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A man with a gunshot wound is treated at Kyauktaw Township Hospital in Rakhine State on October 25. Pic: Kaung Htet

Averting the apocalypse: U Thant's finest hour

By Douglas Long

WITH all the hype in recent months about Myanmar ending 50 years of isolation, it bears remembering that the secretary general of the United Nations from 1961 to 1971 was a top diplomat from Myanmar.

It's also worth noting that 50 years ago this month, this particular secretary general, U Thant, not only presided over the UN during the Cuban Missile Crisis — one of the most dire international emergencies of the 20th century — but also played a key role in ensuring that the situation did not devolve into an apocalyptic frenzy of nuclear destruction.

The crisis unfolded over 13 days in 1962, from October 16 to 28, after photos taken by U-2 spy plane pilot Richard Heyser alerted US president John F Kennedy to the presence of Soviet nuclear missiles in Cuba.

This revelation led the US government to mull airstrikes on Cuba, but Mr Kennedy went against the advice of many Senate leaders and instead implemented a naval blockade.

By October 24 the situation looked desperate: Reconnaissance photographs showed that the missiles in Cuba were in launch position and US and Soviet warships were engaged in a standoff, only a few hundred metres apart and pointing their weapons at one another.

On the same day, the US military's five-level defense readiness condition (DEFCON) was advanced from Level 3 (increase in force readiness above normal readiness) to Level 2 (next step to nuclear war), still the highest in history.

Historically, there has been plenty of bluster from the US side about how military superiority forced the Soviets to back down but a report published in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* on October 12 details the crucial, and largely forgotten, role played by U Thant's quiet, intelligent and tireless diplomacy in averting disaster.

The report — written by A Walter Dorn and Robert Pauk, and titled "The Closest Brush: How a UN Secretary General Averted Domsday" — says that documents in the UN archives and oral histories show that U Thant "received a direct yet secret request from the United States, initiated by President Kennedy himself, to perform intermediary functions during the crisis".

"Thant also took bold initiatives of his own accord," the report said. "Indeed, Thant

Rakhine death toll hits 67 as govt defends soldiers

By Soe Than Lynn in Sittwe

THE secretary of the Rakhine State government's information committee has denied claims Rakhine people have been targeted by security forces, saying soldiers acted without "bias or mistakes" in quelling riots in Kyauktaw and Rathedaung townships.

The comments came as state media reported on October 27 that 67 people had been killed and 95 injured in the latest outbreak of violence in the region.

A number of Rakhine people were killed or seriously injured due to gunshot wounds inflicted by security forces on October 25. The accusations of bias were based on the fact that almost no Rohingya, or Bengalis, had sought treatment at hospitals.

The Myanmar Times witnessed 14 Rakhine people with gunshot and knife wounds arrive at Kyauktaw Township Hospital between 6pm and 9pm on October 25. One man, from Tinnakyay village, died shortly after arrival from a gunshot wound to the head,

while another died while being brought from Taungbway village to the hospital by boat. The body of another deceased man with a gunshot wound was brought to Kyauktaw Hospital early on October 26.

"The forces only shot in order to frighten and disperse mobs. But they continued to shoot when the mobs became bigger so there may have been deaths due to gunshot wounds," U Win Myaing told reporters in Sittwe on October 26.

"In the incident in Letsaungkauk village, Kyauktaw

township, some were shot by handmade firearms known as *tumi*. In the aftermath, some *tumi* were confiscated. There was no bias or mistakes made by the forces," he said.

U Win Myaing said communal clashes were sparked by a domestic dispute in a Rohingya family in Minbya township, with violence spreading to Kyaukpyu, Mrauk Oo, Myebon, Kyauktaw and Rathetaung townships.

"It started in a remote area on the border of Minbya and

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Constitutional courts: you need an impartial umpire

Professor Wojciech Sadurski, a Challis professor in jurisprudence at the University of Sydney, on the impeachment of the Constitutional Tribunal and its implications for the democratisation process

By Sandar Lwin

How important is constitutional review and the role of the Constitutional Tribunal in the democratisation process?

Constitutional review is extremely important in the process of democratisation. It is not a pure coincidence that all major waves of democratic reform around the world recently witnessed also the emergence of powerful constitutional tribunals. Think about South Korea or Taiwan—where constitutional courts have played a vital role in explaining the mechanisms of democracy to political classes. Think about South Africa, where the Constitutional Court became the central agent for change. Think about constitutional courts in Central and Eastern Europe where, after the fall of Communism in 1989 and immediately after, all newly democratised countries set up constitutional courts which became, at least in some of the countries – Poland, Hungary and Czech Republic – very powerful. They largely helped steer the country through the process of transition.

Should we abide by the decision of the tribunal, even if many people think the decision is incorrect?

When it comes to the interpretation and understanding of the constitution, it is necessary to have an impartial umpire whose rulings will be taken as valid. We may assume that judges are less self-interested in providing a particular interpretation of unclear or contested constitutional notions and so it is good for the political system as a whole to stick to their determinations – even if someone believes they made a mistake. Sometimes holding on to one and the same determination is better than trying to achieve “the best” outcome – because in politics, reasonable people may disagree about what is “the best”.

This can be seen in the case decided by the Constitutional Tribunal of Myanmar of

March 28, 2012 (submission no. 1/2012). I cannot really comment on the substance: the matter decided concerns a rather fine point of constitutional interpretation: namely, whether the committees, commissions and other bodies set up by each hluttaw can be understood as “union-level organisations” in the constitutional sense. This is, in my view, not a matter of absolutely central significance for the political life of Myanmar – but the interpretation provided by the Constitutional Tribunal is extremely important because it provides everyone with an authoritative reasoning about how to understand the constitution. The tribunal has

‘I find the quality and the seriousness of the tribunal’s reasoning admirable.’

engaged in an interpretation referring to the legislative intentions, which is perfectly understandable. I find the quality and the seriousness of the tribunal’s reasoning admirable.

There is a lot of discussion about the need for rule of law in Myanmar. But how important will judicial independence be in Myanmar’s transition process?

It is perhaps the most important of all. If the judiciary is not independent – if there is pressure exerted on the judges, or if they fear for their security, or if they have strong incentives to favour one or another political party – their role as independent arbiters is undermined.

How should a democratising country like Myanmar go about encouraging an independent judiciary?

Judges should be appointed in a way that minimises their dependence on the executive branch.

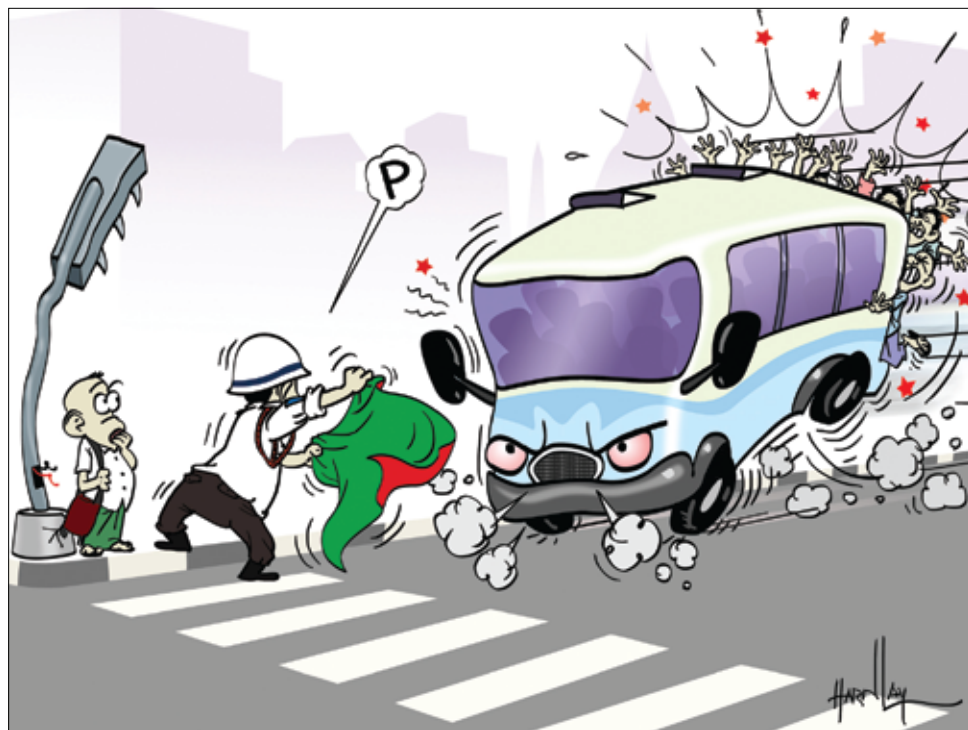
They should be reasonably well paid (within the limits that the state budget can afford) so that their temptations for corruption are minimised. Their tenure should be assured – either for a long but limited term (with no possibility for reappointment) or permanently, until the retirement age. But the main guarantee lies in the political culture on the part of the executive and legislative branches: politicians should know that any attempt to influence or threaten judges is absolutely inadmissible.

In terms of impeachment of members of the judiciary – what kind of a process should that be and when should it be used?

Impeachment should be a method of the last resort – and used only in extreme circumstances. A procedure for impeachment should be such that a different political body initiates the process (for instance, the legislature or the executive) and a different body takes a final decision (a court). In such a way, a possibility of using impeachment for political purposes or as vengeance is avoided.

About Professor Wojciech Sadurski:

A Challis professor in jurisprudence at the University of Sydney, Professor Sadurski is also a professor at the Centre for Europe in the University of Warsaw, and is a visiting professor at the University of Trento, Italy, and Cardozo Law School in New York. He was a professor of legal theory and philosophy of law in the Department of Law at the European University Institute in Florence from 1999 to 2009. He has also taught as visiting professor at a number of universities in Europe, Asia and the United States. He has written extensively on philosophy of law, political philosophy and comparative constitutional law. He visited Myanmar last year and met several political leaders, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.



The Mail Box

Dear editor,

The Myanmar Times should be applauded for its article on the rise of instant experts in Myanmar (“Every carpetbagger has his day”, October 15-21, and Mr Martin Amada, Letter to Editor, October 22-28).

That Myanmar now has a growing gaggle of consultants isn’t surprising – this happens everywhere. Like many, I’ve watched this growth with interest, amusement and concern.

While I wouldn’t use the term “carpetbaggers”, it is arguably better than “conmen”, “hustlers” or “sharks” – terms frequently used to describe these “experts”. Moreover, these titles aren’t only applied by those Mr Amada calls “smug” long-term expats.

Many new consultants claim advisory skills or expertise across a number of sectors (just look at existing business cards and websites for numerous examples), but have no substantive in-country experience. Can someone who has been here since breakfast really develop expertise across so many industries in such a short time? I think not.

Mr Stuart Deed rightly asks what qualifies someone as a Myanmar-specific business consultant/expert, though the answer remains unclear. So far, we have one with experience in investment banks (albeit not in Myanmar) who is still living in another country. Another who can (apparently) speak many languages (but not Myanmar) and had once started a cooking school in Thailand. And another, a regionally based lawyer (who also never worked in Myanmar), who is now somehow qualified to speak about Myanmar’s legal system and pitfalls facing businesses. The list goes on.

Then there are the experts at the plethora of “investment” conferences (thanks to CMT Events) organised every few months, for which people continue to pay a few thousand dollars to attend. I understand that many of these “experts” pay to get on the program, rather than be added because they actually have some wisdom to offer or, god forbid, experience in Myanmar. These events are more opportunities for so-called “experts” to sell their non-existent expertise and waste people’s money.

There are only a handful of individuals and firms that possess in-country experience, language skills, business experience and a nuanced understanding of how things work in Myanmar. Sadly, these are few and very far between. Most of the current batch of “consultants” don’t fit this bill and have a fraction of the Myanmar-specific expertise they claim.

The Myanmar Times, its journalists and the media in general are in a better position than most to know what is going on and to recognise crap when they see it. The media in Myanmar can add an additional layer of consumer protection for potential investors by contributing to the “word of mouth” that Mr Amada refers to, thus ensuring investors aren’t exploited by the carpetbaggers, sharks, conmen and hustlers.

People can claim whatever expertise they want and the media should publicly call them on it. I would invite The Myanmar Times to do a piece on the current batch of consultants, their background, Myanmar experience (if applicable) and why they think they qualify as experts. I’m sure it’d be an enlightening experience for all.

Regards,
Lou Frenidis

Got something to say? We want to hear from you. Address all correspondence to the Editor, The Myanmar Times (English). We endeavour to respond to all correspondence in a timely manner.

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Govt warns of crackdown

Legal action will be taken against those inciting Rakhine violence 'behind the scenes'

By Ei Ei Toe Lwin

THE government has warned of a planned crackdown against unnamed people and organisations it accuses of manipulating the violent incidents in Rakhine State "behind the scenes".

A front-page statement in state media on October 26 threatened to expose those responsible and said "legal action will be taken against them".

The statement, dated October 25, referred to recent rioting in Kyaukpyu, Minbya, Myebon and Mrauk Oo townships that has left 67 dead and 95 wounded, and caused widespread property damage. Following the riots in Rakhine State in May and June, in which about 80 people died, President U Thein Sein declared a state of emergency in the region.

The October riots began in Yaing Thal village, Minbya township.

"We don't know exactly what the problem was, but the violence spread. Both communities (Rakhine and Muslim) clashed and set fire to each other's houses," said U Myo Thant, a communications officer of the Information and Records Committee of Rakhine State, told *The Myanmar Times* on October 23.

The committee was established on June 5 by the Rakhine State government and central government departments.

"We can't say how many Rakhine people and how many Muslims died in the violence. Muslim houses suffered more damage than Rakhine houses. Only Rakhine injured came to the camps, but that doesn't mean no Muslims were injured. The state government sent medical personnel to the Muslim villages, but we don't have a list of casualties yet," said U Myo Thant.

"As of last night the situation is stable," he said on October 26, adding that state police and Tatmadaw and security forces had managed to restore order. Food and shelter were being provided at monasteries and other locations.

"We're living in fear," said Mrauk Oo resident U Maung Shal. "There are more Muslims than Rakhine. The security forces came, but they were too late."

"We heard many Muslims were wounded in these riots, but we have no evidence," said Ko Mya Aye, one of the leaders of the 88 Generation student group, who is Muslim. "I don't insist on stressing the number of Muslim dead. All I want is a return to peace and stability in Rakhine State. This problem arose because of an absence of



Staff at Kyauktaw Township Hospital in Rakhine State tend to a Rakhine man shot through the leg on October 25. Pic: Kaung Htet

rule of law in Rakhine. We are urging the government to deal with this problem in accordance with the law." (See related story right)

The government statement underlined the fact that the unrest took place at a time when Myanmar "has achieved the support and international recognition of its drive for smooth transition in the democratisation process within a short period of time and when the international community is watching ongoing progress in Myanmar with interest."

In a related development, the Yangon-based Islamic Religious Affairs Council last week called on Muslims not to celebrate the Eid Al-Adha festival in Myanmar on October 23 amid security fears.

On October 26, U Zaw Htay, director of the President's office, announced on his Facebook page that every Myanmar citizen was equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right to freely profess and practise religion subject to public order, morality or health and to the other provisions of the Constitution. The message stated that the president had made no attempt whatsoever to restrict Eid celebrations.

"The government has allowed the festival to take place," agreed Ko Mya Aye. "But we won't celebrate, because we think security is inadequate."

88 Generation student group calls for rule of law in Rakhine

By Ei Ei Toe Lwin

LEADERS of the 88 Generation students group have condemned a fresh outbreak of violence in Rakhine State, calling for both sides to solve their grievances through peaceful means.

Riots broke out in Mrauk Oo and Minbya townships in Rakhine State on October 21 and spread to other township, claiming 67 lives and leaving 95 wounded, state media reported on October 27.

"We can only solve the problem through peaceful means, not through violent actions. We request all to work together to ensure this issue does not escalate any further," said 88 Generation leader Ko Min Ko Naing.

He said the lack of rule of law meant the country was susceptible to outbreaks of violent unrest.

"Rule of law is needed urgently in Rakhine State," he said. "Frankly speaking I think that more serious problems like [the Rakhine conflict] will happen in the future but we cannot say exactly what kinds of problems will happen and when and where they will appear. We need to pay close attention to ensure problems like this do not develop. Rule of law is very weak in our country."

However, other 88 Generation leaders said they suspected there were "extreme" elements behind the latest outbreak, an oblique reference to some in Rakhine State's Muslim community.

"It is a trap to make our country go backwards at a time when it is marching towards democracy. It is a transitional period, a very sensitive time for our country," Ko Min Ko Naing said.

Ko Mya Aye said the government should solve the problems by following the law closely and without discrimination against either Rakhine or Muslim.

"In accordance to the state constitution, every citizen is equally entitled to freedom. We want to solve this issue within the framework of constitution. If one [person] commits a crime, the government must punish them according to the law," Ko Mya Aye said.



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Govt invites bidders for airport upgrade

By Zaw Win Than

DEPARTMENT of Civil Aviation has invited the private sector to participate in a planned redevelopment of Yangon International Airport, which will see the capacity more than doubled to 5.5 million passengers a year.

U Tin Naing Tun, director general of the department, said the Ministry of Transport intends to develop Yangon International Airport as a "business centre" in Yangon Region with private sector participation.

The department announced on

October 25 that it would accept submissions from interested local and foreign firms, which can participate either as a joint venture or consortium under the investment law.

Interested firms can submit prequalification documents with a non-refundable fee of US\$1000 to the department. The prequalification period runs until December 5 and the department will invite qualified companies to submit a tender for the project in January 2013, U Tin Naing Tun said.

"Yangon airport can handle only 2.7 million passengers a year. Last year we saw about

2.4 million passengers [and] in 2012 we expect that we will have to handle about 2.8 million passengers. If the number of passengers continues to grow as we expect over the next four years, we will urgently need to expand the terminal, aircraft landing area and so on," he said on October 25.

The redevelopment of Yangon airport will take place at the same time as a new international airport is constructed at Bago.

"We conducted a feasibility study over the past two years with a team of foreign experts. According to our study, the number of passengers using the

airport is likely to increase 20 percent to 23pc each year so in the next four years the number will increase to 5.5 million," he said.

"Yangon airport will only handle a maximum of 5.5 million passengers a year when the project is finished. The rest of the passengers will go through Hanthawaddy airport."

The Yangon project will take the form of a public-private partnership with private sector financing, he said, and will see an airport master plan developed and both the international and domestic terminal buildings, apron and car parking expanded.

From page 1

Rakhine violence

Mrauk Oo townships. According to the latest figures, in the six townships there are 64 dead, including 34 men and 30 women, 72 injured, including 68 men and four women, including 10 children, and 2329 homes destroyed by fire," he said.

State media reported a slightly higher toll on October 27 of 67 dead, 95 wounded and 2818 homes damaged. No casualty breakdown was given by community.

In response to a question about whether the government would increase security in the region further, U Win Myaing said security was "adequate".

"It is true that there will possibly be more riots like this again because Rakhine are the minority and Bengali the majority in remote areas that are out of reach of administrative offices and where transportation is poor," he said.

"But if we raise the number of the security, the international community can say we use excessive force so we have no plan to increase security."

He said on October 27 that troops were "taking control" of potential hotspots, adding the situation was now "calm" after security forces were deployed to the affected areas where violence erupted on October 21.

In Kyauktaw's Taungbway village, rioting broke out at 4:30pm on October 25, with Rohingya from Taungbway and nearby Ahleiywa and Rakhine from Taungbway setting fire to each other's homes.

While security forces did not fire on the arsonists, they fired warning shots into the air when another group of Rakhine people from the opposite bank of the Kaladan River came to the area. Survivors said some of the bullets hit the boats and the occupants were also set upon by a boatload of Rohingya.

"People from Rakhine villages on the other bank of [Kaladan] River here as reinforcements. When Taungbway jetty was crowded, the security forces shot and tried to disperse them ... When the boat was spinning out of control, groups of Bengalis from other villages arrived there by boat. Bengalis were hacking Rakhine people in the boat and they were shot at the same time by security forces. We brought as many injured people as we could to Kyauktaw," monk U Ppyinyar Wara of Shwepyay Monastery told *The Myanmar Times*.

At Kyauktaw Township Hospital, patient U Hla Maung Thein said he and another Rakhine man were shot by

security forces while trying to help a Rakhine man who they had heard was being attacked by Rohingya in Kyauktaw's Letsaungkauk village, on the Yangon-Sittwe Highway.

"Because we heard Bengalis were chasing a Rakhine man, we went there to confirm whether it was true. At that time, the security forces shot us from a distance. A person died instantly. Another died of knife wound. I got a slight wound to my neck," he told *The Myanmar Times*, pointing to his wound.

Ma Hla Hla Myint, 19, from Shanywa quarter in Kyauktaw, received treatment for a slight wound to her forehead.

"A man from our quarter was arrested by security forces so we went to demand his release. At the time, I was shot. My wound is three stitches wide," she said.

Dr Tun Aye from Kyauktaw said Rakhine were outnumbered by Rohingya in many areas of the township.

"There are small Rakhine villages among the Bengalis' big villages ... our locals depend only on the army for security because we have no permission to hold weapons and do sentry duty during curfew. We want the army to stay between the villages of the minority (Rakhine) and the villages of the majority (Rohingya) so more riots don't happen," he said.

The riots prompted some 3000 Rohingya to flee the six violence-hit townships for Thae Chaung refugee camp in Sittwe on the morning of October 25, U Win Myaing said.

He said the state government did not allow them to land and instead arranged for them to disembark at a temporary site on Sin Na Maw Island in the Pha Yone Kar Archipelago on October 26.

"We can't accept any more [Rohingya] in Thae Chaung village. We have to spend more than K1 billion a day on refugee camps in Rakhine State ... our government has been looking after [displaced people] for three months and we can't manage it much longer. The government on its own can't bring about reconciliation between them, community elders and religious leaders also need to cooperate with us."

"An additional 2500 are reportedly on their way," Vivian Tan, spokeswoman for the United Nations refugee agency, said on October 27.

The fighting poses a threat to the government's reform process, the UN also warned on October 26.

"The vigilante attacks, targeted

threats and extremist rhetoric must be stopped," a spokesman for UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said in a statement released in Yangon.

"If this is not done ... the reform and opening-up process being currently pursued by the government is likely to be jeopardised." - *With AFP, translated by Thit Lwin*

U Thant's finest hour

was lauded by newspapers of the day for his effort to de-escalate the crisis, even though the media did not know the full extent of his actions."

Among the secretary general's "bold initiatives" was sending "identical appeals" to Mr Kennedy and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev, asking them to "allow time to negotiate a peaceful settlement".

Mr Khrushchev responded positively to the request, while the US was initially wary, with some American military leaders "openly hostile" to U Thant's proposal and advocating invasion of Cuba.

But on October 24, at the height of the tensions, Mr Kennedy instructed the State Department to contact U Thant and ask him to propose to the Soviets that they "stop their ships for a few days so talks could be arranged". With the idea coming as a request from the UN rather than as a demand from the US, the Soviets agreed to keep their ships out of the "interception zone" imposed by the US naval blockade.

Adlai Stevenson, the US ambassador to the UN at the time of the crisis, later told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee: "At a critical moment - when the nuclear powers seemed set on a collision course - the secretary general's intervention led to the diversion of the Soviet ships headed for Cuba and interception of our Navy. This was the indispensable first step in the peaceful resolution of the Cuban crisis."

According to Dorn and Pauk, U Thant also played an important part in the missile negotiations, and a centerpiece of the diplomacy was his original suggestion that "the Russians would dismantle their missiles immediately in exchange for a guarantee that the United States would not invade Cuba".

U Thant was also the man whom both sides continued to approach with new proposals, and the man who tirelessly urged everyone to show restraint rather than provocation. When an agreement was finally reached to

remove the missiles from Cuba, U Thant flew to Cuba in an effort to prevent Fidel Castro from following through on his threats to undermine the pact.

Dorn and Pauk provide many more details about U Thant's invaluable diplomatic efforts, and conclude their report by writing that, during the Cuban Missile Crisis, "the nuclear clock did not strike midnight, largely because Thant facilitated face-saving and de-escalation".

So why is his role largely forgotten today?

Historian and author Thant Myint-U, the grandson of U Thant and a former fellow of Trinity College in Cambridge, suggested that politics, and even U Thant's unassuming personality, played a part in minimising the kudos he received.

"My grandfather played a pivotal role in first de-escalating and then helping resolve the Cuban Missile Crisis ... but it has been generally forgotten over the decades, in part I think because others were eager to claim credit and because he was not [as eager to do so]," Thant Myint-U told *The Myanmar Times* by email.

"His later criticisms of the Vietnam War also did little to endear him to those who were happy to forget his contributions."

Thant Myint-U, who has also served on three UN peacekeeping operations and as director of policy planning in the UN Department of Political Affairs, added that his grandfather had once been considered a candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize.

"In 1965, the government of Norway told him that he would receive that year's Nobel Peace Prize, to which he replied that he was really only doing his job. The prize went that year to UNICEF, an outcome that his colleague and Nobel Laureate Ralph Bunche later said was a 'deep injustice' to U Thant," he said.

He added that the Myanmar people should be proud of U Thant's accomplishments at the head of the UN in the 1960s. In July a bronze bust of U Thant, sculpted by U Tin Win, was put in place in the former secretary general's hometown of Pantanaw in Ayeyarwaddy Region, a small step toward acknowledging his great achievements.

"[The people of Myanmar] should remember that it was their compatriot, then only 15 years from being a school headmaster in Pantanaw, who pulled the world back from the precipice of nuclear war half a century ago," Thant Myint-U said.

Assembly info campaign begins in MDY

By Phyto Wai Kyaw

NATIONAL League for Democracy members Mandalay's Pyigyitagun township began a campaign to inform members of the process of selecting delegates for a planned national assembly later this year.

The campaign comes after members complained that the process to select delegates was undemocratic, a charge that the party's leaders deny.

Four members visited Htain Kone ward on October 23 to meet residents. They plan to visit the other 15 wards in Pyigyitagun township.

"We informed members how to vote, how they can get invitation cards for the ward assembly and what their options for choosing delegates are. Members from Pyigyitagun township haven't

got membership cards yet. ... We still have to try [to get cards] as we want all members in the wards to participate in the assembly process," said NLD member U Ko Ko Aung.

He said the process of selecting delegates at the village and ward level was important for the credibility of the assembly and it was important to avoid any complaints or allegations of unfairness. Delegates selected at the village and ward level then take part in the township assembly, and those selected at the township level will have the chance to participate in the national assembly.

"We don't have any involvement in the township commission but we are doing this because we believe it is our responsibility. The responsible officials from the township commission haven't come and met members in wards yet to let

them know about the assembly. We think some of them are afraid to do it as they might be trying to get roles in the assembly through undemocratic means," said U Ko Ko Aung and U Win Hlaing, who also joined the education campaign.

Among those who benefited from the information session was NLD member Ko Win Nyein, 29. He said before meeting U Ko Ko Aung's group he didn't know much about how the assembly will work and how delegates will be chosen.

"We don't know much about the assembly because no one came here to tell us about it. Today's activities gave us the information clearly. We understand now that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is managing the assembly in a democratic way that is designed to avoid injustice," the Htain Kone ward resident said.



National League for Democracy member U Ko Ko Aung (standing, right) explains about the party's assembly to residents of Pyigyitagun's Htain Kone ward on October 23. Pic: Phyto Wai Kyaw

NLD members in Patheingyi to resign

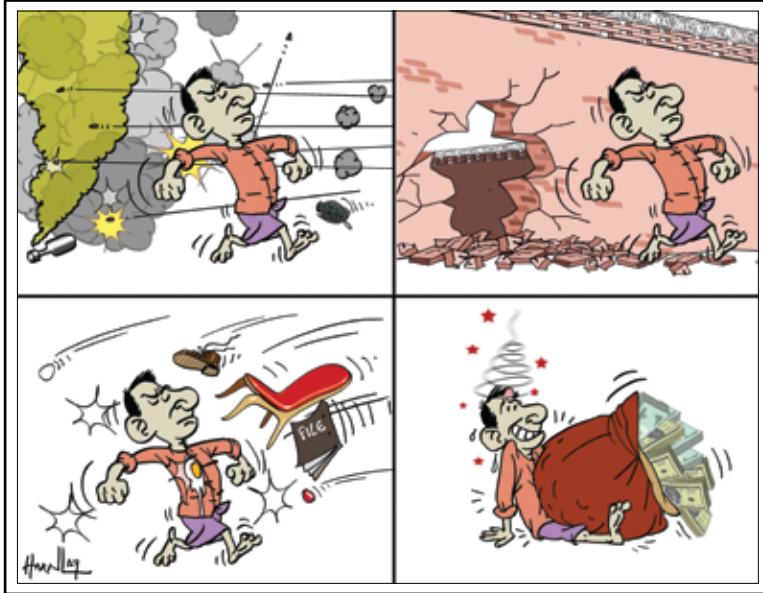
By Kyaw Hsu Mon

UP to 500 National League for Democracy members from Ayeyarwady Region's Patheingyi township are expected to resign in the coming days over the selection of delegates for the party's upcoming national assembly, sources said last week.

U Nyunt Hlaing, who won a seat in Patheingyi in the 1990 election for the NLD, who resigned on October 10, told *The Myanmar Times* the members had decided to quit because the headquarters had chosen newer members to take part in organising the assembly, rather than those who had struggled for the party for decades.

He said about 200 members will resign on October 27 and he expects this figure to increase to more than 500 in the coming days.

"We've been working for the NLD for more than two decades but the top leaders don't know how hard we worked at the community level. For example, we organised the campaign groups for the by-elections ... I was one of the campaign managers but we were not included when the



party organised the assembly commission [for Patheingyi township]. The head office directly appointed people who are very close with the leaders," he said.

The election campaign team features 21 members, most of whom had been with the party since 1990.

"I thought it was not fair for us. We've been working hard for the

party, that is why we won in the by-elections, but the head office doesn't care about us," he said.

The NLD plans to hold its first national assembly before the end of the year and has assigned members to organise ward and village and township level assemblies in preparation for the national event. However, the process has generated conflicts between members and the head

office in some townships, including Patheingyi and Myaungmya townships in Ayeyarwady Region and Pyigyitagun township in Mandalay Region. (See related story above.)

"We want the top leaders to recognise what the ordinary members are doing for the party and not directly appoint new members who are close to them ... it is not fair for us and that is why we will resign," U Nyunt Hlaing said.

He said the party's other representative for Patheingyi from 1990, Dr Than Htike, also planned to resign.

"We'll continue our social work for our local area independent of the party," he said, adding that there are about 1400 NLD members in Patheingyi township.

Speaking at a meeting in Yangon on October 17, NLD co-founder and vice chairman U Tin Oo urged party members to resolve their grievances over the party's organisation of the upcoming national assembly "with unity".

He said at a press conference in Yangon on October 17 that all levels of the party need to be united and problems should be solved within the party.

"There will be some errors

because we have no experience [holding a party assembly]. So I'd like to urge our party members to solve the controversies between each other with patience," U Tin Oo said.

U Nyan Win, the secretary of the commission organising the assembly, told *The Myanmar Times* last week that those appointed to help organise commission would not receive any permanent post and their responsibilities would end after the assembly.

"I'd like to request all party members to participate democratically," he said.

U Khin Maung Swe, a former NLD member and now chairman of the National Democratic Force, said NLD members had a responsibility to maintain the party's "good reputation" and status.

"They need to take this responsibility seriously ... they should solve this problem internally through democratic means," he said.

"In my experience, there are many people who are just seeking a place in every party but there are also people who are working hard for their party. It's up to the leaders to work out who falls into which category."

Daw Suu warns journalists about misusing growing media influence

POWER corrupts – and media power can corrupt the media, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has warned young journalists.

Speaking at the opening of the fifth session of the Pyithu Hluttaw on October 22, the National League for Democracy leader reminded reporters that their job brings duties as well as rights, and that they themselves were now role models that others aspired to.

"Young journalists, please take your job seriously when you ask questions and analyse events. Don't be superficial. You need to see whether the actions of organisations are consistent with their words," Daw

Aung San Suu Kyi said.

Journalists should acquire the right habits when young, since they might not be able to change when they get older, she added.

Answering a question about the press conference held by President U Thein Sein, which had left some journalists dissatisfied, she said: "It's good that he engaged with the media. The government and the media should communicate with each other as much as possible. It's not enough to meet just once or twice."

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi added: "The government and the [Pyidaungsu] Hluttaw are different in nature. The Hluttaw is more transparent. Nothing can be

covered up because there are 651 parliamentarians in the Hluttaw."

She went on to warn: "The media is more influential. You may be infected. If you have power, you may be at risk of corruption. The more power you have, the greater the risk. You should exercise self-control. You can change people's lives with your remarks. You should regard your profession not as a source of power to enjoy, but as a duty to perform. Reporting gossip about someone's private life doesn't benefit the country or your own community, but it can lead to their ruin. There's nothing noble about that." – *Soe Than Lynn, translated by Thit Lwin*

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Depayin Dhamma school overwhelmed by demand

Stone carving workshops wait on MCDC ahead of move

More than 500 enrol at non-profit rural school that offers Dhamma classes in English

By Phyo Wai Kyaw

By Khin Su Wai

ABOUT 500 children have enrolled at a private school in rural Depayin township, Sagaing Region, where Dhamma classes are taught in English.

Rahula Dhamma School was established in Sai Pyin Gyi village on August 24, in memory of the famous Ledi Sayadaw, who came from Sai Pyin Gyi.

The school still only operates from temporary huts and patron Sayadaw Dr Ashin Acara said he had been overwhelmed by demand for the classes.

"I thought it would be enough if I got about five or 10 children who wanted to learn about Buddhism in English. But unexpectedly more than 500 children are coming and attending classes - I got many children in a short time," he said last week.

"The reason I opened the school is so that children can learn both English and Dhamma (Buddhist teachings) at the same time," said Dr Ashin Acara, who is also head of the Pitika English Department at the State University of Sasana in Mandalay's Aungmyatharzan township.

Yahula Dhamma School offers classes in Primary I, Primary II, Secondary I, Secondary II, Intermediate on days when state schools are closed. Another branch has already been established in Depayin's



Students at the Rahula Dhamma School in Sai Pyin Gyi village. Pic: Supplied

Yin Yae village, near where Sayadaw Dr Ashin Acara, 41, grew up.

"Offering the Buddha Dhamma class to young generation is my ambition since I was 20. I will open more and more Rahula Dhamma schools in our

country," he said.

He said that he also wanted to provide free education to children from villages that have only basic education schools and to establish monastic schools in villages where there is no state school.

The Sai Pyi Gyi school was established at a cost of K400 million.

The project includes a water pump and electricity project, two hostels, a meals hall, two classrooms, a library and three buildings for monks.

DESPITE a jade trader offering Mandalay's stone carving workshops a new site in Amarapura township, most workshop owners are waiting for official word from Mandalay City Development Committee before committing to the move.

On August 9 MCDC ordered the businesses to shift from the Kyauksittan area of Mandalay to a new site within one month. Owners initially resisted, saying they couldn't afford to move.

However, only 19 of about 50 businesses in Kyauksittan have so far accepted jade trader U Soe Naing's offer of a 1.5 acre plot in rural Amarapura township.

"Most of the 19 business owners who plan to move to the new place are not included in MCDC's list of those who need to move," said business owner Ko Hlaing. "If we could get an official site from MCDC it would be better so we are waiting and haven't accepted the jade trader's offer."

MCDC said the workshops had to move because they are too noisy, spread dust particles into the air and block traffic. Most of them are closed, while a few are still finishing final projects.

While MCDC said they had to move by September 9, it is yet to enforce the order.

"I helped [the workers] because I heard about their difficulties finding a workplace," U Soe Naing said on October 15. "I don't expect anything in return. A jade market is also going to be built in the same area so the stone carvers will have the chance to expand to jade carving, and they can earn 10 times more money from jade."

"I also want stone carving workers from Myanmar to be able to compete with the Chinese businesses."

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Medical students angry over fail rate

By Khin Su Wai

STUDENTS dismissed from Mandalay University of Medicine have called a press conference to complain about their expulsion on the grounds of insufficient attendance at classes.

They pointed to the much higher failure rate at Mandalay than comparable institutions, claiming that 40 students failed the first year of medical degrees at Mandalay, compared to two at Magwe Medical University and a total of 11 at the two medical universities in Yangon.

About 100 students fail each year across all courses at Mandalay University of Medicine, they said.

The main reason, students say, is that those who attend less than 75 percent of classes for a subject are not allowed to sit the exam. Those who fail an exam two or three times are expelled.

However, at the press conference students said the attendance requirement did not apply to "privileged students". They also complained that class attendance records were inaccurate and that the attendance requirement dated from colonial era and was introduced to restrict access to education.

The October 15 press conference, at Mandalay's Datkinayama monastery in Chanmyathasi township, near Mahamuni Pagoda, was also attended by parents of the dismissed students.

