million to settle the claims of the government and several public bodies, and will pay a further NZ\$10.4 million if it decides to leave part of the wreck on the reef. – AFP

### TRADE MARK CAUTION

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**ACDelco**

Reg. No. 5545/1999

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Win Mu Tin, M.A., H.G.P., D.B.L  
for GENERAL MOTORS LLC

P. O. Box 60, Yangon

E-mail: makhinkyi.law@mptmail.net.mm

Dated: 8<sup>th</sup> October, 2012

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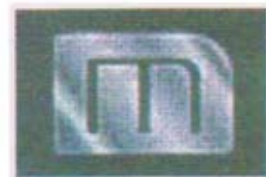
Reg. No. 3567/2006

in respect of "Class 9: Scientific, nautical, surveying, photographic, cinematographic, optical, weighing, measuring, signalling, checking (supervision), life-saving and teaching apparatus and instruments".

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E-mail: makhinkyi.law@mptmail.net.mm

Dated: 8<sup>th</sup> October, 2012

# Bhutan sets 10-year goal to go organic

NEW DELHI – The Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan, famed for seeking “happiness” for its citizens, is aiming to become the first nation in the world to turn its home-grown food and farmers 100 percent organic.

The tiny Buddhist-majority nation wedged between China and India has an unusual and some say enviable approach to economic development, centred on protecting the environment and focusing on mental well-being.

Its development model measuring “Gross National Happiness” instead of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has been discussed at the United Nations and has been publicly backed by leaders from Britain and France, among others.

It banned television until 1999, keeps out mass tourism to shield its culture from foreign influence, and most recently set up a weekly “pedestrians’ day” on Tuesdays that sees cars banned from town centres.

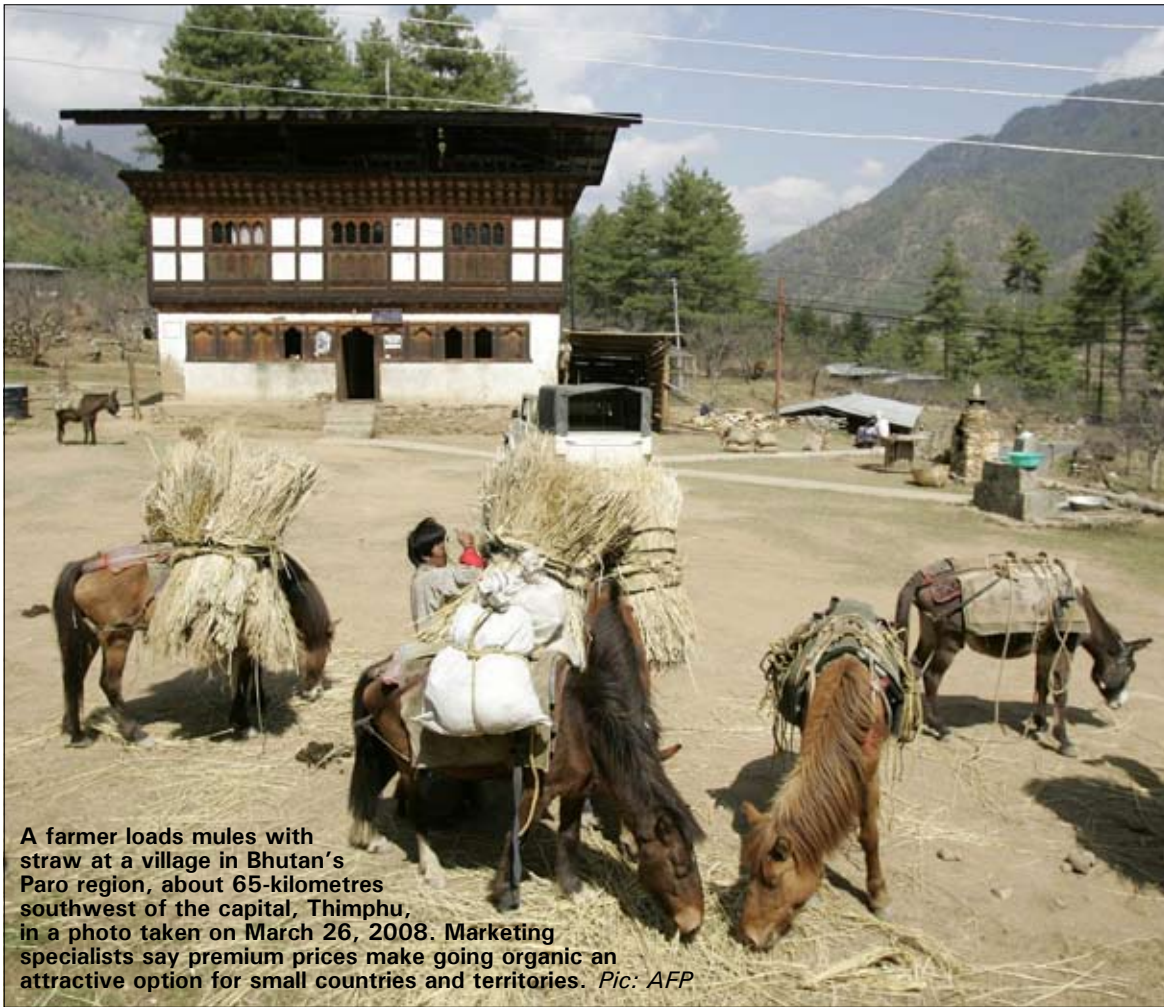
Its determination to chart a different path can be seen in its new policy to phase out artificial chemicals in farming in the next 10 years, making its staple foods of wheat and potatoes, as well as its fruits, 100 percent organic.

“Bhutan has decided to go for a green economy in light of the tremendous pressure we are exerting on the planet,” Agriculture Minister Pema Gyamtsho told AFP in an interview by telephone from the capital, Thimphu.

“If you go for very intensive agriculture it would imply the use of so many chemicals, which is not in keeping with our belief in Buddhism, which calls for us to live in harmony with nature.”

Bhutan has a population of just over 700,000, two-thirds of whom depend on farming in villages dotted around fertile southern plains near India and the soaring Himalayan peaks and deep valleys to the north.

Overwhelmingly forested, no more than three percent of the country’s land area is used for growing crops, says Gyamtsho, with most farmers already organic and reliant on rotting leaves or compost as a natural fertiliser.



A farmer loads mules with straw at a village in Bhutan’s Paro region, about 65-kilometres southwest of the capital, Thimphu, in a photo taken on March 26, 2008. Marketing specialists say premium prices make going organic an attractive option for small countries and territories. Pic: AFP

“Only farmers in areas that are accessible by roads or have easy transport have access to chemicals,” he explained, saying chemical use was already “very

a fungicide to control leaf rust on wheat is also available.

“We have developed a strategy that is step-by-step. We cannot go organic overnight,” Gyamtsho

Bhutan’s only competitor for the first “100 percent organic” title is the tiny self-governing island of Niue in the South Pacific, which has a population of only 1300.

**‘If you go for very intensive agriculture it would imply the use of so many chemicals, which is not in keeping with our belief in Buddhism...’**

low” by international standards.

In the large valleys, such as the one cradling the sleepy capital, Thimphu, chemicals are used to kill an indigenous weed that is difficult to remove by hand – a challenge compounded by a lack of farm labour.

Elsewhere, the fertiliser urea is sometimes added to soil, while

said, describing a policy and roadmap which were formally adopted by the government last year.

“We have identified crops for which we can go organic immediately and certain crops for which we will have to phase out the use of chemicals, for rice in certain valleys for example.”

It aims to reach its objective by 2015-2020.

Nadia Scialabba, a global specialist on organic farming at the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organisation, says the organic food market and its premium prices are attractive for small countries and territories.

“This is happening in very small

countries who are not competitive on quantity, but they would like to be competitive in quality,” she told AFP.

The global organics market was estimated to be worth US\$57 billion dollars in 2010, show figures from the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture and the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements.

Bhutan sends rare mushrooms to Japan, vegetables to upmarket hotels in Thailand, its highly-prized apples to India and elsewhere, as well as red rice to the United States.

By shunning fertilisers and other chemicals, the country also stands to gain by reducing its import bill – a particular concern for a country short on foreign currency.

Peter Melchett, policy director at Britain’s organic Soil Association, says the main benefit of becoming 100 percent organic is an assurance of quality to consumers.

“Because there won’t be pesticides or other chemicals on sale in the kingdom, they would be able to offer a high level of guarantees that products are organic,” Melchett explained.

In countries like Spain, for example, there is a problem of contamination when organic farms are next to highly industrialised producers using large quantities of artificial chemicals, Melchett said.

“It’s difficult for organic farmers in those circumstances to keep their crops and supply-chain free of contamination.”

Bhutan’s organic policy would “start to give the country a reputation of high quality organic food which in the long-run would give them a market advantage and the possibility of price premiums,” he added.

Jurmi Dorji, a member of the 103-strong Daga Shingdrey Pshogpa farmers’ association in southern Bhutan, says his fellow members are in favour of the policy.

