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INSIDE LOI TAI LENG, WHERE THE BATTLE FOR SHAN STATE CONTINUES
NEWS 4-5

GERMAN BUSINESS DELEGATION COMPLETES HISTORIC MYANMAR VISIT
BUSINESS 27

A child covers his face with a towel in a house by the side of a road in Yangon's Dala township. His adopted parents were forced to move earlier this month after the land on which they were illegally staying was sold.

PAGE 30

PHOTO: BOOTHEE

Land speculation forces squatters out of Dala

Despite being just kilometres from downtown, Dala has traditionally had some of Yangon's cheapest land, enabling squatters to live there undisturbed for years. But with speculators moving in and prices hitting US$50,000 a plot, illegal residents are being forced out.

Lit festival moves to hotel after ministry objection

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THE opening day of the Irrawaddy Literary Festival descended into confusion on February 14 after the Ministry of Culture revoked permission for organisers to hold the event at Kuthodaw Pagoda at the last minute.

Organisers were informed of the decision at 6pm the previous evening. They met briefly on the morning of February 14 with surprised participants and visitors at Kuthodaw and announced the festival would be switched to Mandalay Hill Resort instead.

In a notice to organisers, the Ministry of Culture said Minister for the President's Office U Soe Thein had personally given the organisers permission to hold the event at Kuthodaw but the ministry's planning committee revoked permission "according to the correct procedures rather than by an individual minister". It directed further enquiries to U Soe Thein.

The ministry said there is no record of any cultural events being held at Kuthodaw Pagoda in the past and it has no intention of allowing them in the future. It expressed concern that if it allowed the literary festival to take place then it would get more requests to hold events.

Following the venue switch, the festival got underway slightly behind schedule. Patron Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was scheduled to appear on the afternoon of February 15.

D-Day looms in Dagon Seikkan

Thousands of illegal residents in Dagon Seikkan's No 67 ward are refusing to move ahead of a February 16 deadline, and township officials say they expect conflict if residents are forced from their homes. NEWS 3

Page 2

THE INSIDER: The local lowdown & best of the web

online editor **Kayleigh Long** |
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Black mark for local media

Bastion of journalistic integrity *Eleven Media* played it fast and loose with the facts in their reporting on the recent robbery of Yangon-based *Democratic Voice of Burma* journalist Alexandra Fowle, using quotes that might have left the average reader with the impression that she's naïve, has cowardly friends and is perhaps a tad racist.

"At about half past nine, while I was walking with my friend, a male riding a bicycle hit me with his hand. He appeared to have black skin and was thin, shorter than me. After he turned back to me he grabbed my hands firmly. I told him not to do this. When the robber took out a knife from his waist, my friend ran away," *Eleven Media* quoted Ms Fowle as saying.

While she did tell police that the man was shorter than her and slight, she had described him as being of Southeast Asian appearance. Ms Fowle had a colleague contact *Eleven* to alert them to the error, but the message didn't seem to have been passed on.

"I have never been abroad before. I believed that Myanmar was safer than England, so I took a walkabout", Ms Fowle also reportedly said, despite having lived in Norway and Thailand.

It wasn't just Eleven who mangled the facts on this one, with one outlet listing Ms Fowle's name as Mr Alexander Maung, and another reporting that a necklace, which was in her bag, was snatched from her neck – and valued at US$100,000.

Ye Htut is dead (says Google)

As at the time of printing, a Google search on Deputy Information Minister and presidential spokesperson U Ye Htut will yield an alarming result: that he's dead. In fact, for some reason the search brief (which appears in the right side bar and pulls information from Wikipedia) lists just his title, and November 27, 2013, as the date of his passing. However, U Ye Htut is very much alive. His full Wikipedia page bio lists him as being so. How the error arose is unclear. Apart from U Ye Htut's fake death, November 27 is also remembered as the anniversary of the first university students' strike in 1920.

Thaksin consults the stars

Fugitive former Thai premier Thaksin Shinawatra made a stopover in Myanmar last week, having a small family reunion and paying a visit to his longtime astrologer, ET.

Thaksin's camp denied allegations made by his detractors that the trip was intended to facilitate talks on using an area in Shan State as a military training ground and logistics centre, saying he was simply coming to make merit.

Daw E-Thi (most commonly known as ET) is said to have telepathic powers and the ability to see the future. She suffers a severe speech impediment, so her predictions are relayed through her sister Thi Thi. Thaksin reportedly visited ET days before the coup which saw him ousted in 2006.

Breaking Laws: innocent victims of sanctions

An article last week in *Foreign Policy* drew attention to the plight of men called Stephen Law the world over, following a blog post by a man of this name complaining that he was suffering under sanctions.