"I am a teacher, earning about K100,000 [a month], and I took a second job as a

tutor to help support my son through medical university. But he was dismissed because they said his attendance rate was too low," said Daw Swe Swe, aged about 45.

Dr Than Win, rector of Mandalay Medical University, said it was the students' responsibility to ensure they attended class.

"Students are admitted to the university based on their matriculation exam but students have to attend at least 75pc of classes or they are not allowed to sit their exams. This is the standard attendance requirement at international universities – some even require 90pc attendance. This is made clear to students and their parents when they enter the university," he told *The Myanmar Times*.

The All Burma Federation of Student Unions (Upper Myanmar) issued a statement expressing sympathy for the dismissed students and complaining about what it calls government interference in education.

But Dr Than Win denied that there was mismanagement at the university and stressed that medical education required both theoretical and clinical practice, which could only take place in class.

"We are not pleased at all that those students who got attended only 25pc or 30pc of classes say the system is unfair. Medical education is not like distance education; it includes clinical and practical training. They complained our university removed 100 students every year, but we have 3500 students."



A boy rides his bike through Kangyikone ward in Mandalay's Pyigyitagun township last month. Pic: Phyo Wai Kyaw

MCDC sets new deadline for illegal residents to leave

By Phyo Wai Kyaw and Sithu Lwin

MANDALAY City Development Committee has warned illegal residents in Pyigyitagun township's Kangyikone ward to leave their homes no later than November 15, the head of the Department of Land Records said last week.

MCDC staff and regional government officials met the residents on October 24 at Magway monastery in Kangyikone and warned them once again that it was illegal for them to stay in their homes.

"We gave pamphlets to the trespassers indicating that they had to leave the place voluntarily and explaining the illegal issues. But we have not received any instructions about what we should do if they don't leave by November 15," department head U Tin Htut Kyaw said on October 25.

MCDC staff created lists of families living illegally in Kangyikone ward from October 3 to 9, prompting some to speculate that residents would be allowed to stay. However, the pamphlets indicate that MCDC will not recognise the ownership claims of the illegal residents and the measure was just to gather evidence so as to take legal action against those who sold land in the area illegally.

"MCDC says in the pamphlet that we should sue those who sold us the land. That's easy to say but hard to do in practice. It is also hard to find some of the original sellers and some plots were transferred many times. I believe it is not easy to get compensation again from them," said Ma Le Le from Kangyikone.

She said her family settled in the ward in early 2009 after buying a 900-square-foot plot K250,000. More recently, properties have been selling

for up to K3 million for an 800-square-foot plot.

"We could move from here if MCDC arranges a new place for us. MCDC's plan is irresponsible. We would be pleased if we could just get a small space, just enough for us to stay somewhere. We didn't buy this land here to make a big profit; we just used all of our resources to buy this place so we had somewhere to live," Ma Le Le said.

MCDC said in its *Mandalay* daily newspaper on September 15 that about 1180 huts and houses had been built illegally on municipal land in parts of Myayi Nandar ward in Chanmyatharsi township, Kangyikone ward, Zeeoke and Ywarthit Kalay villages in Pyigyitagun township and Nat Yekan village in Amarapura township.

MCDC warned the trespassers to leave no later than September 16 and demolished illegal homes in Myayi Nandar ward on September 17.

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Govt needs to act on land, says NGO

By Tim McLaughlin

A NEW report has urged the government to act on growing concerns over housing, land and property rights in Myanmar and warned new land legislation is "wholly inadequate".

Myanmar at the HLP Crossroads, compiled by Displacement Solutions, an Australian and Swiss non-government organisation, details the most urgent housing, land and property (HLP) concerns in Myanmar and makes a number of recommendations to the government. Released on October 26, the report builds on the group's comprehensive book on Myanmar's HLP legal framework published in 2009.

"Myanmar faces an unprecedented scale of structural landlessness in rural areas, increasing displacement threats to farmers as a result of growing investment interest by both national and international firms, expanding speculation in land and real estate, and grossly inadequate housing conditions facing significant sections of both the urban and rural population," the report says.

The report includes a lengthy list of Myanmar's HLP rights failings, including land grabs, the awarding of land concessions that displace farmers and inadequate housing.

While new protest laws and easing of media censorship have given land disputes increased exposure, the report includes a startling forecast on just how much land could end up in the hands of private agriculture firms.

"As an indication of just how large future land grabbing and consequent displacement may become, it is estimated that some 28 million acres of land classified as cultivable or arable could be put to tender for investors, including foreign investors that are already pouring into the country to exploit what is



A man and woman stand behind a fence in Shwe Pyi Thar township that was erected by the military after a dispute with residents in April. Pic: Boothee

largely seen as an untapped market," the report says.

The influx of foreign investors adds a new pressure to housing, land and property rights in Myanmar, said report author Scott Leckie, who is also the founder and director of Displacement Solutions. He said international

new legislation related to housing, land and property rights and argues that it does not do enough to protect small-scale farmers.

"The Farmland Law, adopted on March 30, 2012, is widely perceived to be pro-business and lacking sufficient protection for

to address HLP rights can have detrimental results on a country's population.

The report makes four recommendations and urges the government to undertake them by the end of the year. The recommendations include a public discussion facilitated through a national HLP conference, a new national housing, land, and property law, an in-depth analysis of land grabs, speculation and displacement and capacity building projects to educate individuals about HLP rights.

Mr Leckie said there is an increased level of awareness among certain individuals in the government about the need to tackle the failings of Myanmar's current housing, land and property rights framework.

"Myanmar can show the world that HLP rights can be taken seriously," he told *The Myanmar Times* by phone ahead of the report's release. "The willingness [from the government] is just about there."

'Myanmar can show the world that housing, land and property rights can be taken seriously.'

companies need to be vigilant to ensure they are not in any way attached to activities that would infringe on the HLP rights of Myanmar citizens.

"[Foreign companies] must ensure that their projects are not complicit or indirectly complicit [in land grabs]. It takes a considerable degree of awareness to ensure their hands are clean," Mr Leckie said.

The report also analysed

the HLP rights of small landholding farmers. The specific deficits in this single piece of legislation are symptomatic of broad deficits in Myanmar's overall HLP legislative scheme."

While much has been made about the positive lessons Myanmar can learn from its more developed ASEAN neighbours, Mr Leckie said Cambodia is a prime example of how an inability or unwillingness

Australian firms still cautious on investment

By Thomas Kean

AUSTRALIAN companies remain cautious about investing in Myanmar because of concerns over the lack of rule of law, a senior Australian government minister said last week.

Mr Bill Shorten, the minister for employment, workplace relations, financial services and superannuation, made the comments at the end of a five-day visit that saw him lead Australia's first trade mission to Myanmar.

The delegation included representatives from some of the country's largest firms, including telecoms company Optus, banking giant ANZ and Woodside, which recently announced it had acquired a 40 percent stake in an offshore block off the coast of Rakhine State in partnership with Daewoo.

Australia has never had a blanket ban on trade and investment with Myanmar. Targeted sanctions against individuals, both in the government and private sector, were removed following foreign minister Bob Carr's June visit, and only an arms embargo and ban on providing training to the military remain in place.

Mr Shorten said he believed the trade mission had "stimulated a whole lot of commercial synapses in the minds of a number of major corporations" but at the same time Australian firms remain cautious.

Mr Shorten met President U Thein Sein and eight government ministers on October 23 and said he "got the clear impression from talking to a range of ministers that they're interested in investors whose investments will generate jobs for locals, so labour-intensive investments".

"But as our delegation made clear, one has to be comfortable and confident that there's the rule of law, that people can have legal rights that are capable of international arbitration in the event of disputes," he told *The Myanmar Times* on October 26.

He said Australian firms would most likely proceed on "a deal-by-deal basis" in Myanmar.

"I think it's ... going to be on the merits of the deal and the certainty of the system into which they move," he said.

"I think a good little test will be to see whether bank licences are granted ... clarity on the foreign investment law, plus an ongoing commitment to labour standards" will

increase the chances of Australian companies doing business in Myanmar.

"Woodside has certainly been an early mover. They've been methodical and careful and I think the big thing we've garnered from our visit is to embrace Myanmar with cautious optimism."

He said Australia would also seek to increase its people-to-people links with the country in a way that boosts the capacity of Myanmar citizens, particularly in the areas of banking, insurance, finance and labour.

"The government I think knows where it wants to be but ... these are not skills that can simply be acquired by ordering them on the internet. You need people with training and experience so I think the exchange of Australian volunteers and specialists into ... Myanmar government and institutions and the training of people from Myanmar in some of our institutions will be mutually beneficial," he said.

However, so far that cooperation has not extended to the Myanmar military.

During Mr Shorten's visit, the Lowy Interpreter website, run by influential Australian think tank the Lowy Institute for International Policy, published an article calling for greater engagement between the Australian defence forces with the Tatmadaw.

Dr John Blaxland from the Australian National University in Canberra said while Australia had taken "a number of initiatives in response" to reforms in Myanmar, "there remains considerable reluctance to proactively engage in the area of defence cooperation".

Elsewhere in ASEAN, Australia's Defence Cooperation Program has "helped foster a network of relatively liberal minded and well placed senior military officers who are well disposed towards Australia" but so far the program "has not been extended to Myanmar".

When asked about the issue, Mr Shorten said he couldn't speak for the Australian Defence Force "but if they were to ask my opinion I would say it makes sense".

"The military is still a significant institution in the life of Myanmar," he said. "The Australian Federal Police have got a credible track record [in Myanmar]; they've trained over 300 police from here. I think that middle-level exchange of captains and majors and colonels ... probably does serve some value."

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Courts will decide land disputes if talks fail: president

By Soe Than Lynn

LAND disputes will be resolved according to the law if negotiations fail to bring about a settlement, President U Thein Sein said last week.

Over the past 18 months, land has become a volatile issue, with many farmers complaining they have lost their fields to private and state organisations. Greater freedom to protest and publish articles about the issues has also seen long-dormant disputes enter the public spotlight.

Speaking at a press conference in Nay Pyi Taw on October 21, the president said in response to a question from *The Myanmar Times* that a negotiated settlement was preferable to arbitration in the courts.

"In some cases, it will have to be settled between four sides: the relevant ministry, the courts, the farmers and the plaintiffs. If not settled [through negotiation], they will have to proceed according to the law," he said.

When pressed on whether farmers who, under existing laws, had illegally occupied land could expect any support from the government, the president said: "Though I am the president, I am not in a position to intervene in the disputes or

to give advice on them. It just needs to negotiate until an agreement is reached between the two sides. If not, they will be dealt with according to the law."

The press conference was the president's first in Myanmar and attracted 128 journalists. It lasted about two hours and more than 20 journalists raised about 30 questions.

Topics discussed included land disputes, peace for Kachin State, the Rakhine conflict, whether the president would stand for a second term, amending the constitution, education, the future of the Myitsone dam, military cooperation with the United States and whether the democratic process could be reversed.

Most journalists said they were not particularly satisfied with the questions and answers because time was limited and the convenors tried to allow as many organisations as possible.

However, the press conference was significant in that it showed a level of respect for journalists lacking under previous regimes. During the press conference, President U Thein Sein said that the activities of the government had been successful in part because of its collaboration with the media and he requested journalists to make the public aware of the government's activities. - *Translated by Thit Luwin*



President U Thein Sein speaks to the media during a press conference at the presidential residence in Nay Pyi Taw on October 21. U Thein Sein held his first news conference inside Myanmar since taking power last year and ushering in a period of sweeping reforms. Pic: AFP

Myanmar open to aid for Muslims

NAY PYI TAW – Myanmar has no choice but to accept foreign aid for Muslims hit by recent sectarian violence or it will face an international backlash, President U Thein Sein said last week.

His comments on October 21 follow a series of protests by Buddhists in Myanmar against efforts by a world Islamic body to help Muslims affected by the violence in Rakhine State.

Dozens were killed in the Buddhist-Muslim clashes and tens of thousands displaced on both sides.

"We need humanitarian assistance. If we reject the humanitarian assistance, the international community will not accept us," U Thein Sein told reporters in his first domestic press conference since taking office 18 months ago.

"We have to feed the people. It costs US\$10,000 a day," he said of the Rakhine State camps.

"Our government cannot afford it. We are not in a situation to feed the people in the camps with the help of ordinary citizens so we have to accept humanitarian assistance from the international community. If we do not accept the humanitarian assistance they will say we are not human."

More than 50,000 Muslims, mainly Rohingya, are housed in several camps in Rakhine and unable to go home. - *AFP*

MCM

Basics of journalism training course

Applications are invited from young graduates keen to participate in a journalism training course.

The six-week course, due to begin in the first week of November, will be conducted in English and presented by experienced foreign and Myanmar journalists.

Please send your application to participate in the course, explaining why you want to be a journalist, as well as a typed CV, to administration@myanmartimes.com.mm and marked "Journalism training course application" in the subject line.

Short-listed applicants will be interviewed to determine their fluency.

Prominent academic warns of 'cowboy' education providers

By Tim McLaughlin

A PROMINENT British academic has applauded the strong desire for further education among Myanmar's youth but also cautioned against opportunistic establishments looking to take advantage of an emerging market.

Dr John Quelch, dean, vice president and distinguished professor of international management at the China Europe International Business School (CEIBS) in Shanghai, visited Myanmar last week in his role as board member of multinational advertising and public relations firm WPP. A New York-based subsidiary of WPP, Ogilvy & Mather, bought a stake in Myanmar company Today Advertising in May.

Dr Quelch said during his visit he had been encouraged by the number of young people eager to further their education through tertiary study.

"I'm a great believer in - although there are cultural differences - that 95 percent of our genetic code is wired the same way wherever we come from in the world and young people have the same aspirations and the same needs

and challenges. It is important to set up the enabling environment that enables the natural energy and entrepreneurship and spirit of young people to flourish," Dr Quelch said.

Like all markets, the education sector is seeing an influx of new players as Myanmar begins to re-engage economically and politically with the international community. While reputable institutions, such as the US-based Johns Hopkins

value in the serious market," Dr Quelch said. "It is very important that young people be protected from these 'cowboys'."

Dr Quelch said the Ministry of Education, along with international organisations such as the World Bank and US Agency for International Development, should regulate the private education sector, adding that there is no shortage of countries willing to participate

development courses but in its 18 years of operation CEIBS is yet to have any students from Myanmar, a fact that Dr Quelch said he is hoping to quickly change.

"In the full-time English MBA program, we have had students from every ASEAN country except Myanmar. Hopefully we can broaden our reach to include Myanmar," he said.

A major hurdle for Myanmar students hoping to study abroad is the cost, including tuition and travel expenses. A full-time MBA course at CEIBS cost US\$56,800 in 2012, while the Executive MBA course carried a hefty price tag of \$85,864.

Dr Quelch said he is confident CEIBS will be able to provide substantial financial assistance to bring courses within reach of qualified Myanmar students who may not have the finances to afford them on their own.

"We have a significant merit-based scholarship program. Students who apply, if they are qualified, would receive significant financial support," Dr Quelch said.

CEIBS was founded in 1994 as a joint venture agreement between the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation and the European Commission.

'The opening up of this market is going to put a lot of young people at risk of being bamboozled into signing up for degrees that have no value in the serious market.'

University, have begun the process of redeveloping academic connections with Myanmar and facilitating Myanmar students to study abroad, schools with dubious credentials are looking to cash in quickly.

"The opening up of this market is going to put a lot of young people at risk of being bamboozled into signing up for irresponsible, for-profit, degree-granting institutions that grant degrees that have no

in joint educational development in Myanmar.

In an address to Myanmar business representatives during his "Building Brand" presentation, Dr Quelch announced that CEIBS will actively work to sign up Myanmar students to its multiple post-graduate and executive business education programs.

The school offers a full-time MBA program, and part-time executive MBAs and executive

State media cautions over Chinese pills

STATE media earlier this month issued a public health warning urging consumers to avoid a popular traditional Chinese rheumatism medication.

A Food and Drug Administration (FDA) laboratory analysis cited in an article in the state-run *New Light of Myanmar* newspaper on October 18 said Lin Chee Tan contains dexamethasone, which has a number of harmful side effects.

The Lin Chee Tan pill is illegal and has no FDA registration number but is widely available in Myanmar. The traditional Chinese medicine is produced by Kong Chew Drugworks, the newspaper said.

Side effects from dexamethasone include stomach upsets, weight gain and a puffy face, increased vulnerability to fungal infection, osteoporosis, cataract and glaucoma. These pills should not be taken without a doctor's recommendation, said Dr Kyaw Win, a general practitioner from Insein township.

U Aung Tun, a pharmaceutical trader based at Mingalar Market, said Lin Chee Tan pills are still "very popular" and began coming across the border from Thailand four years ago.

"We can't stop many illegal and low-quality drugs entering the market because we are too short-staffed. ... Most illegal products come from China, Thailand and India," said FDA director Dr Zaw Win. - *Shwe Yee Saw Myint*



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Drug resistance looms large in Myanmar



IN DEPTH
with
Yamon Phu Thit

MG San Win from Win Kan village in Mon State's Kyaikto township caught malaria in July while working in a lemon orchard.

"It was the worst illness I've ever had," he said following his recovery earlier this year.

"The headaches and muscle pain were terrible."

His father said that Mg San Win has a habit of sleeping without a bed net coated in insecticide, which is an important form of protection against malaria-carrying mosquitoes.

"I hate bed nets - I can't breathe properly," Mg San Win said.

Mg San Win lives in an area where re-infection looms large due to growing resistance to artemisinin, a drug used to treat *Plasmodium falciparum*, the most dangerous of the five parasites that cause malaria.

According to a 2008 World Health Organisation (WHO) report, malaria is the most significant public health challenge in Myanmar. There are an estimated 4.2 million cases every year, accounting for about 20 percent of the total figure in Southeast Asia.

About 69pc of Myanmar's population lives in areas where malaria is endemic or prevalent, the WHO says, while 75pc of malarial deaths in the Greater Mekong sub-region occur in Myanmar.

Three-quarters of cases are caused by the most dangerous strain, said the 2011-15 Strategic Framework for Artemisinin Resistance Containment in Myanmar (MARC).

MARC is endorsed by the Ministry of Health and was launched by a large number

of national and international partners in July 2011.

But Myanmar is also more affected by artemisinin resistance than any other country, ahead of Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam, a study published in the *Lancet* journal earlier this year found. MARC is an initiative to tackle this growing public health issue.

"The joint effort is a response to a growing concern regarding the emergence of malaria parasite resistant to artemisinin derivatives," the WHO says.

Artemisinin-resistant malaria was first detected in Cambodia in late 2006. Growth since then - drug resistance along Thailand's northwestern border near Myanmar shot up from 0.6pc in 2001 to 20pc in 2010, the *Lancet* says - prompted WHO regional director Shin Young-soo to warn on October 1 that countries in the region must "intensify and expand" efforts to contain it.

Resistance to the anti-malarial drug could "eventually render [artemisinin] obsolete, putting millions of lives at risk", the UK-based Wellcome Trust says.

"If drug resistance isn't successfully halted in Myanmar, it could strike Bangladesh, India and possibly Africa," agrees Mr James Howlett, communication officers for the Three Diseases Fund.

With the exact cause of resistance unknown, further research is being undertaken to determine whether it is a result of treating the *falciparum* malaria strain using only artemisinin-based medication, known as monotherapies.

Monotherapy medication continues to be widely manufactured despite a 2007 United Nations resolution highlighting the associated dangers.

Monotherapies are cheaper to produce than combination therapies but the World Health



A World Concern employee prescribes malaria medication as part of a program support by the Three Diseases Fund. Pic: Supplied/World Concern

Organisation says resistance develops more quickly.

"WHO recommends the combination therapy because it is more effective, not only to contain drug resistance but also to combat the disease," said Dr Phyo Min Swe, public health analyst from the Three Diseases Fund.

Scientists believe self-prescribing anti-malarial drugs might also be a factor contributing to resistance. A spokesperson from the Myanmar Medical Association's malaria project told *The Myanmar Times* this was a problem in Myanmar, despite some modest behavioural changes.

Mr Howlett said education was needed to combat the practice of self-prescribing malaria medication.

"Rather than going to see a trained physician, malaria

patients sometimes buy medicine from the nearest shop. And they don't complete the dose once they start feeling better," he said, adding that he was also concerned about the prevalence of counterfeit drugs, another possible contributor to artemisinin resistance.

"Some of the fake drugs are manufactured in neighbouring countries. It's hard to pinpoint where exactly, but the border is porous and there is no way to guarantee the efficacy of these drugs," he said.

While the monitoring of medication and its use is important in the fight against drug-resistant malaria, prevention is also a priority. In Myanmar, Tanintharyi and Bago regions and Mon and Kayin states are among the nation's priority areas for these programs.

World Concern Myanmar is implementing community-based malaria prevention and control programs in Bilin, Thaton and Kyaikto townships in Mon State with funding from the Three Diseases Fund. The programs have seen health volunteers trained and health education programs carried out in 46 villages in the three townships.

"In the past, the public wasn't afraid of malaria. However, now that people are better educated about the disease, they visit the doctor for a diagnosis as soon as they catch a fever," Daw Than Nwet, a village health worker in Win Kan village told *The Myanmar Times* on 28 August.

"There have been fewer cases of malaria this monsoon season. Far more people used to die of it 10 years ago than is the case now."

Migrant workers face high malaria risk

Programs need to target migrant worker communities to consolidate gains made in fight against malaria

By Yamon Phu Thit

MIGRANT workers are more vulnerable to contracting malaria than other segments of the population and should be targeted with education programs and control activities, an official from the Ministry of Health says.

A growing awareness about the health risks of untreated malaria had led to a drop in mortality rates among the general public, said Dr Saw Lwin, deputy director general of the ministry's Department of Health.

However, the susceptibility of migrant workers to malaria remains an area of concern and more effort needs to be made to combat their high risk of infection, he added.

Dr Saw Lwin said forest areas, such as the Bago Yoma in central Myanmar and Rakhine Yoma to the west, had much less medical staff outreach than in lowland

areas. Increasing the number of community health workers is a critical step towards tackling the issue, he said, as it would enable malaria control services to be conducted in hard-to-reach areas.

While the number of infections has fallen in villages where there are enough community health

'While the number of infections has decreased in villages where there are sufficient numbers of community health workers, no such training is provided within migrant worker populations.'

workers, no such training is provided within migrant worker populations, Dr Saw Lwin added.

"Prevention, early diagnosis and treatment can lower rates of infection. We plan to send mobile medical teams to areas where there are large numbers of migrant workers," he said.

Malaria is transmitted to

humans by female mosquitoes of the *Anopheles* genus and the infectious disease is endemic in 284 out of 330 townships in Myanmar.

Ministry figures show the number of reported malaria cases and fatalities in 2010 was 420,808 and 788 respectively. In 2011 there were a slightly

higher number of cases but fewer deaths, with 421,000 and 564 respectively.

Dr Saw Lwin said that labourers engaged in gem mining, logging, agriculture and construction work are typically most at risk.

"People go into the forest for work and become infected. It's as though the malaria parasite is being carried from forests to

people," said Dr Saw Lwin said.

The World Health Organisation says malaria epidemics can occur when "people with low immunity move into areas with intense malaria transmission, for instance to find work, or as refugees".

WHO reports that about 68 percent of Myanmar's population

an interview in late August that migrant workers pose the greatest challenge when it comes to malaria control activities.

"We don't want to stop people from working; what we need to do is understand how to reach these people and teach them better ways to protect themselves against malaria," Mr Howlett said.

Malaria control activities are carried out by the Ministry of Health's National Malaria Control Program and supported by the Global Fund, Three Diseases Fund and Japan Grant Assistance. Activities include treatment services, distributing long-lasting insecticidal nets, education programs and training of community health workers.

The Three Diseases Fund, established in 2006 to tackle HIV, malaria and tuberculosis, was recently replaced by the Three Millennium Development Goals Fund, which will have less programs focusing on the three diseases.

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Foreign direct investment: clearing the infrastructure bottlenecks

Professors Lau Sim Yee and Tan Kim Song are directors at Myanmar Economic Resources International (MERI), a private think tank based in Yangon. Supported by Maybank from Malaysia, MERI has in recent months undertaken a number of capacity building projects aimed at facilitating exchange of experiences between banks and regulators in Myanmar and their East Asian counterparts. In this article they explore reform of the banking sector in Myanmar

IN DEPTH*
with
Tan Kim Song and Lau Sim Yee



THE Pyidaungsu Hluttaw's expected approval of amendments to the foreign investment law in the coming weeks will mark a new milestone in the opening up of the Myanmar economy. If there is one clear message from the experiences of the East Asian economies over the past few decades, it is that foreign investment can be a strong catalyst both for economic growth and social development – if the process of investment inflows is well managed.

Foreign investment should not only be seen as a way to create employment, although this objective is important. It should also be viewed as a means of helping to promote a more holistic development of the economy and society. A well thought out strategy to attract and support the right kinds of foreign investment and to manage their impact is needed to help achieve these broader objectives.

Importantly, such a strategy does not require intrusive planning and direction on the part of the bureaucrats. Other East Asian economies have shown that it is possible for such a strategy to be market-based without distorting the incentives for foreign investors. A certain amount of tradeoff between short-term and long-term gains is necessary for the government and the foreign investors in order to realise the government's broader objectives and to achieve a win-win outcome for both the government and foreign investors. Other East Asian economies have

demonstrated that with the right strategy and the right policy incentives, such tradeoffs are possible without compromising the commercial principles of foreign investors.

A key role for the government in engaging foreign investors is to be an effective facilitator of investment flows. Transparency of policy, both in terms of policy intents and execution, could greatly help to facilitate investment flows at this stage of Myanmar's development. For example, foreign investors want clarity over the amendments to the foreign investment law. More than that, they are looking for a clear roadmap for sustainable economic development in the medium

years), medium term (5-10 years) and short term (3-5 years) goals. At each stage of the process there should be a meaningful role for foreign investment.

An area where policy clarity is urgently needed is how the Myanmar government intends to tackle the challenges arising from the lack of adequate infrastructure – both soft and hard, physical infrastructure. Bottlenecks to investment are painfully evident in areas such as low agriculture productivity, unpredictable electricity supply, poor telecommunication and information facilities, poor transportation, inefficient distribution networks for producers and consumers, an inefficient banking

‘An area where policy clarity is urgently needed is how the Myanmar government intends to tackle the challenges arising from the lack of adequate infrastructure – both soft and hard, physical infrastructure.’

term and the long term, and a better understanding of how they can be a meaningful participant in the process.

The roadmap should spell out the development vision of the government. It could spell out the government's broad economic objectives, such as per capita gross domestic product (GDP) growth, along with other objectives, such as social and political well-being and technological advancement. To be effective, the process should be guided by specific goals to be achieved within stated time frames: for example, long term (10-20

and financial sector, and inadequate human resources capacity in both the public and private sectors to manage economic growth and development. Unless there are active efforts to remove these infrastructure bottlenecks, foreign investment inflows may not accelerate. A clear statement on how the government intends to tackle this issue and how foreign investors could help in this process will go a long way in assuring the latter of the soundness of their investment decisions.

To its credit, the government of President

U Thein Sein has been hard at work in this area. Recognising the considerable financial constraints it faces in building up the infrastructure, the government has been actively seeking external resources for this purpose. Already, the efforts are yielding results. Japan provides a shining example in this regard.

Japan is one of the first countries that President U Thein Sein visited after assuming office. The success of his visit has

infrastructure and rural development.

Encouraged and prompted by the Japanese government, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank have also agreed to take necessary measures as early as January 2013 to clear Myanmar's arrears. This will in turn help pave the way for Myanmar to receive financial and technical assistance from these multilateral financial institutions.

Japan is also actively helping to promote special economic zones

and industrial parks in Myanmar. President U Thein Sein's government has offered Japan the right to develop the Thilawa Special Economic Zone (SEZ), which has a total area of 2400 hectares. The Japanese government has in turn pledged to provide long term yen loans to help develop infrastructure in a 450-acre industrial park area at Thilawa by 2015. The Myanmar government is also seeking an additional \$3.2 billion loan from Japan to jointly develop the Dawei SEZ, which covers about 200 square kilometres.

Japan's active

involvement is not the only success story. The various initiatives launched by President U Thein Sein in the past one year have helped convince many other countries of Myanmar's commitment to open up its economy. Since the beginning of 2012, Myanmar has made progress in the unification of foreign exchange rates, granted permission to private banks to conduct foreign exchange transactions, reduced tariffs for used cars, revised foreign investment laws, simplified immigration procedures and abolished pre-publication censorship. These changes have encouraged many countries to step up their development assistance programs and as a result significantly expanded and diversified the sources of development assistance available to Myanmar.

As the Myanmar government works to secure more official assistance to help develop infrastructure, it should also make greater efforts to enlist the help of foreign investors. Other East Asian countries have shown that – when suitably incentivised – foreign investors from the private sector can make a huge contribution to infrastructure development too. A group of dedicated experts from both the public and private sectors could be assembled to help work out a suitable strategy. The experiences of the dynamic



A worker walks home on the outskirts of Yangon. Pic: AFP

Preparing for a 'miracle': rectify, diversify, multiply

By Dr Min Min Thaw

THERE is great anticipation both inside and outside Myanmar over amendments to the foreign investment law that are being finalised in the parliament.

This is understandable; many countries have greatly benefitted from foreign direct investment (FDI), which often creates jobs, results in improved infrastructure, generates tax revenue, provides training for workers and ultimately promotes economic growth and increases the standard of living for citizens of the recipient country.

Likewise, companies that make the investments can potentially make tremendous profits from the country's relatively cheap, hard-working and flexible labour and abundant natural resources. However, the amendments to the law will need to ensure investment creates a win-win scenario and is relatively fair to both sides.

As the government begins to "open" up the economy, one of the common misconceptions is that FDI will miraculously and instantly solve all economic problems, particularly in reducing the high unemployment rate.

It is important to realise that multinational companies are not responsible for and have little interest in helping to develop physical infrastructure, such as electricity, telecommunications and transportation. At best, they may improve or extend some of the existing infrastructure that pertains to their profit incentives.

Myanmar lacks human capital, has an overvalued real estate market in its larger cities and possesses low-skilled workers. In addition, Myanmar lacks the supply chain required for many large manufacturing companies to consider relocating their production here.

On the other hand, timing may be on Myanmar's side given recent dramatic increases in the price of labour and increasing nationalism in China. To

capitalise on these changes, Myanmar has to make sincere efforts to implement efficient policies for building much-needed infrastructure while employing the highest levels of transparency and accountability.

Effective and sustainable development policies could see Myanmar attract sufficient foreign investment to create thousands of jobs in manufacturing. In the short and medium term, an effectively monitored and enforced fiscal stimulus package, in conjunction with increased physical and human capital, are all required to create jobs and improve the economic welfare of citizens.

Myanmar's existing infrastructure needs to be rebuilt or upgraded urgently. Increased spending on infrastructure should come not only from non-government organisations, foreign governments and development banks. Increased spending on infrastructure creates jobs at many levels over both the short and medium terms. The ratio of government spending on basic infrastructure relative to GDP needs to increase substantially, while improving transparency and accountability at the same time.

For example, detailed information about infrastructure projects, such as the number of companies bidding for a project, detailed cost structure of the winning company, the projected timeframe for completion and so on, should be published in local newspapers and on a dedicated website. An independent watchdog is needed to enforce and oversee projects to make sure that they are being implemented as promised and to the highest quality. It is imperative to make sure that increased spending physical infrastructure is used efficiently.

Dramatic increases in fiscal spending on education and health are also required. In 2009, Myanmar had the lowest healthcare spending as a percentage of GDP in the world. Many governments, NGOs and private foundations have already shown genuine

interests in helping to eradicate some diseases, increase vaccinations for children, reduce the child mortality rate and improve maternal and child health. But increased government spending on healthcare creates jobs for doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals.

It is essential to keep in mind that people who are not healthy cannot work and positively contribute to the economy at their full potential. Improving basic education is also a must, as people with poor skills and knowledge are unable to compete in a global labour market. Accumulating human capital and a healthy labour force are necessary factors in promoting sustainable growth over the long term.

The country needs to promote small and medium domestic businesses by increasing access to credit at lower interest rates. Encouraging small business creates jobs and fosters entrepreneurial skills. Myanmar should encourage socially responsible but profit-seeking microfinance institutions and investors to compete with regular commercial and savings and loan banks. Some small and medium businesses may fail but many will thrive, and medium-sized businesses may eventually become part of the supply chain needed for attracting large manufacturers to Myanmar. Having a strong network of small and medium businesses will also create a solid foundation for financial markets in future.

Myanmar should also seek to promote tourism, as it is a relatively easy means of creating jobs in the short term. The country is unspoiled and "new" to the rest of the world. Increased access to credit coupled with a higher volume of tourists will lead to the creation of many small businesses. Promoting tourism may have some negative social consequences, such as a loss of cultural heritage and ecological degradation, but safeguards can be put in place and the economic benefits outweigh social costs, at least in the short term.

Another focus should be increasing productivity in agriculture. In 2009, Myanmar ranked seventh globally in terms of rice exports, implying that it still has some comparative advantages in rice production. The United Nations projects the global population to reach eight billion by 2030 and global demand for rice is not expected to decrease. There is room to improve production, storage and distribution technologies while increasing the economic wellbeing of farmers. As the country develops further during the next decade or two, there will be a shift in labour from agriculture to industry but until then it is imperative that Myanmar takes advantage of what it is already good at.

Optimistic but realistic views on the development process in Myanmar are required. Policymakers need to focus on the accumulation of physical and human capital and diversifying the economy to both create jobs in the short term and also attract large multinational companies in the longer term.

Economic miracles only happen to countries that prepare themselves well. Myanmar has many challenges ahead but an economic "miracle" is possible if the basic foundations for promoting growth are installed, effective economic policies are implemented and accountability and transparency are improved.

The journey towards creating an economic miracle should be viewed as a political opportunity for policymakers, who at the same time can fulfill their economic responsibilities to the people of Myanmar.

(Min Min Thaw has a PhD in economics and teaches economic development, international economics, managerial economics and decision-making science in the executive MBA program at Hawaii Pacific University. Her research focuses are microfinance, international banking and finance and economic development and she can be reached at minsquarethaw@gmail.com.)

East Asian economies could provide relevant lessons in formulating and executing such a strategy. If necessary, the government could also consider involving foreign experts in this process.

There are good reasons why Myanmar is attracting such excitement among prospective foreign investors, particularly in East Asia. Myanmar is rich in natural resources and with a population of more than 62 million has a potentially large domestic market and competitive labour costs. A survey by Japan External Trade Organisation (JETRO), for example, found that the average monthly wage for a worker in the manufacturing sector is

only about \$68 in Yangon, while the corresponding wages in Phnom Penh, Vientiane and Ho Chi Minh City are \$82, \$118 and \$130 respectively. For the non-manufacturing sector, the average monthly wage for a worker in Yangon is \$173, compared with \$167 in Vientiane, \$266 in Phnom Penh and \$320 in Ho Chi Minh. There are not many other economies that hold the same promise as Myanmar.

The momentum for foreign investment inflows into Myanmar could be sustained for a long time, with enormous benefits to the economy. But a well thought-out strategy to manage foreign investment is needed to sustain the momentum.

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'Whistle for help' plan hits hurdles



IN DEPTH

with Cherry Thein

THE "Whistle for Help" campaign was billed as a means of countering sexual harassment on public transport through public embarrassment of alleged perpetrators. Instead, some women who have blown a whistle when facing unwanted attention from men on Yangon's buses have faced indifference from fellow passengers, prompting questions about the campaign's effectiveness.

In an article in the state-run *Mirror* newspaper on August 29, writer Khin Maung Htay said it would be better if the campaign was stopped, citing the experience of one of his daughter's friends, who was sexually harassed on No 48 bus line as she returned home to Hledan in the evening.

He said she blew a whistle to alert other passengers and shouted at the driver to go to the police but received no help.

The campaign was "useless" and did little to help women, Khin Maung Htay argued.

In another incident, a young woman from outside Yangon was assaulted by a man, who was aged about 50, said Daw May Oo Tha, a member of women's organisation Win-Win.

"She got no help even though she blew the whistle. The man got angry at her instead of apologising, while people on the bus panicked but didn't help at all. She got so angry and stormed off the bus," she said.

Daw May Oo Tha said the incident showed the campaign needed to be expanded so that it achieved broader support.

"I welcome the campaign although it is still far from achieving its target of stopping sexual harassment. It is a message; women are saying that they no longer accept this situation but [the campaign] needs to be done more carefully and seriously," she said, adding that members should not give up even if they are criticised.

Launched in February, the campaign has seen activists

distribute whistles at busy bus stations, along with pamphlets that instruct women to blow the whistle if they experience sexual harassment on a bus.

"Please go and help the women who blows a whistle and let's stop this unacceptable behaviour," the pamphlet said. "The campaign and advocacy is not directed against all men but only those who commit these acts."

Daw Htar Htar, a member of the campaign committee, said the group planned to expand its work to distributing educational literature on gender issues to the public, including a book of stories about sexual harassment and information about sections 354 and 509 of the Penal Code, under which those accused of sexual harassment can be charged.