“More than a decade ago, people realised that the chemicals were not good for farming,” said. “I cannot say everyone has stopped using chemicals but almost 90 percent have.” – AFP

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Khine Khine U, Advocate  
LL.B, D.B.L, LL.M (UK)  
For Nike International Ltd.  
#205/5, Thirimingalar Hous; Strand Rd., Yangon.  
Dated. October 8, 2012

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#205/5, Thirimingalar Hous; Strand Rd., Yangon.  
Dated. October 8, 2012

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Dated. October 8, 2012

## Young musicians sing songs of peace

By Nyein Ei Ei Htwe

THE Peace Music Group Myanmar was founded only four months ago, but the three members already have big plans to use their songs to help bring an end to conflict throughout their country.

The band – consisting of Lin Htet, Daniel Saw and Zin Zin – was formed in June and first performed live at Myanmar National Theatre in Yangon on September 21, which was also International Peace Day.

Twenty-year-old Lin Htet, the leader of the band, told *The Myanmar Times* that when he was 15 years old he started writing songs exploring his feelings about the victims of war, especially starving children and unsafe living conditions.

He later made friends with others who were interested in writing songs about peace, and they decided to form a music group.

“Our group’s aim is to show that young people can also be involved in making peace, and that we really hope for peaceful solutions to conflict. We don’t know how to express our feelings except through music – we know music has great power, and we’ll use it to ask for peace,” Lin Htet said.

Another band member, 18-year-old Daniel Saw, said his father works for UNICEF (United Nations Children’s Fund) so he is accustomed to seeing photographs of children who are starving or dead because of war.

“When young people like us meet at the tea shop or anywhere else, we mostly talk about peace. We want peace for ourselves and everyone else, not just for the leaders of the country, and we want everyone to know our feelings,” Daniel Saw said, adding that most of the participants in International Peace Day were young.



Peace Music Group Myanmar members Lin Htet (left) and Daniel Saw. Pic: Boothee

So far Peace Music Group Myanmar has written 10 original songs, which are performed on a mix of traditional and Western instruments, including traditional orchestral instruments, Myanmar harp, violin and percussion.

Their songs generally fit into the reggae and slow rock genres.

“Musicians and composers need to know about their traditional music,” Lin Htet said. “Being Myanmar, I feel that our traditional music is more inspirational than current pop music, and we should respect our traditions and our instruments. That’s why we use Myanmar orchestral instruments and harps in our songs.”

Daniel Saw said that many of the songs were not written as a direct response to current events in Myanmar, but rather had been composed “years ago” before everyone started organising events calling for peace in Kachin and Rakhine states.

“The raw and basic objects of my songs were pulled from the wars I saw on television news. When I saw children crying in war-torn areas, I couldn’t understand it when people said they wanted to fight for their country. I could see that wars are not good for anyone, and I wrote about those feelings,” he said.

He said the band had a good response from the audience during the performance on International Peace Day, and he felt that the people in crowd understood what the music was trying to express.

Daniel Saw said the band plans to release a CD of their first live performance, and they will donate all profits to victims of the conflicts in Kachin and Rakhine states.

The band also plans to perform in Mandalay before the end of the year, and would like to embark on a nationwide tour in the future, he said.

## Miss Myanmar to compete overseas

By Nuam Bawi

THE winner of the Miss Myanmar International 2012 beauty pageant has been invited to participate in the 52<sup>nd</sup> Miss International 2012 pageant, to be held in Okinawa, Japan, on October 21.

Last month organisers of the international pageant invited Nann Khin Zayar to take part in the event in Japan, which is expected to be attended by competitors from more than 50 countries.

“I’m not satisfied with my preparation because I only received the invitation on September 2, and then I had to travel to the International Travel Expo Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam from September 10 to 15, so I haven’t had much time,” Nann Khin Zayar said.

She said the international competition will emphasise the culture of each country, and she plans to wear a costume in the style of Myanmar’s Konbaung era (18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries)

while carrying a bowl used to offer food to Buddhist monks.

Myanmar fashion designers Pyi Soe Aung, Ma Min Zuu and Ma Thwin Su Htwe will provide Nann Khin Zayar with seven dresses for the competition.

Nann Khin Zayar, 23, is an ethnic Shan who worked as a tour guide for several years before she was named Miss Myanmar International 2012.

“I was very interested in art since I was young but I chose to work as a tour guide to earn a living,” she said.

“I studied very hard to become a tour guide and I also tried very hard to compete at the Miss Myanmar International 2012 pageant, where I unexpectedly won the title. So I don’t want to let go of being a tour guide and a model very easily.”

Among the various titles that will be bestowed in Japan will be the Miss Internet Prize. The public can vote for their favourite candidate at [www.miss-international.org](http://www.miss-international.org).

## Oldest Everest climber seeks new record

By Zon Pann Pwint

A NEPALESE mountain climber who already holds the world record as the oldest person to scale Mount Everest told *The Myanmar Times* last week that he plans to break his own benchmark by conquering the world’s highest mountain again early next year.

Min Bahadur Sherchan reached the 8848-metre (29,029-foot) summit of Mount Everest on May 25, 2008, at the age of 76 years 340 days, a record-breaking feat that has been recognised by Guinness World Records.

Not satisfied with his achievement, he said he is planning to climb the mountain again next February, at the age of 82.

“I want to do something tough that others at my age don’t do,” Mr Sherchan said during a visit to Yangon from September 30 to October 2.

“Most people drink and smoke and giving up the habits that seem too difficult for them. When they get older, there are many factors that make succeeding less probable,” he said.

“But elderly people need to



Min Bahadur Sherchan poses with his certificate from Guinness World Records, recognising him as the oldest person to climb Mount Everest. Pic: Supplied

get into the habit of walking, hiking or mountaineering. I want to prove how the wonders will never end for us if we can succeed. That’s

why I gave up drinking and smoking, and try to be a role model for other people to aspire to.”

Mr Sherchan said he was a

soldier in the British Gurkha Army from 1948 to 1953, and later turned his attention to growing apples on his plantation in Nepal.

After selling the plantation, he started a new career as an agent for hikers and mountaineers in Nepal. He has also worked as a building contractor.

He said he was “very determined” to break his own record and succeed at summiting Everest again.

“If I don’t succeed, I might come to the end of my life. Whether or not I reach the summit, fate will decide. But I have a strong will to conquer it and succeed,” he said.

Mr Sherchan said he reached the peak in 2008 with five other climbers.

“I didn’t have much trouble and the weather was fine too. When I stood at the summit of the highest mountain on earth, I felt as if I was even higher than Mount Everest,” he said.

Mr Sherchan was visiting Myanmar as an honorary goodwill ambassador for Visit Lumbini Year 2012. Lumbini, located in Nepal, was the birthplace of the Buddha and is a popular pilgrimage site.

## Chinese film festival brings six movies to Nay Pyi Daw Cinema

By Zon Pann Pwint

A FESTIVAL of Chinese films will be held at Nay Pyi Daw Cinema on Sule Pagoda Road in Yangon from October 15 to 20.

The festival will feature six films with English subtitles: *Aftershock*, *Sophie’s Revenge*, *Full Circle*, *I Do*, *Flying Swords at Dragon Gate* and *City Monkey*.

Each film will be shown

twice during the festival, with daily screenings at 3:30pm and 6:30pm.

Chinese actress Xu Fan will also attend the festival, making at public appearance at the screening of her film *Aftershock* on October 15 at 3.30pm.

*Aftershock* tells the story of a mother who, in the wake of the Tangshan earthquake of 1976, must choose between saving her son or her daughter. She chooses the son, but

the daughter miraculously survives and does not meet her mother again until 32 years later.

Free invitation cards for the films are available from October 12 onwards at the Cultural Section of the Chinese embassy in Yangon (94 Kayabin Road; Tel 221-398 and 221-399).

The invitations can be exchanged at the cinema for tickets from 9am until 30 minutes before the film’s screening.

**3 sisters' Solo Show**  
Contemporary  
*Dream Flight* Art Exhibition  
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Thiri May  
Thiri Eaint  
Painting - 59 Nos  
Preview - 14th Oct 2012(10 am)  
Date - 14th - 20th Oct 2012  
Place: **New Vision Art Gallery**  
No.132, lift No 4, Barkayar Road, Sanchaung tsp.  
Near by: Shann st bustop ( Myaynigone)  
email: maypanchi.artgallery@gmail.com  
ph: 09 431 60 359

## Fortuneteller's life told on Thai TV

By Pinky and Lwin Mar Tun

A WELL-KNOWN deaf-mute fortuneteller based in Yangon will be the subject of a Thai television series currently in production in Myanmar, and set to be broadcast in Thailand starting at the end of November.

The series, titled *Extraordinary Gift*, will use actors and scripted material to tell the life story of E T, a fortuneteller who is famous not only on Myanmar – particularly for doing consultations with former members of the military elite – but also in Thailand, Japan and several other countries.

Many Thai people have travelled to Myanmar to consult E T, including series director Mr Nirattisai Kaljaruek, who has been coming to Yangon for that purpose for more than 10 years.

"The first time I consulted E T, she was able to tell me about my family, including the names of my dad and mom," Mr Nirattisai told *The Myanmar Times* on September 27.