Indeed, Mr Stephen Law, a British philosophy professor and author, shares a name with Asia World managing director Steven Law – son of Lo Hsing Han, who died mid-2013 and was once described as the "Godfather of Heroin" by US officials.

The US Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) lists nine aliases which apply to Steven (Asia World) Law, including variations on his Myanmar and Chinese names of Tun Myint Naing and Lo Ping Zhong.

Stephen (Philosopher) Law described his frustrations with international funds transfers inexplicably taking a long time or being denied, as well as having shipments seized by customs, before he tweaked as to what was going on.

That Mr Law posted his missive in February 2014, when the sanctions were levelled against Steven Law by the US Treasury Department in 2008 and 2010, makes one question whether life on the blacklist is so bad.

Curious as to how being hit with sanctions has impacted other Stephen Laws, *Page 2* contacted a couple of them over Facebook. An Australia-based Stephen Law said he "hadn't noticed anything", while another in the UK shrugged it off saying sanctions "hadn't affected him personally" and that if it did he would just "ask [his] friends to transfer the money".

Which is what anyone would do, really.

Next week: Taxi driver assaulted after insisting on taking Anawratha during peak hour despite clear advantages of proposed alternative route.

When Myanmar was Burma...

Archival material provided by Pansodan Gallery

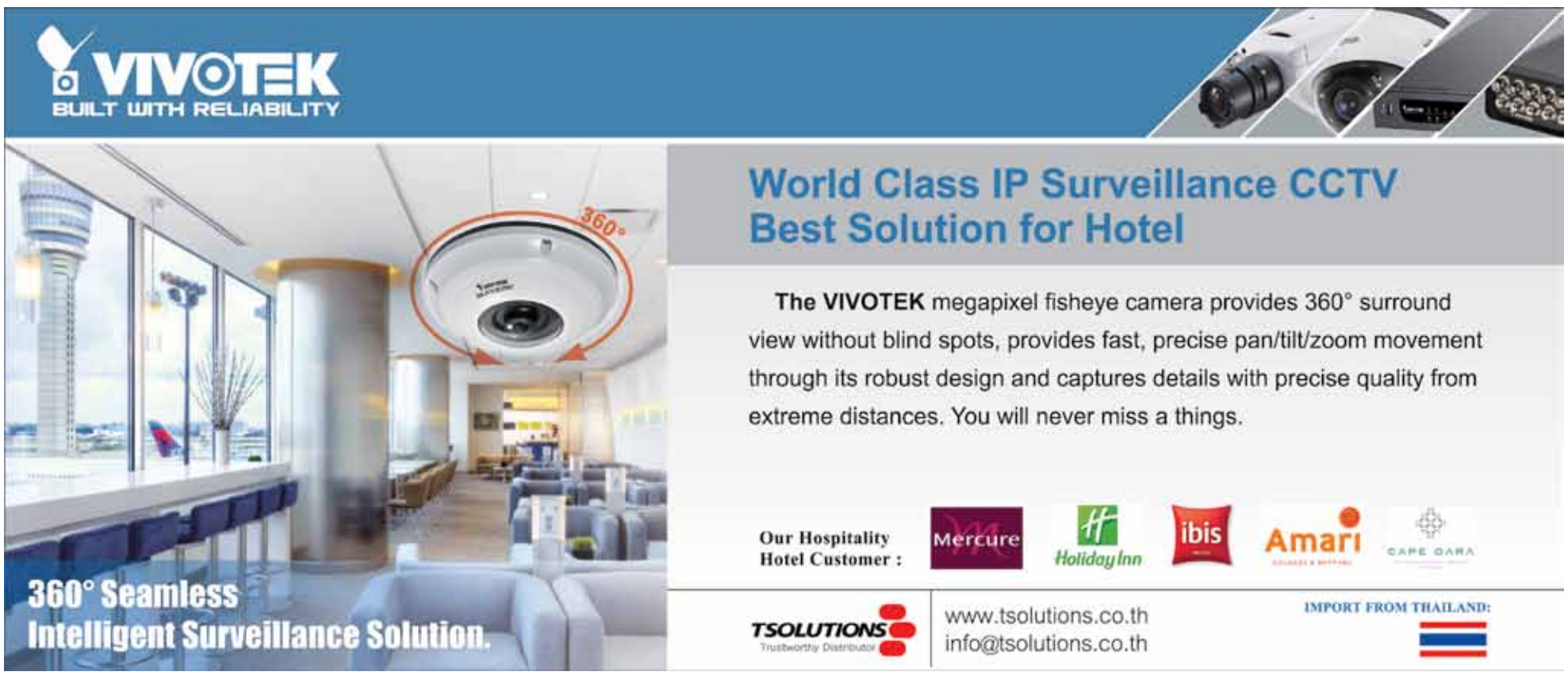
TROUBLE IN BURMA

BY H. G. WELLS

Article (illegible) by sci-fi luminary HG Wells from postwar British publication *Burma To-Day*, 1947.

