

## Bidders dispute Yangon land tender process

By Aung Shin

YANGON Region's government has delayed announcing the winners of a land tender in Kawhmu and Twante townships over a disputed tender process in which one company recorded the highest bids – each time narrowly bidding above a floor price not mentioned in formal procedures and provided to bidders only after they had lodged their documents.

A total of 15 bidders, including seven companies and eight individuals, bid for the three plots, totalling about 1200 acres in southern Yangon Region. The plots were put to tender by the Yangon Region government.

The bids, which required business plans on how the old rubber and tapioca plantations would be used in future, and a deposit of K10 million, were opened by Yangon Region's tender supervising committee in full view of all bidders.

However, minutes before the envelopes were opened an official announced a floor price for the plots – which had not been mentioned in any pre-tender documents – participants said.

Only one group's bids exceeded the floor price in each category. The floor price for the first lot in Kawhmu township was K109.2 million – and Young Investment Group topped the auction with a bid of 109.8 million, some K600,000 higher than the previously undisclosed minimum price and significantly higher than all other groups. The next highest bid was K39.322 million, from the U Zaw Min Aung Group, with U Tin Win Group bidding K29.2 million in third place.

The floor price for the second lot, also in Kawhmu township, was K127.14 million – and Young Investment Group won with a bid of K127.9 million, against a second-highest offer of K26.4 million, from Wide River Company. U Thaung Htaike Oo Group bid K24.09 million.

Young Investment Group also bid highest for the third plot, with K29.8 million, against a floor price of K29.01 million. U Than Aye Group bid second highest with K1.26 million and FMI company third-highest with K1.05-million.

By March 15, the winning bidders had not yet been announced, a Yangon Region government official said.

U Soe Min, Yangon Region's Minister for Agriculture and Livestock Breeding, told *The Myanmar Times*: "We opened tender envelope before all bidders. Three bidders for each plot who offered the highest prices were selected. We have now sent the list of nine bidders to the regional government. The final winners for each plot will be come out after the cabinet meeting."

However, the minister admitted that some participants had complained about the tender process, including the last minute floor price announcement which only one group exceeded, and then only by a minimal amount.

"Some people are not happy with how the tender was conducted. We called them and explained how the tender is going to be handled, and will inform them of the result later," U Soe Min said on March 15.

U Zaw Min Aung, from Yaytarshae village in Kawhmu township, and whose bid for some plots on behalf of a group of colleagues, said: "We have complained to the tender supervising committee because the rules and regulations were unclear."

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Villagers protest the findings of a commission charged with investigating the Letpadaung copper mine project in Monywa last week. Pic: Kaung Htet

## Fury at copper mine report

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi heckled as she tours area to explain commission's findings

By Ei Ei Toe Lwin

OPPONENTS of the Letpadaung copper mine project have strongly rejected the report of the investigation commission set up by the government in the wake of a violent police crackdown against protesters last year.

Villagers who live near the mine confronted and heckled Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the chair of the commission, when she travelled to the area on March 13-14 to explain the report. They also criticised President U Thein Sein, who is on an official visit to New Zealand and Australia, for neglecting the issue.

The mine, in Salingyi township, Monywa district, Sagaing Region, has been the focus of angry protests from surrounding villagers, farmers and monks amid accusations of land-grabs, environmental damage and health risks associated with

the project. The villagers wanted the mine, which is operated under a contract between military-owned Union of Myanmar Economic Holdings Company (UMEHL) and Wanbao Mining, a Chinese company. UMEHL and Wanbao have welcomed the report and agreed to implement its recommendations.

Anger has been directed in particular at the failure of the 10-page report to call for punishment of the police officers responsible for white phosphorous being used to disperse demonstrators last November.

The report, which was released through the state media on March 12, acknowledges the use of the devices at Letpadaung, for which the police have apologised. The protestors had demanded that those responsible for what they called a war crime should face criminal charges.

"I was amazed that the

report failed to address the police action. All it does is to recommend that the government seek international assistance to train the police in how to carry out a crackdown against the people," said U Thein Than Oo, a member of Lawyers' Network, which supports the protest. During the November crackdown, the police set ablaze and destroyed six protest camps housing up to 500 monks and 50 farmers. More than 100 protestors reportedly suffered severe burns.

"It is a war crime that should be dealt with by the international court. We will continue to demand punishment for this crime, but the commission had nothing to say about punishment," said U Thein Than Oo.

Sayadaw U Sandar Thiri, of San Mya Wadi monastery in Zeedaw village, said the report would create more conflict in Letpadaung. "The commission has neglected our interests. We don't accept its recommendation

that the project should continue, without saying anything about the violent attack on monks," he said.

In her stormy encounter with the villagers, who waved signs saying "No Daw Aung San Suu Kyi", "No Commission Report" and "No more Investigation Committee", the Nobel laureate and leader of the NLD advised them to take their protest in accordance with the law to the parliament in Nay Pyi Taw, or outside her house.

U Zaw Htay, director of the President's Office, posted on his Facebook page a denial that President U Thein Sein had neglected the issue, saying he had discussed the issue with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi before his departure.

Villagers told *The Myanmar Times* of their anger at the report. "It is an unacceptable report. We are totally rejecting it," said Ma Thwe Thaw Win of Wattmahtay village.

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## Fact proves stranger than fiction in Sabah saga



AS I write this, sitting in my Malate hotel, highly excitable Filipinos are scurrying about on the streets below talking about an invasion of their Malaysian neighbours.

No, I have not been reading George Orwell in Manila, or even Lolita in Teheran, but I am reading Mohammed Hanif's satirical novel about the death of Pakistan's military dictator Zia ul Haq in 1988.

Hanif's *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* presents a crazily funny, yet weirdly plausible, take on Zia's demise; but its lunacy cannot match last month's events in the east Malaysian state of Sabah.

When reports first came in about an invasion by more than 200 supporters of an ancient sultanate in the southern Philippines, they rated barely a footnote on the inside pages.

After all, surely they were just a few nutters, who had paddled over from the Sulu Islands, landed at the isolated village of Lahad Datu, and claimed the whole of Sabah for themselves.

It was like Monty Python invades Rodonia, for the place is just as obscure and many people would be hard pressed to finger Sabah on a map, let alone Lahad Datu or the Sulus.

Initially, Kuala Lumpur and Manila also deemed it so silly as to be beneath their dignity to respond in any meaningful way.

Even when it became clear the Sultan's men were deadly serious, all that Philippine President Benigno Aquino did was to ask them to surrender and return home before anyone got hurt.

It was too little, too late. The insurgent band was heavily armed and highly motivated battle-hardened veterans of Muslim insurgencies on Mindanao.

And they had an arguable case, because North Borneo, now Sabah, was – and still is – leased by Malaysia from the Sultan of Sulu, and the men said they were simply going home to reclaim it.

So they were never going to listen to platitudes from Aquino, or threats from Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak.

Finally, wanting to appear strong as an election looms, Najib sent in the big guns, including F-18 fighter jets; but most of the canny invaders melted away into the dense jungle.

Still, plenty of bloodshed ensued on both sides and it became less Monty Python and more like a cross between Jonestown and Sharpeville.

And while it has soured ties between the two countries, what is most intriguing is the real motive behind the tragedy.

It is not the fantastical quest to reclaim Sabah for the Philippines – that is never going to happen and the Sultan and his followers know it.

But they also know there is tremendous sympathy for them at home and among the 800,000 ethnic Filipino Muslims residing in Sabah.

So they knew the odds were good that they could achieve their real objective, which is to kill the framework peace agreement Aquino signed with their rivals, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, last October.

That agreement, ironically brokered by Malaysia, could be Aquino's major legacy – if it is approved by congress and enacted by 2016.

However, when Manila negotiated that deal with the MILF, it excluded other Muslim groups, including the Sultan's people and key forces aligned with them.

That was bad enough, but these groups were further riled by the way the agreement covers both MILF's territorial base on Mindanao, and also the Sultan's own heartland of Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi.

They now fear that if the agreement goes into force, MILF, which has little presence in the Sulus, will abandon the Sabah claim.

That is why the Sultan's men want to kill the agreement and why they launched their quixotic invasion which led to the deaths of many of their own men – and of other Filipinos by the Malaysian military.

That in turn has fuelled such anger that legislators in Manila may now vote down the agreement and thus hand a technical victory to the invaders.

And now for something completely different.



## UN welcomes dialogue between govt, KIO

By Nan Tin Htwe

THE United Nations has welcomed discussion on a cease-fire agreement between the Myanmar government and the Kachin Independence Organisation following two days of talks in China.

In a statement released on March 14, the UN said: "The Secretary-General welcomes the outcome of the recent discussions in Ruili, China, between the Union Peace Working Committee and the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO) and their agreement to work toward a lasting ceasefire."

The UN said it expected that aid

could now be delivered to all areas in Kachin as both sides agree to expedite humanitarian relief.

The negotiations between the government delegation, led by Union Minister U Aung Min, and the KIO on March 11-12 in Shweli, China, were the second round of talks since fighting broke out in June, 2012.

After the dialogue, in which China acted as one of the observers together with ethnic groups such as United Nationalities Federal Council and the Restoration Council of South Shan, the group announced a four-point agreement.

Both sides have committed to working towards a cease fire,

issuing the necessary directives and orders to front-line units to reduce the fighting, opening the way for more cooperation and monitoring, and stepping up country-wide genuine political talks, and to meet for further talks by April 10. They also agreed to implement earlier agreements.

"The decision to establish liaison offices will improve coordination and monitoring of developments and facilitate the implementation of previous agreements. The Secretary-General welcomes the efforts of all sides to make this happen", the UN statement said, adding: "The United Nations will continue to be available as needed to assist in these efforts."

## Conflict delays exams in Kachin State

MATRICULATION exams have been delayed in parts of Kachin State under Kachin Independence Organisation control until April 1 as a result of armed conflict with the Tatmadaw.

KIO's education board will conduct matriculation exams for 200 students from April 1, *Mizzima* reported on March 13.

Last year exams were held in

Kachin State at the same time as the rest of the nation, after the KIO worked with the government to ensure the timely holding of exams. However, that cooperation has not occurred this year, *Mizzima* reported.

Elsewhere, thousands of high school students nationwide missed crucial matriculation exams this year for various reasons, a Ministry

of Education official said on March 15. "More than 53,000 students applied for the exam but less than 50,000 took part. The annual absence rate is between 5 percent and 10pc," U Myo Nyunt, director general of the Department of Myanmar Examinations, said.

Matriculation exams started on March 13 and are scheduled to finish on March 22. – Aung Shin



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# President's New Zealand trip to cement relations

By Nan Tin Htwe

THE first visit of a president of Myanmar to New Zealand will help consolidate the relationship between the two countries, which will lead to the establishment of a high-level diplomatic presence in Yangon later this year, a New Zealand senior official told *The Myanmar Times* last week.

The spokesperson for the New Zealand Prime Minister's office said the level of bilateral contacts between Myanmar and New Zealand over the past 12 months had been "unprecedented".

On March 13, President U Thein Sein led a delegation of senior government officials on official visits to New Zealand and Australia, at the invitation of their respective governments.

"This will be the first visit to New Zealand by a Myanmar president, and we are interested in showing the delegation something of our country, including our agricultural expertise," said a spokesperson for the New Zealand government.

During his stay in New Zealand, from March 14 to 17, President U Thein Sein will meet representatives from the University of Auckland and Fonterra, the country's biggest dairy company. Last November Mr John Key became the first New Zealand Prime



President U Thein Sein (centre) inspects the guard of honour during a welcome ceremony at Government House in Auckland on March 14. Pic: AFP

Minister to visit Myanmar.

Presidential spokesperson U Ye Htut told *The Myanmar Times* that the visit is about improving relations, discussing educational and economic cooperation and inviting involvement in Myanmar's reform process.

According to a report from *Australian Associated Press* on March 11, Mr Zetty Brake, director of Burma Campaign Australia, said the president's visit there would undermine Australia's efforts to end

human-rights abuses in Myanmar.

"We were deeply disappointed to see the shifting of the Australian government's policy, from prioritising the promotion of human rights and democracy to prioritising the promotion of trade and investment," he said in a statement.

But the New Zealand government spokesperson said: "Since the elections in 2010 the [Myanmar] government has embarked

upon an unprecedented set of reforms which has opened up the country, and been widely welcomed by the international community."

## Rakhine protesters fight against planned Rohingya housing

By Soe Than Lynn

A PLAN to build 5000 homes for displaced members of the Rohingya community in Rakhine State has sparked a series of demonstrations. Protesters say the plan, which has been proposed by the Turkish NGO TIKa, could allow the Rohingya to own land in disputed areas.

Thousands of people defied police warnings to take to the streets in Sittwe, Kyauktaw and Mrauk-Oo on March 7 to voice discontent. Two activists were arrested, but released the same evening.

Last year, hundreds of people were killed and more than 100,000 displaced in outbreaks of violence between Buddhist and Muslim communities in Rakhine State.

U Kyaw Zaw, who led about 10,000 demonstrators in Sittwe, told *The Myanmar Times*: "Half the 4959 houses to be donated will be built in Pauktaw and the rest in six townships in Rakhine State. In Sittwe, 500 big huts will be built as well. The huts don't matter, but if houses

are built, land ownership issues will ensue. It would constitute giving them plots of land without scrutinising their citizenship. That is why we object."

U Kyaw Zaw said Sittwe township police had turned down their application to demonstrate, so they submitted it to the state government, which had summoned them to answer questions, he said.

"The state government doesn't handle matters relating to permission to build 5000 separate houses but the Ministry of Progress of Border Areas and National Races does, they say. However they didn't deny officially that they had accepted the offer. They threatened us with legal action if we demonstrated."

But demonstrations took place in the three townships to demand the enforcement of the 1982 citizenship law. On March 7, activists Kyaw Zaw Oo and Daw Nyo Aye were arrested, but were released on bail within hours, said U Kyaw Zaw Oo. — Translated by Thit Lwin



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# Letpadaung a test or trap for Suu Kyi?

By Win Ko Ko Latt

THE Letpadaung Project Investigation Commission's report, submitted to President U Thein Sein on March 11 and explained to residents near the mine in Monywa by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on March 13 onward, will test her political leadership, hluttaw representatives said last week.

"I think this report will test Daw Suu's abilities," said Dr Aye Maung, Amyotha Hluttaw representative and chair of the Rakhine Nationalities Development Party.

"I think this situation will show how much political stamina Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has," said U Ye Tun, Pyithu Hluttaw representative for Hsipaw in Shan State.

Analysts say the commission's findings cannot satisfy everyone but the writers had to walk a fine line between supporting the Chinese backers of the project, the government and an increasingly vocal population.

Dr Yan Myo Thein, an observer of Myanmar's political affairs, wrote on his Facebook page that the Letpadaung investigation could be a political trap for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, who he said was the only one willing to brave its risks in the interests of the country and its people.

"It is an undeniable fact that Wanbao Company and UMEHL had to make some concessions when it was announced that Daw Suu would chair the investigation," he wrote.

Dr Aye Maung said people needed to show understanding



Daw Aung San Suu Kyi enters a village near the Letpadaung copper mine project in Monywa last week. Pic: Kaung Htet

on the matter, which could cast a bad light on the country as an investment destination if the project were suspended, even though the report says any gains from the project are marginal.

"She is trying to gently handle the situation and people should understand that," he said.

He added that people need to understand that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is caught in the middle of a difficult issue that many people feel extremely strongly about, especially residents.

"Many people are sandwiched in the Letpadaung affair and people have been hurt," he said. "But people need to be patient and seriously consider this issue," he added.

U Ye Tun, a former member of Burma Communist Party, said: "The approach of protesting everything the government does and trying to push the government into a corner is an old technique - one that used to be practiced by the Burma Communist Party. Some activists are have reinvigorated it and are using it again."

U Ye Tun said Daw Aung San Suu Kyi should be able to talk freely and openly as the opposition leader but has taken on a difficult assignment by chairing the inquiry, which puts her in the crosshairs of many different groups.

Dr Aye Maung said the Tatmadaw, Myanmar's armed forces, would be closely watching how Daw Aung San Suu Kyi handled the inquiry.

"The Tatmadaw and government will see how she handles this test." - Translated by Thiri Min Htun

From page 1

## Mine report angers residents

"Daw Su told us to accept more money in compensation. Why should we? We are not after money. We want to save our environment and our resources," said Ma Sandar of Ah Lae Taw village. "We will not give up," she added.

Wanbao has run the Lepadaung copper mine since 2010, in cooperation with UMEHL. The report says Wanbao invested US\$997 million to produce about 100,000 tonnes of copper a year. According to the production-sharing contract, the government is to receive 16.8 percent of the profit, UMEHL 1.8pc and Wanbao will take 13.3pc. However, Wanbao is exempted from paying 8pc commercial tax. The commission recommends a review of the contract in favour of UMEHL and the government.

The report states that the company had taken too much of the villagers' lands and recommended a review to establish how much land should be restored to the villagers, plus compensation at market rates. It also

noted that the project had been launched without an environmental impact assessment, a social impact assessment or a health impact assessment, or an environmental management plan, and recommended they be undertaken before the project continued.

American State Department spokesperson Victoria Nuland told reporters on the day the report came out that the US opposed the use of phosphorus against civilians. She urged the Myanmar government to ensure that its security forces exercise maximum restraint and protected the freedom of assembly in accordance with international standards.

Mr Dong Yunfei, project director for Wanbao Mining, said: "We are here to listen to the needs of our community and our wider stakeholders and we will communicate with them at every step of the way. We are committed to protecting the environment to the best international practices, and to improving the lives of the families, children and our wider community. We will help

and listen to the needs of the local community in improving their quality of life."

Some activists who led the protest campaign in Yangon and elsewhere said they would accept the report's recommendations if the project really was implemented in the interests of the country and of local residents, adding that otherwise they would intensify their protest campaign.

"Daw Aung San Suu Kyi doesn't have magic power to satisfy everybody. I think we should wait and see whether the companies will implement the report's recommendations," said Ko Ye Lin, who is facing trial in connection with the protest. He added: "I think the government has created this confrontation between Daw Suu and the people. We should avoid falling into that trap."

## Land tender

"We tried to bid as a group because we depend on these rubber plantations in Kawhmu. We collected the deposit from villagers and submitted a bid. But the committee phoned us on March 4, a day before the tender opening, to tell

us to bring K10 million for a deposit, which was not part of the pre-tender documentation.

"We believe that requirement was an attempt to remove us from the process and we have sent letters of complaint to Yangon Region's chief minister, President U Thein Sein and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi about this unclear tender process," he said.

He added that the group of more than 115 villagers planned to hold a press conference in Yaytarshae village on March 16 to voice their complaints.

"Our bid was the second highest for the first tender plot," said U Hla Myint, who is part of U Zaw Min Aung's group. "We have already told the committee that we are going to continue our bid according to the rules. But the committee didn't reply," he said.

U Win Myin, a third member of the U Zaw Min Aung Group, said: "A committee member also phoned us on the afternoon of March 6 to say that one company had bid much higher than us, and asked if we were willing to compete

against that offer."

"We told him that we are going to continue with our bid according to the rules. But the committee did not let us continue, which we think makes it an unfair tender. It is against the tender rules and regulation.

"We object to the committee for their management of the process, not necessarily the tender result," said U Win Myint, adding that many people depended on the rubber plantations for their livelihood.

The Yangon Region government announced the tender in the state-run *Kyemon (Mirror)* newspaper on February 6.

The first and second plots, both old rubber plantations, are in Kawhmu township, while the third plot - a tapioca plantation - is in Twante township.

The first plot covers 576 acres, including 8 acres of factory space; the second plot is 653 acres, with 7 acres of factory; and the third plot is 100 acres, with 5 acres of factory, the tender committee announced.



## US urges an end to N Korea relations

By Tim McLaughlin

THE United States will continue to urge Myanmar to end its military relationship with North Korea, a senior official said on March 14.

Mr Patrick Murphy, US Special Representative and Policy Coordinator for Myanmar, said he hoped the US would soon be in a position to "accept a declaration that the military relationship between the two countries [North Korea and Myanmar] has been severed."

Mr Murphy, who was in Myanmar as part of a three-country visit with stops in Bangladesh and Japan, said the US and Myanmar were engaged in a productive discussion over the issue.

"We have had fruitful dialogue on this issue with the authorities here and I think there is a very good understanding about the international concerns vis-à-vis North Korea," he added.

Presidential spokesman U Ye Htut is travelling abroad to New Zealand and could not be reached for comment.

The question of Myanmar's military engagement with North Korea is a continued point of concern for Washington.

North Korea has sent a flow of arms to the Tatmadaw for decades though the country's relationship was at times strained, most notably by a 1983 assassination attempt on South Korean President Chun Doo Hwan carried out by North Korean agents in Yangon that left 19 people dead.

The incident put an end to formal relations until 2007.

President U Thein Sein admitted in a May 2012 meeting with the then South Korean President Lee Myung-bak that Myanmar had bought conventional weapons from North Korea for 20 years, *The New York Times* reported, but he vowed that this would end.

But just three months later, in August 2012, Japanese officials seized weapons-grade material at the Port of Tokyo that was bound for Myanmar and was believed to have originated in North Korea.

Despite the incident, US Special Representative for North Korea policy Glyn Davies remained positive that Myanmar was heading in the right direction with its paring down of engagement with Pyongyang.

"I think that Burma's on the right path, that they have made a strategic decision to fundamentally alter their relationship with the DPRK and to ultimately end these relationships with North Korea," Mr Davies said in October 2012.

# Maubin probe nearing completion

By Noe Noe Aung

AN INVESTIGATION into a land dispute that has already led to one death is likely to complete its work by March 16, authorities say.

The Ayeyarwady Region government formed a commission in the first week of March to investigate the dispute, in which local farmers say their land was taken by a private company in 1996.

At a protest on February 26, a policeman was killed and more than 40 were injured in a violent clash between demonstrators and police.

"U Win Ko Ko, Minister for Finance and Revenue of Ayeyarwady Region, is chairing the seven-member commission, which began work on March 6. I think the investigation could be finished by about March 16," U Tun Kyaw Kyaw, an assistant director of the cabinet of Ayeyarwady Region, told *The Myanmar Times* on March 8.

He said a civilian legal consultant and U Myint Oo, Maubin township representative of Myanmar Farmers' Association, were



Policemen standing guard at the site of clashes with villagers at Maubin, in Ayeyarwady Region in February. Pic: AFP

advising the commission.

"The commission's first task is to investigate whether these farmlands were really taken without compensation in 1996," U Tun Kyaw Kyaw said. "The commission will reach a

fair solution based on its findings," he added.

The commission has invited farmers to provide proof that they worked the disputed land before 1996. Farmers from Palaung, Adate and Kon Dine Kalay

villages are trying to find any references that they worked the disputed farmlands for three years, Ko Maung Kyaing, a Palaung villager who was injured in the February 26 clash, said on March 8.

"We're collecting old tax receipts and ownership documents to submit to the commission," he said.

Many of the 200 farmers who say they worked the land have documents, but some say they lost them during Cyclone Nargis in 2008.

"We have a group of 10 farmers – five from Palaung, three from Adate and two from Kon Dine Kalay – who are collecting proof from villagers in each village. They are making a list of how many acres they had before the company took the farmlands from us," Ko Maung Kyaing said.

Regional authorities imposed a four-day curfew following the clash.

"As of March 2 the situation was stable and the injured people left hospital one or two days later," said U Nyi Nyi Lin, head of Maubin township administration office.

He said regional authorities were warning against the spread of false information to aggravate the dispute.

"Some activists tried to raise tensions, and there was a lot of misinformation," said U Nyi Nyi Lin.

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## Thilawa will go ahead: Japan

By Noe Noe Aung

THILAWA Special Economic Zone will go ahead, despite recent conflicts between the government and residents, a Japanese embassy official said last week.

Mr Ichiro Maruyama, minister-counsellor and deputy chief of mission at the embassy, said the project, which is a joint venture between Japanese companies and the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, has been delayed.

"We didn't even think about stopping the Thilawa special economic zone project, even though we are facing problems in implementing it," he said on March 1. "This project is really important for both Japan and Myanmar. We want the support of Myanmar's citizen for the project," he said.

In order to clear land for the project, Yangon Southern District authorities announced on January 31 that hundreds of households in project areas in Thanlyin and Kyauktan townships would be required to leave their homes by February 14 or face 30 days in jail for defying the order.

However, many residents said before February 14 that they were willing to face jail because they had nowhere else to go.

On February 14, U Soe Min, Yangon Region Minister for Agriculture and Livestock Breeding, met residents and promised the government would find a solution that would be fair to them.

But the February 14 deadline came and went, with no solution provided by the Yangon Region government.



Japan's finance minister and deputy prime minister Taro Aso (2nd right), gestures during a tour of the Thilawa industrial zone near Yangon on January 4. Pic: AFP

"The land is owned by Myanmar's government and if there were any objection, it is the government's responsibility to solve it," Mr Maruyama said. "But if the government wants any ideas from us we are happy to cooperate."

"Whenever countries try to implement big projects there are objections between the government and citizens - that's usual and we understand."

"But Myanmar's government should solve this problem quickly and fairly," he added.

The Thilawa Special Economic Zone will reportedly cover about 2400 hectares.

The Japanese government is willing to implement the project as a model for other countries, Mr Maruyama said.

He said other sticking points for implementing the project include regular electricity and water supply, transportation systems and

other infrastructure.

"But if Japan could implement this project well, other international companies and investors would join, we have no doubt about that."

"There are a lot of international businesses that are interested in investing here," he said.

"Myanmar's government is making many changes in the country, and its citizens are really hard working, which is why I believe the project will be successful," he added.

Mr Maruyama said Japan will provide training and technology to help Myanmar workers to take on higher-level positions.

"We won't come here just to build factories," he said. "It's true that we have to provide technicians and professionals at first but it doesn't mean that Japan is going to control all important jobs and leave Myanmar workers only the lower positions. Japan is going to

share the technologies and teach employee," he said.

"Most of the factories in Myanmar are garment factories. You don't need any technology in tailoring, which is why employees only have lower level positions in these factories. But Japan doesn't want to build factories like that in future. We want to build automobile factories, for example, which require technologically advanced machinery and skilled technicians to operate them," he added.

Mr Maruyama said Japan plans to build technological schools in the economic zone to train workers.

He added that an environmental impact assessment (EIA) will be conducted before work on the project begins.

"The EIA will take at least six months. Japan wants to start the process before rains arrive and we hope it will be finished in August or September."

"We know that there are a lot of factories in Myanmar and also a lot of industrial zones. But most of the companies want to invest just for their profit. We don't want Thilawa to be like that - we want Thilawa to have a good image."

## Ex-political prisoners fight to free colleagues

By Ei Ei Toe Lwin

RELATIVES of people jailed for their political beliefs or activities are being urged to add their names to a list being drawn up to secure their release.

On February 6, the government formed a committee, led by Union Minister U Soe Thein of the President's Office, to establish a full list of cases to be reviewed.

The Former Political Prisoners (FPPs) group is urging the families of people in prison to give information to seven organisations helping to draw up a comprehensive list.

"Everyone who knows the name of prisoners in political cases should inform the seven organisations," said U Thet Oo of FPPs.

The organisations are the National League for Democracy (NLD), Shan Nationalities Democratic Party (SNLD), 88 Generation Students Group, Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP), FPPs, Former Political Prisoners

Network (upper Myanmar) and U Thura, also known as Zaganar.

"The committee met in the Peace Centre in Yangon on February 23 for the first time. The chairman said they would send the list to the president. So it mainly depends on the president's desire to grant amnesty according to the list," said U Thet Oo.

"According to figures from AAPP, FPPs and 88 Group, there are 288 political prisoners around the country. But the government has a different figure. So we're trying to confirm the statistics," he said.

It is not clear when the president might act on the information provided.

"We have no information about an amnesty, but we expect that some political prisoners will be released soon after discussions with the committee. We will meet with them again on March 16," said U Thet Oo.

"We don't want to leave any political prisoner in jail, but information from remote areas is hard to come by. We're appealing for people with information to come forward," he added.

## Democracy alliance aims to tackle two big parties

ETHNIC-BASED political groupings are to come together to challenge the dominance of the country's two biggest parties. During the next few weeks, the Democracy Alliance Group is likely to be swelled by new groups, U Khin Maung Swe, chairman of the National Democratic Force and group leader, told *The Myanmar Times* on March 12.

The Democracy Alliance Group's existing 11 parliamentary representatives worked together as early as the 2012 by-election. The 11 belong to six ethnic-minority political parties: the Rakhine National Development Party, Shan National Democracy Party, Palon-Sawow Party,

Chin National Party, Mon Regional Democracy Party and Kayan National Party.

The National Democratic Force, Democratic Party (Myanmar), Democracy and Peace Party, Unity and Peace Party and Union Democracy Party are now expected to join the group. Of those, two are Kayin and Shan parties based on their own state.

"We'll meet before Thingyan to discuss membership. The leaders of those parties have already approached me about the group's activities," said U Khin Maung Swe.

The group is likely to build on the electoral experience gained during the by-election.

- Kyaw Hsu Mon

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# Publishers discuss dailies, delayed launches

By Kyaw Hsu Mon

NEWSPAPER publishers initially eager to take advantage of the government's willingness to license daily publication now seem to be hanging back as reality sets in.

The information ministry invited publishers to apply for a license to print a daily edition in February, and has issued licences to eight applicants. But some major players have not yet applied.

The reason seems to be the need to confront, practical problems of financing, distribution, equipment upgrades and staffing expansion, which represent serious hurdles on the path towards daily publication.

By early March, licences for daily publication had been issued to *Khit Moe*, *Pyidaungsu*, *Emperor*, *The Messenger*, *Myanmar Newsweek*, *Mizzima*, *Shwe Nainggan Thit* and *Nauk Sone Ya*.

But *The Yangon Times*, *The Voice*, *7 Days News*, *Modern*, *Weekly Eleven* and *The Myanmar Times* itself are not yet licensed. This is what their editors say

**Hlaing Bwar, editor-in-chief, The Yangon Times**

"We applied for a daily license on February 21, and are now awaiting approval from the Ministry of Information. It could come by the end of this month.

"We are expecting to start publishing a daily newspaper in May or June, and we're making the necessary preparations for things such as financial support, distribution and human resources.

"But the main challenge for us is capital. We will have to spend more than we did publishing the weekly journal, and that will cause some delay. We've set up journalism training and are already appointing new reporters.

"I heard that two Chinese newspapers have also applied for the license. They are based in China and will appear in Chinese."

**Wai Phyto, editor in chief, Eleven Media Group**

"We have applied for a license, but the information ministry asked us to resubmit our application. We will announce the date for



Pic: Ko Taik



Pic: Nyein Maung

Irrawaddy editor Kyaw Swar Moe (left) and D Wave consultant editor U Win Tin.



Pic: Kaung Htet



Pic: Boothee

Myanmar Times (English) editor-in-chief Ross Dunkley and Hlaing Bwar, editor-in-chief, Yangon Times.

going daily in Myanmar language later.