"This was very shocking because I had not told her anything about my family at that time, and back then it was not easy to get personal information ahead of time because the internet was hard to access. After that I continuously consulted her and had a lot of shocks and surprises that made me really respect her."

Mr Nirattisai said that while consulting E T at the beginning of this year, she asked him about the best ways for Myanmar and Thailand to make cultural exchanges and build relations. Feeling that she was opening up to him, he suggested that he make a television series about her life, an idea that the fortuneteller readily accepted.

"E T always takes the money she gets from people who come to see her, and donates it to charity, pagodas and monasteries. This is a belief of Buddhism, and I also work for charity and make a lot of donations in Thailand," he said.

"She told me she believed the series will turn out well and tell about her real life, without adding unnecessary details to the story. That's why she trusts me and accepted my request."



Thai actress Nititar Chawpayark will portray E T in the television series 'Extraordinary Gift'. Pic: Yadana

The series will follow the life of E T from the time of her birth to the present day, including how she became deaf and mute, and how she started predicting the future.

Mr Nirattisai, who has worked in the movie industry for 35 years and has won numerous film awards

in Thailand, said the eight-episode series will air in Thailand on the Miracle Channel, known for its horoscope, horror and Twilight Zone-style content, and on True Vision channels 63 and 68.

Thailand's Kantana television production company and Myanmar's

Ever Top production company are cooperating on the creation of the series.

A 58-member team from Kantana arrived in Yangon on September 18, including the director, actors, actresses and film crew. Shooting started on September 25 and is expected to finish on October 12.

E T's nephew, Si Phyo, will narrate the series and act as assistant director.

"Si Phyo provided many details about E T and her family, as well as information on culture and costumes, which range in design from 50 years ago to the present," Mr Nirattisai said, adding that 80 percent of the shooting will occur in Myanmar and the rest in Thailand.

The role of E T will be played by Ms Nititar Chawpayark, a Thai actress and a presenter on the Miracle Channel.

"I used to act as villains, mostly in action movies, but I haven't acted for about two years. When the director offered this role, I immediately accepted because I know about E T and I don't want to miss this big chance," Ms Nititar said, adding shooting the series also provided her with her first opportunity to travel to Myanmar.

She said she spent two months rehearsing the role of E T, including walking, movement, the way she writes and other gestures.

"E T even offered her own costumes to wear for the shooting, to help give me a sense of what it's like to really be her," Ms Nititar said.

Ever Top production company is owned by E T's sister Daw Thi Thi Win, who said it was important to document the life of the fortuneteller, who is not in good health.

"We also want to give something back to her, since she has always done donations during her 27 years as a fortuneteller. On the other hand we have known Mr Nirattisai for more than 10 years. We trust him and we know that he really respects my sister," she said.

Daw Thi Thi Win added that although the series is being created in the Thai language to target audiences in that country, there is a chance that it could air in Myanmar with Myanmar subtitles.

## R Zarni in S'pore concert

SINGER R Zarni and other musicians from Myanmar will perform live at Kreta Ayer People's Theatre in Singapore on October 27, starting at 4pm.

R Zarni told *The Myanmar Times* last week that the idea for the concert was proposed by Lucky Boss Film and Video Production, which will offer tour packages to fans in Myanmar who want to travel to Singapore for the concert.

The tour package – which includes airfare, accommodation and food for four nights and five days – costs US\$1200 a person.

"Although I've performed many concerts locally and overseas, this will be the first time that I will perform a 'one man show' overseas," R Zarni said.

Following the habit of concert promoters in Myanmar, R Zarni used the term "one man show" very loosely, as the concert will also feature performances by Htun Eindra Bo, Wine Su Khine Thein and Eaih Chit, backed by The Trees band.

Tickets for the show cost S\$30-60 (US\$24-48) and are available at Ya Nant Thai Myanmar restaurant in Singapore (Tel +65-9800-4188) and Lucky Boss Film and Video Production in Yangon (Tel +95-1-241-804). — Nuam Bawi

## Movie Day observed

THE MYANMAR Motion Picture Organisation (MMPO) will mark the 92<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary of Myanmar Movie Day on October 13, which also corresponds with the organisation's annual ceremony to pay respects to elders from the film industry.

Myanmar Movie Day has been observed every year since 1920, and the tradition of paying respects to industry elders on the same day was started in 1963.

MMPO's information officer, U Aye Kyuu Lay, said preparations are already underway for the festivities, which will take place at the organisation's compound on Wingabar Road in Bahan township, Yangon.

The day will start with the respects-paying ceremony and the opening of free food stalls by famous actors and others working in the film industry.

"In the afternoon, we will show a black-and-white Myanmar film titled *Mya Ga Naing* (Green Dense Forest). Although the film is silent, the Swe Bamar traditional orchestra will provide live background music, and actor Pyay Ti Oo and actress Eindra Kyaw Zin will provide dialogue," he said.

Following the movie, students from Laurel Art Academy will perform the traditional opera *Yote Shin Kha Yee Thei* (Film Traveller), directed by U Kyi Soe Tun. All events will be open to the public free of charge.

— Lwin Mar Htun

### Events Flash

#### European Film Festival

The European Film Festival continues through October 14, with screenings at Nay Pyi Daw Cinema at 3:30pm and 6:30pm daily. Films from Germany, France, Switzerland, Finland, Norway and Great Britain are featured.

#### Vanguard art show

The "Vanguard" art exhibition, featuring 42 paintings and two sculptures by Paw Thame and Sonny Nyein, is being held at Gallery 65 (Yawmingyi Road) through October 18.

#### Piano recital

French pianist Nicolas Stavy celebrates the 150<sup>th</sup> birthday of composer Claude Debussy with a concert at Yangon Parkroyal Hotel on October 27, starting at 6:30pm.

#### Myanmar Movie Day

Myanmar Movie Day will be marked on October 13, at the MMPO compound on Wingabar Road in Bahan township,

Yangon. Celebrities will set up food booths, and the silent-era film *Mya Ga Naing* (Green Dense Forest) will be screened with live music and actors supplying dialogue. The event is free and open to the public.

#### Australian wine dinner

An Australian Wine Dinner hosted by Quarto Products will be held at Governor's Residence on October 11 from 7pm. Cost is US\$65 a person. Contact events.quarto@gmail.com or 09-732-18711, 530-237, 530-768.

#### Orchestra concert

The Bangkok-based South Asia Youth Chamber Orchestra will give a concert at the Strand Hotel Ballroom on October 15 at 6:30pm. Free Admission.

#### Chinese Film Festival

A festival of Chinese films will be held at Nay Pyi Daw Cinema in Yangon from October 15 to 20, featuring six movies with English subtitles. Free invitation cards are available from October 12 at the Chinese embassy in Yangon (94 Kayebin Road; Tel 221-398 and 221-399).

#### Tribute concert

The life of famous artist Ko Saw Nyein will be celebrated with a concert by contemporary and traditional musicians at the French Institute, 340 Pyay Road, Yangon, on October 31 at 5pm.

#### Nyein Chan Su exhibition

Nyein Chan Su will hold a solo exhibition titled "In Past Journeys: 1970s" at Studio Square Art Gallery in Pearl Condominium from October 12 to 20, featuring large photographs printed on vinyl, with highlight added using acrylic ink.

#### Oktoberfest

Inya Lake Hotel will host an Oktoberfest celebration on October 26, featuring free flow beer and soft drinks, traditional German buffet, and a DJ from Germany playing genuine Oktoberfest music. Tickets are K25,000. Contact 09-4211-51036.

#### Wednesday Wine Club

The Wednesday Wine Club meets every (you guessed it) Wednesday at the QP Inya Shop (30 Inya Road).

Taste four or five wines for K10,000 a person. Contact chad.quarto@gmail.com or 09-7321-8711.

#### Fashion week

Myanmar International Fashion Week 2012 will be held at Junction Square on Pyay Road, Yangon, from November 16 to 18. More than 80 models and actors will showcase styles from 12 local designers. Shows will be held from 6pm to 9pm on each night of the event.

#### Salsa lessons

The Hola Bar (U Htun Myat Road, near Chatrium Hotel) hosts salsa dance lessons every Thursday, from around 8:30pm to 11pm. Music includes merengue, bachata, and cha cha. Beginners welcome. There's no charge for the lesson but the first drink is K5000.

#### Classic rock

Friendship Band belts out classic rock tunes at 50<sup>th</sup> Street Restaurant every Friday night.

If you would like your event listed in Event Flash, please email editors@myanmartimes.com.mm.



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## Rushdie blasts 'culture of offendedness'

BERLIN — British author Salman Rushdie said last week that if a fatwa calling for his murder over his book *The Satanic Verses* had been issued in the social networking era, it would have further endangered his life.

The writer, in Berlin to publicise his new account of the near decade he spent in hiding, said the campaign against his 1988 book had been "very efficient and very international" with just phones and fax machines.

"There was essentially no email, no text messages, no Facebook, no Twitter, no web, and that of course slowed down the attack," he told a news conference.

