

Ministry to seek more talks with Thailand on workers

Migrant rights activists criticise Thai decision to close registration centres

By Bill O'Toole

THE Ministry of Labour plans to push Thailand to reopen centres that allow illegal migrant workers to register and work legally in the country, a senior Ministry of Labour official said last week.

The centres closed on December 14, the deadline the Thai government set for undocumented migrant workers to apply for passports under the National Verification program and avoid possible deportation. The decision has been criticised by activists, who argue it puts illegal migrant workers at greater risk of exploitation.

After negotiating a six-month extension in June, the Department of Labour had again asked Thailand to push back the deadline but this time Yingluck Shinawatra's government stood firm.

Department director general U Myo Aung said he remained optimistic Thailand would reopen the five registration centres and allow more workers to register for the national verification scheme.

"I think we will travel soon to Thailand and discuss a detailed process of how to

make our workers safe," he told *The Myanmar Times* by phone from Nay Pyi Taw on December 13.

"[Thailand] wants to close the five immigration centres, we would like those centres to stay open," he said. "All countries have their own, national interests. We will cooperate [with the Thai government] ... I hope we will [be able to] work for good conditions for our workers."

He said both President U Thein Sein and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi agreed on the need to take steps to improve conditions for Myanmar workers abroad, adding that the pair "often speak about protection of our workers in any country - it's an important issue."

As of October 31, 1.16 million migrants had registered under the National Verification program, but experts say an estimated one million migrants from Myanmar are still unregistered.

The Thai Department of Employment was unavailable for comment last week but many civil society groups working on the Thai-Myanmar border criticised the closure of the centres, which effectively

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Activists protest in downtown Yangon on December 10 to mark Human Rights Day. Two days later, thousands of monks took to the streets to protest the police crackdown at Letpadaung on November 29. Pic: Kaung Htet

Police make arrests over mine protest

YANGON - Officials said last week they had made a fresh round of arrests over a spate of protests demanding apologies for a police crackdown on a rally at a Chinese-backed copper mine last month.

Demonstrations have been held across the country in a display of public anger for injuries, including severe burns, sustained by dozens of monks in a pre-dawn raid on protest camps at the mine on November 29.

"Some activists were arrested for questioning," a police official said on December 14, asking not to be named. He said they were picked up in Mandalay for protesting without permission.

Activist group All Burma Federation of Student Unions, which took part in street action this week, said eight people were arrested late on December 13.

"Four activists from Mandalay have not been

released yet. We do not know where they are," a representative of the group said on condition of anonymity.

Hundreds of monks, supported by activists, staged demonstrations across Myanmar on December 12 over the mine crackdown, the toughest clampdown on demonstrators since a reformist government came to power last year.

The wife of U Thein Aung Myint, one of the arrested

protesters, said her husband was taken from their home in the evening and had not returned.

"I think he was taken because of his involvement in the monk-led protest on December 12," said Daw Khet Khet Tin.

On December 7 Minister for Religious Affairs Thura U Myint Maung apologised to some of the country's most senior clerics for injuries to

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Corruption index: an exercise in futility

By Derek Tonkin

CORRUPTION is a serious issue in many countries in Southeast Asia, not least in Myanmar. This has been recognised by President U Thein Sein's reformist government and highlighted in his major speeches. In late November the Ministry of Home Affairs issued a statement on the matter, adding that it was drafting new anti-corruption legislation to replace the current law, which dates from 1948.

Although this is all still very much work in hand, I was nonetheless at first surprised to find that Myanmar is again relegated to a very lowly position in the latest Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) released on December 5 by Transparency International (TI). Myanmar occupies the 172nd place out of 176 countries reviewed compared with 180th out of 182 in 2011. But then I read that Samantha Grant, TI Regional Coordinator for Asia Pacific, had acknowledged to Chiang Mai-based *The Irrawaddy* that Myanmar's reform process has not yet had any impact on its latest corruption ranking and that some of the information for the survey is two years out of date.

TI has so far given no explanation of why it decided not to seek out the latest information and provide an up-to-date assessment. I should have thought that Myanmar would merit special attention because of the unprecedented international interest in what is happening in the country. Myanmar is under intense scrutiny by governmental and non-governmental, legal, business, investment and sociological organisations who are working hard to provide their best analyses based on the latest information. We might well ask: Why did TI not do likewise? What is the point of including Myanmar in its rankings unless it is prepared to do the job properly? Indeed, when did

TI last visit Myanmar? What in-country inquiries has it made?

It is important to read TI's Frequently Asked Questions in order to understand exactly what its index represents. FAQ No 6 states that: "The CPI is an indicator of public sector corruption i.e. administrative and political sector corruption." The CPI is accordingly not an indicator of how corrupt a country is perceived to be as a whole, taking both the public and private sectors into account. This is however how the TI index for Myanmar is likely to be interpreted by many who do not read the explanatory notes.

The latest detailed study of Myanmar by TI which I can find is dated March 23, 2009: "Overview of Corruption in Myanmar". In this study, liberally sprinkled with US State Department references and which may still be the basis for its latest ranking, it says it has little information about the nature and levels of corruption in the country, but asserts on page two that "all sources and observers agree that rampant corruption pervades all levels of the

talking to the wrong people. I wrote to the authors of the report about a year ago, inviting them to study the reality on the ground in a rapidly developing situation. I received no response.

TI's FAQ No 8 states that: "The CPI is limited in scope, capturing perceptions of the extent of corruption in the public sector, from the perspective of business people and country experts." I very much doubt though that the majority of businesspeople and country experts actually involved with Myanmar share the perspective implicit in the TI ranking.

In explaining why the CPI is only based on perceptions, TI's FAQ No 2 states that: "Corruption generally comprises illegal activities which are deliberately hidden and which only comes to light through serious scandals, investigations or prosecutions." This issue of illegality hardly applies to Myanmar. There are rather concerns that, as *The Irrawaddy* put it, revenues from resources, notably from natural gas sales to Thailand (and soon to China) which already



industry. MOGE is a state-owned company formed in 1963 from the nationalised Burmah Oil Company. It is a major supplier of revenues to the state. Its contracts with Asian and Western companies on the Yadana and Yetagun gas fields are based on standard international models for exploration, production and operation.

There has never been any secret about how much

revenues earned by state oil and gas companies are seen as a milch-cow for official extravagance. The control of such revenues, which are not "siphoned" off because they belong legally to the state, lies in state hands. It is not MOGE which decides how profit allocated to its "shareholders" shall be spent: how much should be allocated to Myanmar's foreign exchange reserves, to defence purchases, to the construction of Nay Pyi Taw or indeed to any other undertaking by the state.

In this context, I would hope that TI has studied the details of the 2012-13 Union Budget. These details appeared only in the Burmese-language press and have not to my knowledge yet been translated into English. For the first time the budget forecasts the income of the Ministry of Energy, which is responsible for MOGE, at US\$3.299 billion, and expenditure at \$2.054 billion. The use of revenues reflects the co-investment needed with China on the oil and gas pipelines, to be completed in 2013, as well as investment earmarked for electricity generation and other purposes for the population at large. This means that a surplus of some \$1.245 billion has for the first time been openly declared in the budget for general use. At least a start

has been made in resolving the lack of transparency under the former regime.

I would then return to the main concerns that Myanmar experts are likely to have with the TI ranking of Myanmar. This ranking is based on TI perceptions which are not in my view shared by specialists who are at the forefront of political and economic analysis. Why can this be so? TI has traditionally, and not without justification, given considerable weight to the level of human rights violations in a country as a broad indicator of the level of corruption. As a result, in the virtual absence of reliable data, TI has been led to conclude that Myanmar must inevitably be close to the bottom of the list. The reality on the ground is rather different.

TI is of course perfectly entitled to say what it likes. But investors and businessmen looking afresh at the Myanmar market are very unlikely to attach all that much credence to the TI ranking when making their business or investment decisions when that ranking has been influenced by what seems to be a determination on ideological grounds to keep Myanmar in the doghouse just as long as TI possibly can. This contrasts with the pro-active policies towards Myanmar of almost all Western governments these days, including the US administration.

It might not have escaped TI's notice that the Siam Commercial Bank has recently established a representative office in Myanmar. ANZ Bank, Standard Chartered and HSBC are expected to follow soon. SCB chairman, Anand Panyarachun, is on TI's advisory council. TI would do well to seek his advice about the reality of Myanmar today.

As a member of the advisory board of Hong Kong-based Bagan Capital, my own advice will be that investors should not take the TI ranking seriously. It is at heart a political statement, not a reliable indicator of the current level of official corruption in Myanmar.

(Derek Tonkin is a former British ambassador to Vietnam, Thailand and Laos and chairman of non-profit Network Myanmar.)

'This ranking is based on Transparency International perceptions, which are not in my view shared by specialists who are at the forefront of political and economic analysis.'

political and administrative systems". This absolutism is hardly consistent with what other responsible observers have noted.

As chairman of the Beta Mekong Fund, which in the 1990s completed a number of pilot investments in Myanmar through Asian principals, on no occasion was corruption an issue in any context. Nor have signs of corruption arisen in any accounts of current negotiations on investment and business contracts, including those of Myanmar-dedicated investment and advisory company, Bagan Capital, of which I am an adviser. TI has clearly been

provide some 60 percent of all import revenues, have been "siphoned" off by the state and not used for the benefit of the population at large.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi complained in Geneva in June this year in a speech to the International Labour Organisation that: "The Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE), the state-owned company under the Ministry of Energy with which all foreign participation in the energy sector takes place through joint-venture arrangements, lacks both transparency and accountability at present." This has puzzled those in the

MOGE has earned from its operations. The figures have long been available in the publications from the Central Statistical Organisation. The issue, as Professor Joseph Stiglitz put it after his visit to Myanmar in December 2009, is rather: "You have money, then the question is: where does it go? One of the real lessons we did talk about is the importance of transparency so that people know where the money is going." In other words, it is not MOGE, the company, which has lacked transparency but rather MOGE's "shareholders": the state. Myanmar would not be the only country where

Thousands of monks protest, issue demands

Protesters seek apology from president over Nov 29 Letpadaung crackdown

By Soe Than Lynn

THOUSANDS of Buddhist monks in cities throughout the country held peaceful protests at noon on December 12 and issued six "requests" to the government. The protests were in connection with the violence surrounding the Letpadaung copper mine strike and the leaders' demands echoed those made at earlier demonstrations on November 30, December 6 and December 8.

Peaceful protests were held in Yangon, Mandalay, Pakokku, Chauk, Yenangaung and Monywa, and no arrests were made.

The six demands, which the protestors called "requests", are: immediately stop destroying religious heritage buildings; issue a prompt apology from President U Thein Sein to monks injured in the violence; stop attacking demonstrators' camps; resolve the Letpadaung dispute to the satisfaction of local residents; take swift legal action against ringleaders responsible for violent attacks on monks with fire bombs; and release immediately and unconditionally those arrested in connection with Letpadaung.

"An estimated 1000 monks and about 50 lay people demonstrated peacefully today in Pakokku. Some NLD members and young people from All Burma Federation of Student Unions were involved in the protest," said U Nandar Thara, a monk who participated in the demonstration.

"We paraded with vinyl posters stating our six requests. The event started at noon and ended



Monks protest in Mandalay on December 12. Pic: Si Thu Lwin

at 2:30pm. We saw no disturbances by the police," he said.

"We walked and demonstrated while holding our request posters, as well as photos of the injured monks, while we recited *Matta Sutta*."

U Nandar Thara criticised clergy leaders for not standing up for the injured monks and dismissed an apology offered earlier this month by the minister for religious affairs and the deputy minister for home affairs to the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee.

"This apology does not concern our monks and it does not represent an

apology to monks who were affected by the government's attack, because the [committee] was not involved in the Letpadaung issue. Nor was the Ministry of Religious Affairs involved in the Letpadaung attack," he said.

"The government should apologise to all Sangha, including the young novices who really were affected," said U Nandar Thara.

In Mandalay, at least 1000 monks protested at U Pwar Pagoda and about 400 monks at Eaintawyar Pagoda on December 12. More than 500 monks in Monywa also demonstrated

the same day.

However, in some townships administrators met political parties ahead of the planned demonstration to plead with them not to join the event. "We did not experience any disturbances from the Ministry of Home Affairs and there were no arrests on the street. We will continue to protest peacefully even if we face problems and arrests because this demonstration was a decision of the Sangha class and represents the opinion of most Sangha," said U Wi Thiddaa, one of the demonstrators in Monywa. - Translated by Zar Zar Soe

USDP has no plans to change voting system, says U Htay Oo

By Win Ko Ko Latt

A SENIOR Union Solidarity and Development Party official says the party has no immediate plan to put forward a proposal to the voting system from first-past-the-post to a form of proportional representation.

However, USDP vice chairman U Htay Oo did not rule out introducing the changes at some point, or supporting a motion from other parties to change the voting system.

"At present we are still studying [proportional representation]. It is not true that a proposal to change to it will be submitted to the huttaw and voting system will change," U Htay Oo told *The Myanmar Times* at the party's headquarters in Nay Pyi Taw on December 13.

Myanmar uses first-past-the-post, a winner takes all voting system whereby the candidate with the highest number of votes in a given constituency is the winner. However, minority parties, including an alliance of 10 ethnic and Myanmar parties, began pushing for change in the middle of this year after the National League for Democracy swept 43 of the 44 seats it contested in the April 1 by-elections.

Members of the party alliance met and discussed the issue with Union Election Commission chairman U Tin Aye in July. The former general agreed to look at the proposal and possibly submit it to the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw for a vote but the two major parties, the NLD and USDP, have refused to publicly support any change.

U Htay Oo said there were many different types of proportional representation and if parties wanted to change the voting system

then representative would discuss the issue in the huttaw, particularly whether the change would benefit the majority of people.

"Every system has its advantages but what is important is that it is fairly and transparently applied," he said.

However, he warned that voters may face difficulties if a switch is made to proportional representation, pointing out that many still struggled with the much simpler first-past-the-post system.

'Proportional representation will not be as simple as the present system.'

"If [proportional representation] is used, we will have to use different ballot papers and it will definitely not be as simple as the present system. Under the present system, voting just entails ticking the box [next to the party] you like," he said.

"I have no idea which system could be used in future but in some proportional representation systems you have to choose your favourite, second favourite, third favourite and so on."

In an interview in July, *The Wave* magazine editor Kyaw Win said that while proportional representation may be appropriate for Myanmar in the long term, it might make it hard to find common ground in the huttaw because there will be many parties. In particular, it will make it hard to gain the 75 percent support necessary to change the constitution.

- Translated by Thit Lwin

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UN, govt urge housing for nation's low-income earners

By Tim McLaughlin

UN representatives and over 60 senior government officials convened in Nay Pyi Taw last week to discuss housing sector policy geared towards Myanmar's low income population.

The Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on Options for Housing Sector was organised by The Urban Research and Development Institute (URDI). The URDI was created in September 2011 through a Memorandum of Understanding signed by The Department of Human Settlements and Housing Development (DHSHD) of the Ministry of Construction and UN-Habitat to address possible areas of cooperation.

"Today's Expert Group Meeting on Options for Housing Sector is the first step for achieving a basic framework for means of housing provision in Myanmar," said U Soe Tint, The Deputy Minister of Construction in his opening remarks to delegates on December 12.

Myanmar finds itself facing a host of housing sector and land rights issues in need of urgent action.

An October report published by Displacement Solutions entitled *Myanmar at the HLP Crossroads: Proposals for Building an Improved Housing, Land and Property Rights Framework that Protects the People and Supports Sustainable Economic Development*, found that the country had "grossly inadequate housing conditions facing significant sections of both the urban and rural population".

The Director of Department of Human Settlements and Housing Development, U Win Zaw urged that the commission



A woman carrying a child as they wait to fill plastic containers with water from a public tap in the impoverished area quarter of Aungmyingalar on the outskirts of Yangon. Pic: AFP

work towards a long term solution of self-sustainability for lower income families. This approach, he said, would help to abolish a cycle of dependency on government constructed housing.

"The intention of this EGM is to gain a broad understanding on low-income housing issues, and realise that low-income people spend almost all of their income on purchasing food and have no savings to buy a house. We need ideas on how to generate more income opportunities for them instead of building houses for them," he said.

"The national and regional governments, relevant departments, investors and developers need to coordinate towards a common goal and direction and apply it in resolving the issue."

Myanmar's new found position as a hot commodity amongst investors who have quickly moved to capitalise on its opening markets, including real estate, have made the situation worse by pushing real estate prices to historic highs, the Displacement Solutions report stated.

"Taking advantage of the transitional political

environment, HLP speculation of various sorts has taken root in urban areas where housing prices have risen dramatically since early 2011," stated the report. Property prices in some parts of Yangon are now on par with cities like Bangkok, Thailand and New York City, the report continued.

Yap Kioe-Sheng, UN-Habitat Advisor for Housing and Urban Development, used his keynote address to stress that Myanmar must use the experiences of other countries from both within the ASEAN region and outside to successfully navigate its current challenges.

From page 1

More arrests

about 99 monks, state media said.

About 100 police also apologised to a group of monks in Monywa soon after the crackdown.

Photographs of the protesters' injuries have stirred outcry across Myanmar, reminding the public of brutal junta-era security tactics, including the notorious crackdown on mass monk-led rallies in 2007.

The dispute at the Monywa mine centres on allegations of financial malpractice, mass evictions and environmental damage caused by the project, which is a joint venture between Chinese firm Wanbao Mining - a subsidiary of state arms manufacturer Norinco - and military-owned Union of Myanmar Economic Holdings Limited.

China insists that the contentious points have already been resolved.

Eight people arrested in connection with earlier protests against the mine in recent weeks were released on bail on December 11. - AFP

Migrant workers

leaves illegal migrants from not only Myanmar but also Laos and Cambodia with no legal means to register.

Many NGOs and aid networks familiar with the situation voiced concern that the passing of the deadline would make migrant communities even more vulnerable. "[It] could take a bad situation and make it worse," said U Ko Kyaw Zaw Lin, a Yangon-based advisor to the Migrant Worker Rights Network.

He said that many migrants had been desperate to get a passport before the deadline and brokers, recruitment agencies, and even Thai authorities had taken advantage of this by charging additional fees.

In an open letter to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi delivered to the National League for Democracy leader on December 10 in Yangon, the network wrote: "Even now ... the cost of applying for a temporary NV (National Verification) passport is already very expensive and extortionate in practice."

Mr Andy Hall, an expert at Mahidol University's Institute for Population and Social Research in Chiang Mai and adviser to the Department of Labour in Nay Pyi Taw, agreed the unofficial cost of acquiring documents had gone up as the deadline approached.

"What we've seen in the last week [on the border] is a clear trend towards brokers and recruitment agencies asking for more money to help the migrant workers receive their passports," he said on December 11.

He said recruitment agencies and even immigration authorities have started to demand as much as US\$700 or \$800 for one passport. To cover the cost, undocumented migrants are often forced to take out a loan from Thai organised crime syndicates, sending them into crippling debt and increasing the risk of them being a victim of human trafficking.

Until the program restarts, the many undocumented workers still in Thailand will find themselves with no recourse other than keeping

their heads down and avoiding immigration authorities. "Many immigrants we know are liable for deportation," said Ms Jackie Pollack, director of the MAP foundation, which advocates for migrants rights along the Thai-Myanmar border. "They're lying low, and they're living with that fear and uncertainty ... the threat hangs over their heads. It makes them insecure and it makes them not want to demand their rights."

In Thailand and across the globe, undocumented migrant workers often find themselves the victims of inhumane treatment. According to an October 2011 report by the International Organisation for Migration, "Irregular migrants are one of the groups most vulnerable to rights violations in a host state since their invisibility in society often means that they are unable to report abuse."

The report estimated that there were about 1.4 million undocumented migrant workers in Thailand, with the majority coming from Myanmar.

More than 1000 detained in Rakhine, says minister

By Ei Ei Toe Lwin

MORE than 1000 people suspected of taking part in the intercommunal violence in Rakhine State have been detained, and nearly 5000 weapons have been seized by the government.

The figures were released by Union Minister of Border Affairs Lieutenant General Thein Htay at a press conference at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Yangon on December 8.

Hundreds of people were killed and more than 100,000 displaced in outbreaks of violence between Buddhist and Muslim communities in Rakhine State in June and October.

Lt Gen Thein Htay said a total of 1121 people in 12 townships had been detained, comprising 233 Rakhines, 849 Bengalis, 27 Hindus, four Maramagyi, and eight Myanmar.

"The people were detained in custody and the weapons seized in order to maintain the rule of law," he said.

A total of 4802 weapons, including guns, knives, javelins, crossbows, arrows, slingshots and harpoons were seized in 11 townships in the state. However, Lt Gen Thein Htay said local residents used these for traditional hunting. "It is not strange that some people have guns. But guns were used in the conflict. We have to maintain the rule of law, even if it means banning all kinds of weapons," he said.

According to the most recent government data, 200 people were killed, while 10,689 houses, 45 mosques, 14 monasteries and three primary schools were damaged.

In October, the government warned of a crackdown against unnamed people and organisations it accused of manipulating the violent incidents in Rakhine State "behind the scenes".

"Investigations are continuing. We will announce if we get concrete evidence of who is to blame for the violence," said Police Major General Kyaw Kyaw Tun, the deputy minister for home affairs.



Residents of Rakhine State trawl through rubble after an outbreak of violence in October. Pic: Kaung Htet

Lack of development sparked riots: govt

By Ei Ei Toe Lwin

FOR the second time, the government has hit out at foreign media depictions of "genocide" in Rakhine State, urging foreign diplomats and reporters to "think for themselves".

The government also urged the international community to provide more relief funding.

Union Minister for Border Affairs Lieutenant General Thein Htay described the violence in Rakhine State as an intercommunal conflict between Buddhist Rakhines and Muslim Rohingyas, or Bengalis, that had arisen because of underdevelopment in the region and lack of international assistance.

The minister was speaking at a December 8 press conference called at the conclusion of a visit to Rakhine State by high-ranking representatives of the international community.

The visit was led by Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Khan, who was accompanied by UN under-secretary general for humanitarian affairs Valerie

Amos and a number of foreign diplomats.

The border minister's criticism echoed a statement issued last week by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which accused the Qatar-based Al Jazeera news network of "exaggerating and fabricating the incidents in Rakhine State" in a documentary about the "so-called Rohingya". The government said it had handled violence "between Bengalis and the ethnic Rakhine people ... with full transparency".

The minister went on to criticise the international community, saying: "Even UNDP (United Nations Development Program) has not provided us with a normal country program for more than 20 years. We need such a program to help develop the state."

The United Nations last month launched an urgent appeal for more than US\$115 million to provide humanitarian assistance to up to 115,000 people displaced by violence in Rakhine State. At the press conference Lt Gen Thein Htay urged diplomats to heed the appeal.

Al Jazeera aired the

documentary, called "The Hidden Genocide", from December 9 to 12 in English and Arabic.

Lt Gen Thein Htay said: "In Rakhine, there were only 250,000 Rohingyas in 1980 and now there are one million. Think for yourselves. Is this genocide?"

He said government teams had visited Rakhine State several times and assisted both communities without discrimination since violence first broke out in June. The purpose of the December 7 visit was to allow high-ranking international representatives to see the real situation there.

"We have nothing to hide, and we are asking for your help in resolving this issue," Lt Gen Thein Htay said.

Concerning the question of citizenship of the Rohingyas, Union Minister for Immigration U Khin Yi responded by saying anyone could apply for citizenship and all applications would be considered under the 1982 Citizenship Law. Anyone who meets the criteria, which including showing their family has lived in Myanmar for three generations, qualifies for citizenship, he said.

Justice is needed at Letpadaung: Daw Suu

By Win Ko Ko Latt

DAW Aung San Suu Kyi says an investigation into the Letpadaung mine expansion project near Monywa will reach a "just and right solution" after a fair investigation.

She made the comments on December 8 at Saptwar village in Magwe Region's Taungdwingyi township in response to a question from a monk, who said he was worried that protests would escalate if the government did not offer a more substantial apology for a raid on protest camps on November 29 that left scores of people, mostly monks, injured.

The National League for Democracy leader stopped in the village, where about 1000 people had gathered to see her, as her entourage made its way to Natmauk, the hometown of her father, General Aung San.

"We will find out [what happened] with justice. We will recommend the correct solution based on what we really found in our examination," said Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, who was on December 1 tasked with heading the Letpadaung Investigation Commission, which has 16 members.

The monks asked Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to solve the issue swiftly as the Letpadaung project was a source of hardship and unhappiness for monks and laypeople in the area.

But she cautioned that the commission's recommendations are unlikely to satisfy everyone.

"It might not agree with all the various opinions. We will unveil a solution based on the true situation and what we see," she said.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said the commission is examining whether the injuries to monks were deliberate but added that everyone was innocent until proven guilty under the law.

"I hope all of you [monks] will deal with the issue calmly and accept the apology that has been offered. We will try to find a solution as quickly as possible that will satisfy not only the Sangha but all citizens."

- Translated by Zar Zar Soe

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Myanmar media industry still sceptical

By Tony Yoo

FOR the first time since 1996, Myanmar is not on the list of countries jailing journalists. But globally the number has hit an all-time high, according to an annual census conducted by a non-profit organisation.

“As part of the [Myanmar’s] historic transition to civilian rule, the authorities released at least 12 imprisoned journalists in a series of pardons over the past year”, said the statement from the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) of the situation in Myanmar.

However, the Myanmar media industry is still wary.

“I think media reform is just reflecting the country’s overall reform process – [it] is just the beginning”, said Kyaw Zwa Moe, editor of newsmagazine *The Irrawaddy*. “So, we can’t

expect a lot. But I think it is gradually moving forward.”

The annual census, undertaken since 1990, found 232 individuals imprisoned around the world as of December 1. The number increased by 53 since last and smashed the previous record of 185 in 1996.

The CPJ report named Turkey, Iran and China the worst offenders in putting journalists behind bars, stating: “Each made extensive use of vague anti-state laws to silence dissenting political views, including those expressed by ethnic minorities.”

Eritrea and Syria were also named in the top five countries – the CPJ cited that those regimes jailed journalists “without charge or due process and [held] them in secret prisons without access to lawyers or family members”.

Iran, China, Eritrea, and Syria also rank in the bottom

six of the Press Freedom Index 2011/12, compiled by France-based Reporters Without Borders.

Pre-publication government censorship was scrapped in Myanmar in August and the move has led to a boom for the local media industry. Previously exiled publications such as *The Irrawaddy* and *Mizzima* have set up official operations in the country – an unimaginable prospect just two years ago.

This week, *The Irrawaddy* will be distributed legally for the first time within Myanmar.

“Not many people received [it] in the past due to the ex-regime’s ban on us”, said Kyaw Zwa Moe. “But before we [distributed], our Yangon office received several phone calls inquiring how to subscribe... I think our readership will diverge in the country [away] from our traditional audience”.



Myanmar has taken significant strides towards greater press freedom, although concerns remain. Pic: AFP

Program aims to upgrade worker skills

By Yhoon Hnin

TRAINING Myanmar workers to reach Japanese-style levels of quality assurance is the goal of a program being conducted by the Department of Labour.

Officials held the seminar on “Managing Vocational Training Institutions for Achieving Quality Assurance” on December 11. It was conducted by two personnel experts who had received training in Japan as part of a long-term effort to raise skills standards as Myanmar moves towards closer integration with its ASEAN partners.

The program is also a step towards carrying out an agreement related to the Initiative for ASEAN Integration arising from the ASEAN-Japan summit.

In accordance with the initiative, two experts, from UMFCCI and the labour department, are sent to Japan to undergo human resources development training before returning to share their experience.

This is in preparation for the emergence of an ASEAN Common Labour Market in 2015, said labour

department director general U Myo Aung.

U Myo Aung said: “With the support of JAVADA (Japan Vocational Ability Development Association) and the Japanese government, staff from the Labour Department and UMFCCI (Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry) are sent to Japan for human resources development training every year. This year the subject of the training was quality assurance: improving the quality of staff in order to make better-quality products.”

The UMFCCI expert, Daw Cho Thiri Maung, said: “Myanmar needs collaboration between the government and private sector. In Japan, there is high collaboration between the government and the private sector. But here, the public sector and private sector work separately without much collaboration.”

“Vocational training is less frequent than training for supervisors and managers, so we need to emphasise vocational training,” she added.

Commission will report over 300 land grabs to hluttaw

By Noe Noe Aung

A government commission formed to identify farmland ownership disputes will bring over 300 cases of land grabs to the attention of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw before the next session begins, members said last week.

On December 13, U Aung Zin, a hluttaw representative for the National Democratic Force (NDF) announced that 323 cases of land grabbing throughout 13 regions and states will be brought to the hluttaw for investigation by the commission.

The NDF established the commission as part of its Farmers’ Affairs Committee in August.

There have been about 4,000 reports of land grabs from farmers to the commission since its formation, U Aung Zin said.

“In Yangon alone, there are hundreds of reports of land grab problems. But at the moment, we could only select 66 in Yangon to investigate. We’ve already investigated six cases in Yangon since we formed. The hluttaw will resume in January, so I can’t say for certain how many cases we will investigate until then,” U Aung Zin said.

U Aung Zin said that the commission is stalled by both the poor education of farmers and an unwillingness of local authorities to cooperate.

“A quarter of the reports from

farmers we receive are unreasonable. It can be because that farmer is either poorly educated or because he or she is looking to take advantage of an opportunity, such as when a farmer claims he or she never received compensation but already has. These types of investigations take us a long time,” said U Aung Zin.

“Per our cooperation agreement, local authorities are meant to give us all of the documentation we need. However, when companies hear that the commission is going to investigate, they fence off their land before we get there or they cancel the farming contract with their farmers. This causes many complications, and we’ve asked local authorities to help us with this matter but they often deny us.”

“The local authorities claim they have no right to stop companies from fencing off their land because the companies have permission under the law La/Na 39. They say companies can do what they want to do. But according to the law, if a company cannot implement the project within three years, they must return the land to the farmers. Most land grab problems today come from the fact that companies didn’t obey that law,” U Aung Zin added.

U Aung Thein, a hluttaw representative from the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) and member of the commission, said that the commission will report all

of the cases they have investigated to the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw.

“There are so many land grab problems all over the country. We are investigating some of them. When the next hluttaw session starts, we will report the ones we are investigating. The Pyidaungsu Hluttaw will then report the cases to President U Thein Sein. Even if the farmers cannot get their land back, we will try to reduce their losses,” said U Aung Thein.

U Hla Myint, a farmer from Alwan Sut village, Thanlyin township, who lost 13 acres of his land, said that he hopes to be compensated through the Farmland Nationalisation Act of 1953.

“Our farmland was taken illegally. We reported the truth. I hope the problem can be solved by the law. By law, if a government project is cancelled, farmers can get their farmland back. Farmers can also get compensation for what they lost in cultivation,” said U Hla Myint.

“Commission members came to the village on December 8. They asked questions and took documentation from the villagers. I don’t know what the outcome of the visit will be. For now, I am very pleased that the commission is investigating,” he added.

Farmers in Alwan Sut village have been embroiled in a dispute with No 1 War Vessel Group since May 2012, after the Navy unit bulldozed their freshly sown farmland. The farmers have since been unemployed.

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Rights commission submits draft law to president's office

Law would formalise establishment of Myanmar National Human Rights Commission

By Nan Tin Htwe

A DRAFT Myanmar National Human Rights law aimed at broadening the work of the human right commission and ensuring its independence has been sent to President U Thein Sein, the commission's chairman said last week.

U Win Mra, chairman of Myanmar National Human Rights Commission, said he hoped the president would approve the draft "very soon".

"In order to protect human rights and to enhance our work, we need more authority to act and work independently," he told *The Myanmar Times* on December 10 after a Human Rights Day ceremony at Inya Lake Hotel in Yangon.

The law will also resolve a dispute between the government and legislators over the formation of the commission, as it will have to be submitted to the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw for approval. In April, the parliament refused to approve the government's funding request for the commission because legislators argued that its formation by presidential decree did not conform to the constitution.

"After the president has approved [the draft], we will send it to the hluttaw. Then they will debate, consider and enact it as a law," U Win Mra said.

While he declined to give details about the draft's contents, U Win Mra hinted that it would increase or formalise civil society involvement in the right commission.

"If we want to work independently, we cannot forget the important role of civil society," he said.

He said that a team would be

established to decide on a new structure and members for the commission, which was formed in September 2011.

"Old members can be reselected as they already know the tasks and procedures and new members [can be added]. There is chance that [the commission's makeup] will change."

The commission released a statement to mark Human Rights Day in which it outlined some of its activities since its formation, including the examination of most of the more than 3000 complaint letters the commission had received to the end of November.

"Since it is the first time that a human rights complaint procedure has been established in the country, many people immediately started to send in their complaints soon after the establishment of the commission," U Win Mra said at the December 10 ceremony. "Through this mechanism, a culture that human rights violations must be protected has been established."

The statement said the commission's letters of appeal to the president and statements on the need to grant amnesties to prisoners had also led to the release of "thousands of prisoners and finally in a plan for transparent process to examine the cases of remaining prisoners, as announced by the Information Team of the President's Office".

"The commission is gratified that some of those released are currently playing an important role in the country's democratisation process. The experience of the commission in protection work has vividly underscored the importance of the government's cooperation and that of other stakeholders," the statement said.

Noting that Myanmar was



Myanmar National Human Rights Commission chairman U Win Mra speaks at the Human Rights Day ceremony at Inya Lake Hotel in Yangon on December 10. Pic: Thiri

the first country to vote for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, U Win Mra also used his address to call on the government to sign up to two subsequent human rights covenants, which came into force in 1976.

"It is high time for the Myanmar government to give careful consideration to accede to the two covenants to demonstrate its deeper commitment to human right," he said.

The event was the first official Human Rights Day celebration in Myanmar since 1988, and was also attended by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, UN resident and humanitarian coordinator Mr Ashok Nigam and Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights regional representative

Ms Matilda Bogner, as well as journalists, diplomats and civil society leaders.

At the ceremony Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said education is the key to building a strong foundation for respect of human rights. "Unless people can make their expressions not only known, but respected, their aspirations will be ignored," she said.

She added that Myanmar people need to learn how to reach decisions through consensus. "I've always said that Burmese people, the people of this country, not just the Burmese, all the different ethnic nationalities, are weak in achieving compromise through negotiation. This is something we have to learn through practice and through listening."

Vipassana proponent SN Goenka to give lectures this month

By Cherry Thein

A LEADING proponent of Vipassana meditation, SN Goenka, will give a public talk over two days at the National Theatre in Yangon later this month.

SN Goenka will give the lecture to mark the 135th year of his family's arrival in Myanmar and show his gratitude to the "Dhamma land", said U Thant Zin, a member of a committee arranging the talk.

"Sayagyi Goenka's family reached Myanmar 135 years ago. When he sought refuge in the Dhamma (the teachings of the Buddha), his life changed and he helped people to embrace the Dhamma [through meditation] and enjoy the benefits," he said. "India owes Myanmar for its pure Dhamma. He always shows his gratitude to Myanmar."