Members are also collecting feedback about the Whistle for Help campaign for future programs, said Daw Htar Htar.

While acknowledging the campaign had encountered some difficulties, she said tackling day-to-day sexual harassment was an essential step to ensuring gender equality.

"People might think sexual harassment on a bus is a normal, everyday thing, something we don't need to pay much attention too. They think that when the country gets richer, when the government provides more buses, the problem will automatically be solved. But we don't feel this is right," she said.

"[Conservative people] also complain that women wear modern, 'hot' clothes and so are inviting trouble. Whenever women face sexual harassment, they are taught to stay silent and keep their head down. But this just sends the signal that women think these actions are okay - it is absolutely not the correct response."

Daw Hla Su, a teacher from Tarmwe township, said she believes the lack of sex education in schools is a major factor behind sexual assaults.

While some health-related non-government groups have called for the introduction of sex education in schools, the response from the state school system has generally been that sex education does not conform to Myanmar cultural norms.



A commuter on a women-only bus in Yangon. Pic: Seng Mai

"Children learn about sex informally from the internet or videos," Daw Hla Su said. "This also happens in other countries but is more of an issue here because we don't have the right approach to teaching sex education at school."

"It is hard to teach people when they're older. You need to start when they are young ... [so] we should adopt both an accurate and relevant approach to sex education," she said.

U Thiha Kyaing from Phoenix, a local non-government organisation that works on HIV prevention, said the campaign will only be effective if people were aware what the whistle is being used for and what the group's aims are. Ideally, gender equality and respect for women will be ingrained through the education system, he said.

"So that people can better understand the concept, there needs to be more awareness and education throughout all levels of society. This starts at school.

Another important element is sex education, which is almost unheard of in Myanmar but it is now very much needed," he said.

The group will also have to overcome a natural tendency to stay out of other people's affairs, he added.

"It is very rare in Myanmar to meddle in other's affairs, especially if there is an element of risk involved. For example, when a pickpocket puts their hand in someone else's bag, normally nobody will dare to stop them, even the conductor or driver, because they are afraid," he said.

But not everybody subscribes to this view. Ko Zaw Min Htwe, a 33-year-old electrical engineer from Sanchaung township, said he physically intervenes when he sees sexual harassment by pretending to inadvertently bump the perpetrators, which normally forces them to stop.

"I feel so angry and disgusted at the sexual harassment that

women have to go through," he said.

Campaign member Daw Saw Yu said the whistle is just a tool to respond to individual cases of sexual harassment and not a solution to the problem.

"We must be patient and careful if we want to change the overall situation ... we will try hard, step by step, to create a safer and more secure environment," she said.

The campaign group is also planning to hold sex education training and talks and to spread the whistle campaign outside Yangon.

"Our government is making a positive transition to democracy and we think it is the right time to express our feelings about this," Daw Htar Htar said. "We have a lot of work to do; Whistle for Help is just like an alarm that we hope will alert people to this problem so that everyone who shares our attitude, hope and interest can work together to improve society."

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UNFC reps expected to meet govt peace team

By Ei Ei Toe Lwin

MEMBERS of the Chiang Mai-based United Nationalities Federal Council are expected to meet U Aung Min, the head of the government's peace negotiating team, before the end of the year, a facilitator of peace discussions said last week.

The council has 11 members, including the Kachin Independence Organisation, New Mon State Party and Karen National Union, and was established in February 2011. While many of its members have agreed initial ceasefires with the new government, those agreements are considered fragile, with much more needed to be done to consolidate the peace process.

"We proposed to the two sides to meet, discuss and negotiate about the peace process. Both sides didn't say no. The plan is for them to meet in December but we can't say exactly when and where they will meet and what will they discuss," U Nyo Ohn Myint told *The Myanmar Times* on October 23.

U Nyo Ohn Myint is a former head of foreign affairs for the National League for Democracy-Liberated Areas in Chiang Mai who resigned in May 2012 to take part in the peace process. He is an American citizen and was recently removed from

the government's travel blacklist.

Members of the UNFC, which aims to establish a federal union in Myanmar, met U Aung Min in Thailand in November 2011 for informal talks on the peace process.

However, the UNFC has also threatened that its members could walk away initial ceasefire agreements already reached with the U Thein Sein government unless offensives against the Kachin Independence Army are suspended.

Moreover, in a May 10 statement the group's members said it was impossible for them to accept President U Thein Sein's proposal for armed ethnic groups to set up political parties, contest elections and carry out changes in the parliament according to majority decision, saying to do so would compromise its members' negotiations with the government.

U Nyo Ohn Myint said the government peace negotiation team was willing to meet UNFC members in order to implement the president's "all-inclusive peace dialogue".

"We think that ethnic armed groups are also our national brethren [so] they should meet. And also [UNFC secretary] U Naing Han Thar wants to meet with U Aung Min for political negotiations. U Aung Min is also willing to meet them to strengthen the present peace commitments," U Nyo Ohn Myint said.



A team of doctors from Bangkok-based Bumrungrad Hospital screens a child with a congenital heart defect at Yangon Children's Hospital on October 25. Pic: Ko Taik

Two Myanmar children to get free heart surgery in Thailand

By Nuam Bawi

BANGKOK-BASED Bumrungrad International Hospital is to offer free operations to two Myanmar children suffering from heart disease who cannot afford treatment.

The hospital has been giving free treatment to Thai children for the past five years, and has already performed 625 operations without charge. This is the first time they are offering free operations to foreign children.

"They've chosen Myanmar because we are a neighbouring country, and because many Myanmar people receive treatment at Bumrungrad," said Dr Mo Nyan Kyaw, Myanmar representative and country manager of Bumrungrad International Hospital.

A 24-member team, including five doctors from Bumrungrad International Hospital, arrived in Yangon on October 25 and the following day examined 30 children suffering from congenital heart disease who applied to participate

in the program.

From the applicants the hospital will choose two children, who will also have to be cleared by medical staff to be healthy enough to travel to Thailand for treatment.

"All the 30 patients on the list really need an operation but we can't send them all. I just gave information [about the project] to everyone who came to the hospital and we gave them all the chance to get a check-up with the doctors from Bumrungrad International Hospital," said Dr Khin Maung Oo, a consultant in paediatric cardiology at Yangon Children's Hospital's Department of Paediatric Cardiology.

"Some children with congenital heart disease cases are very difficult [to treat] and we can't do the operation in Myanmar because of technical shortages. Therefore, we will choose [the two participants] based on who needs treatment at a better-equipped hospital and also their families' inability to afford such an operation," Dr Khin Maung Oo said.

"Although the doctors in Myanmar do as much as they can the problem is there are no surgeons here who specialise in treating heart disease in children. Now the children are receiving operations here with a surgeon for adults. Although there is no problem when the doctors encounter simple cases, when they meet difficult cases they worry that they cannot make the operation successful. ... Congenital heart disease cases are very complex."

Kaorop Wongprasert, senior manager of Bumrungrad International Hospital, said a shortlist of 10 children would be announced on October 27.

"We will choose 10 children and the two children with the most urgent needs will get the operation in December and the rest will be put on a waiting list. We will offer them operations depending on the funding for this charity project," he said.

December 5 was chosen as the date for the operation to coincide with the birthday of the King of Thailand.

MSF says it won't back down on Sittwe clinic

By Yamon Phu Thit

INTERNATIONAL healthcare experts are determined to go ahead with the reopening of a clinic in Sittwe despite opposition from some Rakhine residents in the state capital.

The October 18 reopening of Médecins sans Frontières' (MSF) Shu Khin Tha clinic had to be cancelled when 30 protesters picketed the site, claiming that MSF was receiving funding from the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and would give preferential treatment to people they described as "Bengalis".

The clinic, on Strand Road in Mizan ward, was to be operated by the Dutch branch of MSF, Artsen Zonder Grenzen, also known as Doctors Without Borders. The clinic's activities were suspended following the outbreak of violence in June.

MSF deputy head of mission Vickie Hawkins said her organisation was

determined to reopen the clinic, which focuses on HIV and malaria treatment and primary healthcare, despite the opposition.

"We'll be talking to the minister for health, government officials and community officials to reopen the clinic," she said.

"We've been involved in discussions

'We'll be talking to the minister, government and community officials to reopen the clinic.'

in the community, and residents are very supportive."

Ms Hawkins said that more than 80 percent of MSF funding comes from private sources, allowing activities on the ground to be independent of economic, political or religious agendas.

"MSF is independent of any government or institution. We

make our own decisions and provide healthcare to those who need it most," Ms Hawkins said.

She said local health conditions had deteriorated since the outbreak of violence and it was important to get the clinic operating again as soon as possible.

"We have about 350 HIV patients

who need drugs and medical consultations every three months to avoid the side-effects of treatment and opportunistic infections," she said, expressing concern over the rise in malaria cases that normally follows the end of the rainy season.

"If the patients don't receive treatment in time, the malaria will be more complicated to cure, and

the number of infections will rise," she said.

The protesters, who held up signs and distributed pamphlets declaring "We do not want AZG/MSF with the aid of OIC", accused MSF of discriminating against Rakhine residents while favouring the "Bengalis", according to a Facebook page run by Rakhine activists called "Rakhine Straight Views".

The Facebook page said it would be acceptable if MSF provided assistance through reliable Rakhine institutions or government organisations, but said they found it unacceptable that MSF was not "transparent".

MSF began working in Sittwe in 1994. In 2011, MSF conducted more than 487,000 consultations, treated about 75,000 cases of malaria, dealt with 24,000 maternal health cases, and provided anti-retroviral treatment to more than 600 patients. MSF has been working in Myanmar since 1992.

Myanmar region's hardest-hit by disaster

By Aye Sapay Phyu
in Yogyakarta

MYANMAR'S economy is the worst affected by natural disaster in Southeast Asia, a UN report has disclosed.

Myanmar has the highest annual expected losses, or AEL, in the region as a percentage of gross domestic product, ahead of Vietnam and the Philippines, the report said.

The study of economic vulnerability as a result of natural disasters, the *Asia-Pacific Disaster Report 2012*, was published by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction last week.

The report, launched at the opening of the Fifth Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, on October 23, stated that the size of national economies, their proximity to hazardous environments, the diversity of production structures and the available fiscal space were critical factors that determined economic vulnerability to the effects of various hazards.

The report said that natural disasters cost Southeast Asian economies US\$4.4 billion a year on average, equivalent to more than 0.2 percent of the region's GDP, including losses associated with floods, tropical cyclones, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and droughts, citing a World Bank study conducted this year.

In financial terms, disaster-related losses were highest for the Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam, while Singapore and Brunei Darussalam suffered the lowest expected economic losses.

But the report said Myanmar's average annual loss was close to 0.9pc of its GDP, compared to nearly 0.8pc in the Philippines and Vietnam.

The report also said Myanmar, the Philippines, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam faced average annual disaster response bills in excess of 0.5pc of total public expenditure.

"Our shared challenge in Asia and the Pacific is to control both the growing rate of exposure and rising vulnerability. Exposure to hazards has multiplied as urban centres grow and people and economic activities expand into increasingly exposed and hazard-prone land. It is also a concern that smaller economies, those that have less diversified economic structures, and countries with high fiscal deficits, show greater strains of vulnerability even when faced with relatively small-scale disasters," ESCAP executive secretary Noeleen Heyzer said in a press release.



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Sitagu Sayadaw (centre) with an elderly woman (second right) who received eye treatment at Putao District Hospital in Kachin State earlier this month. Pic: Boothee

Sayadaw help patients in Putao regain vision

By Zon Pann Pwint

VILLAGERS in remote areas of northern Kachin State flocked to receive free eye treatment from the Sitagu International Buddhist Missionary Association in coordination with Htoo Foundation earlier this month.

The program was launched in Putao in November 2011 and this year a team of four eye specialists treated about 1074 patients for eye ailments at Putao District Hospital between October 15-17, conducting 148 operations.

U Tone Pho Yin, 72, trekked for two days from his home in Nogmung township to Putao District Hospital – a journey of more than 112 kilometres (70 miles) – for his checkup. After suffering blurred vision all his life, he received treatment from the association's doctors.

"I learned that I was suffering from cataract. The cataract in my left eye was removed last year. When I heard that Sitagu

International Buddhist Missionary Association was providing free eye treatment in Putao township, I trekked alone all day and slept at my friend's house on the way to get treatment," he said, adding: "There is no eye specialist in Nogmung township. I'm very grateful to the doctors."

"Cataract is common here, and glaucoma is the second most common eye disease. I also found a few patients with eye injuries," said Dr Mya Aung, one of four eye specialists.

Sitagu International Buddhist Missionary Association vice chairman U Khin Maung Win said the association's founder, Dr Ashin Nyanissara, launched the program in Putao after learning that residents from the area travelled as far as the state capital Myitkyina to receive treatment for eye problems.

"Most people in Putao couldn't afford to see a doctor, and go untreated. Those who can afford it usually go to Myitkyina, but the travel expenses are high,"

said Daw Lu Bu, who brought her 72-year-old mother to receive free eye treatment on October 15 from Pan Hlaing, about 1.6 kilometres (1 mile) from Putao.

"My eyesight started to fade when I was 15 years old. I left it untreated because I couldn't afford a checkup. This was the first time I'd ever seen an eye specialist. I was really pleased," said 24-year-old Ma Za Me Sar, who was given a pair of glasses to wear after her treatment.

"Putao residents could benefit from free treatment for all kinds of diseases. When they advertised free eye treatment, more than 1000 patients came from nearby towns and villages to Putao to receive it," she added.

Daw Phone Pwint Jar, 80, said: "I've had very little sight in my eyes since last year. When I heard they would give free treatment, I walked to the hospital alone."

An orthopaedic surgeon at Putao District Hospital, Dr Labang Gon Jatt, said few people in the area could afford to use the hospital

and most instead rely on whatever treatment is available in their village.

"Moderately sick patients can't reach hospital because of difficult transportation. They don't have money so they can't afford transport, let alone the medical expenses," he said.

"Most of the patients that do come are heavily pregnant women, who are sent here because home delivery would be very difficult. Most pregnant women usually give birth by a midwife."

Dr Labang Gon Jatt said language barriers also deter patients from coming to the hospital.

"We can't speak the local Shan languages – Rawang, Lisu or Khamti – that most people in Putao speak. Patients find it hard to communicate with us, so they seek help in their own village, where people can speak their language," he added.

The doctor said the most common ailments in Putao are malaria and pneumonia but medicine to treat malaria is often not effective.

Japanese man says sorry over slap, abuse charges

By Yu Yu Maw

A JAPANESE man is expected to avoid a conviction for allegedly hitting and verbally abusing a manager of Yangon's Orchid Hotel, after he agreed to apologise and pay compensation last week.

Mr Okahashi Takashi was a guest at Orchid Hotel when he allegedly slapped and abused front office manager, Ma Aye Aye Kyi, at about 11pm on January 28 after she warned him not to break the hotel rules.

He was charged with obscenity, hurt and "assault or criminal force to woman with intent to outrage her modesty", under Penal Code sections 294, 323 and 354 respectively. Mr Takashi countersued Ma Aye Aye Kyi under sections 341 and 506, for wrongful restraint and criminal intimidation respectively.

But after 37 court hearings, he formally apologised to Ma Aye Aye Kyi on October 23 and agreed to pay her K13 million.

Ma Aye Aye Kyi gave K10 million to social welfare organisations, including monasteries and schools for the blind, the Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation and Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association, and K3 million went to Orchid Hotel for her legal fees.

"I know I was wrong in this case so I apologise. I am so sorry this case happened while I was on my business trip to Myanmar," Mr Takashi said at press conference on October 23.

Ma Aye Aye Kyi, who was 25 when the incident occurred, said she agreed to the settlement out of sympathy for Mr Takashi's family.

"He apologised to me and said that he has an 80-year-old mother and a daughter who is going to be married soon. His eyes were full of tears when he told me that. I was very sad that time. I thought about his daughter and have sympathy for his family so I decided to forgive him," she said.

"The main thing I want to say to him is, 'Go back to your family and arrange your daughter's wedding'," she said.

Ma Aye Aye Kyi's lawyer, Daw San Thida Aye, said the final hearing in the case was likely to be on October 29. "We will negotiate to wind up the lawsuit as that is what both side's wish," she said.

Ma Aye Aye Kyi told *The Myanmar Times* she was "satisfied" with the apology and had been determined not to bow to pressure to drop the charges.

"Our Myanmar women grow up under the orders of our parents and under the message of the Buddha and are very kindhearted. We usually say 'ya bar deh' or 'arnar par deh' so some people take opportunities from that," she said.

"I was very ashamed about this case. I didn't want to show up in front of the people [in court] but I faced it. ... I faced this problem bravely because of the encouragement of many Myanmar people here and abroad. Now I'm satisfied with the result."

UMTA election scrapped, new vote planned for December 2

By Yu Yu Maw

THE Union of Myanmar Travel Association announced last week that it will hold another election for executive committee members on December 2 after the results of an earlier election in October were annulled.

The association announced on October 22 that a chair, two vice chairs, general secretary, two assistant secretaries, treasurer and 22 executive members would be selected at the vote.

An election at the association's annual general meeting on October 7 ran five hours overtime because many participants took the

opportunity to express frustration over what they perceived was a lack of action from the UMTA leadership on soaring hotel room rates.

Representatives from 70 travel companies also protested the association's self-nomination system and the new executive committee was only finalised after two additional representatives were selected by their peers. Originally scheduled for 9am to midday, the meeting finished at 5pm, participants said.

Twenty-nine executive committee members were sworn in, with Dr Aung Myat Kyaw taking over as chairman from U Mg Mg Swe, who will continue as an EC member.

However, the results were

annulled because fewer than 50 percent of members voted.

It is the first time that the UMTA has called a re-election since it was established in April 2002.

"I have been hoping to see a real democratic election [within the UMTA] for a long time. We did not get a chance to change the self-nomination system but we expect this re-election will see the best people selected," said a spokesperson from one travel company, who asked not to be named.

An official from another travel firm said: "Now all members will have the chance to vote for the person they like. I hoped for this day ... I think it is the right step

when the country is going on the democratic way."

The election committee was formed with five members and is led by U Khin Zaw of Tour Mandalay. Vice chairman is U Thint Naung of Golden Express, and other members are U Soe Myint of Rendez-Vous, U Aye Kyaw of Ruby Land and Daw Sabai Aung of Nature Dream.

Voting papers, an invitation letter and an explanation of the voting system will be sent to UMTA members no later than November 5.

The election committee has instructed members not to discuss the re-election with journalists, sources say.

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Workers unload teak logs at the Myanmar International Terminals Thilawa port in Kyauktan township. Pic: Stuart Deed

Woodside buys into Daewoo AD-7 block

AUSTRALIAN energy firm Woodside Petroleum Ltd bought a 40 percent stake in Daewoo's AD-7 offshore exploration block in the Rakhine Basin, the company said in a statement to the Australian stock exchange on October 19.

The farm in offer pertains to the South Korean company's Production Sharing Contract and is subject to "fully-termed agreements, completion of due diligence, and necessary government and

other approvals", the statement said, adding that Daewoo will remain the operator.

The companies will undertake a 3D seismic exploration program during 2013-14. The transaction also provides the option to drill an exploration well in a subsequent exploration period, the statement said.

Woodside chief executive officer Peter Coleman said the block was part of an "exciting" exploration area, and the agreement showed the company's commitment to secure international growth opportunities emerging basins that matched its "core capabilities", especially in deepwater exploration.

"The Rakhine deepwater basin is an exciting frontier exploration area and block AD-7 is adjacent to the Daewoo-operated Shwe field development. We are looking forward to finalising this opportunity and building a partnership with Daewoo."

- Staff Reporter

Thilawa SEZ work to start in January

By Myat May Zin

JAPAN External Trade Organisation and the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry will begin building the Thilawa Special Economic Zone in early 2013, officials said on October 21.

U Win Aung, UMFCCI chairman and head of Dagon International Construction, said the Myanmar side will own 51 percent of the venture, while the Japanese will have the remaining 49pc.

"We will invite investors to take part in the Thilawa SEZ. We will sell shares to the public before the project is launched in January," U Win Aung told *The Myanmar Times*.

The 2400-hectare zone, which was announced in January 2011, is about 25 kilometres south of Yangon along the Yangon River in Thanlyin and Kyauktan townships. It incorporates the Myanmar International Terminals Thilawa - a deepsea port facility built in the mid 1990s.

Major Japanese companies reportedly involved in the project include Mitsubishi, Marubeni and Sumitomo corporations.

Minister for National Planning and Economic Development Dr Kan Zaw said the zone is the first step towards building an attractive business environment for investors - and a keystone of economic reforms intended to create the investor friendly-environment in Myanmar.

Deputy Minister for the National Planning and Economic Development U Set Aung said potential investors are required to accomplish a number of tasks before beginning projects.

"Investing companies must register their companies first," he said "We have already simplified the registration process, which can be done in three hours, where it used to up to one year. Even when there is a delay it should take only a day to register," U Set Aung said.

Interested companies must also register their planned projects with the Myanmar Investment Commission. Each economic zone will have a one-stop service centre to assist companies interested in investing, he said.

"Although investment is so far limited to private businesspeople, we plan to ease limitations later, especially in the energy and communication sectors," U Set Aung said.

"Some large foreign companies have applied to invest in mining and energy projects too," he added.

He said the special economic zones would be classified as either free zones or promotion zones. He said companies that focused on exports would be encouraged to work in the free zones.

"If they distribute goods to the domestic market from the free zones they will be required to pay taxes. And residential houses will not be allowed to be built in the free zones," he said. Shopping centres, hospitals,

education centres, banks and insurance companies will be placed in the promotion zone, where companies focused on the domestic market would be based.

"From the promotion zone, they can distribute to the domestic market freely but they have to pay tax on products, importing raw materials and instruments when they export the products to other countries from the promotion zone," U Set Aung said.

- Translated by Zaw Winn

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MATRADE aims to boost role in Myanmar

Mr Dato' Mah Siew Keong and Mr Zulkepli Mohd Perai - the chairman and director of Malaysia's trade promotion agency - talk about the country's plans for Myanmar on the sidelines of the Showcase Malaysia trade show in Yangon

How many companies are involved in this showcase?

Mr Dato' Mah Siew Keong: We have 51 companies showcasing their products and services at this event. Responses from people have been very good and

most exhibitors are finding potential partners. We hoped to increase the level of cooperation between our two countries because we see big potential in Myanmar, and many business opportunities as increasing incomes of the people will lead to more demand for consumer goods.

Malaysia is organising many delegations to visit - 40 representatives from the manufacturing federation were here only days ago and we have more than 50 delegates here for business matching. This is our first time showcase in Myanmar.



Mr Zulkepli Mohd Perai and Mr Dato' Mah Siew Keong in Yangon last week. Pic: Yadanar

It has been successful and we are looking forward to more programs in Myanmar.

Malaysian products are cost competitive and we believe our pricing is good.

What is the role of the MATRADE and what kinds of business does it promote?

Mr Zulkepli Mohd Perai: Our function is basically to promote the export of Malaysia's products and services. We focus on promotion activities, such as trade fairs and exhibitions, and we also organise trade missions and specialised marketing missions, which we have done several times in Myanmar. This has been our first major exhibition in Myanmar.

What kinds of products does Malaysia export to Myanmar?

Mr Dato' Mah Siew Keong: Generally, the volume of trade is quite small. Our exports are focussed on palm oil and rubber.

What's your perspective on Myanmar's economic situation?

Mr Dato' Mah Siew Keong: It is moving forward so fast and in the near future Myanmar's economy must grow. A lot of Malaysian businesspeople are coming here to exploit opportunities because Myanmar has so many natural resources and hard working people.

Under the latest draft of the amended foreign investment law, joint venture businesses will be capped at 50-50 ownership for foreigners - can that work for Malaysian businesses?

Mr Dato' Mah Siew Keong: I am sure that our companies want to work with local partners - it's in everybody's best interest. Malaysian companies investing overseas have

a history of sharing technology and knowhow with local companies. So in that sense, I think that 50-50 joint ventures will work for Malaysian businesspeople.

What kind of businesses is interested in investing in Myanmar? And what kinds of companies are already operating here?

Mr Zulkepli Mohd Perai: We are already invested in Myanmar. Petronas [Malaysia's state-owned oil company] already has investments here. We are also looking into other areas where we can invest, such as palm oil plantations. A company owned by the Malaysian government has already been looking to develop plantations in southern Myanmar. And that could make Myanmar a palm oil distribution centre for other markets, such as India and China. But it depends on the investment laws too.

If you set up the palm oil plantations here, what kinds of benefits would be passed on to communities nearby?

Mr Zulkepli Mohd Perai: Palm oil plantations can provide jobs for many people and they need refineries to finish the oil too.

If you set up palm oil plantations here and export to other countries, what will be the main challenges?

Mr Zulkepli Mohd Perai: Cost is the biggest challenge. We have to look at the cost of setting up compared with other nations, which often depends on the tax structure in a country.

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Dated: 29th October, 2012

Dutch trade team visits

A DUTCH trade delegation flew into Yangon on October 29 for a five-day mission.

The delegation plans to visit industry associations, including the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, and will also hold talks with government officials. During the trade mission, the Dutch Centre for the Promotion of Imports from Developing Countries (CBI) will organise a training session on EU market access for Myanmar producers.

Delegation leader and director of the Netherlands Council of Trade Promotion Gerard Vaandrager said the recent opening up of Myanmar was highly attractive to international companies.

"The growth potential is enormous. But at the same time there's reason to be cautious. The new investment law is still under debate and potential investors benefit by clarity and business security," he said.

"It's important the law is agreed upon and ratified soon. Our main aim now is to be here, to learn and to forge relationships we can build upon in the future," he said.

He added that some deals have been struck already.

"As a result of our first mission one of the participants is advising on port development. Another participant is supplying trucks. It's still early days, but there are opportunities to be had in virtually all business sectors."

- Hans Hulst



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Battle brews in Bago Region over fisheries



IN DEPTH
with
Soe Sandar Oo

FISHPOND owners in Bago Region say they are fighting a losing battle against villagers who steal fish from their ponds.

Villagers near the Hla Blue Natebanpout and Kyite Mae Moe Khaing Gyi fish ponds in Thanatbin township are allegedly fishing at ponds leased from the regional government, said U Maung Maung Naing, owner of Kyite Mae Moe Khaing Gyi fish pond.

"I'm facing heavy losses this year because people are catching about K30,000 worth of fish a day from my ponds," he said. "Business is the worst it has been in the 15 years I've been in the industry," he said.

U Maung Maung Naing said he usually earns from K2-3 million in profit a year

but invested K2.4 million to rent the pond from the Bago Region government and spends about K10 million in feed, fingerlings and maintenance.

"It costs K1.5 million a month, including wages and other maintenance costs. We are doing business fairly but are facing losses for things beyond our control. We think the law cannot protect us.

"We've reported the thefts to the Department of Fisheries in Thanatbin township and township authorities but they have not taken action," he said.

Another fish pond owner, U Hla Ohn, said the problems with theft of fish in Bago is related to a similar situation in Ayeyarwady Region on September 29 that resulted in police shooting dead two villagers.

"If we had people stealing our fish last year we reported the matter to the Department of Fisheries

and they sent one or two police to solve the problem," he said.

"But this year the department has not sent any police. They should protect our businesses according to the law because now doing this business is a major risk," he said.

U Hla Ohn said more than 50 villagers fished from his pond from 11pm every night in the past week but the number increased to at least 80 from October 23 onward.

"I'm only earning about 20 percent from my ponds compared with this time last year," he said. "I have no intention to do this business next year because the risks are too high and nobody is protecting us," he said.

He added that many of the people illegally fishing at his ponds practise illegal electronic-shock fishing using batteries. The punishment for people caught using this method is



Workers sort juvenile fish caught at a fishpond in Bago Region's Thanatbin township last week. Pic: Soe Sandar Oo

a three-year jail term and a K100,000 fine.

"But the law isn't enforced in practice," he said.

The fish produced by the ponds is mostly consumed within Bago Region but some is also shipped to Yangon.

U Aung Zaw Win, the spokesperson for Thanatbin township's branch of the Department of Fisheries, said that the department would move to solve the problem soon.

"Our difficulty is that the area is four hours away by

boat and we can't get there when water levels are low," he said.

However, U Aye Myint, a lawyer who represents a number of farmers in Bago Region said all parties in the dispute were violating the law.

He said the Department of Fisheries needs to clarify the ownership status of the ponds and then ensure that action is taken against people found to be stealing fish or pond owners found illegally tampering with

streams and rivers.

"According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation it's illegal for anybody to place poles or barricades in streams and rivers, but some fish ponds owners are colluding with fisheries officials to enlarge their ponds and divert water and fish into their enclosures," he said.

"As a result, there are few fish in the streams and farmers have little choice but to fish the ponds instead," he said.

Fisheries body approves common use fishing grounds plan

By Soe Sandar Oo and Myat Nyein Aye

MYANMAR Fisheries Federation recently backed a plan to ensure sufficient fishing grounds are left open to villagers in Rakhine State and Tanintharyi and Ayeyarwady regions.

The plan to ensure access to fishing grounds was formed during a three-day workshop from October 12-14 that was organised by MFF, Network Activities Group and the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers. However, the results of the workshop were not made available until the following week.

The workshop was attended by representatives of the regional governments of Rakhine State, Tanintharyi and Ayeyarwady regions, MFF officials and domestic and international NGOs, said U Han Tun, MFF's vice executive chairman.

"According to current fisheries laws, regional governments are allowed to rent and tender fish ponds and rivers to businesspeople," he said.

"But it was decided at the workshop that this system causes many difficulties for grassroots level fishermen, so we decided that common fishing grounds must be established," he said.

He added that the existing system meant too little space was available to the public.

"We found out that fishermen have little chance to catch enough fish in the open areas, so we plan to remove the tender system used in those three regions. MFF has approved that proposal," he added.

U Tin Soe, a representative of Tanintharyi Region's

government, said fishermen live difficult lives and are often trapped in debt cycles.

"They borrow money from rich businesspeople at high interest rates but to pay back their loans they have to sell their catches directly to the lender at lower-than-normal rates," he said.

"They are caught in a debt cycle," he said.

"We need to support them by improving their skills and providing low-interest loans to help them to lift their living standards," he said.

A representative for Ayeyarwady Region fishermen say they are struggling to survive as available fishing grounds are shrinking. U Kyi Win, a representative for small-scale farmers in the region,

said during a workshop at the Myanmar Fisheries Federation in Yangon on October 21 that fishermen are also suffering from higher transport fees.

"Buyers come to fishing villages but they always pay lower-than-market prices because they charge transport fees of about 10 percent," U Kyi Win said.

"If the normal price is K100 for 10 ticals [1 tical is 16.25 grams] they offer K90 because they charge K10 for transport," he said, adding that buyers regularly cheat villagers by using rigged scales too.

He said large swathes of rivers and streams had been tendered by the regional government to businesspeople for use as fish breeding ponds, which

provides a crucial income stream for the government but leaves little space for villagers.

U Kyi Win said fishermen were only able to access open grounds in far-flung areas, which adds significantly to transport costs.

He added that big fishing vessels also deliberately destroyed the nets and equipment used by small scale fishermen in coastal waters.

The Rakhine State government representative agreed that common fishing grounds were too small and often too far away from villages. He agreed that it was necessary to make common fishing grounds more available.

U Han Tun said MFF would begin conducting

research trips to help regional governments to identify common fishing grounds.

The issue of access to fishing ground became hot news following the killing of two villagers by police in Ayeyarwady Region's Kyonpyaw township on September 29. That incident was discussed in Ayeyarwady Region's parliament on October 8.

At the opening of the fourth session of the Ayeyarwady Region Hluttaw on October 8, speaker U San Sint asked the regional government to explain the issue to the parliament on October 10. However, the responsible minister failed to address the parliament.

"We won't give up on this issue. We will continue to

push the government until we get a clear decision," U San Sint said recently.

"Similar cases [of violence] can happen again at any time, that's why the region government should take preventive measures," he said.

"This case concerns the peace and tranquility of the whole of Ayeyarwady Region. But information about the violence in some areas of Ayeyarwady Region has not been provided to the hluttaw or regional government," he said.

"The problems lead to conflict and so we need to talk about this issue in the hluttaw. In Bogale township, for example, there were cases where villagers surrounded and attacked the police station over this."

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

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A worker lifts sacks of rice at a rice stockpile in Bangkok last week. Pic: AFP

Thailand's rice mountain casts shadow over world market

BANGKOK – Thailand's status as the world's top rice exporter is under threat from a controversial scheme to boost farmer incomes that has resulted in a growing mountain of unsold stocks, experts warn.

Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra's year-old policy to buy rice from farmers for 50 percent more than the market price has damaged the competitiveness of Thai exports, which are expected to almost halve in 2012.

"It's the worst year we have ever faced," said Chookiat Ophaswongse, honorary president of the Thai Rice Exporters Association.

"We are already losing our market share in the world to our competitors, especially the newcomers like Cambodia and Myanmar that are producing more and more rice for export," he said.

Rice is the staple food for more than three billion people – nearly half the world's population. Last year Thailand accounted for nearly a third of the global export market.

But its worldwide share is forecast to drop to less than one-fifth in 2012, said the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), which expects the

Southeast Asian nation to fall behind rival exporters Vietnam and India.

Thailand produces about 20 million tonnes of rice each year on average, about half of which is normally sold overseas.

This year, however, exports are expected to reach only about 6.5 million tonnes, say the exporter association and the USDA.

With its warehouses filling up quickly, Thailand is running out of space to house its unsold stocks and even briefly considered using an aircraft hanger in Bangkok's number two airport, Don Mueang.

The longer the government holds on to the stocks, the bigger the drain on the public finances.

Yet experts say if Thailand abandons the scheme now, it risks flooding the world market.

"They are in a jam because with all this rice hanging around they have very little option to do anything else other than just keep on going because otherwise the rice price will drop and then they will have political problems," said Ammar Siamwalla, an economist with the Thailand Development Research Institute Foundation (TDRI).

"The Vietnamese and the Indians are rubbing their hands. They're taking advantage of the

fact that we've slowed down our exports considerably," he said.

If Thailand tries to shift its glut of rice on world markets now, "the price would plummet", Ammar warned. "There is no exit strategy."

He estimates that Thailand has about 10 million tonnes of stock in storage. The USDA predicts the country will have stocks of about 9.4 million tonnes at the end of 2012 and 12.1 million tonnes in 2013.

China and India also have large stockpiles but their production and domestic consumption are much higher.

While the scheme is putting strains on Thailand's government finances, it has been welcomed by many farmers, whose support helped sweep Yingluck to a landslide election victory last year.

Her older brother Thaksin Shinawatra, who was ousted as prime minister by royalist generals in a coup in 2006, is hugely popular with Thailand's rural poor thanks to his populist policies while in power.

"I want the government scheme to continue because, at the very least, it helps us farmers sell our rice at a high price," said Supoj Joopia, who has 9.6 hectares (24 acres) of

rice paddy in Chachoengsao province east of Bangkok.

He said his annual earnings from rice cultivation have soared by more than half to 780,000 baht (US\$25,000) since signing up.

About four million households rely to some extent on farming in Thailand, of which 900,000 have joined the scheme so far, said the TDRI.

The policy is seen as benefiting owners of large farms in particular as they have a bigger surplus to sell to the authorities after their own household consumption. The scheme has also been dogged by allegations of corruption.

The government says it is confident that it can find buyers for its rice on world markets at a price that will raise the living standards of its farmers.

It says it has signed deals to sell rice directly to other countries.

Nigeria, Iraq, Indonesia, Ivory Coast and South Africa are the top customers so far this year, according to the Thai Board of Trade, which says exports slid 45 percent in January-September from a year earlier, to 5 million tonnes.

"We're still confident that we can keep releasing the rice that we have," Commerce Minister Boonsong Teriyapirom said earlier this month. – AFP

BP to revisit Arctic after Rosneft deal finalised

LONDON – British energy giant BP was set to return money to shareholders and could relaunch plans to unearth Arctic oil following a huge strategic deal agreed with Russian state firm Rosneft on October 22, analysts said.

BP, seeking to reposition itself after the Gulf of Mexico oil spill disaster in 2010, agreed to sell its half of Russian venture TNK-BP to Rosneft for US\$17.1 billion plus a 12.84-percent share of the state company.

BP added it would spend \$4.8 billion of the proceeds to buy another 5.66pc of Rosneft from the Moscow government, bringing its total stake in the Russian company to 19.75pc. BP currently owns 1.25pc of Rosneft.

"We see potential for a special dividend" after the October 22 announcements, said Stuart Joyner, analyst at Investec financial group. "The deal will be viewed positively as it halves exposure to Russia whilst upgrading BP's partnership and reviving hopes of an Arctic entry," he added.

BP's head of Russia David Peattie told Dow Jones Newswires that the group was

mulling a share buyback with part of the proceeds, in order to offset the dilution of the group's value.