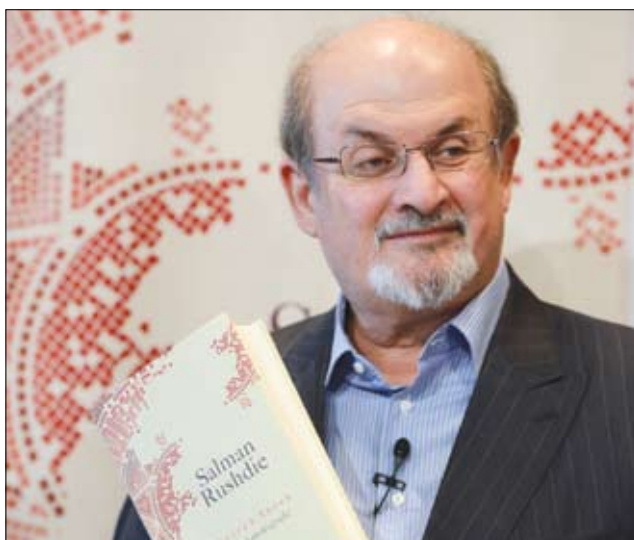
"When everybody can

know everything instantly, it would have been possible to mobilise people against the book with much greater speed and would have been more dangerous now."

Rushdie also hit out at what he called a "culture of offendedness" saying it was absurd and threatened free expression to advocate the banning of works because people took offence.

"This idea that somehow we can ask to live in a world where nothing offends us is an absurdity," the 65-year-old Indian-born writer said.

His more than 600-page memoir *Joseph Anton*, named after his alias while in hiding and written in the third person, was published last month just as deadly



Salman Rushdie poses with a copy of his book 'Joseph Anton' in Berlin on October 1. Pic: AFP

protests over a US-made film rocked the Muslim world.

"We live in this age in which there is this culture of offendedness. All sorts of people, not just Islamic radicals, use this argument as a way of attacking other forms of speech," he said.

"It simply has to be resisted a great deal because otherwise you lose something very precious, which is the right to free expression which was not easily won."

His candid account comes 23 years after Rushdie became the target of a Iranian fatwa, or religious edict, calling for his murder for allegedly blaspheming Islam and the Prophet Mohammed in his book *The Satanic Verses*.

He told India's NDTV last month that the film mocking Islam that enraged some in the Muslim world "looks like the worst little clip ever made" but there could be no justification for responding with "mayhem and murder".

Rushdie, who has written 11 novels as well as short stories and non-fiction, said he did not believe the experience of living under the fatwa had had a profound impact on his way of writing.

"I told myself very consciously, 'Don't fall into the trap of fear and don't fall into the trap of revenge and just try and go on being the writer that you are,'" he said. — AFP

## Bartender represents Myanmar in KL contest

By Douglas Long

THE first Monin Cup Asia-Pacific Grand Finals for young bartenders under the age of 27 was held in Kuala Lumpur last month, with Myanmar represented by the winner of a cocktail-mixing competition held in Yangon in July.

The Yangon contest attracted 12 local competitors, and Nilar Win from Governor's Residence took the top prize and earned an expenses-paid trip to the regional competition in Kuala Lumpur, held at Qba, Westin KL on September 3.

In Malaysia Nilar Win competed against 14 other bartenders who had also won competitions in their own countries, with one contestant each from China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Mongolia, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam.

Malaysia, as the host country, was allowed two contestants. On the line for the winner was the chance to represent Asia at the World Finals in Paris later this year.

Nilar Win was accompanied to Malaysia by Chad Van Den Hoek, marketing manager of Quarto Products, which distributes Monin products in Myanmar. Monin, a French manufacturer of natural flavoured beverage syrups, was the main sponsor of the contest, and competitors were required to use their products in their cocktails.

"The contest in Kuala Lumpur lasted nearly six hours. In the first round, all 15 competitors made a drink they had practiced at home and brought to the event, and from there they announced six finalists," Mr Van Den Hoek said.

Many of these cocktails had distinctly regional flavours: Malaysian Joel Poon mixed bourbon whisky with locally produced hibiscus jam to make the Afternoon Delight, while Zaintiar Desy Renaldi, also from the host country, used jasmine blooming tea with Bacardi Limon to create the Sayuri.

Lychee, dragon fruit and ginseng also appeared on



Competitors in the Monin Cup Asia-Pacific Grand Finals, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on September 3. Pic: Chad Van Den Hoek

various ingredient lists.

"A lot of the contestants used ingredients that were indigenous to their country. [Tran Van Huy from Vietnam] even made his own glass from wire, and used a whole ginseng root as his garnish," Mr Van Den Hoek said.

Nilar Win, meanwhile, created the Green Grass, which used gin, cucumber syrup, sparkling wine, lime and basil leaves.

"For Nilar Win's drink, the combination of gin and cucumber syrup gives it quite a sweet taste, so you need something to dry it out. Soda water just makes the drink bubble a little bit, but she used sparkling wine, Italian Prosecco, which is quite dry and created a nice balance of flavours," Mr Van Den Hoek said.

Unfortunately, her effort was not enough to get her into the final round of six, with the judges instead naming Joel Poon, Zaintiar Desy Renaldi and Tran Van Huy, as well as Miyuki Hongo of Japan, Han Sol Lee of South Korea and Chang Chien Chih-Wen of Taiwan.

The finalists had to make cocktails using surprise ingredients chosen by the judges. Contestants had about 20 minutes to invent their cocktail and five

minutes to actually make it. The final victory, and the trip to Paris, went to Ms Hongo, who used rum, passion fruit, pineapple juice, lemon, dulce syrup and tomato juice to create the Fire Work.

Despite not making the final, Nilar Win was far from disappointed with her experience in Kuala Lumpur.

"This was my first overseas trip. The competition experience was very good for me, and now I know exactly how competitions are done around the world. Even though I didn't win, I learned many things from the trip," she said.

She also admitted that fixing her cocktail in front of the big crowd in Kuala Lumpur was quite a bit more intense than competing in Yangon.

"Of course I felt very nervous making my drink," she said.

But Mr Van Den Hoek was quick to point out that Nilar Win did not appear any more anxious than the other competitors.

"Because the age limit was 27, for some of these kids this was their first international bartending competition. So even though they were very well prepared, they were also very nervous," he said.

"The standards among the competitors in Kuala Lumpur were quite high, and even though there were only six finalists, clearly 10 or 12 of the original 15 could have been in the finals, which were truly a test of bartending knowledge and mixology."

For her part, Nilar Win did not seem intimidated by the prospect of taking part in more international bartending competitions in the future, and in fact vowed to improve her skills to tackle the challenge again next year.

"I have learned what flavours go together from my experience. When I'm working in the bar I can taste which spirit matches which flavour, and the senior staff members at Governor's Residence also teach me about tastes," she said.

"I want to keep practicing so I can go to the Asia-Pacific finals again next year, if I have the chance. I hope I can do better than this year."

Recipes and photographs of all the drinks prepared at the Monin Cup Asia-Pacific Grand Finals 2012 can be found online at <http://thirstmag.com/feature/news-flash/title/Monin-Cup-Asia-Pacific-Championship-2012>.

### YOUR STARS

By Astrologer  
Aung Myin Kyaw

**Aquarius**  
Your intellectual faculties will not be up to the task of thinking abstractly or formulating new theories and scientific inventions. Remarkable social developments will change the good to the bad.

**Pisces**  
A friendship without clear understanding can be dangerous, and your policy of social detachment will make you isolated. Nothing can be achieved unless obstacles are approached with optimism and humility.

**Aries**  
It is one of the most beautiful compensations of human life that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself. Good fortune can be achieved by performing good deeds.

**Taurus**  
Life has no blessing like a prudent friendship. Your stubbornness, and particularly your unwillingness to amend your social and political beliefs, will add unnecessary strain to your life.

**Gemini**  
Your public image is very important to you, so never allow yourself to become an eternal taskmaster. Distribute rewards with impeccable fairness, and you will become known as a just and optimistic person.

**Cancer**  
Committing energy toward social harmony will result in compatibility in family relations as well as in friendships. Optimal thinking is for those who want to live an easy, happy and enjoyable life.

**Leo**  
The best way to be magnanimous at unexpected times is to cultivate sympathetic manners and look at things as simply as possible. Give others the freedom to follow their own philosophies and take their own risks.

**Virgo**  
Avoid applying your excellent problem-solving skills toward the furthering of evil conspiracies. Your participation in morally upright activities will lead to fame and greatness.

**Libra**  
Mutual trust and understanding are indispensable qualities in friendship. Good friends are more valuable than riches. Enjoy your state of contentment, and allow your heart to absorb all that is beautiful and colourful in the world. Even if things go wrong, stay cheerful and stable.

**Scorpio**  
Fresh hopes will provide new energy to achieve your desires. Do not allow fear and suspicion to cloud your mind, but instead think well of those around you. Moments of deep mental calm and inner peace will temporarily cure your stress, obsession and anxieties.

**Sagittarius**  
Your main challenge is to make the right decision at the right time for the right reasons. Time changes everything both good and bad, just as cause and effect changes everything, both right and wrong.