SN Goenka will give a lecture in English with a Myanmar translation at 5pm on December 22 at the theatre. The next day he will give a speech in Hindi with an English translation.

On the December 22 and 23, SN Goenka will hold alms-offering ceremonies at his Yangon residence - No 37 Tharyarwady Road, Bahan township - and offer gifts and robes to monks at Dhamma Joti International Vipassana Meditation Centre in Bahan township. Dhamma students from all over the world are expected to join SN Goenka on his visit to Myanmar, which includes a tour of religious sites at Kyaikhtiyo, Mandalay and Monywa.

U Thant Zin said SN Goenka hopes to be able to open many more branch meditation centres throughout Myanmar to allow more people to learn Vipassana meditation. There are 17 Goenka centres in Myanmar and more than 180 around the world, with courses offered in 58 languages.

Sweden asks India to clarify arms presence in Myanmar

STOCKHOLM - Sweden asked India last week to clarify how Swedish-made weapons wound up in Myanmar in breach of EU sanctions, after it was revealed the Indian army had purchased the arms, Trade Minister Ewa Bjorling said.

The December 13 announcement came a day after Sweden's export control agency said it was investigating the arms presence, a probe Ms

Bjorling said had already borne fruit.

She told parliament that the Swedish Agency for Non-Proliferation and Export Controls (ISP) had informed her that the arms came from India.

"And as a result I asked ISP to request clarification from the Indian authorities," Ms Bjorling said.

Pictures taken by a freelance photographer and published in the Swedish media this week show a Carl

Gustaf M3 anti-tank rifle and ammunition left behind by government soldiers.

The weapon's serial number is clearly visible in one of the photographs.

The European Union has had a weapons embargo against Myanmar since 1996.

On December 12, an ISP spokeswoman said it was "relatively unusual" for Swedish weapons to end up in the hands of third parties. - AFP

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Ward, village administrator selection to finish Dec 30 in Mandalay

By Si Thu Lwin

ALMOST 1700 ward and village-tract administrators will be selected in Mandalay Region by December 30, the regional government said last week.

Selection will take place according to the criteria prescribed in the Ward and Village-Tract Administration Law, the government said in the state-run daily Yadanarpon on December 7.

Mandalay Region Chief Minister U Ye Myint was quoted as saying that those selected people should have "enthusiasm to generously serve the interests of the state and the region".

"There are 97 wards and 100 village [tracts] in the district. Selection is set to finish by December 30. On December 7, a five-member supervisory committee was formed in each township by the township-level administrative department authorities. The committee will scrutinise and appoint the administrators [selected by the people]," a district-level official from the General Administration Department told *The Myanmar Times* on December 11.

"It is best to select those who can really work for the good of the ward, regardless of whether he or she is old or young. Previously, because we didn't want to make annoyed, we selected the same old guys. Voters need not have that attitude anymore," said U Tin Htun, a 50-year-old car trader from Aungmyaythazan township.

State media announced on December 13 that 1685 ward and village-tract administrators would be selected across Mandalay Region. - *Translated by Thit Lwin*

MCDC facing action over evictions

By Si Thu Lwin

RESIDENTS of Kangyikone and Zeekone villages in Mandalay's Patheingyi township have filed a suit against Mandalay City Development Committee for demolishing their homes.

Thirteen people who lost their homes applied to file the charges at Aung Pinlae police station on December 4, they said last week.

"We have filed charges against MCDC for destroying our houses and in particular taking the materials used to build the houses. More than 200 staff from the committee, including the head of the land department and up to 100 security personnel, demolished our houses and took pieces of debris with about 20 trucks and one police van," said U Win Aung, a 45-year-old labourer from Zeekone village.

MCDC said it demolished the homes because they were built illegally on municipal land. The demolition took place after residents in Zeekone and Kangyikone refused to leave by a deadline set by the committee.

But the residents argue they should be allowed to continue living there because they bought the properties with legal documents and the committee was aware of the transactions and took no action to stop them.

"The city development council knew that the transactions took place in the two villages. Some of the buyers were even MCDC staff and police officers. But the committee did not prohibit the transactions at that time," said a woman from Kangyikone village.

"The committee then ordered us to leave and called us squatters," she said.

The complainants are yet to receive a response and the police officer who dealt with their case said the relevant township officials would decide how to proceed.

"The two villages, Kangyikone and Zeekone, are not included in our jurisdiction. We forwarded the complaint from the group of villagers to the respective township office. We have to wait for their reply," Police Lieutenant Kan Po, the officer-in-charge at Aung Pinlae police station, said last week.

Officials from the city development committee have urged Kangyikone and Zeekone residents to file charges against those who sold them the land but the residents say they just want to get back the land they bought.

"The plots were quite cheap when we bought them and I think we can't get back our land

even if we prosecute the estate agents who sold them to us. We just want to have somewhere to live, that's all," said a resident of Kangyikone.

"This tragedy would not have happened if the development committee prohibited the transactions from the start - they knew about them all along," he said.

Officials from the area investigated real estate agents who were selling plots of land but never took formal action to stop the sales, one agent said.

"I have made hundreds of transactions like this since 2004. I have been called in to the BSI (Bureau of Special Investigations) and Patheingyi's General Administration Department to answer questions about these land sales," said agent Ko Min San Oo. - *Translated by Zar Zar Soe*

Heads of three Buddha images stolen in Inwa

By Phyo Wai Kyaw and Than Naing Soe

A SENIOR monk has been accused of desecrating and stealing the heads of three Buddha images near the ancient city of Inwa in Mandalay Region.

The heads of the three images, each about 1.5 metres high, were stolen from the compound of Mahamuni Pagoda compound in Hanthawati village at about 8:30pm on December 11, said U Nay Chi from Inwa's Yon Tan village said the following day.

Villagers in the area have accused the head of a nearby monastery of the act, alleging that a severed head from one of the images was found in the monastery compound, and have called on the police to investigate.

"Villagers tried to enter the monastery on that night

to find the monk ... as soon as the case occurred and they found the head of an image in the compound. However, the villagers left when police officers from Tada Oo township arrived and promised to solve the problem," U Nay Chi said.

On December 12, hundreds of villagers again congregated before the monastery and urged the police to take action.

"Villagers did this because they feel anger towards that monk but we are still trying to catch the culprit. We think the culprit passed through the monastery compound. We found the head of an image and some other objects in the compound," Police Officer Than Lwin from Tada Oo Township said on December 12.

The case has brought to light numerous accusations of impropriety against the monk, who *The Myanmar Times* has decided not to



Villagers examine stolen Buddha statues on December 12. Pic: Phyo Wai Kyaw

name. "The villagers ignored that monk for a long time on social occasions because of his bad past and his hatred for the people in the area. He won't even let a dog enter his compound. He can't offer food in villages in Inwa and needs to go to Tada Oo to do that," U Nay Chi said.

He said the desecration and theft of Buddha images was not unusual in the Inwa area, which was once home to the royal capital.

U Ba Thein from Yon Tan village alleged that the same monk took a wooden statue carved from a precious wood named *thitkanat* to his monastery from Mingalar

Pagoda about six years ago.

"He [the monk] also used to treat his young novices cruelly. He also runs a monastic post-primary school for ethnic youths and would extort money from parents who wanted their young monks to return home," U Ba Thein said.

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SNDP prepares for national assembly

By Naw Say Phaw Waa

THE Shan Nationalities Democratic Party is to hold its second national assembly next month.

The assembly will take place on January 2 and 3 at Tachileik, said spokesperson U Sai Hla Kyaw.

"An estimated 600 representatives from 56 townships will attend. We will confirm the agenda after the central committee meeting on January 1," he said. About 300 representatives attended the first assembly, in Taunggyi in 2010. Also known as the White

Tiger party, the SNDP was founded in 2010, with U Sai Aik Paung as its chairman. In the 2010 election, 57 of its 157 candidates were elected, including 18 to the Pyithu Hluttaw, three to the Amyotha Hluttaw and 36 to region and state hluttaws.

The party is the third-largest in terms of number of representatives in the hluttaws, after the Union Solidarity and Development Party and the National Unity Party. However, in the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, the National League for Democracy has more representatives, with the SNDP the third-largest party.

Members should work for party: Daw Suu

By Win Ko Ko Latt

MEMBERS of the National League for Democracy should work for the party and not themselves, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said last week on a tour of her father's hometown in Magwe Region.

"Those who are scrambling for [power] that does not exist will get into trouble," Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said in a speech to thousands of people in Natmauk on December 8, the first day of a two-day visit.

She warned that the people should learn to control political parties and not believe whatever politicians say, adding that they are "ordinary human beings".

"Our party members are not totally impeccable," she added.

If NLD members do something wrong, the people have the right to criticise but should do so "with goodwill and sympathy", she said.

Her comments come amid complaints from the party's lower ranks over arrangements for a national party assembly, with some accusing other members of using "undemocratic" methods to secure positions of authority.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi vowed that problems and weaknesses in the party would be repaired with the support and encouragement of the people.

"We will advance if people constructively criticise and help us to improve things."

The party's Pyithu Hluttaw representative for Ottarathiri, U Min Thu, said some problems had appeared because the party had been seeking new members since November 2011, when it decided to contest the by-elections held in April.

"Opening the door allows fresh air to come in. If we close the door because a little rubbish comes in at the same time we won't get any more fresh air," he said.

He said that the disputes over the convening of the assembly were as much an opportunity as a challenge for the party.

"Internal problems will arise because the party assembly is being convened in a democratic way in a country that has been without democracy for about 60 years. But we see that we have a chance to train people in democratic practices," he said.

Doubts and disagreements should be solved through negotiation and dialogue, he said. — Translated by *Thit Lwin*

NLD warns over ward complaints

Headquarters will not recognise results of ward assemblies where rules have been violated

By Phyo Wai Kyaw

SENIOR officials from the National League for Democracy have vowed not to recognise the results of ward assemblies where members are found to have violated party regulations.

The party's headquarters issued a statement saying senior officials would investigate allegations of impropriety in the ward assemblies, which are used to select delegates for township assemblies. The township assemblies then selected delegates for the national assembly, which will be the first in the party's 24-year history.

The convening of ward assemblies has prompted a spate of complaints alleging that some members were using "undemocratic" means to secure positions. The party's leaders initially responded to the issue by stating that the delegate positions were not permanent positions of responsibility. But Dr Win Thu, a member from Myingyan who travelled to Yangon earlier this month to

discuss the complaints with the NLD leadership, said it had promised to take a stronger stance on the issue.

"I came to NLD headquarters in Yangon to inform them of unfair and undemocratic means used in ward assemblies in our township. I met U Nyan Win, secretary of the national assembly commission, and he released a letter for the issue dated December 7. The letter said the headquarters could not recognise ward assemblies that employ undemocratic means and procedures," Dr Win Thu told *The Myanmar Times* by phone on December 10.

The letter says regional assembly commissions will investigate the complaints and send a report to the head office.

"There are about 7000 members in our township. However, most of them were not invited to participate in the ward assembly process," Dr Win Thu said.

U Lu Ni, a member of the assembly commission for Myingyan township, said that he could not accept the ward assembly process.



NLD supporters at a campaign rally in Sagaing earlier this year. Pic: Phyo Wai Kyaw

"The process did not follow the official procedures ... [ward leaders] did as they liked and I can't accept that. Although there are hundreds of members, some wards held their assemblies with just 20 members," he said by phone on December 10.

Members from Mandalay's Pyigyitagun township, from which many complaints have

emanated over the assembly process, said they are collating a list of complaints to submit to the party's headquarters.

"If the names of selected [ward] delegates are not included in the list [for the township assembly], we will inform the headquarters. And we will inform them of any other undemocratic issues that we uncover,"

said U Ko Ko Aung.

"We want our party and country to follow democratic practices. If we can't turn away from our mistakes now, it will be more difficult to repair them in the future. We want everyone to know that there are members who are using undemocratic means for their advantage in our party."

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Lack of jobs for disabled costing \$1.2b, say NGOs

By Shwe Yee Saw Myint

TREATING people with disabilities as "second-class citizens" and excluding them from the workforce may have cost Myanmar more than US\$1 billion, say non-governmental organisations.

Dr Mike Griffiths from the Social Policy and Poverty Research Group (SPPRG) said the country's gross domestic product (GDP) could be as much as US\$1.2 billion higher if people with disabilities had been properly included in the workforce.

Dr Griffiths was speaking at a ceremony to mark the first anniversary of Myanmar's ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities at the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry on December 7.

"We calculated this figure working from ILO (International Labour Organisation) standards," he said.

Dr Griffiths is director of research at SPPRG, a joint initiative of ActionAid Myanmar, HelpAge International (Myanmar), the Leprosy Mission Myanmar and the Department of Social Welfare.

A recent national disability survey found that 85 percent of people with disabilities had no jobs or livelihood. About 1.3 million people, or 2.32pc of the population, have a disability, and one in 10 households and more than 16pc of all poor people are associated with disability.

"Most of them rely on casual labour as their primary source of income. Persons with disabilities are more likely than non-disabled persons to be poor, uneducated, unemployed, living in poor housing, landless, to die prematurely, to have food insecurity, to be unable to access public information, to be excluded from public places, and to be ignorant of their rights," he said.

"These factors combine to demonstrate the unacceptable truth that the majority of persons with disabilities are second-class citizens. This requires systematic addressing through enactment of the UN convention, a national disability law and comprehensive national social protection and disability promotion policy," he said, adding: "Employment is better than charity."

U Nay Lin Soe founder and program director of Myanmar Independent Living Initiative, said: "Daily income from work is the main

engine for improvement [of living standards] because people with disabilities are twice as poor as others. We provide funds to help some of them work. Some open shops and some drive trishaws in Ayeyarwady and Bago regions."

The Ministry of Social Welfare cannot provide enough assistance for disabled persons, who must rely on local and foreign NGOs, said Dr Griffiths, adding that a 1956 law on disabilities was ineffective.

A new law should be adopted to meet their needs, including the provision of loans for cottage industries and easy-drive cars, he added.

Ko Ko Naung, who has been blind in one eye since birth, told *The Myanmar Times* it had been hard

to find a job after moving from the Ayeyarwady delta to Yangon because of discrimination from prospective employers.

"I tried to apply to many companies but when they saw me, they refused to give me a job because of my disability. When I worked in marketing some customers understood and treated me well but some were not acceptable," said Ko Ko Naung, who now works Myanmar Independent Living Initiative.

"I faced much discrimination in my workplace before. Bosses didn't like customers to see me and they would put me at the back of the office. I think most disabled people need to be very determined and confident otherwise they won't be able to find a job."



A man with deformities related to leprosy at the Mayankaung Welfare Centre in Hlegu township, Yangon Region. Pic: Kaung Htet

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Association, Dutch firm team up on milk project

By Yamon Phu Thit

HUNDREDS of young children in Yangon will receive free milk over the next three months to boost their health.

Under a program operated jointly by Myanmar Dairy Association and Netherlands-based Friesland Campina milk and dairy products company, milk will be provided to children aged six to nine at three schools in Mingalardon township from December to March, when term ends, association secretary Dr Khin Hlaing told a press conference in Yangon on December 11.

The program aims to promote physical and mental growth, development and protection for school children, Dr Khin Hlaing said.

"Milk contains many nutrients essential for growth. Children are the future of our country."

"We focus mainly on

primary students because milk is the most suitable drink for their age while they are still growing. Milk contains many of the building blocks and energy to stimulate their growth."

Starting this month, the children will be provided with 200cc of steamed milk once a week until the end of March under the K3 million, four-year program.

"This is a pilot program that we want to expand in the next school term," Ms Sarinthip Pimpaeng, marketing manager of Friesland Campina told the press conference.

Similar programs benefitted more than 1800 primary students from eight schools in Mandalay region in July and more than 2200 from eight Yangon schools in August.

"What we are doing are pilot programs. We are planning to form a foundation to expand our program nationwide," Dr Khin Hlaing said.

Myanmar centre of fight against drugs, says UN

BANGKOK – Myanmar is at the heart of a growing narcotics crisis in Asia that threatens public security, the United Nations said last week, urging regional help for the impoverished nation in stemming drug production.

Myanmar, the world's second-largest opium producer, also remains a "top source" of methamphetamine pills in the region, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime said in a report on December 12.

"During the past five years, the availability and use of methamphetamine has increased significantly," said Gary Lewis, UNODC regional representative.

Nearly 123 million methamphetamine pills were seized in the region last year – a nine percent decrease on 2010, but a more than 500pc jump from 2007.

"This and the increasing involvement of transnational organized criminal groups in the illicit trade of amphetamine-type

stimulants (ATS) pose a growing threat to both security and public health in the region," Mr Lewis said.

About 5.9 million methamphetamine pills were seized in Myanmar in 2011, almost double the figure for the previous year, the report said, adding that the numbers "do not reflect the full extent of manufacture" because the drug is quickly trafficked from border regions into neighbouring countries.

Mr Lewis told a press conference in Bangkok that "all countries in the region need to work together", because many of the chemicals needed to produce the drug are thought to be smuggled into Myanmar.

"Both on methamphetamines and poppy cultivation we need to focus our attention on Myanmar," he said, urging the region to focus on alternative development and law enforcement.

Myanmar, once the world's largest

producer of illicit opium until it was replaced by Afghanistan in 1991, has seen an increase in poppy cultivation over the past six consecutive years. An estimated 17pc more land was used for growing the drug in 2012 than in 2011.

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

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

Mr Lewis said production of methamphetamine in small, difficult to detect laboratories, along with distrust between the rebels and authorities means "there is a risk of continued production by groups who see that it is in their interest to hedge their bets". – AFP

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Paleoclimatic study begins in Mon, Kayin

SCIENTISTS have dug deep into the past to try to predict Myanmar's climate future. A five-person team has sent samples from limestone caves of Mon and Kayin states for carbon dating to learn more about change in the remote past.

The paleoclimatic study, the first of its kind, was carried out by scientists from Singapore's Earth Observatory, Myanmar Earthquake Committee and the Department of Meteorology and Hydrology from November 21-26.

A DMH official told *The Myanmar Times*: "We

collected samples from stalactites and stalagmites for carbon dating. The results will reveal temperature and climate data for past centuries that will be useful for climate change studies and help predict future climate variation."

The official said 13 samples would be sent to Taiwan for analysis. He said the study could be more revealing of long-term climate change than research based on rainfall or temperature records. The study will take three years and will include other parts of the country.

– Aye Sapay Phyu

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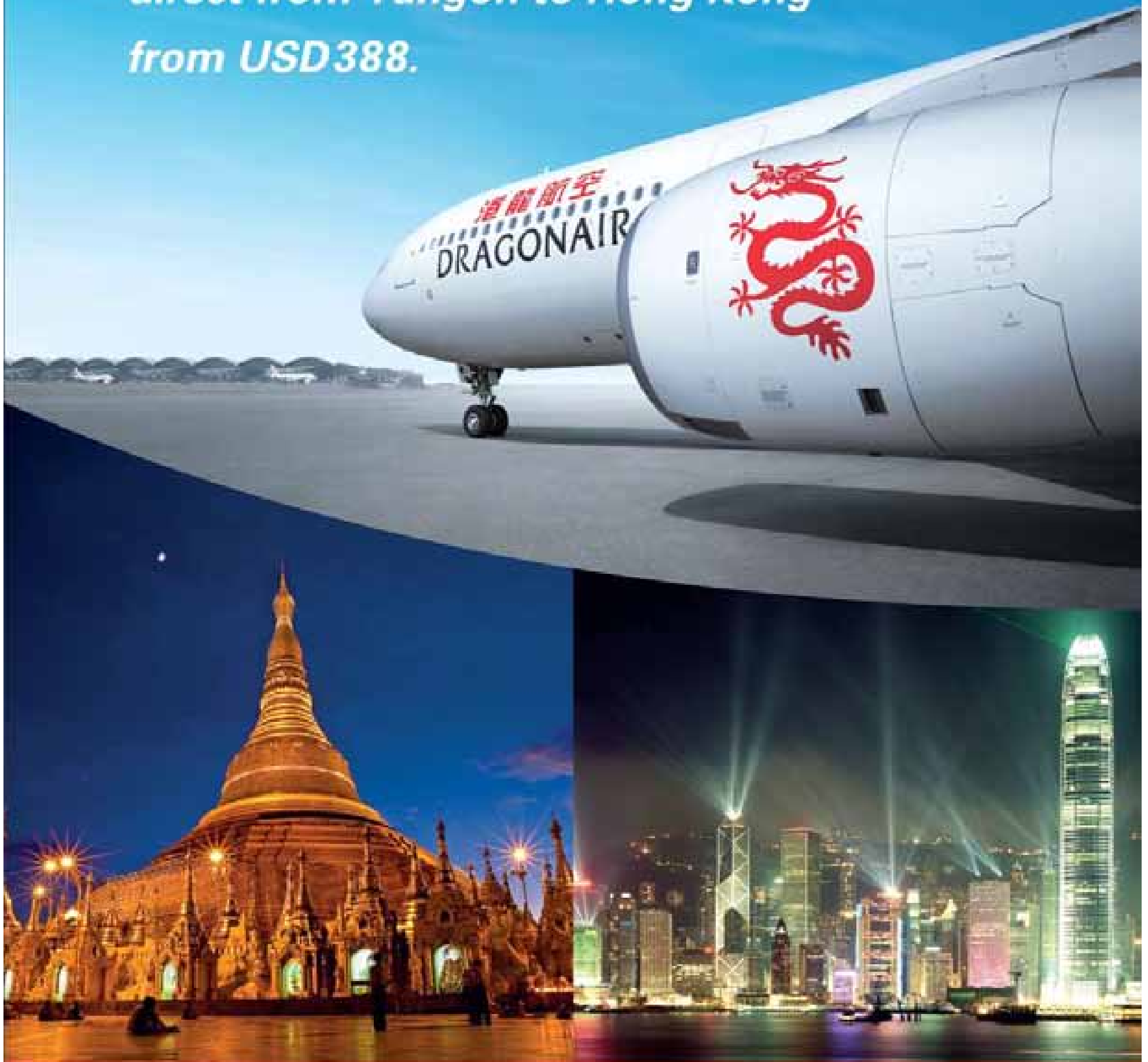
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Miners call for more talks after chairman misses Dec 3 meeting

By Pyae Thet Phyo

GOLD miners whose protest march from Yangon to Nay Pyi Taw was last month broken up by police have called for fresh talks with the company at the centre of a dispute over mining rights in Mandalay Region.

A meeting between the miners from the Moehti Moemi area of Yamethin township, Mandalay Region, and Myanmar National Prosperity company scheduled for December 3 was postponed because the company's chairman was travelling, said Ko Aung Gyi, a member of the group of protesting miners.

'We had a chance to negotiate but didn't receive a definite answer because the chairman was absent.'

The meeting was part of an agreement reached on November 27 at Yeni, about 30 kilometres south of Nay Pyi Taw, to persuade the marchers not to enter the capital, where they had planned to protest in front of the Ministry of Mines office and parliament.

Four days earlier, six miners were arrested in a clash with police in the Myohla area of northern Bago Region.

"The authorities concerned and the company should promptly deal with the matter. At Yeni we negotiated not to enter Nay Pyi Taw with the authorities and other parties ... they agreed on three items but now they seem to have dishonoured the agreement," Ko Aung

Gyi said. "[National Prosperity] came on the date fixed for the meeting but only the general manger, secretary and director attended - the chairman didn't. So we had a chance to negotiate but didn't receive a definite answer because the chairman was absent. They also refused to set a date for the next meeting," said another protester, Ko Hlaing Gyi.

Ministry of Mines officials U Aye Zaw and U Khin Pe also attended the meeting, along with Daw Sandar Min, the Pyithu Hluttaw representative for Zabuthiri township, and U Bo Ni, the Pyithu Hluttaw representative for Yamethin.

The miners are unhappy at what they describe as unfair treatment and broken promises from Myanmar National Prosperity, which won a tender to mine gold in the area in late 2011. In June, workers from the hundreds of small mines at Moehti Moemi began protesting after the company allegedly reneged on an earlier verbal agreement to split all gold found in the area 50-50.

Myanmar National Prosperity officials reportedly made the promise to the small mining companies and individual miners in December 2011, saying they could excavate gold from the area for the duration of its five-year contract with the government.

After holding several illegal protests in the mining area, the miners applied for permission to demonstrate in Yamethin but were rejected twice. About 30 of them then protested in front of Myanmar National Prosperity office in Yangon on November 3, 6 and 8, after which they decided to walk to Nay Pyi Taw. - Translation by Thit Lwin



Protesting miners at a monastery in Yedashe township, northern Bago Region late last month. Pic: Pyae Thet Phyo

Arrested miners charged

By Pyae Thet Phyo

FOUR leaders of a group of gold miners who were arrested on November 23 as they approached Nay Pyi Taw on foot have each been charged with two offences, a lawyer said last week.

The miners walked from Yangon to Nay Pyi Taw with the intention of protesting in front of the Ministry of Mines and the parliament over their dispute with the Myanmar National Prosperity company in Yamethin township's Moehti Moemi mining region.

The miners were charged under section 505(b) of the Penal Code, which relates to making, publishing or circulating a statement, rumour or report with intent to cause fear or alarm whereby any person may be induced to commit an offence against the state or against public tranquility, on December 10 and section 18 of the Peaceful Procession Law on December 11, said lawyer Daw San San Hla.

She said Yedashe township

administrator U Htay Kyaw filed the 505(b) charge, while Myohla police officer Maung Maung Myint charged them under the Peaceful Procession Law "because they didn't apply for permission" for their march.

U Mya Than, father of detainee Ko Nay Aung Htet, said bail was refused even though the administrator raised no objections.

"Therefore the detainees continue to be held in prison," he said.

The four were arrested on November 23 and on November 30 police officers Maung Maung Myint and Myint Wai from Myohla and administrator of Yedashe township's Ngwaytaung village administrator U Thein Win appeared in Yedashe Township Court as prosecution witnesses.

On December 4, submissions from the Myanmar National Prosperity company secretary U Win Myo Thein and Mining Enterprise 2 general manager for Pynmana township U Khin Pe were heard and on December 6 submissions to charge the detainees were heard.

More hearings have been scheduled. The plaintiff main argument to support the section 505(b) charge is that the protest leaders allegedly said some people were above the law.

Daw San San Hla said she was confident the plaintiff would not be able to establish a link between the comments and any "chaos" to support the charge.

"The plaintiff is obligated to prove his charge according to section 101 of the witness law," she said.

She said many people in Myanmar regularly voice similar views and were not charged under section 505(b), adding that she would use journals to support her argument.

"They expressed their views under section 354(a) of the constitution. Ko Ye Yint Tun did not say this in front of a crowd, he only said it when they were in their meeting, so it didn't hurt law and order. Their procession also didn't hurt law and order. So they can't have broken the law. This is my legal opinion as a lawyer," she said.

- Translated by Thit Lwin

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Ministry urges mothers to agree to blood tests

More than 40 percent refuse test, hampering program aimed at preventing mother-to-child transmission of virus

By Yamon Phu Thit

A PROGRAM aimed at preventing mother to child transmission of HIV is being hampered by a reluctance among pregnant women to take a blood test during pregnancy, a National AIDS Program official said.

Blood tests are conducted on a voluntary basis and fewer than 60 percent of women who benefit from the project agree to be tested, said Dr Khin Ohnmar San, deputy director and program manager of NAP, adding that the figures show there is low awareness about the risk of HIV transmission from mothers to children.

The NAP's Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission of HIV (PMCT) program is conducted at maternal and child health clinics, township and station hospitals and rural health centres in 245 townships throughout the country. PMCT services include voluntary HIV counselling and testing, treatment for HIV-positive mothers, prevention of HIV transmission to babies, improved obstetric and postnatal care, counselling on infant feeding practices and antenatal care.

The National AIDS Program launched the PMCT program in 2000 in cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund. In 2011, more than 3000 pregnant women received PMCT services. Ministry of Health figures show rates of transmission from HIV-positive mothers to their children was 13pc in 2011,

down from 23pc in 2010.

The program has provided pre-test counselling comprising antenatal care and counselling to more than 570,000 pregnant women from 2003 to 2011. However, only 320,000 agreed to a voluntary HIV test, shows NAP data.

"Pregnant mothers think they don't need to take a blood test because they have no chance of being infected with HIV," Dr Khin Ohnmar San said.

"We don't know who is HIV-positive without doing a test and pregnant women need to understand the

'We don't know who is HIV-positive without doing a test.'

importance of these tests. These figures show we need to accelerate our education programs," she said.

The drop-out rate of women who get tested but do not return to collect the results and receive post-test counselling remains relatively high, at about 15pc, Dr Ohnmar Aung, a HIV specialist at UNICEF, said during a workshop on PMCT in early October.

"Although they got tested and were diagnosed as HIV-positive, they never came back for post-test counselling and treatment because they are afraid of suffering discrimination. They deliver the baby at their home with

a midwife without taking any proper obstetric care. This is really dangerous" for both the midwife and newborn, she said.

"We need to do a lot more to ... reduce discrimination. One of the reasons why few people agree to take a blood test is because they are afraid of discrimination."

She said blood tests during pregnancy are critical for early diagnosis of HIV and prevention of transmission to unborn children. "All pregnant mothers should have a blood test during pregnancy. This can prevent their child being infected with HIV even if they are infected," she said.

After a pregnant woman is diagnosed as HIV positive, she needs to take prophylaxis anti-retroviral therapy from 14 weeks after conception to prevent infection of the embryo, NAP medical officer Dr Aung Thurein said.

HIV can be transmitted from mother to newborn during pregnancy, delivery and breastfeeding and without medication the chances of infection are between 15pc and 40pc.

"The baby of a HIV-positive mother should also be tested for HIV from birth. And even if it is negative we need to provide proper postnatal care" so the newborn is not infected through breastfeeding, he said.

According to WHO guidelines published in 2010, properly run PMCT programs improve the health of mothers and reduce the chances of mother-to-child transmission to 5pc or less.



A fireman extinguishes a fire that destroyed a Toyota Townace near the corner of Thein Phyu and Mahabandoola roads in Botahtaung township about 1pm on December 12. Pic: Thiri

Townace destroyed in fire

By Htoo Aung

A TOYOTA van was destroyed last week when a faulty wire sparked a fire but no one was injured in the incident, Yangon fire officials said.

The white Townace caught fire about 1:05pm on December 12 and the blaze was extinguished within about five minutes, the Yangon Region Fire Services Department official said.

The incident occurred on Thein Phyu Road between the Anawrahta and Mahabandoola road junctions in Botahtaung township.

The official said the front windshield, dashboard, front tires, front cushion, both side mirrors and rear seats caught fire, causing damage estimated at about K300,000.

The driver of the vehicle, Ko Myo Min Naing, 39, has been charged with negligent conduct with respect to fire or combustible materials under section 285 of the Penal Code, the official said.



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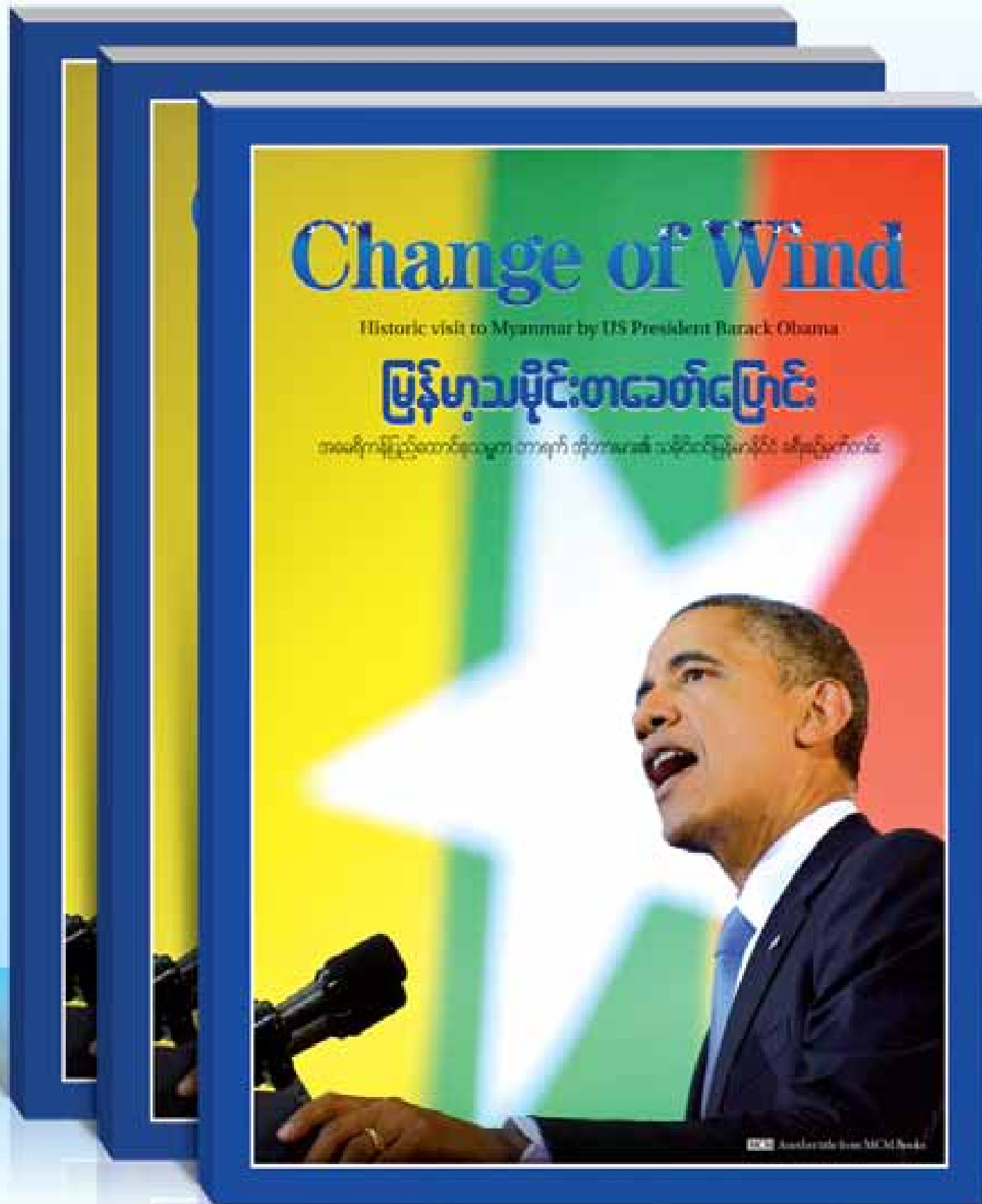
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No belief in peace process: survey

By Cherry Thein

AN NGO survey of 526 households in conflict-affected areas of Kachin, Shan and Kayin states found that few residents knew about the ceasefire and peace processes and most of them did not believe that either the government or armed ethnic groups wanted peace.

Four non-government organisations – Gender and Development Initiative (Myanmar), Metta Foundation, Christian Aid and Knowledge and Dedication for Non-building (KDN) – conducted the “listening project” in conflict areas to research gender equality, human rights violations and the peace process between ethnic armed groups and government.