"We have already announced that the name of our daily newspaper will be *Daily Eleven*. As for the challenges, we will publish first and then find out what we need. For the present, we are preparing every department, such as finance, distribution, newsroom – everything."

**U Win Tin, patron of the National League for Democracy and consultant editor, D Wave journal**

"We will apply for a daily license for *D Wave* weekly journal. Since there are many requirements for

publishing a daily newspaper, we need to upgrade everything. We have to find a financier, buy a press, expand human resources and so on."

"It is not easy to run a daily newspaper. We'll have to do many things, for example open branches in Nay Pyi Taw, Mandalay and other cities, and then staff them. We also have to expand our marketing and distribution network before publishing a daily"

"Actually, *D Wave* has a good circulation as we have a lot of party members, but we are not the biggest seller. I can't say when daily publication will start,

but we're aiming for 19 July, Martyrs' Day)"

**Kyaw Swar Moe, editor (English edition) Irrawaddy Magazine and website**

"Daily publishing, in print, looks quite interesting at the moment, but we've only recently returned to this country. Now we are publishing *Irrawaddy Magazine* (English) for free. The first edition has already been distributed, the second soon will be.

"Even though we're printing many stories every day on the website, we need a stronger editorial team if we are to run a

daily newspaper. So we are still waiting to see what happens in the print market."

"There seems to be about 100 weekly journals, but very few daily licenses have been issued. So I predict that there might be fewer than 20 daily newspapers, because it will be difficult.

"For one thing, how big is the readership for a daily? How will they divide up the market? Not all the contenders can succeed. NLD's *D Wave* has a big circulation now, and I heard USDP will also start a daily, though I doubt the daily market will be dominated by party publications. We will have to think about that before going daily."

**Ross Dunkley, managing editor and editor-in-chief, The Myanmar Times**

"It's been an excruciating wait, a bit like a tree trying to grow through a crack in a rock, but we have now arrived at the starting line and no one seems at all in a hurry. We fall into that category as well, despite having plotted away for this moment for some 13 years. We are waiting for clarification from the ministry on how it will treat this foreign invested project – the only one – before moving towards an application that will be for two dailies, one in English and one in Myanmar.

"It is very disappointing to see unhealthy views creeping into the debate. Even the deputy minister expressed fear about foreigners being involved in the media. I find that to be rather puerile because the truth is that a long time ago I brought in new management techniques, equipment, capital and know-how. I put them all to use and then everyone around me took up those ideas and that changed the sector. This did not threaten the sector. It enhanced it."

"The truth is that if you don't have some foreign involvement you face the risk of once again becoming myopic, inefficient, maybe even irrelevant. I'm convinced that is not what the minister and president have in mind, and I will await their advice before the next move. Of course we have another matter in play here and that is the sale of shares in Myanmar Consolidated Media. It is a complicated scenario right now at *The Myanmar Times*."

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## Politicians debate NLD congress

By Kyaw Hsu Mon

THE re-election of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi as chair of the National League for Democracy has prompted a range of comment about the outcome of the party's conference in Yangon last week.

Despite a widespread feeling that the party's most famous member should continue to lead it, with the aid of trusted and experienced officials, some observers cited the need to bring in fresh blood to help prepare the way for the 2015 elections. And speculation still surrounds the expulsion from the party assembly of four members on the grounds that they were supposedly intending to unseat Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

A number of old hands were also re-elected to senior positions on the central executive committee (CEC), including U Nyan Win, U Hantha Myint and U Ohn Kyine, raising questions about the balance between experience and youth in the party leadership.

"Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's re-election as NLD chair is good for the party. And the CEC members

are experienced. Not many CEC members are young, but at this stage, after the reorganisation, maybe experience is what you need," said U Thu Wai, chairperson of the Democratic Party (Myanmar). But he also stressed the need for new blood, as political activities required energy and enthusiasm.

Some analysts suggested that the experienced members should continue to manage the party in the short term, but make way for newcomers after 2015.

"Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has headed the NLD for 25 years during the most difficult period for the party. Her job now is to expand the NLD's popularity. Let's watch and see how she does it," said political observer and writer U Kyaw Linn Oo.

Others fear the shortage of new blood could make the party appear less democratic. "A leader in place for too long can become a dictator," said Moe Thee Zun, USA-based former student leader.

"If the young generation doesn't participate in party activities, they won't much care about its future," he added. — *Translated by Thiri Min Htun*



Firefighters clean up after a blaze at a wharf on the Hlaing River last week.  
Pic: Ko Taik

## River fire guts fuel tankers

By Htoo Aung

TWO workers were injured in a fire that caused an estimated K29 million in damage at the Premium Petrol Company's wharf on the Hlaing River in Hlaing Tharyar township on March 12.

The fire started while

workers were transferring diesel fuel from a tanker, which had broken down two days earlier, when the nozzle of the hose contacted the tank and sparked.

A Yangon Fire Services department press release said the blaze started at 12pm and was extinguished by 12:55pm. A total of 348 firemen and 243 assistants,

70 Red Cross workers, as well as 58 fire engines, three support vehicles and one firefighting boat worked to bring the fire under control.

One vessel, the *Myit That Oo*, was gutted in the fire, while two 2800-gallon tankers, one diesel tank and two work barracks were also destroyed.

Two people were injured

and taken to Yangon General Hospital, the press release said.

Workers Ko Lin Htike Aung was charged under section of 285 of the Penal Code, concerning negligent conduct in regards to fire. If found guilty, Ko Lin Htike Aung could face three years' imprisonment and/or a fine.

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## March storms destroy houses

By Aye Sapay Phyu

STRONG winds have blown down some buildings and wrought extensive damage in the first 10 days of March in Bago Region and Kayin and Shan states, a Relief and Resettlement Department official said on March 13.

U Aung Khine, RRD director, said 12 houses were blown over and 22 others damaged by strong winds in Taung Thale Pin village tract in Kyauktaga township, Bago Region on March 4.

"Storms struck the four villages of Taung Thale Pin, Kin Pon Chone, Thel Kaw and Kyaung Sone on March 4. A total 184 people were affected," he said.

He added that 11 houses were knocked down during a storm in Kyone Doe village in Kawkaik township, Kayin State, on March 3.

He said affected people had been offered support in rebuilding their houses, as well as temporary assistance for food and relief.

An RRD report said the town of Hseni and Yan Kyain village in Kentung township in Shan State also suffered from storms on March 8 and 9 that tore off the roofs of houses, schools and government buildings.

"A total of about K2.1 million in damages was caused by strong winds in Yan Kyain village in Kentung township on March 9," he said.

Meanwhile, the Department of Metrology and Hydrology on March 5 issued a nationwide warning of possible untimely rain and strong winds in the pre-monsoon period from March to mid-May.

The warning stated that during the pre-monsoon period, isolated rain and thundershowers are accompanied with strong wind, hail and lightning are likely in the late afternoon or evening due to rising temperatures during the day.

U Chit Kyaw, DMH deputy director, said the public should be aware of severe weather warnings but said seagoing fishermen should take particular care.



A speed camera near the Nay Pyi Taw toll gate last week. Pic: Su Hlaing Tun

## Speed traps coming to NPT highway

By Su Hlaing Tun

WE'RE watching you—so you watch your speed, motorists are being told. Police have responded to rising accident rates by checking speeds on the Yangon-Nay Pyi Taw-Mandalay highway, and will soon be ready to take action against drivers exceeding the limit.

On April 1 the 60-mile (100 kilometre) an hour limit will be enforced with the help of two speed-measuring devices, said

the Highway Police Force on March 12.

"We'd like drivers to be aware that they have to stay within the speed limit. Following an awareness-raising period, we are going to take action," said Police Colonel Nay Win at the Nay Pyi Taw headquarters of the Highway Police.

In a survey of 1000 vehicles on the highway since January, police have found excessive speed as being a major cause of accidents. Other causes include unsafe vehicles,

the condition of the road surface and negligent driving.

"Inexperienced young drivers, drowsiness and speeding are the commonest reasons for accidents, as well as blowouts and other tyre problems. Especially during hot weather, drivers should ensure their vehicle is in good mechanical order and is fitted with good tyres," the colonel said.

The speed measuring devices will also photograph the licence plate number and the driver. "Once we

have the pictures, the driver can't deny the offence. We will stop them some distance from the measuring device," he added.

On the 366-mile (600-km) Yangon-Mandalay highway, 15 police stations will be set up with 500 officers, and patrol cars and ambulances will be deployed. Law-abiding drivers wishing to report an offence can call the police station numbers displayed on 32 hoardings along the route.

Speeding cases will be settled promptly at traffic

courts in Yangon, Mandalay and Nay Pyi Taw, where offenders will face a K30,000 fine. Repeat offenders could even lose their licence, Col Nay Win said.

Accident black spots on the Nay Pyi Taw highway include Baw Nat Gyi, Pyu, Bawdigone, Oktwin, Pantin and Paylaybin and Mandalay. According to highway statistics, between February 1 and March 5, 28 accidents occurred, leaving 26 dead and 80 injured. — Translated by Thiri Min Htun

## New rail line opened in Bogyoke Aung San's hometown

By Pyae Thet Phyto

A NEW section of railway line was opened in Natmauk, the Magway Region home town of independence hero Bogyoke Aung San, on March 13.

The new line, which links Natmauk to Ywartaw, is 35.42 miles long and forms part of the Pyawbwe-

Natmauk-Magway Railroad Construction Project.

Union Minister for Railways and Transportation U Zayar Aung said the track is the fourth addition of a 95-mile stretch between Mandalay and Magway regions.

"Many roads, railroads and bridges have been built by our government and more are being built all the time," he said.

Natmauk resident U Thaung said the new track would save townspeople time.

"I'm very happy to see this new track built. Previously, we had to travel about 1 mile to reach the old train station and had to cross Yin Creek at the eastern side of town to get there," he added.

The other three parts of the track are the Pyawbwe-Yanaung line, which was

opened in April, 1999; the Magway-Kanpyar line that opened on December 19, 2009; and the Pyawbwe-Ywartaw line that opened on January 16, 2010.

Minister of the President's Office U Aung Min delivered an apology for the absence of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, who was in Monywa to release a report to the public on the Letpadaung mine.

"This town has been underdeveloped for decades so we are hoping that the new line will bring some development with it," another resident said.

There are 12 stations along the Natmauk-Ywartaw track. Thee Lay Thee Troupe performed at the opening ceremony of the track.

— Translated by Zar Zar Soe

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Par Par Lay's group performing in Mandalay during Thingyan last year. Pic: SUPPLIED

# Lewe woman fights minister over land

By Pyae Thet Phyto

CONTROVERSY surrounds the grant of land to a monastery by a widowed mother of three. Daw Yin Mya, 48, donated the 26-acre plot in April last year after a mysterious fire destroyed the sugar cane she had planted on the land. The blaze occurred after she had received repeated warnings not to cultivate the land, whose ownership is claimed by a former government minister.

Sayardaw U Panyar Thiri, the presiding monk of the monastery in Aung Thu Kha village at Pout Myaing village tract in Lewe township, Mandalay Region, said on March 1 that the plot had been fenced in June last year, apparently on the instructions of former union minister for cooperatives, and livestock and fisheries, U Ohn Myint, who claims ownership.

"He told me not to plant anything on the land, and promised he would ask the government to build a religious building in my monastery if I left the land

alone. But that has not happened," said Sayardaw U Panyar Thiri.

He said he had reported the issue to the government department dealing with land-grab disputes, but was yet to receive a response.

The case has aroused concern in the village because of concerns over a possible land-grab. "This case was reported 10 months

ago. We've heard nothing since. The village doesn't know how to resist over the question of ownership of the land," villager Ko Kyaw Aung told *The Myanmar Times* on March 6.

The plot, which had been cultivated for nearly 20 years, was offered before witnesses on April 17, 2012 by Daw Yin Mya of Shwe Pyi Thar village either for building a monastery or for cultivation to fund religious activities.

Daw Yin Mya said she had donated the plot after U Soe Win Than, ex-administrator of Pout Myaing village tract, threatened her not to cultivate the land, claiming it was owned by the cooperatives minister. "I was afraid to cultivate it after being repeatedly threatened, so I donated the land for religious activities dedicated to my late husband, mother and son," said Daw Yin Mya.

"I have three children, but with no money coming in from the crops, I can't afford to send them to school," she said. "Now I earn my living selling vegetables in local villages," said Daw Yin Mya. Sayadaw U Panyar Thiri has filed three requests with the government: to remove the fence around the land and the trees planted since its enclosure, to register the donation from Daw Yin Mya, and for protection against the alleged abuse of power. - Translated by Zar Zar Soe

## Moustache Brothers to perform Thingyan chants in Mandalay

By Phyto Wai Kyaw and Than Naing Soe

FAMOUS comedians the Moustache Brothers plan to tour Mandalay during Thingyan in a decorative car and perform chants, Par Par Lay, one of the two brothers, said last week.

Thingyan chants have been banned in recent years but the order against such performances was lifted last year, allowing the Moustache Brothers and another group to perform them.

"Although I am still blacklisted and cannot perform public shows, I am planning to perform chant in Mandalay during Thingyan," Par Par Lay said.

"I will perform chants looking at political, social, economic and environmental issues. I might also need to find some supporters [sponsors] for our group because we will have expenses for the car that need to be covered, and I want to pay other artists in our group," Par Par Lay said

on March 11.

He said chanting performances are one of the essences of Thingyan.

"I haven't chosen a title of our chant this year. Last year's title was 'Let's fight friend'. Some elders were afraid that our performances would mock the government but the young people were so happy to see chanting performances return to Thingyan.

"I think there will be more groups performing chants this year during Thingyan in Mandalay," he added.

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## Letpadaung fury

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi encountered hostile scenes last week as she toured areas near the Letpadaung copper project in Sagaing Region to explain the findings of a commission formed to investigate a violent confrontation last year. *Pics: Kaung Htet*






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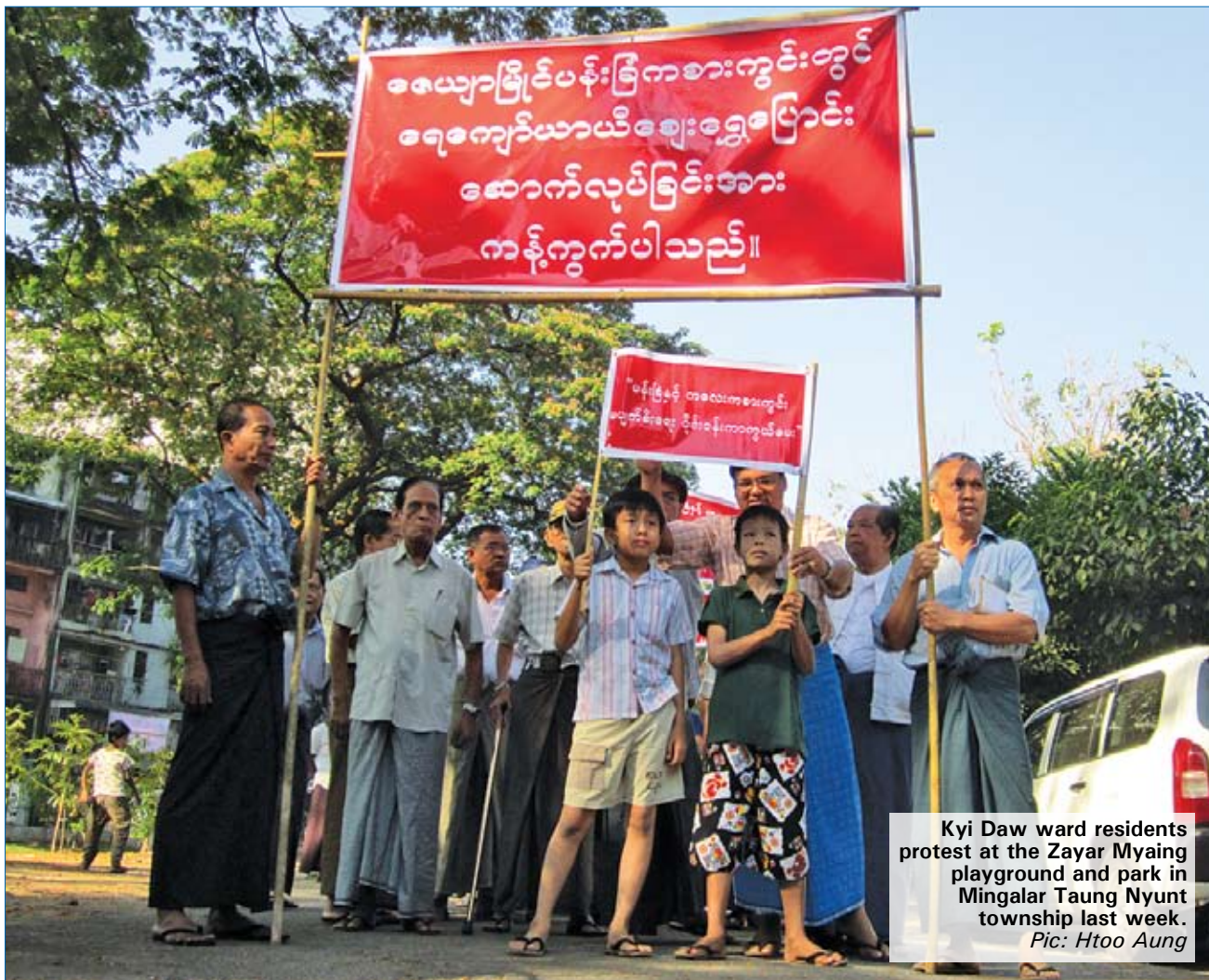
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Kyi Daw ward residents protest at the Zayar Myaing playground and park in Mingalar Taung Nyunt township last week. Pic: Htoo Aung

# Kyi Daw residents oppose proposed market site

By Htoo Aung

RESIDENTS of Kyi Daw ward in Mingalar Taung Nyunt township last week protested against the temporary relocation of the Ye Gyaw Market to the Zayar Myaing playground and park.

A small crowd gathered at the park at about 9am on March 9 to protest against the relocation, which has been proposed until the Ye Gyaw Market is redeveloped.

U Nyaung Nyaung, a comedian who lives in Kyi Daw ward, said residents feared the market would

upset the community's "ecosystem".

"We object to the temporary location of the Ye Gyaw Market in the park and playground. There are lots of places in Pazundaung township that are better suited for this than the park, which has two schools nearby," he told *The Myanmar Times*.

"We don't want the plants and ecosystem destroyed."

Daw Nilar, a 65-year-old resident who participated in the demonstration, said the market would create extra rubbish and waste, adding that plants and trees would have to be removed to make

way for the stalls.

Yangon City Development Committee held a meeting with Kyi Daw ward authorities on March 6, informing them of the intention to temporarily locate the market at the playground.

U Ngwe Kyaing, an officer from YCDC's garden and playground parks department, said the park measures about 1.5 acres. He said any damage to the park would be repaired when the Ye Gyaw Market was redeveloped.

"We are going to use only three quarters of the park," he said. He added that

YDCD had already tried to relocate the market to a vacant piece of land leased by War War Win company but residents rejected the plan, and another possible location was sought.

The Zayar Myaing park is operated by YCDC's department of gardens and playgrounds parks.

U Kyaw Thein, 60, said Kyi Daw residents had written to the mayor protesting against the decision to relocate the market to the park.

"We also sought and received permission for 100 people to demonstrate on March 9 from 9: 15-10:15am."

## Ethnic languages to return to govt schools

By Aung Shin

A PROGRAM to teach ethnic languages in government-run schools will start next year, an official from Ministry of Education said on March 4.

U Ko Ko Tin, the director general of Education Planning and Training Department under Ministry of Education, told *The Myanmar Times*: "We are dealing with the cultural committees of respective national races and related experts to draft curriculums."

"We have to consider first where we can conduct the program, which regions have enough students who want to learn in their own languages, and have enough teachers capable of teaching in those dialects," he said.

"These things are the most important points in implementing our program, which we think will occur in the coming school year" in June.

A meeting of teaching ethnic dialects in basic education schools was

conducted in Nay Pyi Taw on March 1, which was attended by Vice-President Dr Sai Mauk Kham, who is Shan.

"Teaching of ethnic languages and literature is necessary and in accord with the institutions of the country, which is a union of many ethnic groups," he said.

The Ministry of Education is targeting the teaching of about 30 ethnic languages including Shan, Mon, Kayin, Kayah, Rakhine, Kachin and Chin; groups of experts are working on the program to draft curriculums for basic education provision at government schools.

Education Minister Dr Mya Aye also urged experts to complete the drafting of curricula during a meeting to discuss ethnic language teaching programs in March.

"It is good that ethnic languages can be taught at government schools," said Dr Aye Maung, chairman of the Rakhine National Development Party. "Ethnic children can learn faster in their own languages, which

will support national reconciliation," he said.

U Sai Aung Momg (Mo Tai), who teaches Shan language in Mandalay and is also vice president of the Shan Language and Culture Committee in Mandalay, said he supported the idea of teaching ethnic languages in government schools.

"We should have extra time to teach ethnic languages at schools because our country is home to many ethnic groups," he said.

"But I wonder how the program is going to work, and if there are enough native speakers to teach the language properly because I have seen a lack of skilled ethnic language teachers in many regions."

"And the program should focus on teaching ethnic language apart from school texts because it would be a huge task to translate all of those texts into each ethnic language," he added.

Teaching in ethnic languages in government schools ceased in about 1981-82.

## Report outlines land rights abuse

By Bill O'Toole

INCIDENTS of land confiscation in eastern Myanmar have increased by more than 50 percent in the last year, said a report from the Karen Human Right's Group published on March 4.

The report, "Losing Ground: Land Conflicts and Collective Action in Eastern Myanmar", comprises 99 documents related to natural resource extraction and development projects collected by the KHRG throughout 2012.

The documents detail many incidents of forced resettlement due to development, development projects without local support and environmental damage caused by large-scale development projects.

"These projects included hydropower dams, infrastructure development, logging, mining, and commercial plantation agriculture that were undertaken or facilitated by various civil and military state authorities, foreign and domestic companies and armed ethnic groups," the report says.

Armed groups such as the Tatmadaw and the Karen National Union are cited for being particularly abusive in their treatment of local landowners. The report quotes a farmer from Bu Tho township in Pagan, Kayin State, who recalls the Tatmadaw confiscating his neighbour's land and then offering to sell it back to him for K5000 a field.

The report highlights Myanmar's problem with laws concerning the ownership and sale of land. Though the parliament's farmland bill, first passed in 2011, gives farmers the right to register their land ownership with the state and federal government, activists

and farmers agree the law is routinely ignored by the country's various armed groups seeking profit.

Though the best way to strengthen the law continues to be debated in parliament, "[The Tatmadaw] is not involved, they're not even there. In terms of engagement, we don't know what the military thinks", said Tobias Jackson, an advisor for the Yangon-based Land Core Group.

He added that applying "visible, mobilised community pressure" is the best and perhaps only means small communities have for protecting their land. "Hopefully that brings pressure on the Tatmadaw."

Community action against land grabs has increased in the last year, the report says, with many villages organising committees dedicated to halting or examining new land projects. "KHRG's 2012 documentation displayed a sharp increase in committee formation, with 20 [committees formed] in 2012, compared with three in 2011."

The report concludes that land reform is needed for the continued development of Myanmar. "The ultimate aim of any land-governance reforms should be to protect the property rights of people in Myanmar, while providing an environment that allows for sustainable economic development for their benefit," the report says.

Jackson agreed with their assessment: "The key requirement for a national and inclusive discussion on land use ... is to decide what direction to take and how to balance the need for energy and jobs with the need for transparency."

The report defines "land confiscation" as land being taken from local communities without any compensation.

## Minister apologises over Chin article

THE information minister has apologised for insulting references to ethnic Chin that appeared in state-run media last month.

U Aung Min, union minister for information, wrote to the Amyotha Hluttaw on March 14 concerning the novel *Ganaing Kyawt*, the subject of a series of articles in state-owned newspapers from February 15 to 19.

"I was absolutely responsible for this issue as I was the union minister," he said in the letter.

The apology came after the National Brotherhood Federation released a statement on March 2 and 3 objecting to quotes from the novel suggesting cannibalism among the Chin. U Aung Min's letter said the editor-in-chief of the *Mirror* featured the novel because it was "an emotional story with a mixture of romance

and action" based on rural Myanmar traditions, adding that it was popular among the reading public.

The minister said he had instructed the paper on February 17 to take action against the persons responsible for the publication and to ensure that the offending words did not reappear. He also suspended the promotion of editor-in-chief U Khin Maung Kyaw Din, and issued a written warning to the editor, U Win Naing.

"The letter only apologised to the speaker of the Amyotha Hluttaw and representatives of the Chin ethnic group. So we are considering how to respond to the apology because this issue concerns all Chin," said U Paw Lyan Lwin, Chin ethnic representative of Amyotha Hluttaw. — Win Ko Ko Latt, translated by Zar Zar Soe





Cambodia's opposition leader-in-exile Sam Rainsy (right) speaks with comedian Zaganar during a meeting at a restaurant in Yangon on March 11. Pic: AFP

### Girl raped in NPT ward admin yard

By Pyae Thet Phyo

A 16-year-old girl was allegedly raped in the compound of a ward administration office in Nay Pyi Taw Council Territory at about 10am on March 6, while her mother was shopping.

The alleged rape was reported to Pyinmana Police Station, who charged 25-year-old motorcycle taxi driver Ko Naing Htay with rape under Section 376 of Penal Code.

The 49-year-old mother told *The Myanmar Times*: "It happened while I was going to the [Ahara Thuka] market. I only found out when I got home to find my daughter crying."

The alleged rape took place in a house within a ward administration compound, and Ko Naing Htay is alleged to have entered the house and raped the young woman while she was preparing to take a bath.

"I didn't know what to do because it happened so suddenly," the 16-year-old said. "I was so scared. Afterward I couldn't say a word but just cried and cried." - Translated by Thiri Min Htun

## Cambodia's opposition leader visits

PHNOMPENH—Cambodia's opposition leader Sam Rainsy on March 11 branded strongman Prime Minister Hun Sen a "coward" for barring him from running in a key general election later this year.

Rainsy, Hun Sen's main rival, lives in self-imposed exile in France to avoid prison for a string of convictions that critics contend are politically motivated.

In November the 63-year-old Rainsy was told he could not stand in the polls because of his convictions by the National Election Committee (NEC), a body he says is a tool of the premier.

He accused Hun Sen, who has ruled the country since 1985 and has vowed to stay in power until he is 90, of using

the NEC to block his election bid – something the premier has repeatedly denied.

"I think Hun Sen is a coward because there are only two challengers," he told *AFP* by telephone from Yangon, where he met Myanmar's pro-democracy leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

"But Hun Sen dares not to compete with me. He uses a kangaroo court to blame me so that he can go into the ring and fight alone."

Hun Sen, 61, is routinely accused of suppressing political freedoms and violating the rights of dissidents, but analysts say he remains firmly entrenched in power.

Rainsy, who leads the recently-formed Cambodia National Rescue Party, said he still harboured hopes of

running in July's election and expressed confidence his party could end Hun Sen's 28-year grip on power.

Suggesting Hun Sen is committing "political suicide" by not allowing him to compete, Rainsy warned he will "start a strong movement to topple" any government formed by the election.

He also accused the NEC of handing Hun Sen's ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) landslide victories in successive elections.

French-educated Sam Rainsy is one of the most outspoken figures in Cambodian politics but has lived in self-imposed exile in France since 2009, and faces a total of 11 years in prison if he returns.

In 2010 he received a seven-

year jail term in absentia for publishing a "false map" of the border with Vietnam, claiming the neighbour holds Cambodian territory.

Other convictions include accusing the foreign minister of being a member of the brutal Khmer Rouge regime in the late 1970s.

The international community has urged Cambodia to allow all political participants, including

Rainsy, to compete fairly in the looming election.

Despite his apparently unassailable grip on power, some experts question whether Hun Sen's strong-arm tactics could eventually bring him down.

"How can he rule by fear and at the same time try to keep everybody happy?" Ou Virak of the Cambodia Center for Human Rights recently told *AFP*.

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# UN monitor urges Myanmar to tackle sectarian unrest

GENEVA – A UN human rights investigator urged Myanmar last week to reveal the truth about a wave of sectarian violence against Rohingya Muslims thousands of whom have sought refuge in neighbouring countries as boat people.

Presenting a report to the United Nations Human Rights Council – the world body's top rights forum – on March 11, Mr Tomas Ojea Quintana said the issue was a crucial test as Myanmar moves along the road to democracy.

"The government must establish the truth about what happened in Rakhine State during the two waves of communal violence last June and October, and hold those responsible for human rights violations to account," he told the Council, pointing to the actions of security forces.

Rakhine State, on the Western border with Bangladesh, is the main home of the Rohingya, described by the UN as among the most persecuted minority groups in the world.

Myanmar views its population of roughly 800,000 Rohingya as illegal Bangladeshi immigrants and denies them citizenship.

Buddhist-Muslim unrest has left at least 180 people dead and some 120,000 displaced in Rakhine since June 2012, and many have risked their lives by taking to the sea to escape.

Mr Quintana urged the government to ease restrictions on freedom of movement in the area, notably in the camps for displaced Rohingya, as the



Mr Tomas Ojea Quintana. Pic: AFP

rainy season looms.

"The situation in this area is extreme," he warned.

Myanmar's ambassador to the UN in Geneva, U Maung Wai, insisted the government was tackling the issue.

"The communal violence that broke out in Rakhine state last year has caused suffering in both the communities there," he told the Council.

"The government has established an independent investigative commission to probe the causes of the violence and seek short-term, long-term and medium-term solutions to the issue," he said.

"Almost 95 percent of the total population of the country are Buddhists. However, the majority do not discriminate against the minority," he added.

In addition to the Rohingya crisis, Mr Quintana underlined other concerns in Myanmar.

Appointed as the UN's monitor in 2008, he has conducted regular visits to assess Myanmar's transition, marked by the 2010 release of democracy icon and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi after two decades under house arrest.

The junta's four-decade rule ended formally in 2011 when reformist U Thein Sein – a former military commander – became president.

But 25pc of the seats in parliament are set aside for the military, and the constitution offers a bulwark against prosecution for past abuses.

Fresh parliamentary elections are scheduled for 2015, with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's party expected to win power.

"While the process of reform is continuing in the right direction, there are significant human rights shortcomings that remain unaddressed," said Mr Quintana, a rights lawyer who saw his homeland

Argentina move from junta rule to democracy in the 1980s.

He welcomed greater press freedom, but warned that looming legislation could claw it back, and flagged concerns about arrests during peaceful demonstrations, plus excessive force by police.

Welcoming the release of over 800 political prisoners since May 2011, he said more than 250 remain behind bars and should be set free immediately.

"Now is the time to address these shortcomings before they become further entrenched and destabilise the reform process," he said.

While the government has struck ceasefires in long-running armed conflicts with almost a dozen ethnic groups, Mr Quintana raised the alarm about Kachin State, where 75,000 people remained displaced.

Ambassador U Maung Wai complained that Quintana's comments on conflict zones intruded on Myanmar's sovereignty, and denied claims of military abuses.