**Capricorn**  
Stop listening with your ears and start listening with your mind. Then, stop listening with your mind and start listening with your spirit. Greed is like cool poison, and dissatisfaction is like a flame that will gradually sauté your soul.

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For a personal reading contact Aung Myin Kyaw, 4th Floor, 113, Thamaing Bayan Road, Tamwe Township, Yangon. Tel: 0973135632, Email: williameast@gmail.com

## Book Review

## Globish: The end of Babel?

By Jessica Mudditt

"ENGLISH is like a virus that has spread round the world," writes Robert McCrum in *Globish: How English Became the World's Language*. The history of the world's

English is deftly charted from its humble beginnings to becoming the "worldwide dialect of the third millennium".

When William the Conqueror was crowned in 1066 following the Battle of Hastings, "English became the mother tongue of an oppressed people" under French rule. Almost three centuries passed before British parliament began to conduct its affairs in English.

Up until the 1600s, regional variation was strong, to the point of often being unintelligible. McCrum illustrates this with an incident now difficult to comprehend, with English now being used in some form by a third of the world's population.

An Englishman rowed ashore and asked for a meal of "mete and specially egges" at an inn close to London, but was "so misunderstood that the innkeeper's wife declared that she did not speak French". The misunderstanding was resolved when another diner requested "eyren" on his behalf.

The anecdote was recorded by the person responsible for the "apparently irrational spelling conventions" that afflict English. William Caxton, a 15<sup>th</sup> century translator and publisher, decided to modernise the vernacular after being encountering "so many strange terms" while reading over his attempt to create an English version of a Latin epic previously translated into French.

Caxton scoured an old book in vain: "It was more like Dutch than English." Fearing criticism of his abilities, he attempted to create a system the common man could understand, but ultimately gave us oddities such as "through" and "night".

As the owner of one of the earliest printing presses, Caxton then "fixed the language onto the printed page before its writers and teachers had fully reconciled the divergences between the written and spoken". McCrum believes Caxton himself would be horrified to learn his conventions stuck.

Nevertheless, Caxton's efforts to diminish ambiguities were profoundly influential. McCrum writes: "Almost everything from the 1600s in English is comprehensible to modern eyes." *Globish* brims with delectable literary and cultural facts, such as the 2004 film *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* being a quote from a poem by Alexander Pope, published in 1717.

Interestingly, McCrum argues, "it is precisely the imperfections of English that are part of its enduring strength". Its ability to adapt "like mercury, to every new contour" is part of its "indefinable genius".

He explains that "jazz" originally meant "to speed up," "jungle" comes from Sanskrit, "safari" from Swahili, "homeboy" from Xhosa and "pundit" from Hindi. This scattering of words into the English lexicon largely came about through invasions, wars, slavery and colonialism.

Although the number of Mandarin speakers outnumbers the global figure for English by more than two to one, Caxton emphasises that approximately 350 million Chinese also speak some kind of English and that by 2020, nearly a third of the world's population will all be trying to learn English at the same time.

He emphatically dismisses Mandarin as a rival: "It is fashionable to refer to China [as] a giant economic and cultural force. ... But the Chinese language ... is self-contained and ill-suited to a multicultural role."

He interviews Kathy Flower, host of a popular BBC English-language program in



Pic: Douglas Long

Lost in translation: A sign in Yuexiu Park in Guangzhou, China.

China, who states: "Until [the authorities] do something about the 60,000 Chinese characters which an educated person is supposed to learn ... I don't think it's ever going to change places with English."

Ms Flower explains that for millions of rural Chinese, "even basic education in the mother tongue is a lifetime's achievement". McCrum feels confident that Globish "is better equipped to enjoy international influence."

**'Until [the authorities] do something about the 60,000 Chinese characters which an educated person is supposed to learn ... I don't think it's ever going to change places with English.'**

But what exactly is it?

Globish is a term coined by Jean-Paul Nerriere to describe a form of "decaffeinated English" containing a vocabulary of 1500 words and simplified grammar. McCrum reports that it is widely recognised across the European Union, and handbooks are published in six languages (plus one titled *Globish in Globish*).

As its title suggests, *Globish* documents how the English language became "a power in itself", independent of its American and British roots — a divergent path McCrum entertainingly traces.

He predicts the world's English is about to make its own "declaration of independence" and will be widely recognised as Globish. Mr Nerriere tells the author: "Globish will limit the influence of [English] dramatically."

Journalist Ben McIntyre offers a helpful précis of the concept by describing a conversation he overheard between an Indian and a Spaniard in an airport: "The language they spoke was a highly simplified form of English, without grammar or structure, but perfectly comprehensible, to them and to me."

McCrums exact description of Globish is that it is "neutral and intelligible".

However, there are occasions when the author seemingly fails to present his argument in a neutral tone, which is the book's most significant weakness.

Of the Enlightenment philosopher John Locke, a founding father of the world's English, McCrum observes rather strangely: "Crucially, he was an English thinker."

In the preamble to a witty remark by journalist Nuri Vittachi, McCrum writes of "the lingua franca of the Far East", which, as *The Economist* pointed out, is an antiquated, offensive and misleading geographical term: "The 'Far East', as East Asia used to be called, is indeed far away from Europe but quite nearby for people who live there."

Another troubling aspect is the credence given to a split between "native" and "non-native" English speakers, particularly given its context of advancing a global language.

McCrums believes Globish will enfranchise "new people" because it is "designed for use by non-native speakers".

However, if the advantage of Globish is clear communication in an international setting, surely so-called native speakers should strive to jettison localisms that hinder such an exchange.

Academic Kanavillil Rajagopalan rejects the "native speaker" concept (which also sounds inherently old-fashioned) because it reflects the "notoriously unequal power distribution in the use of the English language worldwide".

Furthermore, academic Ali Fuad Selvi writes in *The Non-native Speaker Teacher*: "'Native speakerism' ... frequently results in ... employment discrimination."

But McCrum also quotes Singapore's first prime minister, Lee Kuan Yew: "There is this naive belief ... that because the language is English, therefore it is not part of me, so I cannot learn to use it as well as an Englishman. This is utterly wrong."

Indeed, many a "native speaker" cannot distinguish between "their" and "there". However, McCrum's vision of Globish misses the opportunity to debunk the fallacy altogether.

He also confines English native-speakers to the Western world, while acknowledging that "English became the de facto language of what used to be known as the Third World" following decolonisation.

Although he points out that bilingualism in India began in 1835 and that it currently has the world's third-largest English-language book market, he nevertheless states: "Chinese, Indians, Mexicans and Poles who are ambitious to succeed ... will acquire the language skills necessary to achieve their goals."

According to the global statistics website NationMaster, India has more English speakers — based on "first language or native speaker classifications" — than anywhere outside the US.

Towards the book's end, McCrum writes that "some may even ask: 'Is this ... the end of Babel?'" Unfortunately, not yet. "The extraordinary process described here may be at least a thousand years old, but it is still in its infancy."

## Achebe returns with his memoir

By Ben Simon

LAGOS — Nigeria's Chinua Achebe, often called the father of modern African literature, released his first major work in years last month with a long-awaited memoir centred on the war that nearly destroyed his nation.

*There Was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra* chronicles Achebe's experiences during Nigeria's 1967-1970 civil war, which saw his native eastern region, dominated by the Igbo ethnic group, secede as the Republic of Biafra.

The split came largely in response to massacres of Igbos in Nigeria's north and saw Achebe, author of the revered novel *Things Fall Apart*, speak out forcefully in support of the move.

His memoir was released in Britain on September 27 and will be available in Nigeria shortly after, said publishers Allen Lane, a division of Penguin. Its release in the United States is set for October 11.

The tensions that ignited the Biafran conflict, which left around one million people dead, including many from starvation, are largely settled. Today, sporadic calls for greater Igbo autonomy have limited impact in Nigerian politics.

Experts, however, say a Biafra memoir from the 81-year-old Achebe is urgently needed in a country that remains deeply fractured on other levels, despite the book's focus on events that happened more than four decades ago.

"Achebe is sustaining the debate on integration, on unity and on oneness," said Dapo Thomas, a history professor at Lagos State University.

"Until there is a sovereign agreement from the peasants to the elite that we want to remain as one, we must continue that debate. A nation cannot remain comatose while these issues are unresolved."

Nigeria, Africa's most populous country with 160 million people, groups around 250 ethnic groups and is roughly divided between a mainly Muslim north and

predominately Christian south.

Though speculation persists over whether the country will eventually break up, many say such predictions are overblown.

Yet fault lines remain, notably between the north and south, a division that has had immeasurable impact on Nigeria since independence in 1960.

Religiously and ethnically divided communities in the so-called "Middle Belt" in the country's centre have seen waves of clashes that have killed thousands in recent years.

Beyond that, Islamist group Boko Haram is blamed for killing more than 1,400 people since 2010 in an insurgency which it says is aimed at restoring an Islamic state in the north and stripping power from the secular government.

During the Biafra war, "what we are finding is a new nation going through the pangs of nationhood", said the writer and literature professor A E Eruvbetine.

"The truth is, in Nigeria here we are still going through the trauma of trying to forge a nation."