Between May 15 and June 5, the organisations interviewed 526 households across Bhamo and Momauk townships in Kachin State, Namhkam, Muse, Kutkai and Tarmoeyai townships in northern Shan State, and Thandaung, Hpa-an, Hlaingbwe and Kawkareik townships in Kayin State.

While Kachin State is the only area in which the government is still in outright conflict with an opposition group, most agree the peace process in other areas of the country remains fragile, despite preliminary ceasefire agreements.

The survey also found different men and women viewed the benefits of the peace process differently, with women believing peace would bring better trading and economic opportunities

and men that it would bring federalism and equal rights for ethnic minorities.

But due to gender inequality, women have little knowledge about the peace process and no chance to participate to express their views on conflict-related issues, partly because of cultural and religious values, the survey found.

“I think women should participate in peace process but the problem is we don't know how we can, and which part. We feel we can't do anything but pray,” a woman from Muse township was quoted as saying in the survey.

Gender and Development Initiative (Myanmar) researcher Daw Ja Ra told *The Myanmar Times* that both government and ethnic leaders seemed resistant to allowing women to participate in decision-making roles and gave little thought to gender issues in the peace process.

“If both sides ignore and exclude gender equality in the peace discussions, there will be no end to the gap on gender issues during the rehabilitation and peace process. It is hard to discuss women's issues when there are no women involved in discussions,” Daw Ja Ra said.

The government ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1997 but still needs to implement many aspects of the convention and other anti-discrimination legislation, Daw Ja Ra said.

Daw Ja Seng Khon, a member of the management committee of a relief camp



A family displaced by the conflict in Kachin State at a camp near the China border earlier this year. Pic: Kaung Htet

in Kachin State, told *The Myanmar Times* camp authorities have no chance to improve gender awareness because they are struggling to feed displaced people.

“We want to improve [camp residents'] knowledge of gender issues, especially in reproductive health, but there's no time because we spend all day struggling to get food and medicines for seasonal diseases,” she said.

About two-thirds of respondents to the survey were women, and more than three-quarters of respondents said they did not have access to proper healthcare, citing poor transportation, conflict and poverty.

The survey also found evidence of human rights

violations, including rape and other crimes. Respondents said they witnessed or were victim to 121 cases of rape and 62 deaths.

“Residents are living in fear and feel helpless. They don't know who they can inform to ensure justice when a human rights violation occurs, either by government or armed groups,” the researchers said.

U Saw Heh Khalay from Thandaung in Kayin state said that there are some who did not believe peace processes due to traumatic experiences in past.

“I don't think those who are fighting understand peace. Some are anxious about when they will go to fight again. This comes

from a deep-rooted issue of discrimination against ethnic minorities on part of the government,” he said.

One woman from Bhamo township, who asked not to be named, said she wanted the Tatmadaw to return the land it had taken since fighting broke out in June 2011.

“We are only asking for ownership of the land that was owned by our ancestor and not asking for the land of Myanmar people. If Myanmar people let it go, there will not be any more fighting,” she said.

She said minorities feel the Bamar majority believe they are superior and are not willing to relinquish any political control to minority groups.

UNICEF gets new country chief

By Ei Ei Toe Lwin

THE new United Nations Children's Fund representative in Myanmar says he looks forward to building on the relationship already established between UNICEF and the government.

Mr Bertrand Bainvel made the comments when he submitted his credential to Minister for Foreign Affairs U Wunna Maung Lwin in Nay Pyi Taw on December 6, the agency said in a statement.

“At this historic time for the country, children must be placed at the centre of policy reform, investments and efforts to build a peaceful, prosperous and modern Myanmar,” Mr Bainvel said.

U Wunna Maung Lwin said the government and UNICEF will review their program of cooperation in 2013 and the minister emphasised that “it is important to review the tangible results the program has generated for children and their families, and to consolidate them at decentralised levels”. He added that “investing in children should be a key strategy in the National Poverty Reduction plan”.

Mr Bainvel comes to Myanmar with more than 20 years of experience in the social development sector and was previously UNICEF representative in Russia and Jamaica.

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Corporate social responsibility in Myanmar

By Tony Yoo

"I SHOULD have done this earlier," said U Zaw Naing.

After seeing Cyclone Nargis destroy Myanmar in 2008, the head of Mandalay Technology, a Geographical Information System (GIS) and remote sensing technology business, said he realised something had to be done to prevent another tragedy of that scale.

"Without preparedness to deal with disaster risk, such huge damage to people's lives, villages and infrastructure happened," he recalled of the tragic events that claimed more than 138,000 lives.

In 2009, U Zaw Naing created a low cost training course, "Disaster Risk Reduction and Management". With it he hoped that the devastation of Nargis would never be repeated in Myanmar.

Three years later the programme has won him first prize for the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) award at the ASEAN Information Communication Technology Awards (AICTA).

All sectors of Myanmar society – government, non-governmental organisations, private companies, students, and even interested individuals – have utilised the course. Participants have been trained in how to use geographical information technology to reduce the risk of future disasters.

Despite the international recognition, U Zaw Naing is cynical about the label. "I don't like how CSR is now a buzzword", he told *The Myanmar Times* last week. "Not that CSR isn't good, but many companies misuse it just for publicity."

With Myanmar's economy in rapid development and new

businesses sprouting on a weekly basis, corporate social responsibility can be a forgotten value among the heady drive for wealth.

U Zaw Naing recognised the difficulties for Myanmar businesses. "Profitability and CSR are not always compatible", he admitted.

CSR Asia is an organisation that promotes CSR among businesses through information, training, research and consulting. Nigel Blackwood, the Myanmar representative, said that businesses in Myanmar treat CSR in a very narrow way.

"The current approach is very much charity/philanthropy... donating profits to causes you're fond of", he said.

While donations are admirable, Mr Blackwood said true CSR should be all encompassing.

"You have to engage all the stakeholders...environmental

issues, your staff, local communities, government, tax. Are your products safe? Are they reliable? How are your suppliers behaving?"

Recognising the need to promote corporate social responsibility in a country undergoing massive change, the SUN Institute, a non-profit Myanmar organisation that enhances the relationship between the public and private sectors, hosted a one-day course on CSR in Yangon on December 15.

The chairman of CSR Asia, Professor Richard Welford, was brought in as instructor.

Professor Welford told *The Myanmar Times* before the course that local businesses need a strong CSR culture to successfully compete with the foreign companies that are entering Myanmar, or to form joint ventures with them.

"These [foreign companies] have a very strong social responsibility

agenda", said Mr Welford. "And there's a great opportunity for Myanmar companies to also think about that same responsibility agenda."

With Myanmar's economy on the rise, Mr Welford is convinced strong CSR is essential for success.

"If you really want to take advantages of the growth opportunities, you need to demonstrate that you're growing in a way that benefits the whole country. Not just a narrow set of owners."

U Zaw Naing is very happy with the praise of his company's service to the community. But he now also feels tremendous pressure of expectation as the pioneer of CSR in this country.

"We now have a responsibility to promote CSR and its goals in Myanmar," he said. "I feel not only happy, but at the same time feel heavy."

UN under secretary general Amos makes visit

By Aye Sapay Phyu

THE government must work harder to reconcile the two communities of Rakhine State, the United Nation's chief humanitarian official said last week. She also called on the government to allow the UN more access to people displaced by the fighting.

Ms Valerie Amos said people in Rakhine were still "living in fear" in the wake of fighting that had led to hundreds of deaths and the displacement of thousands of families from their homes. Her media briefing, on December 7, followed a tour of the stricken area.

Ms Amos, the UN's under-secretary general for humanitarian affairs and emergency relief coordinator, said humanitarian

needs were a major concern.

"The last year has seen remarkable changes within Myanmar, but humanitarian needs continue and in some areas have intensified. As the country moves ahead on its reform process it needs to address some critical humanitarian issues," said Ms Amos.

Ms Amos said one of the reasons she was in Myanmar was to assess the impact of the conflict in Kachin and northern Shan states, which has forced some 75,000 people from their homes since fighting began in June 2011, as well as the inter-communal violence in Rakhine, where more than 115,000 have been displaced.

Ms Amos visited Jan Mai Kawng camp outside Myitkyina, where some 700 IDPs are housed. The camp is located in a government-

controlled area and receives regular assistance from aid organisations. She urged the government to allow UN humanitarian workers access to IDP camps in Kachin, which are restricted for security reasons.

"The UN has not been able to provide assistance to almost 40,000 people as we are not permitted to go to Kachin Independence Army (KIA)-controlled areas. Local partners are providing food and other assistance but their stocks are depleted and with the winter months approaching, getting more supplies in is critical," Ms Amos said.

"We have substantial experience working in insecure environments. We are working in other places where the security situation is much worse," she said.

Ms Amos commended President U Thein Sein on his recent pledge

to enact a range of measures, including pursuing a durable ceasefire in Kachin and addressing issues such as citizenship, resettlement, and reconciliation in Rakhine State, and suggested ways forward.

During her visit Ms Amos travelled with the Minister of Border Affairs, Lieutenant General Thein Htay, to Myebon, Pauktaw, Maungdaw and to camps outside Sittwe, where she met people from different communities.

"Tensions between the communities are still running very high. I was shocked to see so many soldiers everywhere keeping communities away from each other. People from both communities gave me the same message. They are living in fear and want to go back to living a normal life.

There is an urgent need for

reconciliation," said Ms Amos said in a report released by her office on December 5.

In Maungdaw she saw new houses being built and communities slowly rebuilding their lives, while in Myebon the situation remained 'dire', she said, adding that the government had a critical role to play.

"We need political leaders at all levels to support the humanitarian work being done by the UN and our partners. Local leaders need to speak out and explain that they have asked us to be here to help," she said.

Ms Amos said inadequate funding for humanitarian issues was also seriously limiting the capacity to respond.

She said US\$68 million was needed to help displaced people for next nine months.



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Sensation Jason Mraz performs live in Yangon: What do you have to say?

By Nyein Ei Ei Htwe and Nuam Bawi



Mone Bwat

Age 27

Drummer

I'm going to see the show with my friends. I was happy – and shocked – when I saw a video on the net of Jason Mraz saying "Mingalabar" for an MTVEXIT promo. I didn't think he'd actually end up coming here, since most famous singers end up in Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia for their worldwide tours. Jason Mraz is huge right now, so this is an incredibly rare opportunity. I personally started listening to him after he released "I'm Yours", and now I love all of his music. I'm not just going to the concert because Jason Mraz is a celebrity, but because he's my favourite singer.



Ko Myo Tun Oo

Age 30

BPI Pharmaceutical Rep, Hlaing township

My friends and I got our tickets at Junction Square without any difficulties. We've been waiting since mid-November when we first heard Jason Mraz was coming – we're so excited. It's good that Jason Mraz is going to entertain a local audience. Who knew a Grammy Award-winning artist would be playing in Yangon? I love the song "I'm Yours", and it's great that the show is free. I'm going to get there right when the gates open so I can get a good spot.



Ko Kyaw Phyo Thu

Age 31

Private teacher, North Dagon township

I'm very surprised that Jason Mraz is coming to Myanmar and playing a free show. Also, Slot Machine, a famous band in Thailand, will be participating in the show. At first I was worried the stage wouldn't be up to international standards and satisfy the bands, but I'm confident now that it's going to be great. I'm really excited to see how Jason Mraz is going to communicate with a Myanmar audience. I can't wait to go early with my friends and I'm going to try to get a space right in the front row.



UNICEF VACANCIES

UNICEF Myanmar requires dynamic, motivated, creative and committed individuals for the positions below to support the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) team in Myanmar.

1. **WASH Specialist, NO-C level (Fixed-term Contract) Yangon**

The incumbent will coordinate with partners to achieve universal access to safe water and sanitation facilities; advocate and support introduction of new approaches and practices, including Community Led Total Sanitation, Water Safety Planning and WASH in School; undertake field visits and assess local conditions and resources; monitor UNICEF inputs, supply and non-supply assistance; support high level advocacy with government ministries and donors; develop and support sectoral work plan implementation and achievements; evaluate and analyze financial and supply reports; prepare programme status reports and provide technical support in formulation of WASH programme documents.

Qualifications and Experiences: Advance University Degree in Public Health, Environmental Engineering or related technical field; five years of progressively responsible professional work experience at national and international levels in programme management, monitoring and evaluation in WASH.

2. **WASH Field Officer, NO-B level (Fixed-term Contract) Mandalay Re-advertisement**

The incumbent will facilitate in the planning, monitoring and facilitating UNICEF supported Water, Sanitation and Hygiene programme at the local level: undertake field visits to project sites and assess local conditions and resources; monitor UNICEF inputs including supply and non-supply assistance; participate in emergency response: liaise with partners on WASH activities; build and strengthen partnerships at State/Township levels; attend technical meetings and undertake follow-up actions in WASH programme activities; collect and analyze data for situation analysis.

Qualifications and Experiences: University degree in Civil Engineering, Hydrology or Hydrogeology, Public Health Engineering or related technical field; two years of progressively responsible professional work experience in field monitoring and evaluation with water, sanitation and hygiene programme background.

3. **WASH in Schools Officer, NO-B level (Temporary Contract - One year only) Yangon**

The incumbent will support the WASH Programme in implementation of WASH in Schools activities including appropriate school toilet design, hygiene promotion, hand-washing and the introduction of menstrual-hygiene management into the school curriculum through linkages with the Ministry of Education (Department of Education, Training and Planning and the Department of Basic Education), and the relevant departments in the Ministry of Health (Health Education Department, Environmental Sanitation Division and Central Health Education Bureau) and ensure UNICEF's policies on WASH in Schools are reflected in national guidelines.

Qualifications and Experiences: University degree in Civil or Public Health Engineering, Social Sciences, specific training or experience in the area of WASH, particularly hygiene promotion in schools; two years progressively responsible professional work experience in water, sanitation and hygiene in education establishments; current knowledge of development issues, policies in WASH sector, especially in WASH in schools.

Detailed Terms of Reference of all three positions may be reviewed at UNICEF Myanmar Office, or on the UNICEF website: <http://www.unicef.org.mm>.

Qualified and interested candidates should submit CV and a cover letter to HR Unit, Traders Hotel, 15th Floor, 223, Sule Pagoda Road, Yangon, by 3rd January 2013. Applications may be sent electronically to: jobs.yangon@unicef.org

Note: Only short-listed candidates will be contacted for further review. Female candidates are encouraged to apply.

Why I opposed tribunal law changes



IN DEPTH
with
Ye Tun

WHEN a bill to amend the Constitutional Tribunal Law was put to a vote in the Pyithu Hluttaw on November 15, two civilian parliamentarians joined the Tatmadaw MPs in opposing the changes. Both are from the Shan Nationalities Democratic Party; one is Dr Sai Kyaw Ohn of Namkham, and the other is me: U Ye Tun of Hsipaw.

The bill was submitted earlier that day to the Amyotha Hluttaw, sponsored by Amyotha Hluttaw Deputy Speaker U Mya Nyein. However, the Amyotha Hluttaw just forwarded the bill to the Pyithu Hluttaw.

I would like to enlighten readers as to why I voted against the bill.

The proposed amendment was published in state newspapers on November 14 to allow people to read it and make suggestions. It is pleasing that this step was taken, as it allows ordinary people to make recommendations. However, representatives were not given any chance to discuss or propose amendments to the legislation when it was in the Pyithu Hluttaw.

Specifically I am not pleased with section 12(i) of the bill, which specifies that the tribunal should report to the president, Pyithu Hluttaw speaker and Amyotha Hluttaw speaker about their activities because they select the tribunal's members. This means that after a person joins the tribunal, it will not be enough for them to dutifully fulfil their responsibilities. They will also have to report what they have done to the president and hluttaw speakers.

Why should we be worried about this? Because it is important that tribunal members do not feel the need to be loyal to those who appointed them. Instead, the tribunal should carry out its duties in an unbiased manner to encourage true democracy. This also potentially leaves the hluttaw looking hypocritical, because only by encouraging the tribunal to be an independent judicial body can the parliament fulfil its stated aim of having an unbiased judicial system.

More appropriate wording would be: "In respect of the performance of duties, the tribunal shall send a formal message to the Union Government, the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, state and region governments and state and region hluttaws."

If I had been allowed to discuss the bill, I would have proposed this change.

Paragraph 3 is also troubling. It says section 23 shall be made section 24, and section 24 will become 23. The new section 24 will read: "The rulings of the tribunal made according to section 23 shall be final."

This leaves open the possibility that the ruling of the tribunal is final only for the cases that belong to section 23, but not for other cases that the tribunal is asked to adjudicate.

The original wording of



Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann presides over the fourth session of the Pyithu Hluttaw in July. Pic: AFP

court according to section 323 of the constitution and section 17 of this law regarding a case being under trial."

dispute, the said court shall stay the trial and submit its opinion to the Constitutional Tribunal of the union in accord with the prescribed

trial and promptly submit its opinion to the chief justice. The chief justice shall with his opinion submit this submission to the tribunal."

our country will face many constitutional crises. Think of it like a football match where the referee does not always have the final say on all the decisions he is supposed to make.

The law should specify which body has the final decisive authority – but it doesn't, so it does not conform to section 324 of the constitution, which says that the decision of the tribunal is final.

Because of this, the bill amending the Constitutional Tribunal Law submitted last month should not have been put to the hluttaw for a vote, and this is why I voted against it.

(Ye Tun is from the Shan Nationalities Democratic Party and is the Pyithu Hluttaw representative for Hsipaw in northern Shan State.)

'It is important that Constitutional Tribunal members do not feel the need to be loyal to those who appointed them.'

section 24, which will become the wording of section 23, is: "The ruling of the tribunal in respect of the matter submitted by a law court according to section 12(g) shall concern all cases."

We have to peruse section 12(g) to find the meaning: "Judgement about the dispute submitted by a law

So I had to get my copy of the constitution out. Section 323: In hearing a case by a court, if there arises a dispute whether the provisions contained in any law contradict or conform to the constitution, and if no resolution has been made by the Constitutional Tribunal of the union on the said

procedures and shall obtain a resolution. In respect of the said dispute, the resolution of the Constitutional Tribunal of the union shall be applied to all cases."

Moreover, section 17 of the Constitutional Tribunal Law states: "If the Constitutional Tribunal has not made a ruling on a dispute over whether a provision of the law is contrary to the constitution or does not agree to the constitution when a law court is hearing a case, the law court shall halt the

The implication of this is that when undertaking seven of the eight duties outlined in section 12 of the Constitutional Tribunal Law – including the definition of the constitution, scrutiny of whether the laws promulgated by the hluttaws agree to the constitution and scrutiny of whether the decisions made by the executive bodies of the union, regions and states and self-administered areas agree to the constitution – the tribunal may not have the final, decisive authority to decide on a case. Only when the case is submitted by a law court, as per section 12(g) of the tribunal law, can we be certain the decision is final.

If this is allowed to happen,



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Mining chief asks businesses to fight slavery

By Tony Yoo

AUSTRALIAN mining magnate Andrew Forrest pleaded with governments and businesses to do all they can to end modern day slavery during an address to business leaders in Yangon on December 14.

"We cannot rest until we extinguish this evil," Mr Forrest said during his address at the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI) building in Lanmadaw township.

"We are all a little bit harmed by the existence of even one slave in the world," added Mr Forrest, who is the third wealthiest Australian and founder of Fortescue Metals Group, the fourth-largest iron ore supplier in the world.

Matthew Friedman, project manager at United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking (UNIAP), told the audience of several hundred that slavery is not an obsolete concept.

"When a person loses control of their life, when they're not getting paid, and they can't leave that situation - what else [can] we call it?" Mr Friedman asked. "It's slavery. Call it what it is."

Mr Friedman said that there are more than 20 million slaves in the world, compared to 11.3 million over 450 years of the African slave trade (1450-1900).



Andrew Forrest addresses the audience at the Walk Free event at the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry office in Yangon last week. Pic: Ko Taik

"There are more slaves in the world now than any time in history," he said. "That's an embarrassing thing for me to say."

Mr Friedman cited specific scams that affected Myanmar citizens abroad. In one scheme, he said that Myanmar men and boys are tricked onto boats in Thailand and forced to stay on for four years.

"They'll work 18 to 19 hours a day - and to be able to work that

much they're drugged. So this has a terrible effect on their bodies," Mr Friedman said. "At the end of this four-year period they ask for their [pay]. But the captain says 'You're from Myanmar. I don't have to pay you. Go away.'"

Police Colonel Ral Lyan Mone, from the Central Body for Suppression of Trafficking in Persons, overviewed the anti-trafficking programs undertaken

by his agency and the co-operation taking place with neighbouring countries.

Col Ral Lyan Mone said forced marriage was overwhelmingly the most common fate met by Myanmar slaves overseas, according to 2012 statistics. He said other slavery scenarios for Myanmar victims included children forced to beg in Malaysia, physically abusive domestic work in Thailand, and

prostitution in China.

"Most people when they think about human trafficking they think ... a woman or a girl who is forced into prostitution ... there are 4.5 million people [worldwide] in this situation", said Mr Friedman.

"The typical scenario is a girl who is tricked or deceived ... away from her home, put into a forced prostitution situation and forced to have sex with anywhere from five to 10 people a day, seven days a week until she gets a disease and is often cast out. It's a horrible thing."

Both Mr Forrest and Mr Friedman urged that support from the business community was essential to fight modern day slavery.

"Either donate your time or funding to help out," said Mr Friedman.

The presentation was organised by the anti-slavery organisation Mr Forrest founded, Walk Free, and UNIAP. It came ahead of the historic MTV EXIT modern day slavery awareness concert in Yangon on December 16, which Walk Free and UNIAP are also involved in.

"Slavery does not have a right to exist in this world," Mr Friedman said.

"There's not a single person in this room who can come up with any justification why it should be there. So let's all work together and see if we can knock it out."

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Seafarers International Research Centre (SIRC) - Nippon Foundation PhD Fellowships

The Seafarers International Research Centre at Cardiff University, with support from The Nippon Foundation, would like to invite applications for a number of four-year scholarships offering exciting opportunities to study for PhD qualifications in maritime-related social science. Based in the UK, these unique fellowships are available to graduates of maritime or social science-related disciplines who have a strong desire to undertake academic research on seafarers and the human-related aspects of the maritime sector.

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For application details visit www.sirc.cf.ac.uk -> Postgraduate Fellowships

Or contact: Seafarers International Research Centre
Cardiff University, 52 Park Place, Cardiff CF10 3AT, UK
Email: sirc@cf.ac.uk

Closing date for applications: 31 January 2013



Marine fish exports slump, says MMFA

By Myat Nyein Aye

EXPORTS of marine-caught fish to China are down by 30 percent over the past three months, industry sources say. As a result, prices have fallen by a quarter.

The reduction has come despite coinciding with a Chinese festival period, when sales are usually good, said U Maung Maung Soe, chairman of the Myanmar Marine Fisheries Association on December 12.

"China buys about 60pc of our saltwater fish, with Thailand taking about 10pc. The rest is sold

to local customers or as dried fish," he said. "Myanmar people don't like sea fish. Even a big sea fish brings in K600 to K800 a viss [one viss equals 1.6 kilograms or 3.6 pounds] in the domestic market, with dried fish selling for K400 to K500 a viss," he said.

Until recently, Chinese buyers would pay K20,000 for 400 grams of groper (*nga poke thin*), a large saltwater fish. However, 400g of groper only fetches K15,000, said one exporter.

"Our only big customer is China. Other countries don't buy a lot of saltwater fish from us, and nor do Myanmar people. I want to a build

canning factory here and export canned saltwater fish to countries like Bangladesh, where they eat a lot of canned fish," the exporter added.

Myanmar Marine Fisheries Association has registered with Myanmar Livestock and Fisheries Ministry office to launch a public company with about K3 billion (US\$3.55 million) in shares and 15 directors, said a member of MMFA.

"When we form the Myanmar Marine Fisheries company, we plan to build four factories – cold storage, ice, fish grinding and canning. But the canning factory will be the most

important facility," he said.

In another setback for the industry, local fishermen are complaining of high diesel prices, said U Soe Soe, a fisherman in Bokepyinn township in Tanintharyi Region.

"We pay about K178,000 to K175,000 for a tank of diesel. This is not a fair price for us. If it was cheaper we'd be okay, but we have to set out with a full tank of diesel whether we catch any fish or not," he said.

Fisherman used to catch about 30 viss a net, but now take in only about 20 viss – and the fish are smaller, said one fisherman.

Dyeing firms hope to grow with garment sector

By Soe Sandar Oo

AS the country's garment industry prepares to grow with the help of new foreign investment, the local dyeing industry is facing problems.

Shortages of electricity, skilled labour and paint are handicapping the dye industry, some sources say.

"I have plans to enlarge my factories as the garment sector has great expectations, but I still face problems in getting enough electricity, labour and paint for the dyeing process," said U Kyaw Kyaw, owner of A Plus Three Silk Screen Printing in Hlaing township.

Currently, the paint used in the dyeing process is imported from China, Thailand and Japan. Small companies cannot afford to buy the 15-60 kilogram (33- to 132-pound) cans, so they buy 5-pound (about 2.3kg) packets of paint powder instead, he says.

"The paint in the packets is mixed with some kind of powder used in food products. Most of it is made in China," he said, adding that the fake powder could damage clothing.

He said 80 percent of garments produced needed to be dyed before export or local sale. "Most of our



orders are from women who want a flower pattern on a shirt. I try to find quality products so I can

he said.

The price for painting a shirt for the local market is K250, and K200 for an

because the volume is higher – an export order can be for at least 8000 shirts, while local orders

‘I have plans to enlarge my factories as the garment sector has great expectations, but I still face problems in getting enough electricity, labour and paint.’

get export orders, which are up 25pc compared with the same period last year,"

exported shirt. Dyeing a shirt intended for the export market is cheaper

run only to about 1000 or 1500 pieces, he said.

Ko Nyan Sint Aung, a

Briefs

KDDI tests waters in Myanmar

JAPANESE telecommunications firm KDDI announced its arrival in Myanmar on December 12 with the creation of a local affiliate, tentatively named KDDI Myanmar.

The centrepiece of KDDI's plan is the creation of a business centre that the company plans to set up in Yangon.

The centre would offer "office space with IT infrastructure and maintenance/operation services" to start-up businesses in Myanmar, the company said in a press release last week.

"There is currently a lack of offices that are adequately equipped for business," it said.

The Myanmar operations will also offer "Japanese-quality network construction and ICT infrastructure support services" to businesses with their own premises.

The KDDI statement said its services would be aimed at Japanese businesses coming into Myanmar, it added.

With annual sales of US\$41.3 billion, KDDI is ranked 191st in *Forbes* magazine's World's Biggest Public Companies list.

– Tony Yoo

OECD calls on Oz to mull sovereign fund

SYDNEY – Australia should look at a sovereign wealth fund to profit from the revenues of its China-fuelled mining boom, the OECD club of rich nations said on December 14, describing the robust economy's outlook as positive.

The country dodged recession during the financial crisis due to its mining-powered economy, but slowing commodity prices have started to hurt growth while a high Aussie dollar has hit manufacturing and other industries.

The Paris-based Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, in its 2012 survey of Australia, forecast growth decelerating from 3.75 percent this year to 3-3.25pc in 2013 and 2014.

But it praised Australia's "sound macroeconomic policies" with unemployment expected to remain around 5.5pc in 2013 and 2014 and inflation hovering at 2.25-2.75pc.

– AFP

CORRECTION:

In our story about ANZ bank opening a representative office in Yangon last week we incorrectly stated in the headline that it would open in 2014 – the representative office will open in early 2013. This error was not made by the reporter and we apologise for any inconvenience this has caused.

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U.S. Embassy seeks Interpreter

Basic Function of Position:

To simultaneously interpret in real time for the Chief of Mission and others as needed. Interpretation will take place in meetings with senior government officials up to the President. Translate press articles, economic and commercial reports, and other documents.

Qualifications Required:

1. College or University studies.
2. Must have at least two-three years of professional experience interpreting between Myanmar and English languages.
3. An ability to translate between written English and Myanmar in a concise manner.
4. Fluent speaking/reading/writing/ English and Myanmar.
5. Must have the ability to do basic research and analysis in a variety of technical subject matter fields in order to become familiar with the technical terminology involved in each subject matter field in which required to translate.
6. Must have basic knowledge of MS Office applications such as Word, Excel and MS outlook

Eligible candidate may submit application to **Human Resources Office, P.O. Box 521, GPO, Yangon** not later than **December 24, 2012**.

UNFPA Vacancy Notice No.2012/012

Position Title : Project Manager (IT)
Grade : SC - 9
Duty Station : Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar
Issue Date : 17 December 2012
Closing Date : 31 December 2012 (5:00pm)
Duration of Appointment : 1 Year (possible extensions)

Applications are invited from interested Myanmar nationals for the post of Project Manager (IT).

Applications should be addressed to UNFPA Representative.

Attention : International Operations Manager Room A07, UNFPA, No.6, Natmauk Road, Yangon.
Email : myanmar.office@unfpa.org

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

Applications will be considered only when meeting all requirements set in detailed vacancy announcement.



AMBASSADE DE FRANCE EN BIRMANIE

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

The French Embassy is looking for a **Political and Protocol Officer** to join its political chancery and press department starting in January 2013.

Responsibilities:

- follow-up of the political and social situation,
- contacts with political parties, civil society, local journalists, ethnic representatives,
- Protocol and relations with Myanmar administrations,
- translations and interpretations in French and Myanmar (also for official visits),
- draft daily correspondence, make phone calls to governmental, national and international partners,
- organize and coordinate work plans for missions and delegations to visit Myanmar as well as seminars and workshops,
- arrange meetings and receptions, prepare the agenda and on specific request take the minutes of the meetings.

Qualifications: Applicants must hold a University degree (political science would be an asset), have at least 5 years of working experience in a related field and an excellent level in written and oral French and English. Strong analytical capacities and judgment are required.

Complete application files (including motivation letter, CV, copies of diplomas and references) must be sent **before December 27th 2012** at Ambassade de France, attention to Mrs Friderich, 102, Pyidaungsu Yeiktha road, Yangon. You can also email your file to ambafrance.rangoun@diplomatie.gouv.fr with a scan of your documents.



Vietnamese prawn farmers have shown interest in investing in farms in Myanmar, the Myanmar Fisheries Federation says. Pic: Myanmar Times Archive/Hein Latt Aung

Vietnamese prawn farmers consider Myanmar venture

By Myat Nyein Aye

A GROUP of Vietnamese prawn farmers has voiced an interest in setting up a 500-acre farm in Yangon Region following a visit to Myanmar, a Myanmar Fisheries Federation official said last week.

U Han Tun said during the weekly fisheries federation meeting on December 11 that the Vietnamese delegation discussed a possible venture with the Myanmar Shrimp Association on December 9.

"They joined us at an exhibition of livestock and

fisheries products on December 7 and 8," he said of the Vietnamese delegation. "They were very interested in prawn farming in Myanmar because it's a relatively undeveloped sector but one that they understand," he said.

"First they wanted to study the farming environment around Yangon Region and perhaps later they will cooperate with the association to farm prawn," he said.

He said most commercially sold prawn is caught in the wild but the product enjoys strong international demand.

U Htay Myint, chairman

of the Myanmar Shrimp Association, said there are about 250 prawn farms at Ngwe Saung in Ayeyarwady Region, with most about 1 acre in size. U Htay Myint owns a farm and said he would welcome foreign investment in his operation.

"I have several breeding ponds in Ngwe Saung and cold storage factories in Patheingyi township," he said.

"If foreign companies want to cooperate with Myanmar businesses it will be good for us because we need some new technology and better management to improve our

business," he added.

U Win Kyaing, the federation's general secretary, said Vietnam is widely involved in prawn farming ventures in Australia and he would welcome its participation in Myanmar.

"It would be wonderful to work with Vietnamese businesses to develop our prawn farming industry. But we warned them during negotiations that they would have to partner with Myanmar companies because they cannot invest 100 percent in projects here according to the foreign investment law."

China's accelerating overseas buys raise fears

By Bill Savadove

SHANGHAI – China's biggest overseas takeover, the US\$15 billion purchase of Canada's Nexen, is a huge step in Beijing's push for foreign acquisitions – but its drive to secure resources and markets is causing unease.

Ottawa a fortnight ago approved Chinese state-owned energy giant CNOOC's purchase of the oil and gas company, despite political opposition in Canada.

The victory is particularly sweet for CNOOC after it was forced to withdraw its bid for another North American firm, US oil and gas producer Unocal, seven years ago following an outcry in Washington.

For the Chinese government, the deal is an affirmation of its decade-old drive to encourage companies to go abroad to build international players and secure supplies of energy and raw materials to keep the economy humming.

"It's a milestone to show Chinese companies are getting more sophisticated when it comes to overseas acquisitions," said Edward Tse, chairman for Greater China for management consulting firm Booz & Company.

"This case will help the Chinese go to other countries, in particular developed countries."

Chinese firms have become more active in mergers and acquisitions since the global financial crisis that began in 2008, as economic distress has thrown up bargains around the world.

Between 2005 and 2011, the number

of China's overseas acquisitions tripled to 177 and jumped five-fold by value to \$63 billion, law firm Squire Sanders and intelligence service Mergermarket said.

Another major deal came on December 12, when global mining giant BHP Billiton said PetroChina, China's largest listed oil producer by value, would buy its stake in the Browse liquefied natural gas project in Australia for \$1.63 billion.

But Chinese state media used the Nexen success to blast unspecified "Western powers" for alleged unfairness and protectionism.

"Chinese investors have been discredited by some Western governments and media as a group of cash-rich predators and spies," the state-run Xinhua news agency said in a commentary.

"Western powers that harbour China-investment phobias should first drop their prejudice towards Chinese companies and let their entrepreneurs, not politicians, decide the business deals."

A US congressional committee said in October that Chinese telecom manufacturers Huawei and ZTE should be excluded from government contracts because their equipment could be used to spy.

CNOOC offered a premium for Calgary-based Nexen, pledged to keep management in place and vowed transparency – helped by a possible listing on the Toronto stock exchange – to smooth the way for the acquisition.

Fei Kwok, a partner for law firm Norton Rose in Shanghai, said the deal could offer psychological support to other Chinese companies planning to invest abroad in

the footsteps of the state giant.

"It does help psychologically for some of the smaller-sized Chinese companies, primarily in relation to private Chinese companies, who are waiting for the result of this CNOOC-Nexen deal," she said.

But academics said more was at work than commerce, as China seeks growing stature and competes with other countries for resources.

"It's tied to the Communist Party's national objectives, which increasingly include projecting economic power abroad," said Joshua Eisenman, senior fellow for China studies at the American Foreign Policy Council.

"Chinese state-run companies have been expanding throughout the developing world and there's been push back in many places," said Eisenman, co-author of *China and Africa: A Century of Engagement*.

In Myanmar, opposition leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi will lead a probe into a crackdown on a protest against a Chinese-backed copper mine which will also assess the future of the contested project.

And in copper-rich Zambia, Chinese companies active in the mining sector have seen riots over wage disputes but deny accusations of labour rights violations.