"The armed forces exercise zero tolerance against human rights violations," he said.

Mr Quintana said foreign nations eyeing business in the former pariah state must keep human rights in the foreground.

U Maung Wai also looked to the international community.

"A new political culture is now taking shape in the country," he said.

"In this new era, we would like to call upon our friends and partners to avoid their stereotypical views and see Myanmar from a totally new perspective." – AFP

# University plans to test Hlaing River

By Yamon Phu Thit

THE University of Public Health will test the quality of water flowing in the Hlaing River downstream from the Hlaing Tharyar Industrial Zone, a university spokesperson told *The Myanmar Times* on March 11.

The university's environmental research will mainly focus on possible water contamination caused by waste water runoff from factories at the industrial zone, said Dr Mya Thandar, the university's chief lecturer in its Occupational and Environmental Health Department.

The project, "Water quality assessment of Hlaing River", will be in line with World Health Organisation (WHO) standards and will be conducted along the river from the Hlaing Tharyar Industrial Zone to Kyeemyindaing township, she said.

"Water samples will be taken and tested to see whether it [the industrial zone] can affect public health and the environment.

"Waste water drains from the factories will also be tested to find out what kinds of chemicals are contaminating the water."

The University of Public Health will be the lead organiser of the research but the university has also requested a grant from WHO to pay some expenses and provide technological support, she added.

Dr Mya Thandar said the university estimated the amount needed was about US\$4000 but WHO has not yet confirmed that it will provide funding.

The research aims to find out how the water is contaminated by waste runoff from factories and ensure early notice of potential health problems for the people who use contaminated water, Dr Mya Thandar said.

"People may use the water domestically consume fish caught from the river, which might be hazardous if the fish have been contaminated," she said.

The duration of the project will be about five months and the results will be released to the respective departments.

"We will initiate the project at the end of this month," she said.

Research scientists from the Department of Medical Research (Lower Myanmar) presented a report at the 41<sup>st</sup> Health Research Congress in early January that showed waste water from factories of Hlaing Tharyar and South Dagon industrial zones include concentrations of copper, manganese and iron that are higher than WHO guidelines.

"The residents using the water are facing potential health problems over the long term," a research scientist said at the congress.

Myanmar has no specific water quality standards but the Ministry of Health is planning to adopt a standard in future, an official from the Department of Health's Occupational Health Division said.

"With our own standards, we can determine what water is safe to drink, and what is not. This will help to improve public health and awareness of safe drinking water," said Dr Kyi Lwin Oo, deputy director of the Occupational Health Division.

# Global Fund announces \$77m in new funding

By Shwe Yee Saw Myint

THE Global Fund has committed US\$77 million in new funding to fight three major diseases in 2013 and 2014, it was announced last week. The money will go to combating AIDs, tuberculosis and malaria.

"We have had Global Fund support for five years. This new funding is will be added to the existing funds," said Daw Nwe Zin Win, executive director of Pyi Gyi Khin, a Myanmar non-governmental organisation.

Myanmar has received \$94 million since 2010 to fight the three diseases, said Global Fund spokeswoman Marcela Roja by email.

"Global Fund said they would come here on March 11 for discussions with government officials and national organisations," said Daw Nwe Zin Win.

"For the next phase of activities, we have asked Global Fund for \$166 million for the HIV project, \$45 million for TB and \$57 million for malaria," said Dr Soe Naing, social mobilisation adviser of UNAIDS.

Among other expected benefits, the new funding could raise the percentage of HIV/AIDS patients receiving Anti-Retroviral (ART) treatment to 85pc.

In Myanmar, more than 12,000 HIV/AIDS patients need ART treatment, but only 35pc of them are receiving it. Last year, 18,000 people, or 40 a day, died of HIV-related diseases.

According to a 2011 estimate, HIV prevalence in the adult population (those aged 15 and over) was 0.53pc, with 216,000 people living with HIV. There were about 8300 new infections among adults in 2011.

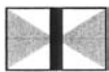
TB is the most important health problem in Myanmar. In 2011, about 200,000 adults and children were at risk, and 10 percent of TB patients are infected with HIV.

"More funding could raise the number of townships receiving help from 38 to 72," said Daw Nwe Zin.

Statistics indicate that malaria sufferers comprise about 4.5 million people, or 8pc of the population. Most live in mountainous areas.

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# New life beckons as refugee program ends

By Claire Luke

THREE-year-old Htee Eh Taw runs excitedly back and forth on the hard wood floors of his spacious new apartment overlooking downtown Albany, New York. His polished new home differs drastically from the refugee camps in Thailand and the toddler and his parents – who lived in the camps since 1990 – left just two weeks ago thanks to the US resettlement program.

But the program, designed to expedite the process for refugees wanting to leave any of the nine camps on the Thai border where they fled from persecution from the Myanmar government, is coming to a close in May, despite a large number of refugees remaining in the camps.

Experts say the end of the US program hinges on the lack of eligible refugees to bring to the US since the Thai government has stopped registering refugees.

"People in the camps first need to be registered with the Thai government before they can be resettled anywhere, and registration has been inactive since 2005," said Sally Thompson, executive director of the Thai-Burma Border Consortium.

"So those resettling to the US now were registered in or prior to 2005."

## Program coming to 'natural conclusion'

Ms Thompson said the Thai government suspended registration after 2005 due to concerns that people would enter the camps to sign up for a move abroad rather than protection.

Unfortunately, this means that despite conflicts between the Myanmar military and ethnic minority groups leading to new arrivals in the camps all the time, only a few have been resettled with relative speed since then, she said.

UNHCR statistics show 62,000 of the 85,000 refugees in the nine camps on the Thai-Myanmar border are unregistered.

Since the number of registered refugees has dwindled, it makes sense that the US resettlement plan is drawing to its "natural conclusion", said Michael Quinlan, assistant public affairs officer at the US embassy in Yangon.

Most refugees eligible to leave for the US under the plan have done so, with 62,000 resettled since the program began in 2005, he said.

The few refugees still eligible to relocate are being asked if they want to do so, and those who do not will remain in the camps because the US government does not deem conditions safe enough for refugees to return, Mr Quinlan said.

Taw Nay Htoo, the patriarch of the newly resettled family in Albany, is in regular contact with those he left behind, and said people in the camps are

too afraid to return to their homeland.

"We hear on the news that Myanmar is open now and changing to a civilian government, but in the ethnic areas we don't see any change yet," he said. "I don't think it's a good time to go back."

In his comfortable new home, Taw Nay Htoo, 32, says he is lucky to be together with his wife and son because many families who entered the camps after the registration cut off have been separated as more people attempt to leave Thailand illegally.

This will be the first time in 23 years that the family will be living outside refugee camps, where everything from English classes to social activities were provided.

The couple faced persecution for their Karen ethnicity and Christian religion in Myanmar and remember when the military burned their village and attacked Karen resistance groups, which were the first to fight for freedom against the government in 1949.

"We were always on the run and fearful," Taw Nay Htoo said. "What got me through was thinking one day I would have more freedom than to stay in the camp, and for my son to grow up and have a good education."

Taw Nay Htoo is one of an increasing number of ethnic minorities from Myanmar settled in Albany as more refugees are placed upstate from New York City. Other hotspots are California, Washington, and Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Minorities from Myanmar constitute New York State's largest refugee population at 65 percent, and last year, 3198 Myanmar settled in upstate New York compared to 331 in New York City, statistics published by the New York District Attorney's Office show.

## Resettled refugees face challenge of adapting

Though optimistic of the "American dream", Taw Nay Htoo says adjusting has been difficult.

"Everything is new. So it's hard at first and adapting isn't comfortable," he said.

"We need to figure out how restaurants work, how to ride the bus, to exchange Thai baht to US dollars, and to use laundry machines," Taw Nay Htoo said, laughing about how he used a bucket last week to wash himself as he did in the camps because he did not know how to use the shower.

Though Taw Nay Htoo received a high school diploma at the camp, he will have to earn another in the US to be eligible to attend a community college.

Jen Barkan, resource manager for Albany's branch of the US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants – the organisation that helps refugees find accommodation and provides basic social services – said the differences in environments are as stark as they come.

"Some of these people



Resettled Myanmar refugees celebrate in Albany, New York, recently. Pic: Claire Luke

come from subsistence farming backgrounds or have lived in thatched huts with dirt floors and are not even familiar with two-storey buildings, or seeing not just stairs, but moving stairs," she said.

Ms Barkan recounted the story of children from a refugee family who believed their father had magical powers since he could open doors by waving his hand (until they learned the reality of automatic doors).

Cold weather, communication barriers

and post-traumatic stress disorder present the largest obstacles to adjustment, Ms Barkan said, though they improve with time as refugees find work in manufacturing, food and hospitality industries as housemaids, assistant cooks or fast food outlet employees.

## Refugees learn to fend for themselves

Though the organisation greets the refugees at the airport, finds their apartment and pays the initial few months' rent, and

offers skills and resources for finding jobs, after that, it is all up to the refugees.

"In the camps, we were told that if we are here, we have to find work and work hard. We cannot rely on the government or any groups and must stand on our own feet," Taw Nay Htoo said.

Biak Hnin Sang, 24, has thrived in Albany since he stepped into the frigid New York winter from the tropics of Southeast Asia a year ago.

A member of the Chin ethnic group, Salai Sang said he suffered oppression since childhood for his identity. After escaping forced labour, portering, abuse and arrest for refusing to attend a military meeting promoting the 2008 constitution, he escaped to Malaysia, where he worked as a waiter for three-and-a-half years until registering with UNHCR and landing in Albany after two days' journey.

Now, he studies business administration and works at a blinds assembly factory earning slightly more than the minimum wage – enough to pay for an apartment he shares

with two other Myanmar and even buy a car. He has found his favourite Asian food stores, participates in football matches like he did in Thantlang, and leads Albany's 50-member strong Chin youth community.

The future looks bright for Salai Sang, a natural survivor; he has just finished applying for his Green Card and in four years plans to apply for citizenship.

Salai Sang says he hopes those waiting in the camps can get the same chance he did.

"I was depressed thinking I might get a call from UNHCR saying I couldn't come here," he said. "This can cause increased suicide rates in the camps because ... the only hope is to go to another country."

He cautioned trusting Myanmar's recent opening too soon, saying not much has changed for minorities and non-Buddhists.

"It's not that [the refugees] don't want to return to Myanmar, but they still fear because it is dangerous and peace is surface-level," he said.

"Now a lot of people are praying because that's all they can do."



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## Visa announces POS roll out

By Aye Thidar Kyaw

VISA will extend their network of Point-of-Sales (POS) transactions by April or May throughout the country, said the spokespersons of domestic banks on March 15.

Visa signed new licensing agreements with domestic banks Kanbawza, Myanmar's largest private bank; Co-operative Bank; and Myanmar Oriental Bank on March 14.

KBZ's general manager, U Zaw Lin Htut, said the bank started allowing ATM transactions for Visa cards in December and will target POS transactions in April. He said the bank plans to roll out POS services at merchants in Yangon, Mandalay, Bagan and Inle: the same target areas for their Visa-ready ATMs.

Electronic payments at KBZ ATMs - also including MPU - have increased 20 percent from the go-live date, U Zaw Lin Htut said.

"A lot of tourists are coming to Myanmar this year, and international travelers hold international cards. This will increase the sale of local products and promote local industries - we're supporting the growth of our economy," he said.

"We now have a lot of technology for international transfers and international payment settlement," he added.

Visa transactions at ATMs have increased by 20 percent since the go-live date. Pic: AFP



CB managing director U Pe Myint said their banks will roll out their POS network with Visa in May because of the long holiday for Water Festival in April.

CB already started their roll out with MasterCard in Yangon in early March.

"We will target merchants in tourist attraction areas, mainly hotels and restaurants," U Pe Myint said.

Both KBZ and CB banks will issue Visa cards to Myanmar citizens under a permit from the Myanmar Central Bank and an

agreement with Visa, sources from the MCB told *The Myanmar Times* on March 15.

"We've made plans to issue Visa cards [to Myanmar nationals], but we need to go through many steps and negotiate between issuers first," U Pe Myint said.

## Kyat on rise

THE official exchange rate has risen to about K890 a dollar as of March 14. This represents a rise of about K10 a day over the past two weeks, when it stood at K865 on March 1.

At banks and legal money changers, the exchange rate stands at about K874-879 a dollar, while black market money changers are offering about K890 a dollar.

"[The kyat] has so much demand at the moment because speculators heard that the government will push the exchange rate up to K1000 [a dollar], so money changes have been buying a lot of kyat since last week," said a black market money changer in Yangon's Kyauktada market.

U Hnin Oo, chairman of the Myanmar Shrimp Association, said government officials and ministers tried to drive up the value of the kyat in anticipation of managing increasing foreign investment.

"K1000 a dollar will still be difficult. Exporters will be happy but importers may suffer," he said.

On February 25, Pyithu Hluttaw speaker Thura U Shwe Mann defended the appreciation of the kyat to K1000, saying that it will protect labourers' rights.

- Aye Thidar Kyaw

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## Investment pours into Dawei SEZ

By Pisit Changplayngam

THE Thai developer of the multi-billion-dollar Dawei economic zone in Myanmar plans to spend an initial US\$300 million in 2013 on developing the project after receiving support from the Thai and Myanmar governments, an executive said on March 11.

The amount will be used for the relocation of local people, as well as utilities, roads and a port before a special purpose vehicle (SPV) is set up at the end of this year, said Premchai Karnasuta, President of Italian-Thai Development Pcl.

"After the governments' agreement about setting up the SPV, there is more confidence in the project. For Italian-Thai, the situation has improved," Premchai told reporters.

Italian-Thai, Thailand's largest construction firm, has struggled to find the \$8.5 billion needed to finance infrastructure and utilities under the first phase.

The \$50 billion, 250 sq km (100 sq mile) complex was planned to include a deep-sea port, steel mills, refineries, a petrochemical complex and power plants.

Under the new structure, the Myanmar and Thai governments will each hold 30 percent in the SPV, while the remaining 40pc will be held by other partners including Japan, China and South Korea, Premchai said.

Italian-Thai will be shareholders of eight companies receiving rights from the SPV to manage projects including a port, roads, power plants, water and industrial park with a holding of 25pc.

The Thai developer will use liquefied natural gas (LNG) as the fuel for a new 280 megawatt (MW) power station and plans to sign a memorandum of understanding next week to buy 3 million tonnes a year of LNG, he said.

The supplier was keen to jointly invest in a new LNG receiving terminal to be built at Dawei, he said, declining to name the potential partner.

In the longer term, the capacity of the power plants in Dawei will be increased to 8,200 MW, of which 1,000 MW will come from natural gas and 7,200 MW coal, and the Thai government wanted to export 4,200 MW to Thailand, Premchai said.

Myanmar's government vetoed plans for a 4,000 MW coal-fired plant a year ago. The Thai authorities have since spoken of the possibility of using clean coal technology.

While waiting for the SPV to be set up, Italian-Thai will spend about \$300 million on the project and has received financial support from local banks including Siam Commercial Bank, Kasikornbank, Bangkok Bank and Krung Thai Bank.

Premchai also expected Japanese financial institutions to support the project.

Italian-Thai's shares have risen 77pc in the past three months. Analysts said Italian-Thai will benefit from massive Thai government infrastructure projects, details of which should be finalised soon. — Reuters



A small port is built for temporary use at a site for a billion-dollar industrial estate in Dawei district. Pic: Reuters

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## Foreign withdrawals expanded

By Aye Thidar Kyaw

FOREIGN nationals can now withdraw from their foreign-currency bank accounts every weekday, an official from the Foreign Exchange Management Department (FEMD) under the Myanmar Central Bank said.

The new policy went into effect on March 6. Prior to March 6, foreign nationals could only withdraw from their foreign-currency accounts two days a week.

The policy also extended withdrawals to private banks.

"Withdrawals of foreign currency were only allowed

in state-owned banks, but we are now allowing withdrawals at private banks," said U Han Min Soe, the FEMD's director on March 14.

Foreign-currency accounts can be opened in three state-owned banks - Myanma Economic Bank, Myanma Investment and Commercial Bank and Myanma Foreign Trade Bank - and 14 private banks.

The Myanmar Central Bank allowed the 14 private banks to offer foreign-currency accounts initially in May 2012, and authorised dealer licenses the following July. The Bank removed restrictions for remittance in November 2013 and now allows remittances Monday through Friday.

"We are trying to adhere to international bank [best] practices. We have opened up transactions at private banks as much as we have at state-

owned banks, and it's totally different than in the past," U Han Min Soe said.

However, foreign nationals are still not allowed to open savings accounts at state-owned or private banks.

The withdrawal limit is still set at US\$10,000. Now, foreign nationals can withdraw up to \$50,000 a week (in five installments) whereas they could previously only withdraw up to US\$20,000 (in two installments).

"This is suitable for customers doing business in Myanmar," said U Pe Myint, Co-operative Bank's managing director.

He said that domestic banks are mostly remitting US dollars, Euros and Singapore dollars. Some banks have requested Chinese yuan, Japanese yen and Thai baht from the Myanmar Central Bank to remit in their banks, he added.



A man holds a wad of kyat in Yangon. Pic: AFP

## Shipper Maersk to open rep office

By Tim McLaughlin

MAERSK Line and MCC Transport, subsidiaries of Danish business conglomerate AP Moller-Maersk Group, announced on March 8 that they intend to open a branch office in Myanmar following EU and US trade sanction suspensions last year.

The office is scheduled to be opened in the second half of 2013.

"I find it very exciting that we have received approval for a permanent representation in Myanmar, which will allow us to be a part of the rapid development we will undoubtedly see in Myanmar in the coming years," said the managing director of Maersk Thailand, Henrik Jensen.

Maersk has operated in Myanmar for around 20 years through a third party agent, Win Universe Limited. They now have four sailings a week departing from Yangon.

"Myanmar is the last untapped market in Southeast Asia. It has significant natural resources, a large population and is strategically located between two of the world's largest economies,



Maersk now has four sailings a week departing from Yangon. Pic: AFP

India and China," the company said in a statement on March 8.

The statement continues: "With a population of 60 million, Myanmar has the potential of becoming one of the largest consumer markets in Southeast Asia, while the low cost of labour is

attracting low end manufacturing and production companies."

AP Moller-Maersk Group operates companies primarily in the fields of shipping and oil and gas. Maersk Line is the world's largest shipping container company.



# Solar power offers alternative solutions

By Soe Sandar Oo

SOLAR power can provide electricity for the whole country by 2031, said U Thoun Win, chairman of the Renewable Energy Association Myanmar on March 11.

"Solar power takes only one day to install in a house in a province. For a whole village, it takes about a month. We are now trying to install power systems that operate on the megawatt level instead of the kilowatt level," he said.

As Myanmar's electricity deficit worsens, the country is in need of alternative energy, U Thoun Win said.

Industrial zones in Pakokku, Myingyan, Mandalay and Taunggyi will easily benefit from solar power, he said, because the areas are constantly exposed to sun and heat.

Foreign investors are showing a keen interest in solar power, U Thoun Win said. More than 40 companies, mostly from China, are now importing solar panels.

One drawback to solar power is the high cost. However, the price of solar panels is decreasing. While a 100-watt capable solar panel cost K500,000 three years ago, the same solar panel - about three feet long - costs K150,000.

Another drawback is quality control, U Thoun

Win said.

"China's big companies export solar panels to European countries that have gone through the quality control process. However, with Myanmar, solar panels are coming through the border trade at Shweli. Most of these panels are rejected by the factories or did not pass quality control.

"We need to be careful with that because it can cause major technical issues during installation," he said.

Solar energy requires a wide space of land, as a one megawatt solar panel needs two acres of space. The most suitable locations for solar power are Bago, Magway and Sagaing



Most solar panels imported into Myanmar are produced in China. Pic: AFP

regions, he said.

Currently, only 26 percent of the whole country

has access to electricity. Among that 26pc, only 4pc in rural areas have access

to electricity. Only 3000 villages out of 68,000 have light.

## New energy policy: govt

By Soe Sandar Oo

THE government is planning to draft a new energy policy based on the current Japanese model, said U Win Kyaing, a member of the Energy Development Committee, on March 9.

Energy ministries and committees will take the advice of 24 trainees who attended a forum for energy policy in Japan last week. Most participants were ministers from the Ministry of Energy.

"We are drawing a policy first, and then we will base the according laws and regulations around the policy after," U Win Kyaing said.

Daw Sain Sain, the central executive member of the Renewable Energy Association Myanmar, said that the RWMP have learnt about the theory and practice of energy policy in Japan.

The policy should focus on supplying rural areas with electricity, she said.

"I am sure this new policy will help achieve our goals and the government can support lighting up rural areas," she said.

She said that the policy should not decentralise electricity to light up rural Mynamar - namely, the government needs to install local electricity producers by using biogas, hydropower or solar power in rural areas instead of connecting to the national grid.

"The government should support getting electricity to rural areas with money and technical assistance, while local producers try to get electricity to the areas," Daw Sain Sain said.

U Than Htay, the minister for energy, has already started drafting the policy in Nay Pyi Taw, according to U Win Kying.

## Rice exporters meet

CHIEF regional rice exporters held a meeting aimed to boost multilateral agricultural trade between the countries at Park Royal Hotel in Yangon on March 13.

The Myanmar Rice Federation (MRF), Thai Rice Exporters Association (TREA) and Vietnamese Food Association (VFA) held an open panel in anticipation of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) by 2015.

"We discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the rice market and planting areas in each country. This meeting will lead to cooperation between rice exporters," said Dr Soe Tun, chairman of the Myanmar Farmers' Association (MFA).

Mr Vichai Sriprasert, president of Bangkok-based Riceland International Limited, addressed Myanmar's rice pledging scheme in Thailand.

"The [Thai] government makes the margin for farmers, exporters and dealers. For exporters, the government makes a 1 percent margin. But exporters produce many tonnes of rice and they can

survive with this margin. For farmers, the government makes a 50pc and above margin but farmers are still poor. Now, our government is improving the price of paddy and farmers are happy about that. But, they don't understand that higher prices mean lower incomes," he said.

U Tin Htut Oo, agribusiness and rural consultant to the National Economic and Social Advisory Council, spoke about cooperation in the multilateral rice trade.

"Export policy should benefit farmers," he said.

"In Myanmar, farming price is too low to benefit the rice producers. Meanwhile, we have big ambitions to export."

General secretary of the MRF, U Ye Min Aung, said: "We aim to boost the volume of export to two million tonnes in the 2014-2015 fiscal year and to four million tonnes in the 2019-2020 fiscal year. Currently, our major volume is 5pc broken rice, but it can't be exported to quality-oriented countries like Japan, Indonesia and Korea." - *Myat May Zin*

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Employees work on the trading floor of the Tokyo Stock Exchange in Tokyo. Pic: Bloomberg

# Asian stocks rise on US jobs

By Jonathan Burgos

ASIAN stocks rose, with the regional benchmark index poised to advance for a fourth week, after US jobless claims unexpectedly dropped and Japan's upper house confirmed Haruhiko Kuroda as central bank governor.

Honda Motor Co (7267), a Japanese carmaker that gets 44 percent of sales from North America, gained 2.6pc. Sony Corp surged 11pc in Tokyo after Daiwa Securities Group Inc. recommended buying shares of the consumer electronics maker. China Southern Airlines Co advanced 4.4pc to pace gains among Chinese carriers after Shanghai Securities News reported plans to build more airports as demand grows in the world's second-largest economy.

The MSCI Asia Pacific Index climbed 0.7pc to 136.22 as of 3:59 pm Tokyo time on March 15, with about three shares rising for every two that fell. The gauge is heading for a 0.5pc advance this week as accelerating US retail sales and a decline in weekly jobless claims added to signs the world's biggest economy is recovering.

"There's a level of confidence to say that the economic momentum, albeit tepid, is still positive," said Tim Schroeders, who helps manage US\$1 billion at Pengana Capital Ltd in Melbourne. "That supports an asset allocation move out of bonds and into equities. China remains a risk, with increasing concerns about bubbles developing in the property market."

Japan's Nikkei 225 Stock Average increased 1.5pc to the highest close since September 2008. Kuroda, an advocate of aggressive monetary easing, was confirmed as Bank of Japan (8301) governor on March 15 by parliament's upper house, along with deputy governor nominees Kikuo Iwata and Hiroshi Nakaso. Governor Masaaki Shirakawa and his deputies step down on March 19.

There's talk of a possible emergency meeting for the BOJ, said Kenichi Kubo, a senior fund manager at Tokio Marine Asset

Management Co, which oversees about \$52 billion. "If it happens, it could introduce drastic measures," he said. The central bank's next policy meeting is scheduled for April 3-4.

The MSCI Asia Pacific Index (MXAP) climbed 4.6pc this year through on March 14 as central banks around the world maintained loose monetary policies to stimulate the global economy and Japanese shares rallied on speculation Prime Minister Shinzo Abe will step up efforts to revive economic growth. Shares on the gauge traded at 14.8 times estimated earnings compared with 14 times for the Standard & Poor's 500 Index and 12.7 for the Stoxx Europe 600 Index, according to data compiled by Bloomberg.

New Zealand's NZX 50 Index (NZSE50FG) added 0.1pc to a record close. The gauge

## 'Concerns about China continue to linger.'

rose a fourth straight week after central bank Governor Graeme Wheeler pledged to keep borrowing costs at a record low until next year. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 Index advanced 1.8pc, the most since July 19.

The Shanghai Composite Index (SHCOMP) rose 0.5pc, extending gains for a second day. Hong Kong's Hang Seng Index fell 0.2pc. Singapore's Straits Times Index climbed 0.7pc. Taiwan's Taiex Index lost 0.3pc, erasing an earlier advance of 0.6pc. South Korea's Kospi Index dropped 0.8pc, reversing an increase of 0.4pc.

Futures on the S&P 500 Index added 0.2pc on March 15. The Dow Jones Industrial Average on March 14 extended the longest rally since 1996 as reports showed the number of Americans filing applications for unemployment benefits dropped last week to the lowest level in almost two months and confidence among US consumers increased for a sixth straight week.

"Growing optimism about the US economy

pushes markets up, even though concerns about China continue to linger," said Matthew Sherwood, head of investment markets research in Sydney at Perpetual Investments, which manages about \$25 billion.

Exporters rose. Honda climbed 2.6pc to 3,820 yen in Tokyo. Toyota Motor Corp, the world's biggest carmaker, added 1.4pc to 5,020 yen. Techtronic Industries Co (669), the maker of Ryobi power tools that gets about 72pc of revenue from North America, jumped 3.6pc to HK\$18.24 in Hong Kong.

Sony surged 11pc to 1,668 yen after Daiwa Securities raised its rating to buy from neutral, saying it anticipates a "dramatic earnings turnaround."

Nikon Corp (7731), which makes cameras and chip-manufacturing equipment, rose 2.5pc 2,262 yen in Tokyo. The Nikkei newspaper reported the company won a 6 billion yen (\$62 million) order from Intel Corp (INTC), its second-biggest customer.

Nippon Meat Packers Inc., a maker of ham and sausages that owns two Japanese baseball teams, jumped 6.5pc to 1,552 yen on speculation the government agreed to remove tariff barriers protecting the country's beef and wheat farmers when Japan joins the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade talks.

Chinese airlines rallied. China should increase investment for airport construction as facilities in the country won't be able to meet travel demand, Shanghai Securities News reported, citing Li Jiexiang, head of the Civil Aviation Administration of China. Air passenger and cargo volumes will grow faster this year than last, he said.

China Southern Airlines jumped 4.4pc to HK\$4.30 in Hong Kong. Air China Ltd (753), the world's second-biggest carrier by market value, gained 1pc to HK\$6.35. China Eastern Airlines Corp advanced 3.4pc to HK\$3.38.

Energy companies gained as crude oil futures climbed to the highest level since Feb. 20. Woodside Petroleum Ltd, Australia's second-largest oil producer, rose 2.6pc to A\$37.17 in Sydney. Inpex Corp (1605), Japan's biggest energy explorer, jumped 3.1pc to 536,000 yen in Tokyo. - Bloomberg



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# Banking sector poised for foreign cooperation



AS part of the rapid liberalisation of Myanmar's economy, the banking sector is now opening up to foreign participation. With the economy both fast-growing and under-banked, and with foreign investment on the rise, the opportunities for international institutions could be considerable.

On February 22 the US Treasury Department (USTD) eased sanctions on four major banks, granting general licences to the Myanmar Economic Bank, Myanmar Investment and Commercial Bank, Ayeyarwady Bank and Asia Green Development Bank, which will give them access to the US financial system and strengthen ties between the two countries.

The licence issues are the latest move by the US to open up commercial relations with Myanmar.

In July 2012 the USTD issued similar general licences permitting US companies to invest and provide financial services in Myanmar, provided they supply detailed disclosures

stakes in joint ventures with local lenders as early as next month. The latest phase of liberalisation was kick-started by a cabinet reshuffle in September 2012 that saw governmental

permitted to establish 100pc ownership within two years, allowing them to expand full branch networks.

Currently, foreign banks are allowed only to have representative offices in the country. Pro-business groups say the changes are likely to reinforce the notion that the private sector will be at the heart of Myanmar's growth over the coming years.

Once the changes are implemented, they are likely to lead to increased activity by international

based Siam Commercial Bank. Japanese banks are also expected to take increasing interest in the market, as Japan is the largest bilateral lender to Myanmar, and Japanese companies and institutions have a steadily growing presence, including in the capital-intensive infrastructure sector.

Growing foreign penetration could be a shot in the arm for the banking sector, which is somewhat antiquated and has been creaking under the

the questionable financial health – and political ties – of some institutions.

In a 2012 report on Myanmar, the IMF stressed both the importance of further financial system modernisation and the construction of a robust regulatory framework to support it. The report noted that "modernising the financial system is essential to promoting growth", going on to say that IMF directors "welcomed the steps already taken to ease administrative controls on banks, and called for further liberalisation of bank operations and interest rates". The IMF's directors underscored that financial reforms must be complemented by strengthened supervision and regulation.

For the time being, international institutions that do come to Myanmar are likely to focus on multinational companies – including existing clients – and retail lending to the wealthiest people. However, their presence could bring an infusion of capital, experience and dynamism to the sector, and the economy as a whole.

**‘Growing foreign penetration could be a shot in the arm for the banking sector, which is somewhat antiquated.’**

about their activities. Several countries have similarly loosened sanctions over the past two years as the country has moved towards political liberalisation.

The Myanmar government is also attempting to promote greater foreign participation in the system. In February the international press reported that, as part of a third wave of reforms by President U Thein Sein, foreign banks could be permitted to take majority

bodies, such as the Ministry of Finance, restructured.

While the overarching framework for foreign investment was codified in a new law passed in 2012, reforms specific to the financial sector are currently being drafted. They will allow foreign banks to own up to 80 percent of joint ventures with local institutions, according to the Myanmar Investment Commission, an official body overseeing investment. Foreign banks could be

financial institutions. There are already more than 20 representative offices of foreign banks in the country, including Standard Chartered, which re-established its presence in February, following a gap of several years. The bank is particularly prominent in Asia and has a history in Myanmar dating back to the 19th century.