Achebe strongly backed his native Biafra in the civil war and even toured to speak on its behalf. Echoes of the conflict emerge in his writing, including his collection *Christmas in Biafra and Other Poems*.

The octogenarian remains a towering figure in Nigerian and African literature, though he has been based in the United States in recent years where he has been a professor at Brown University in Rhode Island. He travels infrequently due to a 1990 car accident that left him in a wheelchair.

Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart*, about the collision between British colonial rule and Igbo society, remains a landmark work 54 years after its release.

"Just as we read Shakespeare, it's not possible for any student in this department to graduate without reading the works of Chinua Achebe," said the head of the English department at the University of Lagos, Adeyemi Daramola.

— AFP



Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe arrives at Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport in Abuja, Nigeria, on January 19, 2009. Pic: AFP



Eindra Kyaw Zin @ Mango Store Launch



Dr. Khin Thandar Myint and U Zaw Naing Oo @ Maha Zaw Gyi Travels and Tours Company Launch



U Win Swe, Capt Htay Myint and Capt Ko Ko Naing @ World Maritime Day 2012



U Tun Kyi, Daw Tin Hla Myint, San Thit La and Daw Khin Khin Kyi @ Follow Me and Secret Counter Opening



Khine Thin Kyi @ Mango Store Launch



Capt Htay Win, U Zaw Myint Thein and U Thein Oo @ World Maritime Day 2012



Ko Kyaw Kyaw Moe @ Maha Zaw Gyi Travels and Tours Company Launch



May Kabyar, Yu Thanda Tin, Thandar Bo, Melody, Moh Moh Myint Aung and Nan Thuzar @ Mango Store Launch



Daw Myint Myint Khine and guest @ Junction Maw Tin Centre 3D Cinema Launch



Ma Zin Mi Mi Aung, Dr Htet Myat Soe and Ko Si Thu Aye Aung @ Sunlot Sanitary Ware Opening



Thandar Bo @ Follow Me and Secret Counter Opening



Poe Darii @ Follow Me and Secret Counter Opening



Khin Phone and Awn Seng @ Mango Store Launch



Chaw Sweet Sweet Thet and May Thu Naing @ Nongshim Noodles Launch



Lily @ Mango Store Launch



Ko Myo Hnin Kyaw, Ma Naung Naung and daughter Thiri Htet San @ Nongshim Noodles Launch



Pair of winners and Ko Kyaw Myo Win @ Majesty Lucky Draw



U Aung San and U Win Swe @ World Maritime Day 2012



U Aung San and U Win Swe @ World Maritime Day 2012



Ko Yu Pa @ Junction Maw Tin Centre 3D Cinema Launch



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Noe Noe K @ Nongshim Noodles Launch



Dr Khin Thandar Myint and sons @ Maha Zaw Gyi Travels and Tours Company Launch



Yan Yan Chan and Chilli @ Mango Store Launch

SOCIALITE WITH NYEIN EI EI HTWE



SOCIALITE would like to announce that she has survived yet another crazy week, chockfull of super-awesome social events! On September 24 she attended an event celebrating that most wonderful time of the year, World Maritime Day 2012, at Parkroyal Hotel. The unbridled exhilaration of the proceedings were such

that it took Socialite two full days to recover, and she was not able to head back out until September 27, for the Majesty lucky draw program at Western Park Royal Restaurant, followed by the opening ceremony for Nu Yee Pwint Silk Shop at Bogyoke Market. On September 29 there were so many events to attend, and so many scintillating images to capture, that the photographer from Socialite's office nearly developed repetitive stress disorder on his index finger from pressing the shutter release button so many times. Festivities included the Nongshim Noodles launch at Junction Square, the Follow Me and Secret new counter opening at Capital Hyper Mart, the SP Gems press conference at Parkroyal Hotel, the Sunlot Sanitary Ware opening at Pearl Condo, and the Mango store launch at Taw Win Centre. Memo to photographer: Put that trigger finger in a splint and get plenty of bed rest, because we'll be back at it again next week!



Ma Thet Su Aye and Dr Khin Thandar Myint @ Maha Zaw Gyi Travels and Tours Company Launch



Daw Thinn Wut Yi Kyaw and Daw Khin Thida Win @ Mango Store Launch



Aung Khine and War War Khine @ Junction Maw Tin Centre 3D Cinema Launch



Ma Mee Mee and Ma Nu @ Nu Yee Pwint Silk Shop Opening



Mar Mar and friends @ Mango Store Launch



U Phyo Min Kyaw, U Moe Hlaing Win and U Nyi Nyi Htun @ Nongshim Noodles Launch



Capt Htay Myint, U Hein Htet Soe, U Sai Myo Tint and U Chan Myae @ World Maritime Day 2012



Ko Aung Kyaw Zin and SP Gems staff members @ SP Gems Press Conference



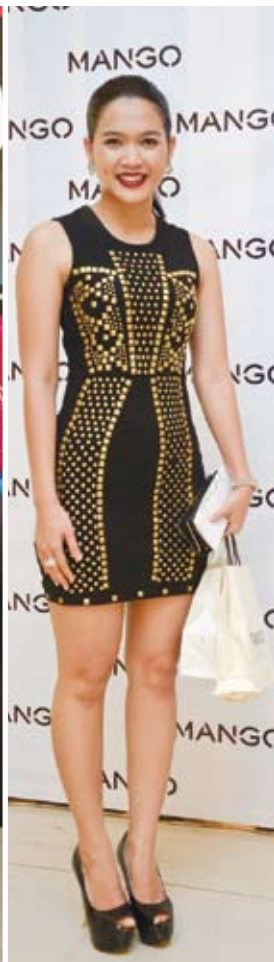
Ko Ye Yint Htun and special guests @ Sunlot Sanitary Ware Opening



Ma Nu and friends @ Nu Yee Pwint Silk Shop Opening



Soe Pyae Thazin @ Follow Me and Secret Counter Opening



Aye Myat Thu @ Mango Store Launch

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Souvenirs are displayed for sale as Egyptian camel owners wait for tourists at the Giza pyramids, south of Cairo, on October 1. Pic: AFP

# Tourism bright spot in global economy

By Katell Abiven

MADRID – Global tourism has adapted well to the economic crisis, with international arrivals expected to rise by nearly four percent this year, the head of the UN World Tourism Organisation said last month.

But Taleb Rifai, secretary general of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation, warned that travel taxes, particularly against the aviation industry, risked "severely affecting" that recovery.

Tourism figures worldwide were hit hard by the 2008 global financial crisis, with the rise in international arrivals that year slowing to 2.1 percent after having jumped 6.6pc in the previous year.

Arrivals plunged by 3.8pc in 2009, its worst performance in 60 years, as the outbreak of the swine flu virus helped persuade cash-strapped consumers to stay home.

But international tourism arrivals bounced back the following year, rising 6.6pc in 2010 and by 5pc in 2011 even though global economic crisis had not yet ended.

"The only good news that is coming from the economy is coming from tourism," Rifai said in an interview at the UNWTO's headquarters in Madrid. "The tourism sector, against all odds,

managed to adjust itself to the crisis. It's a very flexible industry."

But Rifai also warned that travel taxes are becoming a "real issue".

"We are worried about the aviation industry because most of the taxes that are being placed on tourism now are on transport, and particularly aviation. It's becoming really alarming," he said.

"We are concerned that the ability of people to fly and the competitiveness of this sector will become severely affected by that. Especially when there are still very serious possibilities of a major hike in oil prices. It's an issue that mainly affects traffic from Europe but after all 52 to 55pc of world travellers are coming out of Europe. It's a global issue."

This year however, the figures are encouraging.

The number of international tourist arrivals worldwide grew by 5pc during the first half of 2012 to 467 million, with the Asia-Pacific region posting the strongest gains.

"We are still expecting that we will close this year with (a rise in international tourist arrivals) at between 3 and 4pc. I think it will be close to 4pc now," Rifai said. "That would mean that we would be in November or December hitting the historic figure of one billion international tourists."

Economic turbulence "will change the way to travel. People will look for cheaper deals – but people will still travel."

Travel had become a part of people's lifestyle, he explained. "You can't give it up."

The Asia-Pacific region posted an 8pc rise in international tourist arrivals during the first half of the year, as visitors returned to Japan a year after a tsunami and earthquake devastated parts of the country.

Europe, the most visited destination in the world, saw visitor numbers rise by 4pc between January and June, with many destinations in Central and Eastern Europe posting double-digit growth.

Visitors were also returning to Egypt and Tunisia after the turmoil of the Arab spring frightened off foreigners last year, which helped fuel a rise of 7pc in the number of arrivals in Africa.

"There is a clear recovery in Egypt and in Tunisia," said Rifai.

"Tourism is doing well in general, and it's probably one of the few areas that can provide some stimulus and some health to the world economy, particularly when it comes to jobs.