Australia has seen intense internal debate over whether to allow Beijing's state entities to increase their control over its resources, while earlier this year a Chinese company agreed to buy a bankrupt dairy farm group in New Zealand, where critics labeled it a "land grab". – AFP

Woodside buys 50pc stake in MPRL's A-6 block

IN DEPTH
with
Tim McLaughlin



AUSTRALIA'S Woodside Petroleum announced on December 10 that it had bought a 50 percent stake in a second oil and gas exploration block in Myanmar.

Woodside Petroleum, headquartered in Perth, bought the stake in Myanmar Petroleum Resource Limited Exploration and Production's (MPRL E&P) A-6 offshore block. The block is located in the Rakhine Basin off Myanmar's western coast in the Bay of Bengal.

The A-6 block is about

250 kilometres south of the giant Shwe Gas Field, according to MPRL E&P, and covers about 9830 square kilometres.

"The offer is for a 50pc interest in the block and is subject to certain conditions

Woodside and MRPL E&P to undertake a 3D seismic survey program in the block and also provides an option for future drilling."

Figures on the deal remain "confidential" according to a Woodside spokesperson.

foray into Myanmar in October with the acquisition of a 40pc stake in the AD-7 block from South Korea's Daewoo International Corporation through a production sharing contract. The AD-7 block is also

project. Like Daewoo in the AD-7 block, MPRL E&P will remain the operator of the A-6 block during the exploration period.

According to a company spokesperson the A-6 block

Television on November 19. However Woodside does not currently operate an office in Myanmar.

Woodside has looked to aggressively diversify outside of its massive liquefied natural gas projects in its homeland of Australia, where costs are on the rise. Mr Coleman has been highly critical of Australia's industry regulations and high taxes.

On December 3, seven days prior to their Myanmar project being made public, the company announced that it had bought a 30pc stake in the Leviathan field off the coast of Israel from Houston, Texas-based Noble Energy. The deal is valued at US\$1.2 billion.

'The proposal provides the opportunity for Woodside and MRPL E&P to undertake a 3D seismic survey program in the block.'

including execution of fully-termed agreements, completion of due diligence, and necessary government and other approvals," Woodside said of the farm-in agreement in a statement.

"The proposal provides the opportunity for

MPRL E&P signed a production sharing contract with Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE) for the A-6 block in January 2007. In March 2012 the company announced that gas had been discovered in the test wells it had sunk.

Woodside made its initial

located in the Rakhine Basin.

"The Rakhine deep water basin is an exciting frontier exploration area and Block AD-7 is adjacent to the Daewoo-operated Shwe field development," said Peter Coleman, Woodside's chief executive officer, of the

fits with the company's deep water capabilities and Woodside views the project as an opportunity to complement its portfolio.

"Myanmar is our focus at the moment. We are looking at other countries in the region," Mr Coleman said in an interview with *Bloomberg*

Ministry issues LPG cylinder warning

By Soe Sandar Oo

THE Ministry of Energy has warned consumers of the dangers of using illegally imported and non-approved liquefied petroleum gas cylinders, a spokesperson said on December 10.

The spokesperson said most LPG cylinders are legally imported from Thailand by large companies but some non-approved - and unsafe - cylinders are also entering the marketplace, mostly through the Myawaddy border crossing.

"Non-approved cylinders are not safe to use and can explode if they are subjected to extreme heat," he said.

"Approved cylinders have an automatic safety valve that cuts the supply if something goes wrong but the non-approved cylinders do not," he said.

"To warn consumers about this issue is our responsibility

but controlling illegal trade is the Ministry of Commerce's responsibility," he said.

He said some businesspeople import non-approved cylinders and then apply faked approval seals to fool buyers, adding that it is difficult for consumers to spot the difference.

"The Ministry of Energy is happy to grant import licenses for proper LPG importers but this illegal trade is unacceptable," he added.

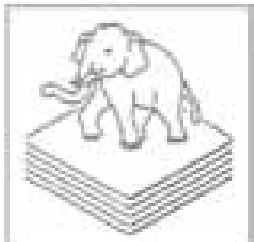
However, Ko Naing, an employee of one of the big LPG trading firms, said consumers can spot fakes by looking at the safety bar.

"Some cylinders have a manual safety bar that can be faked but cylinders that have automatic safety bars must be genuine," he said.

He also downplayed the risk to consumers saying that LPG for domestic use is usually stored at relatively low pressure.

TRADE MARK CAUTION

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Dated: 17 December 2012

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IMF warns Hong Kong property faces price correction

HONG KONG –Hong Kong could see an abrupt fall in property prices after years of dramatic increases in one of the world's most expensive housing markets, the International Monetary Fund warned in an annual review of the territory's economy.

Home prices in the Asian financial hub have skyrocketed 90 percent since 2009 due to an influx of wealthy mainland Chinese buyers, pushing home-ownership beyond the reach of many of its seven million people.

"The sharp run-up in house prices raises the risk of an abrupt correction," the IMF said.

"A sharp price correction would lead to falling collateral values and negative wealth effects, which could trigger an adverse feedback loop between economy activity, bank lending, and the property market.

"The property sector is the main source of domestic economic risk," the Washington-based organisation said.

However, it said the chances of a price correction that is

large enough to generate a major macroeconomic and financial consequences is "fairly low in the near term".

It also said the city's government recent bid to slap new taxes on residential properties "should help dampen housing demand" but urged Hong Kong to ensure sufficient supply in order to boost home affordability.

Hong Kong announced a 15pc stamp duty on non-permanent residents and corporate buyers as well as a higher stamp duty on the resale of property within three years in late October in an attempt to rein in soaring prices.

With the global economic weakness continuing to affect its domestic economy, the IMF said it expects Hong Kong's economy to grow 1.25pc this year, before rebounding to 3pc next year.

Hong Kong leader Leung Chun-ying had warned recently that the city needed to boost its housing supply and create more living space or risked losing its "best and the brightest" talents.

– AFP



Dusk in Hong Kong on December 12. The International Monetary Fund says Hong Kong could see an abrupt fall in property prices after years of dramatic increases in one of the world's most expensive housing markets. Pic: AFP

Heritage forum focuses on Theingyi Market

By Htar Htar Khin

STAKEHOLDERS from the government, civil society and the media attended a forum on urban development in Yangon on December 6 and 7 at which presentations on Theingyi Market were a highlight.

The "Housing for People and Urban Heritage for all" forum was jointly organised by Germany's University of Cologne and the Ministry of Construction, and was held at MiCasa Hotel in Yangon on December 6. Similar forums had been hosted in Nay Pyi Taw and Taunggyi in November.

The forum was co-hosted by Professor Dr Frauke Kraas from the University of Cologne, who is working as a visiting professor at the University of Yangon's Geography Department.

In total, 10 speakers gave presentations at the event, including officials from the Department of Human Settlement and Housing Development (DHSHD) and experts in urban development from Indonesia, Vietnam, Cambodia and Malaysia.

Daw Hlaing Maw Oo, assistant director of DHSHD's Urban and Regional Planning Division, gave a presentation focussing on the importance of green and open spaces.

"When we talk about green and open spaces in Yangon, we can see a chain of them but they are not connected," she said.

"We have to carefully consider if we should maintain these spaces or can we afford to lose them? They are like the lungs of the city.

"The chain starts somewhere around Sule Pagoda with a small open space and expands into the Kandawgyi Lake environment



Shoppers and store holders at Theingyi Market in Latha township last week. Pic: Thiri Lu

and Shwedagon Pagoda area. Furthermore, we have the Inya Lake environment and then there is the green area around Yangon City Golf Club and the Hlawga Lake environment," she added.

Daw Hlaing Maw Oo also discussed the importance of the city's skyline, particularly the idea of ensuring that the city's major landmark – Shwedagon Pagoda – can be seen.

She also asked the audience whether cultural identity, including street markets and festivals, needed to be retained as the city develops.

Daw Hlaing Maw Oo said Yangon's residents were confronting serious urban planning challenges such as traffic congestion, limited parking spaces, loss of privacy, reduced natural light and ventilation through

overcrowding and overloaded public transportation

She added that a number of different acts and laws regulate Yangon's urban planners, particularly in relation to heritage buildings and religious or cultural sites.

"We must pledge to save the past for the present, and save the present for the future," she said.

Mr Christian Gunther, a Master's student at Cologne University, used Yangon's Theingyi Market in Latha township as an example of urban heritage in transition.

"The aim of my thesis is to clarify the impact that urban transition has on living heritage," he said.

"We've heard a lot of heritage theory and I would just say some brief general considerations about the development framework for Yangon.

"The transition process in Myanmar is volatile and the vibrant framework that I'd like to see is one that does not impact on urban heritage," he said.

Mr Gunther said the transition has to be seen in the political, social and economic dimensions.

"The A block of Theingyi Zay (Market) is mainly a traditional wet and dry market that sells wet goods, including fisheries products, while block B sells dry commodities and textiles," he said.

Mr Gunther added that people from varied ethnic and religious backgrounds live around the market and use it for commerce.

Professor Kraas said the market was identified as a potential subject during a 2004 field exercise in Yangon.

"I assumed that Theingyi Zay

was a unique market and I don't think there is anywhere else like it in Southeast Asia. And in 2005, we started conducting field work jointly with Yangon University," she said.

"We choose Theingyi Zay for the study because we saw its huge potential as living heritage. As you can see, Yangon has number of excellent sites and Theingyi Zay is one. It's a lively market and has a long tradition. If we go to the vendors, we can see that they have been there for many years – it's living heritage," she said.

She added that Theingyi Zay has clear architectural value but its social heritage is even more valuable.

"You will find long-term relationships among the vendors and also beyond the market to other parts of Myanmar and even beyond. There are long historic roots and it has deep economic and social cohesion," Professor Kraas added.

She told *The Myanmar Times* that there are 189 heritage listed buildings in Yangon and "we're currently setting up proposals and suggestions for not only buildings but also ...sites such as cultural urban heritage sites.

"I'm very much convinced that Theingyi Zay is among the finest of these places. You won't find many old and still living and not artificially made markets in Southeast Asia. So, it has unique setting – a unique Myanmar character," she said.

The market was built in 1905 and has 1156 shops.

"We're not only talking about the architecture, we're talking about the people, about very closely knitted social communities, vending communities as well. And you won't find that elsewhere in Myanmar," she added.

Shwegondaing flyover ready by late 2013

Developer says project expected to take about 11 months to complete, following ground breaking on December 12

By Htar Htar Khin

COMMUTERS using Kabar Aye Pagoda Road to travel downtown will face 11 months of delays while the Shwegondaing flyover is built, the company building the bridge said last week.

A Capital Development Limited press release issued on December 12 after a ground breaking ceremony at 8:46am said that when the flyover is finished it will allow traffic travelling north-south to bypass the heavily congested Shwegondaing intersection.

The ceremony was attended by Yangon Region Chief Minister U Myint Swe, chairman of Yangon Region Hluttaw U Sein Tin Win, Yangon Mayor U Hla Myint, Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC) departmental heads and other officials.

U Aye Thaw, the company's project director, said surveying work was completed months ago.

"We've been doing pre-survey work since May, following instructions from the Myanmar Investment Commission and YCDC," he said. "The Shwegondaing junction is heavily congested and the roads are narrow at that point, which is why we've consulted with design experts from Japan-based JFE Engineering Corporation to guarantee quality control, reduce the construction period and limit the impact on the environment," he said.

The 420-metre-long four-lane flyover will sit 5.5m above the ground. It will start on the south side near the Jivatadana Sangha hospital and end about 70m



Capital Development Limited project director U Aye Thaw marks the ground ahead of a ground breaking ceremony for the Shwegondaing flyover on December 12. Pic: Thiri Lu

north of Excel tower on the northern side of the intersection, he said.

U Aye Thaw added that the flyover will be for vehicles only and no walkway has been included for pedestrians. It will be able to support vehicles weighing up to 60 tonnes, he said, adding that the predicted cost is about K13 billion (about US\$15.4 million) and the flyover is likely to be finished by late 2013.

U Aye Thaw said the median strip on Kabar Aye Pagoda Road in front of Excel Tower had been removed to make way for the flyover. He also said YCDC plans to widen some nearby thoroughfares, such as U Chit Maung and Bahan Gyar Taw Ya roads to ease congestion during the construction period.

U Aung, a 40-year old taxi driver who usually waits for passengers near Excel Tower, said the traffic congestion is the worst he has seen in the area.

"I've worked in this area for nearly five years as a taxi driver and the traffic is

terrible these days. And the Shwegondaing Junction is one of the worst in the city," he said.

"I'm glad they are building a flyover or it would only get worse," he added.

U Aung said the roads are unable to cope with the increased traffic.

A 36-year-old grocery store owner in a backstreet behind Excel Tower said the flyover was necessary.

"I've lived for 11 years near Shwegondaing and I welcome the flyover project because it will ease traffic congestion," he said.

"Many vehicles pass

through this junction every day and it's chaotic and unsafe, especially when you're walking," he said.

He added that Shwegondaing is a critical route out of the downtown area to suburbs to the north and east and described the flyover as "essential".

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Firm aims to clean up in toilet market

TOKYO – They are found in more than two-thirds of Japanese households and visitors to the country have marvelled at their heated seats, posterior shower jets and odour-masking function.

But for the company that has sold more 30 million high-tech toilets, commonly known as Washlets, global lavatory domination remains elusive, especially among shy US consumers.

“It’s because of the cultural taboo over talking about toilets,” said Hiromichi Tabata, head of the international division at Washlet-maker TOTO, a company that also makes bathtubs, kitchen taps, basins and plumbing fixtures.

“Americans avoid talking about those kinds of things so we can’t expect success from word-of-mouth, even if they recognise our products are excellent.

“Many celebrities say they love the Washlet when they visit Japan, but the fervour is temporary,” he said in an interview last month.

Pop diva Madonna gushed about Japanese culture during a 2005 visit and pointed to the Washlet as a key draw, saying “I’ve missed the heated toilet seats” – the kind of free marketing most companies dream about.

For a nation that claims globally recognised brand names such as Sony and Toyota, the Washlet’s relative lack of overseas presence comes as a surprise to many foreign visitors, even if they’re initially baffled by its dizzying array of functions and Japanese signage.

In technology and hygiene-obsessed Japan, where restaurants provide a steaming hot towel for customers’ hands, they’re found in public toilets, office lavatories and over 70 percent of Japanese households.

“We thought that Japanese people, who are clean freaks, would like the idea of the Washlet,” said spokeswoman Atsuko Kuno.

But when it hit the market in the booming 1980s, the high-tech toilet wasn’t an immediate success in conservative Japan either.

Some viewers were irate over a 1982 television commercial for the newly-released Washlet which featured a girl trying to wipe black paint off her hand with paper, making a mess in the process.

“Paper won’t fully clean it,” she told viewers. “It’s the same with your bottom.”

But the provocative marketing eventually paid off by putting the unique toilets into the minds of consumers.

TOTO designed its Washlet by asking hundreds of its employees to test a toilet and mark, using a string stretched across the bowl and a piece of paper, their preferred location for the water jet target area.

The Washlet’s functions, laid out on a computerised control panel with pictograms, include water jets with pressure and temperature

‘We expect Europe will eventually get used to the idea...’

controls, hot-air bottom dryers and ambient background music.

Another function produces a flushing sound to mask bodily noises – a hit among the easily-embarrassed – while some models have a lid that automatically swings open when users enter the restroom.

Others feature seats and lids that glide back into horizontal position, possibly solving gender battles over flipped-up toilet seats in the home.

Business continues to be robust for the toilet maker, whose rivals in the key

domestic market include Lixil Group.

In the full-year to March 2012, TOTO posted a net profit of 9.27 billion yen (US\$114 million) on global sales of 452.7 billion yen, up 4.4pc from a year earlier.

But only about 14pc of that revenue figure was from overseas sales.

Despite the challenges in reaching foreign consumers, tapping the hotel market has met with some success, executives say, while China and other East Asian nations have seen growing demand “because they have cultures similar to Japan”, Tabata said.

Localising products is also key.

Washlets sold in tropical markets such as Indonesia do not come with heated seats and blast lukewarm water into users’ nether regions instead of the hot spray offered in chillier climes.

Despite the Washlet’s relatively expensive price tag – the cheapest sells for about \$900 – TOTO executives believe that liberal Europeans are a hugely promising bet, especially as a Swiss rival is selling a similar product.

“We expect Europe will eventually get used to the idea of a heated toilet seat with warm water,” Tabata predicted. – AFP



TOTO senior managing executive officer Hiromichi Tabata with the toilet company’s latest model at its head office in Tokyo. Pic: AFP

Training for journalists

With the support of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation’s (UNESCO) International Programme for the Development of Communication, Myanmar Consolidated Media, publisher of The Myanmar Times, is seeking applications for capacity-building programs for both beginner and senior print media journalists in Myanmar.

Two two-week training programs will be conducted for journalists with at least 1.5 years experience, while one three-week training course will be conducted for journalists with minimal or no experience. Trainees in the three-week program will have the opportunity to undertake an internship at The Myanmar Times upon concluding the course.

The programs will be conducted in January and February 2013 with one expatriate and one Myanmar journalism instructor. English skills and a university degree are preferred but not essential. Successful applicants will need to provide a release form from their employer for the duration of the course. For further information please write to the following email address: administration@myanmartimes.com.mm



Call for applications for foreign and Myanmar journalism trainers

With the support of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation’s (UNESCO) International Programme for the Development of Communication, Myanmar Consolidated Media, publisher of The Myanmar Times, is seeking applications from experienced journalists to implement capacity-building programs for both beginner and senior journalists in Myanmar.

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Mass rally in Pyongyang celebrates rocket launch

SEOUL – Hundreds of thousands of North Koreans rallied on December 14 in the freezing cold to celebrate the country's rocket launch, staging a choreographed show of defiance under their youthful leader's "endless" wisdom.

The huge rally in central Pyongyang, shown on state television, came two days after the launch of the three-stage rocket and ahead of the anniversary on December 17 of the death of new leader Kim Jong-Un's father.

The West fears the launch has taken the nuclear-armed state a step closer to firing intercontinental ballistic missiles across the planet and has attracted UN Security Council condemnation along with calls for tougher sanctions.

The US State Department said Kim had the chance as new leader "to take his country back into the 21st century" but instead was making the "wrong choices".

Unbowed, North Korean state media said Kim, who is in his late 20s, had personally signed off on the rocket launch and had declared his regime's "unshakable stand" that the program will continue.

Kim stressed the need "to launch satellites in the future... to develop the country's science, technology and economy", said North's official *Korean Central News Agency (KCNA)* as it



North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un applauds at mission control in Pyongyang on December 12 after the successful launch of a rocket which placed a satellite into orbit. Pic: AFP/KCNA via KNS

gave new details of the launch. The "dear respected Marshal" visited mission control an hour before the

rocket took off on on December 12 and praised the "ardent loyalty and patriotic devotion" of the technical team, KCNA said in the report on December 14.

The report gave no reaction to the international opprobrium that has been heaped on North Korea since the rocket was launched.

The rally was an emphatic demonstration of organised support for the Kim dynasty, as the massed ranks of civilians and soldiers chanted their obeisance under giant portraits of Kim's father and grandfather.

Many of the civilians were in warm coats and the soldiers in olive-green overcoats and Russian-style trappers' hats, as they pumped their fists and chanted "long live!", the state TV's hour-long broadcast showed.

Analysts say the symbolism of the launch was a prime motivating factor for North Korea as Kim shores up his leadership credentials.

"The launch means the fulfilment of Kim Jong-Il's last wish," said Yoo Ho-Yeol, a political science professor at Korea University in Seoul.

"As such, it helps cement Jong-Un's grip on power and strengthens his authority over the North's military elites, securing their loyalty and a sense of solidarity under his leadership," Yoo said. – AFP

• Related report, P. 33.

Ex-Thai prime minister denies murder charges

BANGKOK – Former Thai prime minister Abhisit Vejjajiva on December 13 denied murder charges over a civilian's death during a crackdown on anti-government rallies in 2010.

Abhisit and his then-deputy Suthep Thaugsuban were formally charged at Bangkok's Department of Special Investigation, making them the first officials to face a court over Thailand's worst political violence in decades.

"I am innocent and deny the charges," Abhisit told reporters after he and Suthep emerged from four-and-a-half hours of questioning by investigators.

He acknowledged the charge "related to the incident that happened in 2010" but said that it was "politically motivated" and vowed to clear his name adding "I will not run away... I am not a coward".

Abhisit said he has 45 days to file supporting statements with the DSI which will then decide whether to pass the case to the state prosecutors responsible for deciding if the matter goes to trial.

Both he and Suthep were free to go without any conditions, he said.

About 90 people died and nearly 1900 were wounded in a series of street clashes between "Red Shirt" demonstrators and security forces, which culminated in a deadly army operation in May 2010 to break up the protest.

The charge against Abhisit, who was prime minister at the time, relates to the fatal shooting of taxi driver Phan Kamkong.

DSI chief Tarit Pengdith announced the marcher charges against Abhisit and Suthep on December 6 and said it was prompted by a court's ruling in September that Phan was shot by troops – the first completed inquest into the bloodshed.

Abhisit has said he had no choice but to take tough action adding he would accept trial rather than "bargain" over a proposal by his political rivals in government for a wide-ranging amnesty plan that many believe could allow the return of the Reds' hero, ousted former premier Thaksin Shinawatra.

Experts believe British-born Abhisit is unlikely to face jail because of his close ties to the Thai establishment. – AFP

'I am not a coward.'

Briefly

CAIRO – Egyptians began voting on December 15 on a divisive new constitution backed by President Mohamed Morsi. The first round of voting in the referendum will be in Cairo, Alexandria and eight other areas and the rest of the country will vote on December 22.

COLOMBO – Sri Lanka has defended China's increased naval presence in the Indian Ocean and rejected claims that it is a threat to regional power India, the defence ministry quoted its top official, Gotabhaya Rajapakse, as saying on December 14.

• Related report, P. 38.

WASHINGTON – US Republican and Democratic senators were fiercely split over Susan Rice's withdrawal on December 13 as candidate for secretary of state, but they appeared to unite over Senator John Kerry as a likely replacement.

SYDNEY – Death threats have been made against the Australian radio hosts involved in the royal hoax call tragedy, police said on December 14.

• Related report, P. 38.

LONDON – Britain has agreed to pay £2.2 million (US\$3.5 million) to a Libyan who says British secret services played a role in his illegal rendition from Hong Kong with his wife and four children in 2004, his lawyers said on December 13.

– AFP

US slaughter reignites debate on gun controls

WASHINGTON – The deaths of 20 young children and six teachers in a devastating shooting rampage at a primary school in Connecticut on December 14 reignited the debate over US gun laws that until now has yielded little change.

After the massacre, a tearful President Barack Obama appeared on television to make an emotional plea for "meaningful action".

"As a country we have been through this too many times," Obama said, mentioning earlier shooting massacres, in Colorado, Oregon and Wisconsin.

To tighten gun controls, Obama needs Congress to act and so far the Republican opposition has blocked all reforms of the federal gun laws.

Connecticut State Police spokesman Lieutenant Paul Vance said 18 children and six teachers were shot dead inside Sandy Hook Elementary School. Another two children died of their wounds in hospital. The child victims were reported to be aged between five and 10.

Local media said that the shooter, reported to be a young man who picked off his victims with unusual accuracy, began the rampage in the kindergarten where he killed his teacher mother and her class. – AFP

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UN climate talks take 'modest' step forward

DOHA - A UN climate conference has extended the life of the Kyoto Protocol, the only binding pact on curbing greenhouse gas emissions, in a small but symbolic victory in the fight against global warming.

It took much haggling and many hours of lost sleep in the Qatari capital to arrive at the deal on interim measures to halt climate change pending a new, global pact due to take effect in 2020.

An extension of Kyoto

was finally approved on December 8 with the 27-member European Union, Australia, Switzerland and eight other industrialised nations signing up for binding emission cuts by 2020.

They represent about 15 percent of global emissions.

UN leader Ban Ki-moon welcomed the deal, dubbed the Doha Climate Gateway, as an important first step but said through his spokesman that "far more needs to be done."

The protocol locks in only developed nations, excluding major developing polluters such as China and India, as well as the United States which refuses to ratify it.

In practice, experts say the lengthening of the protocol will make little difference to pollution levels as it covers such a small portion of emissions and its signatories all had their own legislated targets anyway.

"It is a modest but essential step forward," European

climate commissioner Connie Hedegaard said at the end of talks that ran a whole day into extra time, paralysed as rich and poor nations argued over financing and compensation for climate damage.

After 12 days of haggling that ran aground almost from the start, conference chairman Abdullah bin Hamad al-Attiyah finally rushed through the package on the evening of December 8.

He had earlier urged delegates to seek consensus and not "open the box of Pandora again because we will never finish" - a warning that was all but ignored. Attiyah was left waiting in the plenary hall for more than four hours as bartering continued.

The vice prime minister rode roughshod over countries' objections as he swung the gavel in quick succession and proclaimed: "It is so decided" to loud applause. - AFP

Briefs

Mandela recovering

JOHANNESBURG - Hospitalised anti-apartheid icon Nelson Mandela is "recovering" after receiving treatment for a lung infection, South African President Jacob Zuma said on December 13.

"Madiba is recuperating from a lung infection at a Pretoria hospital," he said using Mandela's clan name ahead of the unveiling of a statue of the former president in the central city of Bloemfontein.

Mandela was admitted to hospital on December 8.

Israel raps Europe

JERUSALEM - Israel's Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman criticised Europe on December 11, saying its treatment of the Jewish state was comparable to policies during the Holocaust.

Lieberman said Europe had turned a blind eye to a speech by Hamas chief Khaled Meshal last week, in which he said the Palestinians would not "cede an inch" of historic Palestine, which covers modern Israel.

"Once again, Europe has ignored calls for Israel's destruction," Lieberman told Israeli public radio.

UN team in Iran

TEHRAN - A team from the UN atomic watchdog arrived in Iran on December 13 for talks with nuclear officials on Iran's controversial nuclear program, ISNA news agency reported.

The International Atomic Energy Agency says the aim of the talks is to sign an agreement on a "structured approach" giving IAEA inspectors broader access to sites and people working in the program.

The resumption of talks with the IAEA follows several meetings since the start of 2012, all unsuccessful. - AFP

Syrian coalition wins international backing

MARRAKESH - Arab and Western states recognised the National Coalition as the sole representative of Syrians on December 12, as the opposition bloc urged the US to review its blacklisting of jihadist rebels.

The declaration, issued at a "Friends of Syria" meeting in Morocco, coincided with battlefield gains by jihadists fighting President Bashar al-Assad's forces and a rapidly deteriorating refugee situation as winter sets in.

"Today, full recognition is given to the National Coalition as the sole representative of the Syrian people," Moroccan Foreign Minister Saad Eddine El Othmani told a news conference after the meeting hosted by his government.

The talks on the 21-month conflict brought together representatives from 114

countries, including about 60 ministers, the Syrian opposition and international organisations.

They came a day after US President Barack Obama endorsed the National Coalition, following a similar move by the European Union.

The Friends of Syria again called on Assad to stand down and stressed that his regime would not escape punishment for violations of international law.

A statement also warned Damascus against using chemical weapons, saying this "would draw a serious response from the international community".

Those at the meeting also called for unimpeded access for humanitarian groups inside Syria.

Coalition spokesman Yaser Tabbara underlined hopes the Marrakesh meeting would help alleviate

a mounting humanitarian crisis and support the needs of "liberated" areas.

Tabbara said aid pledged at the meeting amounted to "about \$145 million" including \$100 million from Saudi Arabia and \$14 million from the US.

Under pressure to unite, the opposition agreed on November 11 to establish the coalition and group the various rebel forces under a supreme military council.

Jihadist rebels in Aleppo, a key front line in northern Syria, rejected the agreement, saying they want an Islamic state.

Among them was Al-Nusra Front, which the US blacklisted on December 11 as a "terrorist" organisation, citing its links to al-Qaeda in Iraq.

National Coalition chief Ahmed Moaz al-Khatib called on Washington to "re-examine" the move. - AFP

New Mali PM unveils plan for unity govt

BAMAKO - Mali's new Prime Minister Diango Cissoko started drawing up a new unity government on December 12 that could bring the consensus needed to launch a foreign military intervention in the Islamist-occupied north.

Cissoko pledged to regain control of the country's north amid international condemnation over the ouster of his predecessor Cheick Modibo Diarra.

The new premier has not mentioned the international force which has been mired in uncertainty, but observers say Diarra was seen as an obstacle to reaching consensus and a new government could pave the way to its deployment.

EU foreign policy head Catherine Ashton on December 12 hailed Cissoko's nomination, saying that he was a gifted negotiator with good knowledge of Mali's political scene who had an ability to bring people together.

France, the United States,



Diango Cissoko. Pic: AFP

United Nations, African and European Union have roundly condemned the way in which Diarra resigned and urged the military to stop meddling in political affairs.

The United Nations Security Council, which is awaiting more details on the mission before giving it the green-light, has said it remains committed to "authorising as soon as possible the deployment of an African-led international support mission in Mali."

Cissoko, a veteran public servant, was swiftly appointed by interim leader Dioncounda Traore after Diarra's forced resignation on December 11, and vowed his priority was to regain control of the north from Islamists.

"The priority is the recovery of the north and the organisation of elections... I want to create a government of national unity," Cissoko told AFP.

"I want to tell Malians that they must get together, because it's only a unified people that can confront their problems." - AFP

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UN Security Council condemns launch

UNITED NATIONS – The UN Security Council condemned North Korea's rogue rocket launch on December 12 as the United States pressured China to support punitive action against its ally.

North Korea took a defiant stance against international fury over its launch however and China signaled it was reluctant to take a tough new measures.

The UN Security Council held emergency talks after the North, already under international sanctions for nuclear tests in 2006 and 2009, ignored pleas from friends and foes and went ahead with a rocket launch that it said put a satellite into space.

"Members of the Security Council condemned this launch,

Nations, Susan Rice, said talks would start immediately on international action.

China's UN ambassador Li Baodong resisted harder hitting language in the statement, diplomats at the closed meeting said.

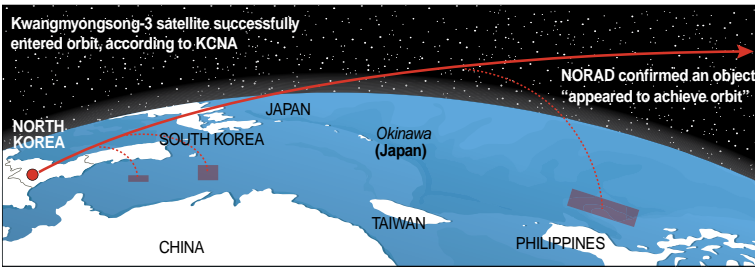
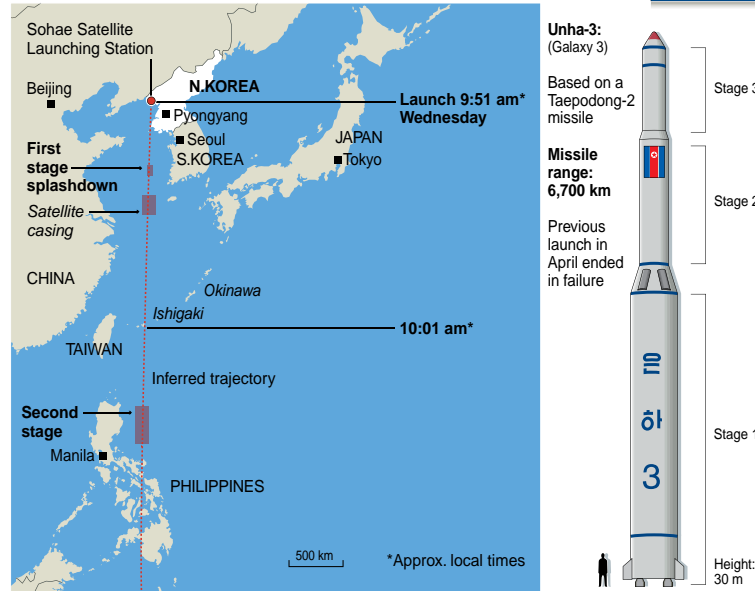
Li opposed mentioning in the statement that the North had used "ballistic missile technology" but eventually gave in after pressure from Rice, the diplomats said.

In Beijing, the Chinese government responded relatively quickly by expressing "regret" and pressing North Korea to abide by UN resolutions.

But in a commentary, state news agency Xinhua also decried "bellicose rhetoric and gestures"

North Korea's successful rocket launch

Provokes global condemnation and triggers an emergency session of the UN Security Council



mission was not a banned inter-continental missile test but carried a scientific satellite into space.

The satellite went into orbit "as planned," the North's Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said. "People's hearts are racing with excitement," the state agency added.

The rocket set alarm bells ringing in Japan and South Korea, which put their militaries on alert.

The launch was a "clear violation" of a 2009 UN Security Council resolution which bans North Korea from using ballistic missile technology, said UN leader Ban Ki-moon.

Russia labelled Pyongyang's defiance of UN resolutions "unacceptable" and warned the launch would have a "negative effect" on regional stability, while the European Union threatened new sanctions.

Masao Okonogi, a professor of Korean politics at Keio University in Japan, said the launch would alarm the United States.

"Putting a satellite into orbit means that you have technology to get a warhead to a targeted area. Now, North Korea is becoming not only a threat to the neighbouring countries but also a real threat to the United States," he said.

But the North said it would ignore international warnings. "We will continue to exercise our legitimate right to launch satellites," said a foreign ministry spokesman. - AFP

'People's hearts are racing with excitement.'

which is a clear violation of Security Council resolutions 1718 and 1874," said a statement released after the meeting.

The council highlighted a warning made after a failed launch in April that it could take "action" if there was a new attempt.

"Members of the Security Council will continue consultations on an appropriate response," said the statement.

The United States said there had to be "consequences" for the breach of UN resolutions. US ambassador to the United

and defended North Korea's right to explore space.

It called on all sides to avoid "stoking the flames."

The launch shows that "North Korea is determined to pursue its ballistic missile program without regard for its international obligations," Rice told reporters.

"Members of the council must now work in a concerted fashion to send North Korea a clear message that its violations of UN Security Council resolutions have consequences," she added.

North Korea's leader Kim Jong-Un, who is in his late 20s,

was believed to be keen that the launch fall close to the first anniversary of the death of his

father and former leader Kim Jong-Il on December 17.

North Korea insisted the

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The end of the world, or a calendar?

CANCUN, Mexico – Gonzalo Alvarez, who arrived in Cancun last week for two weeks of revelry linked to a major milestone in the Mayan calendar, seemed reasonably cheerful for a man about to be swallowed up by the Apocalypse.

"We came to party and to get ready for the beginning of a new era," Alvarez, 39, an architect, said at Cancun's airport on December 10.

Alvarez had travelled to Mexico from Florida to witness the beginning of a new Mayan era on December 21, 2012, which will be marked with celebrations throughout southern Mexico and Central America.