The October 22 events end an often tumultuous but highly profitable TNK-BP joint venture. In Moscow, Rosneft announced it had also bought the other 50-percent in TNK-BP from key Russian investors for \$28 billion.

Tensions over the venture reached breaking point over BP's efforts early in 2011 to strike a separate Arctic oil tie-up with Rosneft.

That Arctic deal was blocked by the BP's Russian partners in TNK-BP in a shock move which only worsened their relations with both Rosneft and BP still further.

BP's chairman Carl-Henric Svanberg said on October 22 that his company's near one-fifth stake in Rosneft would "deliver both cash and long term value for BP and its shareholders".

"It provides us with a sustainable stake in Russia's energy future and is consistent with our group strategy," he added.

For the past two years, BP has set about

selling what it sees as non-core assets to help fund massive compensation costs resulting from the Gulf of Mexico disaster.

Earlier in October, BP agreed to sell its ill-fated Texas City refinery and a portion of its US retail and logistics network to US-based Marathon Petroleum Corporation for \$2.5 billion.

The Texas City facility suffered a deadly explosion in 2005 that killed 15 workers and sparked safety concerns across BP's US operations.

The British group's reputation took a far bigger hammering two and a half years ago after an explosion on the BP-leased Deepwater Horizon rig killed 11 workers and sent millions of barrels of oil spewing into the sea.

The blast on April 20, 2010 sparked what has widely acknowledged to be the worst environmental catastrophe in US history.

BP has so far sold assets totalling more than \$35 billion to help cover the costs of the tragedy, a figure set to reach \$38 billion by the end of 2013. – AFP

ADB studies show way forward in Myanmar

By Aye Thidar Kyaw

THE Asian Development Bank has revealed more details about its future engagement with Myanmar announcing it will assist to develop 11 sectors within the country, including energy, transportation, urban development, telecommunications, health, education and agriculture.

The bank released multiple press statements and studies last week outlining weaknesses within the 11 sectors in Myanmar, and detailing what aid it would provide.

A report on Myanmar's "fragmented and under-resourced transport sector" says it needs a "top-to-bottom overhaul" to meet expected demand for quality roads, railways, airports and transport services in coming years.

"For the benefits of Myanmar's anticipated growth to truly reach people in all corners of the country, its network of roads, railways, inland waterways and airports will need a coordinated path to improvement," said James Lynch, director of the Transport and Communications Division in the Southeast Asia Department at ADB. "This is vital not only for the country's development, from the cities to the remote rural areas, but also to transform the country into a land bridge linking Southeast Asia and South Asia."

ADB began to re-engage

with Myanmar this year. Following a wave of reforms beginning in 2011, an interim country partnership strategy was agreed to October 26 by the government and ADB. It is designed to navigate the process of re-engagement between 2012 and 2014.

"ADB will formulate an investment program and funding targets for the country once the government has settled its outstanding arrears with ADB," the bank said in a press release.

According to a 2012 ADB study, Myanmar could triple its per capita growth rate if it can "surmount substantial development challenges by further implementing across-the-board reforms", the ADB's website states.

A separate press release said the Australian government will provide Myanmar with US\$370,000 pegged for education.

ADB is giving Myanmar \$200,000 in technical assistance, while Australia is providing \$370,000, stated an ADB press release on October 23.

"As Myanmar embarks on dramatic socioeconomic transformations, education must play a critical role in promoting ... poverty reduction," said Christopher Spohr, a senior education economist from ADB's Southeast Asia Department.

He said the funds will help the country to move into higher value-added sectors and increase its competitiveness in regional and global markets.

The assistance will be distributed at all educational



Asian Development Bank says Myanmar's under-resourced transport infrastructure needs to be overhauled. Pic: Christopher Davy

levels other than primary and pre-school and aims to prepare Myanmar for the "opportunities created by ongoing democratic and

financial reforms", ADB's website states.

Economist U Khine Htun said last week that Myanmar must effectively use its energy

resources. He said that although Myanmar is among the region's top five energy exporters, the domestic market is largely unable to access the country's energy sources due to inadequate planning and management.

He said if Myanmar's energy was not used productively at home, its benefits would only be felt abroad.

"Resources extracted from under the ground need to be used to change resources on the ground, such as roads, factories and schools. If this happens then manufacturing and the services sector are likely to progress and Myanmar's investment ratio will rebalance from the existing situation,

where most investment is made in the extractives and energy sectors, he said.

The Bank Information Centre (BIC) states that Myanmar has one of the lowest per-capita energy consumption levels in Southeast Asia. BIC is a non-government organisation that seeks to ensure the operations of the World Bank and regional banks such as ADB are transparent and publicly accountable.

Investment in Myanmar's energy sector amounted more than \$33 billion by June 2012, Myanmar Investment Commission statistics show, with \$19 billion invested in power generation and \$14 billion in oil and gas projects.



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MGW plans nation's tallest building

By Kyaw Hsu Mon

MANDALAY Golden Wings Construction company last week unveiled plans to build the country's tallest building in Yangon's Mayangone township.

The company has started work on the US\$60-million, 34-storey Diamond Inya Palace building on a 2-acre block near Inya Lake, and expects to finish by the end of 2015, a Mandalay Golden Wings spokesperson said last week.

The spokesperson said the project would be funded entirely by Myanmar investors.

"This site will be wholly owned by MGW Construction and we expect work will be finished in December 2015," said Ma Khin Ohnmar Tun, the company's senior sales and marketing manager.

"We're expecting to sell rooms to both locals and foreigners," she added.

The building will occupy a block that was formerly the Ministry of Industry's (1) towel factory at 2 U Htun Nyein Street, near the Inya Lake Hotel. Ma Khin Ohnmar Tun said MGW bought the site through a recent government



A Mandalay Golden Wings Construction employee stands next to a model of the company's Diamond Inya Palace development last week. Pic: Ko Taik

privatisation auction but she would not reveal how much the company paid for the block.

The building will have

an "L" shaped design and will include 406 residential apartments, six floors of car parking, a spa, gym, mini theatre, mini market and a

swimming pool. There will also be four penthouses on the top floor of each building that will have panoramic views of Yangon.

Residential rooms will measure from 850-3000 square feet and sales have begun; the company is also offering hire purchase

agreements through participating private banks, Ma Khin Ohnmar Tun said.

"The building is near Inya Lake so we spent months conducting soil tests to make sure the ground can support the weight. We will use a bole pile foundation," said U Chit Swe Nyunt, chief engineer for the project.

He said Thailand-based firm Process Myanmar had drafted the design and an expert from the Asian Institute of Technology will be on hand to monitor quality control during the construction.

He added that the building will be able to withstand winds of up to 120 miles (192 kilometres) an hour, and survive earthquakes up to 8.5 on the Richter scale. The development will include CCTV cameras and 14 elevators.

"We'll prepare for fires with smoke alarms, smoke detector, fire extinguishers and every room will have a fire alarm. There will also be a 340,000 gallon water tank," U Chit Maung said. MGW Construction is the developer of Yadanapon Diamond Plaza, the biggest shopping mall in upper Myanmar.

Rental market hot: agents

By Noe Noe Aung

BUDDHIST Lent is coming to an end at the end of October but real estate agents say the rental market is already running strong, with incoming foreigners seeking accommodation and the offices.

Ko Thant Sin, from New Moon real estate agency, said high property prices and tax increases in August had muted sales interest. "But residential and office rentals are picking up fast as the end of Lent approaches," he said last week.

"The demand for condominiums is particularly strong because hotels are clearing out spaces they used to rent as offices and the companies are looking for new premises," he added.

Ko Thant Sin said the recent influx of foreigners is also affecting the market because people who might otherwise stay in hotels or serviced apartments are unable to do so - and are looking for apartments instead.

"Most people are looking for condominiums in the downtown area, especially at Sakura Tower and Pabedan, Latha, Botahtaung, Seikkanthar Condo, as well as at Shwe Hin Thar Condo on Pyay Road and Pearl Condo corner on Kabar Aye Pagoda Road.

"House and apartments along Pyay Road are in demand," Ko Thant Sin said. However, he would not reveal rental prices.

He added that it's a difficult time for Myanmar people looking to find new rental accommodation.



Pearl Condominium on Kabar Aye Pagoda Road has become a hotspot for newly arrived foreigners in Yangon. Pic: Myanmar Times Archive/Aye Zaw Myo

"Rental prices are up by more than one-third against the same time last year. In October or November you could find a nice apartment for a middle-class family relatively easily for K1 million but this year it's closer to K1.3 million and it's not easy to find a nice place," he added.

"And if people cannot afford the rents being asked they have no choice but to move further away from downtown, to townships such as Hlaing," he added.

Ko Thant Sin said apartment and condo rentals in Kyauktada, Pabedan, Latha, Botahtaung, Pazundaung, Lanmadaw and Dagon township, as well as houses along Pyay Road had increased significantly this year.

Ko Min Min Soe of Mya Pan Thakhin real estate agency said rental prices are up by an average of 20 percent year-on-year. However, he said there has not been a discernible increase in the number of rental deals.

"Rental prices of houses

and apartments in central places are up about 20pc since last year. It's difficult to find a decent apartment for less than K500,000," he said.

He picked Ahlone and Sanchaung townships as the hottest neighbourhoods in Yangon.

"But a lot of people can't afford the increased rental fees and have had no choice but to move further out or in other areas such as Hlaing or Kyeemyindaing townships," he said.

However, he said some downtown residents were cashing in on the increased value of their condos and apartments and moving elsewhere.

Ko Min Min Soe said office rentals and incoming foreigners amounted to about a third of the company's business.

"It's unusual for people to move house during the Lenten months but there's usually a rush at the end. But this year a lot of people are just trying to stay where they are because prices are higher," he said.

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Beijing-based developer buys New York site in Chinese first

By David M Levitt

NEW YORK – A Beijing-based developer took control of a lot slated for more than 200 units of housing near New York's Brooklyn waterfront, a deal the company says is the first of its kind by a Chinese firm in the United States.

Xinyuan Real Estate last month bought the 2-acre (0.8-hectare) parcel at 421 Kent Avenue in the Williamsburg section for US\$54.2 million, said Omer Ozden, who advised the company on the purchase. Under chief executive officer Yong Zhang, Xinyuan has built more than 21 million square feet (2 million square metres) of housing in second-tier Chinese cities including Hefei, Zhengzhou and Chengdu, said the company's website.

Brooklyn is luring investors including Invesco and Sam Zell's Equity Residential as demand for housing soars in New York's most populous borough. Xinyuan's acquisition, made as China's government limits domestic property purchases, was the first by a Chinese company of a US site planned for more than a few units, showed data from Real Capital Analytics going back to 2000.

"There's no question that China wants its domestic companies to spread their wings around the world," said Dan Fasulo, head of research at New York-based Real Capital, which tracks global commercial-property transactions. "This firm is no joke. Many Chinese real estate developers are looking overseas almost as a training ground for their people, to bring best practices back home."

Xinyuan, which plans to market the units as condominiums, considered several projects in the New York area before making the Brooklyn purchase, said Tom Gurnee, the company's Beijing-based chief financial officer.

"We selected it for its attractive price, trendy location with restaurants and nightlife, its proximity to Manhattan, and its readiness for vertical construction in a relatively short period of time," he said in an e-mail.

The Kent Avenue site, two blocks south of the Williamsburg Bridge, had been taken over by a local investor, Richard Kalikow, after he foreclosed on the previous owners earlier this year, making the property available for less than the market price, Ozden said in a telephone interview from Beijing.

The deal was also appealing because the prior owners had already done about \$8 million of work

on a condominium project, Ozden said. The foundation and some plumbing were completed before the death of a development partner, Chaim Lax, halted construction, Kalikow said in a telephone interview.

The Chinese government in the past year has restricted multiple purchases of its real estate by individuals, aiming to slow price growth and avoid a collapse. The curbs have spurred buyers to seek deals abroad, Ozden said.

"This year, there's been approximately \$9 billion-plus invested from China into the United States real estate market, and it's been almost all individuals, typically individuals buying up one, three, five homes at a time," Ozden said, citing data from the National Association of Realtors. "There's a massive opportunity here."

Investors are focusing on US cities that appeal to mainland Chinese residents, such as New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Miami, he said.

Xinyuan, which made two smaller investments in the US earlier this year, will continue to search for development projects on the East and West coasts that are "offered at favourable prices and that are attractive to potential buyers from China", Gurnee said.

The former owners' original plan for the Brooklyn site was to market the 216 units to Hasidic Jewish families, said Robert Knakal, co-founder of New York-based Massey Knakal Realty Services. Southern Williamsburg has been an enclave for Hasidim since many emigrated from Hungary following World War II.

Under a deed restriction limiting the number of units, the apartments were designed to average about 2000 square feet, much bigger than the typical New York apartment, to appeal to the larger families Hasidic Jews tend to have, said Knakal, who brokered the Xinyuan purchase.

Xinyuan plans to redesign the project "somewhat", and add amenities, Ozden said. The company will have its own local management team, he said.

"There will be many large multiroom units which are suitable for larger families, as well as those growing families who have been priced out of Manhattan," Ozden said.

In the area that includes Williamsburg, the median price of condos that sold in the third quarter rose 9 percent from a year earlier to \$703,000, brokerage Corcoran Group said in a report on October 18.

— Bloomberg News



Workers at a building site in Miami, Florida, on October 24. Pic: AFP

US new-home sales rise in September

WASHINGTON – Sales of new US homes rose 5.7 percent in September from August, a further sign of recovery in the distressed housing market, government data released on October 24 showed.

Sales of new single-family houses climbed to an annual rate of 389,000, following August's downwardly revised pace of 368,000, the Commerce Department said.

The September sales rate was 27pc higher than a year ago, as the housing market

shows steady improvement more than six years after prices collapsed from a huge bubble, sending the US into recession.

New home prices continued to surge in September as inventory of new housing stock slipped to a lean 4.5-month supply at the current sales pace, down from 4.7 months in August.

The National Association of Realtors said on October 22 that the pace of September existing-home sales slipped slightly from August, when

sales were the highest in more than two years. But year-over-year September's existing-home sales were up 11pc.

"All the housing data has taken a turn for the better. Clearly mortgage rates at such a low level and what appears to be an increase in banks' willingness to make loans has boosted activity off the lows," said Steven Ricchiuto at Mizuho Securities.

The Commerce Department reported the median sales price of a new home was

US\$242,400, up 12pc from a year ago.

Sal Guatieri at BMO Capital Markets said the gains in the new-home segment, with housing starts up an annualised 30pc in the third quarter, added to signs that residential construction likely led the nation's economic expansion for a fourth straight quarter.

Though housing activity was still running far below normal levels, "the potential for further steady gains is high", he said. — AFP

US government sues BoA for \$1b over bad mortgages

By Paul Handley

WASHINGTON – The United States sued Bank of America on October 24 for at least US\$1 billion for allegedly dumping dodgy mortgages on state-controlled mortgage financiers Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac.

The government charged that Countrywide Financial and Bank of America, which took over Countrywide in 2008, ran a program to process mortgages and ship them to Fannie and Freddie as fast as possible with little effort spent on ensuring the loans were viable.

The 2007-09 program, nicknamed "Hustle", was run even as the US housing sector was melting down, and caused "over \$1 billion in losses and countless foreclosures", the Justice Department said.

To speed up the generation of new home loans and their sale to Fannie and Freddie, "Countrywide eliminated every significant checkpoint on loan quality and compensated its employees solely based on the volume of loans originated", the charges said.

That led to "rampant instances of fraud and other serious loan defects". It said Countrywide ignored warnings that the program "would have catastrophic consequences on

loan quality" and concealed its own reports on the quality of the loans.

After defaults began to soar in the loans, the charges said, Countrywide and Bank of America refused to buy them back or compensate the losses.

"The fraudulent conduct alleged in today's complaint was spectacularly brazen in scope," Preet Bahara, the US attorney in New York City, said in a statement.

"Countrywide and Bank of America made disastrously bad loans and stuck taxpayers with the bill," he said.

"This lawsuit should send another clear message that reckless lending practices will not be tolerated."

Bank of America made no immediate comment on the suit.

Countrywide was, at the height of the US housing boom in the 2000s, the largest mortgage origination company in the United States.

As did many mortgage lenders, it resold most of its home loans to Fannie and Freddie, which fund more than half of the home mortgages in the country.

After the housing bubble burst over 2006-09, both Fannie and Freddie nearly collapsed under the weight of millions of failing mortgages they took in from lenders.

The government had to pump \$183 billion into the two companies to keep

them afloat, and estimates are that it will not recover much of the money.

The case, the first the government has filed over toxic mortgages on behalf of Fannie and Freddie, is rooted in the requirements that originators properly vet any of the loans they rate as investment grade to sell on to the two state firms.

The case said Bank of America is responsible because it knowingly assumed Countrywide's liabilities when it took the company over in 2008.

Countrywide initiated Hustle in 2007 just as loan default rates were rising and Fannie and Freddie were tightening their loan purchasing requirements to reduce risk, the Justice Department said.

"According to internal Countrywide documents, the goals of the Hustle were high speed and high volume, where loans 'move forward, never backward' in the origination process," the department said.

"To accomplish these goals, the Hustle removed necessary quality control 'toll gates' that could slow down the origination process."

"Countrywide and later Bank of America knowingly originated loans with escalating levels of fraud and other serious defects and sold them" to Fannie and Freddie, it said.

— AFP

Apple challenges its rivals with 'very cool' iPad mini

SAN JOSE, California – Apple introduced the iPad mini on October 23, confident that a smaller version of its beloved tablet computer will trump lower-priced offerings by rivals Amazon, Google and Samsung.

"This isn't just a shrunken down iPad," Apple's senior vice president for marketing Phil Schiller said as he displayed the new gadget at a company event in San Jose. Schiller. "It is an entirely new design."

Chief executive Tim Cook presided over the launch of what was considered his first Apple product not bearing the thumbprint of late co-founder Steve Jobs, who derided small tablets.

Jobs publicly declared seven-inch tablets being fielded against iPad would be dead-on-arrival; that was unless they included sandpaper, "so that the user can sand down their fingers to around one quarter of the present size."

Industry analysts noted that the derision could have been a ruse by Jobs to discourage competitors while Apple had a smaller version of the iPad on the drawing board.

The iPad mini's touchscreen measures 7.9 inches (20 centimetres) diagonally compared to 9.7 inches on the original iPad.

A 16-gigabyte version of the iPad mini with Wi-Fi connectivity costs US\$329, while a 16GB model with both Wi-Fi and cellular capability costs \$459.

The top-of-the-line 64GB iPad mini with Wi-Fi and cellular connectivity will sell for \$659. Like later versions



The iPad Mini at its launch in San Jose, California, on October 23. It enters a market for smaller tablet computers dominated by Amazon, Google and Samsung. Pic: AFP

of the original iPad, the new Apple tablet also features rear- and front-facing cameras.

"That is very cool," Cook said of the iPad mini.

Customers can begin pre-ordering the iPad mini on October 26 and Wi-Fi versions were set to begin shipping on November 2 to about three dozen countries in Asia and Europe in

addition to the United States.

Schiller said the iPad mini weighs 0.68 pounds, less than half the original, and is 7.2mm thick – thinner than a pencil.

Apple also unveiled a fourth generation of the original iPad for the same starting price of \$499 for a 16GB model with Wi-Fi connectivity.

Cook said Apple sold over 100 million iPads in two and a half years.

Apple set the tablet computer market ablaze with the first iPad in early 2010 and stuck with its 9.7-inch screen while rivals introduced lower-price tablets with screens closer to seven inches.

Amazon's seven-inch Kindle Fire proved popular last year and a new version was launched last month. Meanwhile, a Google Nexus 7 powered by Android software has since joined the Samsung Galaxy in the seven-inch tablet market.

While the cheapest iPad mini costs \$329, less than the original iPad, the device is still considerably more expensive than the seven-inch tablets from Amazon, Google and Samsung – which start at \$199.

Independent technology analyst Jeff Kagan said the new, smaller iPad was a gamble for Apple in that it risked cutting into sales of the original iPad.

"Yes this will cannibalise some of the iPad, but pull the camera back and you can see how it will increase the size of the Apple customer base," Kagan said. – AFP

Iraq's bureaucrats venture into the world of internet

BAGHDAD – Smiling shyly, Wassan Saleh admitted to being the face of a vast problem across Iraq's bureaucracy that officials are trying to remedy: she had never used a computer.

Her participation in information technology (IT) classes at a Baghdad college is part of efforts by university professors to help modernise Iraq's civil service.

The bureaucracy routinely frustrates – to put it mildly – Iraqis, with its Byzantine rules and paper-based system that has remained largely unchanged for decades.

"This is the first time in my life that I am using a computer," said Saleh, 35, an official in the commerce ministry, as her introductory class at Baghdad Technical College drew to an end.

"I have a computer at my home, but I had no idea how it worked," she said. "Now, I will use everything I have learned. It's really a great experience that I can pass on to my family and my neighbours."

Internet penetration in Iraq is by far the lowest in the region – it was just 1.1 percent in 2010, said the International Telecommunication Union.

While mobile phone usage has rocketed since the 2003 invasion that ousted Saddam Hussein, use of computers has not expanded at nearly the same rate.

With that in mind, the IT classes for civil servants are designed to be simple.

There is no jargon, no cryptic technical language, and initial lessons are devoted to basic operations and use of simple programs such as Microsoft's Word or Excel software.

Then, students are introduced to the internet and social media services such as Twitter and Facebook, which have been added in recent years as mandatory university courses.

The lessons are the brainchild of Harith Fuad Jawad, the head of the college's IT department. He started them in December 2008 after reading a newspaper article that lamented Iraqis' "technological illiteracy".

In the article, an unnamed professor recalled how, when teaching students to use computers, "I asked them to drag the mouse up – one of them grabbed the mouse and held it up in the air, over the computer."

The students take lessons for three hours a day over 10 days in a small room with 30 computers. Government ministries decide who to send and the courses

are cheap, even by Iraqi standards – just 50,000 dinars (US\$42), paid for by the government.

"We learned to use several programs like Word and Excel, and we went on the internet," said Abdul Jalil Hanoun, 55, a civil servant in the justice ministry.

"We learned things we did not even know existed."

Iraq's slow embrace of computers is a direct result of 30 years of war and sanctions: the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War; Saddam's 1990 invasion of Kuwait and the international response the following year, along with the resulting economic embargo; and the 2003 invasion.

"Until 1980, Iraq was the most advanced country in the Middle East when it came to technology," Jawad said. "But the war with Iran changed all that, and today, in the technology race, we are lagging far behind."

Saddam's regime clamped down on freedom of expression, including use of the internet, but while the shackles on Iraqis' use of the web were lifted in 2003, the government has not promoted the use of computers.

Iraqis seeking to get things done at ministries face immense amounts of paperwork, with no option to do any of their work online.

US soldiers, who were stationed in Iraq from the invasion until their withdrawal in December,

were often surprised to learn that orders from town police chiefs could take days to get to individual police stations because they were not conveyed by e-mail, but by paper.

At home, meanwhile, internet subscriptions remain expensive, ranging between \$60 and \$100 a month, and connection speeds trail behind the rest of the region, let alone the rest of the world.

The course at Baghdad Technical College, however, has made small inroads into that lack of digitisation.

In the first five months of this year, 547 civil servants took their first steps in computer science, showed figures provided by the college.

Other Baghdad colleges have since started similar programs.

Najwa Abdulridha, 27, proudly declared that she had now learned to send e-mails, after recently completing a course.

"These computers have reduced the planet to a village and we want to live in this village," she said.

– AFP

Huawei offers to allay espionage fears

SYDNEY – Chinese telecoms giant Huawei on October 24 accused the US of "protectionism" after Congress labelled it a spy threat and offered to lay bare its source code and equipment in Australia to allay fears.

The firm's Australia chief John Lord urged against the cybersecurity debate becoming "distorted the way it has in the US", vowing that the company would "never" allow state or individual abuse of its equipment for illegal ends.

Huawei, which was founded by former People's Liberation Army engineer Ren Zhengfei, was barred from tendering for Australia's national broadband network this year on security grounds.

Those fears were echoed by the US House Intelligence Committee on October 8, when it warned that equipment supplied by Huawei and ZTE, another Chinese telecom equipment maker, could be used for spying and called for its exclusion from government

contracts and acquisitions.

Lord said the Congressional committee's report should be "called for what it really is: protectionism not security."

The US committee's report should be seen as "a missed opportunity," he told Australia's National Press Club.

Lord said Huawei's future depended on its "complete transparency" on security and other issues, and dismissed questions about its links to the Chinese state, denying that client

information had or ever would be shared.

"Cybersecurity infringements, violations are illegal and we would never allow anyone to do that and we haven't ... We would never allow our equipment to be misused and I make that point quite strongly."

Lord said Huawei had been surprised and disappointed to be barred from Australia's broadband project and had not "to this day" been offered an explanation. – AFP

'These computers have reduced the planet to a village and we want to live in this village.'

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Way cleared for Bo's prosecution

BEIJING – Disgraced Chinese politician Bo Xilai has been expelled from the country's parliament and stripped of his legal immunity, clearing the way for his prosecution, state media said on October 26.

The announcement follows intense speculation on the fate of the former party boss of the southwestern city of Chongqing in the lead-up to a once-in-a-decade leadership transition set to begin on November 8.

State news agency *Xinhua* said the Standing Committee of the 11th National People's Congress (NPC) removed Bo from his post late in September, but made the announcement on October 26 at a bi-monthly session.

"According to the law on the deputies to NPC and to local people's congresses, his post was

terminated," *Xinhua* said, quoting a statement from the standing committee at the end of a four-day meeting.

The focus will now shift to when Bo will face trial for a litany of alleged crimes, with most commentators suggesting the court case will be after the Communist Party Congress in November at which new leaders will be selected.

Bo's expulsion from the NPC comes after he was expelled from Communist Party in September, when state media announced he would "face justice" for alleged abuse of power, taking bribes and improper sexual relations.

This was seen as an unprecedented public rebuke for a senior Chinese party official as authorities looked to lay to rest a damaging episode that shocked

China and saw Bo's wife convicted of murder.

Bo, the party boss of the southwestern metropolis of Chongqing, had been seen as a candidate for promotion to the party's top echelons.

But he was brought down earlier this year by murder allegations against his wife Gu Kailai that came to light when Bo's key aide and police chief Wang Lijun sought refuge in the US consulate in Chengdu and detailed a string of alleged crimes.

The charges against Bo are likely to result in a long prison sentence, political analysts say.

His wife was handed a suspended death sentence – commonly commuted to a life sentence – for fatally poisoning British businessman Neil Heywood.

Bo was earlier removed from

his Chongqing post, with analysts saying the affair exposed deep divisions within the party because he retains a large following among left-leaning members.

In response to the opening of the NPC meeting last week, hundreds of Bo's supporters urged the parliament in an online petition not to expose him to a potentially unfair trial.

"The entire trial involving the Bo case has the problems of facts that are unclear, evidence that is neither reliable nor adequate and procedures that are not lawful," the letter on the leftist Red China website said.

There were more than 500 signatories in support of Bo, who had championed a "red revival" before his downfall.

The Communist Party had hoped for a smooth build-up to a congress

that is tightly scripted to underline its claim to be the only legitimate force capable of ruling the world's most populous nation.

But the party has instead been rocked by the Bo case and the details of murder, million-dollar deals and the affluent lifestyles of the Communist Party power elite that it laid bare.

A *New York Times* investigation published on October 25 alleged that Prime Minister Wen Jiabao's family had invested in assets worth at least US\$2.7 billion from 1992-2012, according to corporate and regulatory records.

The congress typically lasts about one week, and ends with the traditional unveiling of a new Politburo line-up that this year is expected to see Vice President Xi Jinping promoted to Communist Party general-secretary. – AFP

Briefly

DAMASCUS – Deadly car bombings and artillery fire on October 26 shattered a fragile truce between the warring parties in Syria just hours after it had begun on the first day of the Muslim Eid al-Adha holiday. State media blamed "terrorists", the regime term for rebels, for a car bomb attack in Damascus that killed at least eight people and wounded 30, and a rights watchdog reported another deadly bombing farther south in Daraa.

LONDON – Police investigating alleged child sex abuse by the late BBC star Jimmy Savile have identified about 300 possible victims, making him one of the worst offenders in British history, a senior officer said on October 25.

• Related report, P. 28

VIENNA – Josef Fritzl, the Austrian who fathered seven children with his own daughter in a homemade dungeon, has divorced his wife of 55 years because she has never visited him in prison, the Austrian weekly *News* reported October 25.

MOSCOW – A new crew of two Russians and an American docked with the International Space Station on October 25, Russian mission control said. The crew will join NASA's Sunita Williams, Russia's Yuri Malenchenko and Japan's Akihiko Hoshide, who arrived in July.

JOHANNESBURG – Striking South African gold miners have signed a pay deal to end months of often violent labour unrest, the country's main mining union and mine owners said on October 25.

TOKYO – Higher-than-normal radiation levels found in fish caught off Japan's east coast more than a year after the Fukushima nuclear disaster could indicate the plant is still leaking, said new research published in *Science* journal on October 25. – AFP



An artist's reconstruction of the first feathered dinosaur to be found in the Americas, based on fossils discovered in Alberta, Canada. *Science* journal reported on October 25 that the 75-million-year-old fossils include the remains of a juvenile and two adult ostrich-like creatures known as ornithomimids. The creatures – portrayed as having scales rather than plumage – had a cameo appearance in the original *Jurassic Park* movie in which they were shown being chased by a *Tyannosaurus Rex*. The fossils were unearthed by scientists from the University of Calgary and the Royal Tyrrell Museum, which are both in Alberta. Pic: AFP/University of Calgary

Wikileaks publishes military documents

LONDON – Julian Assange's WikiLeaks website on October 25 started publishing more than 100 US Department of Defense documents, including the first prisoner treatment manual for Guantanamo Bay.

The latest release by the anti-secrecy site comes as Assange, who faces charges of rape and sexual assault in Sweden, remains holed up in the Ecuadoran embassy in London with what Quito says are health problems.

Assange said in a statement that the newly released documents exposed military detention policies at camps in Iraq and at the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base in Cuba after the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States.

Among the documents is the 2002 manual for staff at Camp Delta at Guantanamo, shortly after it was set up by US President George W. Bush to house alleged al-Qaeda and Taliban detainees from the "war on terror".

"This document is of significant historical importance. Guantanamo Bay has become the symbol for systematised human rights abuse in the West with good reason," said Assange, the founder of the website.

US President Barack Obama vowed within

hours of taking office in January 2009 that he would close Guantanamo Bay, saying it was acting as a recruiting tool for Islamist extremists.

But Obama has so far failed to do so in the face of deep opposition in Congress to moving inmates to the US mainland, and several people accused of involvement in the 9/11 plots are on trial at the camp.

WikiLeaks first enraged Washington in 2010 by publishing a flood of secret military files on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as a huge cache of diplomatic cables from US embassies throughout the world.

Assange, 41, walked into the Ecuadoran embassy in London on June 19 seeking asylum in a bid to avoid extradition to Sweden, where he faces questioning over alleged rape and sexual assault.

He was granted asylum on August 16 but Britain has refused to grant him safe passage out of the country, and he remains in the embassy.

Ecuador said on October 24 it has requested a meeting with Britain to discuss the health of Assange, who it says is losing weight and suffering vision problems.

– AFP

US Navy to guard 'freedom of navigation' in Asia

MANILA – The captain of a US super carrier said last week the US Navy's presence in Asia would help safeguard "freedom of navigation", amid China's claims to sovereignty over vast waters in the region.

The commander of the *USS George Washington*, which is on a port call to the Philippine capital, said the United States was not taking sides in territorial disputes but stood firmly for keeping sea lanes open.

"One of the reasons we deploy throughout

the region is so we can carry forth the banner of freedom of navigation. It is very important to us given the trade that travels throughout the region on the seas," Captain Gregory Fenton said on October 25.

However Fenton emphasised his ship's visit to Manila was a routine event and not related to the recent tensions between the Philippines, a close US ally, and China over rival claims to parts of the South China Sea, the main maritime link between the Pacific and

Indian oceans. He told reporters aboard the Japan-based carrier that the United States took no sides and hoped the countries involved would settle the disputes diplomatically.

The Philippines has been moving closer to the United States, its main defence ally, since a stand-off began in April with China over the Scarborough Shoal in the South China Sea.

China claims the shoal as well as nearly all of the South China Sea, even waters close to the coasts of neighbouring

countries. The Philippines says the shoal is well within its 200-nautical-mile exclusive economic zone.

In a separate development, four Chinese government ships spent several hours in territorial waters around disputed Tokyo-controlled islands on October 25, for what Japan's coastguard said was the first time in three weeks.

Japanese Vice Foreign Minister Chikao Kawai lodged a strong protest with the Chinese ambassador about "the Chinese ships' intrusion into Japan's territorial waters", the foreign ministry in Tokyo said in a statement.

In Beijing, foreign ministry spokesman Hong Lei said there was nothing abnormal about Chinese ships exercising jurisdiction in the area.

The *Mainichi Shimbun* said on October 25 arrangements were being made for a meeting in Tokyo this week between Kawai and his Chinese opposite number, Zhang Zhijun, to discuss the islands dispute. – AFP

Berlusconi rules out running in elections next year

ROME – Italy's Silvio Berlusconi said on October 24 that he would not run in elections early next year and hand his People of Freedom party over to a successor, ending months of uncertainty over his candidacy.

"I will not be presenting my candidacy but I will remain at the side of younger people who can play and score goals," said the media magnate, who founded the party in 2009

and is famous for talking politics in football terms.

Berlusconi, 76, who owns AC Milan football club and three national television channels, said in a statement that his successor would be appointed by the end of December after a party vote.

"I still have good muscles and a head on my shoulders, but my role will be to give advice", he said, adding that

the vote may take place on December 16.

"For the love of Italy one can do crazy and wise things. Eighteen years ago I came onto the scene, a mad move that did not lack wisdom: I now take a step back," he said, putting to an end speculation over his return.

The move came as his scandal-hit PDL party tries to boost its credibility following a series of investigations into

misuse of party funds.

"Berlusconi's pulling out? It's time for the 'Berlusconi way' to pull out too, for Italy to clean itself of 20 years of intellectual numbness. Bye bye Berlusconi," said Nichi Vendola, head of the Left, Ecology and Freedom party.

The former prime minister had retreated from the political frontlines after handing over power in November 2011 to former European competition

commissioner Mario Monti amid a parliamentary revolt and a wave of financial market panic.

His decision to step aside indicated a belief that he could not hope to muster enough support to lead Italy's centre-right to victory.

The former premier, who was seen as a blast of fresh air when he burst onto the scene in the 1990s after a period of political corruption

and scandal, has been hit hard by his own fraud and sex scandals and has lost many supporters.

Berlusconi is on trial for fraud, bribery and paying for sex with a 17-year-old prostitute nick-named "Ruby the Heart Stealer".

The sex trial was one of the last in a series of scandals that helped precipitate the media tycoon's downfall. – AFP

Pussy Riot pair taken to remote camps: lawyer

MOSCOW – The jailed Pussy Riot punks, Nadezhda Tolokonnikova and Maria Alyokhina have arrived at prison camps in remote Russian regions, a defence lawyer said on October 24.

"Tolokonnikova has arrived at corrective labour camp 14 in Mordovia and Alyokhina has arrived at camp 32 in Perm," lawyer Violetta Volkova told the Interfax news agency.

"We do not have official information. I found this out from my sources, they checked it," Volkova added.

The Russian prison service is obliged to inform the women's relatives of their location within 10 days of their arrival.

The Mordovia camp is known for its harsh conditions. It is where lawyer Svetlana Bakhmina, the only woman convicted in the Yukos oil case that saw the jailing of Russia's former richest man Mikhail Khodorkovsky, served time from 2006 until October 2008.

The Perm camp is seen as a more pleasant option since it is in a city, although Perm is about 1400 kilometres from Moscow where Alyokhina's young son lives.

The two women were sentenced to two years for hooliganism motivated by religious hatred after they performed a "punk prayer" in a Moscow cathedral. Bandmate Yekaterina Samutsevich was released on appeal with a suspended sentence because guards grabbed her before she could take part.

Bakhmina, 43, told *New Times* opposition magazine that Camp No 14 had no hot water and the only way to wash was once a week in a Turkish-style bath.

While Bakhmina was convicted of the financial crime of embezzlement, she said she lived and slept in a section including murderers.

If Volkova is correct, Tolokonnikova will be in the same camp as Yevgenia Khasis, the partner of a nationalist activist who shot a rights lawyer and a journalist in broad daylight in Moscow in 2009. Khasis was sentenced to 18 years for complicity in the murders.

In a separate development, a Russian opposition activist has claimed he was abducted in Ukraine and tortured to confess to an anti-Vladimir Putin plot.

Leonid Razvozhayev, who is being held in a Moscow prison after

investigators said he freely confessed, told visiting rights activists that he was tortured and his family threatened, they told journalists on October 24.

Razvozhayev was allegedly kidnapped after a television show named him as a suspect in a probe based on claims that high-profile protestors were plotting an uprising with foreign funding.