"With high rates of unemployment now, we can't afford to lose the jobs that tourism is providing." – AFP

## INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT SCHEDULES

Table containing international flight schedules with columns for Days, Flight, Dep, and Arr. It lists routes between various cities like Yangon to Bangkok, Bangkok to Yangon, Yangon to Kuala Lumpur, Yangon to Gaungzhou, Yangon to Taipei, Yangon to Kunming, Yangon to Kolkata, Yangon to Chiang Mai, Yangon to Hanoi, Yangon to Singapore, Yangon to Ho Chi Minh, Yangon to Gaya, Singapore to Yangon, Ho Chi Minh to Yangon, and Gaya to Yangon. Each entry includes flight numbers, departure, and arrival times.

International Airlines section listing contact information for Air Asia (FD), Air Bagan Ltd. (W9), Air China (CA), Air India, Bangkok Airways (PG), Malaysia Airlines (MH), Myanmar Airways International (8M), Silk Air (MI), Thai Airways (TG), and Vietnam Airlines (VN). Each entry includes the airline name, address, and contact details.



## Phyo's Cooking Adventure

Phyo cuts through culture to reveal life's true taste

### Welcome the sun with minestrone

MONSOON is definitely on its way out, and now is a good time to have a nice, warm, cheesy soup for those occasional, lingering rainy days. This simple, easy-to-make but yummy Italian minestrone soup is just the ticket for chasing

those rainy days out of Myanmar and welcoming the sunnier days ahead. Some of the traditional ingredients for this recipe can be difficult to locate in Myanmar, such as risoni pasta and cannellini beans, but it is easy to find substitute beans and suitable vegetables at the local markets. So here is my recipe of minestrone soup, adjusted for the Myanmar kitchen.

#### INGREDIENTS

- (6 servings)
- 1 big onion (diced)
- 2 carrots (cut into 3cm cubes)
- 6 ripe tomatoes (diced)
- 1 cup of cauliflower (cut into small pieces)
- 1 cup of frozen peas
- 8 stalks of Chinese coriander and a few leaves
- ¼ cup of butter beans (soaked in water one night before)
- 1 cup of cooked shell pasta
- ¼ teaspoon of thyme



- (dried)
- ¼ teaspoon of oregano
- (dried)
- ¼ teaspoon of basil (dried)
- Chili flakes (optional)
- 3 tablespoons of olive oil, and drizzle for soup
- 4 cups of Massel salt-reduced chicken stock
- Parmigiano grated cheese to serve

#### PREPARATION

Prepare the shell pasta according to the package instructions, but cut three minutes off the suggested cooking time. In my experience, if you would like to have 1 cup of cooked pasta, use ½ cup of raw shells. Sauté the diced onion

in olive oil with medium heat. When the onions are translucent, add thyme, oregano, chili and Chinese coriander, and stir for five minutes.

When the aroma comes out, add the diced tomatoes and fry for eight minutes. Then add chopped carrots and cauliflower and cook for another five minutes. Stir occasionally.

Add the cooked beans, frozen peas and stock, and let the soup boil. Once it starts to boil, cover it with a lid and reduce the heat. Simmer the soup for 45 minutes. Add the partially cooked shell pasta and simmer for another five minutes.

Salt and pepper for taste, and serve with a drizzle of olive oil, grated Parmigiano cheese and garlic bread.

#### GARLIC BREAD

- ½ baguette or any bread with crust
- 4-5 small cloves of garlic
- 1 tablespoon of butter
- ¼ teaspoon of dried basil leaves

Crush the garlic and place it with the butter in a small cup. Heat for 20 seconds in a microwave oven with medium heat or until the butter becomes soft. Mix with dried basil leaves.

Cut the bread into slices, but do not cut all the way to the bottom of the baguette. Brush the mixture of butter between the slices then wrap tightly in aluminium foil. Heat the pack over a very slow flame for a few minutes until it warms.

Alternatively, you can toast the bread and spread the butter mixture on top.

Most ingredients are available at the marketplace. Chinese coriander is available at local markets, and baguettes can be found at Sharky's delicatessen.

Send feedback, comments and questions to [phyocooking@gmail.com](mailto:phyocooking@gmail.com).

### Main Tips

Use more stalks of Chinese coriander with fewer leaves. They are a good substitute for the celery that is normally used in minestrone.

Soaking the butter beans in water overnight will save cooking time. When you are boiling the beans, adding vegetable cutoffs to the water, along with ½ teaspoon of salt, will enhance the flavour.

Do not thaw the frozen peas before cooking, as this will result in overcooking.

#### QUAFFING QUOTE

"I cook with wine, sometimes I even add it to the food."  
— WC Fields

#### NEXT WEEK

Next week's recipe will feature bow pasta with peas and shallots in cream sauce, with a side of caramelised carrots and fennel seeds.

### Red Wine



**Bordeaux du Clos des Moiselles Merlot 2009**

Fruity, smooth and slightly tannic with a hint of chocolate, this strikes a blow against the anti-Merlot propaganda of the film *Sideways*.

Score BOX

9/10

Ks 11,700

### White Wine



**Barton & Guestier 1725 Bordeaux Reserve 2010**

Chill at 10-12 Celsius and enjoy this French white with distinctive citrus aromas and refreshing aftertaste.

Score BOX

7/10

Ks 13,100

### FOOD REVIEW

### Little Tokyo's big flavour



#### Little Tokyo

168C Dhammzedi Road, Bahan township, Yangon  
Tel 09-731-85168, 09-731-78946

- Food: 9
- Drink: 9
- Atmosphere: 7
- Service: 9
- X Factor: 8
- Value for Money: 8

Score BOX

8/10

and cucumber topped with avocado, fresh tuna and a slice of cherry tomato: a brilliant mix of fresh ingredients, and the potentially piquant tuna meant there was no need for wasabi.

For traditional sushi we went with the basic but excellent salmon rolls (six pcs K2300), and also ordered tori teriyaki (K5500), the sweet sauce subtle enough to allow the flavour of the tender meat to hold its own.

A Japanese meal would not be complete without rice wine, so we ordered Hakutsuru sake (K12,000). Because it was unpleasantly warm outside, and because we anticipated a strong, oily taste from the tori teriyaki, we ordered the sake cold. It was a great, and for us rare, treat on a sultry night in Yangon.

There was only one tiny hitch in the otherwise admirable service: My wife, having worked at an upscale restaurant in Tokyo, was annoyed that the waiter had to be asked to fill the soy sauce dishes at our table—an unforgivable error in Japan, perhaps, but in Yangon just part of the culture of casual service. — DL

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# Seven years late, Greenberg takes his swings

MIAMI – Adam Greenberg, struck in the head by the first Major League Baseball pitch that he faced back in 2005, struck out on October 2 in his return to the batters' box seven years after his ill-fated first visit.

Greenberg, signed to a one-day contract by the Miami Marlins, was inserted as a pinch-hitter to start the sixth inning and went down swinging on only three pitches from New York Mets ace knuckleballer R.A. Dickey.

"It was a magical moment," Greenberg said. "In a sense I was honoured to strike out against him."

The Marlins would win 4-3 in 11 innings but the outcome between teams long-since ousted from the playoff hunt was less meaningful than Greenberg's inspiring comeback tale from lasting injuries after being struck in the head.

Greenberg, 31, was a pinch-hitter for the Chicago Cubs on July 9, 2005, in a game against the Marlins when the first pitch he faced, a 92-mph fastball from Valerio de los Santos, struck him just below his right ear.

"The sound, the way he went down -- the first thing that went through

your mind was, 'This guy is dead,'" de los Santos said at the time.

Greenberg crumpled into the dirt of the batter's box. His parents, there to watch their son live his dream, watched in horror as he was taken off the field and to a nearby hospital.

"I lost control of my eyes and thought my head was split open," Greenberg said. "I never lost consciousness. I grabbed my head, and I kept saying, 'Stay alive.'"

Since then, Goldberg has struggled with post-concussion syndrome, vertigo, nausea, headaches, dizziness and double vision. He could not lace his shoes without losing his balance.

Greenberg was never able to return to the major leagues. He spent years in developmental leagues and played for Israel in World Baseball Classic qualifying last month.

On October 2 he was cheered, signed autographs and learned he will have his own trading card with a picture from his moment at the plate, a youthful dream for many baseball players.

"The outcome from a competitive standpoint meant a lot," Greenberg said. "I wanted to get on base. I wanted to get a hit.

"The true outcome, strikeout, that didn't matter. It was a true success before I left the dugout and got to the batter's box."

Greenberg became a unique footnote in baseball history, the only player among more than 18,000 major leaguers whose career ended after one pitch and without an official time at bat, until Tuesday.

"He has earned this chance as his love and passion for the game never diminished despite his career tragically being cut short," Marlins owner Jeffrey Loria said.

Greenberg donated his one-game salary of about US\$2,600 to the Marlins charity foundation, which donated the money to the Sports Legacy Institute, which examines treatments and preventions for brain trauma in athletes.

"Life's going to throw you curveballs... or a fastball to the back of your head," Greenberg said. "I got hit by one of them. It knocked me down. I could have stayed there. I had a choice.

"I chose to get up and get back in the box. That's the kind of message to everyone, that whatever is going on in their personal lives, get back up. Good things happen.