Many of the representative offices are Asian, such as China-based ICBC and Thailand-

pressure of rapid economic growth. Internationally linked ATMs are relatively new to the country, and large parts of the economy have little access to formal lending, though microcredit is on the rise in rural areas.

Joint ventures give local institutions the chance to benefit from capital, technology and skills transfers, while foreign banks may be thorough with due diligence before forming partnerships, given

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A model of The Interlace is displayed at the company's office in Singapore. Pic: Bloomberg

## Singapore's home sales at 14-month low

By Pooja Thakur and Klaus Wille

SINGAPORE'S home sales plunged 65 percent to a 14-month low in February after the government introduced

its seventh round of cooling measures to cool record home prices.

Home sales dropped to 708 units in February from a revised 2,016 units in January, according to data released by the

Urban Redevelopment Authority on March 15. That's the smallest number of residences sold since December 2011, when sales declined to a two-year low of 632 units.

Singapore home prices reached a record in the fourth quarter amid low interest rates, raising concerns of a housing bubble and prompting the government to widen a four-year campaign to curb speculation prices in Asia's second-most expensive housing market. Knight Frank Pte cut its estimates for new home sales for 2013 by 20pc and expects annual sales to range between 12,000 and 14,000 units.

"The government's measures are starting to take effect," said Vijay Natarajan, a Singapore-based analyst at UOB-Kay Hian Pte. "In addition, fewer

units were offered because of the Chinese New Year. Over the coming months, I expect volumes to decline further."

The city's businesses were shut on February 11 and February 12 for the Chinese New Year holiday, limiting sales opportunities over an extended weekend.

Home sales reached 22,699 units in 2012, according to calculation by Bloomberg News based on the government data, which dates back to 1996.

Q Bay Residences in the city's northeast, developed by Far East Organization and Fraser & Neave Ltd's property unit, sold 74 homes last month, while buyers bought 84 units at Topiary in north-central Singapore, according to the data.

The latest measures included an increase in the stamp duty for homebuyers

by between 5pc points and 7pc points, with permanent residents paying taxes when they buy their first home. Singaporeans will also have the levy starting with their second purchase.

Singapore also plans to raise taxes for luxury homeowners and investment properties. The higher tax will apply to the top 1pc of homeowners who live in their own residences, or 12,000 properties, Singapore Finance Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam said in his budget speech on February 25. He said in a February 28 interview the property market is still "in a wrong part of the cycle."

The government also tightened loan-to-value limits for buyers seeking a second mortgage, referring to the amount they are allowed to borrow relative to the value of their properties.

The cash down payment will also rise to 25pc from 10pc starting from the second loan, it said.

Singapore has been attempting to rein in prices since 2009, when the government barred interest-only loans for some housing projects and stopped allowing developers to absorb interest payments for apartments still being built.

Earlier steps taken by Singapore to ease the property market included imposing additional taxes on foreigners and companies buying properties, and moving to curb the trend of so-called shoebox apartments. In October, it restricted home-loan maturities to 35 years and required tighter loan-to-value limits for loans exceeding 30 years.

— Bloomberg

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## Taw Win Foundation rebuilds school

By Htar Htar Khin

THE Taw Win Foundation donated K1.35 billion (about US\$1.6 million) for the reconstruction of No 4 Basic Education High School in Yangon's Sanchuang township.

The three-storey school building will be finished in three months to coincide with the beginning of the school season, U Ko Ko Htwe, the chairman of the foundation, said at the groundbreaking ceremony on March 9.

The ceremony was attended by the minister for Commerce U Win Myint, Yangon region chief minister U Myint Swe, Yangon region Forestry

and Energy minister U Kyaw Soe, Yangon Region Education and Social minister Dr Myint Thein and officials from the ministry of Education.

"I want to talk about the establishment of the Taw Win Foundation. I was recently registered by the government. I've been supported to aid the education and health sector through my career, but now I've founded the Taw Win Foundation to particularly focus on charity work," said U Ko Ko Htwe at the ceremony.

He said that the foundation mostly focuses on the education sector. They prioritise youth education not only by building schools, but also

by developing the physical and academic educations of young students.

U Ko Ko Htwe said that schools are the best means for providing career opportunities to offer Myanmar's youth a better future.

The Taw Win Foundation's donation for the school's redevelopment will comprise a building that's 450 feet in length and 50 feet wide. It will house 22 classrooms, providing academic space for over 2000 students. Now, the school has an enrollment of about 1,000.

U Ko Ko Htwe said the foundation will also provide the school with furniture, televisions, air conditioning units, fans,

computers, and other items necessary to the students' education.

"I've been maintaining the school for nearly 10 years since it's long been part of our community, and there has been little upkeep so it has become rundown. The school has become a danger zone and I've decided to rebuild it. Surely the project can finish soon," said U Ko Ko Htwe.

The demolition of the old school began after school exams.

U Ko Ko Htwe has also donated K20 million (about \$23,000) to Daw L Khun Yee, the leader of Manaw Ahla Orchestra Group for people who have suffered from strife in Kachin and northern Shan State.



# China's Li faces home prices challenge

By Bonnie Cao

CHINA'S new leaders are inheriting a challenge that stymied the outgoing government: deflating a bubble in big-city home prices without damping economic growth.

In one of its final acts before the leadership change, China's State Council on March 1 imposed tough new measures intended to cool the market, a step that sent property stocks tumbling. While curbs initiated last year had some success, prices resumed climbing in the second half as the central bank cut interest rates to reverse an economic slowdown.

Real estate and related industries such as construction account for about a fifth of China's gross domestic product, while cities, especially smaller ones, rely on land sales to raise revenue. The country's leaders are searching for ways to address the mounting frustration of ordinary Chinese struggling to afford a home while minimising wider economic damage.

"Beijing recognises that there are bubble conditions in many major urban real estate markets and wants to be seen as responsive to public concerns about rising home prices," Nicholas Consonery, Asia analyst at New York-based consultancy Eurasia Group, wrote in a note on March 6. "But the new leadership is well aware of the dangers of freezing the nationwide market and causing a bigger slowdown in growth."

Home prices rose for a ninth month in February, extending a rebound in the second half of 2012 after interest rates eased. Premier Wen Jiabao, who on March 15 was succeeded by Li Keqiang, vowed to keep housing affordable during his 10-year term. Still, home prices climbed 1.5 times from 2003 to 2012 to the highest since China privatised home ownership in 1998.

The new leadership will maintain the real estate tightening measures Wen initiated, said Zhu Haibin, chief China economist at JPMorgan Chase & Co.

"Wen's property policies in the past 10 years couldn't be counted as successful," said Hong Kong-based Zhu. "The property-tightening

measures will continue under the new administration, but before Wen goes, he certainly wants to give them a push."

The government has taken multiple steps since it first began to tackle surging property values in April 2010. It raised down-payment and mortgage requirements; imposed its first property tax, in Shanghai and Chongqing; and enacted restrictions in about 40 cities, including limiting the number of homes people can own and requiring new residents of a city to wait a year or more before buying a home.

In the latest measures, the council, China's cabinet, ordered even higher down-payment requirements and interest rates for second mortgages in cities where price gains have been "excessively fast." The council said it will study the cities that have piloted the property tax and accelerate and widen the trials, and told local authorities they must release price-control targets in the first quarter. It also warned real estate companies found hoarding land or collaborating to push up home prices that they will be barred from new development loans or raising funds in capital markets.

In addition, it is cracking down on individuals avoiding a 20 percent tax on profits from sales when the original purchase price is available, a levy many only pay a fraction of by feigning they can't provide the data—a common practice in cities where prices have escalated

the most.

The Shanghai Stock Exchange Property Index (SHPROP), which tracks the shares of 24 Chinese developers, has fallen 11pc since the March 1 measures, extending its decline this year to 13pc. The benchmark Shanghai Composite Index (SHCOMP) rose 0.4pc in 2013, compared with the 5.2pc gain by the MSCI AC Asia Pacific Index (MXAP).

The property index fell 0.9pc to the lowest in three months at the local close on March 15.

The recent measures don't tackle the real issues in



Workers labour on the roof of a house under construction next to residential apartments at the Sino-Singapore Tianjin Eco-city in Tianjin. Pic: Bloomberg

the property market, said Yao Wei, China economist at Societe Generale SA in Hong Kong. Yao is ranked by Bloomberg as the most accurate forecaster for quarterly gross domestic product.

"Property measures have been restated over and over again," Yao said. The latest statement "is stronger than expected as the government sent a signal that they are still serious about the tightening. But it is only

the weakest expansion in 13 years and down from the average 10.6pc rate over the previous 10 years. Economists surveyed by Bloomberg News forecast a pickup to 8.1pc growth this year, based on the median estimate.

The curbs are the firmest since the central government in February last year made the cities of Wuhu and Foshan abandon attempts to lift restrictions imposed by policy makers

months earlier, followed by the northwestern city of Urumqi, where prices increased 12pc.

Apartments in Shanghai, the nation's financial hub, cost more than 45 times average salaries, Wang Shi, chairman of China Vanke Co, the country's biggest homebuilder, told the US television news show "60 Minutes." Wang said there was a "bubble" that could spell "disaster" for the Chinese property market,

Eva Lee, a Hong Kong-based property analyst at UBS, wrote in a report on March 4.

Property sales will slow down "immediately," billionaire Vincent Lo, chairman of Shanghai-based Shui On Land Ltd, which develops high-end residential and entertainment precincts, said in an interview in Beijing on March 6. Lo, a member of the government's advisory board, also said curbs in the past decade have been unsuccessful.

"Our sales will slow down," Lo said. "But there are a lot of things unknown depending on the policy implementation and how the market is digesting it."

At least 34 cities are expected to tighten home-purchase restrictions following the latest measures because the policies have only covered parts of the cities, Jinsong Du, a Hong Kong-based property analyst at Credit Suisse Group AG, said in a note to clients on March 4.

Some have already started. The southern business city of Shenzhen said it is taking steps to guide developers in setting "reasonable" prices and is implementing the central government's measures to ensure prices don't rise too quickly. Changsha, also in the south, banned loans from the housing provident fund for second homes if applicants' first homes are larger than 120 square meters, China National Radio reported March 13, without saying where it got the information.

Investors are becoming more cautious. Industrial Securities Co and CIMB-GK Securities Research both downgraded China's property sector to neutral from overweight, saying the measures are stronger than expected. — Bloomberg

**'The property-tightening measures will continue under the new administration, but before Wen goes, he certainly wants to give them a push.'**

targeting the superficial problem of home prices. It still hasn't taken out the speculative demand and the fiscal reliance of local governments on land sales," she said.

Yao estimates China's economy will expand about 7.8pc this year, as tightening in the property market is likely to prompt banks to pull back on mortgage lending. China set an economic growth target of 7.5pc for this year, unchanged from 2012.

The world's second-largest economy posted 7.8pc growth last year,

in Beijing. China's cities, especially smaller ones, got at least 21pc of their revenue from selling land last year, according to Zurich-based UBS AG.

Initially, the measures appeared to have worked. Home prices fell for nine straight months from September 2011, declining 2.8pc over the period, according to SouFun Holdings Ltd (SFUN), the country's biggest real estate website owner, which tracks prices in 100 cities.

They picked up again in the second half last year as central bank rate cuts helped boost developers' sales and prompted ratings company Standard & Poor's on February 20 to raise its outlook for residential builders to stable from negative.

New home prices climbed 0.8pc to 9,893 yuan (US\$1,590) per square meter (10.76 square feet) last month from January, SouFun said. Prices in Beijing rose 6.8pc in February from a year earlier and 3.1pc in Shanghai, according to SouFun. The eastern city of Heze in Shandong province posted the biggest gain, up 18pc, in February from 12

adding that that the debt of developers is a serious problem.

Vanke, which builds small and medium-sized homes that have proven more resilient to the curbs because they target first-time buyers, said sales rose 28pc in February after increasing 56pc in January from a year earlier. The company's profit jumped 30pc last year.

Wen maintains the government has been successful in tempering price growth: "In the past five years, we kept a firm grip on the real estate market and kept housing prices from rising too quickly," he said in his working paper at the start of the National People's Congress.

Among the roughly 3,000 members of China's legislature are some of the nation's most powerful politicians and executives, wielding power in their home provinces and weighing in on proposals such as whether to impose a nationwide property tax.

"The new measures will 'freeze' the entire market and delay the originally planned sales schedules planned for the near term,"

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# A HOME CONTEST THAT'S ALL ABOUT STYLE

## Advertorial

### Interview with Thomas Ng (Creative Director of NatRay Design Studio)

Colour is one of the most effective tools in architecture and interior design. Colour is also part of a key element in our surroundings, environment and decoration. It not only affects the way in which a space is perceived but also the relation between space itself and the objects within it. Mr. Thomas Ng, Creative Director of Natray Design Studio gives us an insight tips and ideas on how to use the colour black. Black is a very strong colour, some consider it not even a colour, it is an absent of white. Black is a very mysterious, extreme and contrasting colour palette. Says Mr. Ng. When use carefully, black can give life to an object. Black is the colour created when an object absorbs all the light waves that it receives and does not reflect anything. It is the ultimate colour for contrast. Along with other colours, especially warm tones, it creates very expressive combinations. For those who want their house to have a touch of modern luxury feel, the answer is using black with gray or white tones to create elegant atmospheres. Use black on

areas that you want to emphasize and gray or white on areas that you want to highlight. Like a feature wall, use gray as the backdrop and black furniture to brings out the depth of these two element. Should there be items in rooms that tend to be monotonous, you can use black to create the contrast in them too. But there's one important thing to take note, says Mr.Ng. Avoid using black in small or poorly lit rooms. If you must use black in these rooms, what you can do to tone down is to mix some elements which add light to it, like glass or steel. If you think that black and gray are nothing interesting and kind of boring. Try using black with red, yellow or orange to make it more vibrant. Black is, without a doubt, one of the colours with the most powerful psychological connotations, and is traditionally associated with negative ideas. However, only the excessive use of black will create this impression in our home. Black used sparingly is synonymous with distinction, elegance and modernity.

### Wooden houses are well-matched with Myanmar climatic Conditions

This week's interview for Best Beautiful Home is with Ma Tin Tin Oo of S.Okkalapa.

**Q. Can you please tell me your back-ground idea in building this house?**

**A.** From the beginning, I planned to build a house out of timber. One storey building, ground floor is concrete and upstairs is timber - a simple one. But like in US, not the same level with the ground, but three stairs above. This kind of house is very compatible with Myanmar weather, which is very hot. During the day, concrete keeps you cool while at night timber keeps you cool. Availability of electricity is unpredictable. So you cannot rely on air-conditioners. If you have a wooden house, it doesn't matter you use air-con or

not.

**Q. Is your theme energy-saving?**

**A.** Yes, it is. On the wall, we use two-ply timber to protect heat. We try not to use air-con as much as possible. And many windows around the house make better ventilation.

**Q. What you mean by 'home'?**

**A.** I want to make my home natural, not heavily decorated. Frankly speaking, I don't want spend a lot of money. But timber is more costly. I gave priority to my taste than it's cost.

**Q. What made you contest in MT?**

**A.** Because it is heard that there is a contest in MT. And wherever my friends visit my home, they show their interest in my house and they encourage me to take part in it.

**Q. How much percent of the house is wood?**

**A.** About 75% of the house is made of wood.

**Q. Please tell me your satisfaction about your home, built according to your taste?**

**A.** I like it. It cost me a little more, but it is comfortable and peaceful. From the beginning I didn't want to make it big. It should be comfortable. I like it because it is unique.

A HOME CONTEST THAT'S ALL ABOUT STYLE is jointly organized by The Myanmar Times, NatRay Co.,Ltd and the Association of Myanmar Interior Design (AMID).

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#### REQUIREMENTS FOR CONTESTANTS

- (1) Must be citizen of Myanmar.
- (2) Number of Pictures need to submit: 4 Photos  
\*\*\* (Living room + master bedroom + Dining Room + structure of the whole house)
- (3) Picture size: 10" x 15"

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Last date for submission - 30 March, 2013  
Date of announcement of winner - 29 April, 2013

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- (1) Must be citizen of Myanmar.
- (2) Must be well-trained in Interior Design.
- (3) Member of Association of Myanmar Interior Designs  
(One entitled to (1) and (2) can apply for membership)

#### DESIGN TO BE SUBMITTED

- (1) Interior Design already done anywhere in Myanmar.
- (2) Any type of design (10" x 15" one figure only)  
For example: Completed Interior design of home, showroom, hotel and restaurants
- (3) Photo of completed design together with the design submitted to the owner (3D Rendering) or  
(Orthographic Plan Elevation Section) 10" x 15" one figure only
- (4) Above two drawings (2) & (3) explanation and concept of Design not more than one page (A4)  
Note\* The following must not be included in colorful (10" x 15") figures. 1. Name of Design 2. Name of Design Company 3. Logo

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1. Daw Khin Marla (NatRay Co., Ltd)
2. Mr. Ross Dunkley (Myanmar Consolidated Media)
3. Daw Hnin Si (Former Principal ZK School of Design)
4. U Win Myint (Architect)
5. U Wai Phyo (Senior Interior Designer)
6. Mr. Thomas (Interior Designer from NatRay Design Studio)

Note\* 1. The Judges will inspect the Interior Design if needs be.  
2. For membership of AMID, contact the following  
Tel: 09 5500 575 | 09 5506 215 | 09 7314 5876 Email: interior.amid@gmail.com

#### JUDGES FOR BEAUTIFUL HOME CONTEST

1. U Sun Oo  
(Association of  
Myanmar Interior Design)
2. Daw Khin Marla  
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#### Competition terms and conditions

No NatRay or Myanmar Consolidated Media (MCM) employees, nor any member of their immediate families, may participate in the competition. Entrants must own the house, condominium or apartment entered into the competition; it cannot be a rented property. Entries must be made on an original entry form cut from a participating MCM product. Photocopies will not be accepted. All entries mailed to The Myanmar Times Head office, must clearly state in either English or Myanmar "The Myanmar Times/NatRay A home contest that's all about style" on the front. NatRay reserves the right to refuse poorly written or illegible entries. The competition will be drawn in Yangon on Friday, April 26, with the results to be published in The Myanmar Times (English) and (Myanmar) on Monday, April 29. By participating in the competition all entrants consent to allow MCM and NatRay to use the information submitted as deemed necessary. Additionally, the winner will allow MCM to publish a house profile that will expand on the original entry.

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## Rover finds proof of life on Mars

WASHINGTON – Analysis of Mars rocks by the Curiosity rover uncovered the building blocks of life – hydrogen, carbon and oxygen – and evidence the planet could once have supported organisms, NASA said on March 12.

“A fundamental question for this mission is whether Mars could have supported a habitable environment,” Michael Meyer, lead scientist for NASA’s Mars Exploration Program said. “From what we know now, the answer is yes.”

At a televised news conference, the NASA team said this is the first definitive proof a life-supporting environment had existed beyond Earth.

Curiosity, a six-wheeled robot with 10 scientific instruments on board, is the most sophisticated vehicle ever sent to another planet.

The sample was drilled from sedimentary bedrock in an area which previous research had shown to be an ancient river system or lake bed.

It was found to contain clay

minerals, sulfate minerals and other chemicals.

Based on the analysis of those chemicals, researchers were able to determine that the water in which the rocks were formed was of a relatively neutral pH – not overly salty, acidic, or oxidising.

Speaking at the same news conference, one of NASA’s top officials John Grunsfeld said the discovery makes him “feel giddy.”

He said the new data helps add to the picture of what the red planet may have

looked in a previous era, with a possible freshwater lake and a snow-capped Mount Sharp.

But it would not have looked like that any time recently, the researchers cautioned.

Although it is hard to confirm an exact date, it was probably at least three billion years ago, said Grotzinger.

The US\$2.5 billion nuclear-powered Curiosity has been exploring the planet’s surface since its dramatic landing on August 6, for an anticipated two-year mission. – AFP

## Alzheimer’s detection test wins prize at SXSW fest

AUSTIN, Texas – Technology capable of diagnosing Alzheimer’s disease long before its symptoms appear won a coveted honour for innovation at the annual South by Southwest (SXSW) festival last week.

Neurotrack, which uses eye tracking to achieve a claimed 100 percent success rate, clinched the health technologies category in the SXSW Accelerator competition.

“It’s a computer-based visual cognitive test that is able to diagnose Alzheimer’s disease six years before symptoms appear,” Elli Kaplan, chief executive officer of the Richmond, Virginia-based upstart, said on March 12.

“Today the only way to diagnose Alzheimer’s is once full symptoms are in existence,” Kaplan told AFP, “but that’s years after irreparable damage has already taken place.”

Initial users of Neurotrack will be pharmaceutical manufacturers to help

them develop drugs to prevent or at least slow the progression of the most common form of dementia, she said.

But in time, Kaplan added, it will be rolled out to doctor’s offices and research hospitals.

SXSW Accelerator is a showcase for up-and-coming news, social, mobile, web, entertainment, health and music technologies. One of its 2010 winners, the voice recognition software Siri, is standard equipment in Apple iPhones.

Other winners on March 12 included the mobile advocacy app Phone2Action; Plotter, a social network for maps; mobile typing assistant Syntellia; Wanderu, a website for young budget travellers; and MakieLab, a 3D printing toy and game service.

Kaplan, who lost two grandparents to Alzheimer’s, said Neurotrack was developed in collaboration with Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia and a team of neuroscientists.

It challenges the subject to compare images – some new, some not – that appear briefly on a screen.

“By monitoring the way a person moves their eyes, and watching how they view novel images versus familiar images, we’re able to detect perturbations that exist on the hippocampus,” Kaplan said, referring to the part of the brain that handles memory.

“Every human being has an instinctive preference for novelty and that’s one of the things that we are testing,” she added.

The hippocampus is also the first to be changed by Alzheimer’s, which is thought to affect as many as 5.1 million people in the United States alone.

Kaplan said the claim of 100pc accuracy is based on a large study, based at Emory University, that followed the progress of participants – some of whom developed the disease – over an extended period. – AFP



A Hitachi employee disembarks from a mobility robot unveiled at the Japanese high-tech maker’s facility at Tsukuba Science City in Japan on March 12. The single seat vehicle is known as Ropit, an abbreviation for Robot for Personal Intelligent Transport System. The vehicle, which is designed to travel on footpaths, can pick up and drop off passengers autonomously. It navigates using GPS and relies on cameras and 2D and 3D laser distance sensors to avoid pedestrians and other obstacles. It can also be controlled by a joystick controller in the cockpit. Ropit was designed for use by the elderly and those whose mobility is impaired. It is powered by a lithium ion battery and travels at speeds of up to six kilometres an hour (3.7mph). Pic: AFP

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## New pope warns that Church must undergo renewal

VATICAN CITY – Pope Francis warned on March 14 that the troubled Roman Catholic Church risked becoming little more than a charity with no spiritual foundations if it failed to undergo renewal.

The 76-year-old Argentinian told the cardinals who elected him as Latin America's first pope that the Church could "end up a compassionate NGO".

"I would like all of us after these days of grace to have the courage to walk in the presence of the Lord," Francis said in his first mass, amid the splendour of the Sistine Chapel.

He warned the cardinals against "the worldliness of the Devil".

"Walking, building and confessing are not so easy. Sometimes there are tremors," the pope said, in a homily that will be scrutinised for clues to the style of his leadership.

The election of the son of an Italian emigrant railway worker, who was considered a rank outsider, was met with widespread surprise and expressions of hope for change in a Church riven by scandal and internal conflict.

The elevation to pontiff of the former Cardinal Jorge

### Francis, the first Jesuit pope

**December 17, 1936**

**Jorge Mario Bergoglio** is born in Buenos Aires

**1957**

Enters seminary at Villa Devoto

**1969**

Ordained priest

**1998-2013**

Archbishop of Buenos Aires



**February 21, 2001**

Created cardinal by Pope Jean-Paul II

**March 13, 2013**

Elected 266th pope at the age of 76, the 1st non-European in modern times to hold the post

Mario Bergoglio was also seen as recognition of the Church's power in Latin America, which accounts for 40 percent of the world's 1.2 million Catholics, while it is

in decline in Europe.

"The choice of Bergoglio shows that the Church is determined not to remain in mourning for the crisis in Europe but has opened

its doors to the revitalising energy of Catholicism's biggest continent," said Vatican expert Luigi Accatoli.

Projecting an image as a simple man of the people, the pope chose to name himself after St Francis of Assisi, the 13th century saint who shunned the riches of his family to devote himself to God and the poor.

Experts said they expected the new pope to shake up the Vatican, where poisonous rivalries within the Curia – its governing body – plagued the papacy of Francis's predecessor Benedict XVI.

Benedict, 85, abruptly

ended his eight-year papacy last month saying he lacked the strength to deal with the rigours of the job.

The election of Francis was greeted by world leaders, while the Organisation for the Islamic Conference said Muslim nations hoped "the relationship between Islam and Christianity will regain its cordiality and sincere friendship" during his papacy. The pointed message reflected a rocky relationship between the two faiths that reached a low in 2006, when Benedict sparked fury throughout the Muslim world with remarks seen as linking Islam with violence. – AFP

## France, UK ready to arm Syrian rebels

### Briefly

BEIJING – China's parliament named Communist bureaucrat Li Keqiang, 57, to the post of premier on March 15, a role that involves running day-to-day government in the world's second-largest economy.

BAGHDAD – A coordinated string of bombings and a brazen assault on a ministry near Baghdad's heavily fortified Green Zone killed 18 people on March 14. The attacks came days before the 10th anniversary of the US-led invasion.

WASHINGTON – An Iranian fighter jet tried to intercept a US Predator drone over the Gulf but backed off after encountering two American military aircraft, the Pentagon said on March 14.

TOKYO – The grounded Dreamliner is "absolutely" safe and will be back in the air within weeks, plane maker Boeing said in Japan on March 15, as it sought to reassure airlines and passengers about its aircraft.

LONDON – British Prime Minister David Cameron abandoned cross-party talks on press regulation on March 14 after he failed to reach a deal with his Liberal Democrat coalition junior partners and the Labour opposition. – AFP

BRUSSELS – France has joined Britain in voicing its willingness to supply weapons to Syria's rebels if it cannot convince its European partners to lift an arms embargo as the conflict enters its third year.

"Our goal is to convince our partners at the end of May, and if possible before.... If by chance there is a blockage by one or two countries, then France will take its responsibilities," President Francois Hollande said on March 14, referring to the embargo, which the European Union extended on February 28 until June 1.

"Political solutions have now failed (in Syria), despite every pressure," Hollande said, after talks on the first day of an EU summit in Brussels.

The United Nations says at least 70,000 people have been killed in Syria since the uprising erupted in mid-March 2011.

"We must go further because for two years there has been a clear willingness by (Syrian President) Bashar al-Assad to use every means to hit at his own people," he added.

France said earlier that Paris and London were pushing for the EU to drop the arms ban – a move opposed by some European governments, who fear a flood of weapons into Syria will only escalate the conflict.

Syrian opposition activists have called on London and Paris to provide heavy



French President Francois Hollande in Brussels last week. Pic: AFP

weaponry to tilt the balance in the two-year uprising.

Assad's government, like its key foreign ally Russia, said any such arms shipments would be a "flagrant violation" of international law.

The United States may look favourably on the French and British moves to give more aid to Syrian rebel forces, the State Department said on March 14, without explicitly backing armed support.

Germany is known to be cool to the idea.

Some have also raised fears that European-supplied weapons would fall into the hands of radical Islamist militants, who are playing an increasingly prominent role in Syria's armed uprising.

Hollande said Paris had "every guarantee that the weapons supplied will be in non-fundamentalist hands". – AFP

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## Obama quick to reach out to China's new president

WASHINGTON – US President Barack Obama wasted no time in courting China's new President Xi Jinping on March 14, calling him within hours of his elevation, and then pressing him on cybercrime and North Korea.

Obama had a cordial yet sometimes frustratingly formal relationship with Xi's predecessor Hu Jintao, and his decision to reach out quickly to the new Chinese leadership may be a sign of intent.

The White House said Obama congratulated Xi on his new position and promised regular high-level engagement on economic and security challenges on which Beijing and Washington have been increasingly at odds in

recent months.

"The president highlighted the threat to the United States, its allies, and the region from North Korea's nuclear and missile programs," and sought close coordination with China on the issue, a statement said.

Obama also raised with Xi the importance of addressing cybersecurity threats which he said, diplomatically, represent "a shared challenge."

China's state-run Xinhua news agency said Xi told Obama that "China and the United States have enormous common interests, but also differences."

"He emphasised that as long as the two sides follow the spirit of mutual respect, openness and tolerance,

China and the United States will be able to achieve more" and turn "the Pacific into an ocean of peace and cooperation."

Beijing has viewed Obama's pivot of diplomatic and military resources towards Asia with concern and chafed as Washington has supported the idea of a regional code of conduct on maritime disputes wanted by its allies.

Xi also underlined China's principles on cyber security and North Korea, Xinhua said without giving further details.

US officials were encouraged that China, an ally of North Korea, helped draft a new UN resolution condemning Pyongyang's nuclear test last month. – AFP

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US church to pay \$10m to Catholic sex abuse victims

LOS ANGELES – The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles has agreed to pay nearly US\$10 million to four men who alleged they were molested by a former priest in the 1970s, their lawyers said on March 12.

LA’s Cardinal Roger Mahony – who was taking part in the Vatican conclave to choose a new pope, despite protests from victims – approved the deal this month, with lawyers for the men and

the former priest involved, they said.

The long-delayed release last month of hundreds of files about abuse claims – which came at the same time as Mahony was stripped of his duties for mishandling the scandals – helped precipitate the settlements, a lawyer said.

The priest involved, Reverend Michael Baker, molested the four young victims repeatedly in the

1970s, including on overnight trips to San Diego, said the legal documents.

The lawsuits claim that then-Archbishop Mahony allowed him to continue to minister as a priest even though Baker admitted in 1986 that he had sexually abused minors in the past.

Baker was jailed for over 10 years in December 2007 after pleading guilty to 12 felony counts of the sexual abuse of a minor, involving

two of the victims in these lawsuits. He was released in October 2011.

Lawyer Vince Finaldi said Baker was scheduled to be a witness, if the lawsuits – filed after the LA archdiocese reached a \$660 million settlement with abuse victims in 2007 – had gone to trial.

The LA archdiocese released files last month on more than 100 clerics accused of sex abuse, as required under the 2007 lawsuit deal,

including some showing Mahony discussing how to cover up alleged crimes.

Finaldi said the release of the files “played heavily” into the archdiocese’s decision to settle the cases. “Once we got the files, it confirmed everything we had argued for years and years,” he told the *Los Angeles Times*.

“Cardinal Mahony’s fingerprints were all over the case,” he added.

Mahony travelled to Rome

to participate in the conclave to choose a successor to Pope Benedict XVI, despite calls from victims’ groups for him to stay home following the recent revelations about his role in covering up alleged abuse.