Mexico is one of five countries preparing to observe the date, which marks the end of a more than 5000-year era in the Mayan "Long Count" calendar, which began in 3114 BC.

For many people in this region, December 21 will be a date for celebration.

The start of the new Mayan calendar is also big business in this region, with tourism offices in no fewer than five countries aggressively promoting the date.

Millions of tourists are expected in the region for celebrations that will include fireworks, concerts and other

spectacles at more than three dozen archaeological sites.

In addition to Mexico, celebrations will be held in Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras.

But while some prepare for the end of the Mayan calendar, others fear with trepidation that the date will usher in the end of the world.

Some New Age spiritualists are convinced of a December 21 "doomsday" foretold by Mayan hieroglyphs – at least according to some interpretations.

The prophesy to which they

"They are not telling the truth about time cycles."

refer is in an ancient Mayan monument in Tortuguero, Mexico, and is believed to have been left by a Mayan ruler. The Mayan leader, fresh from defeat on the battlefield, declared that the military setback was but one event in a larger cycle of time that would end in 2012.

Many scholars say the prophesy was misinterpreted and was not meant to suggest the end of all time, but simply the end of the old Mayan calendar and the beginning of a new one.

Indigenous experts scoff

at the faulty and sensational misreadings of the Mayan calendars.

"The Mayans had a cyclical concept of time, not one that ever focused on the end of the world," Mexican archaeologist Jose Romero told AFP.

Romero blames Hollywood for a rather fantastical interpretation of the hieroglyphs "without much knowledge of the facts" of Mayan history and culture.

Meanwhile, the belief that the world will end on December 21 has travelled far beyond Meso-America.

In the Russian city of Tomsk a company is selling a "Apocalypse kit" that includes food and medicine with a bottle of vodka – or tequila if the customer prefers.

In the French Pyrenees, authorities have temporarily closed access to a mountain to avoid throngs of people fleeing from apocalypse.

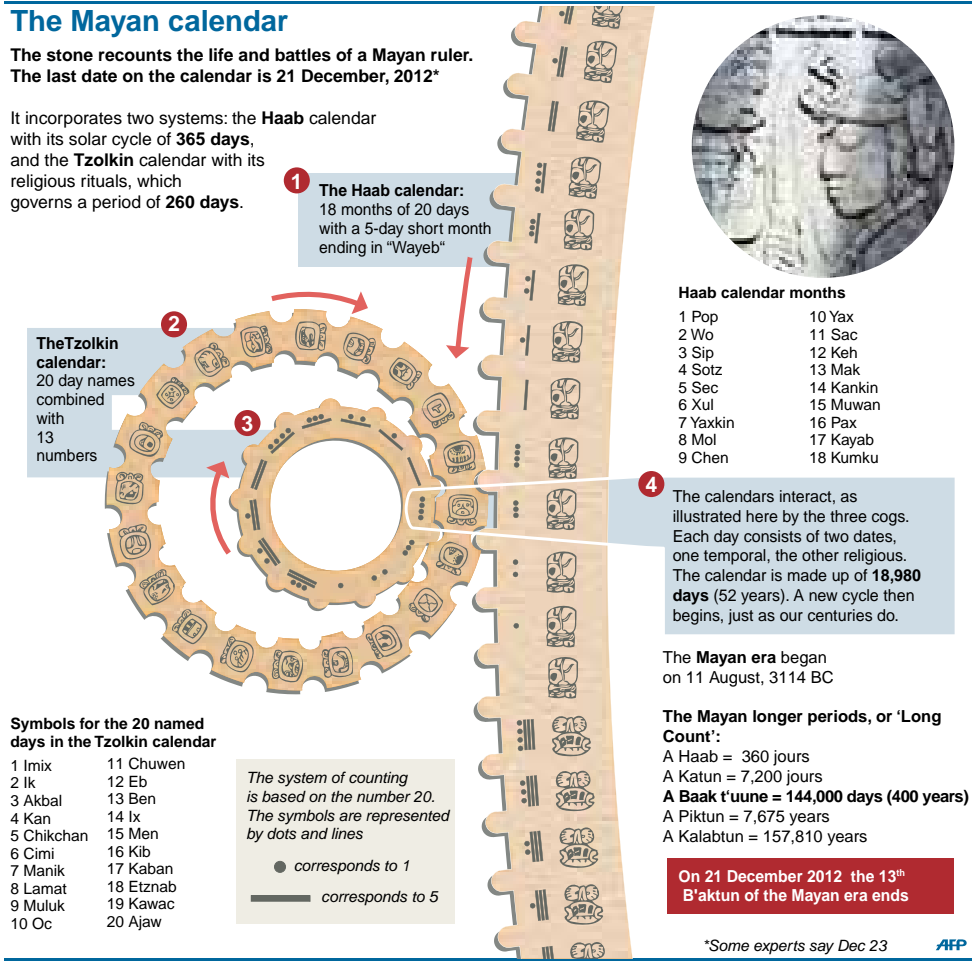
Indigenous leaders in Mexico, critical of the way the date is being commercialised, have convened a Mayan Peoples Council to focus on the cultural significance of the new era.

In neighbouring Guatemala, 1992 Nobel Peace Prize winner Rigoberta Menchu has also criticised the commercialisation of the

The Mayan calendar

The stone recounts the life and battles of a Mayan ruler. The last date on the calendar is 21 December, 2012*

It incorporates two systems: the Haab calendar with its solar cycle of 365 days, and the Tzolkin calendar with its religious rituals, which governs a period of 260 days.



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From Philippines, a reason for hope

COMMENT
by Pankaj Mishra

IT wasn't an incredible photo-op and it's unlikely to be included in this month's valedictory roundup of 2012 highlights. In fact, it was barely reported.

One of this year's most remarkable events, however, was the agreement between the Philippine government and the insurgent group Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

If successful, it may not only terminate decades of secessionist violence in Mindanao, the second largest island in the Philippines; it may also inspire hope in a wide swath of Asian countries damaged, politically as well as economically, by internecine conflicts.

Divide-and-rule European imperialists, favouring one ethnic group and persecuting or neglecting another, or drawing arbitrary lines in the sand or the grass, originally transformed social and religious differences into political antagonisms within Asian societies. Their local opponents—mostly educated natives—hardened religious and ethnic identities by turning them into a basis of anti-imperialist solidarity.

In the end, the principle of self-determination was widely exported from relatively homogenous Europe to multicultural Asia, where it was embraced by rising native elites. The result was the proliferation of hastily and poorly imagined national communities—unwieldy nation-states where patchworks of relatively

autonomous groups and individuals with multiple, overlapping identities had existed.

Since then, postcolonial rulers eager to hold on to their inheritance—centralised states, administrations and large, resource-rich territories—have made the map of Asia bleed red.

Tamils in Sri Lanka, the Pattani Muslims in Thailand, Baloch secessionists in Pakistan, Uighurs in China's Xinjiang province, India's Kashmiri Muslims and northeastern minorities—there is barely an Asian nation-state where centralising governments haven't fought, often with brute military force, to hold down religious and ethnic minorities.

The secessionists have occasionally succeeded, if after much horrific bloodshed, as in East Pakistan and East Timor. More often they have looked to be upholding doomed causes. But the tremendous strain of fighting them has had uniformly devastating results, whether in Indonesia, Thailand or Sri Lanka: an enhanced political and economic role for men in uniform, the diminishment of rule of law and the loss of civil liberties.

The imperative to uphold territorial integrity turned the army into the most powerful institution early on in Pakistan, Indonesia and Myanmar, and set back prospects for democracy for decades. The Javanese leader Sukarno prepared his own demise by often deploying the army to suppress disaffection across the Indonesian archipelago.

More recently, Thailand's former General Sonthi



Philippine President Benigno Aquino and the head of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front Murad Ebrahim (right) shake hands before signing a peace agreement to end four decades of conflict, at the Malacanang Palace in Manila on October 15. Pic: AFP

Boonyaratglin, who had been empowered by then Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra to crush the insurgency by Pattani Muslims, went on to lead a military coup against his civilian boss in 2006. In India-ruled Kashmir, the local military chiefs openly overrule the state's elected chief minister.

Even in countries with stronger traditions of civilian rule and electoral democracy, such as India and Sri Lanka, an authoritarian-minded nationalism has productively deployed ethnic and religious minorities as a foil.

Racial politics has deeply compromised Malaysia's great potential. India's Hindu nationalists rose to power on a program of demonising Muslims. The more recent success of Sri Lanka's Sinhalese strongman Mahinda

Rajapaksa, the country's president, confirms that in large parts of Asia, closely identifying your nation with its racial, religious and ethnic majority can still bring you huge electoral harvests.

Fearing loss of likely support among Myanmar's Buddhist majority, even Aung San Suu Kyi is reluctant to denounce the disenfranchisement of the country's Rohingya Muslims. Her stance on the militarised state's longstanding battles with the Kayin, Shan, Chin and Kayah minorities is not much clearer.

Myanmar's prime minister, Thein Sein, renewed cease-fires with these obdurate secessionists. But violence in Kachin State in the resource-rich north has worsened.

It would be too optimistic to expect improvements as Myanmar's economy

is integrated into global networks of trade and finance. The promise of quick and great prosperity is likely to deepen, not heal, old divisions. Indeed, what look like ethnic and ancient hatreds often conceal very modern battles over precious resources—minerals and fossil fuels—in ethnic-minority regions.

Pakistan's Baloch as well as Myanmar's Kachin separatists claim to fight for a fair share of benefits from the riches extracted from their lands. Furthermore, predatory war economies, from timber and prostitution rackets in Kashmir to gem smuggling on the Thai-Myanmar border, have struck deep roots in many Asian borderlands.

Power in the region has long flowed out of gun barrels and, until the announcement of the peace accord in the Philippines in October, it wasn't easy to see how this could change. Brokered by Malaysia, the deal between Manila and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front paves the way to radically enhanced autonomy for the Muslim-dominated southern region of Mindanao.

Greater federalisation, which includes clear guarantees on the sharing of natural resources and land, cultural and religious rights, may also be the way out for countries that have frittered away too much national energy and resources in affirmations of sovereignty.

The agreement in the Philippines is a timely reminder of the much less fraught relationships that have existed and can exist between the periphery and the centre and between majority and minority communities.

The European idea of the nation-state, realised after much horrific bloodshed in Europe itself, was always a poor fit for Asia's diverse mosaic.

Joseph Roth, who grew up in the multinational Hapsburg empire, was appalled by the imperatives of modern nationalism, according to which "every person must belong to a definite nationality or race" in order to be treated as an individual citizen. Roth, a Jew, suspected that members of minority groups, like himself, would be relegated to third-class citizenship, and vicious prejudice against them would be made respectable in the new nation-states built on the ruins of multinational empires.

The ethnic cleansers of 20th century Europe proved him right. It required a monstrous crime and a repentant political imagination to institute peace between warring European nations and soften attitudes toward minorities.

The battle against bigotry is far from over; Europe's long and violent past today looms over its inevitably multicultural future.

For Asian nations beset by their own present and potential ethnic cleansers, it is even more important to remember the relative youth of sectarian nationalism on the continent—and the long centuries when it did not exist. — *Bloomberg News*

(Pankaj Mishra, a Bloomberg View columnist, based in London and Mashobra, India, is the author of *From the Ruins of Empire: The Revolt Against the West and the Remaking of Asia*.)

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Killing in Thai south was 'senseless': UN

BANGKOK—The UN called last week for an end to violence against children in southern Thailand after the "senseless and unacceptable" shooting of a baby girl.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) condemned the December 11 attack on a teashop in Narathiwat that killed the infant and left a 10-month-old boy injured, in a rare statement on an insurgency that has killed thousands in three provinces bordering Malaysia.

The shooting, in which gunmen sprayed bullets at villagers who were having breakfast, was "a tragic, senseless and unacceptable act", Bijaya Rajbhandari, UNICEF representative in Thailand, said on December 12.

"Every time a child is killed or injured, every time a child loses a parent or relative, and every time their schools and teachers are attacked, the more all children in the deep south suffer," he said.

"Bringing an end to the

violence is the only way to ensure that the rights of all children in the south are fully protected and respected."

Violence is a part of life for many in Thailand's Muslim-majority southern provinces of Narathiwat, Pattani and Yala.

More than 5300 people, Buddhist and Muslim, have been killed since the unrest reignited in 2004.

The fighting has claimed the lives of more than 50 children, said the UN.

On October 31, an 11-year-old boy was shot and killed in an ambush with his father, in an attack in a Yala district that also left his nine-year-old brother in a critical condition.

The teashop attack left five people dead, while a headmistress and teacher were also killed in a separate shooting at a school in Pattani.

Militants view the education system as an effort by Bangkok to impose Buddhist culture on the region and teachers working in non-religious schools are often targeted. — *AFP*



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'ASEAN-India Car Rally 2012', powered by Mahindra XUV500, passes through Myanmar

Myanmar, December 12, 2012: The ASEAN-India Car Rally 2012, which is powered by 28 Mahindra XUV500s, passed through Myanmar between December 11 and December 15, 2012, before entering India.

The second edition of the 'ASEAN-India Car Rally 2012' organized by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) was flagged off on November 28, 2012. The three week long rally will see 28 XUV500s travel through 8 ASEAN countries over 8,000 kms. The rally will conclude in India on December 20, 2012. En route, the convoy crossed highways, dirt tracks and even made a ferry crossing, before making its way through mountainous terrain, verdant valleys and the coastal areas of Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos and Myanmar. The expedition will now move on to India. At the end of the rally, the formal flag in of the ASEAN-India Car Rally 2012 will be held in Delhi where the heads of states of the ASEAN countries will be present.

According to Vivek Nayer, Chief Marketing Officer, Automotive Division, Mahindra and Mahindra Ltd. "We are happy that the Mahindra XUV500 has been chosen as the exclusive vehicle to power the ASEAN-India Car Rally 2012. The XUV500 was conceived and built as a Global SUV and therefore it is now going places across international borders. We are confident that the tough and rugged Mahindra DNA will ensure that all 28 vehicles will come through with flying colors in the 8,000 km long rally that will traverse grueling conditions across the ASEAN countries".

"The ASEAN rally is in synch with one of the pillars of the Mahindra Brand proposition of 'Accepting No Limits.' We are particularly pleased that the rally gave participants the chance to drive through several nations where the Mahindra Group has a presence or will soon establish one, including Malaysia, Cambodia, Vietnam and Myanmar. Mahindra UVs are noted for proving themselves in the toughest rallying conditions with notable examples being the grueling Rally des Sertoes in Brazil and the recent Tri Nation rally," said Ruzbeh Irani, Chief Executive, International Operations, Auto and Farm Sectors, Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd.

"We are absolutely delighted to be a part of the ASEAN Rally. This event demonstrates the tough and rugged DNA of Mahindra vehicles and will help build the Mahindra brand in Myanmar," said Mr. Rajul Goenka, Executive Director of Bandoola International (S) Pte. Ltd. Mahindra Distributor in Myanmar.

The ASEAN-India Car Rally 2012 can be tracked online on XUV500's website www.mahindraxuv500.com/asean and on www.facebook.com/mahindraxuv500 and www.twitter.com/mahindraxuv500.

Proposed Route Map: Ceremonial Flag off

November 26 - Indonesia
November 27 - Indonesia

Leg 1

November 27 - 28 - Singapore
November 28 - Singapore -> Malaysia
November 29 - Malaysia -> Thailand
November 30 - December 2 - Thailand
December 3 - Thailand -> Cambodia
December 3 - 5 - Cambodia
December 6 - Cambodia -> Vietnam
Day 12 - Cambodia -> Vietnam

Leg 2

December 7 - Vietnam -> Cambodia -> Laos
Day 7-9 - Laos
December 10 - Laos -> Thailand
December 11 - Thailand -> Myanmar
December 11-14 - Myanmar
December 15 - Myanmar -> India (Kohima)
December 16 - India (Guwahati)
December 17 - Guwahati (Flag in)

Ceremonial Flag-in

December 20 - New Delhi

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Post World War, the 3rd generation of the family, under the visionary guidance of S.N. Goenka (currently world renowned Vipassana Meditation Teacher), moved to Yangon, establishing several Industries and venturing into trading, government supplies, mining and agriculture activities, making Bandoola a leading business group in Myanmar. All trade and industries were however nationalized in the late sixties.

With the change in Government in 1988, the 4th generation commenced distribution for MNCs like Unilever, Colgate & Palmolive, Cadbury's, Reckitt & Colman and many more, making Bandoola a household name in Myanmar. The Group set up a pulses and beans processing plant and is also engaged in export of agricultural commodities. The Group ventured into Travel & Tourism and has been the GSA for Air India since 1994.

The 5th generation entered the non-ferrous and precious metals trade, which later led it to acquire rights for mining of metals and minerals. The Group was appointed distributor for Mahindra, has brought Tractors and Farm Equipment, for state-of-the-art mechanized farming in Myanmar and will soon also introduce passenger and commercial vehicles.

Bandoola has etched its name in the pages of Myanmar's history. Today, with a presence of 135 years, spanning five generations, the Goenka Bandoola Group is one of the oldest and most reputed business houses in Myanmar, engaged in multifaceted activities related to trade between India and Myanmar.

About The Mahindra Group

The Mahindra Group focuses on enabling people to rise. Mahindra operates in the key industries that drive economic growth, enjoying a leadership position in tractors, utility vehicles, information technology and vacation ownership. Mahindra also has a strong presence in the agribusiness, aerospace, components, consulting services, defence, energy, financial services, industrial equipment, logistics, real estate, retail, steel and two wheelers.

A USD 15.9 billion multinational group based in Mumbai, India, Mahindra employs more than 155,000 people in over 100 countries. In 2011, Mahindra featured on the Forbes Global 2000 list, a listing of the biggest and most powerful listed companies in the world. Dun & Bradstreet also ranked Mahindra at No. 1 in the automobile sector in its list of India's Top 500 Companies. In 2010, Mahindra featured in the Credit Suisse Great Brands of Tomorrow. In 2011, Mahindra acquired a majority stake in Korea's SsangYong Motor Company.

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India must accept China in its backyard: FM

NEW DELHI – India's foreign minister has said New Delhi must accept China's growing presence in its own backyard as Beijing steps up its investments and diplomatic efforts in South Asia.

New Delhi has been wary of growing Chinese influence around the Indian Ocean, where Beijing has forged ties with Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, the Maldives and Myanmar,

often through funding and building infrastructure.

Speaking at a conference in the Indian capital on December 10, Salman Khurshid said: "We will have to accept the new reality of China's presence in many areas that we consider an exclusive playground for India and its friends."

"China for instance would give a right arm to be in the Indian Ocean as comfortably

as India is placed in the Indian Ocean... this is an important critical factor for what we will see as the emerging Asian century," he said.

Khurshid, 59, was appointed foreign minister just over six weeks earlier amid expectations that he would bring a fresh approach to a decades-old diplomatic strategy that has favoured caution over ambition.

The minister, whose speech was sent to *AFP* by the foreign ministry, said India needed to develop its relationship with China into a meaningful partnership in the coming years.

"China is aggressive. China is a partner for us. China is a neighbour for us... the real creativity in India's foreign policy will come in being able to combine the strengths of China with the

strengths of India," he said.

Relations between India and China, which have an unresolved border dispute, are often prickly and marked by mutual distrust, a legacy of a brief border war in 1962.

India's navy chief said last week that Beijing's growing maritime strength was a major cause for concern and New Delhi needed to adapt its strategy accordingly.

— *AFP*

Japan scrambles jets for Chinese plane

TOKYO – Japan scrambled eight fighter jets on December 13 after a Chinese state-owned plane breached its airspace for the first time, over islands at the centre of a dispute between the countries.

It was the first incursion by a Chinese state aircraft into Japanese airspace anywhere since Tokyo's military began monitoring in 1958, the defence ministry said.

The move marks an escalation of what observers suggest is a Chinese campaign to create a "new normal" – where its forces come and go as they please around islands Beijing calls the Diaoyus, but Tokyo controls as the Senkakus.

It also came as ceremonies marked the sensitive 75th anniversary of the start of the Nanjing Massacre, when Japanese Imperial Army troops embarked on an orgy of violence and killing in the then-Chinese capital.

F-15 jets were mobilised after a Chinese Maritime Surveillance twin turbo-prop aircraft ventured over the islands just after 11am local time, Chief Cabinet Secretary Osamu Fujimura told reporters.

"It was a fixed-wing Y-12 aeroplane belonging to the Chinese State Oceanic Administration. We confirmed that this aeroplane flew in our country's airspace," he said.

"It is extremely regrettable. We will continue to resolutely deal with any act violating our country's sovereignty, in accordance with domestic laws and regulations," he said, adding a senior Chinese diplomat had been summoned.

Japan mobilised eight F-15 jets and an E2C early-warning aircraft, the *Asahi Shimbun* reported, citing a defence ministry source.

But the incident appeared to have passed off without any direct confrontation.

In Beijing, China's foreign ministry said the flight had been routine.

"China's maritime surveillance plane flying over the Diaoyu islands is completely normal," said spokesman Hong Lei.

"China requires the Japanese side to stop illegal activities in the waters and airspace of the Diaoyu islands," Hong said, adding they were "China's inherent territory since ancient times".

The incident came as Japan's coastguard chief told reporters he was preparing for a protracted dispute.

"As China has publicly said it will make this a permanent situation, we are preparing to be better equipped for this long, drawn-out contest," Takashi Kitamura, the commandant of Japan Coast Guard, told a news conference.

"Because we have various other responsibilities other than patrolling for border security, we are asking government to consider building up our capacity," he said.

Chinese government ships have moved in and out of waters around the islands for more than two months – four vessels were there for several hours on December 13.

Such confrontations have become commonplace since Japan nationalised the East China Sea islands in September, a move it insisted amounted to nothing more than a change of ownership of what was already Japanese territory.

But Beijing reacted with fury, with observers saying the subsequent riots throughout China had at least tacit backing from the Communist Party government. — *AFP*

Briefs

Inequality widens in China, survey finds

SHANGHAI – China's wealth gap has widened to a level where it is among the world's most unequal nations, a Chinese academic institute said in a survey, as huge numbers of poor are left behind by the economic boom.

China's Gini coefficient – a commonly used measure of inequality – was 0.61 in 2010, the Survey and Research Center for China Household Finance said, well above what some academics view as the warning line of 0.40.

A figure of 0 would represent perfect equality, and 1 total inequality.

RP typhoon toll rises above 900

MANILA – The death toll from the strongest typhoon to hit the Philippines this year has climbed above 900, with hundreds still missing, the government said on December 13.

Typhoon Bopha killed 902 people, most of them on southern Mindanao island, where floods and landslides caused major damage in nearly 2000 villages on December 4, the civil defence office said.

A total of 615 people remain missing, it said.

The typhoon destroyed 149,000 houses, it said.

Hun Sen admits human rights 'gaps'

PHNOM PENH – Cambodian Premier Hun Sen said on December 10 his country enjoyed greater freedom compared to the dark days of brutal Khmer Rouge rule but admitted there were "gaps" in the nation's human rights regime.

"Now there is so much freedom. But it doesn't mean that we don't recognise the gaps that need to be filled in," Hun Sen said in a speech on national radio.

His comments came as thousands of activists packed the capital for International Human Rights day to decry Cambodia's rights record, which campaigners say has been "in freefall" this year.

Malaysia seizes 24 tonnes of ivory

KUALA LUMPUR – Malaysian customs have seized 24 tonnes of unprocessed elephant tusks worth almost US\$20 million, the largest such haul to be made in the country, officials said on December 11.

Some 1500 tusks hidden in two containers loaded with timber were found by customs officials at the country's main port of Klang.

The containers had originated in the west African nation of Togo and were believed to be headed to China. — *AFP*



A newly-married couple kiss in Hong Kong on December 12. Thousands of couples tied the knot in Hong Kong, mainland China and Singapore on 12/12/12, seeking good fortune for marriages begun on the century's last repeating date. In Hong Kong and Singapore, 696 and 540 couples respectively registered marriages, a four-fold increase over the daily average in the Chinese territory and an eightfold increase in Singapore. — *AFP*

Watchdog investigates Sydney DJs hoax call

SYDNEY – Australia's media watchdog on December 13 opened an investigation into a prank call to the hospital treating Prince William's pregnant wife, Catherine, hours before an inquest in London was told that a nurse duped by the call was found hanged.

The hoax sparked global condemnation after the nurse, Jacinta Saldanha, 46, was found dead on December 7, three days after the call was made.

The Australian Communications and Media Authority said its probe was into the broadcaster, *2Day FM*, and not presenters Mel Greig and Michael Christian who have borne the brunt of worldwide anger.

When complaints are received about broadcasters in Australia, the regulator's usual process is to give them 60 days to respond.

But it also has discretionary powers to launch an immediate

investigation if the issue is serious enough and deemed to be in the public interest, a clause it has enacted.

ACMA will examine whether *2Day FM*, owned by Southern Cross Austereo, breached standards of decency, invaded privacy or broke rules of consent in line with the Commercial Radio Codes of Practice.

If it did, the station's right to broadcast could either be cancelled, restrictions put on its licence or it could be fined.

Under Australian regulations, the permission of anyone on the receiving end of a radio prank must be sought before the call can be broadcast.

A police officer told the inquest that the body of Saldanha, a mother of two, was found hanging in her room in nurses accommodation near King Edward VII's Hospital in central London, where Catherine was being treated. — *AFP*

Sex scandal rocks Singapore as Speaker quits over affair

SINGAPORE – Singapore opposition parties on December 13 urged Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong to call a by-election after the parliamentary Speaker abruptly resigned due to an extramarital affair.

The calls came less than 24 hours after Michael Palmer, 44, publicly confessed and announced his resignation from his parliamentary seat and membership of the ruling People's Action Party (PAP).

Confessing to "a serious error of judgment," the married father of one – who was only sworn in as Speaker in October 2011 – said he quit "to avoid further embarrassment to the PAP and to Parliament".

Singapore dailies on December 13 splashed pictures of Laura Ong, 33, a married community worker identified as Palmer's lover, in the latest sex scandal to hit the city-state.

The resurgent political opposition immediately urged Premier Lee to call a

by-election to fill Palmer's seat in the Punggol East ward.

"We strongly urge the Prime Minister to call for a by-election as soon as possible, to ensure that the constituents of Punggol East are democratically represented hereafter," Singapore People's Party chairman Lina Chiam said in a statement.

The Workers' Party echoed the call and announced its intention to run for the vacated seat.

Singapore Democratic Party chief Chee Soon Juan said on December 13 that Lee "cannot avoid calling for a by-election... without inflicting severe damage to his and his party's political and moral standing".

"Voters of Punggol East have been badly let down and they deserve the opportunity to elect another representative," he added.

By law, the decision to call a by-election is made wholly at the prime minister's

discretion.

Lee however gave no indication of his intentions in a Facebook post.

"The Constitution does not require me to call a by-election within any fixed timeframe," Lee said on his Facebook page late on December 12.

"I will carefully consider whether to call a by-election in Punggol East and, if so, when. I assure Singaporeans that I will make my decision based on what is best for the constituents of Punggol East and the country."

Opposition parties have been emboldened since last year's general election in which the Workers' Party won a total six seats in the 87-member parliament, riding on a wave of sentiment against PAP policies in a range of issues, including its open-door policy on foreign workers.

The PAP suffered its lowest share of the popular vote since coming to power more than 50 years ago. — *AFP*

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Class: 42

“Computer software design, computer programming, or maintenance of computer software; consultancy, instruction and providing information relating to computer software design, computer programming, or maintenance of computer software; computer system design, creating or maintenance of computer systems; consultation, instruction and providing information relating to computer system design, creating or maintaining of computer systems; providing technical information relating to computer software design, computer programming, or maintenance of computer software using the Internet, mobile telephone communication or other communication means; creating or maintaining home pages for others on the Internet; designing, creating and maintaining of home pages for

advertising on the Internet; hosting of digital content and web sites on the Internet; providing information relating to designing, creating and maintaining of computer programs against computer virus; providing information relating to designing, creating and maintaining of computer programs for computer network security; consulting services relating to security on communication network by the Internet, mobile telephone communication or other communication means; identification of electronic commerce users; inspection, verification and authentication of existence of falsification of contents of electronic information; encryption of data for computers; on-line identification of registered users; identification and collation with personal data of communication network users; providing information relating to designing, creating and maintaining of computer programs used for personal identification system using fingerprint; providing search engines by the Internet, mobile telephone communication or other communication means; conversion of sound, image and text information to sound, image and text signals by computers; data conversion to computer databases; electronic interchange of photo image in data form; information processing by computers; remote monitoring of computer systems; expansion and addition of functions and configuration of computer programs and computers (including central processing units and electronic circuits, magnetic discs and magnetic tapes storing computer programs and other peripheral equipment); verification of connection between computers; confirmatory verification of computer program behavior; computer consulting and instruction concerning maintenance and installation of computer programs to apparatuses using computer programs or apparatuses used by computer systems; computer system integration services; providing general information technology support services, including, troubleshooting in the nature of diagnosing computer hardware and software problems and repair of computer software problems via the Internet, telephone, email and in person; oversight and implementation of technology systems, including, computer project management services; enterprise resource planning implementation services, including the definition, acquisition and implementation of management information systems; data migration services; computer security service; rental of computers (including central processing units and electronic circuits, magnetic discs and magnetic tapes storing computer programs and other peripheral equipment); providing computer programs and providing information relating thereto; rental of servers; rental of memory areas of servers for communication networks; cloud computing services; consulting services in the field of cloud computing; application service provider (ASP), including, providing, hosting, managing, developing, and maintaining applications, software, web sites and databases, and software as a service (SaaS) services; technical consulting services in the field of datacenter architecture, public and private cloud computing solutions, and evaluation and implementation of Internet technology and services; Paas (Platform as a Service); Iaas (Infrastructure as a Service); industrial analysis and research services; preparation of manuals relating to computer programs and computers (including central processing units and electronic circuits, magnetic discs and magnetic tapes storing computer programs and other peripheral equipment); technical advice relating to performance, operation of computers and other machines that require high level of personal knowledge, skill or experience of the operators to meet the required accuracy in operating them; services in the field of science and technology, such as research and development related thereto; research and consultancy in the computing sector; research and development of computer technologies; quality control; design and development of computer hardware and software; creation and development of websites and Internet portals (search engines)”

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Comedian Zaganar finds humour in his darkest days

By Zon Pann Pwint

COMEDIAN Zaganar, renowned for his ability to always see the lighter side of life, has published his second book entitled *Pahtama* (The First), detailing the days of his first prison term that lasted a year.

Zaganar was first arrested in October 1988 for taking part in that year's national uprisings. As a well-known wit, he found humour in the hardships of prison life.

The punches and kicks he received while being interrogated and his poor diet of bean soup became fodder for jokes.

He wrote down his experiences when released in April 1989 while they were still fresh in his mind, but gave up hope of publishing the book for 20 years.

"I don't want to forget them," Zaganar said at the launch of his new book held at House of Media and Entertainment (HOME) on December 7.

"We took part in the 1988 uprising. Those who fell asleep while protesters marched passed their houses are working as key figures in this country's administration. We have to write about it," he said.

Zaganar is the stage name of U Thura. He first took to the stage at Yangon University during his days as a student.

He then founded Moe Nat Thuzar Anyeint Troupe in 1983 and formed a second troupe Mya Ponemamar a year before he was imprisoned.

"In the transitional period, people want to chronicle the '88 uprising and to make a documentary film but we don't have the complete records," he said.

He added that when he visited Cambodia he had met Youk Chhang, director of the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam) which chronicled the Khmer Rouge period.

"We have to chronicle the accounts of the 1988 uprising and compile a book. Former political prisoners like U Min Ko Naing, U Ko Ko Gyi, Ko Jimmy and myself wrote books which are based on the accounts and the events that we ourselves witnessed. We did this so that one day we could compile a complete book about the '88 uprising and about the prisons we were locked up in," he added.

U Zaganar starred in his first film in 1985 after graduating from university. He was the lead in four films leading up to 1988.

"I wrote about my life in prison not because I want to take revenge on them but



Comedian Zaganar speaks during an event with Burmese activists on February 2 at the National Endowment for Democracy in Washington, DC. PIC: AFP/Mandel NGAN

because I don't want to forget it and I want to document it," he added.

He faced a second prison term of five years in May 1990 and was freed in 1994.

Undeterred, he returned to his career as a comedian but was banned from performing on the stage in the same year and faced another ban from acting in and directing films in 1997.

Though this ban was eased in 2001, another one was imposed four years later in 2005.

Zaganar said he hopes to write a total of four books documenting his four stints in

prison.

"The last time I was in Myitkyina prison so that I will write about Myitkyina prison. I support the other former prisoners recording where they were held. For example, Ko Jimmy was held in Taunggyi prison and he wrote about it. One day we will be able to keep an archive containing detailed accounts of the 41 prisons in Myanmar," he explained.

Zaganar was last imprisoned in 2008. He was released as part of an amnesty on October 12, 2011.

Sung Thin Par ends seven year hiatus

By Nuam Bawi

SINGER Sung Thin Par is set to release her first solo album in seven years. *A Thit* (New), her fourth album as a solo artist, will come out on December 22.

This album is produced by Forever Blossom Co., Ltd, a media content provider for MRTV-4 and Mandalay FM. It is the first album that the company has produced.

"We have been only focused on broadcasts for our TV channels. This is the new step for us to produce a music album," Pyae Phyo Han, the director of Forever Blossom, told a press conference at the Park Royal Hotel on December 12.

"When we started looking for a singer for this project we knew that we wanted to produce a veteran's album. We did not want to produce a new singer's album for this project. When we spoke with Sung Thin Par, she said she had already recorded and we decided to produce her album without even listening to her songs because we believed in her," U Kyaw Win, spokesperson for Forever Blossom told *The Myanmar Times*.

Forever Blossom produced the album with the help of Thai-based Gold Disc. Despite the extra costs and profits slipping due to music piracy, Forever Blossom felt the need to focus on quality.

"We wanted to upgrade the quality of the CD and the appearance of the album. The quality of Myanmar CDs is very bad. After two or three plays, the CDs start to have problems and don't work. This disappointed a lot of fans. The fans started thinking that it made more sense to buy the pirated CDs at a very cheap price because they are almost the same quality as the originals," said U Kyaw Win.

"We decided to make this album with Gold Disc because we would like to present a product of higher quality than the CDs being made by the pirates."

Sung Thin Par said that her seven year hiatus had made her feel like a new singer and served as the inspiration for the album's title.

"There was a long gap between my last solo album and my new solo album, so I feel like I'm a new person for all my fans. This is the first time that I have released a solo album which includes only original songs," Sung Thin Par explained.

"Although I'm an older singer, my mind, my inspiration, my songs and my creations on this album are all new."

She is hoping that her efforts will be well received by her fans.

"I would like to hear some loud cheers from the fans when we release the album. We put our best effort into it," she said.

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English language arts mag to hit stands

By Zon Pann Pwint

AN ENGLISH language magazine aimed at broadening the understanding of Myanmar arts and artists will launch on January 1.

The quarterly *Art in Myanmar* will provide readers with articles and news covering painting, sculpture, photography and traditional Myanmar architecture and crafts.