"Sometimes it takes seven years." – AFP



Adam Greenberg of the Miami Marlins bats for the first time since being hit in the head by a pitch in 2005 in his first Major League at-bat against the New York Mets at Marlins Park on October 2, 2012. Pic: AFP

## Arsenal's Gervinho backed to emulate Henry

LONDON – Arsenal assistant coach Steve Bould has challenged Ivory Coast striker Gervinho to emulate Thierry Henry's impact with the Gunners.

Gervinho scored his fifth goal of the season on October 3 as Arsenal overcame a sluggish start to maintain their 100-percent start to their Champions League campaign with a 3-1 win over Olympiakos at the Emirates Stadium.

After an underwhelming first season with Arsene Wenger's side, Gervinho is showing signs of fulfilling his potential following his switch from a wide role to a more central position in Arsenal's attack.

Gervinho looked to have an uncertain future at the start of the season after Wenger splashed out on Olivier Giroud and Lukas Podolski.

But Wenger's decision to make Gervinho the focal point of his three-man forward line is reminiscent of the way he gradually built his team around Henry, who arrived at Arsenal as an inconsistent winger and

left as arguably the best striker in the club's history.

And, while Gervinho is some way short of Henry's standards, Bould -- standing in for Wenger at the post-match press conference while the Arsenal boss served a European ban -- is convinced he has the talent to follow in the legendary French striker's footsteps.

"Number one, he is scoring goals so his confidence is sky high and his link play is gradually improving as well," Bould said.

"He is still learning his trade. I don't think he's played there (in the central role) a lot, but he is starting to learn when he drops deeper and he has set up chances for Santi (Cazorla) a few times already.

"His pace and movement make him dangerous. He can be a top player. If he gets anywhere near Thierry Henry we will take that all day long."

Gervinho's 42nd minute goal, a low strike from the edge of the penalty area, put Arsenal ahead against Olympiakos, only for the Greek side to equalise on the stroke of

half-time when Kostas Mitroglou punished slack defending to glance a superb header past Vito Mannone.

Arsenal were able to overcome their sloppy first half thanks to Gervinho and Podolski, who combined for the crucial second goal when the Ivorian's cross was finished off by the German forward's sharp turn and clinical strike.

Wales midfielder Aaron Ramsey came off the bench to seal the win with a cool, chipped finish in stoppage-time and Bould is hopeful the result will restore Arsenal's confidence after their morale-sapping loss to Chelsea.

"We looked nervy at times. There was a hangover from the Chelsea game. That probably knocked our confidence as we got beat when we felt we could have got something from the game," Bould said.

"We're hoping now we've won we've got the Chelsea result out of our system and are back on track. Hopefully it will give us a bit more confidence for the weekend, which will be a tough game against West Ham."

While Bould was relieved to see Arsenal take another step towards the last 16, the former Arsenal defender admitted he was concerned with the way the current back-four conceded yet another goal from a cross.

Both of Chelsea's goals in their September 29 match came from free-kicks and Bould, brought in by Wenger to pass on his knowledge to the Gunners defenders, is determined to keep working on the flaws at the back.

"We haven't conceded an awful lot of goals but in the main those goals have been from set pieces, which we are all disappointed with," he said.

"We are working on that. I guess that is my responsibility."

Arsenal's defensive frailties weren't helped by the absence of Per Mertesacker and Bould revealed the German centre-back had missed the game with a virus that has now sidelined four Gunners stars at various times in recent weeks.

"He was ill this morning," Bould said. "He has a bit of a virus. We're hoping he is fit for the weekend.

"We've had about four of them ill over the period of about two weeks." – AFP

## Greece gives 29 million euros for Formula One racetrack

ATHENS – Debt-ridden Greece is to spend 28.9 million euros (US\$37.3 million) on a Formula One racetrack despite the nation's economic crisis, the development ministry said Wednesday.

The funds, which will subsidise about one-third of the 94-million-euro project, were released as part of a government effort to speed up investments that it considers top priorities but that have been delayed by bureaucratic procedures.

The government gave the project the green light in May, saying the racetrack would boost tourism and create jobs, in a country where severe austerity measures and a crippling recession now in its fifth year have driven the unemployment rate over 20 percent.

The racetrack, to be built by Greek construction group Avtokinitodromio Patras will host Formula One races -- pending approval from the sport's governing body -- as well as motorcycle and go-kart races.

The town of Fares in the northwest of the Peloponnese peninsula will host the track, which will be built over the next three years.

Greece's leaders have been debating for years whether to build a Formula One racetrack but have faced resistance from residents and environmentalists.

The country spent 8.95 billion euros to host the 2004 Athens Olympics, including 7.2 billion euros to build and outfit venues, according to opposition party Syriza. As the country has slid into financial catastrophe, the government has come under fire for that tab.

The development ministry also announced Wednesday the release of credit lines of 29.25 million euros to help fund construction of a solar panel factory in the northeast and 15 million euros to renovate the Elounda Bay luxury hotel on the island of Crete. – AFP



Arsenal's Ivorian forward Gervinho runs with the ball past Olympiakos FC's Giannis Maniatis during the UEFA Champions League match at the Emirates Stadium in London on October 3, 2012. Pic: AFP



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## IndyCar champ to battle F1 legends in Bangkok

BANGKOK – IndyCar Series champion Ryan Hunter-Reay will line up against Formula One stars Michael Schumacher and Sebastian Vettel at the Race of Champions in Bangkok on December 15-16, organisers announced.

The annual end-of-season contest, which brings together heavyweights from all racing disciplines in the same type of car, is a chance for Thailand to showcase its host credentials as it seeks to stage its first Formula One race.

The Race of Champions, now in its 25th year, will be held on a specially constructed tarmac track in Bangkok's 50,000-capacity Rajamangala Stadium.

The latest addition to the line-up is American Hunter-Reay, who clinched his first IndyCar Series championship with a fourth-place finish in the season-ending race last month.

"After a career best season culminating in an IndyCar Series Championship, I could see no better way to cap off 2012 than representing the USA and IndyCar, competing against the best drivers from other top level championships

around the world at the Race Of Champions," Hunter-Reay said.

The field also features F1 drivers Jenson Button and David Coulthard along with eight-times Le Mans 24-Hour race winner Tom Kristensen and X-Games legend Travis Pastrana, according to organisers.

Schumacher will team up with reigning F1 world champion Vettel in a bid to extend Germany's five-year winning streak in the Race of Champions Nations Cup.

After winning two world titles with Benetton and five with Ferrari, Schumacher is retiring for the second time at the end of 2012, he announced Thursday.

Thailand meanwhile is on track to host its first Formula One race in 2014, with talks already at an advanced stage, the kingdom's tourism and sports minister told AFP on Monday.

"It's unlikely we'll have any problem," Chumpol Silpaarcha said, adding that the country was still looking for a suitable venue for what local media have said is likely to be a night race like in Singapore. – AFP



Myanmar defeated Brunei 1-0 on October 5 during the qualifying round of the AFF Suzuki Cup. Pic: Boothee

### AFF Suzuki Cup 2012 Qualifying Round Schedule

Tue, Oct 9 Youth Training Centre, Yangon	3:00 pm	Cambodia	vs	Brunei DS
	6:00 pm	Timor Leste	vs	Laos
Thur, Oct 11 Youth Training Centre, Yangon	3:00 pm	Brunei DS	vs	Laos
	6:00 pm	Myanmar	vs	Cambodia
Sat, Oct 13 Youth Training Centre, Yangon	3:00 pm	Laos	vs	Myanmar
	6:00 pm	Brunei DS	vs	Timor Leste

# Struggling Myanmar Sneaks Past Brunei 1-0

By Aung Si Hein

THE Myanmar national football team secured three points in the AFF Suzuki Cup qualifier after defeating Brunei 1-0 in a hard-fought game at Yangon's Thuwanna Stadium on October 5.

Brunei, seen as one of the weaker teams in the tournament, proved to be a tough challenge for the home team, who had just finished up five friendly matches against Japanese clubs.

Myanmar's head coach Park Sung Hua said during

a press conference on October 4 that all of the teams in the tournament were equally matched and that Myanmar could face difficulties because of a lack of strikers with Kyaw Ko Ko and Yan Paing both injured.

This lack of effective strikers limited Myanmar to just one shot on goal during the first half, a blast from midfielder Kyi Lin that ran off the post.

Surprisingly it was the Brunei side taking the shots early in the game. At the 28 minute mark a long

ball from the left wing was headed by a Brunei striker but sailed wide.

Ten minutes later Brunei was awarded a free kick that was saved by the Myanmar keeper.

The second half saw three players substituted for Brunei. Myanmar kept the same line-up throughout the match.

Myanmar gained an edge in control in the second half.

Yan Aung Win scored the match's lone goal during the 83<sup>rd</sup> minute of play when the Brunei keeper was unable

to handle his shot allowing it to reach the back of the net.

Myanmar's normally boisterous supporters failed to provide much atmosphere at the stadium as the stands remain almost completely empty.

There are five teams participating in the AFF Suzuki Cup qualifying round; Laos, Timor, Myanmar, Cambodia and Brunei. The top two teams will play in next month's AFF Suzuki Cup that is being hosted in Thailand and Malaysia.

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