Mahony, who retired in 2011, was stripped of his remaining church duties in January by his successor Archbishop Jose Gomez for mishandling claims against dozens of priests. – *AFP*

Venezuela race begins

CARACAS – Venezuela was plunged into a bitter election fight to succeed Hugo Chavez on March 11, with acting President Nicolas Maduro and opposition leader Henrique Capriles exchanging barbs after registering as candidates.

“I am not Chavez, but I am his son and all of us together, the people, are Chavez,” he declared, attempting to ride a wave of emotion popular emotion in the wake of his mentor’s death on March 5.

“This campaign is between you and me, Nicolas. Let’s leave the (late) president out of it,” Capriles said.

Venezuelans will vote in snap April 14 elections after a brief campaign that analysts say heavily favours Maduro, whom Chavez picked as his successor in his last public appearance before going to Cuba for cancer surgery in December.

Farith Fraija, a political scientist and blogger, told *AFP*: “It’s not a race between Capriles and Nicolas Maduro. It’s a race between Capriles and Chavez.” – *AFP*

Falklands referendum a ‘parody’: Kirchner

BUENOS AIRES – Argentine President Cristina Kirchner, her approval rating plummeting, has refused to recognise the results of a referendum in which the people of the disputed Falkland Islands voted to remain British.

The vote in the sparsely populated South Atlantic archipelago that triggered a war between the two nations in 1982 was a “parody,” she said on March 12.

British Prime Minister David Cameron had earlier urged the Latin American country to respect the wishes of 99.8 percent of the islanders who voted “yes” to staying a self-governing British territory, showed official results.

The islanders organised the vote in response to increasingly bellicose sovereignty rhetoric by Kirchner, and only three of the 1517 valid ballots – on 92 percent turnout – were cast

against the islands staying under British rule.

Kirchner’s government had dismissed the referendum as meaningless and said it would not affect its claims on the Falklands which it calls “Las Malvinas”. She reiterated her displeasure on March 12 at an event at the presidential mansion.

“What is important today is the United States’ position about this kind of parody of a referendum,” Kirchner said.

“The State Department spokeswoman said that they continue to recognise that there is a sovereignty dispute between Argentina and Britain.”

The United States earlier said it took “note” of the islanders’ vote, but refused again to take sides in the dispute.

“The residents have clearly expressed their preference for a continued relationship with the United Kingdom,” State Department spokeswoman

Victoria Nuland said. “That said, we obviously recognise that there are competing claims.”

Argentina failed to seize the islands back from Britain in the brief 1982 war.

The announcement of the result overnight on March 11 sparked jubilation in the islands’ tiny capital, Stanley, and Cameron said he was “over the moon” at the outcome.

“The Falkland Islanders couldn’t have spoken more clearly. They want to remain British and that view should be respected by everybody, including by Argentina,” he said.

Cameron, who later telephoned the chairman of the islands’ legislative assembly to congratulate him on the result, also warned against any military action by Argentina.

“People should know we will always be there to defend them,” he said. – *AFP*

US spy chief warns of new security threats

WASHINGTON – Spy chief James Clapper warned on March 12 that the United States faces an array of new security threats around the world, from crippling cyber attacks to a “belligerent” nuclear-armed North Korea.

In an annual assessment prepared for lawmakers, the intelligence director portrayed al-Qaeda as a fading danger and suggested there was still time to persuade Iran’s leaders not to pursue nuclear weapons.

But he admitted that North Korea’s strategic thinking remained a mystery, amid new tensions on the Korean peninsula, and said more than a decade after the September 11 attacks America faces a myriad of new potential dangers.

Clapper, speaking to the Senate Intelligence Committee, cited a mounting risk from digital assaults on power grids and other infrastructure while cyber espionage threatens to undercut the American military’s technological edge.

He said “unsophisticated” attacks could penetrate poorly protected computer networks for power grids or similar systems and pose an “increasing risk to US critical infrastructure.”

Unlike previous reports, the assessment ranked cyber attacks first on a list of transnational threats, devoting more words to



US Director of National Intelligence James Clapper. Pic: AFP

digital hacking and cyber spying than to Islamist extremists in Afghanistan.

As for the war in Afghanistan, after more than a decade of combat and more than 2000 Americans dead, the report could only point to mixed results.

In contrast to upbeat assessments from top US officials and commanders, the report said the Taliban was “diminished” but resilient and battlefield gains remained “fragile.”

With tensions spiking on the Korean peninsula, Clapper also told senators he was dismayed by “very belligerent” statements coming from Kim Jong-Un’s regime.

“The rhetoric, while it is propaganda-laced, is also an indicator of their attitude and perhaps their intent,” said Clapper, who oversaw military intelligence in South Korea in the 1980s.

“So for my part I am very concerned about what they might do.” – *AFP*

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Dated: 18 March 2013



## Briefs

## Obama warns Iran

JERUSALEM – Iran is “over a year or so” from getting a nuclear bomb, US President Barack Obama said in an interview on March 14 a week before visiting Israel, warning that the military option remained on the table.

In an interview with Israel’s Channel 2 television, Obama also said that Washington would not wait until the last minute to take action to stop Iran developing a nuclear weapon.

Obama is due to arrive in Israel on March 20 for a three-day visit.

## Evidence ignored

LONDON – British police investigated allegations of abuse against disgraced late television presenter Jimmy Savile in 1964 but officers ignored evidence and routinely failed to follow up complaints, policing inspectors said on March 12.

The inspectors found only five allegations and two pieces of evidence in police files on Savile, who is accused of over 450 sex crimes.

The earliest police record naming the former BBC presenter and DJ in an investigation dates to 1964, but officers did not follow up on the evidence, the inspectors found.

## Manning tape aired

WASHINGTON – A group pressing for more open government flouted a military ban on March 12 and released a secret recording of testimony by US Army private Bradley Manning, accused of leaking a mass of classified files.

It marks the first time since Manning was arrested in May 2010 that the world has heard his voice as he awaits trial for leaking diplomatic cables to the WikiLeaks website. – AFP

## Peres calls for Arab intervention in Syria

STRASBOURG, France – Israel’s Shimon Peres called last week for Arab intervention “to stop the massacre” in Syria as he delivered the first speech by an Israeli head of state to the European Parliament in almost three decades.

The free world “cannot stand by when a massacre is carried out by the Syrian president against his own people and his own children. It breaks all our hearts,” he said on March 12.

Saying “the intervention of Western forces would be perceived as foreign interference,” Peres said the best option to end two years of tragedy in Syria “might be achieved by empowering the Arab League, of which Syria is a member, to intervene.”

The 22-member Arab League pulled out its observer mission to Syria after only a month in January last year amid controversy after failing to halt the regime’s campaign

against the rebels.

“The Arab League can and should form a provisional government in Syria to stop the massacre, to prevent Syria from falling to pieces,” Peres told the 754-member European Parliament.

“The United Nations should support the Arab League to build an Arab force in blue helmets,” he said.

Asked later at a news conference if he was calling for military intervention by an Arab force, Peres said he did mean “a force” but that its actions could be as a peacekeeping force and “not necessarily military”.

Peres warned that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad was a threat to the entire region because of his arsenal of chemical weapons which must be prevented from falling into the wrong hands.

The speech came as Peres, 89, was winding up an eight-day tour of Europe. – AFP



Tourists frolic in unusually heavy snow in Paris on March 13 as blizzard-like conditions created havoc throughout continental parts of northwestern Europe. Heavy snowfalls only days before the official start of spring on March 20 caused travel chaos, disrupting road, rail and air traffic. Pic: AFP

## They’re in the mood for love

LONDON – He is performing handstands and eating constantly and she is spraying her home with alluring scents – all the signs point to mating season for Britain’s giant pandas.

Experts at Edinburgh Zoo in Scotland, which acquired the pair from China in December 2011, believe the mating window of just a few days each year will take place in the coming three weeks.

Female panda Tian Tian, whose name means Sweetie, failed to mate with Yang Guang (Sunshine) last April.

“We’re doing everything we can to get a pregnant panda,” Iain Valentine, director of giant pandas for the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland, said on March 13.

“I’ve got high hopes of this year,” he said.

“This year we’ve been taking the male and putting him into the female enclosure where he’s picking up her chemical cues. And that gets him all pumped up.” – AFP

## Karzai backtracks on criticism of US

KABUL – President Hamid Karzai said on March 14 he wanted to “correct” rather than damage US-Afghan relations, after a storm of protest over his recent anti-US remarks.

Karzai, who on March 10 suggested that the US was working in concert with Taliban militants, acknowledged there were serious bilateral strains as the NATO-led military coalition starts to withdraw from Afghanistan.

“The president called the United States a friend and strategic partner of Afghanistan and said his recent comments... had been to correct rather than damage this relationship,” a statement from his office said.

“The president said that both countries are in a critical stage of relations, therefore it is natural that each side tries to stand for and focus on its

national interests.”

Karzai told a debate forum held at his palace in Kabul that among the causes of tension were a dispute over Afghan detainees held by the US and civilian casualties in NATO military operations.

“We want a good relationship with America, we want friendship, but

leave next year.

The coalition commander in Afghanistan, US General Joseph Dunford, on March 13 sent an advisory to his senior officers warning that troops faced an increased threat of attack after anti-US comments by Karzai.

“Karzai’s remarks could be a catalyst for some to lash out

Wardak, a strategic province next to Kabul, and stopped Afghan forces from calling in US air strikes.

“We’re at a rough point in the relationship,” Dunford said. “(Militants) are also watching and will look for a way to exploit the situation – they have already ramped up for the spring.”

have triggered criticism from rival politicians, who say he is deliberately misleading ordinary Afghans and could threaten the future of international aid on which the country relies.

“He says the Taliban and Americans are one,” Abdullah Abdullah, a former presidential candidate, said in a speech on March 14.

“Our people are worried about whether Karzai is right – or they ask whether it is another conspiracy.”

The president’s anti-US rhetoric has been widely seen as an attempt to establish himself as a strong nationalist leader before he steps down at the end of his second term next year. – AFP

## ‘We want a good relationship with America.’

friendship between two sovereign nations,” Karzai told the audience of invited guests and government officials.

Karzai’s allegation of collusion provoked fury among US officials, as both nations negotiate the framework that could allow some American troops to remain in Afghanistan when NATO combat troops

against our forces – he may also issue orders that put our forces at risk,” Dunford said in the advisory, which was obtained by *The New York Times*.

The president has recently banned international troops from university campuses due to unproven claims of harassment of students.

Last month he also ordered US special forces out of

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# Opponents fail to overturn shark, manta protection deal

BANGKOK – Japan, China and other nations that support shark fishing on March 14 lost a bid to overturn a landmark deal that offers global trade protection for several species of the ocean's oldest predator.

A decision to restrict exports in the oceanic whitetip shark, the porbeagle, three types of hammerheads and the manta ray won final approval by the 178-member Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) during a major wildlife conference in Bangkok.

"This is an historic day for marine conservation," Glenn Sant of wildlife trade protection group Traffic said

after the decision.

"Sharks populations are in freefall, but have been thrown a lifeline today – CITES has finally listened to the scientists."

Rather than a complete ban, countries will be required to regulate trade by issuing export permits to ensure the sharks' sustainability in the wild, otherwise they could face sanctions by members of CITES, a global treaty which protects some 35,000 species.

The United States hailed the agreement as a "historic moment in shark and ray conservation".

The move was agreed by member states on March 11 but required

final approval at the meeting's plenary session.

Opponents including Japan, China and India failed to garner enough support to challenge the earlier decision on the oceanic whitetip and the hammerheads.

Japan has a long history of shark fishing and its fishermen fear that moves to control the trade could affect an industry still recovering from the impact of a devastating tsunami that hit the country's northeast coast in March 2011.

Along with China, Japan argued that national and regional fishing bodies should be left to regulate shark exports. Each country

supported different motions aimed at reopening the debate at CITES.

Hailing the meeting's refusal to heed their call, Susan Lieberman of The Pew Charitable Trusts described it as "the most significant day for the ocean in the 40-year history of CITES".

The species now join the great white shark, the whale shark and the basking shark, which already enjoy international trade controls. Members have 18 months to introduce the new measures.

The conference agreed on March 12 to step up efforts to protect threatened tree species from illegal loggers amid warnings that criminal

gangs are plundering the world's forests.

CITES agreed to restrict cross-border trade in ebony from Madagascar as well as rosewoods from the same island, Southeast Asia and Central America.

"Never before have so many positive proposals to list tree species been adopted by CITES nations," said Juan Carlos Cantu of Defenders of Wildlife.

The proposals, were adopted by consensus, aim to help countries better regulate and monitor trade in the tropical hardwoods, making it harder for illegal loggers to sell their timber overseas. – AFP

## Pyongyang's threats fuel anxiety in South Korea

SEOUL – Over the years South Koreans have become accustomed over the years to the warmongering threats and provocations of North Korea, often shrugging them off while the rest of the world reacts with horrified concern.

But with military tensions on the peninsula at their highest level for years, there are signs of creeping public anxiety, especially after the North's nuclear test in February.

There has been none of the panic that saw people stripping store shelves in 1994 after a North Korean negotiator threatened to turn Seoul into "a sea of fire".

But South Korea's largest online marketplace, G-Market, saw a spike in sales of canned food and instant noodles after the North said on March 7 it was shredding the 1953 Korean War armistice and voiding peace pacts with Seoul.

"I wasn't really worried until recently," said Park Soo-Mee, 38, a law office worker in Seoul.

"But people keep saying it feels different this time and a close friend even said we may have to withdraw some cash in case the North

attacks and the electricity is cut.

"My mother who lives in Canada keeps calling every day to check on me."

The anxiety is most pronounced among inhabitants of the five "frontline islands" near the disputed maritime border off the west coast of the Korean peninsula.

In 2010 the North launched an artillery attack on Yeonpyeong island killing four people – including two civilians – and briefly triggering fears of a full-blown conflict.

During a visit on March 11 to an artillery unit which has its sights training on the islands, North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un told officers to be ready to turn targets on Baengnyeong island, which has a civilian population of about 5000, into a "sea of flames".

Kim Young-Gu, a government official on Baengnyeong, said daily drills against an artillery attack were being held as a precautionary measure.

"It's not like there's a mass exodus of panicked islanders to the mainland. But to be honest with you, we're a bit scared," he told AFP by phone. – AFP

# Xi takes helm in China

BEIJING – China's parliament named Xi Jinping as president on March 14, four months after he took charge of the Communist Party with pledges of reform that have raised hopes but so far yielded little change.

About 3000 delegates cast their votes in Beijing's cavernous Great Hall of the People, dropping red papers into red ballot boxes in front of giant red flags, but the outcome was never in doubt.

Xi, 59, received 2952 votes at the tightly choreographed ceremony, with one against and three abstentions, a 99.86 percent share.

Xi's formal appointment as head of the world's most populous nation is due to be followed by the naming of Li Keqiang as premier on March 15, marking the final step in the nation's once-in-a-decade power handover.

Xi's new role was effectively guaranteed by his position as Communist party leader, the real source of his authority in China, but the title will increase his public and international standing.

Domestically, since taking the top party post in November Xi has pledged to preserve the ruling party's grip on power by cracking down on corruption, improving people's livelihoods and pushing forward economic reforms.

But despite the promises of action on multiple fronts, observers say concrete reforms would be complex and will not be swiftly introduced.

Xi last year became head of China's top military body, the Central Military Commission, unlike his predecessor Hu Jintao, who worked as President for two years before his predecessor Jiang Zemin passed on the Commission chairmanship.

"In recent memory there is no



Newly-elected Chinese President Xi Jinping (right) and his predecessor Hu Jintao confer after the leadership vote during the National People's Congress in Beijing on March 14. Pic: AFP

comparable figure who has such power in his hand (so quickly)," said Willy Lam, a politics expert at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

As the son of one of China's most famous generals, Xi has closer ties to the People's Liberation Army than Hu did and has strengthened the relationship in recent months with an unusually high number of visits to military bases.

He is seen as one of the architects of China's recent more assertive stance on territorial disputes with neighbouring countries and a supporter of Beijing's military expansion.

Tokyo sent congratulations and its Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said it had "always kept our door

open for dialogue with China", adding the relationship was "one of the most important international relationships for Japan".

Li Yuanchao, 62, who is seen as a reform advocate, was named as vice-president.

"He's come up with all these ideas a few years ago for making cadres more accountable, for making government more accountable," said David Goodman, Professor of Chinese Politics at Australia's University of Sydney.

"At the very least one ought to be able to say that this is a signal that there is some real intended reform." But the vice-presidency is largely symbolic, and he added: "It could be nothing." – AFP

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## Chinese report welcomes missile successes in Syria

BEIJING – Chinese-made missiles have been used to shoot down two Syrian army helicopters, state media reported on March 14, adding their performance could boost the international sales appeal of Chinese weapons.

The *Global Times*, a tabloid with close links to the ruling Communist Party, said two videos posted on the internet by Free Syrian Army rebels showed two Mi-8/17 helicopters being shot down by Chinese shoulder-launched missiles.

The paper said it was not known how the rebels obtained the missiles.

But it said the success of the FN-6 weapons, which it said were developed by China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation, could lift the

overall image of China's defence products.

"In regards to export prospects, Chinese weapons need to engage in more conflicts to prove their value," Daniel Tong, identified as the founder of the Chinese Military Aviation website, told the newspaper.

"The kills are proof that the FN-6 is reliable and user-friendly, because rebel fighters are generally not well-trained in operating missile systems," he added.

Chinese weapons have not been tested in battle to the same extent as those built by the United States and Russia, and publicity surrounding the shootdowns will raise the profile of China's air defence products, the paper cited him as saying. – AFP



Briefs

Ambassador ordered to remain in India

NEW DELHI – India’s Supreme Court on March 14 issued an order for Italy’s ambassador to stay in the country amid a dispute over two Italian marines who skipped bail while on trial for murder in New Delhi.

A three-judge bench said that ambassador Daniele Mancini, who had negotiated the release of the marines so they could return home to vote, should remain in India until the next hearing about the dispute on March 18. Rome said on March 12 that it was reneging on commitments to send the two marines back to India.

Singh’s cabinet backs tougher rape penalties

NEW DELHI – India’s cabinet gave the green light on March 14 to a bill for harsher punishments for rapists, reports said, following a brutal gang-rape in New Delhi that sparked outrage and demands for tougher laws.

The bill provides for a minimum prison sentence of 20 years for rape, which can be extended to natural life of the convict in jail, the *Press Trust of India* said, adding that the draft law also provided for the death sentence in the event a rape victim died.

Under the existing law, rapists face a term of seven to 10 years in jail.

Ivory trade nations escape sanctions

BANGKOK – Eight nations accused of failing to do enough to tackle the illegal trade in elephant ivory escaped sanctions on March 14 at a conference of the 178 member nations of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) in Bangkok.

The conference identified Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda as well as transit countries Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam, and top markets China and Thailand as making insufficient efforts to curb the trade.

They avoided punishment after six of them submitted draft action plans in response and China and Tanzania committed to do so by a specific date.

Pakistan’s parliament completes full term

ISLAMABAD – Pakistan’s parliament made history on March 14 by becoming the first in the country’s history to complete a full term in office, dissolving in a low-key session that paves the way for elections.

The dissolution of the national assembly is a milestone in Pakistan, where the military has seized power three times in coups and ruled for about half the country’s existence. – AFP

Former Khmer Rouge foreign minister dies at 87

PHNOM PENH – Ieng Sary, the Khmer Rouge co-founder who was on trial for genocide and war crimes, died on March 14, the UN-backed court said, robbing Cambodians of a verdict for his role in the murderous regime.

The death of the 87-year-old former Khmer Rouge foreign minister intensified fears the remaining two elderly defendants may also fail to live to see justice at the much-delayed tribunal.

“Ieng Sary died this morning after being hospitalised since March 4,” court spokesman Lars Olsen said, adding it was “regrettable we cannot finish the proceedings in the case”.

Charges against Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan will not, however, be affected

by Ieng Sary’s death, he added.

Only a handful of top regime figures have come to trial over the Khmer Rouge’s crimes that saw a quarter of Cambodia’s population wiped out between 1975 and 1979.

The one-time radical student was the oldest of three former leaders on trial, and – along with “Brother Number Two” Nuon Chea, 86, and former head of state Khieu Samphan, 81 – denied charges including war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity.

Ieng Sary’s wife Ieng Thirith, the regime’s former social affairs minister, was last year deemed unfit for trial after being diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease.

Rights groups expressed dismay that the former foreign minister cheated



Ieng Sary greets Chairman Mao Zedong at an unknown location in China in 1970 as Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot looks on. Pic: AFP

justice despite evidence he oversaw the wholesale purging and murder of intellectuals, many of them taken from his ministry with his knowledge.

“His death is no victory and it carries little value for the regime’s victims who patiently wait to see justice done. The court must move on,” said Youk Chhang, of

the Documentation Centre of Cambodia, which researches atrocities by the hardline communist regime.

Heather Ryan, a trial monitor at the Open Society Justice Initiative, described Ieng Sary’s death as “an example of ‘justice delayed is justice denied’”, which would “leave Cambodians with a sense of frustration”.

Born to a poor ethnic Khmer family in south Vietnam, the former foreign minister repeatedly denied knowledge of the mass executions that came to define the Khmer Rouge regime and claimed he had no powers of arrest.

The court has so far settled just one case, sentencing former prison chief Kaing Guek Eav, better known as Duch, to life in jail for overseeing the deaths of some 15,000 people. – AFP

Najib describes Sabab incursion as ‘wake-up call’

KUALA LUMPUR – Malaysia’s premier has called a deadly incursion by Philippine militants a “wake-up call” that will lead to tighter security on the neighbours’ notoriously porous sea border, a report said on March 13.

But Prime Minister Najib Razak added that securing the border was a “huge challenge” due to eastern Sabah state’s long coastline and the centuries-old movement of people between there and the adjacent southern Philippines.

“This is a wake-up call. There are gaps in terms of our capabilities, but we hope we will be able to close the gaps,” Najib said in an interview published in the *New Straits Times*.

“For example, the coastline of Sabah is simply enormous,” he was quoted as saying.

The issue burst into the regional spotlight last month when armed followers of a self-styled Philippine sultan landed in Sabah to claim the territory for their leader, tearing open a long-dormant dispute over ownership of the state at the northern tip of Borneo island.



Malaysian troops patrolling a Sabah palm oil plantation on March 12 during the operation to evict the gunmen from the Philippines. Pic: AFP/Malaysia Ministry of Defence

The incursion by some 200 Islamist militants and an counter-offensive by Malaysian security forces left dozens dead – mostly the invaders – and put a rare stress on relations with Manila.

Security forces were still hunting for militants early last week, possibly scores of them, who managed to dodge a military operation to round them up.

Najib’s administration has been criticised by the

opposition for the porous nature of the border and must balance calls for tighter security with the task of managing cross-border movement.

Najib gave no details of how the border would be better policed, but said “we certainly need to put in more assets”.

“We will certainly put in place a better surveillance system and tighten up security in Sabah,” he added. – AFP

Bangkok, rebel group set talks date

BANGKOK – Thailand and one of several rebel groups in the country’s Muslim-majority south will open peace negotiations in Malaysia on March 28 in an effort to end a bloody insurgency, a Thai official said on March 14.

Thailand and the Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN) rebel group signed an agreement in Kuala Lumpur on February 28, pledging to open talks on ending a nine-year insurgency by a number of shadowy groups that

has claimed more than 5500 lives.

Paradorn Pattanabutr, the head of Thailand’s National Security Council, said a preliminary meeting was held on March 5 on the “conditions” for the talks, but more substantive dialogue would begin with a one-day exchange on March 28.

“We will fly to Malaysia for the first talks with BRN and possible other representatives on March 28,” Paradorn told AFP.

“We aim to focus on what

we should do to decrease violence in the south.”

Paradorn did not specify who the other representatives could be or give further details on the planned talks hosted by Thailand’s southern neighbour.

Analysts say the quest for peace is complicated by the splintered nature of the insurgents, a lack of concrete demands, and Thailand’s difficulty in finding negotiating partners who actually control hardened fighters on the ground. – AFP

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## 6600 dead pigs pulled from Shanghai river

SHANGHAI – Shanghai said it pulled hundreds more dead pigs out of its main river on March 13, bringing the total to just over 6600, as residents worried over drinking water criticised the handling of the incident.

Shanghai recovered 685 more dead pigs from the Huangpu river, which flows through China's commercial hub and supplies 22 percent of its water, but water quality was within national standards, a government statement said.

The pig carcasses, believed to have been dumped by farmers upstream after dying of disease, have been hauled out of the river since March 9 but the daily numbers have begun to slow.

"Treated water meets national drinking water hygiene standards," the Shanghai government statement said.

But residents questioned the government assurances

and called for more transparency over the incident.

"So many dead pigs and the water quality has not been affected. Who are you fooling? Do you think people are idiots?" said one online posting under the name Youshan Wanshui6\_6.

In another posting on a Twitter-like microblog, Shoppinggirl Caijiajia said: "The dead pig incident has completely ruined Shanghai's image."

Shanghai has pointed the finger at Jiaying in the neighbouring province of Zhejiang, a major pig farming area and on March 13 an official admitted some of the dead pigs could be from the area.

Shanghai's agricultural commission said on March 11 that some of the animals had tested positive for porcine circovirus, which it described as a common swine disease that does not affect humans. – AFP

## China counts pollution's cost on human, economic activity

XINGTAI, China – Thick grey smog pressed against Zhao Jian's windshield, blotting visibility to two metres as he drove through China's most polluted city.

"I don't remember ever seeing air pollution so bad," said Zhao of the weeks of recent haze that saw hazardous air hanging across swathes of the country.

But like others in Xingtai, a 3000-year-old city that in February was officially declared to have the country's worst air pollution, Zhao has no hope for improvement. "There's nothing you can do," he said.

China's Communist Party leaders, gathered in Beijing last week for the annual meeting of the National People's Congress, have promised action on pollution in response to growing public outrage.

The capital itself has seen particulate levels 40 times higher than World Health Organisation limits and the pollution is inflicting a heavy toll on both human health and economic activity.

"The state of the ecological environment affects the level of the people's well-being and also posterity and the future of our nation," Premier Wen Jiabao said in an address to the congress.

"We should resolve to solve the problems of serious air, water, and soil pollution that affect the people's vital interests."

Air pollution caused at least 8572 premature deaths in four of China's biggest cities last year and 6.8 billion yuan (US\$1.1 billion) in economic losses, found a study by Peking University and Greenpeace published in December.

But analysts say that without a serious threat of social unrest, China's rulers are unlikely to abandon their focus on economic growth



On a clear day Beijing residents breathe easier. The city's skyline (top) during severe pollution on January 14 and the same view (bottom) during clear weather on February 4, 2012. Pic: AFP

or take radical action on polluting industries in the face of powerful vested interests.

Metres from the towering smokestacks of Xingtai's sprawling steel plants – many of them state-owned – shopkeepers have no difficulty naming the source of the pollution.

"It's sulphur dioxide from the steel plant," said

into the lungs – come from coal burning, with the rest mostly from vehicle emissions and construction.

Three provinces surrounding Xingtai, 350 kilometres (220 miles) south of Beijing, burned through almost 400 million tonnes of coal last year – nearly half the total consumption of the United States.

Experts agree that any

### "There's nothing you can do."

Zhang Shouxiang, 65. "Big companies aren't willing to spend money on cleaning themselves up."

Nearly half of China's emissions of PM2.5 – tiny particles that penetrate deep

meaningful action on pollution will mean reducing dependence on coal, but say Beijing's current stance will see its use rise.

"We see nothing in the current policy that could

meaningfully slow down the pace of coal consumption," Deutsche Bank said in a report this month.

Locals said measures to reduce air pollution are unevenly enforced because of bribery.

"You give the government some money and they won't do anything," Zhang said, miming the action of slipping cash into an official's pocket.

While China's leaders have repeatedly stressed the importance of tackling pollution, responsibility for reducing emissions falls to environmental protection bureaus at the local level.

Xingtai's bureau occupies a few floors of dusty, undecorated offices above a cake shop.

"We're meant to implement emissions reductions policies, but we're too weak," said an official surnamed Wang, sitting opposite an ageing computer showing the day's PM2.5 reading at 179 – seven times the WHO limit.

"It's a moderate day for us," he added.

Chinese state media have been unusually outspoken over the smog outbreaks. "This choking, dirty and poisonous air forces Chinese people to rethink the widespread, messy development model," said the *China Youth Daily*.

Protests over environmental issues in China have grown by almost 30 percent a year since 1996, said the *China Daily*, but air pollution has not yet provoked the same level of street action as for water and land.

"People are concerned about air because now they can see it," said Yang Fuqiang, a senior advisor in Beijing for the US-based Natural Resources Defense Council.

"The pressure from the public is much stronger than before, but still not big enough." – AFP

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## Not paved with flowers: Turning loss into poetry

After a lifetime of struggle, octogenarian Daw Myint Myint Khin releases her first book of verse, the English-language *Poetry for Me*, at a ceremony in Yangon

By Zon Pann Pwint

POET Richard Rosen once wrote that "the poem is the point at which our strength gave out". Such is undoubtedly the case for Dr Daw Myint Myint Khin, who on March 12 released a collection of her English-language poetry at a ceremony in Yangon.

Daw Myint Myint Khin retired from her job as professor at the Institute of Medicine in Mandalay in 1985. In the same year she was devastated by the death of her husband of more than 30 years, as well as by the incarceration of her son by the government for political reasons.

"These contemporaneous ordeals threw me into a turmoil," the 88-year-old poet said at the launch of her book, which is titled *Poetry For Me*.

At the launch, held at the headquarters of the Myanmar Medical Association, she said her love of poetry began as a child but the feeling intensified when she travelled abroad in 1985 to find solace for her series of losses.

At that time she worked as a visiting professor of medicine at the National University of Malaysia.

"I had never expressed my fondness for poetry because I didn't have confidence in my ability to write, even though snippets of rhymes sometimes flooded my mind," Daw Myint Myint Khin said.

"Even my husband and son didn't know about my love for poetry."

She said her imagination and courage to write poetry developed soon after death of her husband, and for the first time she started putting her poems on paper.

"I wrote poems because I



Daw Myint Myint Khin signs a copy of her book 'Poetry For Me' at Myanmar Medical Association headquarters in Yangon on March 12. Pic: Aung Htay Hlaing

could not bear not to write them," she said.

From Malaysia she moved to New Delhi, where she worked from 1985 to 1991 as a consultant at the World Health Organisation's Southeast Asia Regional Office. When there she had the opportunity to visit Sri Lanka, whose beauty inspired her to write more poetry.

Daw Myint Myint Khin also said writing poetry has helped her tap into a long-suppressed side of her personality.

"I attended an educational psychology course in Yangon while working as a professor, where I was asked many questions aimed at evaluating my personality. The result was that I am very sentimental and emotive," she said.

"My students would never believe it because I was very aggressive and abrasive when I

was teaching at university."

She said the results of the psychological evaluation led her to wonder why she needed to hide her emotions beneath a veneer of aggression.

"My life has not been paved with flowers. Especially, I suffered anguish at the deaths of my brother and mother, loss of property, and fears and insecurities in the aftermath of World War II," she said.