"They are restoring the use of the experience of the Stalin era of the 1930s," rights activist Valery Borshchev told reporters after visiting Razvozhayev in Moscow's Lefortovo jail.

Razvozhayev, 39, claimed he was bundled into a van by masked men in Kiev, where he had been seeking asylum, on October 18.

Razvozhayev said he was taken across the Russian border and interrogated in a cellar.

"They told me: if you don't answer our questions, your children will be killed."

He said he confessed to the allegations after the men said they would otherwise inject him with a "truth serum" that could leave him permanently disabled. – AFP



Yevgenia Tymoshenko, with a picture of her mother – jailed Ukrainian opposition leader and former prime minister Yulia Tymoshenko – during a news conference at the Geneva Press Club on October 24. Yevgenia Tymoshenko said she feared that elections in Ukraine on October 28 could lead to an irreversible dictatorship under President Viktor Yanukovich. The election will be the first since Yanukovich beat Tymoshenko in a bitterly contested 2010 presidential poll that was soon followed by charges against the former prime minister, who was last October sentenced to seven years in prison on abuse of office charges. Pic: AFP

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Briefs

Libya suspect killed in Cairo: police

CAIRO – A gunman killed during a police raid on an apartment in northern Cairo is suspected of involvement in a deadly attack last month on the US consulate in the Libyan city of Benghazi, police said on October 25.

Various media reports suggested that the man who died in the October 24 raid was a Libyan citizen who is believed to be an Al-Qaeda militant.

US ambassador Christopher Stevens and three other Americans were killed in the September 11 attack on the US consulate in the eastern Libya city.

Piracy down, says maritime watchdog

PARIS – Sea piracy has fallen to its lowest level since 2008, a maritime watchdog said on October 22.

There were 233 acts of piracy in the first nine months of this year, the lowest figure for the period since 2008, the International Maritime Bureau (IMB) said in a report.

It said attacks by Somali pirates had fallen to their lowest level since 2009, with 70 attacks in the first nine months of the year, compared with 199 for the same period in 2011.

Obama lampoons Donald Trump

BURBANK, California – US President Barack Obama on October 24 lampooned Donald Trump

during an appearance on “The Tonight Show with Jay Leno” after the real estate tycoon revived the right-wing conspiracy theory that alleges that the president was not born in the United States.

“This all dates back to when we were growing up together in Kenya,” Obama joked.

“We had constant run-ins on the soccer field. He wasn’t very good and resented it,” said Obama, who was born in Hawaii.

Birdie theory on shark discovery

LOS ANGELES – Things don’t always land where they’re supposed to on a fairway, but the live shark that mysteriously appeared near the 12th tee of a California golf course seems to have been the result of a birdie.

The 60-centimetre (2-foot) leopard shark is thought to have been picked up by an osprey off the nearby Pacific coast and dropped as the bird flew over the San Juan Hills Golf Club south of Los Angeles, club officials said on October 25. – AFP

A year after liberation, Kadhafi bastion seized

BANI WALID – Libyan pro-government forces on October 24 seized control of Bani Walid, one of the last bastions of Moamer Kadhafi’s ousted regime, reports from the town said.

Hundreds of fighters, mostly former rebels from the rival town of Misrata, converged on the centre of Bani Walid, firing in the air to celebrate and hoisting the Libyan flag on abandoned public buildings, he said.

Several rebel chiefs, whose fighters patrolled in vehicles mounted with heavy weapons, told AFP the town was “almost liberated.”

Later in the day Libyan army chief-of-staff, Yussef al-Mangouch, officially announced the end of all military operations in the town, despite some pockets of resistance.

Mangouch told a news conference his troops were on a manhunt to track down several fighters who had fled towards the desert.

Government spokesman Nasser al-Manaa said meanwhile that about 100 suspects were arrested in Bani Walid in connection with crimes committed during last year’s revolution – namely combatants who sided with Kadhafi forces.



Murals decorate a wall in Libyan capital, Tripoli, last week as part of an exhibition to celebrate the first anniversary of the ousting of the regime of Moamer Kadhafi. The transitional authorities declared the country’s liberation on October 23, 2011, three days after Kadhafi was captured and killed in his hometown, Sirte. Pic: AFP

Speaking at a news conference, Manaa also gave a death toll of 50 government forces killed and said hundreds were wounded in the battles with “well-trained combatants in Bani Walid who possessed modern weapons.”

Local governance minister Mohamed al-Hrari also told reporters more than 10,000 families fled the fighting in Bani Walid to neighbouring towns, including Tarhuna.

Fierce clashes in Bani Walid, which was accused of harbouring die-hard

Kadhafi loyalists, cast a pall over celebrations for the first anniversary last week of the overthrow of his regime in a bloody conflict.

The fighting fanned old tribal feuds and underscored the difficulties of achieving national reconciliation.

A scaled-up offensive against Bani Walid since a week earlier came in response to the death of Omran Shaaban, 22, a former rebel from the city of Misrata who was credited with capturing Kadhafi.

Shaaban spent weeks held hostage in Bani Walid, where he was shot and allegedly tortured, before the authorities managed to broker his release.

He later died of injuries sustained during the ordeal, stoking tensions between his hometown Misrata and Bani Walid, long-time rivals which fought on opposite sides of the 2011 conflict, and galvanising the authorities to act.

The victorious fighters on October 24 carried massive portraits of Shaaban and of Ramadan al-Swihli, a resistance hero who fought Italian colonial powers and was killed in 1920 in Bani Walid.

Clashes between pro-government forces and Bani Walid fighters during the previous week had killed dozens of people and wounded hundreds, in scenes evocative of the civil war that led to Kadhafi’s overthrow and death.

– AFP

Sudan blames Israel for deadly air strike

KHARTOUM – Israeli missiles struck a military factory in the Sudanese capital killing two people, the Khartoum government said last week, 18 months after alleging a similar raid by the Jewish state.

Culture and Information Minister Ahmed Bilal Osman said four radar-evading aircraft carried out an attack about midnight on October 23 on the Yarmouk military manufacturing facility in the south of the city.

Evidence pointing to Israel’s involvement was found among remnants of the explosives, he told a news conference on October 24.

“We think Israel did the bombing,” Osman said. “We reserve the right to react at a place and time we choose.”

The military and foreign ministry in Israel, which has long accused Khartoum of serving as a base for militants from the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, refused to comment.

Sudan took its case to the UN Security Council on October 24 with envoy Daffa-Alla Elhag Ali Osman calling on the council to condemn Israel.

The envoy also accused Israel of arming rebels in Sudan’s Darfur region, where the UN says at least 300,000 people have been killed during the past decade.

In 1998, Human Rights Watch said a

coalition of opposition groups had alleged that Sudan stored chemical weapons for Iraq at the Yarmouk facility. Government officials strenuously denied the charge at the time.

In August that year, US cruise missiles struck the Al-Shifa pharmaceutical factory in North Khartoum, which Washington alleged was linked to chemical weapons production. Evidence for that claim later proved questionable.

Yarmouk made “traditional weapons,” Osman said on October 24.

“The attack destroyed part of the compound infrastructure, killed two people inside and injured another who is in serious condition,” he said.

There have been other mysterious blasts in Sudan – and allegations of Israeli involvement.

In April last year, Sudan said it had irrefutable evidence that Israeli attack helicopters carried out a missile and machine-gun strike on a car south of Port Sudan.

Israel refused to comment but officials there had expressed concern about arms smuggling through Sudan.

Last year’s attack mirrored a similar strike by foreign aircraft on a truck convoy reportedly laden with weapons in eastern Sudan in January 2009. – AFP

Rocket barrage brings warning to militants

GAZA CITY, Palestinian Territories – Israel vowed on October 24 to punish Hamas militants after scores of rockets fired from Gaza seriously injured two people, provoking air strikes that killed four Palestinian militants.

The latest surge in violence started early on October 23 when a roadside bomb severely wounded an Israeli soldier. That attack was claimed by the armed wing of the leftist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

Later that day, Palestinian militants fired six rockets at Israel, shortly after a high-profile visit to Gaza by Qatar’s Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani.

In response, Israeli aircraft killed two militants from Hamas’ armed wing, the Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades, in northern Gaza. Palestinian militants hit back with more rocket fire.

An early-morning Israeli raid near southern city of Rafah on October 24

killed a third militant from the Popular Resistance Committees (PRC). Another Hamas militant hurt in air strikes died of his injuries later, medics said.

Militants from Hamas and the PRC claimed responsibility for the rocket fire.

“Hamas will receive its punishment for what has happened here,” Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak said October 24.

“If they cannot be calmed, and the rockets continue, then the IDF (military) will act,” Barak added.

Since the start of 2012, nearly 600 rockets and mortars had been fired at southern Israel, he said.

UN peace envoy Robert Serry, deploring the escalation, called on all parties to exercise utmost restraint.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned any continuation of rocket fire would prompt a “much more extensive” Israeli response.

– AFP

African Union backs plan for north Mali offensive

ADDIS ABABA – The African Union has readmitted Mali after suspending it from the pan-African bloc following a March coup, and backed plans for authorities there to recapture the north from radical Islamists.

The move on October 24 came as the International Red Cross issued a warning about the plight of those in the north of the country,

where a food crisis looms.

“Council decides to lift the suspension of Mali’s participation in the activities of the AU,” the bloc’s Peace and Security Commissioner Ramtane Lamamra told reporters.

Mali’s membership was revoked after army officers overthrew the elected government seven months ago.

The subsequent chaos

gave free rein to a rebellion by Islamic extremists and Tuareg separatists who took over large swathes of the country’s north, before the Islamists forced out their former Tuareg allies.

Fearful that the area the size of France could become a sanctuary for al-Qaeda-linked Islamists, Mali’s neighbours and Western powers are keen to drive

the radicals out.

The AU also endorsed a regional plan urging the “restoration of state authority of the northern part of the country”.

The plan, which also calls for free elections in Mali early next year, would be presented to the United Nations Security Council for endorsement, said Lamamra.

Hundreds of jihadist

fighters, mainly from Sudan and Western Sahara, arrived in northern Mali earlier last week to support the Islamist groups ahead of the planned regional intervention.

The armed Islamists have already enforced a harsh version of sharia law there, forcing women to cover their heads and banning cigarettes, alcohol and music. – AFP

Trafficked Nepalese pair's odyssey 'like a detective story'

GENEVA – Two Nepalese men were rescued from prison-like conditions in Haiti after 11 months at the mercy of human traffickers who had promised them jobs in the United States, the International Organisation for Migration said on October 23.

The men, in their 30s, had been recruited in their native Nepal by a human smuggling network that had charged them an unspecified fee in exchange for legal immigration and work in the US, Jumbe Omari Jumbe, a spokesman for the Geneva-based

organisation told reporters.

Since starting their journey last November, the men had been shuttled through Singapore, China, Brazil, Panama and finally to Haiti – supposedly their last stop before reaching the US – and had been provided official visas for each country in which they stopped.

"It reads like a detective story," Jumbe said, adding that the smugglers must have had a massive network since they "actually obtained visas from all these countries."

"They must have paid thousands of dollars," he added.

Although the two men had been willingly smuggled initially, they became trafficking victims when they arrived in Haiti in January this year and were taken to a private home in the northern city of Cap Haitien.

"They were kept as virtual prisoners with little food and dirty drinking water," Jumbe said, adding that the family had confiscated their passports, threatened them and demanded money.

But when their captors told

them to call their families and ask for more cash, the men described to their loved-ones, in Nepalese, details of landmarks they had passed when they were being transported to the house.

Their relatives then contacted Nepalese police, who in turn alerted police units forming part of the UN peacekeeping mission in Haiti, which organised a rescue mission.

"It was very hard finding the area, because these men were in prison. They didn't see where they were. But finally through hard

work they found them and they were rescued," Jumbe said.

IOM, which has helped some 2000 human trafficking victims since it began working on the issue in 1994, transported the two men back to Nepal, he said.

"This case confirms that Haiti is a country of origin, transit and destination for human trafficking and migrant smuggling," IOM's mission chief in Haiti, Gregoire Goodstein, said in a statement.

"The criminal networks at work in Haiti are national and international," he added. – AFP

Earthquake jail sentences slammed as 'big mistake'

ROME – The head of Italy's top disaster body quit in protest on October 23 after seven of its members were sentenced to jail over a deadly earthquake in a shock ruling that the global science community warned dealt a dangerous blow to scientific freedom.

Luciano Maiami, the head of the Major Risks Committee, and several top scientists resigned after seven of the body's members were found guilty on October 22 of manslaughter for underestimating the L'Aquila quake which killed 309 people in 2009.

Maiami, one of Italy's top physicists, described the verdict as "a big mistake".

The verdict has provoked deep anger and concern in the global science community, with experts warning of the repercussions and saying their colleagues had been used as scapegoats.

The seven defendants are appealing against the ruling by the court in the medieval town of L'Aquila in central Italy. Under the Italian justice system, they remain free until they have exhausted two avenues of appeal.

All seven defendants were members of the Major Risks Committee which met in L'Aquila on March 31, 2009

– six days before the 6.3-magnitude quake devastated the region, killing 309 people and leaving thousands homeless.

One of the seven, Mauro Dolce, resigned as head of the Civil Protection's seismic risk office on October 23, and the rest of the committee were preparing to follow suit, said Maiami.

The appeal hearings are due to take place later this year, said Marcello Melandri, lawyer for Enzo Bosci, the head of Italy's national geophysics institute (INGV) at the time of the quake.

"I am still incredulous," he said of judge Marco Belli's decision to give the scientists an even harsher sentence than the four years called for by the prosecutor.

Anna Bonomi, spokeswoman for a survivors' group which has campaigned for justice.

"They may convince Italians (that the trial was unfair) but they will not convince us residents: they played with people's lives," she said.

Maiami said that rather than blaming the scientists, prosecutors should be going after the architects and builders who put up poorly built apartments.

It is "deeply wrong that there is no investigation into who constructed houses in a seismic zone in such an inadequate fashion," he said.

Geophysicist Dario Albarello, who heads a project into short-term quake forecasts for the INGV, said "it is not earthquakes that kill, it's badly built buildings that collapse," and described the trial as "a witch hunt." – AFP

'I am still incredulous.'

The defendants were also ordered to pay more than nine million euros (almost US\$12 million) in damages to survivors.

In L'Aquila and the surrounding towns, survivors and families of those killed said they were shocked by the reaction.

"There has not been any trial against science," said



Jimmy Savile at celebrations in London marking the Golden Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II, in a file photo taken on June 4, 2002. Pic: AFP

Former BBC chief denies shelving Savile abuse probe

NEW YORK – Incoming *New York Times* CEO Mark Thompson last week denied any role in shelving an investigation while he was head of the *British Broadcasting Corporation* into allegations of sex abuse against late British TV star Jimmy Savile.

Thompson, who is set to take charge at America's most prestigious newspaper, told the *NYT* he had heard about the probe from a reporter at a party last December and followed up with two *BBC* News officials.

"I talked to senior management in *BBC* News and reported the conversation I had at the party and asked was there a problem," he was quoted as saying on October 24, adding that he was told the story would not be published "for journalistic reasons."

Thompson, 55, who headed the *BBC* from 2004 to September 2012, said: "There is nothing to suggest that I acted inappropriately in the handling of this matter."

"I did not impede or stop the *Newsnight* investigation, nor have I done anything else that could be construed as untoward or unreasonable." Thompson said he was never told about the nature of the allegations against Savile, who died in October 2011 aged 84, nor did he ask, during his talks with the reporter and the officials.

"Had I known about the nature of the allegations and the credible allegations that these horrific crimes had taken place during his time at the *BBC* and in the building at the *BBC*, I of

course would have considered them very grave and would have acted very differently," he was quoted as saying.

George Entwistle, the current director general of the *BBC*, appeared before British lawmakers on October 23 and said he regretted that the broadcaster had dropped *Newsnight's* Savile investigation.

But he denied that pressure from *BBC* top brass had forced the flagship current affairs television show to shelve its investigation.

The New York Times confirmed in its story that Thompson would join the company as president and CEO the week of November 12.

"It is my belief that there isn't anything in my participation or my role in this story that would impede my ability to join and work with my colleagues at *The New York Times*," Thompson told the newspaper.

Thompson said in a separate interview with Britain's *ITV* news – the independent TV channel which first ran the Savile allegations two weeks earlier – that he was willing to answer questions from the parliamentary committee that quizzed Entwistle.

Savile, a DJ who rose to become one of the biggest and most distinctive personalities of *BBC* television from the 1960s until the 1980s, died last October.

British police have launched a separate criminal investigation into the alleged abuse by Savile, and Scotland Yard says it believes there may have been as many as 200 victims. – AFP

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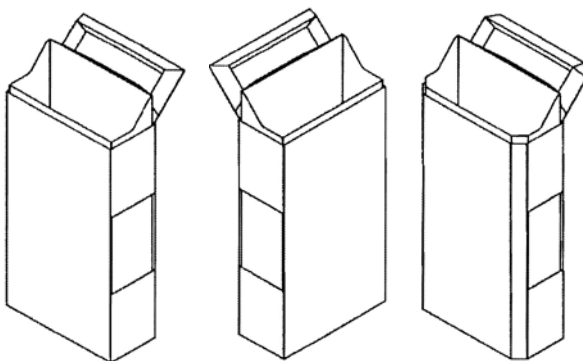


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Cultivating peace to live in harmony

K F A R E T Z I O N SETTLEMENT. Palestinian Territories – After years of struggle, Mohammed Saed is about to finally secure army permission to build a home in his West Bank village after an Israeli in a nearby settlement stepped in to help.

Saed's village, Khirbet Zakariya, is in a part of the West Bank under full Israeli administrative and security control. As a Palestinian, he cannot build without Israeli permission, which is often difficult to secure.

"Settlers came to visit the village three years ago and were surprised when they saw how little housing there was," he told AFP.

"They offered to speak to the (Israeli) Civil Administration to help us obtain the necessary permits," he said, referring to the defence ministry unit responsible for zoning and planning in most of the West Bank.

"We were shocked because we usually get harassed or attacked by settlers."

The presence of half a million Jewish settlers in the West Bank and east Jerusalem – which, along with the Gaza Strip, were occupied by Israel during the 1967 Six-Day War – is a source of much bitterness for Palestinians who want these areas for their long-promised state.

But a settlers' movement called Eretz Shalom (Land of Peace) is trying to bring both sides together to



Eretz Shalom leader Nahum Patchenik (left) and Sheikh Ibrahim. Eretz Shalom is an Israeli settlers' group that promotes cooperation with the Palestinians. Pic: AFP

soothe some of those open wounds.

Eliaz Cohen, a Jew living in the settlement of Kfar Etzion, was one of the first to get involved in efforts to help the villagers of nearby Khirbet Zakariya. He said he struck up a relationship with Saed as they battled to get a permit for his house.

"For three years, I fought by his side," said Cohen, a poet and a pioneer of efforts

to start dialogue between the settlers and their Palestinian neighbours.

For him, peace starts with mutual recognition of the right of both sides to the same land.

"It's not that the land should be divided, it should be shared by everyone," he told AFP.

"I think there is room for two national entities to exist in the same place, whether in

the form of a confederation, or two states, but without anyone losing their historic rights to this land, to which our two peoples are both attached."

Two years ago, Cohen's friend Nahum Patchenik set up the Eretz Shalom movement to promote religious, social and economic cooperation with the Palestinians.

"Peace between us is mandatory," said Patchenik, a father of four who lives in Gush Etzion, a settlement bloc in the southern West Bank that lies close to Bethlehem.

With a bushy black beard, a large skullcap and sandals, Patchenik looks exactly like one of the nationalist religious settlers who are usually little inclined

toward dialogue with their Palestinian neighbours.

A rabbi's son, he was born and raised on settlements and says he can't imagine living anywhere else.

"I am tied to this land and I will stay, but the Palestinians are too, and I want to learn to live with them," he said.

Eretz Shalom is involved in a growing number of projects, including farming a field together.

"The project is called Sadot Shamayim (Fields of Heaven) because we Jews and Muslims believe that the land, in the end, belongs to no one but God,"

he explained, saying the food grown there would be distributed to needy families.

Patchenik's views are not shared by many of the 500,000 settlers living in the West Bank and east Jerusalem. Eretz Shalom has about 1700 members, including 150 Palestinians.

Many in the settler community consider Eretz Shalom to be utopian dreamers at best, traitors at worst.

And for many Palestinians the idea of cooperating with the settlers is also anathema.

But not for those living in Khirbet Zakariya, who say they are happy to accept

"It's my right to be part of a Jewish minority in a Palestinian democracy, just like the more than one million Palestinians living in the state of Israel," he said.

"Peace is made between people of good will on the ground, not on the lawn of the White House," he added.

Ibrahim Anbawi, a Palestinian member of Eretz Shalom from the West Bank city of Ramallah, said he also wants to spread these ideas among his compatriots.

"I've met with settlers who agree to live in a future Palestinian state and this dialogue is a good thing for the future," he said.

In a climate marked by a growing number of settler attacks on Palestinians and their property, the

movement faces an uphill battle. United Nations statistics show there were 411 such attacks last year, up from 167 in 2009.

But Cohen insists that ideas about coexistence and cooperation are gaining ground as more people realise their futures are irrevocably intertwined.

"People's mentalities are changing more and more, among the settlers and among the Palestinians," he told AFP.

"They're understanding that their futures are closely linked," he said.

"We are condemned to make peace." – AFP

'Peace between us is mandatory.'

any help if it will secure them a rare permit from the military to build much-needed homes.

"We are 650 people here and we need all the help we can get," said Saed, adding that settlers are often seen in the village, visiting the grave of the biblical prophet Zechariah.

"Am I crazy?" Patchenik asked. "Yes, I'm crazy for peace."

He refused to propose political solutions, but said that if a two-state solution were adopted one day, he'd stay where he is – even if he became part of a Palestinian state.

Signs bridge language divide in Mecca during hajj

MECCA, Saudi Arabia – Nods, smiles, frowns, and hand gestures speak volumes in the holy city of Mecca where Muslims from throughout the world for the annual pilgrimage – the hajj – manage to communicate in silence.

In the Grand Mosque, home to the holy Kaaba, an African woman frowns and waves her hand to signal to a female Turkish pilgrim that the prayer is not yet over.

She understands, nods, smiles and continues to pray. Afterwards they shake hands and exchange smiles.

It all takes place in silence, both women well aware that they could not have had this dialogue aloud as they speak very different languages.

"We call this special means of communication the 'language of the Haram' (Grand Mosque)," says Ali Abdullah, a Sudanese shopkeeper living in Mecca.

"I deal with Asian pilgrims using sign language," he said. "We depend on body language and signs and even on drawings in some cases."

"I can deal better with Nigerians and other Africans who can usually speak English, but Asians have their own languages which I can't understand."

Abdullah, who has been working in Mecca for five years, tries to improve his communication skills by offering customers a pen and paper to draw the item they are looking for as he tries to commit to memory the words they use for the drawing.

"I try to memorise it in case someone asks for the same thing in future," he says with a grin.

Meanwhile his colleague Rasheed Ali, from Myanmar, proudly announces "I speak 10 languages. I learned them all from working here for 17 years."

Pilgrims nearby stop to ask a security official for directions. He understands, nods and points.

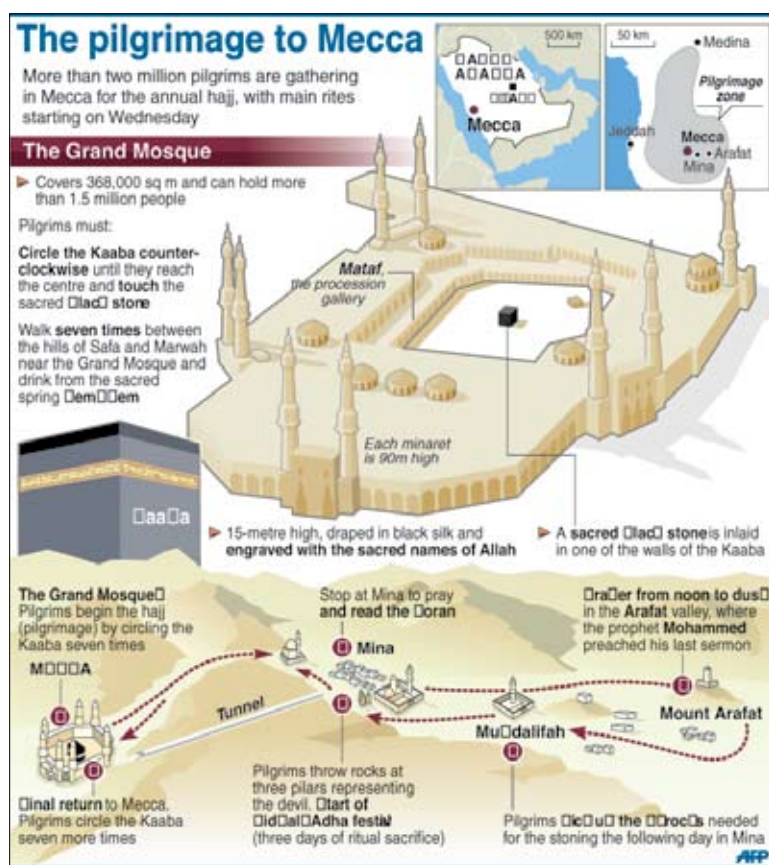
"I don't speak foreign languages but I can understand what they are trying to say and they usually understand my directions," he says. If not, he has to leave his post and lead them to their destination.

It took Majed al-Qulaisi, a Saudi merchant, two to three years to learn Turkish, Malaysian and some Russian. But with Africans, he still communicates using sign language.

"Sometimes they don't understand what I'm saying. I could say something which a pilgrim would interpret as an insult, get cross with me and walk out of the shop."

After 11 years in the small shop selling rosaries made from precious stones, Qulaisi's job has become easier as he now knows beforehand what stones every pilgrim is looking for depending on their country of origin.

"Southeast Asians usually look for pearls, coral, and wooden rosaries," he said. "Africans prefer long rosaries while Turks look for smaller ones with 33 beads" instead of the standard 99, representing the various names of God.



A few kilometres (miles) away, a policeman trying to organise the pilgrims' movements in and out of the mosque waves his arms to direct the crowds, whose various phonetics mingle to form a loud reverberating buzz inside the building.

But silence descends as prayer begins and the pilgrims all recite

the holy Muslim book the Koran, and worship Allah (God) in Arabic.

Signposts in the mosque and its squares are often illustrated with drawings in addition to being written mainly in English, Arabic and Urdu.

The Saudi authorities have taken various small steps to try to

overcome the linguistic challenges posed by the pilgrimage of more than two million foreigners who arrive each year for the world's largest Muslim gathering.

As pilgrims pour into the country through the hajj terminal in Jeddah airport, they are met by officials from the ministry of hajj, many of whom are capable of giving directions and advice in different languages.

Millions of booklets, films, copies of the Koran and tapes in various languages are also handed out to pilgrims arriving from abroad. Media outlets provide basic information in 32 different languages.

A hotline, the Mnask service, has also been set up to respond to the questions of pilgrims in Arabic, English, French, Urdu, Indonesian, Turkish, Bengali and Hausa.

The authorities have launched a free smart phone application that provides a simple explanation on hajj rituals in four languages – English, Arabic, Indonesian, and Urdu.

The religious police have meanwhile hired 700 translators to guide pilgrims in Mecca and the second holy city Medina.

Some pilgrims try to learn some Arabic during their short stay for hajj.

"I have learned a few Arabic words to help me communicate with people here. I can say 'shukran' which means thank you and 'sabr' which means patience," said a US pilgrim of Nigerian origin. – AFP

Children's survey forecasts a landslide for Barack Obama

WASHINGTON – The youngsters of the United States have voted, the results are in – and it's a landslide victory for Barack Obama.

Sixty-five percent picked the incumbent president, and 35pc his Republican challenger Mitt Romney, in a bellwether online poll conducted by children's current affairs show "Nick News

with Linda Ellerbee."

The outcome, released on October 22, will raise eyebrows because, for five out of the six previous US presidential elections, the viewers of "Nick News" have correctly picked the winner several weeks before the actual vote.

In grown-up surveys, Obama and Romney have been running

neck and neck.

"Obama won big," said "Nick News" anchor Ellerbee, who doubted that Romney's failure to join Obama in a "Nick News" election special a week earlier on the *Nickelodeon* cable channel might have swayed the outcome.

"In 2004, when John Kerry refused to participate in the show,

the kids still elected Kerry," who went on to suffer defeat at the hands of George W. Bush, she told *AFP*.

More than 521,000 votes were cast during the previous week, Ellerbee said, a significant fall in turnout "because *Nickelodeon* fixed it this time so you couldn't vote more than once."

And while there was no way to guarantee that everyone who voted was under the legal voting age of 18, "it's safe to say the majority are kids," based on anecdotal evidence from previous years, she said.

Launched 21 years ago, "Nick News" is the longest-running children's news program in television history. – *AFP*

It's head-to-head in White House race

DELRAY BEACH, Florida – Barack Obama and Mitt Romney took their head-to-head battle for the US presidency to key swing states last week after a feisty but inconclusive final debate.

Post debate polling showed Obama winning the debate on October 22 but analysts said Romney, who adopted more dovish-sounding foreign policy prescriptions that differed little from those the president, may have been helped by the encounter.

"The fact that Mr Romney was able to show himself to not be the dangerous, wild conservative that Obama has been trying to portray him as, that may help him," said Christopher Arterton, a political science professor at George Washington University.

"That may continue some of the flight that we have seen towards Romney, particularly in states he has to win, Florida and Ohio".

The focus will likely return to the economy as the two campaigns in the key battlegrounds expected to decide the election, with the president speaking in Florida and Ohio and his Republican rival heading



Political analysts are predicting a cliffhanger finish between Barack Obama (right) and Mitt Romney when Americans vote in the presidential election on November 6. Pic: AFP

west to Nevada and Colorado.

Economic woes loom far larger than any foreign threat, and it will take several days to gauge whether the debate had any impact on tied polls with days to go before the November 6 elections.

Obama had the best lines of the night and sharply cross-examined Romney on his approach to Syria, Iran and trade rows with China, accusing him of "airbrushing history" by dumping earlier hawkish conservative positions.

"I know you haven't been

in a position to actually execute foreign policy, but every time you've offered an opinion, you've been wrong," Obama said, accusing his opponent of being "all over the map" on a wide range of issues.

The Republican, who has spent months trying to paint the president as a weak appeaser, took a milder tone, actually backing much of the substance of the current administration's global strategy.

In a clear bid to moderate his image, Romney endorsed Obama's decision to withdraw from Afghanistan

in 2014, supported the president's lethal drone war against terror suspects and congratulated him on hunting down Osama bin Laden.

Romney vowed to press China harder on trade and currency issues but toned down earlier rhetoric, following warnings that his approach could spark a trade war.

"We can be a partner with China. We don't have to be an adversary in any way, shape or form," he said, despite his vow to brand Beijing a currency manipulator on day one of his presidency.

Oddly, neither candidate mentioned the eurozone crisis – widely seen as the country's biggest external economic threat – aside from Romney reprising his warning that the debt-laden US economy under Obama was "heading toward Greece."

The president scored the most Twitter-worthy remark, when he dismissed Romney's claims that he had scaled back the military to a level not seen since the early 20th century.

"Well, governor, we also have fewer horses and bayonets because the nature

of our military's changed," he said, to laughter from the audience.

The "horses and bayonets" barb caused Twitter message volume during the debate to hit a peak of 105,767 tweets, the micro-blogging service said.

Arterton said Obama and Romney had performed well in the debate but that the "ground game" in closely fought states would be decisive.

"We're really down to both sides mobilising whatever resources they have to get their voters to the polls," he told *AFP*.

The rivals are effectively tied in national polls after Romney surged following his first debate win in early October and started chipping away at Obama's foundation in the swing states that will decide the election.

"It's still quite up in the air," said Charles Franklin, co-founder of Pollster.com and a politics professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

"I think we are, at the moment, close enough that you could imagine a cliffhanger that comes down to a single state's electoral votes." – *AFP*

Man appears at his funeral

RIO DE JANEIRO – There was screaming. There was fainting. It doesn't happen every day: a car washer in Brazil walked into his own wake, where his distraught family was already weeping over their loss.

"People were so startled. Women were fainting, people started running all over the place," said Maria Menezes, one of the mourners at the event in Alagoinhas, in Salvador de Bahia state, *GI* news reported.

Gilberto Araujo, 41, heard from a friend on the street that his family thought he was dead and was busy getting ready to bury him so he decided to head straight to the wake and clear things up.

In fact, Araujo's family had been burying a corpse that looked startlingly like their loved one, a body that had yet to be formally identified, *GI* reported.

"I am just beside myself with joy," a beaming Marina Santana told the network. "What mother who is told her son is dead is not going to be overjoyed when she sees her son alive again?" – *AFP*

Female health activists target lawmakers in book campaign

WASHINGTON – Women's health advocates outlined a plan last week to put a copy of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* in the office of every lawmaker on Capitol Hill, 41 years after the guide to the female body was published.

By doing so, they're aiming to check the possibility that senators and congressmen in Washington – and the vast majority are men – might give short shrift to science when drafting legislation involving women's health.

Our Bodies, Ourselves has been translated into 30 languages since it was first published by the Boston Women's Health Book Collective in 1971 and found its way on to the best-seller lists.

It's become a go-to authority on such topics as sexuality, birth control, childbirth and menopause.

But in this election year, Judith Norsigian, executive director of the *Our Bodies Ourselves* organisation – as the Boston collective now is known – said more politicians and their aides

need to have it in their libraries.

"We hope to advance evidence-based reproductive health policy-making in this country" by giving copies to all 435 members of House of Representatives and 100 senators, she told reporters in Washington on October 22.

Abortion and contraception have been hot-button issues ahead

"Most of us get pretty poor quality sex education..."

the November 6 elections.

In August, congressman Todd Akin, a Republican from Missouri, raised eyebrows when he said he had been told by doctors it was "really rare" for a rape victim to wind up pregnant.

"If it's a legitimate rape, the female body has ways to try to shut that whole thing down," he said, prompting Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney

to distance himself from the would-be senator's remarks.

Cindy Pearson, executive director of the National Women's Health Network, said abortion – including a total ban, even when rape is involved – has been a decisive issue among Americans for decades.

"What seems to be escalating somewhat right now is public figures' willingness to make statements of fact that are so badly wrong," she said.

Norsigian expressed concern about the quality of sex education in schools.

She cited a medical school professor in Chicago who told her about a student who claimed that condoms aggravated the spread of HIV-AIDS.

"Most of us get pretty poor quality sex education and reproductive health education when we're growing up," she said. "This country has a long way to go in that respect."

– *AFP*



United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and South Korean singer Psy, whose real name is Park Jae-sang, share a light moment at UN headquarters in New York on October 23. Ban said he felt overshadowed by his countryman, who showed off some of the 'Gangnam Style' dance moves that have been viewed more than 530 million times on YouTube. "I'm a bit jealous," Ban said. "Until two days ago someone told me I am the most famous Korean in the world. Now I have to relinquish," he joked. Psy heaped praise on Ban, telling reporters: "For all the Koreans he is the guy, you know, in everyone's heart in Korea, the best among the best." Ban's office said the encounter was arranged because the two men were interested in meeting each other. Pic: AFP

Britain ends 10-year boycott of leading Hindu nationalist

AHMEDABAD, India – Britain held talks on October 22 with Indian regional leader Narendra Modi, ending a 10-year boycott over deadly religious riots in Gujarat state that left more than 2000 dead, including three Britons.

Modi, a Hindu nationalist who is tipped as a possible future prime minister, came to power in Gujarat shortly before the 2002 riots and is accused of doing little to prevent India's worst religious violence since independence.

After the riots, Britain stopped dealing directly with Modi but the government in October changed its policy and announced that its ambassador to India, James Bevan, would travel to Gujarat.

"This is about engagement, it is not about endorsement," Bevan told reporters after the meeting.

"If you want to engage effectively with an Indian state... you need to engage with the chief minister."

Bevan said Britain was keen to improve its overall relations with India and he also noted that several public figures had recently been found guilty over the riots.

Modi's office said the discussions included

opportunities for British companies in Gujarat.

"Had a great meeting... to strengthen Guj-UK ties in economic and social sectors," Modi said on Twitter.

The riots in 2002 were triggered by the deaths of nearly 60 Hindu pilgrims in a train fire that was initially blamed on a mob of Muslims.

Modi is accused of failing to halt the orgy of revenge that left more than 2000 people – mainly Muslims – dead, according to rights groups. Government figures put the death toll at about 1000.

'This is about engagement...'

Among the dead were three British nationals who were burnt to death in Sabarkantha district of the western Indian state.

When Britain announced it would end the boycott, the government said it still wanted "to secure justice for the families of the British nationals who were killed in 2002".

Bevan on October 22 also stressed the well-established

ties with Gujarat due to large numbers of Indian-origin families who have migrated to Britain from the state.

But Tanveer Jaffery, whose father was killed in the riots, said that the British government needed to fully explain the end of the boycott.