The magazine will also include profiles of local and foreign artists, current news about art movements and articles about art galleries in Myanmar.

"Myanmar art has been attracting a lot of attention and there is no magazine dedicated to it. There are certainly many art enthusiasts here at home and abroad," said editor-in-chief and artist Daw Khin Than Phyu.

Daw Khin Than Phyu added that there will be a focus on the direction in which the arts are developing and movements within the art industry.

While Daw Khin Than Phyu will write some content, the magazine will publish news, art criticisms and interviews written by contributors. Daw Khin Than Phyu will collaborate with fellow artist K T U Tin Lwin to edit the magazine.

"I have had many difficulties leading up to the publishing of the magazine. Artists who are

very professional at painting are not skilled at writing in English and those who are experts at the English language don't have extensive knowledge of the arts," she said.

The first issue will publish a feature *Approach the Innwa Era*, about Mai Nu Oak Kyaung, a brick monastery considered one of the finest examples of such architecture.

"When I write about the ancient architecture of monasteries of the 19th century, I have to look at books like *Splendour in Wood: Buddhist Monasteries of Burma* by Sylvia Fraser-Lu for reference purposes because we are not skilled at the technical language of traditional ornaments, designs and crafts," she said.

Ms Sylvia Fraser-Lu, author of *Splendour in Wood and Burmese Lacquerware* told *The Myanmar Times* by email that the disappearance of traditional arts was a main motivation for creating the books that have become such valuable references.

"Crafts are on the decline everywhere. I wanted to have the ones in Myanmar with which I am familiar with recorded before they all disappear," Ms Fraser-Lu said.

Art in Myanmar will not be limited to the visual arts. Contemporary and classical literature, music and film will

be covered.

"Music enthusiasts are very interested about American singer and composer Jason Mraz who is scheduled to perform in Yangon. We can provide readers with information about Mraz through our magazine," Dae Khin Than Phyu said.

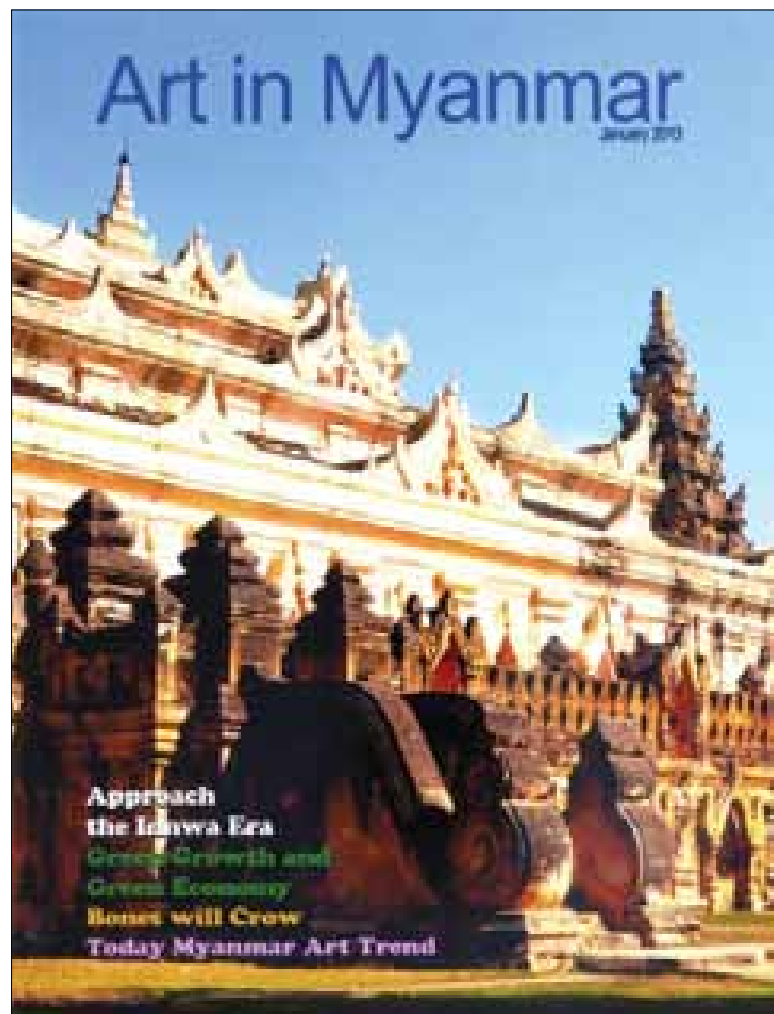
The announcement of the magazine has met a positive response throughout Myanmar's artist community.

La Min Thauung Tun, who will help to run the magazine, said an English language arts magazine can directly communicate with the foreign art enthusiasts.

Artist Khin Zaw Latt said he welcomes the up-and-coming magazine but also cautioned that quality and journalistic standards would need to remain high for the publication to be successful.

"We can't anticipate just how advantageous the magazine will be to the local artists, it depends on the quality of articles, how they approach writing about the current arts movement and artists and if the magazine will be able to reach a wider audience," Khin Zaw Latt said.

"I would like art critics and art professionals to write criticism rather than the artists themselves, but unfortunately there are few art critics and art historians in our country," he said.



Spielberg takes awards lead with Golden Globe nods

LOS ANGELES - Steven Spielberg's presidential drama "Lincoln" led nominations for the Golden Globes Thursday with seven nods, its second top billing in two days as Hollywood's awards season kicks off.

The veteran filmmaker has taken an early lead in the annual race which climaxes with the Oscars in February, with Globe nominations including the key categories of best drama, best director and best actor.

Actor turned director Ben Affleck's Iran hostage crisis drama "Argo" and Quentin Tarantino's brutal western "Django Unchained" came in second with five nods each from the Hollywood Foreign Press Association (HFPA).

"Les Miserables," romantic comedy "Silver Linings Playbook" and Osama bin Laden hunt movie "Zero Dark Thirty" by Oscar-winning director Kathryn Bigelow were tied in third place with four nominations each.

Daniel Day-Lewis is up for best actor as Abraham Lincoln, against Denzel Washington for piloting "Flight," Richard Gere for "Arbitrage," John Hawkes for "The Sessions" and Joaquin Phoenix for "The Master."

"I'm very grateful to the Hollywood Foreign Press Association for so generously acknowledging us in a year of such powerful films and performances," Day-Lewis said in a statement issued by his publicist.

For best actress Jessica Chastain won a nod as expected for her CIA agent role in "Zero Dark Thirty," along with Britain's Helen Mirren for "Hitchcock," France's Marion Cotillard for "Rust and Bone," Naomi Watts

for Indian Ocean tsunami drama "The Impossible" and Rachel Weisz for "The Deep Blue Sea."

The announcements come as Tinseltown accelerates into its annual awards season, after the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) nominations announced Wednesday, in which "Lincoln" and "Silver Linings Playbook" were joint leaders.

After a US presidential election year, Spielberg will

be hoping to fare better with "Lincoln" than he did with last year's epic "War Horse," which was nominated for six Oscars and two Globes but went home empty-handed.

In the best drama category, Spielberg's movie -- about Lincoln's battle to free slaves against the backdrop of the Civil War -- is up against "Argo," "Django Unchained," "Life of Pi" by Ang Lee and "Zero Dark Thirty."

"It's very gratifying to get

this many nominations from the HFPA for a film I worked so hard on and am so passionate about," said Tarantino, who won an Oscar for 1994 film "Pulp Fiction."

Bigelow, whose 2008 Iraq war movie "The Hurt Locker" won six Academy Awards, added: "It's an honor, sincerely, and very humbling to be singled out this way by the HFPA."

Affleck, nominated for directing "Argo," was modest

about his skills behind the camera.

"It is coming more naturally but I don't have the sense I have figured it out and to be honest I don't know if anyone ever figures it out," he said.

Best comedy or musical nominees are Indian-themed "The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel," "Silver Linings Playbook," "Les Miserables," "Moonrise Kingdom," and "Salmon Fishing in the Yamen," starring Ewan McGregor.

Best comedy/music actor nods went to Jack Black for "Bernie," "Hangover" star Bradley Cooper for "Silver Linings," Australian Hugh Jackman for "Les Mis," McGregor for "Salmon Fishing" and Bill Murray for "Hyde Park on Hudson."

Three British actresses are shortlisted for best comedy or musical turns: Emily Blunt for "Salmon Fishing," Judi Dench for "The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel," and fellow veteran Maggie Smith for "Quartet."

Britain's Grammy-winning songstress Adele won a Globe nod for her theme tune to the latest 007 blockbuster, "Skyfall."

On the small screen, multiple award-winning British period drama "Downton Abbey" was nominated for best drama, against "Breaking Bad," "Boardwalk Empire," spy thriller series "Homeland" and "The Newsroom."

The 70th annual Golden Globes show will be held in Los Angeles on January 13, hosted by Tina Fey and Amy Poehler -- a safer bet for organizers after British comic Ricky Gervais' close-to-the-bone humor the last few years. - AFP

'The Final Exhibit 2012' at Gallery 65

By Nyein Ei Ei Htwe

GALLERY 65 is presenting The Final Exhibit 2012 from December 15 to January 15.

Sixty paintings are displayed at the exhibition, including modern, contemporary, traditional realism and abstract works created with acrylic, water and oil paints.

"It is just to display our collection and to give some artists whose work will not be shown during the Tun Foundation Bank exhibition this year a chance to showcase their paintings. I heard that there is no sponsor for that event this year and some artists are feeling bad about that. Also, there have been changes to the Myanmar Traditional Arts and Artisans Organisation, so they will not have any 2012 year end show," said U Min Lwin, owner of Gallery 65.

Artists Nyo Hla, Myat Kyawt, Khin Maung Yin, Tin Maung Oo (Mandalay), NCS (Nyein Chan Su) and others will all have their work displayed.

The end of the year show is the last of 22 exhibitions that were held at Gallery 65 in 2012.

Gallery 65 is located at No. 65, Yaw Min Gyi Road, Dagon Township, Yangon. The gallery is open 10am to 6pm daily.



Megan Fox announces nominations at the 70th Annual Golden Globes Awards nominations event in Beverly Hills on December 13. Pic: AFP

Performance artists create change



Artists participate in performance workshop at Dagaung Gallery in December 2012. Pic: Supplied

Myanmar's new generation of alternative artists are turning to performance to express themselves

By Nathalie Johnston

THERE is certain scepticism when it comes to performance art worldwide, but in Myanmar, this branch of visual art is one of the fastest-growing mediums among artists.

While no widely accepted definition exists, one could describe performance art as a body-based practice, where an artist's actions and movements represent an idea that he or she is trying to express. Challenging more traditional art practices is exactly what these performance actions aim to do.

Myanmar is no stranger to artistic forms and traditions. Rich cultural practice has existed for centuries in writing, theatre, puppetry and temple art.

Impressionist and modern painting arrived under British colonialism and Myanmar has produced many an accomplished painter in these genres ever since.

However, it is the alternative art practices like installation, video and performance, which carry a strong and more immediate message about where the people in Myanmar come from and where they are going.

In the mid-90s, artists such as Htein Lin and Nyein Chan Su walked the streets of Yangon, documenting their actions with photography.

Aung Myint, one of the fathers of modern painting and Phyu Mon, one of Myanmar's first female new media artists, have both played important roles in the development of performance art in Yangon.

Aye Ko, of New Zero Art Space, was the first to bring an international performance artist - Japanese artist Seiji Shimoda - to Myanmar.

This first generation of

performance artists paved the way for the young and enthusiastic artists working today.

Mrat Lunn Htwann, Nyan Lin Htet and Moe Satt were younger artists who worked almost exclusively in performance art and helped bring it into the mainstream art scene in Yangon.

This December was the 5th year of the Beyond Pressure Contemporary Art Festival. Curator Moe Satt originally founded Beyond Pressure as Myanmar's first and only performance art festival.

His hope was that, "artists would continue to practice alternative art forms after the transition period."

Both Nyan Lin Htet and Mrat Lunn Htwann have also organised events through shows such as Theatre of the Disturbed and Body Reports, respectively. It is because of pioneering artists like the first and second generation that performance art has grown in popularity.

The question is, why performance? Why are more artists in Yangon and Mandalay choosing to work with this medium?

It doesn't make any money. You can't sell a performance piece - at least not in an undeveloped art market such as Myanmar's.

So what is the attraction? Artists all over the world use performance in order to have a "live presence" in their work.

But in a city such as Yangon, artists comment not only about their own personal experiences but also on the world around them, whether it's the political and economic changes happening in Myanmar, censorship, Buddhism, society, femininity or other issues.

Several artists have recently performed with weekly journals: reading

them aloud, burning them and building with them.

Others go for pure action: found objects become props and experiments.

Still others involve audience members, and not always purposely.

Less than two weeks ago, two audience members, including myself, were hit with eggs that were being used in a performance piece. How is that for performance art in your face?

The most recent Beyond Pressure performance event was held in a public space at Karaweik gardens with spotlights and video cameras focused on the artists.

Families and bystanders crowded the area, whispering questions to each other: "Are they making a movie?" or "Is it a magic show?"

One by one artists created their works in front of the bewildered yet captivated crowd.

Intan Rafiza, an artist from Malaysia, released birds from a cage, picking out the dead ones and respectfully burying them in the ground.

Zoncy, a female artist from Myanmar, used plastic wrap to cover her face in flowers, not before she passed around the flowers for people to smell.

Ma Ei, another female artist from Myanmar, allowed audience members to put cosmetics on her face.

Mrat Lunn Htwann invited everyone to give him one possession to place on a table so that he could use it in his performance.

The audience interacting and witnessing the action is also what performance art is all about.

Artist Aung Ko once said: "We are just human beings and we should relate to each other that way."

Performance artists often

state simply that they want to bring the everyday into their art by using their body. It is that simple.

Living in a proverbial cage in a crippling system for so long, performance art offers something liberating. It is not theatre. There is no script. Nor it is a painting, where an artist puts down the brush when the painting is complete.

Things can go wrong, audience members get involved and artists come together.

At the New Zero and French Institute International Multimedia show in mid-December, artist Nyein Way said he "really wanted to work with the young performance artists."

As a poet and artist working in the field for 20 years, it was an important step he took to include others in a collaborative performance; the artists use the same space, but do not interact. It was a great example of performance bridging the generation gap.

Visiting international artists are often surprised about the development of alternative art forms such as performance in Myanmar.

Vietnamese artist Tien Thua Le commented: "The passion and talent reminds me of art in Vietnam 20 years ago."

All the artists seem excited for the future of art in Yangon. With many talented artists and a passion for art happenings, everyone wants to be a part of it.

However, as with any strong movement, it is not without its critics.

Journalist and artist Htoo Lwin Myo said he "wishes there were more local and international scholars to approach performance and other new media art from

a historical and academic perspective."

Others prefer not be affiliated with festivals such as Beyond Pressure, opting instead for a more individual approach to art practice.

Whatever the case, Myanmar is full of artists who want to have a voice and make their voices heard. Performance art requires no material and no specific location. An artist can create art anywhere,

anytime.

There might trouble, or a bewildered audience, or even a revelation, but in a country changing as quickly as Myanmar, it's best to expect the unexpected.

(Nathalie Johnston is an independent researcher at Myanmar Art Evolution, an online platform exploring alternative art and culture in Myanmar. Originally from the US, she received her MA in Art History in Singapore and is based in Yangon.)

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Rock stars shine at Hurricane Sandy benefit gig

NEW YORK - Rock music royalty, including the Rolling Stones, Bruce Springsteen, Pink Floyd's Roger Waters and Paul McCartney, joined in a stellar line-up on December 12 to raise money for victims of superstorm Sandy.

The "12-12-12" concert at Madison Square Garden brought a Who's Who of rockers under one roof for the event, which was broadcast live across 37 US television networks and a multitude of Internet livestream sites, as well as radio. Organisers expected two billion people to tune in worldwide.

Musicians also included The Who, Jon Bon Jovi, Eric Clapton, Dave Grohl of the Foo Fighters, Billy Joel, Alicia Keys, Chris Martin, and rapper Kanye West, who lit up the Twittersphere by performing in a black leather skirt.

While music stars strutted their stuff, movie and TV performers including Leonardo DiCaprio, Chris Rock, Susan Sarandon, Whoopi Goldberg, and political humorist Jon Stewart fronted a telethon drive or appeared in the arena to appeal for funds in the event organised by the Robin Hood Foundation.

The phone bank was literally wall-to-wall with celebrities, among them Chelsea Clinton, the increasingly high-profile only child of former president Bill Clinton and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

Mega-stars with New York and New Jersey roots said

the October 29 hurricane-strength storm, which killed about 120 people in the United States, had humbled them.

"I've never seen anything remotely close to what Hurricane Sandy was," Bon Jovi said before being joined on stage by fellow New Jersey star Springsteen. "This storm lasted a day. The effects of it are going to last a lifetime."

Coldplay frontman Chris Martin performed a duet with surprise guest Michael Stipe of R.E.M. fame, and McCartney sang in the show's finale alongside a reunion of surviving members of 90s grunge rock band Nirvana.

Between the high-powered rock anthems, comedian Adam Sandler played a more unusual song with a cheekily rewritten version of Leonard Cohen's ballad "Hallelujah."

"Hallelujah, Sandy screw ya, we'll always rule ya, coz we're New Yorkers," ran the chorus to the feisty homage to the Big Apple and neighbouring New Jersey that had some in the crowd in tears of laughter.

But even the funny men showed their serious side at the event.

Stewart, of "The Daily Show," recalled his boyhood on the Jersey shore and praised the area's "working-class" heroes. He then called on the crowd of 13,000 to give a standing ovation to the police officers of Seaside Heights, a beach community that was torn apart in the storm.

Demand for seats quickly turned tickets into gold dust. The StubHub site listed one ticket at US\$10,400, and before the first note played, tickets and other sales had raised \$32 million for the fund-raising drive.

At the end of the night, Robin Hood director David Saltzman said "tens of thousands" of people had made donations, adding that the money would be "distributed in a matter of days, weeks, months -- not years."

Mega-storm Sandy slammed into New Jersey on October 29 before rolling up through New York City, bringing hurricane-force winds to the densely populated region and leaving massive flooding and ruined infrastructure in its wake.

Even now, tens of thousands of people remain without electricity, hot water or heating in the New York area.

Many people in the hardest-hit beach communities have lost their entire homes, just as the winter cold sets in.

The White House has asked Congress to send \$60.4 billion to aid rebuilding efforts, but the money has yet to be approved. The governors of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut have estimated damages as high as \$82 billion.

The storm killed 120 people in the United States after carving a deadly path through the Caribbean.

-AFP



Bruce Springsteen performs during "12-12-12: The Concert For Sandy Relief" December 12 at Madison Square Garden in New York City. Pic: AFP

Shankar to receive posthumous Grammy award

LOS ANGELES - Indian sitar player Ravi Shankar is to receive a posthumous lifetime achievement Grammy award, organisers of the music industry's top prize show said on December 12.

Three-time Grammy winner Shankar, who died on December 11 in California, is among seven artists including Carole King and the Temptations named as Grammys Lifetime Achievement Award honorees.

"He was selected before his death and notified last week he was receiving the honor," a Grammys spokeswoman, Stephanie Schell, told AFP when asked if Shankar was added to the list after his death.

"As one of the world's most renowned sitar players, (Shankar) is a true ambassador for international music," the Recording Academy said in its brief biography of the Indian musician, alongside those of the other honorees.

"As a performer, composer, teacher and writer, he is considered a pioneer in bringing Indian music to the West," it added.

Shankar died on December 11 in southern California at the age of 92, after failing to recover from surgery at a hospital in La Jolla, near San Diego last week. His family was at his bedside.

The sitar pioneer taught his close friend George

The other Grammy lifetime award recipients are "You've Got a Friend" singer King, classical pianist Glenn Gould, jazz musician Charlie Haden, blues legend Lightnin' Hopkins, Motown greats the Temptations and Patti Page, famous for "(How Much Is That) Doggie In The Window."

The 55th annual Grammy Awards show will be held in Los Angeles on February

release, "Traveller."

In a comment via his publicist after the nominations were announced, Shankar said: "It is thrilling to see something we worked so hard on, and released on our own label, given this wonderful recognition."

"And, of course, I am deeply proud of my daughter Anoushka and her own nomination. Actually, I think she might give a better speech," he added.

Another daughter, five-time Grammy winning singer Norah Jones, paid tribute to her father. "He will be greatly missed by me and music lovers everywhere," she said in a statement.

She posted two videos of her father on her Facebook page. "Here are some great clips of my dad playing the sitar for anyone who never saw him perform live," she wrote.

"He's 51 in the first clip and 92 in the second clip, and an inspiration in both. I love you and miss you, Pops." - AFP

'As a performer, composer, teacher and writer, he is considered a pioneer in bringing Indian music to the West'

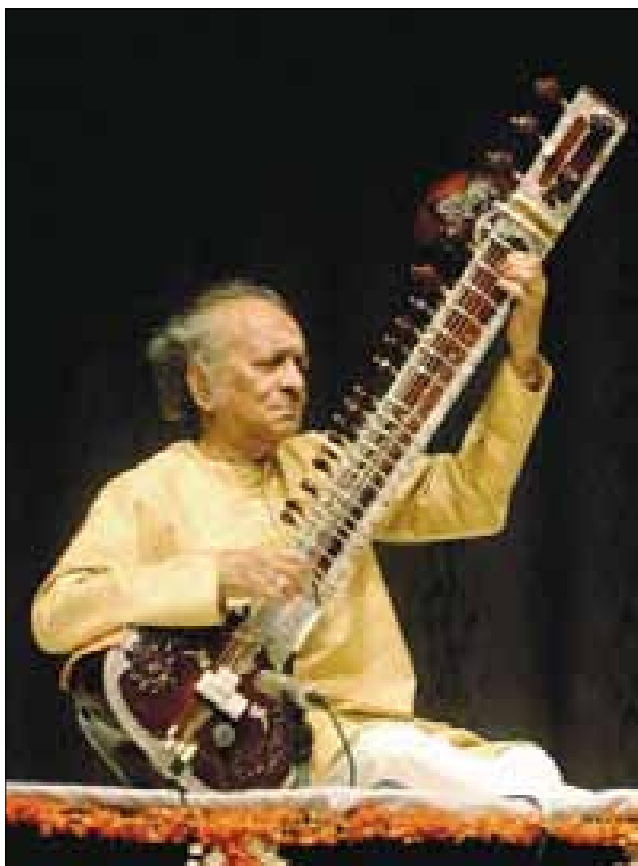
Harrison, the late Beatle, to play the instrument and collaborated with him on several projects, including the ground-breaking Concert for Bangladesh in 1971.

Harrison called Shankar "The Godfather of World Music", and Yehudi Menuhin, widely considered one of the greatest violinists of the 20th century, compared him to Mozart.

10, 2013.

Shankar received a Grammy nod only last week, when the Academy announced those shortlisted, including his "The Living Room Sessions Part 1," released by his East Meets West Music label, for Best World Music Album.

His daughter Anoushka Shankar was also nominated in the same category for her Deutsche Grammophon



Indian musician Ravi Shankar plays a sitar at a function to pay tribute to Beatle George Harrison in 2004. Mr Shankar died at the age of 92 in San Diego on December 12. Pic: AFP

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Hepburn, a master of film and fashion

By Peter Rainer

NEW YORK — For my money, Katharine Hepburn was America's finest actress. But America's finest clothes horse?

A new exhibit — "Katharine Hepburn: Dressed for Stage and Screen" at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts at Lincoln Centre through January 12 — makes the case.

With her preference for slacks, Hepburn cultivated a stylishly androgynous look that made her an icon to many, if an irritant to some.

By the way, note that I am not using the word "pants" here in deference to her immortal line in *Pat and Mike* (1952), the best of her nine movies with Spencer Tracy: "They're not pants, they're slacks. Watch your language."

It's Hepburn's performances, of course, and not her costumes, that are her legacy. In her 66-year career, she appeared in 44 films and eight television movies, as well as some 33 plays. The stinker quotient is awfully low for such an extended run.

Not that there weren't more than a few of those. She was ineffably miscast as a Chinese patriot in the Pearl Buck adaptation *Dragon Seed* (1944). With her Yankee verve and Bryn Mawr intonations, who is less Mandarin than Hepburn?

And even though Kenneth Tynan once referred to her as the "Garbo of the Great Outdoors", that's because he probably never saw her as the uneducated Ozark mountain girl Trigger Hicks in *Spitfire* (1934).

In her 1991 autobiography *Me: Stories of My Life*, which is so stylistically staccato that it makes Mickey Spillane seem like late Henry

James, Hepburn had this to say: "Was a Southern sort of mountain spirit. Shame on you, Kathy."

But of the glories, there is almost no end. In her very first movie, *A Bill of Divorcement* (1932), opposite John Barrymore, she already was sui generis — imperially elegant, angular and self-possessed. A year later, as the star-struck actress in *Morning Glory*, she won the first of her four Oscars.

Her performances as Jo in *Little Women* (1933) and as the small-town social climber in *Alice Adams* (1935) are so strikingly vivid that it's as if she was putting us right inside her head.

It's difficult to believe that for a time in the late 1930s, exhibitors labelled Hepburn "box office poison". (She was in good company, along with Garbo and Dietrich.)

It's equally difficult to comprehend that perhaps her greatest comedy, *Bringing Up Baby* (1938), where she plays a madcap heiress opposite Cary Grant's hornswoggled palaeontologist, was a commercial flop.

None of this sank Hepburn, any more than the devastating reviews of her Broadway performance in *The Lake* back in 1933, which prompted Dorothy Parker's immortal quip that Hepburn "runs the gamut of emotions from A to B".

Less well known is George S Kaufman's jab, after hearing that Hepburn had sheets put up in the wings to avoid a draft: "She's afraid she might catch acting." (Hepburn, it should be noted, agreed with Parker and Kaufman.)

She engineered her own triumphant comeback in Philip Barry's *The Philadelphia Story*, first on Broadway in 1939 and then as a George Cukor



Katharine Hepburn (centre) stars in 'Adam's Rib' with (from left) David Wayne, Spencer Tracy and Eve March. Pic: Clarence Sinclair Bull

film in 1940, co-starring Grant and Jimmy Stewart.

She had bought the film rights (reportedly bankrolled by boyfriend Howard Hughes) before the play opened, which allowed her to call the shots in Hollywood. Hepburn said of her role as Philadelphia blueblood Tracy Lord: "I gave her life and she gave me back my career."

Hepburn's best comedies also include *Adam's Rib* (1949), where she and Tracy parry as married lawyers on opposing ends of a court battle, and *The African Queen* (1951), where her spinster Rosie, in a performance inspired by Eleanor Roosevelt's smile-in-the-face-of-

adversity fortitude, settles in with Humphrey Bogart's gin-soaked river rat.

Films like these set her firmly in the pantheon of Hollywood's most accomplished comedians. What is virtually unprecedented is how she could be equally great in tragedy.

As drug-addicted Mary Tyrone in Sidney Lumet's film of Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey Into Night* (1962) she gives her finest performance. In her final scene, dragging around her wedding dress in a doped-up haze, she evokes abject awe and terror.

To care for the dying Tracy, Hepburn did not work again in the

movies until 1967, in *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*. Tracy died 17 days after filming his last scene.

In the remaining decades, she played indomitable types: Eleanor of Aquitaine in *The Lion in Winter* (1968); Hecuba, Queen of Troy in *The Trojan Women* (1971); Coco Chanel on Broadway in the panned but popular musical *Coco* (1969-1970); and, at 74, Yankee matriarch Ethel Thayer opposite Henry Fonda in *On Golden Pond* (1981).

In her own life, as both actress and modern American female archetype, Hepburn was as indomitable as any of the women she played.

— Bloomberg News

Tortoiseshell craftsmen forced to adapt to a new century

PARIS — What did Yves Saint Laurent, Jackie Kennedy and the architect Le Corbusier have in common? Their eyewear, for one, as clients of the luxury French tortoiseshell artisan, Bonnet.

Four decades after the trade in tortoiseshell was banned under the 1973 CITES convention, the fourth-generation family firm sees itself as custodian of a rare craft, fashioning made-to-measure spectacles from stocks amassed before the ban.

Bonnet describes its customers -- among them Audrey Hepburn, Maria Callas or presidents Francois Mitterrand and Jacques Chirac -- as "aesthetes" more concerned about timeless style than fashion.

Christian Bonnet, who learned the trade from his father and grandfather, holds the rank of "maitre d'art", an honorific title granted by France's culture ministry and currently held by just over 100 craftsmen nationwide.

Today jointly headed by Christian and his sons Franck and Steven, Bonnet turns out around 100 pairs of handmade tortoiseshell glasses per year

for prices ranging from 3,500 to 30,000 euros (US\$4,500 to \$38,600)

"My father didn't want me to go into the trade, because of the problem with tortoiseshell supply," produced mainly from the shell of the endangered hawksbill turtle, Franck Bonnet told AFP.

With 12 grammes of

tortoiseshell needed for one pair of glasses, the firm says it uses around two to three kilos per year.

Declared part of French national heritage in 2007, Bonnet will not say how much stock it holds, but the supply is finite.

"It is inconceivable that we would ever fish another turtle

out of the ocean," says the 41-year-old, himself a staunch environmentalist.

So he decided a few years ago it was time to look to the future -- and to a wider market.

"For my father, my grandfather and great-grandfather before them, it was tortoiseshell, tortoiseshell,

tortoiseshell only.

"I said to my father, 'You are the last tortoiseshell craftsman, but you are also the last hand-made eyewear maker. If we could only use more readily available materials, maybe I can keep our craft alive?'"

That is how from 2008 onwards, he introduced buffalo horn -- lowering the average frame price to between 1,200 and 1,500 euros, and acetate, for budgets between 850 and 1,150 euros.

Tortoiseshell aside, the dozen workers at its Paris boutique and workshop in Sens, a few hours southeast of the capital, now produce some 700 pairs using new materials.

The next step towards broadening what they offer is to come from customisation -- allowing people to change the size and colour on standard models.

Franck Bonnet says he loves watching Japanese tourists inspect his wares, and is mulling opening a boutique in Tokyo.

"They go over every last detail. You know you haven't put the effort in for nothing!"

Bonnet was snared in controversy recently when a star journalist, Audrey Pulvar -- then in a relationship with a Socialist minister -- was outed for wearing a pair of their steeply-priced glasses.

"It wasn't 12,000 euros, it wasn't 15,000 euros or 18,000!", as reported in the media, Bonnet told AFP. "Five thousand is more like it."

In other words, almost an entry-level model.

"It's true it is costly," Bonnet said. "But we artisans are not millionaires, this kind of high craft is extremely time-consuming."

Making glasses to measure means studying the face in minute detail.

"How high your ears are, the shape of your nose -- all have an incidence on the tilt of the lenses, and therefore on how well you see," he explained. And that is before all the different steps of shaping and polishing the frame.

"You can spend a crazy length of time on a pair of spectacles, redoing them two, three, five times to get them exactly right. What costs money is not marketing, it's what goes on the client's nose!" - AFP



An apprentice of Christian Bonnet prepares a pair of tortoiseshell spectacles frames, looking at the turtle-shell's shades, on November 19 in the company Maison Bonnet's Sens workshop, south of Paris. Pic: AFP

Phyo's Cooking Adventure

Phyo cuts through culture to reveal life's true taste

Mutton meatballs and Greek salad

Meatballs are a consummate favourite for everyone from adults to children. I loved to eat mutton meatball curry and fried meatballs with steamed or fried rice when I was living in Yangon. I enjoyed meatballs with pasta, meatball sandwiches and meatball curries from around the world after relocating to Sydney.

You can make batches to freeze and use later for curries, a quick bite or with fried rice. Nan bread and tortillas are great for meatball rolls. Just add natural yoghurt, fresh mint, cucumber, tomatoes, salad, onions and mustard, tomato or chili sauce then roll them up with tortilla. They are one of my favourites for lunches at school or at work.

There are numerous ways to cook meatballs and here I've combined two methods. I've paired them with tortillas and a simple Greek salad. They are a perfect match.

With the holiday season upon us, this recipe can go right to the entertaining tables. You can even make it one day before.



500 g of mutton (minced)
1 egg
1 onion (finely chopped)
1 teaspoon of cumin seeds
1 tablespoon of dried mints
½ teaspoon of ground coriander
½ teaspoon of salt
Freshly ground pepper
¼ cup of vegetable oil
½ cup of natural yoghurt
Fresh mint leaves and wedges of lemon to serve
Olive oil to serve

PREPARATION
Pat the minced mutton dry with a paper towel. Add egg, onion, cumin seeds, mint, dried coriander and minced mutton into the bowl and mix well.

Then scoop the mixture with a tablespoon and roll into a ball. Lay the balls on a plate, cover with clear plastic wrap and refrigerate

for half an hour.

In a frying pan heat up the vegetable oil over high heat. Fry the meatballs under golden brown. Then add ¼ cup of water and cook them through while covered. When the meatballs are tender, drain all excess oil.

Tortilla

Dampen a paper towel with water.

Then lay the tortillas on the plate and cover with the damp paper towel and microwave for 5-6 sec until puffy.

Or heat them in a non stick frying pan.

Serve the meatballs with tortilla, yoghurt, olive oil, fresh mint l, wedges of lemon and Greek salad.

Greek Salad INGREDIENTS

(6 servings)
5 ripe tomatoes
1 cucumber
1 green pepper
2 Asian onions
1 tub of Kalamata olives
100 g of Feta cheese (marinated is preferred)

Dressing INGREDIENTS

¼ cup of olive oil
2 tablespoon of red wine vinegar
1 teaspoon of dried oregano leaves
½ teaspoon of Dijon mustard
Salt and pepper for taste

PREPERATION

Cut the tomatoes into wedges and halve them again. Peel the cucumbers and cut them length wise and slice into cubes.

Cut the green peppers into pieces the same size as the tomatoes.

Add all the ingredients for the dressing into a jar and mix well.

In a large bowl, add tomatoes, green pepper, shallots and olives and pour the dressing over, then toss. Sprinkle the feta cheese and mix them gently.

SHOPPING LIST

Kalamata olives, tortilla, marinated feta cheese are from Sharky's.



Main Tips

Make sure to pat the mince dry before mixing. Add ¼ teaspoon chili powder for extra spice. Do not take the tortillas out of fridge until you are ready to prepare them.

QUAFFING QUOTE

"Miracles are like meatballs, because nobody can exactly agree on what they are made of, where they come from, or how often they should appear."
- Lemony Snicket in *The Carnivorous Carnival*

NEXT WEEK

Xmas dessert - quick and easy ice cream cakes, a free form for your creations.

Red Wine

Marquis de Chasse Merlot & Cabernet 2009

Marquis de Chasse's take on this classic blend is a smooth and reliable drop that pairs well with red meat but is just as easily savoured on its own.

Score BOX

8/10

Ks 15,300

White Wine

Oustric Sauvignon Blanc

"Oustric will give you great emotions," intones the label. Indeed, but which emotions. The "intense aromas" arrive as promised but the somewhat tart taste failed to excite.