"I have had to overcome tremendous adversity, and I think I might not have survived if I had not suppressed the positive side of my personality at those times. But those sentimentalities and emotions that I have concealed came out in this poetry book."

Before pursuing medicine Daw Myint Myint Khin studied English language and literature at the University of Yangon, during which

time she was obsessed by the works of metaphysical poet John Donne.

"I thought my love of English poetry must stem from the fact that I was raised in colonial times, although there aren't many others from that time who long for English poetry," she said.

"But I've met young people, one who said he admired Robert Browning and another who told me he loved the poetry of William Wordsworth. I was amazed by their partiality for poetry. In fact, there are no frontiers or boundaries for lovers of poetry."

Since 1996 Daw Myint Myint Khin has published 11 books in Myanmar language and two in English, mostly about the medical field. *Poetry for Me* is her first poetry collection.

## Celebrities, dogs tapped to raise funds for orphans

By Nuam Bawi

THE sixth fundraising fair for orphans organised by Win Htut Tara (Chan Chan), daughter of singer Zaw Win Htut, will be held at People's Square on March 30, from 5pm to 9pm.

Chan Chan told *The Myanmar Times* that she was organising the fair to share with orphans some of the love she has received from her family and friends.

"I wanted to show orphans that there are people who care about them and who are willing to offer their energy for them, even though it seems like they have no one around them," she said.

"Also, I want people see that celebrities are doing these kinds of good things, because I believe it will become a model for many people who will follow and do good things as well."

Chan Chan organised fundraising fairs from 2004 to 2007, then moved to Australia for a few years to study. She returned to Myanmar and revived the annual fair last year.

She said this year's event will have some changes from the past, including some new programs.

"In previous years I had many booths with celebrities working as vendors. Last year we had about 200 celebrities," she said.

"Some of them were very interested in working at the fair and some were not, and it was too complicated working with so many people. So this year I've only invited those celebrities who are passionate about participating."

New for this year will be a "Top Dog Fashion and Stylist Competition", in which dogs and their owners will show off matching styles, and an auction featuring beach trips, dinners with celebrities and more.

Chan Chan is also asking people to donate old, unwanted items to sell at the fair.

"Everyone has things in their homes that are no longer useful for them, such as books they have already read and CDs they have already listened to. These are useful things that we can sell at the fair to raise money for orphans," Chan Chan said.

Such items can be donated to all Frolick shop branches in Yangon until March 28.

Application forms for the dog competition can also be picked up at all Frolick shops, which are located at Taw Win Centre; Junction Square; Dagon Complex Level 5, Room 1, Sanchaung township; and No 31-2 Bo Yar Nyunt Street, Dagon township.

Chan Chan said the funds raised at the fair will go to orphans who have not received many donations in the past, including those affected by the conflict in Kachin State, and private schools in downtown Yangon that provide free tailoring and sewing classes for orphaned girls.

Chan Chan added that she still feels inspired to help orphans even though organising fundraising fairs with celebrities can be challenging.

"I've often wanted to give up holding this kind of event every year. I might even be able to raise more money simply by asking for donations rather than spending so much time, energy and sleepless nights preparing for the fair," she said.

"But when I see how happy the children are when they realise that the celebrities they admire are busy working for them, all my thoughts of stopping are swept away."



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# Evils of censorship linger in visual arts

By Zon Pann Pwint

IN 2010 artist Maung Khine Mar painted a portrait of a Shan vendor counting money while wearing a basket on her back. The painting was titled *Alternate* and was intended to highlight patterns of alternating light and shade.

When government censors saw the painting before it was exhibited to the public, Maung Khine Mar found himself barraged by unexpected questions: Why was the vendor's face so sad? Were her sales down? Was the "alternate" of the title meant to indicate the

rise and fall of the Myanmar government?

"Artists make paintings from an artistic perspective, but they looked at our paintings from a political angle at that time," he said. "Their criticisms are purely subjective."

While censorship of print media has ended, restrictions on the visual arts are still officially in place, he said.

"Censorship on art has relaxed quite a bit, but they still have a blinkered attitude towards any art that goes beyond Myanmar's cultural norms, such as nude paintings," said Maung Khine Mar, who earlier this month held an exhibition at

Lawkanat Gallery, in which he displayed 12 acrylic paintings of colonial-era buildings in Yangon.

"Artists who paint nudes are still questioned, but I saw an exhibition held at the Myanmar Artists and Artisans Organisation in Yangon last month that included some paintings similar to nudes. But the paintings were not explicit about the subject."

He said artists should be given the freedom to paint any subject they want.

"If artists never get the chance to show paintings that oppose cultural norms, the public won't think it's art and they'll have a negative attitude towards such paintings. They'll see the subject from the wrong perspective," he said.

Maung Khine Mar added that even if people think some artwork goes beyond the bounds of what is acceptable, to a certain extent artists should be encouraged to depart from "cultural norms".

"Artists want viewers to see art as art. At the start, viewers might think it's outrageous but eventually they will become habituated to seeing it. And the more artists are restricted, the more curious the public will become about seeing art about restricted subjects," he said.

"If artists are constrained they will simply keep on working surreptitiously, and the public will continue sneaking glances at such artworks."

Another Yangon-based artist, Aung Kyi Soe, said that "no boundary should be fixed to art".

"Artists are pushing back against the boundaries of cultural norms," he said,



Maung Khine Mar poses with his paintings at Lawkanat Gallery in Yangon on March 7. Pic: Boothe

and mentioned an exhibition held in Yangon in January titled "Khin Maung Yin 100" at which a nude painting was censored.

"I don't think the painting was harmful to viewers. Censorship just restricts freedom," Aung Kyi Soe said.

Maung Khine Mar recalled his days as a university student during which he

studied human anatomy and made drawings of the human body.

"When I attended the National University of Arts and Culture, both male and female students had to draw the human anatomy," he said. "At first the girls were embarrassed to draw the human body and they hid their sketches from others as soon as they finished them."

But later they didn't feel shy anymore."

Artist Pe Nyunt Way said paintings covering a wide range of themes have largely been uncensored in recent months, "except those that are thought to disrespect Myanmar tradition and culture".

"Hopefully, these knots which bind the artists will soon be untied," he said.



Artwork by Aung Kyi Soe.

## Phyu Thi announces first career concert

By Lwin Mar Htun

SINGER Phyu Thi has been making music for more than 30 years, but she has never performed in front of a live audience.

That will change on March 24 when she takes the stage at the National Theatre, delivering a show that will draw on material from the 14 albums she has released throughout her career.

Phyu Thi said at a press conference last week that the concert was something she would never have done on her own, had she not been urged to do so by a local promoter.

"If I tried to arrange this concert myself it would never have happened because I've never performed songs onstage. Even when [promoter] Andy Aung asked me to hold this concert, I was adverse to the idea because I'm afraid I'll make a mistake onstage, and also my health is not very good," she said.

"But he promise he would take care of all responsibilities for me, so in the end I accepted."

Andy Aung told *The Myanmar Times* that he first approached Phyu Thi last September about doing the concert.

"I went to her home every evening to talk to her and listen to her music, and she finally agreed to perform," he said.

"This will not just be a live show, it will be a concert. There will be plenty of programs, including new vocalists singing new versions of Phyu Thi's songs, as well as traditional Myanmar dance and contemporary dance performances."

Oasis, Emperor and Golden Wave bands will provide backing music for Phyu Thi at the concert. Zaw Win Htut, She, Eaint Chit, Zaw Paing, Yadanar Oo, Ni Ni Khin Zaw and other singers will also perform.

Ko Thet, the keyboard player for Oasis, said people often ask him what Phyu Thi's face looks like since she never performs live.

"This concert is a good chance for people who would like to see Phyu Thi's face, which I can assure fans has not changed much in the past 30 years," he said.

The concert will start at 6pm. Tickets are priced at K30,000, K20,000, K15,000 and K6000, and are available at Bo Bo Entertainment, Shwe FM and Yankin Centre.



Phyu Thi attends a press conference in Yangon on March 14 to announce the first concert of her 30-year career. Pic: Ko Taik

## Artist Ai Weiwei plans rock album

BEIJING — Chinese dissident artist Ai Weiwei, whose oeuvre already spans genres from film to architecture, is taking on a new medium with plans for a hard rock album, he said on March 12.

Ai's avant-garde works, which also include visual arts and sculpture, have been exhibited around the world, but he admitted his musical limitations.

He was not a long-standing hard rock fan and had no favourite bands, he said.

"My favourite band will be myself," he added. "I don't play instruments, I sing and I wrote the songs. It's about my condition and China's condition."

The music, composed by a friend, is in the final stage of mixing, while videos are also being produced. The album, provisionally titled *Divine Comedy*, is due for release within two months, he added.

Ai has emerged as a fierce critic of the government in Beijing, often through his prolific use of the Internet and involvement in sensitive social campaigns.

He was detained for 81 days in 2011 during a roundup of activists at the time of the Arab Spring popular uprisings, and on his release he was accused of tax evasion and barred from leaving the country for one year.

He is known for tallying the number of schoolchildren killed in a 2008 earthquake, a taboo subject because many schools collapsed while other buildings did not, fuelling suspicion of corruption.

In January he released a 102-minute film about a villager whose fatal crushing by a truck sparked outrage from those who suspected he was killed for campaigning over land seizures, a widespread grievance in China.

Last year Ai produced a version of the widely imitated Gangnam Style music video in which he pulled out a pair of handcuffs, symbolising the authorities' efforts to silence him. The video was soon censored online.

— AFP



# Exhibit celebrates fabrics of Myanmar and Thailand

By Lwin Mar Htun

TRADITIONAL fabrics and fashions from Myanmar and Thailand were showcased at the “Textiles of the Two Lands” exhibition, held at Junction Square shopping centre in Yangon on March 9 and 10.

That event, organised by the Thai embassy and Myanmar Red Cross Society, marked the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Thailand and Myanmar, as well as the 80<sup>th</sup> birthday of Queen Sirikit of Thailand.

The Thai ambassador to Myanmar, Mr Pisanu Suvanajata, said textiles were chosen as the main theme of the event because “they are the heritage of both countries that can reveal the weaving of a strong bond of friendship from past to present days through our similarities and shared values”.

He added that textiles are one of Queen Sirikit’s “keen interests”.

The two-day exhibition was accompanied by several events, including a seminar

on March 9 titled “Thailand and Myanmar Traditional Textiles: Hidden Treasures, Shared Wisdoms” held at Junction Square from 10am to 1pm. Experts and textile collectors from the two countries shared their knowledge at the seminar.

One of the speakers, textile collector Daw



A model struts on the catwalk at the Textiles of the Two Lands Gala Dinner at Chatrium Hotel, Yangon, on March 9. Pic: Thiri Lu

Swe Zin Htaik, said her interests included finding global business opportunities for traditional fabrics, and using them in modern fashion.

A gala dinner was held at Chatrium Hotel’s Pool Terrace on the evening of March 9, featuring a mix of Myanmar and Thai cuisine, a fashion show and other entertainment.

Festivities started with a

performance of a famous episode from the *Ramayana* in which Rama chases a golden deer. This was followed by the slow and graceful Thai candlelight dance, and a fashion show featuring the creations of designers Mogok Pauk Pauk from Myanmar and Mr Paothong Thongchua from Thailand.

The fashion show was divided into three parts, starting with a showcase of classical costumes from Thailand and Myanmar, followed by designs mixing traditional textiles from both countries. The final part featured contemporary designs using traditional textiles. The fashion show was accompanied by the music of Vie Trio, which played a fusion of classical, pop, rock and traditional Thai songs.

Mogok Pauk Pauk said clothing from both designers was sold at an auction held during the dinner, with all proceeds from sales going to support the Myanmar Red Cross Society.

Donations to the society also came from local businesses, and more funds were raised through a raffle held on March 11.

## Indonesia showcases cuisine and culture

By Lwin Mar Htun

THE Seventh Indonesian Culinary and Culture Fair is will be held at Parkroyal Hotel in Yangon from March 18 to 26, featuring food and dance performances from the Southeast Asian nation.

During the fair, La Brasserie restaurant at Parkroyal Hotel will host a daily traditional Indonesian buffet dinner for US\$30 a person.

On March 18, 21, 23 and 26, students from the Indonesian International

School in Yangon will present traditional Indonesian music and dance performances at the buffet dinner.

Mr Sigit Witiaksono, first secretary at the Indonesian embassy in Yangon, said at a press conference on March 12 that “the purpose of the fair is to promote Indonesia as a country that is rich in culture, especially in food, to Myanmar people”.

The fair also aimed to “enhance the people-to-people contact between the two countries through their own unique traditional cuisine and culture,” he said.



Dancers from Indonesian International School attend a press conference at Parkroyal Hotel on March 12.

## Updated tourism guide hits the shelves

By Douglas Long

IT’S that time of year again! Is it Christmas? Thingyan? Your birthday? Even better: It’s time for the launch of a new edition of the locally produced *Myanmar Hotels and Tourism Guide*.

The format for 2013 remains basically the same as previous editions – the first half consisting of glossy pages packed with photos and basic cultural and tourism information, and the second half offering useful yellow-pages-style listings for tourism-oriented businesses throughout Myanmar.

Much of what was valuable in the past is still here, including chapters on history, handicrafts, sights in all states and regions, food and drink, places to go, and planning your trip. But there’s plenty that’s new to attract the interest of readers, including photos, editorial

material, and more maps with more detail – you’ll never lose your way in Nay Pyi Taw again!

Updated information panels provide introductions to cheroots, the nine wonders of Shwedagon Pagoda, colonial buildings in Yangon and more. The “Things to Do” section offers new info on local markets, horseback riding and Yangon nightlife.

The “Planning” chapter provides updates on immigration and customs laws; restricted areas; banking, money changers and credit cards; and buying and renting phone cards. There are also recommendations for books to read about Myanmar.

Overall, the *Myanmar Hotels and Tourism Guide 2013* is a very useful resource, especially the transportation schedules and the tourism business listings in the second half.

Some quirks remain: The visual

presentation of the text in the glossy pages is utilitarian – readable but not beautiful. And the choice of cover image is again unusual: Last year the publishers went with one of those spurious posed images that are so popular in Myanmar.

This year marks a turn in the opposite direction, with the cover showing a refreshingly non-modelesque woman with faded thanakha on her cheeks, staring into the camera.

The subject seems to be of Pa-O ethnicity, but the shot is taken too closely to reveal much of anything about context, and therefore doesn’t say much about tourism or culture in Myanmar. But the publishers still have next year to get it right.

The *Myanmar Hotels and Tourism Guide 2013* retails for K25,000 and is available at bookstores, supermarkets and souvenir shops throughout Myanmar.

## Censored paragraph restored to ‘River’

By Zon Pann Pwint

THE third printing of the Myanmar-language version of Dr Thant Myint-U’s 2007 book *The River of Lost Footsteps* was launched on March 14, with a paragraph restored that had been censored from earlier editions.

“The paragraph that was censored before concerns incidents surrounding the army crackdown on

protestors in front of Yangon General Hospital in 1988,” said the book’s publisher, Dr Thant Thaw Kaung.

“The third edition also contains an updated biography of Dr Thant Myint-U.”

The book was translated into Myanmar from the original English by Daw Mra Hninzi. The third edition is available for K6500 at bookstores throughout Yangon.



United Kingdom 1919

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# Millions for mastiffs at Chinese dog expo

By Tom Hancock

BAODING, China — Drooping eyes barely visible behind a mountain of glossy black fur, an enormous dog snoozes on stage in an industrial Chinese city. Its asking price: close to US\$1 million.

"This is the greatest dog in China," breeder Yao Yi said, as he stroked a year-old Tibetan mastiff, up for sale on March 9 for five million Chinese yuan (\$800,000), at a dog show in Baoding, a few hours' drive from Beijing.

Massive and sometimes ferocious, with round manes lending them a passing resemblance to lions, Tibetan mastiffs have become a prized status symbol among China's wealthy, with rich buyers across the country sending prices skyrocketing.

One red mastiff named Big Splash reportedly sold for 10 million yuan (\$1.5 million) in 2011, in the most expensive dog sale then recorded.

"Check out her paws, they're enormous," Yao said, as his dog salivated onto a wooden stage in a dilapidated sports stadium where breeders gathered from across northern China to show off their purebred canines.

"Her parents are from Tibet, so she's not used to hot weather," Yao added.

Owners say the mastiffs, descendants of dogs used for hunting by nomadic tribes in central Asia and Tibet, are fiercely loyal and protective.

Breeders still journey to the Himalayan Plateau to collect young puppies.

"It takes over a month to drive back from Tibetan areas with the dogs," said Wang Fei, a Beijing-based mastiff breeder who collects white-coloured puppies from western China in the back of a truck.

Most of the puppies are unable to adjust to low altitudes and die during the journey, he added. "The success rate is not very high."

The risks of travel lead other breeders to raise dogs closer to their clients in China's wealthy eastern provinces.

"I take dogs to Tibet for breeding, but they give birth near Beijing," said Zhang Ming, who joined vendors at the mastiff-dedicated expo, where dozens of dogs paced around in white cages or peeked out from the back of cars.

Zhang's wealthiest clients include the owners of coal mines, which dot the landscape of northern China, he said.

"Now almost everyone has a car, so people need a new way of showing their wealth," he said, adding that not all of his clients pay in cash.

"One buyer paid for a dog with a 30,000 yuan Omega watch and a car, just for a small dog," he said, whipping out his smart phone to show a record of the transaction.

The sperm of purebred mastiffs can also be worth a fortune. "I would charge

50,000 yuan to sell his sperm," Zhang said of his favourite dog, named Moonlight Fairytale, on sale for 200,000 yuan and weighing 155 kilograms (340 pounds).

The booming market has attracted a fair share of fraudsters, with some passing off crossbred dogs for pedigrees, using artificial hair extensions made with dog fur, the *China Daily* reported.

Intensive breeding has led to dangerous numbers of inbred mastiffs, while some vendors inject glucose into dog's legs to make them appear stronger, the *Global Times* daily reported.

Out-of-control Tibetan mastiffs have also carried out attacks across China, with one dog wounding nine people in a frenzied attack in Beijing in 2012, said the *Global Times*.

Local newspapers reported in December that a 62-year-old man in central China's Henan province died after being attacked by a Tibetan mastiff owned by a local government official.

Regulations in Beijing and other major Chinese cities ban residents from keeping large dogs in downtown areas, but rules are sometimes flouted.

"It's like the one child policy," Zhang said, referring to rules limiting the number of children families can have, which can be circumvented by paying fines to authorities. "If you really need to break the rules, you can do." — AFP



A Tibetan mastiff is displayed at a show in Baoding, China, on March 9. Pic: AFP

## India media sector to double by 2017 Russia a 'pyramid of thieves' says writer

MUMBAI — India's media and entertainment sector is set to double in size in the next five years to reach 1661 billion rupees (US\$30.6 billion) by 2017, a study said last week.

Despite a slowdown in the Indian economy, the industry is being driven by growth in regional media, upcoming elections, a strong film industry and digitisation, according to the report by global consultancy group KPMG.

The sector grew by 12.6 percent to 821 billion rupees in 2012 from 2011 and is expected to see a growth rate of 11.8pc this year, it said.

Television remains the dominant segment, despite the huge popularity and turnover of the Bollywood film industry.

The television sector grew by 12.5pc year-on-year in 2012 to 370.1 billion rupees, print — the second-largest sector — was up 7.3pc at 224.1 billion rupees and films were up 21pc to 112.4 billion rupees.

"In 2012, the economic slowdown hit the industry hard — especially advertising revenue," said the report.

"However, many seeds of positive change were sown this year," it said, pointing to the beginning of the industry's digital transformation, including the roll-out of cable digitisation.

The report was released in conjunction with the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) at an annual conference on media and entertainment in Mumbai.

Opening the event, FICCI's media and entertainment committee chairman Uday Shankar said efforts to curb free speech in India were among the biggest challenges that threatened to derail the industry's growth.

"We are not far from a point where someone's sneeze or a cough on a television show will be a source of offence and outrage for many," Shankar said. "What makes it worse is that increasingly the democratic institutions have more patience for those who promote intolerance." — AFP



Indian Bollywood actors Neil Nitin Mukesh (left) and Sonal Chauhan pose during a promotional photo shoot for the Hindi film "3G" in Mumbai on March 12. Pic: AFP

## Russia a 'pyramid of thieves' says writer

MOSCOW — Russia said last week it was "surprised" and disappointed by top novelist Mikhail Shishkin's refusal to join its delegation at a US book fair after he reportedly described the government as a "pyramid of thieves".

Russia's state publishing and media agency had asked Shishkin to be part of the delegation at the BookExpo America fair in May to help promote Russian literature abroad.

Shishkin turned down the offer, saying he could not represent a state with whose politics he categorically disagreed, the *RIA Novosti* news agency said.

"We are surprised. We regret this," said Vladimir Grigoryev, deputy head of the Federal Agency for Press and Mass Communications (RosPechat).

"This is what happens when a Russian writer is separated from the motherland for so long. There are many examples in history," he added.

In a letter quoted by Britain's *Guardian* newspaper, Shishkin said he could not represent Russia at the book fair as "power has been seized by a corrupt, criminal regime".

He described the state as a "pyramid of thieves" and

elections as a "farce", and condemned "laws that are returning everyone to the Middle Ages". He said he wanted to represent "another Russia, my Russia".

Shishkin has lived in Switzerland since 1995 but has won numerous Russian literary prizes with novels penned in Russian, although he has also on occasion written in German.

His novel *The Taking of Izmail* won the Russian Booker prize in 2000 while his more recent novels *Maidenhair* and *The Letter Book* have also won awards in Russia.

In separate comments to the Moscow Echo Radio, Grigoryev brushed off the attack on Vladimir Putin's Russia, which he blamed on the author's foreign publishers.

"I fear that Mikhail has fallen into temptation under pressure of the PR-department of an English publisher who want to create a certain image before his book comes out. I can only regret that one of the most talented modern authors is starting to give into political vanity. And, as we all know, the muse does not tolerate vanity."

BookExpo America is due to be held in New York in late May. — AFP



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# Phyto's Cooking Adventure

Phyto cuts through culture to reveal life's true taste

## Brunch with flavours sandwiched between Asia and Europe

### Main Tips

Don't defrost the sausages using a microwave. You can also cook the meatballs in tomato sauce; it works very well. You can use any type of pickle for the sandwich filling, but sweet varieties are better.


**QUAFFING QUOTE**  
"Sandwich every bit of criticism between two layers of praise." — Mary Kay Ash (founder of Mary Kay Cosmetics)

**NEXT WEEK**  
Sweet desserts from Vietnam

### Red Wine

**Famille Castel Cabernet Sauvignon 2010**

If your cheese is hard and your meat juicy, pop the cork on this silky ode to sun-ripened fruit from the dark, savage heart of French winemaking country.



Ks 12,100

Score BOX

8/10

### White Wine

**Ta Ku Sauvignon Blanc 2011**

Despite the label offering a typically unimaginative, wine-speak description of aroma and palate, this Kiwi white was surprisingly distinct and enjoyable.



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7/10

THIS recipe represents a fusion of French bread and Vietnamese flavours, in which a French-style baguette is served with meat, fresh herbs and pickles. The first time I saw such a sandwich it seemed a bit strange to me, but I tried it anyway. It inspired me to experiment with a wide variety of fillings.

The resulting quick sandwiches with Asian flavors have become some of my favourite lunches. I especially love sandwiches made with balachaung (fried dried shrimp) on Turkish bread, but I also need more options to get me through the week.

Traditionally these sandwiches are served with grilled lemongrass pork, paté, or Vietnamese-style ham or sausage. If you really want to try the authentic version, you can use the grilled lemongrass pork and pork patty recipes previously published in *The Myanmar Times* (March 4-10).

For the versions below I use spicy chicken sausages, and chicken or pork meatballs. It's perfect for Sunday brunch, when you want to do less cooking and more relaxing.



Pic: Phyto

**Vietnamese baguette sandwich**  
**INGREDIENTS**  
(4 servings)  
2 baguettes  
2 cups of carrots and white radish pickles (See *The Myanmar Times* March 4-10)  
8 spicy chicken sausages (grilled or fried)  
1 small cucumber (sliced lengthwise)  
1 bunch of coriander  
1 bunch of mint  
1 teaspoon of fish sauce  
3 cloves of garlic  
4 tablespoons of mayonnaise

**PREPARATION**  
Thaw the spicy chicken sausages on the kitchen counter (do not defrost them in the microwave). Poke a few slits in the sausages and fry them in a nonstick frying pan over medium-low heat until they are cooked through. Cover the pan with a lid and turn them every 2-3 minutes. (I used spicy chicken sausages from Quarto Products and didn't add any oil to the pan). Remove the sausages from the pan and place

them on kitchen paper for a few minutes to absorb the excess oil. Then cover them with aluminium foil.  
Mix the mayonnaise and crushed garlic in a bowl and set aside. Drain the pickles well and set aside. Mix the fish sauce with the coriander and mint leaves in a small bowl and set aside. Wash the cucumber, drain well and slice lengthwise.  
Assemble the sandwich by cutting the baguette into three pieces, and then cutting each piece in

half lengthwise. Place the pickles, cucumber, spicy chicken sausage slices, garlic mayonnaise, and the coriander and mint leaf mixture in between.

**Vietnamese baguette sandwich with meatballs**  
**INGREDIENTS**  
300g of chicken or pork mince  
1 tablespoon of cabbage (finely shredded)  
¼ teaspoons of ginger (finely grated)  
¼ teaspoons of chives (finely chopped)  
½ teaspoons of white pepper  
1 teaspoon of Kikkoman soy sauce  
½ teaspoon of salt  
2 tablespoons of vegetable oil

**PREPARATION**  
Pat dry the mince and mix all the ingredients in one bowl. Form the mixture into meatballs and store in the refrigerator for 30 minutes.  
Heat oil in a frying pan over medium-low heat, and fry the meatballs until they are cooked. Cover with a lid and toss frequently.  
Assemble the sandwich as in the above recipe, using the meatballs instead of spicy chicken sausage. Serve with mustard and tomato sauce.  
If you prefer, insert a bit of fried, dried pork fat for more crunchiness.

## RESTAURANT REVIEW

### Where the west wind ruffles the dipping sauce

IMAGINE, if you will, a place gently caressed by fructifying winds from the west, where people can gather with their friends alongside a placid lake for morning mohinga (K800).

If there's nowhere else to be, and no pressure to depart, it's possible to stay at Zephyr for hours, talking with your friends while the kids run around like hyperactive hummingbirds on the playground, which is highly visible from the outdoor dining area.

After awhile you start getting hungry again, so you order a few choices from the snack menu, perhaps prawn rolls (K1000), vegetable tempura (K2000) and dried venison (K1400).

The venison, you think, would be a good snack to eat while drinking beer, but it's only 11am. Then again, why wait? In our post-information age of zillion-way communication, are we not, in a profound way, everywhere on the globe at once? It's always drinking time somewhere! And besides, the locals at the next table have been pounding cans of Myanmar beer since 9:30am, so why not join them?

The day plods on, but you're having such an amazing time catching up with your amazingly interesting friends and watching the

kids wear themselves out on the swing-set and the freaky giant-duck-on-a-spring ride that you harbour no thoughts of departing

from this oasis, where the sun glints on the green lake-water and the gentle breeze sends unanchored napkins fluttering across the lawn.

Lunch? Asian and European options abound, from sweet and sour pork (K4000), chicken kung poo (K5500) and deep fried fish Hong Kong style (K4700), to fish and chips (K5500) and pepper-steak pork (K5800).

By now it's mid-afternoon. It's been a long day and the kids are cranky, bursting into tears at the slightest provocation. But surely you have time for coffee. On offer are cappuccino (K1750), café latte (K2200), coffee berry icy (K1800) and much more.

Finally it's time to go. The bill comes, and the total is

a bit higher than expected but not too terrifying. (There was also that annoying K300 fee you had to pay just the enter the garden where the restaurant is located.) The food was not great but not terrible, so the overall value for money is also pretty average.

Service? Also passable — the waiters were reasonably attentive, but you did have to ask three times before someone delivered sufficient amounts of dipping sauce for the vegetable tempura.

Overall you're fairly satisfied, the big draw being the chance to chat with friends in a relaxing, picturesque atmosphere where the west wind wafts across waters of Inya Lake.



### Zephyr Coffee and Restaurant

Sein Lann So Pyay Garden, Inya Road (near Pyay Road), Kamaryut township, Yangon

Food:	6
Drink:	7
Atmosphere:	8
Service:	7
X Factor:	7
Value for money:	6

Score BOX

7/10





**Model @**  
Sunkist Trade  
Launch Ceremony



**Mr Fumio Otani @** Toshiba  
New Product Launch



**U Tun Win @**  
Panasonic New  
Product Launch



**Ms Yasuko Okuda**  
@ Toshiba New  
Product Launch



**U Win Naing @**  
Panasonic New  
Product Launch



**Mr Mitsuki**  
**Nakamura @**  
Toshiba New  
Product Launch



**Ma Hlaing**  
**Hlaing Win @**  
Camus Wine  
and Spirits  
Tasting  
Dinner



**Mr Arif Golmekisz, H E Murat Yavuz Ates and U Zaw**  
**Aye Maung @** Horizon International School Year End  
Ceremony



**Guests @** Charity Flea Market



**Ko Wai Lin @** Pond's  
Promotional Sale



**Ko Thi Ha @** Panasonic  
New Product Launch



**Tin Moe**  
**Lwin @**  
Hi-Q Product  
Launch



**Awn**  
**Seng**  
@  
'Textiles  
of the Two  
Lands'  
Fashion  
Show

**Zin Mar Htun**  
@ Pond's  
Promotional Sale



**Kaung**  
**Htet**  
**Zaw @**  
Hi-Q Product  
Launch




**Theint Theint @**  
Sunkist Trade Launch  
Ceremony



**Eaint**  
**Chit @**  
Panasonic  
New Product  
Launch




**May Shin, Mr Russell and Yone Yone @** Toshiba New Product Launch



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SOCIALITE

WITH NUAM BAWI



WITH Myanmar striving for democracy, and therefore not quite as much of a leprotic pariah state as in the past, more and more foreign companies are keen to introduce their wares to the local market. This has made Socialite busier than ever with product launch ceremonies, and among them throughout the week were events by Sunkist Trade at Inya Lake Hotel, Panasonic at Kandawgyi Palace Hotel, Toshiba at Park Royal Hotel and Hi-Q canned fish products at Chatrium Hotel. But the week wasn't only about product launches. Socialite's journey also included Horizon International School's year-end ceremony, held at its Po Sein Campus in Thaketa township on March 6. The following day she nosed and sipped, nosed and sipped, nosed and sipped at the Camus wine and spirits tasting dinner at Governor's Residence. On March 9, she enjoyed shopping at the Charity Flea Market organised by the Women of ASEAN in Yangon, held at Horizon International School, and afterward she dropped by "Textiles of the Two Lands", a fabulously frightening fashion show at Chatrium Hotel. She ended her week the next day at the Pond's cosmetic sale at Junction Mawtin.