"There was a gross violation of human rights in 2002 when the state machinery connived with the rioters," Jaffery told AFP.

"What assessment has the British made of the Modi government to compel them to change their stance?"

Modi, a senior leader of the main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), denies any misconduct over the riots. But he has struggled to shake off the allegations, and the US has refused to grant him a visa since 2005.

Britain's resumption of links with Modi came two months after a Gujarat court sentenced a former member of his government to 28 years in jail for her role in instigating the 2002 unrest.

The sentencing of Maya Kodnani, who served as women's minister from 2007-2009, was seen as a setback for Modi's prime ministerial ambitions as India looks to general elections due in 2014. – AFP



Sri Lankan police recruits from the country's Tamil minority undergo training at a police academy at Kalutara, near the capital, Colombo, on October 24. A group of 480 men and women from the ethnic group have been recruited amid calls from Tamil political parties to increase the numbers of Tamils in a police force dominated by island's Sinhalese majority. Pic: AFP

Briefs

Bangladesh begins rebuilding temples

DHAKA – Bangladesh has started rebuilding 19 Buddhist temples vandalised by Muslim mobs in violence triggered by anger over Facebook content that defamed the Koran, officials said on October 25.

Army engineers will renovate the temples at a cost of nearly 120 million taka (US\$1.5 million) on the orders of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina who recently visited the area, district administrator Ruhul Amin told AFP.

Police said thousands of Muslims had taken part in the riots and nearly 300 people have been arrested.

Suicide blast kills dozens in mosque

KABUL – A suicide bomber killed at least 32 people and wounded 34 when he struck inside a mosque in Maymana city in northern Afghanistan during Eid al-Adha prayers on October 26, officials said.

The attacker was wearing a police uniform when he blew himself up in the crowded Eid Gah mosque in the provincial capital of Faryab province, they said.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility, but suicide bombings are a favourite weapon of Taliban Islamists trying to topple the Western-backed government of President Hamid Karzai.

Reward offer on self-immolations

BEIJING – Chinese police said on October 25 they were offering up to US\$32,000 as a reward for information on those they say are behind a series of self-immolations in a Tibetan-inhabited region in northwestern Gansu province.

Nearly 60 ethnic Tibetans, many of them monks and nuns, have set themselves on fire in China since February 2009 in protest at Beijing's rule in Tibet, with the most recent incidents occurring near the Labrang monastery in the province.

'Gangnam' parody blocked, says Ai

BEIJING – Chinese internet authorities on October 25 blocked a "Gangnam Style" parody by dissident artist Ai Weiwei, which took aim at the government's efforts to silence his activism.

The four-minute music video, a parody of South Korean artist Psy's viral hit, was uploaded to China's video-sharing site Tuduo on October 24.

It was removed by internet censors after getting thousands of hits, Ai said on his microblog web page. – AFP

Pachyderm processed, at \$50 cup

BANGKOK – An upmarket hotel chain in Thailand has begun selling coffee made from beans digested and excreted by elephants.

The Black Ivory blend is billed as producing a particularly smooth cup.

But it is not cheap, with Anantara Hotels saying the "naturally refined" coffee costs US\$1100 a kilogram – making it one of the most expensive blends in the world.

"Research indicates that during digestion, the enzymes of the elephant break down coffee protein," the Thai-based hotel group, which is selling the brew at about \$50 for two cups, said in a statement on October 25.

"Since protein is one of the main factors responsible for bitterness in coffee, less protein means almost no bitterness."

After being picked from the elephants' dung, the beans are sun-dried.

The process is carried out at the hotel's elephant rescue centre in Thailand's north.

Black Ivory is not the first novelty blend to hit the market in recent years. Coffee passed through the civet, a tree-dwelling mammal in the Philippines, Vietnam and Indonesia, sells for a similar price.

One New York coffee shop sells the civet coffee for \$748 a kilogram. – AFP

China chides Obama, Romney over tough rhetoric in debate

BEIJING – Beijing urged the US presidential candidates on October 23 to refrain from inflaming tensions with China after President Barack Obama and challenger Mitt Romney vowed to get tough with the Asian giant.

Both men vowed to be firm on China at their final presidential debate in Florida the previous evening with Romney reeling off a list of alleged Chinese trade violations.

"US politicians no matter from what party should view China's development in an objective and rational light and should do more for China-US mutual trust and cooperation," foreign ministry spokesman Hong Lei said after the debate.

"The sound and steady

development of China-US relations serve the fundamental interests of both countries and both peoples, it is also conducive to regional and world peace, stability and prosperity."

During the debate, Romney repeated his

'US politicians...should do more for China-US mutual trust and cooperation.'

vow that, if elected, he would declare China to be a currency manipulator on his first day in office, charging that Beijing has kept its yuan artificially low to flood the market with cheap exports.

"They're taking jobs. They're stealing our

intellectual property, our patents, our designs, our technology, hacking into our computers, counterfeiting our goods," Romney said.

But despite the tough talk, he discounted the possibility of provoking a trade war with Beijing should he win

partner in the international community if it's following the rules," Obama said at the debate.

China's state press lashed out at the anti-China tone of the discussions.

"Willing or not, Democratic or Republican, the next US president shall have to tone down his get-tough-on-China rhetoric made along the campaign trail," Xinhua news agency said in a commentary.

It added: "Both US presidential candidates vowed at their third and last debate... that they would press Beijing to 'play by the rules' in shaping their bilateral ties."

"However, their definition of 'rules of the road' is primarily pro-American." – AFP

India a partner, not a rival: Beijing

BEIJING – Beijing stressed last week that India and China were "partners instead of rivals" with common interests in development, striking a conciliatory note on the 50th anniversary of a war between the neighbours.

Badly-equipped Indian troops were humiliated in the four-week war along the Himalayan frontier which began in October 1962,

with Chinese forces pouring through the mountains and advancing as far as the plains of Assam.

China then withdrew to the current border but it still claims much of the remote Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh and the dispute consistently sours efforts to improve ties between the regional rivals.

"The current road has undergone deep and

profound changes," China's foreign ministry spokesman Hong Lei said on October 24 in a reference to the war anniversary.

"As the two most populous developing countries and emerging economies, both China and India face important opportunities of development (and) the two countries are cooperation partners instead of rivals."

"Common ground

far outweighs disputes and common interests outnumber conflicts ... the world has enough space for the common development of China and India."

The border between India and China has been the subject of 14 rounds of fruitless talks since the war. Despite warm words during official visits, friction remains high on the border itself. – AFP



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Vietnam's PM admits errors in managing the economy

HANOI – Vietnam's prime minister admitted last week that his government had made mistakes in its stewardship of the troubled economy, in the latest bout of self-criticism by the secretive Communist regime.

Scandals, inefficiencies and major losses at state-run giants such as shipbuilder Vinashin have dented public confidence, Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung told the opening session of the month-long National Assembly on October 22.

"I recognise my political responsibility and my faults," he said, citing Vinashin by name. "We have learned our lesson."

He warned parliamentarians that economic growth was likely to be just 5.2 percent for 2012 – the slowest rate in 13 years. The government had previously targeted growth of up to 6.5pc for this year.

"Vietnam's economy still has many limitations and weaknesses – the macro-economic situation is not good, inflation may rise again, toxic debts are increasing," he said.



Vietnam's Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung (centre) with Vietnamese Communist Party secretary general Nguyen Phu Trong (left) and President Truong Tan Sang at a ceremony in Hanoi on October 22. Pic: AFP

Dung, 62, had escaped punishment at a key Communist Party meeting the previous week over a recent string of scandals that have touched the country's leadership.

But in an attempt to deflect increasing online criticism, the party issued an unusual rebuke against its own performance.

Experts say Dung's political

rivals, notably Communist Party Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong and President Truong Tan Sang, seem to be using the crisis to try to reduce the power of the prime minister.

Dung, a former central bank governor, is said to have become the country's most powerful prime minister.

Seen as a moderniser when first appointed, he pushed for rapid economic growth and

relied on state-owned giants to drive the economy.

But the near-collapse of scandal-tainted Vinashin in 2010 put the spotlight on the financial troubles of the state-owned companies.

The arrest in August this year of a disgraced multi-millionaire banker seen as an ally of Dung further shook investor confidence in the country.

Vietnam is grappling with slowing economic growth, resurgent inflation, falling foreign direct investment and rising fears about toxic debts in the fragile banking system.

Dung said the government's top priority for 2013 was to stabilise the macro-economy and keep inflation – which hit 23pc in August last year but has since fallen to single digits – under control.

Dung took aim at online newspapers and blogs that have published what he called "negative information" about the economic woes, calling for those who "take advantage of the internet to sabotage the country" to be punished. – AFP

Khmer Rouge trial faces more delays, say judges

PHNOMPENH – Cambodia's landmark trial of three former Khmer Rouge leaders faces fresh delays, the UN-backed court said on October 23, explaining funding woes would force it to hold fewer hearings each month.

The court cannot afford to replace "a significant number of key international legal and other staff", judges said, in the latest setback to a trial stalked by fears that its octogenarian defendants will not live to see a verdict.

"While there is insufficient staff to support the work of the trial chamber, it cannot continue to sit for four days each week," presiding judge Nil Nonn said in court, adding that hearings would be three times a week from November.

"This will lead inevitably to an extension of the time needed to conclude (the) case," he said.

The move comes as the oldest and most frail of the accused, former foreign minister Ieng Sary, 86, is in hospital with a string of ailments, lending fresh urgency to proceedings that have already been hit by health-related delays.

The tribunal, which is funded by foreign donors, has often faced cash shortages since it was formed in 2006 to seek justice for up to two million people who died under the 1975-1979 Khmer Rouge regime.

It has spent over \$160 million so far and faces a shortfall of at least \$4 million this year.

Ieng Sary, and co-accused "Brother Number Two" Nuon Chea and former head of state Khieu Samphan deny charges including war crimes and genocide.

To speed up their complex case, it was split into a series of smaller trials, starting with the forced evacuation of the population into labour camps and related crimes against humanity.

But given the age of the accused and the funding crisis, tribunal monitors believe this first "mini-trial" will also be the last and the trio will likely never have to answer for the worst atrocities.

The court has completed one case, sentencing former prison chief Duch to life in jail for overseeing the deaths of some 15,000 people. – AFP

Chinese ordered deported

PHNOMPENH – A Cambodian court on October 23 ordered the deportation of a Chinese factory manager who outraged workers by ripping up photographs of recently deceased former king Norodom Sihanouk.

Wang Zia Chao, 43, was also handed a one-year suspended sentence for "intentionally damaging the photos" of the revered royal and told to pay a two million riel (US\$500) fine, judge Seng Neang at Phnom Penh municipal court said.

Wang expressed remorse for destroying the two photos on October 22 after becoming annoyed that staff at the Top World garment factory had interrupted work to look at them, but she told the court she was unaware who was shown in the images.

Wang was handcuffed and forced to make a public apology at a shrine to the revered royal. She was also fired from her job as chief of a production unit.

– AFP

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Miss Myanmar, Nan Khin Zay Yar, arrives in Yangon on October 23 after participating in the Miss International Beauty Pageant 2012 in Japan on October 21. Pic: Thiri Lu

Miss Myanmar nabs two awards in Japan

By Nuam Bawi

MISS Myanmar netted two awards at the Miss International Beauty Pageant 2012, which was held in Okinawa, Japan, on October 21.

After a 50 year absence from the annual pageant, Myanmar was represented this year by Nan Khin Zay Yar.

Although she did not make the shortlist for the main title, Nan Khin Zay Yar was given the People's Choice Award, as well as the Miss Internet Award as the result of earning 21.5 million online votes.

"Although the internet connection is very slow in Myanmar, and only a small percentage of the population uses the internet here compared to other countries, the people of Myanmar cast the most ballots. I'm very proud of that," Nan Khin Zay Yar said at a press conference in Yangon on October 24.

She said that even though she was not shortlisted for the main award, she was very happy to achieve what she did, against her own expectations.

She pointed out that she received her invitation only 20 days ahead of time, while other contestants were invited months in advance.

"I participated in this competition because I want to promote our country to the rest of the world, and show our culture and traditional clothing styles," Nan Khin Zay Yar said.

"I didn't expect to win anything because I didn't have as much time as the others to get ready. Some of the other delegates even had surgery to prepare. But our people really supported me so I got these two awards."

She added that people from other countries even applauded her for the unity of her country.

"Someone even commented on the pageant's website that the people of Myanmar show so much unity and pride. This person commented that he didn't know whether Miss Myanmar was beautiful, but he applauded the support of Myanmar's people," she said.

Nan Khin Zay Yar said she planned to participate in

social work in the future, to bless the people of Myanmar and repay them for supporting her at the pageant.

"While I was in Japan for the pageant we went to various forums about how to care for disabled children and how to develop education. Then we each gave reports on what we learned," she said. "I invited the organisations that led these forums to come to Myanmar, and I said that if they came I would help as much as I could."

She said her next plan was to travel to her hometown in the Pa-O region of Shan State to give an inspirational talk.

"Most Pa-O people are not very well educated. As I'm a Pa-O girl, I will give a speech about the importance of education at the global level," she said.

"I also plan to go to Taunggyi in Shan State to talk about the same thing. This will be the beginning of my social work for the people in Myanmar."

The overall title at the Miss International Beauty Pageant 2012 was won by Miss Ikumi Yoshimatsu of Japan.

S Korea irked by Japan indifference to 'Gangnam Style'

SEOUL — While South Korean rapper Psy's song "Gangnam Style" has taken the world by storm, it has largely fallen flat in Japan — an anomaly viewed with grave suspicion by some in the singer's home country.

Korean K-pop music is huge in Japan, but for one reason or another Japanese music fans have remained relatively immune to the seductive powers of Psy and his horse-riding dance.

In South Korea there has been speculation that a bitter territorial dispute over contested islands may have caused Japanese fans to shun the song.

While the number has topped the UK charts and currently sits at number two on the US Billboard ranking, it has only scraped into the top 30 of the Japanese iTunes chart.

To make matters worse, various Japanese music blogs have suggested that the video's success on YouTube — 530 million views and counting — was down to South Koreans using automated viewing programs known as "bots".

Some even started playfully referring to the song as "F5 Style" — a reference to the keyboard key used to refresh the window of an internet browser.

Last week the Korean Wave Research Institute (KWRI) — a non-profit body established in 2010 to "aggressively" promote

Korean popular culture around the globe — hit back.

Denouncing the "conspiracy theories" of YouTube chart manipulation, KWRI president Han Koo-Hyun said the "outrageous" Japanese argument was "tantamount to doubting a world record in an Olympics marathon".

Scepticism about the song's worldwide popularity on YouTube "should be viewed as a primary school kid's jealousy and envy", Han said in a press release.

Not content with defending the success of "Gangnam Style", Han launched a vitriolic attack on the only Japanese entry in YouTube's chart of the 30 all-time, most-viewed videos.

Currently ranked 29th with more than 237 million views, the video shows a young Japanese woman engaging in the popular internet meme activity of dropping some Mentos candy in a bottle of diet coke so that it sprays soda everywhere.

Mocking what he described as the "most grotesque and preposterous content" on the entire chart, Han said it was "another lowly example showing the video-related preference of the Japanese".

Several reasons have been suggested for the lack of success for "Gangnam Style" in Japan, including the fact that Psy didn't follow the path chosen by most K-pop stars of releasing a Japanese-language version. — AFP

Film to show Ayeyarwaddy lifestyle

By Zon Pann Pwint

SHORT films showing men chewing betel nut or young women rolling cheroots are suitable expressions of Myanmar culture and lifestyle.

But a team of local and foreign filmmakers is set to go one step farther by cooperating in the production of a three-hour documentary that will offer deeper, more detailed insights into Myanmar culture, and specifically the lifestyles of people living along the Ayeyarwaddy River.

The crew will consist of four filmmakers from Germany-based Along Mekong Productions, along with four locals, including director Wera.

Shooting for the documentary, titled *Daily Life along the Ayeyarwaddy*, is expected to start in mid-November and take two or three months to complete, said Wera, who wrote the script for the film.

"The documentary film will show the lifestyle and culture of residents along the Ayeyarwaddy River from the source to the end, along with its landscape, but with less emphasis on the environmental issues," he said.

The river is about 2010 kilometres (1240 miles) long, starting at the confluence of the Maykha and Malikha rivers in Kachin State and flowing down to the delta region west of Yangon.

Wera, who previously made the documentaries *Fishermen's Friends: Ayeyarwaddy Dolphins* and *Floating Market and the Ayeyarwaddy Travellers*, said he was contacted by filmmakers from Along Mekong Productions, who had read about him in an article on electric fishing posted on *The Myanmar Times* website.

He added that he was asked to cooperate in the making of the new documentary because he is a filmmaker "whose attention is engaged in the river".

"Small aspects of the Ayeyarwaddy have

already been recorded in documentaries, like the Ayeyarwaddy dolphins and the lifestyle of residents in particular small areas, but there has not been a quality film about the whole course of Ayeyarwaddy and the communities along its banks that fully depend on the river for their livelihood," Wera said.

He said the Ayeyarwaddy flows through two-thirds of the length of Myanmar, so a documentary about communities along the river "will truly represent the nature of Myanmar people, how they think and their perspective on the river".

The film crew has already completed preliminary surveys of key sites along the river, including two visits each to Katha, Bhamo, Mandalay and Pyay. The team members from Along Mekong Productions departed Myanmar on October 21.

"We are now waiting for permission from the Ministry of Information. We will start filming as soon as we get permission, which we hope will be by mid-November," Wera said.



Village life along the Ayeyarwaddy River. Pic: Wera

New Aung San actor to be announced soon

By Nyein Ei Ei Htwe

A NEW actor will soon be named to play the lead role in an upcoming biopic about the life of General Aung San, following the resignation of one of the original cast members, a spokesperson from the Bogyoke Aung San Film Executive Board said last week.

After a lengthy audition period, in July two actors were named to play the role of Bogyoke Aung San in the film, and two others were picked to portray his wife.

But one of the Aung San actors, Mg Kyauk Khae, resigned in September, for unspecified reasons.

The new actor will be chosen from the shortlist of candidates who made the final interview with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on July 20, said U Zaw Thet Htwe, a member of Bogyoke Aung San Film Executive Board.

"Members of the board have already selected the new actor but they are waiting for confirmation from Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. The name will be

announced before the end of this year," he said.

He said that in the meantime, the three remaining actors – Ma Kyaw Kyaw Myo, Ma Zarchi Lin and Ma Thin Myat Thandar Hlaing – took acting lessons last month from a French drama teacher, Mr Thierry Blau, at the headquarters of the Myanmar Motion Picture Organisation.

Since October 15, they have been taking acting lesson from directors Mg Myo Min, Wine, Kyi Phyu Shin, Ei Ei Khine and Lu Min, and they are also taking language lessons for scenes in which they must speak in English.

"The people we chose for these roles didn't know about acting at all, but they are slowly improving. We hope they can do their best for our film," U Zaw Thet Htwe said.

"When they finish their course from the directors, they will also learn from local directors U Tin Oo and U Win Pe, as well as from foreign directors. We plan to start shooting the film in January 2013."

DVD magazine launched

By Nyein Ei Ei Htwe

THE House of Media and Entertainment (HOME) will launch the first issue of its monthly DVD magazine on November 5, comedian U Zaganar said at a press conference at the HOME office in downtown Yangon on October 21.

The magazine, titled *Motion*, will feature poets reciting their work, animation features, documentary films, short films, comedy routines and interview programs.

U Zaganar, who is a member of the HOME board of directors, said *Motion* is not the first attempt to launch a DVD-based publication in Myanmar, pointing out that writer U Win Tin Win and publisher U Mg Myo (Two Cats) had introduced a similar project in the past.

"But there are some differences. Our publication will include reflect a wider range of content that would be seen in a printed lifestyle magazine, and the timing will also reflect the changes that are occurring in our country at the moment," he said.

U Zaganar added that the



U Zaganar announces the launch of 'Motion' DVD magazine at House of Media and Entertainment in Yangon on October 21. Pic: Thiri Lu

original plan was to release the first issue at the end of November, but the official censors agreed not to cut any of the content, so they were able to move the date forward.

"At the moment we have enough material for the first three issues, and we will try to keep it going as a monthly release," he said.

The first issue will feature the poem "Hey ..." by U Zaw Thet Htwe; the animated feature "Do We Really Love our Children" by U Zaw Bo Bo Thein; and U Lwin Hmain's documentary "Naing Ngan Wat Hmay Wat Paung Khey Ni" (Country, Wat Hmay Village, Ham and Copper).

Short films will include "Related" by U Zaganar;

"See Shore No Way" by Ko Thu (Ghost); and "Gradually Swallowed" by U Nyi Pu Lay. A video of a performance by standup comedians at HOME on August 26 will also be included, as well as several interview programs.

Poet and writer U Zaw Thet Htwe, who is also a member of the HOME board of directors, said *Motion* magazine and the publication of books by former prisoners can help document the changes occurring in Myanmar.

"The fact that we can get permission to publish a DVD magazine without anything being cut by the censors is a sign of the current political changes. The first issue includes a documentary about protests at copper mines in upper Myanmar, which we were sure would be censored but it wasn't," he said.

Motion will be sold for K3000 a copy at video outlets around town.

The House of Media and Entertainment is located on the lower block of Bo Aung Kyaw Road in Kyauktada township. Contact 01-380-272 or 380-301 for more information.

After five years in Nay Pyi Taw, film awards return to Yangon

By Nyein Ei Ei Htwe and Lwin Mar Htun

THE Myanmar Academy Awards ceremony for films screened in 2011 will be held at Thuwunna Indoor Stadium in Yangon on December 30, according to a report in state media on October 17.

The ceremony will mark the return of the awards show to Yangon after five years in Nay Pyi Taw.

The awards ceremony was held in Yangon from its inauguration in 1952 until 2005, when prizes were given for the best films of 2004.

But in 2006 the ceremony was moved to Nay Pyi Taw and has been held there ever since. The awards for films released in 2010 were held on February 7 of this year.

According to the report in state-run newspaper *Kyae Hmon* (The Mirror), Myanmar Motion Picture Organisation (MMPO) chairman U Zin Wine sent a letter to the Myanmar Motion Picture Enterprise (MMPE) requesting that the ceremony be moved back to Yangon this year.

"To attend the ceremony in Nay Pyi Taw, people in the film industry needed to waste at least a day and a half on travel," U Thein Tun Aung, the administration director of MMPE, was quoted as saying in the newspaper.

"This was very difficult for the elderly people who wanted to attend. Although MMPE has always arranged transportation and accommodation for Nay Pyi Taw, everyone was tired out by the trip. So, we will hold it in Yangon again."

Actors contacted by *The Myanmar*

Times said they were very pleased by the news.

"Most of us actors live in Yangon, so holding the ceremony here will make it easier to attend. Some people could not travel to the ceremony in Nay Pyi Taw in the past," said May Than Nu, who has won several Academy Awards for acting.

"This year I'm sure we'll have the chance to meet everyone from the film industry."

She said travelling to Nay Pyi Taw had posed many problems, including ticketing for the event, checking cars for the trip and booking hotel rooms near City Hall where the ceremony was held.

"Make-up artists were also a problem. Most of them were unable to follow because of their business in Yangon. Last year there was one

make-up artist for 15 actresses. We were very worried and had to wait for hours for our turn," May Than Nu said.

Well-known actress Eindra Kyaw Zin also welcomed the change in venue.

"I attend every year, to show my appreciation for the work of other actors, actresses and directors, but I'll be happier this year celebrating in Yangon," she said.

"I never faced many problems in Nay Pyi Taw, but we did need to make time for the trip and often had to postpone our work, and we were unable to meet some of the older actors who were unable to make the journey."

Actress May Thinzar Oo said she was also happy that the ceremony would be held in her hometown.

"Nay Pyi Taw was too far and too time-consuming. When we arrived there, we barely had time for make-up," she said. "Also, there were times when I travelled all the way up there only to discover that I had forgotten something important. If I do that in Yangon, I can just run home and get it."

Comedian A Yine said there were always additional hassles in Nay Pyi Taw.

"Nay Pyi Taw wasn't convenient for us because security personnel were always checking us, so we weren't happy going there," he said.

"It's good that the awards are moving back to Yangon. We can go to the ceremony from our homes. I hope everyone from the film industry can meet there without stress this year."

Myanmar ghosts don't need Halloween for a good haunting

By Pinky

HALLOWEEN is a pretty big deal in the United States: Homes are decorated with pumpkins carved into ghoulish characters and illuminated with candles, kids don costumes and run around hassling their neighbours for candy, and adults go to parties and let loose, supposing that their masks give them licence to get drunker and act stupider than usual.

Evangelical Christians, meanwhile, huddle in their homes, praying that Satan does not sully their threshold on a night when the gateway between the lands of the living and the dead creaks open just a bit farther than usual.

Halloween is also the season for scary movies. In mid-October, found-footage demon-fest *Paranormal Activity 4* opened at number one in the North American box office, while another horror flick, *Sinister*, also made the top 10.



Creepy doctors surround their victim at a Halloween party in Singapore in 2011. Pic: Pinky

In recent years Halloween celebrations have also made inroads into some areas of Southeast Asia, including the Philippines, Thailand and Singapore, but the "holiday" is largely ignored in Myanmar, aside from a handful of parties at expat-oriented venues around town.

In a country where belief in ghosts and spirits (nats) is prevalent, perhaps the

people of Myanmar don't feel the need for a special day to welcome brain-eating zombies into their lives.

In fact, many locals have stories about haunted places in Yangon – hospitals where untended gurneys rattle around the morgues at midnight, homes where deceased celebrities roam the hallways – as well as tales about their own personal

experiences with the denizens of the afterlife.

Yangonite Ma Phyo Phyo, who lives in Bahan township, told me a story about her own ghostly encounter, which occurred three years ago when she travelled with her auntie's family to Pyin Oo Lwin to attend the flower festival held there each year in December.

"Because of the flower festival, all the hotels in Pyin Oo Lwin were full. We finally found a hotel with one bungalow left. Without thinking about why no one else dared stay in that room, we checked in," she said.

She said that on the night they arrived everyone was exhausted, so they ate dinner and went to sleep around 10pm.

That's when things started getting strange.

"In the middle of the night I could feel someone come out from the bathroom and walk past my bed. It happened a second time, and then a third. I thought it was just someone from my family, so I ignored

it," Ma Phyo Phyo said.

But she grew more alarmed later in the morning when everyone in the family reported similar incidents during the night.

Her cousin said he also felt someone pass his bed several times, and when he opened his eyes he saw a strange man walking out of the room. When he tried to get up to investigate, he found he was unable to move.

"My cousin said he felt as if someone were grappling his left leg, so he gave a strong kick with his right leg and then was able to sit up, but by then he saw nothing strange in the room," Ma Phyo Phyo said.

Her auntie and another cousin also reported nocturnal abnormalities.

"My other cousin and my auntie both said they felt like someone was standing over their beds watching them, moving closer and closer. They both said they felt paralysed, but when they opened their eyes, nothing was there," she said.

Everyone also agreed that, at one time or another, they had heard the sound of someone, or something, knocking on the bungalow's wooden walls.

"By 3:30am we were all awake and none of us could even think about sleeping anymore," she said.

"In the morning we were talking about what had occurred the previous night, and the people staying in the next bungalow said our room was famous for being haunted. Everyone who stayed there had the same experience. The ghost wasn't scared of anyone, not even monks."

So did they hazard another night in the haunted bungalow?

"We were so shocked that we went back to Yangon the same day. There was nowhere else to stay in Pyin Oo Lwin, and there was no way we were going to stay in that room again. We were so scared we couldn't even enjoy the flower festival anymore," Ma Phyo Phyo said.

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BOOK REVIEW

Allegorical novel tackles anti-immigration hysteria

By Douglas Long

AT first glance, George Saunders' novella *The Brief and Frightening Reign of Phil* (2005) seems to unfold with the simplicity of a child's fable: The prose is unpretentious, and the characters are given whimsical, abstract shapes for bodies. There are even drawings interspersed throughout the book to help illustrate the story.

It quickly becomes apparent, however, that in this darkly humorous allegory the author is exploring territory much too menacing for books aimed at children: The language used by key characters will resonate with anyone familiar with the malicious rhetoric that emanates from communities in which anti-immigration hysteria has taken root, whether located in the southern United States, northern Europe or western Myanmar.

The book tells the story of Inner Horner, a country with a population of seven but only enough land area to accommodate one person at a time. Each citizen has his or her designated time to occupy the country, while the other six await their turn in the Short-Term Residency Zone of the neighbouring country of Outer Horner.

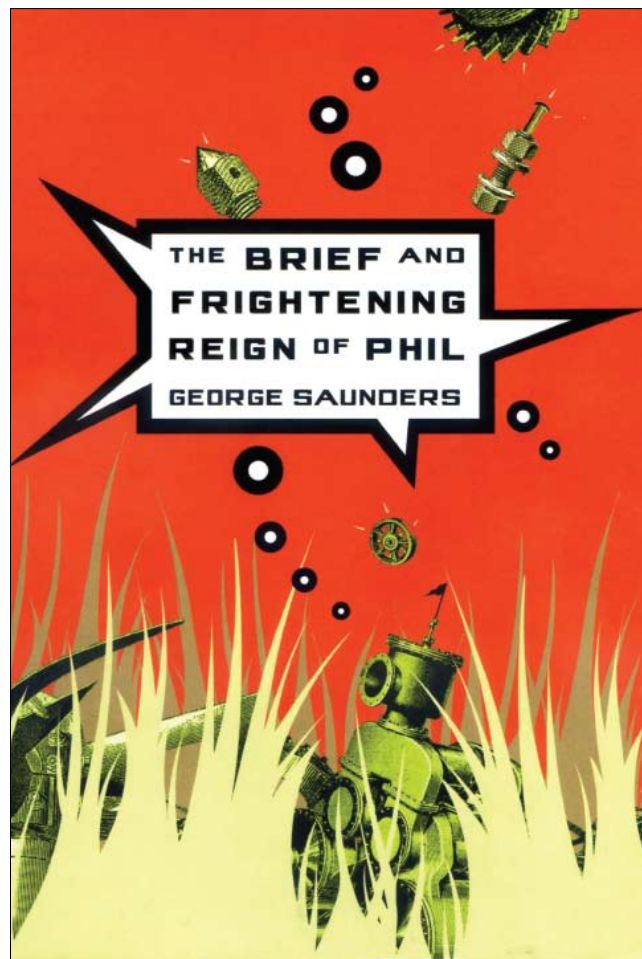
This system has been in place for some time, and as the book opens, cross-border resentment is running high, with the Outer Hornerites feeling that "their country was big, but it wasn't infinitely big, which meant that they might someday conceivably run out of room".

They also fear what might happen to their way of life — which "afforded them such super dignity and required so much space" — if outsiders kept demanding bits of Outer Horner.

Tensions increase when, due to an unspecified geological cataclysm, the land area of Inner Horner shrinks to such a degree that it can no longer accommodate even a single person. With three-quarters of an Inner Horner citizen named Elmer suddenly hanging over the border, the Outer Hornerites promptly sound the alarm and move to "expulse" the "invader".

Saunders plays up the absurdity of the situation, using the outlandish overreaction of the Outer Hornerites to show that immigration issues are never solely about immigration: They are also about nationalism, race, religion, socioeconomics, politics, xenophobia and a host of other interconnected factors, from which immigration cannot be isolated.

The situation on the border quickly degenerates.



A particularly angry and vindictive Outer Hornerite named Phil imposes excessive taxation on the "invaders", and when the victims run out of money, he takes their remaining resources (one apple tree, one nearly dry stream, and approximately 3 cubic feet of dry, cracked soil) and then steals their clothes.

Having, through their own callous actions, ensured the destitution of the "foreign

'Immigration issues are never solely about immigration: They are also about nationalism, race, religion, socioeconomics, politics, xenophobia and a host of other interconnected factors, from which immigration cannot be isolated.'

invaders", the Outer Hornerites only harden their stance.

In one speech Phil says to the Inner Hornerites: "We are a noble people, of ancient lineage, and have a right to live and thrive, whereas you, who would take away our right to live and thrive, I'm not sure about you, I'm not sure that you have not, over the long years of taking advantage of our simple generous nature, forfeited certain rights having to do with your continued existence!"

This is an ominous declaration, and when Phil stages a coup and declares himself president of Outer Horner, he forces his own citizens to "voluntarily

sign, with their eyes closed and their backs turned to the document, a Certificate of Total Approval to sanction his similarly obscure Border Area Improvement Initiative.

The signatories soon find out what the initiative entails: Phase I calls for the internment of the Inner Hornerites in a camp surrounded by barbed wire, which Phil euphemistically refers to as the Peace-

Encouraging Enclosure — shades of President U Thein Sein's proposal last July that a certain segment of the Rakhine State population be herded into refugee camps. *AFP* journalists visiting western Myanmar just a few days before last week's renewed violence, meanwhile, reported seeing "thousands of Muslim Rohingya behind barbed wire and armed guards in a ghetto in the centre of [Sittwe]".

"How typical of the Inner Horner mindset," Phil shouts when the victims attempt to protest, "to be unable to distinguish a jail from a Peace-Encouraging Enclosure. Safe inside the Peace-Encouraging Enclosure, you will be

protected from your innate violent tendencies."

For Phase II, Phil oversees the restoration of the land that had formerly been occupied by the Inner Hornerites: "At last we are reclaiming our ancient ancestral land, and we want it to look nice!" Phil declaims.

Phase III constitutes the final solution. Phil demands that the Inner Hornerites, whom his father had always said were the "dirt of the world", be eliminated once and for all: "For us to be at total peace they must be totally gone! Gone gone gone!"

Crazed and angry words, yes, but not so different in substance from the vicious sentiments demonstrated in some of the more extremist messages posted on social media in reaction to the violence in Rakhine State.

When his countrymen balk at perpetrating genocide, Phil urges them on with yet another fanatical speech: "With Inner Hornerites there is no lady, there is no kid, there are only evil, which must be dealt with harsh, before it spread!" By this point his syntax is suffering under his increasingly maniacal outlook.

Without revealing precisely how the situation gets resolved, I will say that the book ends on a decidedly ominous note, indicating that few lessons have been learned from the brief and frightening reign of Phil, that the underlying causes have been swept under the carpet, and that a similar situation is very likely to recur in the future.

Shortly after finishing this book, I read a report on the *Mizzima* website in which well-known comedian Zaganar said that the work of the government-appointed commission to investigate the recent violence in Rakhine State, of which he is a member, had been stymied by lack of cooperation from community members "from all sides".

It is perhaps understandable that the major players in this tragic situation — the government, the Rohingya, the Rakhine — would be too ashamed to discuss their role in the still-unfolding events in western Myanmar, and would likewise be reluctant to have their behaviour in this regard scrutinised too closely.

But their silence will only serve to further obscure the underlying tensions, at a time when root causes need to be examined and analysed by courageous people. This fear of democratic discussion will only ensure that no progress will be made toward an equitable, peaceful solution, and that Myanmar will continue sailing on dark seas where violence and devastation are constant companions.

Gastronomy nourishes Spain's gourmet city

SAN SEBASTIAN, Spain — Ham with brie, wild mushroom croquettes, cured-meat ravioli: Gourmet cooking has put this Basque town on the gastronomic map, drawing visitors from around the world.

Now its culinary assets — which include more Michelin stars per square metre than anywhere else in the world, and the world's first university of gastronomy — are nourishing it in the economic crisis.

"Gastronomy is a tourist attraction of growing importance" for the region, said the director of the Basque Culinary Centre gourmet university, Joxe Mari Aizega. "We are looking to become part of the economic attraction."

In a 2011 survey by the Basque Country regional government, seven out of 10 visitors said they were drawn there by the food.

More than 1.5 million tourists visited the region this year up to August — its second best year on record — but the number of Spaniards among them fell compared to previous years while the number of foreigners rose.

Many of them come to the bars of San Sebastian's old town, where Japanese and US tourists sample *pintxos*, the region's trademark bite-sized canapes.

The foreign visitors are helping keep the restaurants in business while Spaniards are spending less at a time of high unemployment and budget cuts.

"Visitors from the rest of Spain have got slightly fewer, but at the same time we are making up for it with foreigners," said Amaier Martinez, a joint owner of the Ganbara bar.

"A lot of them come from France, as well as from Asia, the United States and Britain," he said, standing behind a counter piled with mushrooms, seafood and various *pintxos*.

"The Asians are most interested in the seafood

and how it is prepared. The French are very interested in the mushrooms."

Chefs in San Sebastian, which include names such as Martin Berasategui, Pedro Subijana and Andoni Luis Aduriz, have 16 Michelin stars between them.

The Basque Culinary Centre, launched last year, counts among its expert participants Ferran Adria, the Catalan master whose former restaurant El Bulli was hailed as the best in the world, and the French chef Michel Bras.

"This centre's basic mission is to act as a reference in advanced knowledge of gastronomy with an international vision," Aizega said.