Score BOX

6/10

Ks 9,900

FOOD REVIEW

Home style it ain't



La Maison 20 Restaurant & Bar

20 Kabar Aye Pagoda Road, Yankin township, Yangon
Tel: 01-664-204, 01-667-504

Food: 7
Drink: 7
Atmosphere: 7
Service: 8
X Factor: 8

Score BOX

7/10

Happily, that did not happen.

My main beef was with the food. This is Myanmar fare customised for the sensitive Western palate, which is fine when you do it well, as some Yangon establishments do. But the classics that I ordered - chicken and gourd soup (K4800) and eggplant, or aubergine, salad (K2000) - were in my opinion too far removed from what I consider to be their original state.

The salad was overly dry and creamy, and lacked its normal delicious smokiness. The chicken and gourd soup seemed to have coconut milk in it.

The prices are a little expensive considering what you get, and the drinks are no different: a rum sour was K4000, while a glass of Red Mountain shiraz was K5000. Only afterwards did I realise they forgot to charge me for the Thai-style omelette with pork (K3500).

Nevertheless, La Maison 20 exudes potential. With some tinkering to the menu, it could become an established fixture on the Yangon dining scene. - TK

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A teacher and old students @ B.E.H.S No (1) Botahtaung ceremony to honor teachers

@ 5th anniversary of NOW! Magazine



U Win Lwin Oo, Mr. Quek Ser Yang and Mr. Felix Loo @ a.g.o.p. design



U Yan Haing Zaw and U Wai Thein @ Fifth Avenue boutique opening



@ 5th anniversary of NOW! Magazine



H.E. Dr V.S. Sheshadri @ Grand opening of United Bank of India



Mrs. Neena and Mrs. Shanda More @ Grand opening of United Bank of India



Thandar Bo @ Fifth Avenue boutique opening



Ma Tin Tin Aye, Ma Chaw Chaw Myint, Ms. Charlene Chan, Mr. Ethan Hua and Mr. Ho Choon Heung @ Prolink new product launch event

Yadana Kyaw Oo @ Luminarc 2012 Design Show



Directors of Hitachi @ Grand opening of the Hitachi showroom



Make-up artist @ One Touch new product launch



Daw Nelly Tun and U Hla Oo @ Art in Myanmar magazine launch



Ma Khin Myo Theik, Daw Khin Than Phyu and Daw Khin Mya Win @ Art in Myanmar magazine launch



U Win Lwin Oo, Mr. Quek Ser Yang and Mr. Felix Loo @ a.g.o.p. design studio opening



Daw Win Win Tint @ Luminarc 2012 Design Show



Khine Thazin Yu Wah, Daw Phyu Phyu Nyunt, Ma Phyu Thwe Maw, Daw Aye Aye Myint, Khine Thazin Ngu Wah and San Htut @ Fifth Avenue boutique opening



@ 5th anniversary of NOW! Magazine



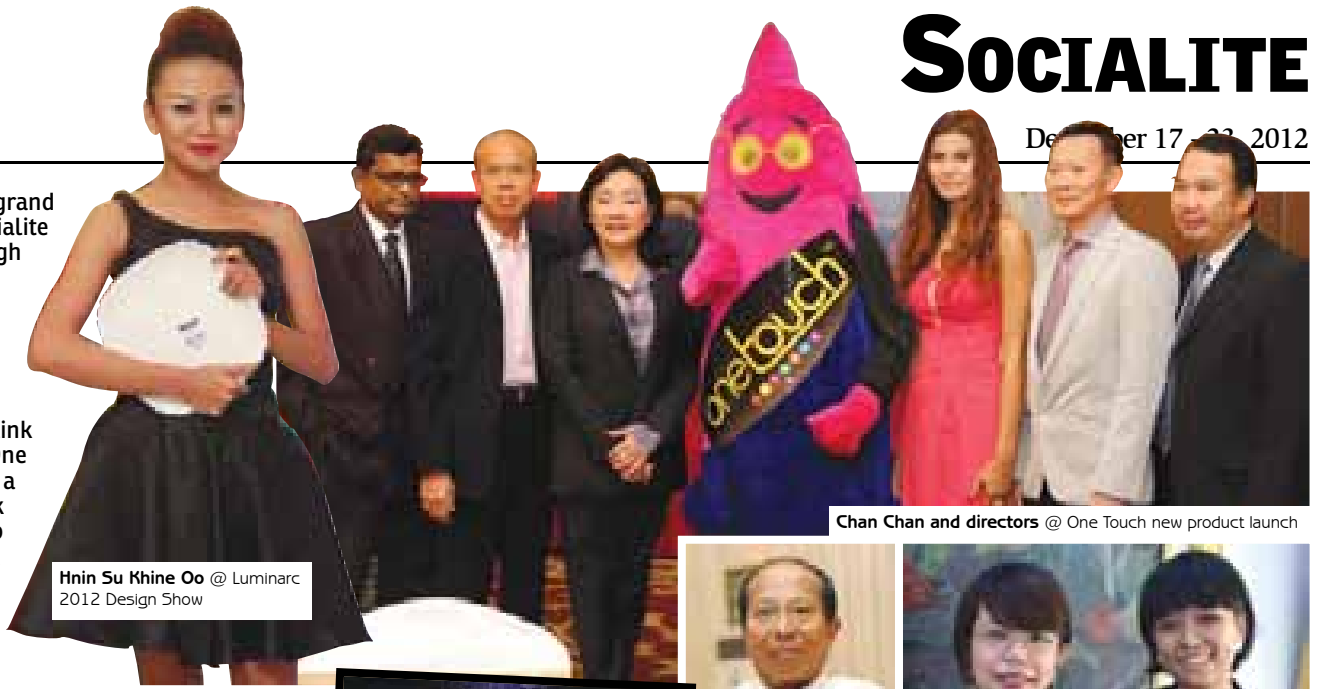
Attendees @ One Touch new product launch

SOCIALITE WITH NYEIN EI EI HTWE



Product launches and grand openings have kept Socialite busy and warm through a chilly December. On December 5, she attended two grand opening ceremonies.

First, she jetted to United Bank of India at Kan Daw Gyi Palace Hotel, then down to the new Hitachi showroom on Alone Street. On December 6, she was at Traders Hotel for the ProLink product launch and continued on to Chatrium Hotel where One Touch condoms were promoting their product. Socialite took a much needed break, sleeping in on December 7, but was back at it that evening attending the wedding reception of Ko Bo Bo Win and Ma Eizali Lwin where she wished the happy couple all the best. On December 8, she went to the opening ceremony of a.g.o.p design studio in Kamaryut township then caught the Luminarc 2012 design show at Market Place in Bahan township.



Chan Chan and directors @ One Touch new product launch

Hnin Su Khine Oo @ Luminarc 2012 Design Show



@ 5th anniversary of NOW! Magazine



Daw San San Lwin, Daw Aye Aye and Ma Sandar Oo @ Fifth Avenue boutique opening



U Nyunt Wai @ Grand opening of United Bank of India



Ma Yadanar and Ma Lae Phyu Pyar Myo Myint @ Art in Myanmar magazine launch



Ko Zay Yar Min and wife @ B.E.H.S No (1) Botahtaung ceremony to honor teachers



Teacher U Tin Aung @ B.E.H.S No (1) Botahtaung ceremony to honor teachers



Attendees @ Luminarc 2012 Design Show



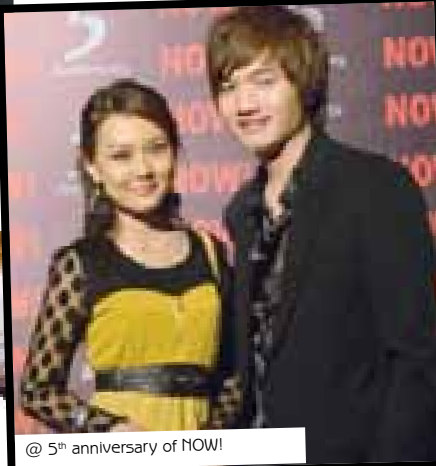
Daw Phyu Phyu Nyunt and Daw Aye Aye Myint @ Fifth Avenue boutique opening



Ma Chaw Su and Ma Tin Wai Hnin @ Fifth Avenue boutique opening



Mr. Amon @ One Touch new product launch



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Couple with Rain Moe and Aw Ratha @ Ko Bo Bo Win and Ma Inzali Lwin's wedding reception

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Make sure your kid's future is bright

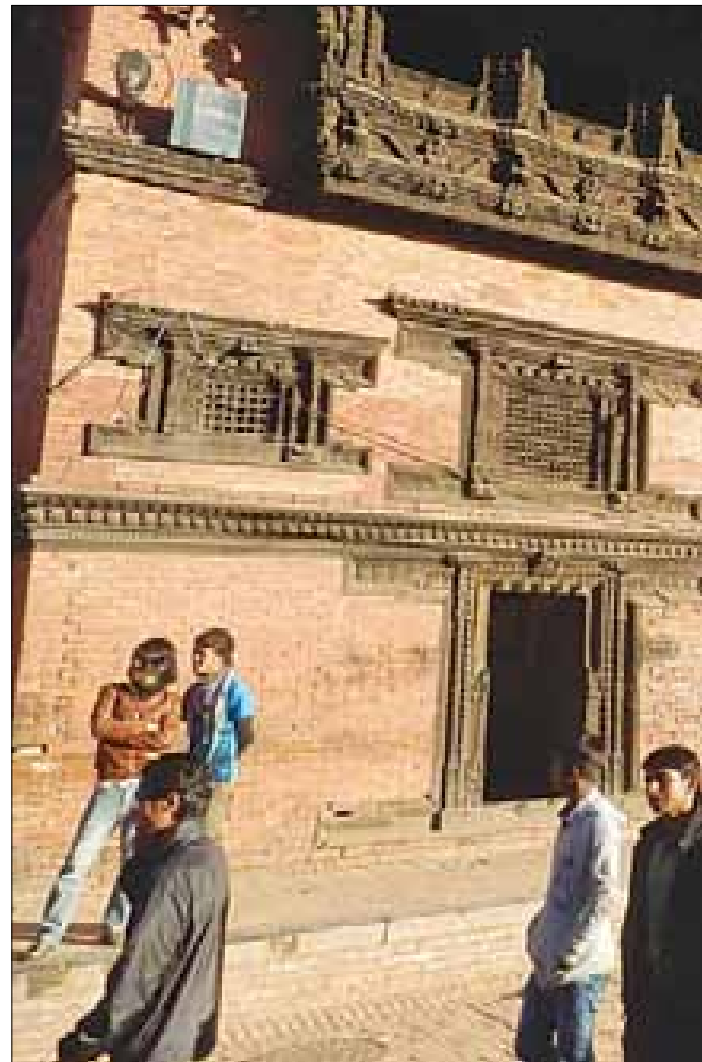
Busyness
illness
homeworks
worryes

Teach your kids how to play defense"

Multivitamin Syrup
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DOMESTIC FLIGHT SCHEDULES

Table with 6 main columns representing flight routes: YANGON TO NAY PYI TAW, NAY PYI TAW TO YANGON, YANGON TO MANDALAY, MANDALAY TO YANGON, YANGON TO NYAUNG U, NYAUNG U TO YANGON, YANGON TO NYAUNG U MYITKYINA, NYAUNG U MYITKYINA TO YANGON, YANGON TO HENDU, HENDU TO YANGON, YANGON TO SITTWE, SITTWE TO YANGON, YANGON TO MYEIK, MYEIK TO YANGON, and YANGON TO THANDWE, THANDWE TO YANGON. Each column contains flight details for various airlines and carriers, including flight numbers, departure times, and arrival times.



Haphazard obs

By Khin Su Wai

A COUPLE weeks after returning to Myanmar from my trip to Nepal, I still had vivid memories of the moments during which I stood gazing at the beautiful Himalayan mountain scenery, and the spectacular architecture of Dubar Square of Kathmandu Valley. I had never been to Nepal before, and I'm sure that most people who go there for the first time have similar experiences of awe and wonder at the amazing sights and landscapes. I travelled to Nepal from November 18 to 21 as part of a group of about 60 visitors participating in a United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) media workshop on the environment of the Asia-Pacific region. The schedule for the four-day workshop was very tight, so it was hard to find time to wander around the Nepalese capital of Kathmandu. Fortunately, one of my friends from UNEP made a plan to visit Dubar Square just before the start of the workshop. I did not expect to

find such beautiful scenery and to get a taste of Nepalese culture from such a short trip to this small country, all the while learning about environmental issues from the workshop. As our group explored Dubar Square, which is a UNESCO Heritage Site, we saw many other tourists marvelling at the amazing temples and beautiful art. It was thrilling to be surrounded by the spectacular architecture, which vividly showcased the skills of artists and craftsmen working over several centuries. As a girl from Mandalay, the old royal city of Myanmar, I was very surprised at the small wood carvings at the temples in Kathmandu. I learned that this was typical of the Newari architectural style, which is elevated on platforms that form pyramid-like structures. While travelling around the city I noticed that, like Mandalay, many people used motorcycles for transport, and there were also lots of small taxi cars. Traffic was very congested in some parts of the city.

Domestic Airlines

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Air Mandalay (6T) 146, Dhamazedi Road, Bahan Tsp, Yangon Tel : 501520, 525488 (Head Office) 720309, 652753,	
Air KBZ (K7) 33-49, Corner of Bank Street & Maha Bandoolla Garden Street, Kyauktada Tsp, Yangon, Myanmar. Tel: 372977-80, 533030-39 (Airport) Fax: 372983	
Asian Wings (AW) No.34(A-1), Shwe Taung Gyar Street, Bahan Township, Yangon. Myanmar. Tel: 951 516654, 532253, 09-731-35991-3. Fax: 951 532333	
Airway Airways(YH) 166, MMB Tower, Level 5, Upper Pansodan Rd, Mingalar Taungnyunt Tsp, Yangon. Tel: (+95-1) 383 100, 383 107, 700 264, Fax: 652 533.	

Domestic
6T = Air Mandalay
W9 = Air Bagan
YJ = Asian Wings
K7 = AIR KBZ
YH = Yangon Airways
UB = FMI UB Charter

Subject to change without notice



Pic: Khin Su Wai

Observations about Nepal

One of the benefits of the workshop was that we did not spend all day sitting inside, but went on some interesting fieldtrips: one to a waste management project and the other to a cocoon plantation. This gave us the chance to experience village life in Nepal, and the locals welcomed us with their traditional songs and dances. They also provided detailed and educational explanations about their work.

It was a happy unforgettable moment when the participants joined the

little girls from the village in dancing and singing their cheerful songs in the sun. The villagers painted our foreheads with red dots and also draped us with garlands as a symbol of welcome.

The field trips were worthwhile, even though they involved a bit of trekking, which I found exhausting. Some of the other participants in the workshop were in much better shape than I was, and they kept going even when I felt I would not be able to move forward another inch.

It didn't help that I came from the lowlands of Mandalay and was unaccustomed to walking through hills like those in Nepal, but the mountainous country did provide a beautiful, snow-capped backdrop to my suffering.

The souvenirs that I saw during the trip were also very appealing, as was the artwork. I wanted to buy everything I saw, including the metal healing bowls. At times I was so intent on looking at the artwork that I almost lost my way while walking.

My stay in Nepal was all too short. The country has so much to offer, and I had so little time. Someday I'd like to go back and try some of the many adventures available for travellers, including rock climbing, bungee jumping, jungle safaris, mountain biking, rafting and paragliding.

For Myanmar nationals, Nepal gives 15-day visas at a cost of US\$25. I would highly recommend the trip, and I would suggest staying as possible to see and experience as much as you can..



Pic: Khin Su Wai

International Airlines

Air Asia (FD)

33, Alan Pya Pagoda Rd, Ground Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 513322, 513422, 251 885, 251 886.

Air Bagan Ltd.(W9)

56, Shwe Taung Gyar Street, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 513322, 513422, 504888, Fax: 515102

Air China (CA)

Building (2), corner of Pyay Rd and Kaba Aye Pagoda Rd, Hotel Yangon, 8 miles, Yangon, Myanmar. Tel: 666112, 655882.

Air India

75, Shwe Bon Thar St, Pabedan Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 253597-98, 254758. Fax: 248175

Bangkok Airways (PG)

#0305, 3rd Fl, Sakura Tower, 339, Bogyoke Aung San Rd, Kyauktada Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 255122, 255 265, Fax: 255119

Malaysia Airlines (MH)

335/357, Bogyoke Aung San Rd, Pabedan Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 387648, 241007 ext: 120, 121, 122 Fax: 241124

Myanmar Airways International(8M)

08-02, Sakura Tower, 339, Bogyoke Aung San Rd, Kyauktada Tsp, Ygn. Tel: 255260, Fax: 255305

Silk Air(MI)

339, Bogyoke Aung San Rd, 2nd Floor, Sakura Tower, Kyauktada Tsp, Yangon, Myanmar. Tel: 255491-6, Fax: 255 290

Thai Airways (TG)

Room No. 1101, Sakura Tower, 339, Bogyoke Aung San Rd, Kyauktada Tsp, Ygn. Tel: 255491-6 Fax : 255223

Vietnam Airlines (VN)

#1702, Sakura Tower 339, Bogyoke Aung San Rd, Kyauktada Tsp, Yangon. Fax 255086. Tel. 255066/255088/255068.

INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT SCHEDULES

Table containing international flight schedules for various routes including Yangon to Bangkok, Beijing, Frankfurt, Gaungzhou, Taipei, Kunming, Kolkata, Chiang Mai, Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh, Singapore, Phnom Penh, Seoul, Siem Reap, Tokyo, Mandalay, Don Mueng, Kunming, Gaya, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, and others. Each entry includes flight number, departure, and arrival times.

International Airlines logo and list of airlines with their codes (FD & AK = Air Asia, TG = Thai Airways, 8M = Myanmar Airways, etc.).

Subject to change without notice

Dogs are delicacy and man's best friend in Vietnam

By Tran Thi Minh Ha

HANOI — At a packed Hanoi restaurant, one of Vietnam's growing ranks of proud pooch owners tucks into a traditional delicacy to mark the end of the lunar month — a plate of juicy dog.

Canine meat has long been on the menu in Vietnam. But now a growing love of the four-legged friends means that one man's pet can be another's dog sausage — quite literally as far as dog bandits are concerned.

"We never kill our own dogs for their meat. Here I'm eating in a restaurant so I don't care which dogs they killed or how," Pham Dang Tien, 53, said as he chewed contentedly on a plate of boiled dog.

Dog meat is good for health and virility, believes Tien, who sees no contradiction between these monthly meat binges and owning a dog — his family have had a string of beloved pet pooches over the course of 20 years.

For many older Vietnamese, dogs are an essential part of traditional Vietnamese cuisine that can coexist with pet ownership. Those dogs that end up on the dinner table are traditionally beaten to death.

When times were hard after the Vietnam War, local authorities in big cities strictly limited pet ownership.

But as the popularity of

keeping animals at home rises along with the economy and living standards, more young people feel like 16-year-old Nguyen Anh Hong.

"I just don't understand how people can eat dogs — they are lovely pets," she said.

The love affair has a dark side — growing ranks of thieves go from small town to small town in rural areas of Vietnam stealing pets to sell to dog meat restaurants.

Although the value of the thefts — dog meat fetches around US\$6 a kilo — is too low to concern the Vietnamese police, the loss of a treasured pet to the cooking pot means emotions run high.

Dog-theft related mob violence has spiralled over the last few years.

In June, a man was beaten to death after hundreds of villagers caught him red-handed trying to steal a family dog in Nghe An province, the *VNExpress* news site reported, triggering an outpouring of public support for the mob.

"It's not right to beat a man to death but anyone in this situation would do the same," one reader, who lost a pet to the bandits, wrote on the site.

In Hanoi's Reunification Park, hundreds of people now walk their pet dogs every day, showcasing the range of exotic foreign breeds — Chihuahuas and Huskies are particularly popular —

favoured by Hanoi-based pet-owners.

"In Vietnam now, raising pet dogs has become fashionable," said Cu Anh Tu, a 20-year-old university student and dog owner. "The young generation now seems to love animals very much."

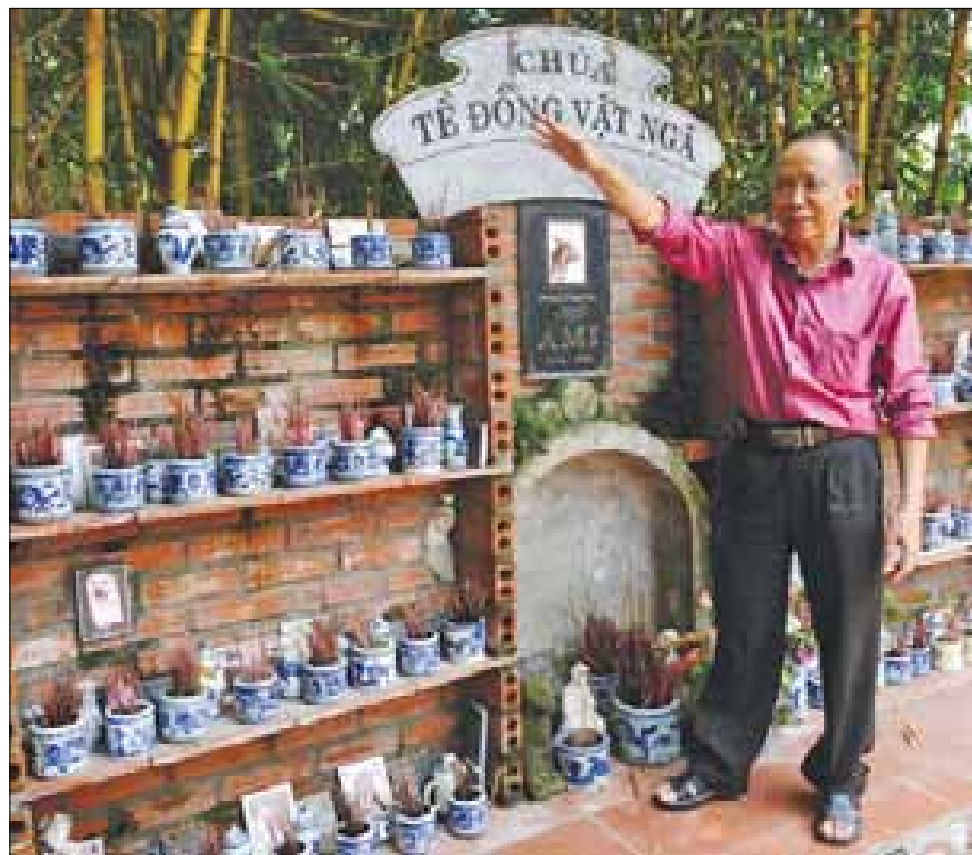
In the countryside, local mongrels are kept as pets or guard dogs. It is these, more nondescript, animals which are most vulnerable to the dog bandits.

Most of the dogs served in Hoang Giang's restaurant are local breeds raised specifically to be eaten — but as local dogs are also kept as pets in the countryside, it is hard to know which animals are stolen, and which are farmed.

While exotic pet dogs are found only in cities, "in the countryside people will continue to see dogs as meat", he said.

Typically, Vietnamese "eat dog meat at the end of the lunar month to get rid of bad luck. That's what business people often do", said 30-year-old Giang, a specialist dog meat chef.

As he prepared a plate of canine meat in the kitchen



Nguyen Bao Sinh, owner of Hanoi's first private five-storey all-service hotel for pets, stands next to an altar with incense stick pots for customers' dead pets inside the compound of his pet hotel in Hanoi on June 16. Pic: AFP

of his busy restaurant, Giang told said that his small establishment served up to seven dogs a day at that time of the month — and business is reliably solid.

Dog is served in a range of ways — from boiled to barbecued — often with shrimp sauce, rice noodles and fresh herbs, he said.

For Nguyen Bao Sinh, a luxury kennel owner in Hanoi, Vietnam needs to move away from its traditional love of canine meat and learn from

other pet-loving cultures. "[Westerners] love dogs in this life. That viewpoint is very good. ... We should love dogs here and now in this life. We should not kill them or beat them barbarously," he said.

Sinh, who runs Hanoi's only luxury kennel and grooming parlour for pets, said he has seen a rise in the number of pet-mad Vietnamese.

His establishment offers "hotel rooms" for pets whose owners go away on business

or holidays — and even has a cemetery for dogs and cats, where hundreds of pets are buried, and monks perform blessings every year.

"It would be better if the state had a law banning the eating of dog meat," Sinh said.

"However, we should not discriminate or look down upon those eating dog meat," he said, adding that the key was to gradually convince the public to respect and love animals. — AFP

Events Flash

Anniversary exhibition

Lokanat Art Gallery (62 Pansodan Street, First Floor Kyauktada township) will hold its 42nd Anniversary Art Exhibition from December 5 to 31. The show will feature the work of more than 25 eminent member artists of the gallery. The paintings are in oil, watercolour and acrylic on canvas and are mostly realist in style.

The Final Exhibit 2012

Gallery 65 (No. 65, Yaw Min Gyi Road, Dagon Township, Yangon) is presenting its year end show, The Final Exhibit 2012, from December 15 to January 15. The gallery will showcase paintings across a wide range of styles from contemporary to traditional. Gallery 65 is open 10am to 6pm daily.

Calle de la Salsa

Tuesday is salsa night at 50th Street Bar, featuring free dance classes (salsa, bachata, mambo, meringue and more), plus dance shows and drink specials. With music by DJ Mani and special guests.

Wednesday wine

The Wednesday Wine Club meets every (you guessed it) Wednesday at the QP Inya Shop (30 Inya Road). Taste four or five wines for K10,000 a person. Contact chad.quarto@gmail.com or 09-7321-8711.

Live music

Friendship Band belts out classic rock tunes at 50th Street Restaurant every Wednesday and Friday night.

If you would like your event listed in Event Flash, please email editors@myanmartimes.com.mm.



YOUR STARS

By Astrologer
Aung Myin Kyaw

Aquarius

(Jan 20 - Feb 18)

Get yourself ready to face the unexpected, and to let go of something to which you have been clinging tightly. Awaken to new ideas that can improve your situation, and welcome new questions whose answers will help you stay on the proper path and deal with your responsibilities. The needs of your heart might be equal to the needs of your love.

Pisces

(Feb 19 - Mar 20)

Strive for a new paradigm in your thinking, one that is positive and rich in imagination. Take advantage of unexpected opportunities that will come your way, which will help you negotiate risky social situations. Spiritual changes will help increase your potential for greatness. Now is a good time to pursue new love affairs.

Aries

(March 21 - April 19)

Self-probing and introspection will introduce you to an awareness that will make social relations easier and more effective. Know that people everywhere, belonging to all strata of society, will suffer according to their own reasons. Believe that justice dwells in its own kingdom where everyone knows the truth. Remain free and open when it comes to affairs of the heart.

Taurus

(April 20 - May 20)

Make your mind straightforward with courage and never try to pretend that you know nothing about truth and reality. Maintain a positive attitude, and be slow to find fault with others. Make a practice out of forgiving as easily as possible. Fortune is on your side in social and financial matters. Add some colour to your picture of love, and know that money has no power to create affection.

Gemini

(May 21 - June 20)

Study natural intercourse with the highest mind, and never trifle with the biological order of things. You can avoid frustration by learning to recognise which social situations are best shunned. Emancipation from error is the condition of real knowledge. Base your search for a life partner on shared moral values rather than on desire.

Cancer

(June 22 - July 22)

Changes in your family relationships will be great, and changes in your social circle will be wonderful. Old partners will stand with you on the same platform of professional risk. It is important to be able to change your mind, and to remain flexible and diplomatic. Networking

and communication will forge a favourable environment for finding love and beauty.

Leo

(July 23 - Aug 22)

Without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement, but the revolution can disappear by means of continuity of compromise. You were born with the great need to be brave in action and to perform risky deeds without contemplation or delay. Reinforce your bonds with old friends you trust. New music and songs will be available in your love concert.

Virgo

(Aug 23 - Sept 22)

Big thoughts and ideas with big strength require big, clever steps to make great changes for yourself and all living beings. No single person can build a spacecraft; the project requires the cooperation of many skilled people with many diverse qualities. Your duty is to put yourself at the service of others. A new position will be given to you according to your abilities.

Libra

(Sept 23 - Oct 22)

Pessimistic viewpoints will disappear, and your optimism will build a strong wall that will help you face those who contradict you. Avoid talking too much about yourself, and make a point of praising the best qualities of your partners and others. Someone from a different culture might shake your heart.

Scorpio

(Oct 23 - Nov 21)

It might be necessary to change your outward demeanour, to focus on a new image reflecting the present and the future. Doubt nothing about your abilities or your potential for creative success in risky projects. Your atmosphere of love needs understanding and trust. Social changes will fall in your favour.

Sagittarius

(Nov 22 - Dec 21)

Do not put yourself in a position where you experience a high degree of tension day after day. A good leader is able to forge a clear line of responsibility, and those who best understand the flow of this line will become a leader of leaders. Understand what you should hold onto, and what you need to let go. There are no clouds in your sky of love, but you'll have to take a risk to get results.

Capricorn

(Dec 22 - Jan 19)

Great people are products of courage, and before long you should develop a strong determination to shoulder extraneous responsibilities and high duties. Emotional balance will be essential and you will have to feel satisfied with your social and political activities. You are certain to become famous in music and movies.

For a personal reading contact Aung Myin Kyaw, 4th Floor, 113, Th-amain Bayan Road, Tamwe Township, Yangon. Tel: 0973135632, Email: williameast@gmail.com

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OURSAKURABRANCH office will move to New Address on 16 Nov 2012. New Address: Columbus Travels & Tours Ltd. (Sule Branch): 69/71 (Ground flr), Sule Pagoda Rd (Near AGD Bank), Kyauktada, Tel: 378535 (Hunt Line), 378549 Fax: (951) 378 576

Myanmar to apply for its Scholarship Program or the Master of Arts in Economics International Program, at Thammasat University, Thailand. A maximum of 3 full scholarships are available for the academic year 2013. Closing date: 31 December 2012. For further information pls refer to the website of the program: https://www.econ.tu.ac.th (Click on "English" language button/" Academic programs"/ "Master of Arts in English"; The application information on the website will be updated within the the next months)
PRARAM 9 Hospital (Myanmar office) will be moved to a new location. All business services will resume at New address Monday, Dec 3, 2012. New address: No. 74 (Ground floor), Ma Naw Hari St (Near Royal Thai Embassy) Dagon Tsp, Yangon, Tel: 09-731-46988, 09-731-46977, 09-513-6554. Email : knl.praram9@gmail.com

WAREHOUSE , Front - 85ft Front to back (side) - 180ft Wear house area - 80ft*100ft (with steel structure). Add: (141), Min Gyi Rd (In Sein Bo Gone Rd), near In Sein hospital. Price - 16000 lakhs. Extra 1 small house. Ph : 09-501-7345
DAGON NORTH, 63, Bandoola St, near Ba Htoo Market, Block 46, 40X60, RC2, water, electrical, ph: 09-431-23501.
BAHAN, New University Ave Rd Condo, 2400 Sqft Fully Furnished, Newly Apartment. 3500 Lakhs, US\$3000. Call Maureen: 09-518-8320 (No Agts Pls).

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Property

Housing for Rent

CHANTHA GONYAUNG Executive Condo miniums, Penthouse/Rooms. 4 rooms, 5 rooms. Fully Furnished. Amazing serenity and satisfactory facilities, club restaurant. 24 hours electricity internet, cable TV. Brokers welcome. Interested parties Pls call: 09-73-85811, 09-730-85844, 09-850-2055.

(1) **DAGON Tsp**, Near Thai Embassy, (80'x80'), 2 storey, 4 MBR, 1 Single Rm, 6AC, Ph, USD 4800. (2) **Tawwin Rd**, (70'x90'), 2 storey, 3MBR, 1BR, 5AC, Ph, USD 4500. (3) **7 mile** (Near Honda Showroom), (40'x80'), 2 1/2 storey, 2 MBR, 4 Bed Rm, USD 3000. (4) **9 mile** (Maurawadi Rd), (80'x90'), 2 storey, 4 MBR, Swimming Pool, USD 2500. No Agts Pls. Call 09-4211-77105.
BAHAN (1) **Kokkine Yeiktha St**, 50' x 60', 3.5 storey, 4MBR, USD-15000 (2) **Near Singapore Embassy**, 60'x60', 5storey, 7MBR, 5BR, USD 7000/ (3) **Near Myayeknyo Hotel**, 45'

Sqft 2MBR, 2BR, USD 1800 (11F), Foreigner only, Pls no Agent. (3) **7 mile** (Near the Honda Showroom), 3300 Sqft, 2MBR, 4BR, 2 1/2 storey, USD 3000 per month, Call: 09-4201-14749. (1) **MAYANGONE** (1) Kabaraye Pagoda Rd, 0.5 acre, 2 storey, 8MBR, USD 20000 per month. (2) **Near Thai Embassy**, 80'x80', 2 storey, 4MBR, 1BR, USD, 4800 per month. (3) **Near Chatrium Hotel**, 90' x 90', 3 storey, 8MBR, 5BR, USD 20000 per month. No agent pls, 09-4211-77105.

BAHAN: New house with a nice design in West Shwegondine for rent as residence or office. Land: 6,700sqft, House: 3,700 sqft (2RC with 3MBR & 2BR). 4th plot from Shwegondine Main Rd. USD 5,000/month. Terms & conditions negotiable. 09-4200-86237

Housing for Sales

9 MILES: Bonyarna lane; (50' x 75'); corner side; (4000 lakhs ; no agent please ;
SANCHAUNG 9th floor penthouse apartment (hall type) for sale in new, lift-serviced building on Myaung Mya Street. 1250 square feet, with high ceiling to accomodate conversion into two-storey apartment. Balconies on three sides, with views of Shwedagon Pagoda and across the Yangon River. 600 lakhs negotiable. Call 09-45000-6957.
TAMWE, G Fir Flat sales by Owner, Awba lane, 15x60 ground floor for sale, 1000 lakhs 09-503-0093, 09-734-94295
WAREHOUSE , Front - 85ft Front to back (side) - 180ft Wear house area - 80ft*100ft (with steel structure). Add: (141), Min Gyi Rd (In Sein Bo Gone Rd), near In Sein hospital. Price - 16000 lakhs. Extra 1 small house. Ph : 09-501-7345

DAGON NORTH, 63, Bandoola St, near Ba Htoo Market, Block 46, 40X60, RC2, water, electrical, ph: 09-431-23501.
BAHAN, New University Ave Rd Condo, 2400 Sqft Fully Furnished, Newly Apartment. 3500 Lakhs, US\$3000. Call Maureen: 09-518-8320 (No Agts Pls).

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Want to hire

FOR COMPANY Office: **BAHAN** (Kabaaye Pagoda Rd, Pyi Htaung Su Rd), **Hlaing** (Pyay Rd), **Kamaryut** (Pyay Rd), **Yankin** : 2RC or 3 RC, MB5, 3Phase Power Meter, Water-Cute well & YCDC, Compound 80 x 80, Fully Furnished, Pls contact by house owner only, 556407, 540995, 4412580.