Ma Chaw Nge Nge Chit @ Camus Wine and Spirits Tasting Dinner



Wint Darli @ 'Textiles of the Two Lands' Fashion Show



Model @ 'Textiles of the Two Lands' Fashion Show



Nan Myat Phyoee Thin @ Pond's Promotional Sale



Nyaung Nyaung and Ayine @ Hi-Q Product Launch



Mr Kitinon and Mr Suwit @ Hi-Q Product Launch



Vendor and customers @ Charity Flea Market



Mr James Marsden and Mr Maxence Goinere @ Camus Wine and Spirits Tasting Dinner



Mr Ronald Lee and Ms Wane Li Jun @ Camus Wine and Spirits Tasting Dinner



Sales girl @ Charity Flea Market



Model @ 'Textiles of the Two Lands' Fashion Show



Aye Myat Thu @ 'Textiles of the Two Lands' Fashion Show

Eain Si @ Sunkist Trade Launch Ceremony

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## DOMESTIC FLIGHT SCHEDULES

Days	Flight	Dep	Arr	Days	Flight	Dep	Arr	Days	Flight	Dep	Arr	Days	Flight	Dep	Arr	Days	Flight	Dep	Arr
YANGON TO NAY PYI TAW				FRI	YJ 211	06:00	07:25	SUN	YJ 892	08:30	10:25	THUR	YJ 891	07:45	10:25	FRI	YJ 891	06:10	09:00
MON	UB-A1	07:45	08:45		YJ 891	06:10	08:15		6T 402	08:45	10:45		6T 401	07:55	10:45		6T 401	06:20	09:20
	UB-B1	11:30	12:30		6T 401	06:20	08:25		K7 223	09:00	11:05		W9 141	08:05	11:05		K7 242	06:45	09:00
	UB-C1	16:00	17:00		K7 222	06:30	08:40		Y5 132	09:30	10:30		YJ 141/W97141	08:20	11:20		YJ 141/W97141	06:45	09:00
	6T 211C	18:30	19:25		YJ 001	07:00	07:55		YJ 002	11:00	11:55		W9 143	08:20	11:10		6T 403	07:00	09:30
TUE	UB-A1	07:45	08:45	SAT	6T 403	07:00	08:25	MON	YJ 212	11:00	12:25	FRI	YJ 891	07:45	10:25	SAT	YJ 911	06:00	08:15
	UB-B1	11:30	12:30		Y5 131	08:00	09:00		6T 502	16:25	18:35		6T 401	07:55	10:45		YJ 891	06:10	09:00
	UB-C1	16:00	17:00		YJ 751/W97751	11:00	12:55		K7 623	16:40	18:05		YJ 141/W97141	08:20	11:20		6T 401	06:20	09:20
					K7 824	13:00	14:25		8M 6604	17:20	18:30		6T 502	18:35	19:55		K7 224	14:15	15:30
WED	UB-A1	07:45	08:45	SAT	6T 501	14:00	16:05	MON	YJ 752/W97752	17:50	19:15	THUR	YJ 891	07:45	10:25	SAT	YJ 911	06:00	08:15
	UB-B1	11:30	12:30		YJ 891	06:10	08:15		6T 401	07:55	10:45		YJ 891	06:10	09:00		6T 401	06:20	09:20
	6T 211	13:00	13:55		6T 341	06:30	07:55		K7 222	06:30	08:40		YJ 141/W97141	08:20	11:20		K7 224	06:45	09:00
	UB-C1	16:00	17:00		K7 222	06:30	08:40		YJ 001	07:00	07:55		6T 403	07:00	08:25		YJ 761	11:00	12:10
THUR	UB-A1	07:45	08:45	SAT	K7 244	06:45	08:10	MON	YJ 001	07:00	07:55	FRI	YJ 891	07:45	10:25	SAT	K7 826	12:30	13:45
	UB-B1	11:30	12:30		YJ 001	07:00	07:55		Y5 131	08:00	09:00		YJ 141/W97141	08:20	11:20		K7 224	14:15	15:30
	UB-C1	16:00	17:00		Y5 131	08:00	09:00		YJ 761	11:00	12:55		6T 501	14:45	15:45		6T 501	14:45	15:55
					YJ 601/W97601	11:15	12:40		6T 501	14:00	16:05		YJ 751/W97751	11:00	12:10		6T 501	14:00	15:10
FRI	UB-A1	07:45	08:45	SAT	6T 501	14:45	16:45	MON	YJ 211	11:00	12:25	THUR	YJ 891	07:45	10:25	SAT	YJ 911	06:00	08:15
	UB-B1	11:30	12:30		YJ 891	06:10	08:15		YJ 891	06:10	07:30		6T 401	07:55	10:45		YJ 891	06:10	09:00
	UB-C1	16:00	17:00		6T 401	06:20	08:25		W9 109	14:00	16:40		6T 401	06:20	09:20		6T 401	06:20	09:20
					6T 501	14:00	16:55		6T 501	14:00	16:55		6T 502	17:50	19:10		K7 224	14:15	15:30
SAT	UB-A1	08:00	09:00	SAT	K7 222	06:30	08:40	MON	W9 205	06:00	07:20	THUR	YJ 891	07:45	10:25	SAT	YJ 911	06:00	08:15
	UB-A1	15:30	16:30		YJ 001	07:00	07:55		W9 141	06:00	08:10		YJ 891	06:10	09:00		6T 401	06:20	09:20
					YJ 001	07:00	07:55		YJ 891	06:10	07:30		6T 401	07:55	10:45		YJ 891	06:10	09:00
					Y5 131	08:00	09:00		6T 403	06:15	07:35		6T 403	06:15	07:35		6T 403	06:15	07:35
SUN	UB-A1	15:30	16:30	SAT	6T 401	06:20	07:40	MON	6T 401	06:20	07:40	THUR	YJ 891	07:45	10:25	SAT	6T 403	07:00	08:25
					K7 222	06:30	07:50		6T 401	06:20	07:40		6T 403	06:15	07:35		6T 403	07:00	08:25
					K7 222	06:30	07:50		6T 401	06:20	07:40		6T 403	06:15	07:35		6T 403	07:00	08:25
					6T 501	14:00	16:55		6T 401	06:20	07:40		6T 403	06:15	07:35		6T 403	07:00	08:25
MON	UB-A2	09:15	10:15	SAT	W9 143	06:45	08:05	MON	W9 143	06:45	08:05	THUR	YJ 891	07:45	10:25	SAT	6T 403	07:00	08:25
	UB-B2	13:00	14:00		YJ 141/W97141	06:45	08:05		YJ 141/W97141	06:45	08:05		YJ 141/W97141	06:45	08:05		6T 403	07:00	08:25
	UB-C2	17:30	18:30		YJ 911	09:15	10:35		YJ 911	09:15	10:35		YJ 911	09:15	10:35		6T 403	07:00	08:25
	6T 612	19:45	20:40		YJ 791	14:30	17:10		6T 501	14:30	17:10		6T 501	14:30	17:10		6T 403	07:00	08:25
TUE	UB-A2	09:15	10:15	SAT	6T 501	14:30	17:10	MON	W9 129	15:30	18:10	THUR	YJ 891	07:45	10:25	SAT	6T 501	14:30	17:10
	UB-B2	13:00	14:00		W9 205	06:00	07:20		W9 205	06:00	07:20		W9 205	06:00	07:20		6T 501	14:30	17:10
	UB-C2	17:30	18:30		YJ 891	06:10	07:30		YJ 891	06:10	07:30		YJ 891	06:10	07:30		6T 501	14:30	17:10
					6T 401	06:20	07:40		6T 401	06:20	07:40		6T 401	06:20	07:40		6T 501	14:30	17:10
WED	UB-A2	09:15	10:15	SAT	W9 141	06:30	07:50	MON	W9 141	06:30	07:50	THUR	YJ 891	07:45	10:25	SAT	6T 501	14:30	17:10
	UB-B2	13:00	14:00		K7 222	06:30	07:50		K7 222	06:30	07:50		K7 222	06:30	07:50		6T 501	14:30	17:10
	UB-C2	17:30	18:30		6T 403	06:45	08:05		6T 403	06:45	08:05		6T 403	06:45	08:05		6T 501	14:30	17:10
					YJ 141/W97141	06:45	08:05		YJ 141/W97141	06:45	08:05		YJ 141/W97141	06:45	08:05		6T 501	14:30	17:10
THUR	UB-A2	09:15	10:15	SAT	W9 504	11:00	13:55	MON	W9 504	11:00	13:55	THUR	YJ 891	07:45	10:25	SAT	6T 501	14:30	17:10
	UB-B2	13:00	14:00		YJ 201	12:00	14:50		YJ 201	12:00	14:50		YJ 201	12:00	14:50		6T 501	14:30	17:10
	UB-C2	17:30	18:30		K7 622	12:00	14:55		K7 622	12:00	14:55		K7 622	12:00	14:55		6T 501	14:30	17:10
					W9 251	11:30	14:25		W9 251	11:30	14:25		W9 251	11:30	14:25		6T 501	14:30	17:10
FRI	UB-A2	09:15	10:15	SAT	W9 143	06:45	08:05	MON	W9 143	06:45	08:05	THUR	YJ 891	07:45	10:25	SAT	6T 501	14:30	17:10
	UB-B2	13:00	14:00		K7 242	06:45	08:05		K7 242	06:45	08:05		K7 242	06:45	08:05		6T 501	14:30	17:10
	UB-C2	17:30	18:30		YJ 141/W97141	06:45	08:05		YJ 141/W97141	06:45	08:05		YJ 141/W97141	06:45	08:05		6T 501	14:30	17:10
					YJ 911	09:15	10:35		YJ 911	09:15	10:35		YJ 911	09:15	10:35		6T 501	14:30	17:10
SAT	UB-A2	10:00	11:00	SAT	6T 501	14:30	17:10	MON	W9 129	15:30	18:10	THUR	YJ 891	07:45	10:25	SAT	6T 501	14:30	17:10
	UB-A2	17:00	18:00		W9 129	15:30	18:10		W9 129	15:30	18:10		W9 129	15:30	18:10		6T 501	14:30	17:10
					6T 401	06:20	07:40		6T 401	06:20	07:40		6T 401	06:20	07:40		6T 501	14:30	17:10
					K7 222	06:30	07:50		K7 222	06:30	07:50		K7 222	06:30	07:50		6T 501	14:30	17:10
SUN	UB-A2	17:00	18:00	SAT	W9 205	06:00	08:10	MON	W9 205	06:00	08:10	THUR	YJ 891	07:45	10:25	SAT	6T 501	14:30	17:10
					YJ 891	06:10	07:30		YJ 891	06:10	07:30		YJ 891	06:10	07:30		6T 501	14:30	17:10
					6T 401	06:20	07:40		6T 401	06:20	07:40		6T 401	06:20	07:40		6T 501	14:30	17:10
					K7 222	06:30	07:50		K7 222	06:30	07:50		K7 222	06:30	07:50		6T 501	14:30	17:10
MON	UB-A2	09:15	10:15	SAT	W9 141	06:30	07:50	MON	W9 141	06:30	07:50	THUR	YJ 891	07:45	10:25	SAT	6T 501	14:30	17:10
	UB-B2	13:00	14:00		K7 242	06:45	08:05		K7 242	06:45	08:05		K7 242	06:45	08:05		6T 501	14:30	17:10
	UB-C2	17:30	18:30		YJ 141/W97141	06:45	08:05		YJ 141/W97141	06:45	08:05		YJ 141/W97141	06:45	08:05		6T 501	14:30	17:10
					YJ 911	09:15	10:35		YJ 911	09:15	10:35		YJ 911	09:15	10:35		6T 501	14:30	17:10
TUE	UB-A2	09:15	10:15	SAT	6T 501	14:30	17:10	MON	W9 129	15:30	18:10	THUR	YJ 891	07:45	10:25	SAT	6T 501	14:30	17:10
	UB-B2	13:00	14:00		W9 129	15:30	18:10		W9 129	15:30	18:10		W9 129	15:30	18:10		6T 501	14:30	17:10
	UB-C2	17:30	18:30		6T 401	06:20	07:40		6T 401	06:20	07:40		6T 401	06:20	07:40		6T 501	14:30	17:10
					K7 222	06:30	07:50		K7 222	06:30	07:50		K7 222	06:30	07:50		6T 501	14:30	17:10
WED	UB-A2	09:15	10:15	SAT	W9 141	06:30	07:50	MON	W9 141	06:30	07:50	THUR	YJ 891	07:45	10:25	SAT	6T 501	14:30	17:10
	UB-B2	13:00	14:00		K7 242	06:45	08:05		K7 242	06:45	08:05		K7 242	06:45	08:05		6T 501	14:30	17:10
	UB-C2	17:30	18:30		YJ 141/W97141	06:45	08:05		YJ 141/W97141	06:45	08:05		YJ 141/W97141	06:45	08:05		6T 501	14:30	17:10
					YJ 911	09:15	10:35		YJ 911	09:15	10:35		YJ 911	09:15	10:35		6T 501	14:30	17:10
THUR	UB-A2	09:15	10:15	SAT	6T 501	14:30	17:10	MON	W9 129	15:30	18:10	THUR	YJ 891	07:45	10:25	SAT	6T 501	14:30	17:10
	UB-B2	13:00	14:00		W9 129	15:30	18:10		W9 129	15:30	18:10		W9 129	15:30	18:10		6T 501	14:30	17:10
	UB-C2	17:30	18:30		6T 401	06:20	07:40		6T 401	06:20	07:40		6T 401	06:20	07:40		6T 501	14:30	17:10
					K7 222	06:30	07:50		K7 222										





The famous pyramids of Gizeh, Egypt. Pic: Ricardo Liberato

# Egypt, Tunisia strive to woo back tourists

By Celine Le Prioux

BERLIN – Two years after the Arab Spring uprisings, Tunisia and Egypt are trying to win back holidaymakers in a lifeblood sector for both countries, which are gripped by renewed political crisis.

Leading tourism officials from Tunisia and Egypt were keen to stress at the ITB Berlin tourism fair, which closed on March 10, that their destinations are safe and outlined plans for wooing back visitors.

Egyptian Tourism Minister Hisham Zaazou admitted his stated goal to boost the number of tourists back up to almost the pre-Arab Spring level in 2010 of 14.7 million was ambitious given that it fell to 11.5 million last year.

“My target at least is to reach 14 million by the end of 2013. Maybe I have high hopes but I’m working very hard,” he told a news conference.

Tunisia is also aiming high and, as in Egypt, tourism plays a key role in the economy of the country, beset by tensions and uncertainty sparked by the assassination last month of a leftist politician.

Tourism accounts for a sixth of the workforce in Tunisia, which, according to the director general of the National Tourism Office

Habib Ammar, aims to have welcomed 7 million tourists by the end of 2013 as in 2010 – an increase of 1 million from current levels.

Nearly 12 million people rely directly or indirectly on the tourism industry in Egypt, where unrest has contributed to a painful economic crisis since 2011 when a popular uprising ousted long-time president Hosni Mubarak.

“We are in a political transition. It doesn’t mean that we are not going forward. We are a welcoming nation,” Zaazou stressed.

To promote Egypt as a tourism destination and counter the image conjured up by international headlines, the minister plans to set up giant screens in European cities projecting live webcam pictures from venues such as the Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh or the ancient temple city of Luxor.

“We notice if Egypt is not in the media the figures go back very quickly, meaning that the demand for Egypt is there,” Zaazou said, but he added that the capital Cairo was particularly suffering.

Another initiative aims to support small businesses reliant on tourism, he said.

“For instance, we have now a program for the caleche owners to feed the horses because they don’t have

enough money,” Zaazou said, adding the scheme would start next month in Luxor.

At the end of February Luxor’s tourism industry faced a blow when a hot-air balloon crashed killing 19 tourists.

“Once we have the investigation out, we will see the reasons why that happened. And for sure, if there’s a technical reason behind it we will avoid it in the future,” Zaazou said.

Meanwhile, Tunisia will launch a publicity campaign on radio, internet and posters in its leading markets next month stressing the new freedom that can be enjoyed in the country.

“Tunisia is safe but we are in the process of learning democracy,” Afif Kchouk from the Tunisian Federation of Hotels told reporters.

Tunisia has been mired in political crisis since Chokri Belaid, a vocal critic of the Islamist-led government, was gunned down outside his home in Tunis on February 6.

But Ammar played down its impact on tourism, stressing the first half of the year was low season for the country, known for its beaches, and was optimistic for the future due to plans to diversify by promoting its cultural heritage, desert trips or thalassotherapy. – AFP

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<b>Air Asia (FD)</b> 33, Alan Pya Pagoda Rd, Ground Flr, Parkroyal Hotel, Yangon. Tel: 251 885, 251 886.	<b>Condor (DE)</b> Unit 10-05, 10 <sup>th</sup> Flr, La Pyayt Wun Plaza, 37, Alanpya Pagoda Rd, Dagon Tsp, Yangon, The Republic of the Union of Myanmar. Tel: + 95 1 -370836 up to 39 [ext : 810]
<b>Air Bagan Ltd.(W9)</b> 56, Shwe Taung Gyar Street, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 513322, 513422, 504888, Fax : 515102	<b>Dragonair (KA)</b> Unit 1107, 11 <sup>th</sup> Flr, Sakura Tower, 339 Bogyoke Aung San Rd, Kyauktada Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 95-1-255322
<b>Air China (CA)</b> Building [2], corner of Pyay Rd and Kaba Aye Pagoda Rd, Hotel Yangon, 8 miles, Yangon, Myanmar. Tel: 666112, 655882.	<b>Malaysia Airlines (MH)</b> 335/357, Bogyoke Aung San Rd, Pabedan Tsp, Yangon. Tel : 387648, 241007 ext : 120, 121, 122 Fax : 241124
<b>Air India</b> 75, Shwe Bon Thar St, Pabedan Tsp, Yangon. Tel : 253597-98, 254758. Fax: 248175	<b>Myanmar Airways International(8M)</b> 08-02, Sakura Tower, 339, Bogyoke Aung San Rd, Kyauktada Tsp, Ygn. Tel : 255260, Fax: 255305
<b>Bangkok Airways (PG)</b> #0305, 3 <sup>rd</sup> Fl, Sakura Tower, 339, Bogyoke Aung San Rd, Kyauktada Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 255122, 255 265, Fax: 255119	

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# Malaysian wins Asia's top literary prize

HONG KONG — Author Tan Twan Eng became the first Malaysian author to win Asia's top literary prize on March 14 for his novel set during the aftermath of the Japanese occupation of Malaya.

Tan won the US\$30,000 Man Asian Literary Prize with *The Garden of Evening Mists*, beating four other shortlisted books.

Literary critic and journalist Maya Jaggi led the judging panel and said Tan's novel "revisits the traumatic aftermath of the Japanese occupation of Malaya, and the post-war insurgency against British rule, with stylistic poise and probing intelligence".

*The Garden of Evening Mists*, which was also shortlisted for the 2012 Booker prize, follows a young law graduate who discovers the only Japanese garden in Malaya and its secretive owner and creator.

"The novel becomes a profound exploration of

personal and national honour; guilt and complicity; what it means to atone; and what it takes to forgive," said the judging panel that also included Vietnamese-American novelist Monique Truong and novelist Vikram Chandra.

**'The novel becomes a profound exploration of personal and national honour.'**

"You're being taken in different directions and there's an atmosphere of doubt and mystery," said Jaggi of Tan's novel. "And that's deliberate, it's partly about the coexistence

of cultural refinement and artistry and terrible barbarity."

Tan, born in 1972 in Penang, worked as lawyer in Kuala Lumpur and also has a first-dan ranking in aikido. His first novel, *The Gift of Rain*, was longlisted for the Man Booker Prize in 2007.

"This comes as a huge shock," Tan said at a black tie dinner in Hong Kong where the announcement was made. "It's such a strong list this year that I am speechless."

The book's central metaphor of the Japanese garden was partly inspired by a chance meeting with the gardener for the emperor of Japan, he said.

"I've always been interested in that period of history and I've always wanted to explore all the things which I felt weren't explored enough by other people," he said of its setting in the aftermath of Japanese occupation, an issue that continues to resonate in Asia.

Jaggi said the ambitious scope and structure of Tan's novel elevated it above the others on a shortlist that included Indian author Jeet Thayil's *Narcopolis* and *The Briefcase* by Japanese writer Hiromi Kawakami.

*Silent House*, an early work from Turkish writer and 2006



Malaysian author Tan Twan Eng poses for a photo after winning the Man Asian Literary Prize for his novel 'The Garden of Evening Mists' in Hong Kong on March 14. Pic: AFP

Nobel Prize in Literature winner Orhan Pamuk, also made the 2012 shortlist despite being first published nearly 30 years ago. It qualified for the prize because it appeared in English for the first time in 2012.

China, which has seen three Man Asian Literary Prize winners since the prize was first awarded in 2007,

did not have any writers on this year's shortlist.

It is the second time the prize has been won by a novel originally written in English. All previous winners, except *Ilustrado* by Miguel Syjuco (2008), won as English translations.

The prize, which is looking for a new sponsor with London-based Man Group

ending its funding after this edition of the event, is given to the best novel by an Asian writer, either written in English or translated into English.

Last year's winner was South Korean author Kyung-Sook Shin for her novel *Please Look After Mom*, which has gone on to sell more than two million copies. — AFP

## Events Flash

### SIR concert

The four bands that constitute rock collective Skulls in Ribcage (SIR) — Wanted, Idiots, Reason and Big Bag — will perform at People's Square in Yangon on March 22, starting at 6pm. Tickets are K6000 each.

### Hip-hop concert

A hip-hop concert will be held at Myaw Sin Kyun in Kandawgyi Park, Yangon, on March 23, starting at 5pm. Performers will include J-Me, Jauk Jat, Bunny Phyo, Ar-T and Mi Sandy. Tickets are K5500 each.

### Hinnthar show

Hinnthar Art Gallery (42A Inya Myaing Road, Bahan township) is celebrating its 12<sup>th</sup> anniversary from February 23 to March 23, with a group exhibition featuring the work of Lun Gywe, Lun Mya Mya, Myint Aung and 13 other artists.

### 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.

### Ar-T live

Popular singer Ar-T will launch his new album *Cho Chin* (Candy) with a live concert at Junction Square shopping centre's outdoor area on March 24, from 4pm to 8pm. On March 26 he will play live at Diamond Plaza in Mandalay.

### Bridal fair

Getting hitched? Then hightail it to Bridal Fair 2013 at Kandawgyi Palace Hotel in Yangon on March 26, starting at 3:30pm. Wedding fashions and services will be showcased in a garden atmosphere.

### Local comedians

Local comedian groups Mya Ponnamar and Thee Lay Thee will perform a concert under the title Pyi Thu A Nyeint Tha Bin at People's Park in Yangon on March 27 at 6pm. Tickets cost K6000, K15,000 and K20,000.

### Soe Thu live

Singer-turned-actor Soe Thu will perform live at Minder Ground (U Wizara Road, Kamaryut township) on March 30, starting at 4pm. Entry is free.

### Baji Aung Soe

An exhibition in memory of artist Baji Aung Soe (1924-1990) will be held at Pansodan Gallery (286 Pansodan Street, First Floor, Kyauktada township) from March 22 to 25. Works of art by Baji Aung Soe, along with other 50 artists, will be on view.

### 50<sup>th</sup> Street live

Jazz band Great Blessings plays 50<sup>th</sup> Street Bar on Wednesday night, while Friendship Band belts out classic rock tunes on Fridays.

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)

Careless mistakes at work might dampen your spirits and create tension. Negativity at home will take some time to overcome. Lies and broken promises could put valued friendships at risk this week. You should live according to your principles, but try not to let concerns over personal safety cause you to be inflexible. Your love life will improve with golden favour.

### Pisces

(Feb 19 - Mar 20)

Try to streamline your schedule a little so that you can get down to important work you need to complete. An atmosphere of quiet pessimism and stubborn work colleagues will be among the challenges to overcome this week. All things are impermanent: Deal with this, and it will make life easier to digest. Thoughts of love will lead to self-examination; try not to be too critical.

### Aries

(March 21 - April 19)

Fear and anxiety are natural responses to difficulty, and you must strive to overcome them. Faith in yourself is the greatest indicator of achievement. Spiritual restlessness will leave you feeling tired, and social incompatibility will give you a chance to change. Avoid the temptation to read too closely into small details. Love means favouring each other with understanding.

### Taurus

(April 20 - May 20)

Seize opportunities to expand your social circle; getting out and about a little more is just what you need right now. Keeping a lid on your anger might not always be possible this week. Keep your observations sharp to refute those in opposition to you. Do your best to generate a little warmth in romantic matters, and enjoy the atmosphere that surrounds you.

### Gemini

(May 21 - June 20)

Welcome old friends who greet you with new ideas, but try not to get sucked into other people's schemes just because you like them. The time is right for you to restore your affairs to a happier state, particularly where your love life is concerned. Relax and make an effort to be more gregarious in the development of emotional affairs.

### Cancer

(June 22 - July 22)

Never get excited at the thought of conquests. Gain respect by making your friends see you as an equal. Your main task this week is to avoid being passive-aggressive and to refrain from causing conflict with your staunchly self-reliant point of view. You might

have to endure some heated arguments this week. Your heart will be showered with love.

### Leo

(July 23 - Aug 22)

You must learn to be content to live one day at a time and deal with problems as they arise. On the bright side, you will have greater clarity in matters of love. Communication might be problematic, especially if you fall into the bad habit of believing everything you hear. Your personal life will move along quietly, and you have some loving moments to look forward to.

### Virgo

(Aug 23 - Sept 22)

Optimism and imagination will be helpful this week, especially in eschewing the pursuit of unrealistic dreams in favour of making your life the best it can be right now. Self-help and self-control are your main strengths, and together they constitute a powerful way to remain energetic and to keep your mind free from fear and worries. Make an effort to learn more about the language of love.

### Libra

(Sept 23 - Oct 22)

Taking time to understand the reasons behind recent conflicts in your social relations will help you develop a new, positive outlook that will increase your compatibility with others. Seek out an extroverted person in a new social situation, to help adjust your ways of observation. Finding true love depends on the integrity of your heart.

### Scorpio

(Oct 23 - Nov 21)

By confronting people with honesty, you can inspire them to grow away from relying on negative expressions. Seek a fresh perspective and pursue lines of inquiry that will provide clues to the hidden dynamics of any pattern. Focus on purity in your love life and you will find peace and respect.

### Sagittarius

(Nov 22 - Dec 21)

Time has a way of making the impossible suddenly seem possible, but it can also move possibilities beyond reach if action is not taken quickly enough. Pay attention to your conscience and its role as the best moral sanction at your disposal. Your main task is to make the right decision at the right time for the right challenge. Nurture beauty in your heart.

### Capricorn

(Dec 22 - Jan 19)

As life becomes more and more about amassing wealth and material goods, take care to keep your morale up and maintain your morality. You can learn more from what does not work than from what does. Allow pleasant memories to flood your mind before you fall asleep and prepare your thoughts in advance after sleeping hours. Learn to love each other and to dwell among the richness of beauty.

For a personal reading contact Aung Myin Kyaw, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, 113, Thamaing Bayan Road, Tamwe Township, Yangon. Tel: 0973135632, Email: williameast@gmail.com



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**A SMALL** sculpture of General Aung San, carved thoroughly in brass, represents an image of Myanmar Nationalist who brought Burma's independence back from British colonial rule. It is an art sculpted for those who love to keep a replica of Boyoke Aung San as a treasure in their surroundings and for those willing to take it abroad as present, or as a collection. The pieces are available at National League for Democracy (Head quarter), Bahan, Pls call: 09-430-88645, 09-430-88645.

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## Property

### Housing for Rent

(1) **PAN SOE TAN ST** , Condo, 1250 Sqft, 2 BM, 1760 USD per month. (2) **Near Park Royal Hotel**, (for office), 1200 Sqft, Hall type, 850 USD per month. (3) **Than Lwin St** , 1250 Sqft , 2 RC, 3 MBR, 5882 USD. (4) **Near Sedona Hotel**, 2 RC, 5 MBR, 5882 USD (5) **Near Inyar Lake**, 2 RC, 3 MBR, 3529 USD (6) **Inya Rd**, 2 RC, 3 MBR. 5882 USD. Ph: 09-4921 4276, 09-421177 105.

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**THINGANGYUN** Kypwaryay (North), 25 minutes drive to Down Town 40' x 60' 2 RC, 3 MBR, 2 SBR, Ready to stay, 4 AC, 1 Ph Line US\$1000 1 month Allowe 6 months contract. Ph: 09-731-11190 email: m2k 20099@gmail.com

**BAHAN.** (1) Near Singapore Embassy, (60' x 90'), 4MBR, 2RC, 7000 USD. (2) **Golden Valley**, near USA Embassy, (100' x 100'), 8BR, 2RC + 1RC, negotiate. **Near Chatrium Hotel**, Po Sein St, (50' x 70'), 1MBR, 1 1/2 RC, 2400 USD. Ph: 09-421-77105

**OFFICE** Space Available @ Orchid City Hall Hotel Ground Floor USD 5.00 (1 sqft) 2nd Floor & 9th Floor USD 3.00 (1 sqft) Please contacts at 09-507-7594, 09-505-3820.

(1) **SHWEHINTHAR Condo**, 6 1/2 miles, 2000 sqft, f.f. US\$ 4000 (2) **Moe Myat San Condo**, Bahan Off New University Ave Rd, f.f. 25 Lakhs. (3) **Shwe Than Lwin Condo**, 3600 sqft, f.f. US\$ 2500 call maureen: 09-518-8320

(1) **KAMAYUT, Diamond Condo**, Bldg B, Rm (6-01), Corner of Pyay Rd & Nanataw Rd, (1550') (2) **Ahlonge**, 54 G Flr, Thake Pan St, Sin Min Ward, (25' x 50') Ph: 09-860-0126, 01-687-878.

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(1) **NEAR EAST POINT** Shopping Mall (10580 USD) (273 Sqm) 3 Storey, 2 MBR (2) **Near Yankin Centre** (Good for office), U Chit Mg St, (364 Sqm) 4 storey, hall type, 5300 USD (3) **Apartment**, Near Kandaw gyi Hotel 1500 USD, (walking 20 minutes) (273 Sqm) all furnish, (4) **United Condo**, (River View Side) 2000 USD (227 Sqm) 3MBR, fully furnish 09-4201-14749, 09-4921-4276..