Students on the four-year course learn everything from soups to avant-garde dishes as well as studying the science of cooking with test-tubes, management and business skills, with work placements in top eateries worldwide.

"Every day they teach us tricks and little tips that help us make the dishes much better," said Esteban Yebes from Colombia, one of the students working at long tables here in their white aprons and hats. "For example, how to shock beans by adding a bit of cold water while they're boiling."

For Spaniards struggling to find work in the recession, the centre's world-class training offers a strong guarantee of a job on leaving.

"I studied business administration and management, but I could find no work," said one student, Lolo Roman, 29, from the Canary Islands, cooking beans in the training kitchen. "I had always liked cooking so I decided to come here."

"We have no doubt they will find work. There are some who get offered work after studying here for one year," Aizega said. "Gastronomy will continue to have its place here and keep innovating." — *AFP*



Joxe Mari Aizega, director general of the Basque Culinary Centre, poses in front of the centre's headquarters in San Sebastian, Spain, on October 4. Pic: AFP

Phyo's Cooking Adventure

Phyo cuts through culture to reveal life's true taste

Ratatouille with a garlicky tang



Main Tips

If you can't find zucchini you can substitute an additional eggplant or simply go without it.

Use ripe tomatoes for flavour and colour.

Make a little cross on the top of tomatoes before you boil them, for easier peeling afterwards.

QUAFFING QUOTE

"That's the beautiful thing about food, it breaks down the barriers." — Matt Preston (British-Australian food journalist and restaurant critic)

NEXT WEEK

Rice, rice and more rice: Spanish, American and Asian flavours, and shitake mushroom rice for Japanese flavour.

Red Wine

Red Mountain Estate Syrah (Shiraz) 2011

Take a break from leg-rowing across Inle Lake to try this purple-red Shan State syrah, with ripe fruit and spicy flavours but a somewhat disappointing finish.



Score BOX

Ks 13,500

6/10

White Wine

Red Mountain Estate Sauvignon Blanc 2010

This light-yellow wine, arguably Red Mountain's top product, boasts a fresh flavour that is a bit fruitier than sauvignon blancs produced in other countries.



Score BOX

Ks 9,600

7/10

THIS vegetarian recipe combines a popular French dish, ratatouille, with a touch of Myanmar sichet (fried garlic in garlic oil). My husband is a huge fan of garlic sichet, which he drizzles on most of the dishes I cook. When he did this with my ratatouille, I decided to copy his creation and sprinkle the sichet directly into the pot. Since then we have enjoyed this twist, with the aroma of the garlic combining nicely with the taste of the ratatouille.



Ratatouille with sichet

INGREDIENTS

- (6 servings)
- 1 big onion (diced)
- 2 eggplants (cut into 3cm cubes)
- 3 small green peppers (cut into 3cm squares)
- 1 big zucchini (cut into 3cm cubes)
- 8 ripe tomatoes
- ½ teaspoon of thyme (dried)
- ½ teaspoon of oregano (dried)
- ½ cup of olive oil and extra to drizzle
- 3 cloves of garlic (crushed)

PREPARATION

Peel the eggplants and cut into 3cm cubes. Washed

and soak in water. Drain just 1 or 2 minutes before you use them.

Boil the tomatoes until the skin is broken. When they are cool, peel and cut them roughly.

Sauté the diced onion in half of the olive oil with medium heat, using a saucepan or heavy-base pot.

When the onions are translucent, add the other half of the olive oil and the eggplants, and fry them for 5 minutes.

Add the green peppers and zucchini into the pot and fry for 4 to 5 minutes. Add oregano, thyme leaves and garlic, and stir for 2 more minutes.

Add the cut tomatoes and fry for 6 to 8 minutes.

Add 1 cup of water and bring it to a gentle boil. Cover with a lid and simmer for 45 minutes. Salt for taste.

Mix the garlic sichet into the vegetables. I prefer to serve the dish at room temperature when accompanied by bread, or a little warm with pasta and meat.

Garlic sichet

- 2 tablespoons of olive oil
- 4 cloves of garlic (crushed)

Sauté the garlic in heated oil until it turns golden yellow. Scoop the fried garlic out and set aside.

When the oil cools down, mix in the garlic again. You can make 3 or 4

portions and keep leftovers in an airtight jar.

Caramelised onions and anchovies

Here's a recipe for spread to add to your favourite bread: salty anchovies and sweet caramelised onions with the aroma of rosemary.

INGREDIENTS

- 10 onions (thinly sliced in rings)
- 2 teaspoons of rosemary leaves (dried)
- 5 fillets of anchovies (mashed)
- ¼ cup of olive oil

Sauté the onions and rosemary in a covered pan (do not use nonstick). Stir frequently and do not let them burn.

Once the onions are translucent, add the mashed anchovies and stir thoroughly.

Remove the lid and caramelize the onions. When they start to caramelize they will stick to the pan, so more frequent stirring is necessary.

When cooking is finished, push the mixture to one side of the pan and tip the pan so the oil runs to the other side. Or lay the mixture on kitchen paper, but save some oil for the bread.

FOOD REVIEW

Don't forget your appetite



Pic: Ko Taik

House of Memories

290 U Wisara Road, Kamaryut township, Yangon
Tel 01-534-242, 01-525-195, 09-7319-1498

- Food: 6
- Drink: 8
- Atmosphere: 9
- Service: 8
- X Factor: 8
- Value for Money: 8

Score BOX

8/10

particular type of cuisine. Sample menu items include Myanmar-style tomato salad (K1500), chicken satay (K4500), tom yam soup with prawn (K3500), Indian-style minced beef curry with mint and spices (K4000), beef burger (K2500) and spaghetti marinara (K4500).

House of Memories also bills itself as a piano bar, and there is indeed a piano that sometimes gets played in the evening, and a cosy bar area with a wall-mounted TV that often shows little people running around playing one ball sport or another.

The drink menu is extensive, including Tiger draught (K1000), bottled Myanmar beer (K3000), frozen margaritas (K4000), whisky sours (K4500) and piña coladas (K4000). By-the-glass wines include Shan State's Red Mountain Estate sauvignon blanc (K3000) and Aythaya Winery cabernet sauvignon (K3000).

For those who would like to stay sober and remember their experience at House of Memories, there is also a range of fruit and vegetable juices, smoothies, soft drinks, tea and coffee. — HJ

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Ks. 5,580 D'AMICO Anchovy 140ml

Ks. 3,850 MCCORMICK Ground Oregano 21g

Ks. 2,100 RISCOSSA Pasta Fettuccine Noodle No.87 500g

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Awn Seng
@ Giordano New Branch Opening



U Aung Myat Min, U Kyaw Kyar, U Thet Htoo Hlaing and U Nay Tun Oo
@ Myanmar Beer New Product Launch



Bossini staff @ Bossini Store Opening



Phyu Phyu Kyaw Thein
@ Bone Health Talk By Anlene



U Aik Htun @ Octagon Signing Ceremony



U Ye Min Soe, U Kyaw Kyar and U Kyaw Kyaw Htoo
@ Myanmar Beer New Product Launch



Mr Martin Lundstedt @ Octagon Signing Ceremony



IP Zone staff members @ IP Zone Fashion Corner Opening



Mr Henry Heng, Ma Thinzar Win and Mr Prashant Pradhan
@ Bone Health Talk By Anlene



Myat Thu Aung, model and San Toe Naing @ Giordano New Branch Opening



Ma Nadi Htike and guest
@ Canmake Tokyo Fashion Show



Model @ Canmake Tokyo Fashion Show



Thae Naw Zar @ Canmake Tokyo Fashion Show



Designer Ma Pont and her daughter
@ Canmake Tokyo Fashion Show



Director Mg Myo Min
@ Bone Health Talk By Anlene



Min Maw Kun
@ Bone Health Talk By Anlene



MS Vonce @ Nayani Win Cosmetic Counter Launch



Mi Sandy @ Canmake Tokyo Fashion Show



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Wint Yamone Hlaing, Sann Thit La and Okkar Htet
@ Giordano New Branch Opening

SOCIALITE
WITH NYEIN EI EI HTWE



IT was another rollercoaster week of thrills, chills, and beer and wine spills — and subsequent dry-cleaning bills — for Socialite. On October 17 she attended a dinner hosted by Myanmar Brewery at Kandawgyi Palace Hotel, to announce the launch of exciting new products. The next day she swung by the opening ceremony for the new Giordano branch on Anawrahta Road in Kyauktada township, and on October 19 she checked out the new Bossini shop at Junction Square, as well as the signing ceremony between Octagon and Scania companies. On the same day, Socialite also deemed it worthwhile to attend Anlene's talk about bone health. People! I cannot overemphasise the importance of bones: Without them we would all be flopping around on the floor like rag dolls. So take proper care of your skeletal system, from your skull all the way down to the phalanges of your feet! The weekend held more fashion fun, first at the Canmake Tokyo product show at Junction Square on October 20, followed by the I P Zone fashion corner opening at Sein Gay Har in Hledan township.



Mr Chim VH @ Nayani Win Cosmetic Counter Launch



Brayden, Ye Win, Don, Thant Zaw Htun and Edward @ Nayani Win Cosmetic Counter Launch



U Chan Mya and Mr James William Thomas Armstrong @ Octagon Signing Ceremony



U Aung Moe Kyaw @ Grand Royal Chelsea FC Sponsorship Event



Khine Thazin Yu Wah @ I P Zone Fashion Corner Opening



U Oakkar Aung, U Myint Zaw and Mr Argus @ Myanmar Beer New Product Launch



Eaint Chit @ I P Zone Fashion Corner Opening



Khine Thin Kyi @ Bone Health Talk By Anlene



Ye Min Thu @ I P Zone Fashion Corner Opening



Model @ I P Zone Fashion Corner Opening



Shwe Yee Phyo Ei @ Canmake Tokyo Fashion Show



Khine Thazin Ngu Wah @ Giordano New Branch Opening

Aung @ Myanmar Beer New Product Launch



● Flatulent?

● Gastritis?

● Excessive spices?

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The fastest most reliable cure to gastric and stomach problems

Kremil - S

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DOMESTIC FLIGHT SCHEDULES

Days	Flight	Dep	Arr	Days	Flight	Dep	Arr	Days	Flight	Dep	Arr	Days	Flight	Dep	Arr	Days	Flight	Dep	Arr	Days	Flight	Dep	Arr	
YANGON TO HAY PYI TAW																								
MON	6T 111	07:00	07:55	FRI	W9 205	06:00	07:25	SUN	W9 205	06:00	08:10	MON	6T 401	06:20	09:23	FRI	W9 141	09:00	11:05	SAT	W9 141	09:00	11:05	
	UB-A1	07:45	08:45		YJ 891	06:15	08:20		YH 917	06:15	07:35		W9 141	06:30	08:45		YH 918	09:20	10:30		YH 918	09:20	10:30	
	UB-B1	11:30	12:30		K7 222	06:20	08:25		YJ 891	06:15	07:35		W9 011	07:30	09:15		YJ 892	09:20	10:30		YJ 892	09:20	10:30	
	UB-C1	16:00	17:00		6T 341	06:30	07:55		6T 401	06:20	07:40		W9 119	10:30	11:40		6T 552	09:30	10:40		6T 552	09:30	10:40	
TUE	UB-A1	07:45	08:45		YJ 211	06:30	07:55		W9 011	08:50	10:30		YJ 761	11:00	12:10		K7 223	10:15	11:30		K7 223	10:15	11:30	
	UB-B1	11:30	12:30		YJ 909	06:30	07:55		W9 143	09:20	10:45		W9 109	14:30	15:25		6T 501	15:40	16:40		6T 501	15:40	16:40	
	UB-C1	16:00	17:00		W9 143	07:00	09:05		YJ 212	11:30	12:55		YJ 791	15:00	16:10		W9 109	15:45	17:35		W9 109	15:45	17:35	
WED	UB-A1	07:45	08:45		W9 011	07:30	08:30		W9 015	12:20	13:20		YH 731	15:00	16:10		W9 117	16:35	18:45		W9 117	16:35	18:45	
	UB-B1	11:30	12:30		W9 014	11:00	12:00		YH 728	16:30	17:30		6T 501	15:30	16:40		K7 825	18:10	19:25		K7 825	18:10	19:25	
	UB-C1	16:00	17:00		W9 7751	11:00	12:25		6T 502	16:35	18:40		W9 129	15:45	16:55									
THUR	UB-A1	07:45	08:45		YH 727	11:00	12:25		YJ 792	16:40	18:45													
	UB-B1	11:30	12:30		W9 116	11:45	13:40		W9 117	17:20	18:45													
	UB-C1	16:00	17:00		K7 824	12:15	14:20		W9 211	17:40	19:45													
FRI	6T 111	14:15	15:10		W9 256	17:45	19:10		W9 7752	17:50	19:15													
	UB-A1	07:45	08:45		K7 622	14:00	15:25		YJ 752	17:50	19:15													
	UB-B1	11:30	12:30		6T 501	14:15	16:15		W9 109	14:30	16:10													
	UB-C1	16:00	17:00		YJ 791	14:30	16:25		YH 731	15:00	16:55													
SAT	UB-A1	08:00	09:00		W9 211	16:00	17:25		W9 211	16:00	17:25													
SUN	UB-A1	15:30	16:30																					
HAY PYI TAW TO YANGON																								
MON	6T 112	08:15	09:10	MON	W9 205	06:00	07:25	MON	W9 205	06:00	07:25	MON	6T 607	11:15	12:40	MON	6T 607	11:15	12:40	MON	6T 607	11:15	12:40	
	UB-A2	09:15	10:15		YJ 211	06:00	07:25		YH 918	08:35	10:30		W9 309	11:30	13:15		W9 309	11:30	13:15		W9 309	11:30	13:15	
	UB-B2	13:00	14:00		YH 917	06:10	08:30		YJ 892	08:35	10:30		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55	
	UB-C2	17:30	18:30		YJ 891	06:15	08:20		6T 402	08:48	10:53		W9 309	11:30	13:15		W9 311	14:00	15:25		W9 311	14:00	15:25	
TUE	UB-A2	09:15	10:15		6T 401	06:20	08:25		W9 011	08:50	10:30		6T 607	11:15	12:40		6T 607	11:15	12:40		6T 607	11:15	12:40	
	UB-B2	13:00	14:00		K7 222	06:20	08:35		W9 143	09:20	10:45		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55	
	UB-C2	17:30	18:30		YJ 909	06:30	07:55		W9 009	13:00	14:00		W9 309	11:30	13:15		W9 309	11:30	13:15		W9 309	11:30	13:15	
WED	UB-A2	09:15	10:15		W9 119	10:30	12:55		W9 109	16:30	17:30		6T 607	11:15	12:40		6T 607	11:15	12:40		6T 607	11:15	12:40	
	UB-B2	13:00	14:00		YJ 601	10:45	12:10		YJ 762	16:35	18:00		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55	
	UB-C2	17:30	18:30		W9 77601	10:45	12:10		YJ 602	17:05	19:10		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55	
THUR	UB-A2	09:15	10:15		YH 729	11:00	12:25		W9 77602	17:05	19:10		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55	
	UB-B2	13:00	14:00		K7 622	14:00	15:25		YH 730	17:20	18:45		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55	
	UB-C2	17:30	18:30		6T 502	17:20	19:25		YH 732	17:55	19:15		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55	
FRI	6T 112	09:15	10:15		W9 211	17:40	19:45		W9 211	17:40	19:45		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55	
	UB-A2	07:45	08:45		SUN	W9 205	06:00	07:25		YH 918	08:35	10:30		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55
	UB-B2	13:00	14:00		YH 918	08:35	10:30		YH 918	08:35	10:30		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55	
	UB-C2	17:30	18:30		YJ 892	08:35	10:30		YJ 892	08:35	10:30		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55	
SAT	UB-A2	10:00	11:00		6T 402	08:48	10:53		6T 404	09:10	10:35		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55	
SUN	UB-A2	17:00	18:00		W9 011	08:50	10:30		K7 223	09:10	11:30		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55	
					6T 404	09:10	10:35		W9 143	09:20	10:45		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55	
					W9 143	09:20	10:45		YJ 212	11:00	12:25		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55	
					YJ 212	11:00	12:25		W9 015	12:20	13:20		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55	
					YJ 502	16:35	18:40		YJ 502	16:35	18:40		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55	
					YH 738	17:10	18:35		W9 129	17:55	20:00		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55	
					W9 117	17:20	18:45		K7 623	18:40	20:05		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55	
					W9 252	17:35	19:00						6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55	
					6T 502	17:35	19:40						6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55	
					YJ 752	17:50	19:15						6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55	
					W9 7752	17:50	19:15						6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55	
					YH 738	17:10	18:35						6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55	
					W9 117	17:20	18:45						6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55	
					W9 252	17:35	19:00						6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55	
					6T 502	17:35	19:40						6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55	
					YJ 752	17:50	19:15						6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55	
					W9 129	17:55	20:00						6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30	08:55		6T 611	07:30		

sts swindle locals



What might be missed in Monywa: Thanboddhay Pagoda. Pic: Douglas Long

characters who prey on foreign visitors to Myanmar, as illustrated by the grotesquely inflated room rates charged by ravenous hoteliers last tourist season, a move that might result in short-term profits but has helped give the country a bad reputation as a travel destination. And of course there are the (occasional) taxi drivers who suggest payment of K3000 or K4000 for a K1500 ride.

During a recent visit to Inwa near Mandalay, I watched as two self-consciously scruffy Australian backpackers feigned cool indifference as they declared to the

pony cart drivers that they would pay no more than K1000 for a ride through the ancient capital.

A nearby sign indicated that pony cart tours, which usually last at least two hours, cost US\$5.

In Myanmar it is, of course, par for the course to bargain for a fair price. But these backpackers weren't haggling in good faith; they were simply trying to swindle locals who weren't exactly raking in the big money on a day-to-day basis.

It was clear from the exchange that if the Australians continued to insist on their unreasonable rate, they would end up

standing there all day. But I didn't intervene.

Certain types of backpackers love to boast about the travails of their travels, about how they eschewed package tours and easy destinations for rugged, off-the-beaten track exploration.

So I figured I was doing them a favour by helping make their trip a little tougher. And they could go home and proudly tell their friends about how they baked in the tropical sun while the horse drivers wandered back into the shade, ignoring demands for an obnoxiously low-cost tour through Myanmar's remarkable countryside.

Chinese city seeks to cash in on Mo Yan's Nobel Prize win

BEIJING – A Chinese city hopes to cash in on the success of its most famous resident, Nobel Literature Prize winner Mo Yan, by investing millions in a tourist zone dedicated to the writer, Chinese media said last month.

Gaomi, a city in eastern China's Shandong province, will invest US\$107 million in projects to honour Mo Yan, who has set most of his gritty stories of Chinese peasant life in the area, the Beijing News reported.

The city will build a Mo Yan Culture Experience Zone, and plant 650 hectares (1600 acres) of red sorghum, a type of grain.

Red Sorghum is the title of the author's best-known work, a 1987 novella set amid the brutal violence that plagued the eastern Chinese countryside.

Local farmers once relied on sorghum but stopped growing it in the 1980s as it was unprofitable, the paper said.

The report did not indicate whether the Nobel laureate has approved the projects.

Mo Yan recently opposed plans to renovate his former residence in Gaomi because it would be funded by taxpayers' money, the *Modern Express* newspaper reported.

"He will still oppose any renovations even though he's won the award. It's too public, people should be low-key," his brother told the paper.

Mo Yan is enjoying a boost in popularity with Chinese readers, who have emptied bookstore shelves in several cities in a rush to buy his novels, the *China Daily* reported.

Mo Yan, meaning "don't speak", is a pen name for the author, who was born Guan Moye. – AFP

INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT SCHEDULES

DAYS	Flight	Dep	Arr	DAYS	Flight	Dep	Arr	DAYS	Flight	Dep	Arr	DAYS	Flight	Dep	Arr	
YANGON TO BANGKOK				WED				BANGKOK TO YANGON				SAT				
MON	PG 706	07:15	09:30	AK 859	08:30	12:50	8M 336	06:40	07:25	MI 5872	07:55	09:20	MI 5872	07:55	09:20	
	FD 3771	08:35	10:20	8M 501	08:55	12:55	FD 3770	07:15	08:00	3K 585	09:10	10:40	8M 6231	09:10	10:40	
	8M 335	08:40	10:25	MH 741	12:15	16:30	TG 303	07:55	08:50	8M 232	14:10	15:40	MI 518	14:20	15:45	
	TG 304	09:50	11:45	AK 851	18:50	23:05	PG 701	09:05	09:55	8M 234	19:15	20:45	8M 234	19:15	20:45	
	PG 702	10:45	12:40	THUR				MON				SUN				
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	8M 331	16:30	18:15	8M 501	08:55	12:55	FD 3770	07:15	08:00	8M 232	14:10	15:40	8M 232	14:10	15:40	
	FD 3773	18:05	19:55	MH 741	12:15	16:30	TG 303	07:55	08:50	MI 518	14:20	15:45	MI 518	14:20	15:45	
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Social media empower female musicians

By Shannon Teoh

KUALA LUMPUR — Malaysian singer-songwriter Zee Avi's path to musical stardom began five years ago in her bedroom with a second-hand guitar, a clunky old laptop and a YouTube account.

Her grainy, self-shot black and white rendition of her song "Poppy" soon gained a following, and further videos led to her discovery by Patrick Keeler of The Raconteurs and two albums that charted on the American Billboard 200.

"It was my birthday and I was out with friends for dinner. When I came back, I was like, why are there 3000 emails from YouTube?" Zee, 26, said of her selection as the video-sharing site's featured artist for Christmas 2007.

She only posted "Poppy" for the benefit of a friend who had missed her maiden public performance.

With a folk-soul sound resembling early Norah Jones, US-based Zee, who comes from a Muslim family, is among a wave of Malaysian women artists who have used social media to appeal directly — and successfully — to fans.

This has not only helped them gain popularity but has also given them more leverage when it comes to the pressures

and constraints faced by female singers and performers in their predominantly Muslim country, they say.

Another rising star is Yuna, a Muslim ethnic Malay whose soulful self-titled debut this year peaked at number 19 on Billboard magazine's "Heatseekers" chart and has made some waves in the US. She is currently based in New York.

Yuna — who swaddles her hair in a chic version of the Muslim hijab headcovering worn by many Malay women — gained "three fans, then 3000, then 300,000" after uploading her first song on Myspace in 2006.

Yet at home they face criticism from religious authorities, online trolls and the mainstream media over what they wear, who they date and where they go.

"Muslim females are generally free to perform in small venues in the local scene. But once they gain popularity, that's when the problems start," said Daryl Goh, senior music writer for English language daily *The Star*. "The moral police start paying attention".

Malaysia bars hugging, kissing, jumping and foul language by performers on stage. It also prohibits women from baring skin between



Zee Avi performs on stage during Rainforest World Music Festival in Malaysia's Sarawak State on July 13. Pic: AFP

their shoulders and knees.

Female stars often elicit attacks that they are promoting free sex and alcoholism — and in the case of Malay Muslim artists, that they are degrading the community. Male stars rarely face such accusations.

Authorities fined American female group Pussycat Dolls 10,000 ringgit (US\$3200) for "gross indecency" following a performance in 2006.

R&B superstar Beyonce Knowles twice cancelled shows in Malaysia amid protests over her "sexy" image while American singer Erykah Badu had a concert cancelled in February over a photo of

the Arabic word for "Allah" painted on her body.

Malaysian dance-pop artist Mizz Nina, who has a more overtly sexual style than Yuna or Zee Avi, released a debut single "What You Waiting For" in 2010 that has been viewed nearly four million times on YouTube.

Her songs also have been downloaded half a million times as phone ring tones, reflecting a more tech-savvy fanbase in a country where internet use — especially Facebook — is heavy.

But Nina, 32, who released a suggestive video for "What You Waiting For" that also featured US singer Colby O'Donis, said she was taken aback by abuse on her

Facebook page accusing her of "degrading Malay women".

Nina, a Malay whose real name is Shazrina Azman, says she must walk a tightrope — between the "sex-sells" approach that finds success overseas and "limitations to what you can do as a Muslim."

"The director said, 'Nina I want some scenes where you've got the dancers grinding and getting dirty with each other'," she said of a recent music video shoot.

"They can, but 100 percent it'll be banned and they will say, 'Nina is promoting sex on the dance floor'. That's where we have to be more creative," she added.

Zee and Yuna dress more conservatively and grasp guitars rather than men on stage and in video but have also come under criticism.

As Zee's career took off, she was chosen last year as a youth ambassador of her home state of Sarawak on Borneo island but she was accused of denying her roots when she spoke only English in a 2010 promotional visit to Kuala Lumpur.

Nevertheless, "this generation is definitely breaking stereotypes and as far as possible, the government has been very supportive as seen with the recognition Zee Avi has in Sarawak", said Goh.

Zee said social media has

given more power to the artist to decide "what to do and how to dress".

With Yuna's hijab framing her fashion-model looks, many young women look to her as a more conservative role model, someone who has deftly balanced success, both at home and abroad, with a Muslim image.

"She's done everything right," said Goh of the 25-year-old, whose full name is Yunalis Zarai.

But even she — the Malaysian face of global giants Oil of Olay, Samsung and Canon — says that her choice of a life in show business has seen her commitment to Islam questioned.

"I'm not Mizz Nina. I'm covered head to toe but still they say bad things about me. They say I'm a disgrace," she said.

Yuna said that her use of social media such as Twitter or YouTube helped give her enough independence to have "this racehorse view — just shut everything out and go towards your goal and success".

"It's amazing what social media can do to your music and art if you know how to use it, have the right platform and what you want to sell. Whatever happens after that, you know Grammys, an award, would be nice," she said laughing. — AFP

Events Flash

Hip-hop show

Sai Sai Kham Hlaing, Ye' Lay, Kyaw Htut Swe, Snare, Jauk Jack, Sandi Myint Lwin, Bobby Soxer and others will perform at Myawsinkyun in Kandawgyi Park on October 30. Tickets cost K6000 and can be purchased at Orange Supermarkets, Manthiri and Fashion Star.

Gospel music

A festival of Christian gospel music will be held at Myanmar Convention Centre (Min Dhamma Road, Mayangone township, Yangon) from October 30 to November 2. Performances will be held daily from 5pm to 9pm. Admission is free.

Lokanat show

The group exhibition "Direction C", featuring the work of three artists, will be held at Lokanat Gallery (62 Pansodan Street, First Floor, Yangon) from October 29 to 31.

Book club revival

The 75th anniversary of the founding of the Nagani Book Club will be marked at the National Theatre in Yangon on November 4, from 9am to 5pm. The book club existed from 1937 to 1941, during which time it published 70 books, mostly on anti-colonial politics. The ceremony will include the founding of the New Generation Nagani Book Club,

which will also act as a publishing venture. Cartoon competitions will also be held, and about 100 bookstores will offer discounts on their products.

IC concert

Iron Cross will perform with Yadana My at People's Park on November 28. Tickets are K15,000 and K8000.

Tribute concert

The life of well-known 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.

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.

Hola dance party

Hola Dance Club (4 U Tun Myat Street, Tarmwe township, Yangon) is hosting a dance party on November 1. There are two kinds of tickets for the event: dinner and dance performance (7:30pm to 11:30pm, K50,000), with food prepared by the author of Food of Burma, Claudia Saw Lwin; or two free drinks and dance performance (9:30pm to 11:30pm, K20,000). For more information, please contact Claudia (09-500-3591) or Thant Zin (09-4500-11770).

Deepavali festival

A Deepavali Festival of Light celebration, featuring a performance by Indian Idol season 3 top singer Ankita Mishra, will be held at the National Theatre in Yangon on November 3, starting at 6pm. Tickets are available for K10,000, K20,000 and K30,000. Contact 09-4320-1998 (English/Myanmar) or 09-4200-87374 (Myanmar only).

Dancers exhibition

Artist U Lun Gywe will celebrate his 83rd birthday by holding the "My Golden Dancers" exhibition, featuring 70 paintings of Myanmar traditional dancers created from 2009 to 2012, at Professional Art Gallery (Kaba Aye Pagoda Road, Yangon) from November 3 to 7.

Illustrator art show

Artist Kyaw Thauung will hold a solo exhibition titled "Illustrator" at AMT Art Gallery (143 Myanmar Gonyi Road, Mingalar Taung Nyunt township, Yangon) from November 3 to 9.

Artfest for women

The Third Blue Wind Multimedia Art Festival for female artists will be held in Yangon from November 23 to 27, with highlights including a directing workshop led by Finnish cinematographer Pekka Niiskanen. Venue TBA. Email bluewindmyanmar@gmail.com for info.

If you would like your event listed in Event Flash, please email editors@myanmar-times.com.mm.



YOUR STARS

By Astrologer Aung Myin Kyaw

and hate are twin sisters who are at play in the field of your golden responsibility.

Leo July 23 - Aug 22

Avoid travel this week if possible, otherwise your personal safety could be jeopardised. Romantic fantasies might be great fun but they are hardly going to improve your present situation. Success and failure are a part of life, so get used to losing if you wish to appreciate the sweet sense of victory.

Virgo Aug 23 - Sept 22

Learn more about your lover: There may be unplumbed depths yet to explore. Sexual pleasures are lurking for you but they might distract you from higher pursuits. Your positive attitude toward work will propel you forward.

Libra Sept 23 - Oct 22

Do not consider humility to be a weakness, even though it may on occasion make you look stupid. Pessimistic thinking will smother all creativity and colour your decision-making. Look closer at the needs of your lover, if you wish your relationship to progress.

Scorpio Oct 23 - Nov 21

Be respectful of your shared history and avoid indulging in misunderstandings for the sake of your pride. Avoid confrontation with your parents if possible. It's better to wait for the right moment or the right answer than to take whatever first comes your way.

Sagittarius Nov 22 - Dec 21

Thoughts of inferiority could trouble you. Be honest in your social dealings, and lend a helping hand whenever you have the opportunity. Concentrating on work and other activities could be a good challenge, but your political affairs should be in good order.

Capricorn Dec 22 - Jan 19

Make more time for pursuits that you enjoy, and consider leading a simpler life in the future. Be careful about your social communication this week, and don't feel guilty about playing hardball in your negotiations.

For a personal reading contact Aung Myin Kyaw, 4th Floor, 113 Thamaing Bayan Road, Tamwe Township, Yangon. Tel: 0973135632, Email: williamaste@gmail.com

Aquarius Jan 20 - Feb 18

Confidence comes not from always being right, but from not fearing to be wrong. It is never too late to transform your superstitious beliefs into logical or modern scientific thoughts. The best lesson of tolerance is to tolerate intolerance. It's not easy to find love when your interests lie elsewhere.

Pisces Feb 19 - Mar 20

Pursue your goals without hesitation, but this week it is best to avoid tackling big challenges or putting too much pressure on yourself. Your social life will improve and your love life will be "fair and square" if you can become more flexible in matters of the heart.

Aries March 21 - April 19

Pay close attention to your new social surroundings, and seek out potential partners who are interested in launching a profit-sharing venture with you. Don't suffer the pessimism of others, but remember that haughtiness will only make you look stupid.

Taurus April 20 - May 20

Take action to reduce your stress level, and know that patience and harmony are two ingredients for success. Accept challenges to your way of thinking, and the tensions will dissolve. Try not to listen to any gossip as it will only harm your relationships with work colleagues.

Gemini May 21 - June 20

Your hypochondria might be the result of a nervous disorder caused a mental imbalance and lack of self-confidence. Taking pleasure in the affections that are lavished upon you will help you remain fresh and green. Your beautiful family relationship can make you happy and healthy.

Cancer June 22 - July 22

Consider taking a risk on a new business venture, and don't be afraid to accept the advice of your lover; it could be more helpful than you think. Love

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SPECIAL Teaching (Individual or Group). Mathematics for GCE, Edexcel IGCSE (O Level & A Level), Mathematics for SAT (Grade 7,8,9,10,11,12), Mathematics for Matric Exam, Teacher Kyi: B.Sc (Honours), M.Sc (Engg Maths), M.Res (Mathematics), Ph: 09-731-48725.

GUIDE For Young Learners if you need to coach your child, you are welcome to contact us. We are ready to support with following subjects, English, Maths, Geo-graphy History, Science, Social English / Myanmar Language, Email: candlight295@gmail.com

I TEACH from primary to Grade-6 with all subjects. I teach computer basic & DTP for children and other people. I teach it to their house. Ph: 09-420-044409. Email: thesu.20@gmail.com

Expert Service

CONSTRUCTION & Engineering (Free advice) I, sole owner of S-Engineering & Construction, am providing the best service to build various buildings in all over the country (Myanmar) with affordable price and reasonable period. In addition to that, I am providing the valuable advice for those people who are interested in Construction & Engineering field and intended to do Construction & Engineering as their future endeavor for free-of-charge. Ph: 09-500-5817

IF YOU WANT us to service from international driving licence to Myanmar driving licence and Myanmar driving licence to international driving licence. Give me only pass post copy, visa copy, licence original and copy, id photo 3 copy and FEC 60 & services fee 35000 ks. Call us 0973008426.

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WE provide part-time accounting services for your company at a fair price. Our services cover from book-keeping to final financial statements & finance performance. Our accounting services shall be flawless with more than 6 years of accounting experience. Ph: 09-731-83043.

OLAR Translation Service Ph: 09 4200 31866 / 01 - 229 301 Email: iolar.translation@gmail.com

Language

HOMETUTION Japanese language class basic, inter course (kanji, reading, spoken) Japan going course Myanmar language for Japanese. Ph: 09-4200-55323

MYANMAR Language Training Course for foreigners. Ph: 09-518-1316, 09-731-27074 for Registration.

PUBLIC SPEAKING Course - 12000 Kyats, 28th October 2012, 11 am to 1 pm, Contact 09-5181316, 09-73127074 for Location

DEAR Foreigners, Let me know, if you want to learn Myanmar Language & Speaking, please contact to me. Mobile phone number: 09 540 3453

SAT score raising classic novels and short stories practice can be asked, it is right to enjoy reading classic and persuaded writing, critical thinking and world culture. If you are not the student of SAT study, you tried as much as you can to follow the lesson with skill you got good experienced for your further study. Spanish language can be inquired. UThantZin: 09-503-5350 or 01-547442. Add: 28/3B-Thadipahant St, Tamwe

FREE ENGLISH Conversation Opportunity. You can participate in individual conversation with native English speakers. Call MBJ Office ph: 538 557, 537 307

DELIGHT JAPANESE Language Academy: 15, 1st Flr, Thukhamein Rd, Sanchaung. Ph: 09-518-0297, 09-421-157608, 09-730-03521

LANGUAGE Proficiency (A) Effective & Scientific way, (B) Intensive Class, (C) Interpreter - part time/ Full time (Under mentioned languages), (D) Hindi/ Myanmar/ English (Basic Advance) for Embassy staff/ Foreigner/ Agrup single/ Kids + Teens/ NGO - INGO personal (Special rate for national peoples) by an Expert Tutor. (1) Home tuition available in groups or single. (2) Translation of English/ Hindi/ Sanskrit/ Bengali/ Nepali & Myanmar are also available. (3) Business Guide & Agency services. (4) Partner-ship business welcome. R.S. Verma. B.Sc., (Bot), Yangon. (UFL-English)

Yangon. Email: rsverma.myanmar@gmail.com, Ph: 09-730-42604, Add: 125, 43rd St, 5th Flr (R), Botahtaung.

TIME TO LEARN REAL English by a REAL teacher! Experienced and qualified English language consultant, native speaker offering evening classes for all levels from basic to advanced. 1-1 teaching focusing on grammar, conversational and business English. Down-town Yangon area. Reasonable price! Email: mingalaenglish@hotmail.com for details.

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NEW TOYOTA Mark ii 99 with driver. Contact : 09-519-2555.

MARK II, 1999 Model, Pearl White, 2.0 Gasoline, 111000 km, 2D/3000, Grade 4.5, Kyat 8 Lakhs per month (minimum 3 month rent), Ph: 09-731-15378.

For Sale

FOR BUY & SALES (Not Brand but excellent quality) iPhone iPad 1 2 3 Samsung HTC Sony Ericsson, Huawei and Tablet notebook laptop netbook Macbook Pro MacBook Air. iPod Touch 4G Black 64GB With all original accessories & Full App game Price : 190000 Ph: 09-517-8391

HD (Game, app) install iPhone, iPod touch 6000ks, iPad 8000ks, iTunes account open (free game, app download) Gmail account open, All iDevices iOS 5.1.1 version upgrade full untethered jailbreak (power off), Android Game, app install 5000ks, contact : 09-514-7480

1 WEEK USED Samsung Galaxy S2 I9100 Black Color With All original Accessories Voucher & Box 95% New. Price - 270000 (Fixed Price) Ph: 09-517-8391

IPHONE 4G 16GB Black Official Unlock (ios 6) Price - 290000. iPhone 4G 32GB Black Official Unlock Price - 340000 iPhone 3GS 16GB Black Price - 150000 Ph: 09-450-039844

APPLE iPad 2 64GB White Colour (Good Condition) With Back Cover Price 380000 Ph: 09-450-039844

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USED IPHONE 2G/3G/3GS/4G/4S/5 Used iPad 1/2/3 Wifi Only & Wifi +3G Used iPod Touch 4G/5G Used Samsung / SonyEricsson / HTC / Huawei / Nokia HandSet Used Notebook/NetBook / Mac Book / Mac Air / iMac / Any Tablet PC. Ph: 09-450-039844

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3 MONTH Used Ipad Touch 4G 32GB White Color With All original Accessories and box & Cover 9 Month Apple Warranty Left Price - 150000 Fixed Price Ph: 09-517-8391.