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Contact Phone (Office Hour)
Ph: 205327, 205918

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Embassy

THE FRENCH Embassy is looking for a **Political and Protocol Officer** to join its political chancery and press department starting in January 2013. **Responsibilities:** - follow-up of the political and social situation, - contacts with political parties, civil society, local journa lists, ethnic representatives, - Protocol and relations with Myanmar administrations, - translations & interpretations in French & Myanmar (also for official visits) - draft daily correspondence, make phone calls to governmental, national & international partners, - organize & coordinate work plans for missions & delegations to visit Myanmar as well as seminars & workshops, - arrange meetings & receptions, prepare the agenda and on specific request take the minutes of the meetings. **Qualifications:** Applicants must hold a University degree (political science would be an asset), have at least 5 years of working experience in a related field and an excellent level in written and oral French and English. Strong analytical capacities & judgment are required. Complete application files (including motivation letter, CV, copies of diplomas & references) **before December 27th 2012** at **Ambassade de France**, attention to Mrs Friderich, 102, Pyidaungsu Yeiktha Rd, Yangon. You can also email to **ambafrance.rangoun@diplomatie.gouv.fr**

Ingo Positions

HelpAge International is implementing a 3-year project entitled "Building Community Organisations to Reduce Poverty and Vulnerability Amongst Older People and their Families in Myanmar", with funding from HelpAge Korea/KOICA. It is implemented in 63 villages in Kyaiklat and Patheingyi townships in Ayeiawady Region, Patheingyi and Pyin Oo Lwin Townships in Mandalay Region and East Dagon Township in Yangon Region. We are seeking a qualified and experienced Myanmar national for the following position for a period of 2 years: Job Title: **Project Manager** (1 Post) Location: Yangon with frequent travel (minimum 50%) to the project locations. **Qualifications/competencies:** University degree preferably in social work, community development or related fields with five years' livelihood/food security project management experience with INGOs/international agencies. Professional experience in project cycle management including participatory planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of projects. Experience in budget planning and financial management. At least 3 years' experience in managing staff, and working with expatriates. Strong familiarity with networking with government, and other national and international agencies. Proven track record of quality performance in remote locations and high pressure environments. Experience in facilitating training workshops and coaching. Experience in integration of ageing/cross-cutting issues with livelihood/food security projects. Excellent written and oral communication skills in both English and

Myanmar. Strategic, transparent, and flexible in thinking and working process. High degree of initiative and problem solving skills. Basic computer skill essential. Interested and qualified candidates are requested to send a Cover Letter and Curriculum Vitae to the Human Resources Unit of HelpAge International Myanmar Country Office, No.10 Kanbawza Avenue, Shwe-taun-gya Ward No. 1, Bahan Township, Yangon **OR** by email to **hr.helpagemyanmar@gmail.com** no later than **5 p.m., Wednesday, 24th December 2012**. Candidates interested in receiving full JD, please contact HelpAge International Myanmar Country Office **OR** send your request to **hr.helpagemyanmar@gmail.com** Only shortlisted candidates will be notified for interview.

SOLIDARITES Int'l (SI) is seeking **Deputy Administrative & Finance Manager** in Bhamo. Profile: University level or equivalent in accounting/management/administration. 1 year in a similar position with NGO. Excellent knowledge of Word & Excel, knowledge of accounting software SAGA & HR software HOMERE is a plus. Fluent spoken and written English and Myanmar. Pls submit application (CV, cover letter, reference) by email to: **hr.solidarites.mm@gmail.com**, recruitment@solidarites-myanmar.org. Closing date: 31 December 2012.

SOLIDARITES Int'l (SI) is seeking **Deputy Logistics Coordinator** in Yangon: 4 years professional experience in Logistics field with INGO/NGO. University Degree or Diploma (preferably in Logistics Or related proven experience in similar area.). Knowledge of IT management & MS office (excel, word, power point and networking). Fluent in English & Myanmar. Good writing & communication skills. Pls submit application (CV, cover letter, references) to: Win Htay, Logistic Coordinator - Solidarites Int'l office: 44-A, Tharyarwaddy Lane, Bahan, or per email: recruitment@solidarites-myanmar.org & ccto ygn. log.coordo@solidarites-myanmar.org.

MYANMAR Red Cross Society is seeking **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 related to the position. Very good computer literacy in MS Office pack (word, excel, PowerPoint, outlook. Basic English languages skills. Pls submit a letter of application, relevant documents to U Khin Maung Hla, Executive Director, Myanmar Red Cross Society, information & application, www.myanmarredcross.org. **SOLIDARITES Int'l (SI)** is seeking **IT Responsible** in Yangon with frequent travel to all bases: 2 years experience in IT field (preferable INGO/NGO experiences). University Degree or Diploma in IT sector. Good spoken & written English and Myanmar. Pls submit application (CV, cover letter, references) to Win Htay, Logistics Coordinator - Solidarites Int'l office: 44-A, Tharyarwaddy Lane, Sayar San Ward, Bahan, Yangon or per

email: recruitment@solidarites-myanmar.org and cc to ygn.log.coordo@solidarites-myanmar.org (thanks to use basic excel, word or pdf format). Closing date: 20-12-2012.

Local Position

AMTT Co., Ltd is seeking **Clinical Laboratory Dept.** (1) **Sales Manager** - M/F 1 post: over 7 years experience in clinical laboratory (2) **Assistant Manager** - M/F 1 post: Marketing & sales experience is an advantage. Excellent in English. (3) **Sales Executive** - M/F 1 post: Science graduate is a must. Excellent in English & computer skill. **Renal Healthcare Dept.** (1) **Asst: Manager** - M/F 1 post: Over 5 years experience. Able to communicate with foreign suppliers, Strong command of English. (2) **Sales Executive** - M/F 1 post: Science graduate. Excellent 4 skills in English & computer skill. **Physio Equipment & Supplies Dept.** (1) **Sales Executive** - M/F 1 post: Excellent 4 skills in English & computer skill. **Medical Supplies Dept.** (1) **Sales Executive** - M/F 4 posts: Any graduate with sales & marketing experience. Excellent 4 skills in English & computer skill. (3) **Business Development Dept. Coordinator** - F 1 post: Any graduate with management & computer skill. Excellent 4 skills in English. (4) **Service Dept.** (1) **Service Manager** - M 1 post: BE, ME (EP/EC, Mechatronic), AGTI (EP/EC), 10 years experience in related technical background, experienced engineer in medical supplies and healthcare product is preferable, strong management & computer skill, excellent presentation & English fluency. (2) **Service Engineer** - M 3 post: BE, ME (EP/EC, Mechatronic), AGTI (EP/EC), Strong computer skill & English fluency. Pls submit update resume with 2 passport photos with necessary documents to 5/Sah-B, Aung Myingalar St, Mayan gone. Closing date: 24 Dec, 2012

(1) **RECEPTIONIST cum Admin Assistant** - F Requirements: Minimum Diploma Holder, 3 years experience (2) **Corpo rate Consultant** - M/F: Degree Holder, 3 years experience. For all posts: Excellent written & verbal communication skills in English, Computer literate with MS Office Applications. Pls submit detailed CV in person or by email, stating your current & expected salary, date of availability, reason for leaving and a recent passport size photo to Inter Consulting Co., Ltd: 30(B-1), 6th Flr, Yadanar Innya Condo, Than Lwin Rd, Bahan, Tel: 09-7310 5353, 09-7310 5340. Email: hr@icononline.net. Pls state the Job Title that you are applied for in the subject of your email.

NEED English Teacher (Full Time) - M/F 1 post: 4 skills, do course books, responsible person, focus on Learning, at least 3 years experiences in learning, good in English speaking. Please bring your own English Basic Course & all necessary documents to Future Point: Block 38/1, Baw Zin Street (beside 7 MART), Baw Zin St or Lan Thwe (3), Thuwunna, Yangon before (31.12.2012) in person. Ph: 09-732-15521

SERVIER, the leading French Independent Pharmaceutical company with more than 15 years of operations in Myanmar, is looking for 2 **secretaries** (female) to be based in Yangon Office. Candidate must be a young bachelor degree holder with 2 years experience as secretary, good knowledge of Microsoft Excel, Word and Powerpoint and email, proper filing, and fair command of English. Attractive salary and bonus package will be offered. Pls send CV & a cover letter to 'Country Manager- Servier (S) Pte Ltd (Myanmar Branch): 62, U Wisara Rd, Dagon Tsp. Ph: 242 291, 243 099, Email: serviermyr@gmail.com. Closing date: 21 Dec 2012

ICS TRAVEL Group is looking for two new colleagues for **Airline Ticketing and Hotel Reservations**: Good communication and inter-personal skills, fluent in spoken and written English, travel business/airline ticketing experience of at least 2 years, excellent computer skills (Microsoft Office, Internet & Email), must possess ability to work under pressure, highly motivated & outgoing personality. Pls submit CV with photo and other certificates personally or per e-mail. You will find our contact details below. ICS Travel Group: 11(A), Maharmyaaing St, Sanchaung, Tel: 511658, 511701.

(Lake View Building), Kan Yeik Tha Rd, Mingalar Taung Nyunt, Ph: 399341, 399345. Closing date: 27.12.2012.

EDULINK is seeking **Study Abroad Counsellor**. Selection Criteria: Professional presentation. Reasonably proficiency in English Presentation skills. Able to use MS Word, Excel & Powerpoint. Able to use Gmail. Personal values consistent with those of EduLink Australia (honesty, integrity, client focus). Pls send a short cover letter & CV to info@edulinkaustralia.com with the subject "Study Abroad Counsellor". Pls call 09-4211-19895 for more information. EduLink Australia, Bldg 6, Junction Square, Pyay Rd, Kamaryut, Ph: 500 464, 09-731-6 2586. Email: info@edulinkaustralia.com www.edulinkaustralia.com

EXECUTIVE Search: (1) **Project Engineer/Manager** - M BE (Civil) 5 years experience. (2) **Site Engineer** - M: BE/AGTI (Civil) 2 year experience. (3) **Sales Engineer** - M/F: BE/ME (Mechanical), 2 years experience (4) **Engineer** - M/F: BE/ME (Electrical) - 5 years experience (5) **Finance Director** - M/F: B.Com, (CPA)/ACCA - 7 years experience. (6) **Chief Accountant** - F B.Com,

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A LEADING local tour operator is looking to employ skillful people for the following positions: **Sales Manager, Assistant Sales Manager, Sales Assistant, Reservation Manager, Asst: Reservation Manager**. Requirements: university graduate with very good English skills. 3 years of experience in hotel and travel industry preferred. Attractive salary package will be offered to the best candidates. Interested candidates should send their CV and a short cover letter to **marek.klenaric@gmail.com**. Closing date: January 31, 2013

HOTEL BUSINESS Unit: (1) **Reservationist** - F 3 Posts: University Graduate. 1 year experience. Computer skill. Fluent in English. (2) **Asst: Sales Manager** - F 1 Post: University Graduate. 3 years sales experience in Int'l hotel. Excellent language proficiency/ middle management training. (3) **Sales Executive** - F 2 posts: University graduate. English language skills & computer skills. Sales experience in hotel field is preferable. (4) **Driver** - M 3 posts: Must pass Tenth Standard. Must have valid driving license. 3 years experience. Pls send application with a CV, one recent passport size photo and copy of labor registration Card, NRC card, graduation certificate and other relevant certificate to HR Dept. (Head Office, Aureum Palace Hotels-Resorts & Myanmar Treasure Hotels-Resorts) Kandawgyi Palace Hotel

(CPA)/ACCA - 5 years experience (7) **Admin Manager** - M/F: BBA/ DMA/ Any Graduate, 5 years experience. (8) **Admin Executive** - M/F: BA/ BSc/ BB, 3 years experience. (9) **Computer Operator** - F: BA/ BSc, 2 years experience. (10) **Driver** - M: 5 years experience. Tel: 222963, 229406, 229437. Email: esearch@yangan.net.mm

ASIA BEST Getaway Travel and Tours is looking for (1) **Ticketing Officer (International & Domestic)** - 4 posts: 1 - 2 years of air-ticketing experience, Good with calculation airfares and knowledgeable with airline long-haul sectors, Knowledge of Microsoft Office applications (2) **Tour Operator** - 4 posts: 1 or 2 years related working experience in travel industry, Developing tour packages & Pricing, Provide travel information & visa requirements, Proficient in Microsoft Office applications (3) **Reservation & Sales** - 2 posts. Pls email your resume and expected salary to enquiry@abgtourism.com or call 01-378 181, 378 180 for interview.

(1). **MANAGEMENT Trainee** 3 Posts, Myanmar National, Age 20 - 27, Graduate with (B.Com/B.Econ/B.B.A/B.B.M). Must have good practice on Mathematic & Knowledge of Microsoft office software package. Pls send CV together with Copies of academic certificates, Original and Update Police Clearance form, A copy of Family Registration Form (10), 1 passport photo & a copy of NRC to Human Resource Development Team Creation (Myanmar) Co., Ltd - 15-18, Thamaing Bayan Rd, Myittar Yeik Mon Housing, Tarmwe, Ph: 09 202 7605, Email: bdthmanager@goldenland.com.mm

NETSMART, a leading IT company in Myanmar, is expanding its business and is looking for skilled and highly motivated individuals with good English to join its team. (1) **IT Technical Engineer** - F/M 3 Posts (256/266)/10 Flr, Seikkan Thar St (upper), Kyauktada, Ph: 398030, 09-505-2595

WE AMARA Group Co., Ltd is currently looking for (1) **Chief Accountant** 1 Post (Ngapali), (2) **Accountant** 1 Post (Ngapali), (3) **Restaurant Supervisor** 1 Post (Kalaw), (4) **Accountant** 1 Post (Kalaw), (5) **Ground Manager** 1 Post (Mandalay). Be part of a young dynamic team and contribute to the hotels success with your expertise & experience. Therefore we offer an

interesting work environment, accomodation & an attractive package. We look forward receiving CV in English. Contact: amaragroup. mmw@gmail.com. Ph: 663347, 652191.

MYANMAR WONDERS Travels is looking for (1). **Travel Manager**: 3 years experience, in the preparing and creating tour programs, in managing quotation, being able to manage the team assisting with all areas of bookings, Good computer knowledge (Excel & Words), fluent in English & French (written & spoken), Salary negotiable. (2). **Operation Executive**: Experience in related field, being able to handle all areas of booking such as reservations for Hotels, Restaurants, guides transportation, meals, work closely with suppliers on all reservations to ensure the smooth operation of travel programs, good computer knowledge (Excel & Words), good knowledge in English & French. (3). **Chief Accountant**: 3 years experience in Travel Agency Accounting or in related field, good self management skills. B.Com degree & LCCI Level III, good computer knowledge & skills on peachtree, Excel skills, good knowledge in English. Pls apply with updated resume to (256/266) 10D, Seikkanthar (upper), Kyauktada. Ph: 398030, 09-505-2595

A GLOBAL Mining Investment Development Group, head quarter in (HK), now just open a new office in Yangon is looking for (1) **Office Administrator** - M/F 2 Post: 3 years experience, 2 years management experience (2) **Cashier/Office Assistant** - F 3 Posts (3) **Project Assistant** - M 4 Post (4) **Translator & Mining Site Inspection** M 5 Post (5) **Driver** - M 4 Posts. Fluent in English-Chinese-Myanmar (or) English-Myanmar (or) Chinese-Myanmar, Geart computer skill of Words, Excel, PPT and others. Pls send us a resume (with photo) and call us for arrange the schedule. Contact: Miss Vickey-Ph: 09-4016-04185, 572954.

SPINE Architects: A Local Architectural Firm seeks (1) **Architect (all levels)** Diploma & Work Experience a Plus All must know AutoCAD well. 3-D modeling & rendering skills. (2) **Driver**: 3 years experience. Note - must be able to drive left and right handside, have valid driver's license & clean driving record. Interested applicants should send CV with recent photo, indicating education, work experience, Form 10, NRC, Labour card copy & expected salary to SPINE Architects at 15/A, West Parami Rd, Mayangone. (Across RC-2). Ph: 660 996, 667770. Email: admin@SPINEarchitects.com

INTERNATIONAL law firm seeking qualified **Information Specialist**, She/he should have 3 years of experience in collection/enquiry current informations from government office /websites/relevant sources to help law firm obtain current information on legislation & business, any graduate. Good command of English. Submit CV to **suhlaing07@gmail.com**. Tel: 540995, 556692.

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WEB DEVELOPER (1) Post: Minimum High School graduates and/or related technical certificates. Proficient in PHP, HTML, CSS, Ajax, Java Script, 3 years experience in developing & implementing Myanmar websites. Experience in Drupal CMS (Content Management System) will be advantage. Ability to continuous learning. Ability to communicate in English effectively. Good interpersonal and communication skill. (2) **Web Designer** 1 Post: Minimum High School graduates and/or related technical certificates. Proficient in HTML, CSS, Adobe Photoshop, Indesign, 2 years professional experience. Ability to continuous learning. Ability to communicate in English effectively. Pls clearly state the position that is applied for. Information: amkyw1@gmail.com

VIBHAVADI HOSPITAL (Exclusive Myanmar Branch Office) is looking for **Marketing & Sales Representative** - F 1 post: Must be a bachelor degree (OR) M.B.B.S degree holder, Age 25 - 35, Person with strong personality, must be able to work independently & able to travel frequently, 2 years experience in health & marketing environments, Good interpersonal & communication skills, Good knowledge of using Computer (Microsoft office, Internet & Email), Good communication in Verbal and Written skills in both English and Myanmar. Pls apply CV with 3 recent photos including expected salary, copy of National Registration Card, Labor Registration Card, Police Recommendation Letter and other related educational references and experiences to address: Vibhavadi Hospital Exclusive Myanmar Branch Office: 214 (A-1), Waizayantar Rd, Thingangyun or send mailto "aquastarwin@gmail.com"

BLUE BIRD Hotel (Urgent Position Requirement) (1). **Front Office Supervisor** M/F (2). **Guest Relation Officer** M/F (3). **Reservation Officer** M/F (4). **Senior Accountant** M/F (5). **Accountant** M/F (6). **Engineering Staff (M&E) M/F** Work Place As Bagan, Blue Bird Hotel office (Yangon) (256/266)/10 Flr, Seikkan Thar St (upper), Kyauktada. Ph: 398030, 09-505-2595

DREAM Paradise Travels & Tours is seeking (1) **Language Guides** - M/F High grade licence. (2) **Operation Staff** - M/F Must able to use ticketing

software e.g Galileo, Amadeus, Abacus. Good communication skill. Must have any graduate. (84), Rm(13), Anawratha Rd, Corner of 39 St, Kyauktada, Yangon, Ph: 951-37437000, 09-730-43408. Email: dreamparadise.sale@gmail.com

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The Essentials

- EMBASSIES**
- Australia** 88, Strand Road, Yangon. tel: 251810, 251797, 251798, 251809, 246462, 246463, fax: 246159
- Bangladesh** 11-B, Than Lwin Road, Yangon. tel: 515275, 526144, fax: 515273, email: bdootygn@mptmail.net.mm
- Brazil** 56, Pyay Road, 6th mile, Hlaing Tsp, Yangon. tel: 507225, 507251, 507482, fax: 507483, email: Administ.yangon@itamaraty.gov.br
- Brunei** 317/319, U Wisara Road, Sanchaung Tsp, Yangon. tel: 526985, 524285, fax: 512854 email: bruneiemb@bruneiemb.com.mm
- Cambodia** 25 (3B/4B), New University Avenue Road, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. tel: 549609, 540964, fax: 541462, email: RECYANGON@mptmail.net.mm
- China** 1, Pyidaungsu Yeiktha Road, Yangon. tel: 221280, 221281, 224025, 224097, 221926, fax: 227019, 228319
- Egypt** 81, Pyidaungsu Yeiktha Road, Yangon. tel: 222886, 222887, fax: 222865, email: egye mbyangon@mptmail.net.mm
- France** 102, Pyidaungsu Yeiktha Road, Yangon. tel: 212178, 212520, 212523, 212528, 212532, fax: 212527, email: ambaf rance. rangon@diplomatie.fr
- Germany** 9, Bogyoke Aung San Museum Road, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. tel: 548951, 548952, fax: 548899 email: info@rangun.diplo.de
- India** 545-547, Merchant Street, Yangon. tel: 391219, 388412, 243972, fax: 254086, 250164, 388414, email: indiaembassy@mptmail.net.mm
- Indonesia** 100, Pyidaungsu Yeiktha Road, Yangon. tel: 254465, 254469, 229750, fax: 254468, email: kuckygn@indonesia.com.mm
- Israel** 15, Khabaung Street, Hlaing Tsp, Yangon. tel: 515115, fax: 515116, email: info@yangon.mfa.gov.il
- Italy** 3, Inya Myaing Road, Golden Valley, Yangon. tel: 527100, 527101, fax: 514565, email: ambyang.mail@esteri.it
- Japan** 100, Natmauk Road, Yangon. tel: 549644-8, 540399, 540400, 540411, 545988, fax: 549643
- Embassy of the State of Kuwait** Chatrium Hotel, Rm: No.416, 418, 420, 422, 40 Natmauk Rd, Tarmwe Tsp, Tel: 544500.
- North Korea** 77C, Shin Saw Pu Road, Sanchaung Tsp, Yangon. tel: 512642, 510205, fax: 510206
- South Korea** 97 University Avenue, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. tel: 527142-4, 515190, fax: 513286, email: myanmar@mofat.go.kr
- Lao** A-1, Diplomatic Quarters, Tawwin Road, Dagon Tsp, Yangon. tel: 222482, fax: 227446, email: Laoembcab@mptmail.net.mm
- Malaysia** 82, Pyidaungsu Yeiktha Road, Yangon. tel: 220248, 220249, 220251, 220230, fax: 221840, email: mkwyangon@mptmail.net.mm
- Nepal** 16, Natmauk Yeiktha, Yangon. tel: 545880, 557168, fax: 549803, email: nepemb@mptmail.net.mm
- Pakistan** A-4, diplomatic Quarters, Pyay Road, Yangon. tel: 222881 (Chancery Exchange) fax: 221147, email: pakistan@myanmar.com.mm
- Philippines** 50, Sayasan Road, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. tel: 558149-151, fax: 558154, email: p.e.yangon@gmail.com
- Russian** 38, Sagawa Road, Yangon. tel: 241955, 254161, fax: 241953, email: rusinmyan@mptmail.net.mm
- Serbia** No. 114-A, Inya Road, P.O.Box No. 943-Yangon. tel: 515282, 515283, fax: 504274, email: serbemb@yangon.net.mm
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Anti-racism body slams 'weak' FA, Premier League

LONDON - The chairman of an anti-racism group has accused England's Football Association and the top-flight Premier League of lacking morality and leadership over their handling of recent racism cases.

Herman Ouseley, who heads the Kick It Out organisation, also rebuked Chelsea and Liverpool over the racism incidents involving their players John Terry and Luis Suarez, saying they failed to take a stand against unacceptable behaviour.

"There is very little morality in football among the top clubs," Ouseley, a lawmaker in Britain's upper chamber of parliament, said in an interview with The Guardian newspaper published on December 11.

"Leadership is so important; you have to send a powerful message that racism is completely unacceptable. But there is a moral vacuum.

"The big clubs look after their players as assets. There was no bold attitude from them, to say that they would not put up with it."

Terry served a four-game ban earlier this season after being found guilty of racially abusing Queens Park Rangers' Anton Ferdinand by the FA, while Suarez was hit with an eight-match suspension for a similar offence last season.

Despite the punishments dealt out to the two players, Ouseley said the football authorities should have been more outspoken in their criticism.

"The condemnations have been mealy-mouthed," the former head of the Commission for Racial Equality said.

"We want all players and fans to feel confident about reporting abuse. But the FA did not say anything about the lies and distortions which came out in John Terry's and Ashley Cole's evidence. Instead the players are protected.

"The Premier League could have set the tone; they and the FA do a good job in community work. But on this, I have not heard anything from the Premier League."

Ouseley also chastised the former Liverpool manager Kenny Dalglish and ex-Chelsea coach Andre Villas-Boas for giving too much support to Suarez and Terry during their respective cases.

"We were observing the process but the managers were speaking out and sticking up for Luis Suarez and John Terry," Ouseley added.

"The FA should have asserted themselves, said they would not put up with people disrespecting the process, but the FA were very slack and weak."

English football has been hit by a spate of incidents of racial abuse this year, with a succession of players allegedly targeted by fans both at grounds and on the micro-blogging site Twitter.

Chelsea also had a claim of racial abuse against referee Mark Clattenburg dismissed by the FA over a lack of evidence. - AFP

Calls for Pacquiao to retire



Referee Kenny Bayless holds back Juan Manuel Marquez as Manny Pacquiao of the Philippines lies face down on the mat after being knocked out by Marquez on December 8 at the MGM Grand Garden in Las Vegas, Nevada. Pic: AFP

MANILA - Philippine media commentators have put pressure on boxing great Manny Pacquiao to retire after his heavy defeat in Las Vegas, with one comparing him to Parkinson's disease sufferer Muhammad Ali.

The southpaw, who turns 34 on December 17, has vowed to fight on. But many suspect that nearly 18 years of pro ring combat are now taking their toll on the man once seen by many as the world's finest pound-for-pound fighter.

Pacquiao, a national hero, was knocked out by Mexican rival Juan Manuel Marquez in Las Vegas on December 8 in his second consecutive defeat.

"Pacquiao got hit hard but in the end, he was conquered by Father Time after it turned out he could no longer take a solid punch," wrote sports columnist Recha Trinidad in the Philippine Daily Inquirer newspaper.

Pacquiao, who fought his way out of poverty as a teenager and is now immensely wealthy, controversially lost his World Boxing Organization welterweight crown to unbeaten US fighter Timothy Bradley in June.

TV analyst Ronnie Nathanielsz said that while Pacquiao wants a shot at redeeming himself, there was always the danger that too many punches could condemn him to

the fate of his US coach, ex-fighter Freddie Roach.

"The sight of Roach himself riddled by Parkinson's disease and the great heavyweight champion Muhammad Ali, wracked by the disease, sends shivers among many who care deeply for Pacquiao," Nathanielsz wrote in the Manila Standard.

Philippine Olympic Committee vice-president Joey Romasanta said Pacquiao should have quit after his last winning title defence in November 2011, when he retained his WBO welterweight crown against his old foe Marquez, now 39.

"It would have been nice if he had retired while he was ahead. In boxing, there will always be somebody better. After this loss, Manny should read the signs and consider these things," Romasanta told the Manila Bulletin newspaper.

Pacquiao, who has been a world champion in eight divisions, has used his boxing fame to build a film and television career. He was also elected to parliament in 2010 and has even become a Bible-quoting preacher.

Criticism of the loss has led him to lose his focus on boxing. SYDNEY - The men's 4x100m freestyle relay team of the Philippines, including Pacquiao, failed to qualify for the Olympic final in London.

To many, that would pit him against undefeated American fighter Floyd Mayweather Jr., even though earlier efforts to set up the bout have failed.

"He shouldn't retire. He has to recover and redeem himself. Then he can retire," Roel Velasco, a bronze medalist at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, told the Bulletin.

London-based Boxing News blogger Daniel Welling acknowledged the calls for Pacquiao to bid boxing goodbye.

But he wrote: "It would be a huge shame if one of the greatest fighters of the modern era ends his career face down on the mat," referring to how Pacquiao's fight with Marquez ended. - AFP

Ye spearheads China team for Australia

SYDNEY - The men's 4x100m freestyle relay team of the Philippines, including Pacquiao, failed to qualify for the Olympic final in London.

China's team for next month's inaugural Aquatic Super Series in Perth, organisers said December 12.

Ye, who scored a medley double at the London Games, will rekindle her rivalry with Australia's Alicia Coutts at the meet on January 18-19 which also features swimmers from South Africa.

Coutts, Australia's best performer in the pool in London with five medals, took silver behind Ye in the Olympic 200m individual medley final.

Another Olympic gold medalist, London 200m butterfly champion Jiao, is part of the strong Chinese team but distance superstar Sun Yang is missing.

Chad le Clos spearheads the South African line-up. La Clos shocked the world when he defeated American great Michael Phelps in his pet event, the 200m butterfly in London, as well as winning silver in the 100m butterfly.

"The Chinese are always strong and with 18 members of their Olympic team heading to Perth both our men and women will have plenty to swim for.

"From a South African point of view, they have also been very strong over the shorter distances and someone like Chad le Clos is able to back up and race well across a variety of events."

- AFP



Gold medalist China's Ye Shiwen holds her national flag after the podium ceremony of the women's 200m individual medley final during the swimming event at the London 2012 Olympic Games on July 31. Pic: AFP

Advertisement for 'The Crime Journal' (လုပ်ငန်းခွင် အာဏာပြန်ဆောင်ရေးအဖွဲ့: အာရုံစိုက်သည်). The ad includes the journal's title in Burmese, its affiliation with Myanmar Consolidated Media Ltd., and details about its content and subscription information. It mentions that the journal covers various crime-related news and is published weekly.



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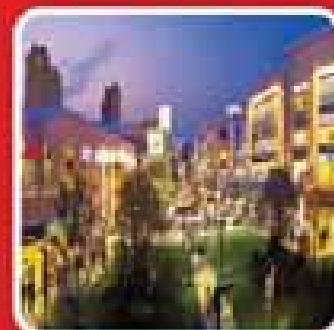
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TIMESSPORT

Three losses for cricketers in Thailand

By Tony Yoo

THE Myanmar national team lost all three of its group matches and was eliminated from the Asian Cricket Council Trophy Challenge held in Thailand last week.

The team took on Qatar in its first match on December 7, and was bowled out for 54 after winning the toss and choosing to bat. Extras top scored with 18, as no batsman managed to reach double digits.

Three Myanmar players

scored 8 runs each as it painstakingly resisted the Qatari bowling for 23 overs at the Chiang Mai Gymkhana ground.

In response Qatar reached in the target in 13 overs, but not before Myanmar new ball bowler Abdul Rahmantook two wickets (2/17).

The Royal Chiang Mai Golf Club hosted Myanmar's December 8 clash against another Middle Eastern opponent, Bahrain. Myanmar again won the toss but this time opted to field to dismiss Bahrain for

250 in the 46th over.

Opening bowler Aye Min Than (2/20) led the Myanmar effort in which all six bowlers took at least one wicket. Imran Sajjad (77 off 80 balls) and Shahzad Siddique (61 off 85) hit half-centuries for Bahrain. Myanmar unfortunately gifted 36 wides.

Myanmar survived to 21.4 overs in its reply, ending up with a total of 32. Aye Min Than backed up his bowling effort by hitting 10 off 17 deliveries, which was the highest score after extras contributed 11. Man

of the match Qamar Saeed bagged 5 wickets (5/13) for Bahrain.

After the two demoralising defeats the national team looked ahead to the December 10 battle against China. Last week *The Myanmar Times* reported that this was the game that the Myanmar cricket team thought it had the most realistic chance of winning.

China was sent in to bat by Myanmar, and was in some trouble at 3 for 45 at the Royal Chiang Mai Golf Club. However all rounder

Zhang Yufei (39 off 56) then steadied the innings, as China accumulated 187 runs by the time the final wicket fell in the 48th over. For Myanmar the best of the bowlers were Abdul Rahman (3/34) and Min Wai (3/40).

Myanmar then answered with its best batting in the tournament – but it was not enough, as it fell 100 runs short of target after 35 overs. Chinese captain Wang Lai took four wickets (4/14) to destroy the Myanmar top order.

Singapore eventually

won the tournament after defeating Bahrain by 24 runs in the December 13 final. The island nation now looks forward to returning to the “elite” tier of the ACC.

With funding from the ACC dependent on its performance in this tournament, the immediate future of cricket in Myanmar is uncertain. The sport will be played at home in next year's South East Asian Games, but Myanmar Cricket Federation will now have many headaches about that prospect.

Draw Results

Group A	Group B	Group C
Myanmar	Kyrgyzstan	Laos
India	Tajikistan	Afghanistan
Taiwan	Pakistan	Sri Lanka
Guam	Macau	Mongolia
Group D	Group E	
Nepal	Philippines	
Palestine	Turkmenistan	
Bangladesh	Cambodia	
Brunei	Brunei Darussalam	

AFC Challenge Cup qualifying set

By Aung Si Hein

HOST nation Myanmar has been placed into Group A for the qualifying stages of the 2014 AFC Challenge Cup. The national team will clash with India, Taiwan and Guam when the stage kicks off in March 2013.

The group-stage qualifying draw was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on December 15.

There are five groups comprised of four teams. The winners of each group as well as the second best two teams will advance to the 2014 AFC Challenge Cup

together with host nation the Maldives.

Group B matches will be held March 17-21 2013; all others will be on March 2-6.

Group C is comprised of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan and Macau. Kyrgyzstan will host the group. Group D includes Laos, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and Mongolia, with Laos hosting.

Group E sees Nepal, Palestine, Bangladesh and Mauritius square off. Nepal will be the host nation.

Group F includes Philippines, Turkmenistan, Cambodia and Brunei, with Philippines serving as the host.

Goal-line technology a 'no-brainer' says Lampard

YOKOHAMA, Japan – Chelsea midfielder Frank Lampard, whose “goal” against Germany at the 2010 World Cup was missed by officials, believes the introduction of goal-line technology into football is a “no-brainer”.

Lampard came on as a substitute in Chelsea's semi-final win over Monterrey at the Club World Cup December 13 – the first time the English Premier League side had ever played a match where a goal-line system was available to the referee.

“I have been in favour for a while now, particularly when it was clear it would be a quick and simple measure, and wouldn't take much time from the game,” the 34-year-old said ahead of the match in Yokohama, Japan.

“Anything we can do to help referees, who have a very tough time trying to have their eye across everything – ... – we have to try,” he added.

“If it doesn't break the game up, and it could add the excitement factor as it has in cricket, then why not?”

It was the England international's long-



Germany's goalkeeper Manuel Neuer watching the ball shot by England player Frank Lampard before the goal was disallowed during the 2010 World Cup on June 27, 2010. Pic: AFP

range effort, which cannoned off the crossbar and dropped over the line before bouncing back out, in South Africa two years ago that sparked FIFA into investigating the use of

goal-line technology. The world body is trialing two systems at the Club World Cup in Japan – camera-based Hawk-Eye and GoalRef, a system that uses magnetic fields

and a ball with a special chip to determine its trajectory and position.

Both inform the referee within a second if a goal has been scored.

GoalRef was available to the referee during Chelsea's semi-final win at the International Stadium but the match passed, like every other so far at the tournament, without the need for technology to judge a contentious incident.

FIFA will analyse the performances of both systems during the Japan showpiece early next year before choosing one for June's Confederations Cup.

The body insists the technology will only ever be used to determine whether or not the ball has crossed the line, something Lampard agrees with.

“As long as it's around specific goal chances, then I think I've always been for it, and my one [against Germany] has brought it more to the fore,” he told Chelsea TV.

“[If it helps] the middle ground where the human eye can argue about it, it's a no-brainer.”

– AFP

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