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## Employment

### Ingo Positions

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erredeshommes(Tdh-L), anintlSwissorganisation working to assist children & families, wishes to appoint a **social worker** to join our child reintegration team. The team is based in Yangon : 3 years' full-time work experience in the field of child protection, child rights & social work with children & families. Proven knowledge and experience of community mobilisation work. Excellent communication skills with children & adults. Bachelor's degree. Good working knowledge of Myanmar languages. Diploma in social work an advantage. Pls submit a CV giving details of education, training and work experience plus contact information & 2 referees & include a personal statement indicating why they wish to work in the field of child protection and reintegration. Applications must be sent by email only to: U Nyo Htun, Administrator, the Foundation Terre des hommes-Lausanne Email: nyohtun09@gmail.com Add: House N° 32 (N1), Avenue 32, 6½ Mile, Pyay Rd, Hlaing, Yangon. Ph: +95 01 525 881, +95 097 321 4890. Closing date: 5th April 2013

**INTERNATIONAL NGO / MAM** is seeking (1) **Lab Technician** for Thazin clinic, Hlaing Thar Yar : University degree

(B.P.S.C or B.Med.Tech) or Diploma in Paramedical Sciences / Medical Technology. Previous work experience preferable. Basic command of English. (2) **Lab Technician** for TUN clinic, Shwe Pyi Thar : University degree (B.P.S.C or B.Med.Tech) or Diploma in Paramedical Sciences / Medical Technology. Previous work experience preferable. Basic command of English. For more information pls contact : 544537, No 32 (A/1), Kokkine Swimming Club Lane Saya San Rd, Bahan, or email: mamya.offmng@gmail.com Closing Date: 22nd March 2013

**INTERNATIONAL (SI)** is seeking **Deputy Administrative & Finance Manager** in Yangon (with Frequently travel to Bhamo Base) : University level or equivalent in accounting / Management / administration. Previous experience 1 years in a similar position with NGO. Excellent knowledge of word & excel. Fluent in English & Myanmar. Pls submit application (CV, cover letter, references) by email to : hr.solidarites.mm@gmail.com, recruitment@solidarites-myanmar.org. Closing date : 31 March 2013.

**SOLIDARITES Int'l (SI)** is seeking **Logistics Supervisor** FUSO, Follow Up/Stock Office, Sittwe, Rakhine State. Profile Required: Experience of 5 years at least, in NGO is best. Strong computer skills: excel, word, internet etc. IT skills & telecomunication equipment skills. Experience in stock management. Fluent in English. Pls submit (CV, cover letter, references) to : Moe Moe Myat Aung, Administrative Officer - Solidarites Int'l office : 94, U Outta Ma Rd, Kyaung Teat Lain Qt, Sittwe, or per email: rks.admassist.stw@solidarites-myanmar.org, hr.solidarites.mm@gmail.com

@ gmail.com. Closing date: 22.3.2013

**MYANMAR Red Cross Society** is seeking **HR Officer** 1 Post: Any graduate with HR diploma. 2 years experience in HR management. Computer literate. Effective English language skills. Pls submit a letter of application, CV with relevant documents & 1 passport photo (Cover letter CV documents only need to be sent via email) to mrcshre.cruitment@gmail.com before 22nd March 2013.

**MEDECINS du Monde (MDM)** is seeking (1) **Logistics Assistant** 1 post in Yangon: High school graduate. 1 year experience in logistics/ procurement service. Basic English. Good computer skills. (2) **Data Clerk** 1 Post : Finished High school education. Experience in data collection. 1 year experience as data clerk for medical data collection. Good computer skills. Good command of data bases software. Pls submit CV and a cover letter to MDM Yangon Program Office: 2, Aung Dahma Yeik Tha St, Hlaing, Ph: 664352, 660948. Email: hr.mdm.myanmar@gmail.com

**WE** are looking for (1) **Sale Manager** 1 Post : B.Sc, Chemistry, IC. (2) **Sale Asst Manager** 1 Post : B.Sc, Chemistry, IC. For selling Chemical Raw Material have already experience in this field at least 5 years & well communication skills in both English or Chinese languages. (1) **Sale Manager** 1 Post : B.E Electronic. For selling plastic machinery have already experience in this field at least 5 years & well communication skills in both English or Chinese languages. Pls send C.V, 2 recent photos, photocopies or labor registration card, recommendation from police force, education certificate & other related documents to 10, Parami Rd, Hlaing, Ph: 521002,

521009. Closing date : 29.3.2013.

**MEDECINS du Monde (MDM)** is seeking **Project Manager** (Re-Advertisement) 1 Post: Complete University Degree in any of following specialties: Public Health, Medical science, Social work, Public administration, Program management. 3 years experience in NGO's, possibly in Health programs, out of which 2 years in senior management position. Fluent in English. Pls submit CV & a cover letter to MDM Country Coordination Office, Yangon : 47-B, Po Sein St, Bahan. Ph: 542830, Email: hr.mdm.myanmar@gmail.com

### UN Positions

(1) **FINANCE & Admin Associate** (Yangon) 2 Posts. (2) **Human Resources Associate** (Yangon)-1 Post. (3) **Procurement and Logistics Associate** - (Yangon) 2 Posts. (4) **Township Coordinator** (Field) 6 Posts. (5) **Finance and Admin Assistant** (Field) 6 Posts. (6) **Medical Specialist** (WASH) (Field) 6 Post. (7) **Medical Specialist** (Infrastructure) (Field) 6 Posts. Field positions are meant for Matupi, Mindat and Kanpetlet in Chin State and Phekho, Pindaya and Pinlaung in Shan State. Details are available at www.themimu.info/jobs Or UN-Habitat, No. 6, Natmauk Road, Yangon. Ph: 542910~9 Ext: 116. Email: recruitment@unhabitat-mya.org

**WFP Myanmar** is seeking **Information Technology Asst:** (Grade SC-4) Sittwe 1 post: Minimum secondary school education, preferably supplemented by courses in a field related to Information Technology. A University degree holder with experience in related field will be advantaged. 3 years of progressively responsible job related experience in information technology or telecomunications or information management, such as, WAN/LAN networking, operating systems, telephone services, radio unit, web design, registry or similar. Some experience in client support, such as, a Help Desk or User Support Unit, web design team, telephone maintenance

service, e-marketing group, hotline, or similar. Fluency in English & Myanmar. Pls send applications with UN P-11 form to HR Unit, World Food Programme, 3rd Flr, Inya Lake Hotel, 37 Kaba Aye Pagoda Rd, Yangon, P.O. Box 650 (or) email to Myanmar.vacancy@wfp.org COB 24th March 2013.

**IOM Int'l Organization for Migration** is seeking **Medical Doctor** (Officer) - HIV/ AIDS in Mawlamyine, Mon State : Myanmar national. Advanced university degree in Nursing, Public Health or Medicine (must have a valid license to practice). Strong management skills are necessary, demonstrated by at least 3 years experience managing health related projects for int'l organizations of government and institutions focusing on community health. Sound knowledge of HIV project implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Good written & spoken English & Myanmar (speaking Mon and/or Mon would be an advantage). Computer literacy, including Micro soft Office applications. Pls submit CV to IOM Mission in Myanmar - Yangon 12th Flr, Traders Hotel, 223, Sule Pagoda Rd, Email: iomyangon@iom.int, www.iom.int, Tel: 252560, 254008.

### Embassy

**A FEMALE STAFF** at Residence of Head of Foreign Mission, (Must be presentable, neat and tidy) Age: between 21 to 28 years. Height: Not less than 5 feet 4 inches. Contact Mobile: 09-503-3739 (or) Email: tztztz78@gmail.com

**THE ITALIAN Embassy** in Yangon is seeking **"Administrative Assistant"** 2 posts, requiring previous experience in secretariat & administrative tasks. Very good English & Myanmar knowledge (spoken and written) is required, while Italian will be highly valued. Pls submit by March 19th, 2013 an application form, available at the Embassy & at www.ambyangon.esteri.it, to: Italian Embassy, 3 Inya Myaing Rd, Golden Valley, Bahan, Yangon or to: archivio.yangon@esteri.it Applicants shall be at least 18 years old; in good health;

high-school equivalent degree; Resident in Myanmar for at least 2 years. For queries, call: 01.527100 ext. 0

### Local Position

**SECRETARY** urgently required. Must be fluent in English and able to use MS Office. Also must have good communication skills & excellent telephone manner as well as strong organization and administrative skills. Pls send CV by email to sharl@oxfordbusinessgroup.com

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**ECO APARTMENT** (pearl condo): looking for new project: **Office staffs** - posts, **Receptionist/ front desk** - 8 posts: **Housekeeping manager** - 1 post: **Housekeeping/ Public attendant** - 20 posts: **Guest relation officer** - 2 posts, **Sales Asst:** - 5post, **IT** - 3post (good English is essential) **Plumber** 3 posts, **Electrician** - 5 posts **Accountants** - 5 posts. Sent CV to ECO Apartment (Pearl condo) Ga21 (between tower C & D.) Kabaaye pagoda Rd, Bahan.

**CRUSADE Services Co., Ltd** (Carpet & Upholstery Cleaning Services) **Sale & Marketing** 1 post : Age 25 ~ 35, 3 years experience in marketing field, Strong working knowledge in sales of cleaning chemical & cleaning Services. Great Tele-sales skill & must run out side sale. Fluency in English 4 skills & Proficiency in computer skills Application must include a cover letter, current CV, Copies of relevant academic qualification certificates & recent passport photo to : 123, G Flr (L), Ngu War St, Ahlone, Ph: 215285, 09-421-7810. Closing Date: 20 March 2013

**WE** are looking for, (1) **Sales Representative** 3 Posts : B.Sc, Science Graduated. (2) **Ware House Staff** (Hlaing Thar Yar) 3 Posts : B.Sc, Science Graduated. Pls send C.V, 2 recent photos, photocopies or labor registration card, recommendation from police force, education certificate & other related documents to 10, Parami Rd, Hlaing Ph: 521002, 521009. Closing date : 29.3.2013.

**OUR ARCHITECTURAL firm** is seeking **Architects** 2 posts : Bachelor of Architecture (B. Arch). Must be able to lead a group of architects and engineers, 5 years experience on building design & construction, Highly design sensibility and artistic ability, Knowledge of design software such as AutoCAD, Sketch Up 7 or any 3D programs, Capable to generate construction documents according to YCDC standards, Knowledge of construction procedures & standards, Must be able to resolve unexpected technical issues and critical thinking, Must be willing to work under minimal supervision, Able to speak and write English preferred, Salary Expectation, Microsoft Office Suite knowledge is a plus. Architecture 3 Construct ion Company Ltd, ph: 09-730-22667, 011220949 Email: architecture.3.myanmar@gmail.com, thaw@oepg.com.mm

**(1) SENIOR / SALES Executive** - M : Age under 35, Degree in Chemistry or Chemical related disciplines, Relevant industrial sales experience will be an added advantage, Able to speak and write in

English, Hold car driving license, More senior position will be offered to more qualified candidate (2): **Accountant** - F 2 posts : Age above 30, 5 years experience, Added advantage for speaking Mandarin language, Must be independent, Must be able to work long hour. Pls apply to Shwe Annawar Industries Co., Ltd : 4, Baho Rd, Sanchaung. Ph: 519305, 519301

**AMD Trading Ltd** is seeking (1) **Sales Engineer** (for Medical & Laboratory Products) M/F 5 Posts : B.E/ M.E (EC). Age 20 ~ 30. 1 year experience. (2) **Sales Coordinator** (for Medical & Laboratory Products) - M/F 3 Posts: Bachelor of Medical Technology (Fresh graduate are preferable). Age 20 ~ 25. (3) **Service Engineer** (for Medical & Laboratory Products) - M/F 2 Posts : B.E/ M.E (EC). Age 20 ~ 30. 1 years experience. (4) **Chemical Engineer** (for Water Treatment) M/F 1 Post : B.E/ M.E (Chemical). Age 20 ~ 30. 1 years experience. (5) **IT Engineer** - M 1 Post : B.E (IT)/ B.Sc Tech or any relevant degree or diploma. Age 20 ~ 30. 1 years experience. (6) **Driver** (Delivery) - M 2 Posts : Must have skillful driving skills. Pls apply CV, copies of educational certificate with relative documents to Amd Trading Ltd.: 39, Thazin Lane, Baho Rd, Ahlone, Ph: 09-731-76248, 09-731-12672, Email: amd@yangon.net.mm

**AMARA GROUP Co., Ltd** is currently looking for (1) **Sale Manager** (Hotels Sale) 1 Post (Yangon). (2) **Accountant** 2 Posts (Yangon). (3) **Restaurant Supervisor** 1 Post (Kalaw). (4) **Front Office Supervisor** 1 Post (Kalaw). Be part of a young dynamic team and contribute to the hotels success with expertise & experience. Therefore we offer an interesting work environment, accommodation & an attractive package. We look forward receiving CV in English. Email: amaragroup.mmw@gmail.com Ph: 663347, 652191.

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### Job Wanted

**I AM** a female Medical doctor, who recently graduated & interested in joining an N.G.O for a suitable vacancy. My Stints includes: HIV/ AIDS, ART, OI Multidisciplinary basic & advanced Training course from "Salus World" Research Methodology & critical thinking Course. Community Services includes : Morbidity & Mortality Survey, Diarrhea Action Programme, Health services during the Nargis Campaign. OBR campaign. For further information pls contact me on pearl.june@gmail.com or Ph: 09-513-0011.

### Vacancy Announcement (Inland only)

**Young Investment Group Co. Ltd**  
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**Phone : 01-526626, 01-512528**

Young Investment Group of Companies is currently seeking for qualified and motivated candidates to fill the following positions:

- Chief Accountant (M / F) 3 Posts**
  - Any graduate (or) B.com, B.Ecom (Slats), B.A (Eco), DA, CPA, ACCA Part II are must prefer
  - Minimum 3 years of relevant experiences
  - Good interpersonal skill, pleasant personality and co-ordination skills
  - Have good computer skills
  - Must be able to travel
  - Have good cash control skills
- Senior Accountant (M / F) 5 Posts**
  - B.com, B.Ecom (Slats), B.A (Eco)
  - LCCI Level (III)
  - Above 3 years of relevant experience
  - Have good computer skills
  - Good interpersonal skill, pleasant personality and co-ordination skills
  - Must be able to travel
- Cashier (F) 1 Post**
  - Any graduate
  - Have good computer skills
  - Minimum 2 years of relevant experiences
  - Must be able to travel

Please submit the CV Form with a passport photo, NRC card copy, labor registration card copy, other educational certificates copies, quarter and police recommendation letters to above mentioned address, not later than 1.4.2013.



### JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT (Urgently Required)

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**La Source Beauty Spa**  
-80(A), Inya Rd, Kamayut Tsp, tel: 512 380, 511 252. www.lasourcebeautyspa.com

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# 'Golf war' returns to Asia

BANGKOK – Asia's "golf war" made an unwanted return last week when the OneAsia season started with the Thailand Open – in direct competition with another big event on the rival Asian Tour.

While a strong field was lined up for the Bangkok tournament, attention was shared with the Avantha Masters near New Delhi, co-sanctioned by the European Tour and headlined by Colin Montgomerie.

The clash follows a landmark court judgment in Singapore in November that found the Asian Tour had illegally barred four of its players from OneAsia events.

OneAsia is expected to hold about 12 events this season, its fifth year of operations since emerging in 2009. It is seen by the longer-standing Asian Tour, which organised more than 20 tournaments last year, as a direct challenge.

The Thailand Open featured local favourite Thaworn Wiratchant and a strong Japanese contingent led by Shingo Katayama, after OneAsia entered a partnership with the Japan Golf Tour Organisation (JGTO).

"It's wonderful to see so many great players from

the JGTO in the field this week... Their presence certainly raises the bar for our OneAsia stars," OneAsia commissioner Sang Y. Chun said in a press release.

"We are working hard to bring more tournaments on board and offer our players greater opportunities."

Meanwhile Montgomerie, plus fellow Ryder Cup players including Edoardo Molinari and David Howell, along with a host of Indian stars, were the main attractions at the \$2.3 million Avantha Masters, which also started on March 14.

Last month, Asian Tour CEO Mike Kerr told AFP there had been no formal contact between the two tours, tempering hopes of a thaw in relations following the Singapore court ruling.

And according to Asian Golf Monthly's managing editor Spencer Robinson, "Asia is bracing itself for the first of what will inevitably be a number of absurd and harmful date clashes between high-profile tournaments".

"As well as diluting the media coverage for each of the events and creating conflict for the players, the confusion in the marketplace serves only to scare off potential sponsors," he commented during a regular video briefing. – AFP



Stephen Leaney of Australia tees off during the Thailand Open Pro-Am golf event at Thana City Golf and Sports Club in Bangkok on March 12. Pic: AFP

## Mayweather launches rich new deal against Guerrero

LAS VEGAS – Unbeaten fighter Floyd Mayweather began promoting his return to the ring after a year's absence on March 11, saying rival Robert Guerrero does not have a ghost of a chance of winning on May 4.

Guerrero, whose nickname is "Ghost", will be the first foe for World Boxing Council welterweight champion Mayweather in a new six-fight, 30-month deal with CBS and Showtime that he claims is the biggest in boxing history.

"My new deal is very thrilling for me and a motivation to fight more often," Mayweather said. "I know Guerrero has been campaigning to fight me for quite a while now and I am happy to give him his opportunity."

"I'm excited for the challenge and fully expect a good, tough fight. However, I do expect the same outcome for him as all of the others who have challenged me."

Mayweather, 43-0 with 26 knockouts, has not fought since taking a unanimous 12-round decision from

Miguel Cotto last May. Mayweather has served a 90-day jail sentence for domestic battery last year after his victory.

US southpaw Guerrero, 31-1-1 with 18 knockouts, has won 15 fights in a row since suffering his only loss, a 2005 split-decision defeat at the hands of Mexico's Gamaliel Diaz.

"I'm destined to dethrone Floyd," Guerrero said. "When we lock eyes across the ring on fight night he's going to feel the presence of a man preordained for greatness."

Mayweather was ranked as the highest-paid athlete in sports last year by Forbes magazine at \$85 million a year, just ahead of Filipino icon Manny Pacquiao, the major foe Mayweather has never fought.

Should all six fights of his new deal take place and his pay-per-view averages of more than one million buys per fight hold, Mayweather says his new deal would be the largest for any individual athlete in sports history.

Mayweather has used the Mexican holiday "Cinco de Mayo" weekend and Mexican foes or undercard fighters to help boost past US pay-per-view figures from Hispanic audiences and the latest card will be no exception.

The Mayweather-Guerrero undercard will feature two former Mexican Olympic fighters as WBC featherweight champion Daniel Ponce de Leon, 44-4 with 35 knockouts, defends his title for the first time against Abner Mares, 25-0 with one drawn and 13 knockouts.

"I have every intention of staying the world champion for a long time because even though I'm 32, I feel like I'm 20 years old," Ponce de Leon said.

Mares, a former bantamweight and super bantamweight world champion, could become a ring king in a third different weight class.

"I don't like to waste opportunities," Mares said. "I can't wait to get into the ring." – AFP

## Australia starts to break all-white mould

SYDNEY – As Australian cricket struggles to recapture former glories, the sport's chiefs are painfully aware of the need to widen the net to reflect the country's burgeoning cultural diversity.

While rugby, Australian Rules and soccer have embraced the country's multicultural make-up, the national cricket side has lagged behind, largely stuck in its white Anglo roots.

Australia's experience contrasts sharply with that of their oldest adversary England, who for decades have successfully incorporated the talents of players from ethnic minority communities, whether Afro-Caribbean or South Asian.

The 2011 national census revealed that 26 percent of Australia's population was born abroad while many others had at least one overseas-born parent.

The retirement of modern-day greats such as Shane Warne, Glenn McGrath and Ricky Ponting has made the search for new talent more pressing as the declining national team bids to revive its domination of the world game.

"By 2015, 40 percent of Australians will have a parent who was born overseas," Matt Dwyer, Cricket Australia's national game development manager, told AFP.

"Cricket Australia has programmes in place and we will benefit from having players in the national team which will reflect multicultural Australia and increase the diversity of our game," he said.

There are examples of cricketers from ethnic minorities donning the famous "Baggy Green" cap and others are tipped to follow in their footsteps.

Usman Khawaja, whose family emigrated from Pakistan when he was a child, was celebrated when in 2011 he became the first Muslim to play a Test for Australia, against England.

The 26-year-old left-hander has gone on to play six Tests but has failed to hold down a regular place in the side.

Moises Henriques, also 26, became the first Portuguese-born player to represent Australia in Tests when he made an outstanding debut against India last month, scoring two half-centuries in Chennai.

Pakistani asylum-seeker Fawad Ahmed could cap a dramatic rise by playing a role in Australia's Ashes series in England later this year, the first of a double-header against the former colonial masters.

As Australia's spinners struggle in India, Ahmed, who impressed with his seven-wicket debut for Victoria in the domestic four-day Sheffield Shield competition last month, may be fast-tracked into the national team.

"It is about performance and consistency in

performance, but I'm confident he certainly has the skill set to play at the next level," said his Victorian state coach Greg Shipperd.

Ahmed left his home in the border region near Afghanistan to come to Australia on a short-stay visa in 2010, saying he was targeted by Muslim extremists.

The 31-year-old was granted a permanent visa to stay in November and quickly established his credentials at the Melbourne Renegades in the T20 Big Bash League.

He is eligible to play for Australia as soon as he is granted citizenship, although under International Cricket Council guidelines he can also play for his adopted country from August.

According to the website Cricinfo, Cricket Australia is lobbying authorities in Canberra to fast-track his citizenship so he is available for July 10 – the opening day of the first Test against England at Trent Bridge.

It is all a far cry from the 1980s, Cricinfo said in an article about the team's changing racial composition.

**'It makes it clear that this is a sport that welcomes all and that is great for our society.'**

"This week 20 years ago, for example, Australia fielded a Test team whose first names could be those of 'Home and Away' regulars: Mark, David, Justin, Mark, Steve, Allan, Ian, Paul, Shane, Merv and Craig," it said.

Ashton Agar, who has Sri Lankan grandparents, is another beneficiary of Australia's pursuit of a top-line spinner. The tall 19-year-old accompanied the Australian team to India to provide net practice.

New South Wales pacer Gurinder Sandhu, born in Australia but of Indian heritage, is another being groomed for the international game after the 19-year-old was selected for the Prime Minister's XI to play West Indies.

"This commitment by Cricket Australia is excellent. It makes it clear that this is a sport that welcomes all and that is great for our society," Glenn Withers, professor of public policy at the Australian National University, told AFP.

"It also enriches the sport itself. US studies show that teams that integrate perform better. Integration often leads to new skills and new ways being considered that can enhance performance."

– AFP



US boxer Floyd Mayweather Jr. (R) and Puerto Rico's Miguel Cotto (L) battle on May 5, 2012 in Las Vegas, Nevada. Pic: AFP



# New look for NHL season

NEW YORK – Sparked by the return of the Jets to Winnipeg the board of governors approved its realignment plan on March 14, the National Hockey League announced.

The board and the NHL Players Association have now both given the green light to the realignment which calls for groupings based primarily on geography and will cut down dramatically on travel costs for teams like Winnipeg. The Players Association had already signed off on the plan.

“But for the relocation, this isn’t something we would have undertaken,” said league commissioner Gary Bettman.

The franchise moved in 2011 to Winnipeg after spending more than a decade in Atlanta.

The plan, which goes into effect for the 2013-14 season, calls for four divisions and two conferences, the Eastern and Western Conference.

Winnipeg moves to a Western Conference division that also comprises Chicago, Colorado, Dallas, Minnesota, Nashville and St. Louis. The other consists of Anaheim, Calgary, Edmonton, Vancouver, San Jose, Los Angeles and Phoenix.

Carolina, Columbus, New Jersey, New York Islanders, New York Rangers, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and Washington will play in one division within the Eastern Conference, while the East’s other division comprises



Mikkel Boedker (89) of the Phoenix Coyotes shoots the puck against the Los Angeles Kings on March 12 in Glendale, Arizona. Pic: AFP

Boston, Buffalo, Detroit, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Florida and Tampa Bay.

Detroit and Columbus will move from the Western Conference to the East, while Winnipeg is moving from the Eastern Conference to the West.

Bettman said permanent names for the divisions will be assigned at a later date.

The Stanley Cup playoffs will still feature eight teams from each conference, but there is now a wild card system in place. The top three teams from each division will qualify, along with two wild cards.

The new plan allows each team to play once a season in every NHL arena for the first time since the 1997-98 season.

– AFP

# Sochi struggling with ‘overspending, legacy’

MOSCOW – State overspending on the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics amounts to more than half a billion dollars while the government has failed to provide a lasting legacy for sporting venues, according to an official audit report.

Russia’s federal audit office gave a damning verdict on preparations for the Sochi Games, as well as plans for dealing with the giant venues once the Olympics are over.

In a report presented to the Russian parliament, the Audit Chamber said cost overruns were the fault of state corporation Olympstroy, whose officials “created preconditions for unnecessary increase of construction cost for sports venues,” which amounted to 15.5 billion rubles (\$505 million).

The government has said that total cost of the Olympic sports venues for the Sochi games will

amount to 200 billion rubles (\$6.5 billion).

The audit office’s examination of “Olympic construction shows that their cost continues to progressively increase,” said the report, adding that many investors have approached the government in 2012 asking for more money to complete their Olympic projects.

The report, presented last week but made available on the website of Russian State Duma lower house Wednesday, said Olympstroy had taken “decisions which increased cost of objects without giving reasons for new calculations.”

In some cases, Olympstroy confirmed cost estimates that exceeded maximum allowed financing, it said, and several venues were never approved by the state construction watchdog as required by law, it said. – AFP

# Cricket returns to Pun Hlaing

CRICKET is making a return to the Pun Hlaing Golf Estate’s sports oval in Hlaing Tharyar township on Sunday, March 24, as the venue hosts a limited overs competition.

The day will feature a 20-over a side social match and is being organised Pun Hlaing’s Steve Alexander, aka “Boonie”.

Mr Alexander said the first 22 players to register for the competition will be selected for the game, which will commence at 2pm. Players will

be required to pay a K20,000 fee to take part in the game to help pay for the cost of buying a new cricket kit and cover grounds costs.

A barbeque lunch, along with cold beverages will be available. The event is being supported by Yoma Strategic Holdings and SPA Project Management. For more information or to register for the competition please contact Mr Alexander by email at sa.golf.spapm@gmail.com

– Stuart Deed

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## Philippines to compete in Myanmar games despite row

MANILA – The Philippines said March 11 it will send its best athletes to the upcoming Southeast Asian Games in Myanmar despite alleged cherry-picking of sports to give the host country the most medals.

The head of the Philippine mission Jeff Tamayo said he was prepared for a poor medal showing at the 27th SEA Games in December but the country was not being deterred.

“We are sending the best of the best. This is all about the challenge

to the individual. It is not about winning our place in the SEA Games,” he told *AFP*.

While some sports officials originally suggested just sending a token delegation – or even boycotting the Myanmar games entirely – Tamayo said they chose not to look at the medals as the main reason for competing.

Many Southeast Asian countries have been irked by signs that events were being chosen to help Myanmar athletes win in the games.

Tamayo cited the inclusion of

“chinlon”, a native Myanmar ball game unknown in many other countries as well as events like chess and bodybuilding, all areas where the host is perceived as having an edge.

He said Filipinos could not even participate in some of these additional sports as they are not played in their country.

In contrast, sports like tennis and gymnastics were dropped, possibly because the host country does not do well in those areas, Tamayo said.

The Philippines is likely to

send athletes to only 27 of the 33 events and a shortage of funds will probably cut the number even further, he said.

Despite this, he expects the country to secure victories in boxing, taekwondo and basketball.

Even if the Philippines fails to do well in the total tally of medals, it could still excel in “the ratio of athletes to medals”, he said.

The 2013 SEA Games will be the first major international event to be held in Myanmar since the end of junta rule in 2011. – *AFP*

## Kempo inclusion irks Karate Federation

By Aung Si Hein

THE Myanmar Karate Federation is criticising the inclusion of kempo in the upcoming Southeast Asian Games, claiming that it is taking too many athletes away from their chosen discipline.

Kempo was selected as one of the 33 events to be featured in the 27th SEA Games after Indonesian officials allegedly promised the Minister of Sports, U Tint San, that with the help of Indonesian coaches, Myanmar could capture at least six gold medals in the sport.

Eighteen kempo events will held at the Games. Indonesia has traditionally excelled at the sport.

“Now we have to transfer eight of our karate athletes to the kempo team,” U Tin Win Myint joint-secretary of Karate Federation told *The Myanmar Times*.

“The minister asked us for some of our athletes so we gave them away but it really hurts us because we have worked with them and if not this year, in 2015, we would have seen good results from them.”

Myanmar Taekwondo Federation head coach U Kyaw Than Oo said that most of the burden will fall to the Karate Federation due to the similarities between kempo and karate.

“It is Shorinji Kempo, which is closer to karate. The Taekwondo Federation gave away five athletes as well as coaches and a manager. But it won’t affect us much because the athletes are from the second squad,” he said.

Thirty-three kempo athletes began training on March 1 at Lea Way Training Centre in Nay Pyi Taw and 54 from the Yangon and Mandalay Institutes of Physical Education are scheduled to join them on March 23.

“In our kempo training camp there will be around 90 athletes and 45 will be selected for the SEA Games squad. We have two Indonesian coaches who have just arrived, one for sparring kempo and another for show kempo,” said Daw Mi Mi Maw, junior director for the kempo training.

“We have already submitted paperwork to the authorities for forming a kempo federation with the aim of having more athletes for the 28th Singapore SEA Games in 2015,” she added.



Leandro Duarte (21) of Ayeyarwady United runs past Kelantan FA's Obinna Nwaneri (4) on March 13 in Yangon. Pic: Boothee

## Mixed results in AFC Cup

By Kyaw Zin Hlaing

MALAYSIA Super League champions Kelantan FA thrashed Ayeyarwady United of the Myanmar National League 3-1 in the group stage of the AFC Cup at Thuwana Stadium in Yangon on March 13.

Kelantan captain Badhri scored once in the first half and forward Dimitrios Petratos added two more in the second.

Ayeyawady was only able to get one goal back with a score by Slovenian midfielder Dominik

Bersnjak in the second half but it was too little too late.

Ayeyarwady fielded a depleted squad for the match.

Soe Kyaw Kyaw, Min Min Thu and Otomo Satoshi were all forced to watch from the sidelines with injuries.

Badhri did quick work, scoring off a free kick in only the 2<sup>nd</sup> minute of play. The first half was all Kelantan as they controlled the ball and pace of the game.

Things only got worse for Ayeyarwady after halftime, when Australian striker Petratos scored in the 54<sup>th</sup> minute and again in the

81<sup>st</sup> minute.

Between his two goals, Slovenian midfielder Bersnjak netted Ayeyarwady's only score in the 79<sup>th</sup> minute.

“I’m very happy with today’s result. Even though Ayeyarwady played well, our team played better,” said Kelantan coach Bojan Hodak.

“We did not play our best because our main players are injured. We just couldn’t keep the ball and gave it away too often but I’m hoping that in the coming matches we play better,” said Ayeyarwady coach Marjan Sekulovski after

the match.

While Ayeyarwady stumbled Yangon United continued the impressive start to their AFC Cup run with a 3-1 win over Hong Kong’s Sunray Cave JC Sun Hei in Group F on March 12.

Playing at Mongkok Stadium in Hong Kong striker Adama Kone built on his February 27 hat trick against Indonesian club Persibo Bojonegoro with a goal in the 2<sup>nd</sup> minute.

Brazilian striker Cesar scored in the 53<sup>rd</sup> minute and Aung Moe added one more in injury time for the Yangon United.

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