"CREATIVE ZEN MEDIA Player for sale (Genuine Creative Product) 4 GB internal memory. Original Silicon case and box. Can play music, video, FM, Voice recording & photo view. Very good condition. Battery - more than 3.5 hours. Price - 30,000 Kyats 09 5079980 (Aung Thu Hein)"

IBM Branded CPU Pentium 2.6 GHz Memory 512MB Hard-disk 40GB Optical Drive CD R/W Window XP Games : Dota, Counter Strike, Small Games Application, LCD BenQ 15' wide. K 170,000/ Ph: 09-421-148603.

CAR: Max X 2007 model, push start, Auto parking, White, sport type, High Grade, (5D/---) 250G, Price: 375 Lakhs, Maureen: 09-518-8320.

General

PRE ORDER 16GB - 770,000 Kyats, 32GB - 880,000 Kyats, 64GB - 990,000 Kyats. Goodways & Gate International Pte Ltd, Singapore Company. Yangon Contact - 40-42, 136st, Ma Ou Gone, Tarmwe. Ph: 09-510-9966, 09-730-33603.

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Travel

ISAMI Myanmar Travel & Tour : Ticketing, Visa, D Form, Hotel Reservation, Car Rental, Tour Package, "Golf Tour Package"

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Public Notice

GOLDEN SPIRIT CO.,LTD HAS SECURED ISO 9000, ISO 14000 AND ISO 18000, ISO 22000, BECOMING THE FIRST ALCOBEV COMPANY TO HAVE TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN PRODUCTION AT ITS YANGON FACILITY. HAS RECENTLY LAUNCHED SAILORS BRAND OF MATURED XXX RUM. THE PRESENTATION CEREMONY OF THE ISO CERTIFICATION BY THE CERTIFYING BODY FROM UK TO THE MANGING DIRECTOR U HTOO MIN MYAT OF GOLDEN SPIRIT CO.,LTD. GOLDEN SPIRIT CO.,LTD LAUNCHING OF SAILORS IN OCT 2012 WILL BE FOLLOWED BY IMPERIAL AND OTHER BRANDS. FACTORY IS LOCATED IN (NO. 123, CORNER OF U CHAINT & U MYU STREET, DAGON SEIKKAN TSP, INDUSTRIAL ZONE 1, YANGON.). FACTORY USES LATEST TECHNOLOGY IN WATER PURIFICATION, BLENDING, BOTTLING LINE WITH THE TECHNOLOGY TIE UP WITH SPIRIT SINGAPORE PTE., LTD.

PROPERTY

Housing for Rent

FOR OFFICE ONLY (1) New University Avenue Lane Condo. 1500 Sqft, 2MBR, USD 1800 per month. (2) Junction Maw Tin Tower, 1300 Sqft, 2M, 1BR, AC, Furniture, 10F up, USD 1800 per month. Ph: 399263.

(1) **BAHAN**, Inya Rd, 1 acre, Lake side view, colony house A/C, 3 master bed rooms, 1 single bed room, phone, SQ, big garden, tennis court, good electricity & water, negotiable price. (2) **Mayangone**, 0.3 acre land, 2 story buildings, 4 master bed rooms, 1 single bed room, phone line, 8 air conditioners, fully furnished, SQ, generator, good electricity, US\$ 6000 per month (negotiable), ph: 09-420-116460

KYAUK KONE 30'X120, 2RC, New, 2 Master, 3 Single, 6 A/C, 15 Lakhs Per month. Ph: 09-420076256.

BAHAN, Shwe Than Lwin Condo, 3600 Sqft, 2 MB, 1 BR, Ph, 4 A/C, Nicely apartment, asking price US\$ 3000. Call Maureen : 09-5188320.

BAHAN (1) Kokkaine Yeik Thar St (8500) Sqft, 4MBR, Ph, 7AC, 4RC, USD 15000. (2) Near Chatrium Hotel, (85'x85') 8MBR, 11AC, LTD.



FOUND: iPhone. In taxi on evening of October 6. Owned by a European. Contact: geoffrey@myanmartimes.com.mm

CORRECTION: Please refer to Singapore Airlines advertisement on 5 Oct 12 & 08 Oct 12. Please note that fares quoted are available from now to 30 October 2012 instead of 16 November 2012.

GARAGE Sale: 10th, 11th, 12th November 2012. Ph: 511195, 09-732-24664, winmmkhin@gmail.com, 43, Inya Myaing, Shwe Taungyar Qtr (1), Bahan, Yangon.

Travel

SWEET Seasons Travels & Tour is providing services such as individual/ group tour packages, Hotel reservation, transportation, D-form, ticketing & delivering for individuals, families & corporate companies. email: sales@sweetseasonstours.com/ www.facebook.com/ sweetseasonstours, Ph: 09-511-7479, 09-730-86864, 09-506-2499.

Want To Buy

USED PHONE- Samsung, Huawei, Iphone Nokia HTC Sony Ericsson Ipad Ipad Laptop, Notebook Net-book, Macbook Pro, Macbook Air, Samsung Galaxy Tablet, External Hardisk. Ph: 376420.

with kitchen utensil, daily housekeeping, free drinking water, free facial tissue, free toilet tissue, 4 unit aviable. **Mayankone**, Kabaraye Gamonepint Condominium, 1700 sqft, 1 MBR, 2 Single BR, fully furnished with kitchen utensil, daily housekeeping, free drinking water, free facial tissue, free toilet tissue, 4 unit aviable. Ph: 0943063890

BAHAN, Kanbawza Yeik Tha, 0.6 Acre, 12 MBR, fully furnished with kitchen utensil, daily housekeeping, free drinking water, free facial tissue, free toilet tissue. **Kamayut**, Inya Kan Yeik Thar, 80' x 90' ft, 4 Story Bldg, 2 MBR, 4 Single BR, fully furnished with kitchen utensil, daily house-keeping, free drinking water, free facial tissue, free toilet tissue. **Botahtaung**, 8 Story New Bldg, 30'x40' ft, Hall Type, Including Lift. Ph: 09-501-9648

BAHAN, Kanbawza Rd, Golden Valley - 3300 sqft compound, 2 storey building (1110 sqft), Upstairs: 1MBR (16x13.5 sqft), 1 BR (18x11 sqft), family room with small balcony Downstairs: Large living room, dining room with kitchen attached, 1 MBR (17x12 sqft) with staircase to upstairs inside). Lawn & plants at backyard, highly secure, best electricity in town, municipal (gyo-phyu water). Fully furnished, heater, air-conditions, fridge, washing machine. \$ 1,500. Pls call - Myat@ 09-501-0816, Email: ixora2007@gmail.com. No agent pls.

DAGON, Manawhari Rd, Near Thai Embassy, 4 MBR, 2 RC. Ph: 09-492-14276, 09-420-114749.

BAHAN, Golden Valley, Inya Myaing Rd, 2 RC, 4 MBR, 3 AC. Ph: 09-492-14276, 09-420-114749.

Housing for Sale

BAHAN, New University Avenue Rd, Condo 28' x 80', 2MB, 1BR, Nicely Apartment, Lift, Negotiable price: 3500 Lakhs, Call Maureen: 09-518-8320 (No Agts.).

Want To Hire

FORCOMPANYOFFICE: Bahan (Kabaaye Pogada Rd, Pyi Htaung Su Rd), Hlaing (Pyay Rd), Kamayut (Pyay Rd), Yankin - *2RC or 3 RC, MB 5, 3 Phase Power Meter, Water-Cute well & YCDC, Compound 80x80, Fully Furnished, Pls contact by house owner only. 556407, 540995, 4412580

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Employment

UN Positions

THE UNITED NATIONS Office on Drugs & Crime (UNODC) is seeking for **Infrastructure Specialist** (Level: SC-6) MMRJ94/J95 Projects - 1 Post, in Taunggyi/Hopone, Southern Shan State: University degree in civil engineering or related engineering fields. 5 years experience in all aspects of irrigation and water supply system design and construction for rural communities. Fluency in English. Pls submit a cover letter, current CV, copies of relevant academic qualification certificates & a recent passport photo to UNODC, 11A, Mayikha Rd, Mayangone (or) C/O UNDP, PO Box (650), Yangon, Closing Date: 5 November 2012.

(THE UNITED NATIONS) World Food Programme Myanmar) WFP Myanmar is seeking **Finance Assistant** 1 post - Grade: GS-5, in Magwe: Minimum secondary school education including or supplemented by courses related to the area of work. A University degree holder with experience in related field will be advantaged. 4 years experience in general administrative work including at least two years in the field of finance, accounting, audit, administrative services. Fluency in English/Myanmar. Pls send the applications with UN P-11 form to WFP HR Unit, 3rd Flr, Inya Lake Hotel, 37 Kaba Aye Pagoda Rd, Yangon, P.O. Box 650 (or) email to Myanmar.vacancy@wfp.org COB 31 October 2012.

INGO Position

CARE Int'l in Myanmar is seeking **(1) Senior Program Officer-Partnership-Loikaw** (Kayah State) 1 Post: University graduate, with relevant experience. 2 years experience managing humanitarian programs in Myanmar. 1 year experience supervising staff. **(2) Technical Officer** (Monitoring & Evaluation) - Extension for Kokang Self Administrative Region, Northern Shan State: University graduate and/or degree holder with related working experience. Pls send an application letter outlining their claims against the matching indicators, along with a current C.V., passport sized photograph, clearance certificate from police station - original and copies of any references or testimonials to HR Manager: 17-A, Pyi Htaung Su St, Sayarsan Rd, Bahan. Email: recruitment@care.org.mm, Closing date: 5th November 2012.

PREMIERE Urgence-Aide Medicale Internationale (PU-AMI) is seeking **(1) Liaison Officer** (Pang Kham Base) 1 Post in Wa Special Region No.2 : Any graduate (or) diploma. Previous experiences in INGO/UN agency. Excellent skills in English & Myanmar is compulsory, Chinese will be an advance. Excellent knowledge of the Wa region. Computer skills. **(2) Community Mobilization Officer** - CMO 1 post in Yangon: Any Graduate. Language: Myanmar & English. **(3) Midwife or Nurse** 1 post (Relaunch) in Tanintharyi: Registered Midwife or Nurse. Clinical experience in Maternal and Child Health care. Willing to live and work in a remote area.

Myanmar (compulsory), Kayin would be an asset. CV with a recent passport size photo, cover letter & certificates can be sent to (PU-AMI), Yangon Office: 73, Than Lwin St, Kamayut, Ph: 525246. Or by email to: ami.recruitment.mm@gmail.com or puami.wa.hr@gmail.com

MYANMAR Red Cross Society is seeking **(1) Township Branch Capacity Building Training Officer** (DRR Field Team), 1 Post: University degree or diploma related to the position (management, organizational development Capacity building...). 2 years experiences, very good computer literacy in MS Office pack. Must have basic English languages skills. **(2) Disaster Risk Reduction Education Training Officer** (DRR Field Team), 1 Post : University degree or diploma related to the position. 2 years experience in teaching or children. Communicative English languages skills **(3) Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation & Reporting Officer** (DRR Unit), 1 Post : University degree or bachelor related to the position. 2 years experience. English language skills, Computer literacy. Pls submit a letter of application, relevant documents & CV, Copy of Recommendation letter from Police Station / Labor Registration Card/ Good health certificate & 1 passport photo (Cover Letter CV documents only need to be sent via e-mail) to U Khin Maung Hla, Executive Director, Myanmar Red Cross Society, Nay Pyi Taw mrcshrrecruitment@gmail.com before 2nd November 2012. Pls visit to www.myanmar-redcross.org.

MEDECINS Du Monde is seeking **consultant** to work on the end of the project Evaluation which will take place in Pyapon Township in the mid of November 2012 for the duration of 3 weeks (including report writing). Pls send an expression of interest, detailing your relevant experience and summarizing the tools and methodology you would propose for the Evaluation, together with your resume to MDM Country Coordination Office, Yangon: 47-B, Po Sein St, Bahan. Ph: 542830, 09-731-71002, Email: hr.mdmmyanmar@gmail.com. Closing date : 1st November 2012.

ALLIANCE in Myanmar is seeking **Consultant** for Mid-term Evaluation : Pls forward their CV to the Country Director, Int'l HIV/AIDS Alliance, No. 12/F, Pyi Thu St, 7 miles, Mayangone, Yangon by 2 November 2012. Copies of the ToR are available upon request. Further information on the Alliance can be obtained from www.aidsalliance.org. "The International HIV/AIDS Alliance is committed to equal opportunities & welcomes applications from appropriately qualified people from all sections of the community."

CARE Myanmar is looking for **Project Manager** (PM) position in Kokang Self Administrative Region, Northern Shan State: Master's degree in Business Administration, Private Sector Development, related field or substantial equivalent in professional experience. 3 years field experience in Myanmar or other countries in Southeast Asia. Pls send an application letter outline their claims against the matching indicators, along with a current

C.V., passport sized photograph, clearance certificate from police station - original and copies of any references HR Manager, Care Int'l in Myanmar 17A, Pyi Htaung Su St, Sayarsan Rd, Bahan, Email: recruitment@care.org.mm, Closing date : 30th October 2012.

PREMIERE Urgence-Aide Medicale Internationale (PU-AMI) is seeking **(1) Training Officer** in Dala, Yangon Office: M.BBS Degree Holder. 2 years working as a trainer or in a similar position & experience in an INGO. Myanmar & English compulsory. **(2) Head Of Base** 1 post in Dala Tsp : University graduate. 5 years experience in NGOs or International Agencies. Excellent in English & Myanmar. Excellent computer skills. **(3) Base Finance** (YGN) : Any graduate, preferably in bookkeeping. 1 year experience in bookkeeping, administrative management or related field. Good in English. **(4) Base Admin** HR 1 post in Dala Tsp : University degree or equivalent/Secondary education (High school diploma). Fluency in English. CV with a recent passport size photo, cover letter and certificates can be sent to PU-AMI. Yangon Office: 73, Than Lwin St, Kamayut (Ph: 525246), or by email to: ami.recruitment.mm@gmail.com

SOLIDARITES International (SI) is seeking **(1) Administrative Officer** in Sittwe, Rakhine State: 1 year experience in INGO or private organization. University Degree or Diploma (preferably in accounting field). Fluent in English & Myanmar. Knowledge of MS Office. **(2) Deputy Administrative Manager** in Sittwe, Rakhine State: University level or equivalent in accounting/ management/ administration. 2 years experience Excellent knowledge of word & excel, knowledge of accounting software SAGA & HR software HOMERE is a plus. Fluent in English & Myanmar. **(3) Administrative Supervisor** in Sittwe, Rakhine State: Academic background in Management, finance or accounting studies. Fluent in English and Myanmar. Computer knowledge Pls submit application (CV, cover letter, references) to : HR Department Solidarites Int'l : 44A, Tharyarwady, Bahan or email: hr.solidarites.mm@gmail.com. Important: the position you want to apply for has to be specified in the subject of your e-mail, otherwise the applications: 31st October 2012.

Local Position

AMARA Group Co., Ltd. is looking for **(1) Junior Sous Chef** 2 Post (Ngapali), **(2) Chef De Partie** 2 Post (Ngapali), **(3) Ground Manager** 1 Post (Mandalay), **(4) Accountant** 1 Post (Yangon), **(5) Accountant** 1 Post (Mandalay), **(6) Sous Chef** 1 Post (Kalaw), **(7) Housekeeping Supervisor** 1 Post (Kalaw), **(8) Reservation Executive** 1 Post (Yangon). Be part of a young dynamic team and contribute to the hotels success with your expertise & experience. Therefore we offer an interesting work environment, accommodation and an attractive package. We look forward receiving CV in English. contact: amaragroup.mm@gmail.com, Ph: 663347, 652191.

PAHTAMA GROUP Co., Ltd is seeking **(1) Marketing Supervisor** M/F 5 Posts : Age 25 ~ 35, Any Graduate, 2 years experience, Computer literate. **(2) Marketing Coordinator** M/F 5 Posts : Age 20 ~ 25, Any Graduate, 2 years experience **(3) Finance Assistant** - F 5 Posts : Age 23-28, Any graduate, LCCI Level II, can able to cash control & can handle cash book/ ledger, 1 year experience. **(4) I & E Asst** - M 5 Posts : Age 20 ~ 28, Any graduate, Experience in related field. **(5) IT Asst** - M 5 Posts : Age 23 ~ 28, Any graduate, Must have IT know-ledge. **(6) Sales Representative** (Driving) M 10 Posts : Age 22 ~ 30, 10th standard passed / Graduate, Have sales experience, driving skill & license. **(7) Asst. Sales Admin** - F 5 Posts : Age 20 ~ 25, Any graduate, Good computer skill, 1 year experience **(8) Driver** - M 5 Posts : Age 25 ~ 35, Valid driving License & 2 years experience. **(9) Promotion Girl** - F 30 Posts. Pls send C.V, 2 recent photos, copies of labor registration card, N.R.C card, education certificate & others documents to 73-76, Waizayandar Rd, Thingan Gyun. Ph: 573-286, 565494. Email: hr.pahtama@gmail.com

HORIZON INT'L Kindergarten is seeking for **Swimming Teacher** - F 1 post : Must have any bachelor degree, Must have a diploma or certificate of Basic Swimming course, Must be able to speak English, Must have an experience in teaching Swimming at least 1 year, Must have a good communication with kids, Must be patient, kind, honest & reliable, Willing to work with us for a long time. The one who are interested can be applied along with CV and cover letter to (5) A, Pho Sein Rd, Bahan, Yangon before 30.10.12. Ph: 548452

BLUE BIRD Hotel (Bagan) Carrier Opportunity **Front Office Supervisor** - M/F, **Receptionist** - F, **Guest Relation officer** - F, **Reservation officer** - M/F: Work Place In Bagan **Reservation officer** - M/F, Work Place In Yangon. Pls contact us with your cv to 256-266, Rm 10D, Shine Tower, Seikkantha St, (Upper), Kyauktada, Ph: 398030, 09-505-2595

GENER EQUALITY NETWORK (GEN) is seeking **Training & Research Officer** : This energetic & collaborative network organizes supports and coordinates action in the area of women's empowerment & gender equality in Myanmar. If you would like to be a part of this dynamic group, please send the application letter with updated CV to meemeefwp@gmail.com or Gender Equality Network Office

: 1, Wingabar St, Shwe Gone Daing, Bahan, Yangon, 5 Nov 2012. Pls read detail job description in Myanmar Network: <http://www.myanmar-network.net/profiles/blogs/training-and-research-officer-1>. No. 1, Wingabar Rd, Shwe Gone Taing, Bahan, Yangon. Ph: 95-1-546671 Ext: 205 email: gen.myanmar@gmail.com

WE HAVE requirement to search **Marketing Manager** - 2 Posts: For Farm & Heavy Machinery in Myanmar, BE and/or Equal Qualifications, 3 years related experience, Fine Personality & human skills, Able to Travel almost any places in Myanmar, Fluent 4 skills in Myanmar & English. Good compensations could be awarded as Qualified. Pls contact (office hour): 0973030243, Before 30th November 2012.

REAL FITNESS Centre New Fitness Club opening soon in Yangon seeking: **(1) Asst. Manager** - M/F 1 post **(2) Admin & Accounts Executive** - M/F 1 post **(3) Membership Executive** - M/F 1 post **(4) Receptionist** F 2 post **(5) Fitness Trainer** M/F 2 post **(6) Cleaner** M/F 2 post Requirements : Active & pleasant personality, Good command of English for senior positions, Excellent social & people skills, Customer service or relevant experience. Pls submit CV, photo with other documents to Rm 503, 5th Floor, FMI Centre (near Bogyoke Market). Ph: 240289, 240400 Ext: 1503

REQUIRED Cook/cleaner for two-person home in Parami. Five days a week, part-time is fine. Knowledge of basic English would be great. Pls call 09-500-0614 or email jess.mudditt@gmail.com

ICS TRAVEL GROUP is looking for **(1) Travel Consultant** : 2 years experience, good communication and interpersonal skills, fluent in spoken and written English, travel business experience, excellent computer skills (Microsoft Office, Internet & Email), must possess ability to work under pressure, highly motivated & outgoing personality. Pls CV with photo & other certificates personally or per e-mail. You will find our contact details below. ICS Travel Group : 11 (A), Mahamyangin St, Sanchaung. Ph: 511658, 511701, 504502. Email: zinzin@is-myanmar.com Website: www.icstravelgroup.com

WE ARE looking for a maid of housework. Applicant must not be older than 30 years old. Pls Mr. JE Seung Ho, diplomat at Embassy (01-527143, 09-431-64169) for more information.

4 STARS leading hotel in Yangon urgently seeking **(1) Receptionist** 1 post, Over 1 year of extensive experience as Receptionist and front desk. Strong interpersonal & communication skills. Avid understanding of front desk operations. **(2) Housekeeping attendance** 1 post, over 6 months of experience as a housekeeper. Highly skilled in operation, through understanding of safety precaution in all housekeeping services. Pls contact -09-43027727

"A LEADING English language media company is seeking: **(1) Business news editor & subeditor** **(2) Business news writers and reporters** **(3) Advertising Sales Executives** **(4) English and Myanmar translator** Qualifications: Experience preferred with local, national or international newspaper, online news or wire service. Good command of spoken & written English. Pls send your resume to Tharaphu Decor Co., Ltd : 22 (A), Kabaaye Pagoda Rd, Bahan Email: marchetti.yangon@gmail.com Ph: (951) 8603288, (951) 552886 Ext: 105/106

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South Korea 97 University Avenue, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. tel: 527142-4, 515190, fax: 513286, email: myanmar@mofat.go.kr

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Sri Lanka 34 Taw Win Road, Yangon. tel: 222812, fax: 221509, email: slembassy.yangon@gmail.com, info@slembyangon.org, www.slembyangon.org

Thailand 94 Pyay Road, Dagon Township, Yangon. tel: 226721, 226728, 226824, fax: 221713

United Kingdom 80 Kan-na Road, Yangon. tel: 370867, 380322, 371852, 371853, 256438, 370863, 370864, 370865, fax: 370866

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IOM 12th Flr, Traders Hotel, 223, tel: 252560 ext. 5002

UNAIDS Rm: (1223-1231), 12 Fl, Traders Hotel. tel: 252361, 252362, 252498. fax: 252364.

UNDCP 11-A, Malikka St, Mayangone tsp. tel: 666903, 664539. fax: 651334.

UNDP 6, Natmauk Rd, Bahan tel: 542910-19. fax: 292739.

UNFPA 6, Natmauk Rd, Bahan tsp. tel: 546029.

UNHCR 287, Pyay Rd, Sanchaung tsp. tel: 524022, 524024. fax 524031.

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UNICEF 14-15 Flr, Traders Hotel. P.O. Box 1435, KTDA. tel: 375527-32, fax: 375552 email: unicef.yangon@unicef.org, www.unicef.org/myanmar.

UNODC 11-A, Malikka Rd., Ward 7, MYGN. tel: 666903, 660556, 660538, 660398, 664539, fax: 651334. email: fo.myanmar@unodc.org www.unodc.org./myanmar/

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UNRC 6, Natmauk Rd, P.O. Box 650, TMWE tel: 542911-19, 292637 (Resident Coordinator), fax: 292739, 544531.

WFP 3rd-flr, Inya Lake Hotel, 37, Kabar Aye Pagoda Rd. tel: 657011-6 (6-lines) Ext: 2000.

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ASEAN Coordinating Of. for the ASEAN Humanitarian Task Force, 79, Taw Win st, Dagon Township. Ph: 225258.

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Orchid Hotel 91, Anawrahta street, Pazundaung Township, Yangon. . Tel: 399930, 399990, 901061-65. E-mail: orchidhotel@myanmar.com.mm.



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Strand Hotel 92 Strand Rd. tel: 243377. fax: 289880.

Summit Parkview Hotel 350, Ahlone Rd, Dagon Tsp. tel: 211888, 211966. fax: 227995.

Thamada Hotel 5, Alan Pya Phaya Rd, Dagon. tel: 243639, 243640, 243641.

Traders Hotel 223 Sule Pagoda Rd. tel: 242828. fax: 242838.

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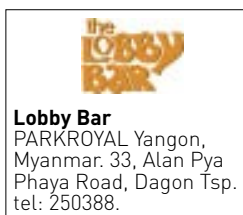
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Ministry of Foreign Affairs ☎tel: 067-412009, 067-412344.
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Wiggins and rivals must pedal onward

PARIS - As doping-disgraced Lance Armstrong cycles into the sunset of sporting infamy, Britain's Bradley Wiggins and a new generation of pedal pushers must try to make people care about a forever-tainted sport.

That's the challenge moving ahead after the International Cycling Union (UCI) upheld a life ban on Armstrong and the stripping of his seven Tour de France titles based upon a mountain of evidence from the US Anti-Doping Agency.

Where Armstrong had been listed as champion of the world's most famous cycling race from 1999-2005, there is no winner named, organizers choosing not to move up other riders into the top spot, symbolic of a lost era.

Another former Armstrong teammate, Norwegian Steffen Kjaergaard, admitted on October 23 that he took the banned blood booster erythropoietin (EPO).

With already-ousted winner Floyd Landis also among confessed Tour dope cheats and an entrenched banned performance-enhancing system around Armstrong, Rabobank dropped its team sponsorship, declaring the sport was too far gone.

Wiggins, this year's Tour de France winner with Team Sky, and 2011 champion Cadel Evans of Australia are among the stars who must try and convince sponsors and supporters of cycling to stay faithful in the face of betrayal.

Cycle of abuse

The International Cycling Union (UCI) failed to stop Lance Armstrong cheating, but the global cycling body points out it did catch other top sportsmen who failed drug tests



Tyler Hamilton
(USA)
Years banned:
2005 - 2007



Floyd Landis
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2007 - 2009



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2007 - 2009



Danilo Di Luca
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2009 - 2011



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(Netherlands)
2009 - 2011



Roberto Heras
(Spain)
2006 - 2008

Source: UCI AFP

"We are the ones picking these pieces up," Wiggins told Sky News. "For me it is about moving forward and not looking back any more to what happened 10, 15 years ago."

"We are one of the most

successful sports for catching people. I don't think that is relevant to what we are doing today. What we are doing today is setting the example for our sport."

Sky said it will ask all team members to sign a

pledge vowing they have never been involved with doping and never will be -- or face firing.

"We want a team in which riders are free of the risks of doping and in which fans new and old can

believe without any doubt or hesitation," Sky said.

Michael Ashenden, a blood doping expert who worked for UCI until April, said Sky's pledge must have effective oversight and standards to be meaningful.

"Do Sky intend to actively investigate what (team leader David) Brailsford calls reputational risks and act on what they find if there are grounds to suspect someone has been associated with doping?" he asked.

"It's a really important issue because unless they can qualify their position, their statement isn't worth the paper it's written on. If they intend only to act when a cyclist is sanctioned, they're being disingenuous to their fans."

"We're talking about millions of fans being deceived and tens of millions of dollars being fraudulently earned by Armstrong. Lessons have to be learned."

Brailsford said slower Tour times in recent years show the doping era is over.

"Times have got slower and slower, which contrasts the normal progression of sport," Brailsford said. "There's only one explanation and it's that the sport has cleaned up. People are doing a lot to make sure all the results can be authentic."

Showing the depth of past disgrace, however, erodes confidence in the stars of the moment and threatens the future.

The Onion, a satirical faux news website, summed up the Armstrong affair in a story entitled "This Last Story Ever Written

About Cycling" with cutting remarks basically wondering why cycling should even bother trying to ride on.

The tongue-in-cheek report said Armstrong's punishment ensured "cycling will never be mentioned in a mainstream news publication ever again, because, what's the point?... Lance Armstrong is done and cycling is over."

"According to sources and basic common sense, now that the storied career of cycling's most prominent and marketable figure has been revealed as a complete and undeniable fraud, there is no chance the sport will ever again receive even one line of coverage from any news outlet in the world."

What if they staged a Tour de France and nobody cared?

Well, what if Wiggins won Britain's first Tour de France title then took London Olympic gold in the road time trial and the big cycling story of the year was a 41-year-old US drugs cheat?

British rider Chris Hoy, a six-time Olympic champion, is unhappy that one famous cheat can smear the efforts of all who race without resorting to doping.

"It's very sad," he told the BBC. "We do it clean, we put in years and years of effort and make sure we have the correct diet and rest properly. We don't go out drinking. You sacrifice a lot and then you win a gold medal."

"But there will be a percentage thinking 'Well, I wonder if there were drugs involved in that performance?' - AFP

McGinley backed for Ryder Cup captain

SHANGHAI - Graeme McDowell and Luke Donald have backed Paul McGinley to be Europe's next Ryder Cup captain as they prepared for China's US\$7 million BMW Masters starting on October 25.

Northern Ireland's McDowell told AFP it seemed to be a straight fight between two of 2012 captain Jose Maria Olazabal's assistants from Chicago -- McGinley and former Open champion Darren Clarke, who are also playing in Shanghai.

The victorious European team of last month reunited last week, with only Sergio Garcia absent, for the first time since their historic 14 1/2 to 13 1/2 defeat of the United States at Medinah.

Former US Open winner McDowell and England's Donald believe that either of the Irish pair would be a great choice but that they would plump for McGinley to be given the captaincy first, at Gleneagles in Scotland in 2014.

Clarke, they added, should then be given his chance for the next battle, in the United States in 2016.

The 2011 British Open champion Clarke this week batted away questions about the captaincy but McDowell and Donald were happier to talk about the subject that has become almost a taboo among the team since the celebrations in Medinah died down.

"Both Paul and Darren would be great captains in their own right but then Paul has kind of forged a little niche for himself given the way he has conducted himself in the Seve Trophy and the Ryder Cup vice-captaincy roles," said McDowell, the 2010 US Open champion.

"He's a scholar of the game and a strategist and would probably be technically, if that's the right word, a good captain."

"Darren would emotionally be a great captain and a great motivator, and also with that big personality he possesses," he added.

World number three Donald agreed either man would make an inspiring captain, but at Gleneagles he would also prefer to see McGinley in charge.

"Personally, probably I have spoken a little bit more to McGinley," he said.

"He always seems very up for the challenge. I do believe that if he doesn't get it this year, he probably won't get it. Whereas I feel like Darren will have other opportunities."

McDowell explained that, in his view, the captaincy role is not just about past playing success.

"If it should boil down to pure playing credentials, of course Darren would win hands down as the next captain."

"However, that opens a can of worms on the Ryder Cup captaincy debate because we are looking for a captain who has the

right playing credentials or are we looking at Ryder Cup captains who will be great captains?"

"You've got to look at what makes a great captain and it's personally being able to relate to 12 very individual players in a team."

And McDowell hinted that maybe the European Tour's players committee, which will announce the next captain at the Abu Dhabi Championship in January, could decide a few captains in advance.

"There should be a pecking order of guys who are next in line, and Paul McGinley really has good enough credentials to be a Ryder Cup captain," McDowell said.

"Darren... would make for a great captain in America as they love him over there. His personality suits America and they see him as the cigar-smoking, Guinness-drinking nice guy that he is." - AFP

Northern Ireland's Graeme McDowell, who has backed Paul McGinley to be the next European Ryder Cup captain, chips onto the 7th green during the first round of the BMW Shanghai Masters at the Lake Malaren Golf Club in Shanghai on October 25. The European Ryder Cup team defeated the United States in a stunning comeback last month in Chicago. Pic: AFP





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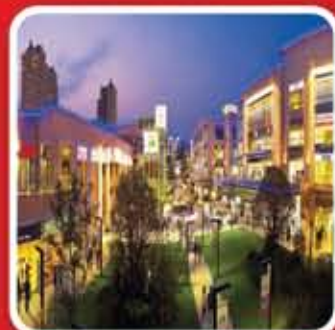
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Stellar Sandoval latest Venezuelan to make mark

SAN FRANCISCO – Venezuela's Pablo Sandoval has emerged as the standard bearer for an unprecedented collection of Hispanic players in baseball's World Series with his rare three home run outburst in game one on October 24.

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez was among those taking notice of Sandoval's achievement, tweeting congratulations during the October 24 game after the San Francisco Giants slugger joined Babe Ruth, Reggie Jackson and Albert Pujols as the only players to hit three homers in one contest in Major League Baseball's Fall Classic.

"He put a tweet on the three home runs," Sandoval said on October 26, shortly before the Giants extended their series lead over the Detroit Tigers in game two.

"When I was hitting the fourth at-bat, he was like 'I'm just going to say congratulations to Pablo, but I'm just going to see the four homers right now.'

"So that was funny." Sandoval's last at-bat in fact yielded a single, giving him a 4-for-4 night at the plate in the Giants' 8-3 victory.

That helped erase any lingering bad memories from the Giants' 2010 World Series title run, in which his poor form saw him barely get a chance to play.

He said he'd received 300 text messages, many from friends and family back home in Venezuela -- also the home country of Tigers' slugger Miguel Cabrera.

Cabrera is also expected to make some noise in this best-of-seven series, having become baseball's first Triple Crown winner in 45 years -- leading the American League in home runs (44), batting average (.330) and runs batted in (139).

Sandoval said Cabrera's exploits, and now his own, had ratcheted up attention in Venezuela.

"It's a big deal," he said. "The president sent me a tweet yesterday -- I still can't believe it!"

In all there are nine Venezuelans on the two teams' World Series rosters. There are also nine from the Dominican Republic and two from Puerto Rico.

Giants manager Bruce Bochy, who has first-hand experience of baseball in Venezuela, said he wasn't surprised to see so many players from the country making a mark in the major leagues.

"I spent three years playing winter baseball down there, and they love the game," Bochy said. "They have just a great passion for baseball. As far as I know, I'm pretty sure it is their national sport there."

"There are some great players that have come out of Venezuela. So I'm not surprised to see that many players here in the World Series that are just great players and have played the game all their life."

"They play the game in their country probably similar to how we played it here 50, 60 years ago," Bochy added. "They all played as kids growing up. You drive around the country and you see them playing sandlot baseball. That's why I think we're seeing so many players, not just from Venezuela but from Latin America, because of how much they play as kids." – AFP



Juniors boarding at the Tennis Federation of Myanmar in Yangon prepare to play at Thein Byu Tennis Centre. Pic: The Tennis Federation of Myanmar

Tennis Federation of Myanmar serves up plan for growth

By Aung Si Hein

THE Tennis Federation of Myanmar (TFM) is undertaking ambitious projects with hopes of building a strong base of new tennis teachers and players.

The TFM took the first step towards widespread improvements late last year when it hired Robert Davis as head coach and technical expert for a period of two years after he was recommended by the International Tennis Federation.

Mr Davis has previously served as the head coach for the Thai, Indonesian, Peruvian and Panamanian national teams.

"In contracting Mr. Davis our main task was to prepare our national teams for the upcoming 2013 Southeast Asian Games," U Aung Maw Thein, president

of TFM, said.

"However, he is also tasked with developing tennis in general throughout the nation. Our goal at the TFM is to provide the necessary structure for the game to grow."

The main areas that they will be focused on during Mr Davis' tenure are coaching education, talent identification and development, officiating and attracting international tournaments to Myanmar.

From December 2nd -8th, TFM will host the 1st Myanmar International Tennis Project at Thein Byu Tennis Centre.

"The objective of the Myanmar International Tennis Project is to bring together everyone in Myanmar that has an enthusiasm to play, teach or learn more about tennis," Mr Davis said. "From school kids who have never played tennis,

to the very successful adult league organised by L'Opera Restaurant, to established tennis coaches from the 14 states of Myanmar and to physical education teachers in the schools who want to offer tennis to their students. Everyone is welcome."

There will also be a tennis teacher's course directed by the Professional Tennis Registry and an officiating course conducted by the International Tennis Federation.

"We want to create a greater interest in tennis among adults and young children alike through a variety of activities that introduce new people to tennis," Mr Davis said of the program.

"In order to teach more students how to play tennis, we will need more people willing to learn to teach tennis. The idea that you have to be a good

player to be a good teacher is false. What is needed is a good teacher first, and tennis ability second. We can easily help them acquire the necessary tools to play and teach tennis with."

Though these new programs are exciting, TFM has no illusions of instant gratification; they are fully aware that developing tennis players and improving infrastructure is a long process that requires quality education and enthusiastic sponsors.

"I am very excited about the opportunities here in Myanmar," Mr Davis said.

"I have worked for national associations all over the world, and like anything else, success starts at the top. And the president of the TFM is fully committed to planting seeds now for a sustained long term growth later."

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