Jessica Dada
for *NOW!* magazine.
Photo: Jason (SENSE photography)

Style Statement NOW!



Vice President U Sai Mauk Kham gives an address on February 12 to mark Union Day. Photo: Hsu Hlaing Htun

President promises federal political system

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PRESIDENT U Thein Sein has urged all ethnic groups to work together to establish a "federal system" of government, in one of the strongest indications yet that his administration plans to push through constitutional amendments to give more rights to ethnic groups.

In his annual Union Day message on February 12, the president called on all ethnic groups "to establish the national unity based on the 'Panglong Spirit' and then march toward a peaceful, modern and developed democratic nation through a federal system".

While many ethnic groups have pushed for decades for a federal system, the central government has always insisted that Myanmar be a union, with power concentrated in the centre. The reference to the Panglong Agreement of 1947, the signing of which is marked by Union Day, also marks a break from the past.

The president said he believed that "national unity and reconciliation" would lead to "an era of peace and prosperity", and urged all ethnic minorities to contribute to the process of democratisation.

The message was read by Vice President U Sai Mauk Kham at a ceremony in Nay Pyi Taw on February 12 that was attended by more than 2300 guests.

At a ceremony in Yangon, meanwhile, the National League for Democracy said political negotiation rather than armed conflict is the only way to achieve peace and stability. "Union cannot be created by arms and orders; it must be created through mutual understanding ... and working together with sympathy and loving kindness," the party said in its Union Day statement on February 12.

It marked the day with a ceremony at a Bahan restaurant that was attended by patron U Tin Oo, senior member U Win Tin, 88 Generation members, diplomats and members of the public.

U Tin Oo expressed confidence that the government's peace plan could bear fruit and end decades of conflict. "I believe that this time the government and ethnic armed groups can end 60 years of conflict and can keep going to achieve national reconciliation."

Union Day commemorates the signing of the Panglong Agreement between Bogyoke Aung San and ethnic leaders in eastern Shan State on February 12, 1947.

Squatters refuse to go as eviction date looms

Residents begin nightly patrols in Dagon Seikkan township ahead of a February 16 eviction deadline as township administrator admits the likelihood of violence is high

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THOUSANDS of illegal residents in Dagon Seikkan township have vowed to defy an order from local authorities to leave their homes by the weekend or face eviction – and even jail time.

Almost 8000 squatters in Dagon Seikkan's No 67 ward were told by the township General Administration Department to leave by February 12 but the deadline was pushed back to February 16. The land they are living on is owned by the regional government, the department said in a notice.

The notice warned that those who do not comply with the order could face one month in prison under section 21(1) of the Lower Burma Town and Village Lands Act. They will even be charged by the authorities for the cost of demolishing their homes, the notice said.

But residents told *The Myanmar Times* last week they would not leave voluntarily.

"We are not moving," said Ko San Min Oo, who has lived in the ward since 2004 and is its head firefighter. "If our houses are destroyed, we'll live on the ground. But if they arrest us, we will go with them."

He said he would not leave even if offered compensation, as his children are studying for free at a nearby monastic school.

Township administrator U Hnin Aung said there is a real possibility of violence if local authorities move in to evict the squatters.

"We have seen the people who live there are gathering knives. They said that if somebody gets in their way, they will fight," he said on February 12.

Department figures show there are about 2500 illegal homes in the ward. Most of the more than 7900 residents have arrived in the past five years; only 592 homes were registered during the 2008 referendum.

U Hnin Aung said the owners of the illegal homes had arrived in the ward in the hope of securing land compensation. "They've come from the conflict in Rakhine State, from areas of Kayan and Thongwa [townships in Yangon Region] where the riverbank has collapsed, from areas affected by Cyclone Nargis and from upper Myanmar," he said.

However, he also agreed that the squatters had nowhere else to go.

2500

Estimated number of illegal households in Dagon Seikkan's No 67 ward

"They stay here taking whatever jobs they can. They depend on this place and will be in big trouble if they are removed," he said.

Concerned about the possibility of a forced eviction, residents have established units of young men to patrol the area at night. Most of the residents have already packed up their belongings so they can make a quick getaway if the officials arrive.

But they have no idea where they will run to. "I have no home to return to," said Daw Mya Tha, who moved to No 67 ward after her home in the Rakhine State capital Sittwe was destroyed in an outbreak of violence in 2012. "Where can I go?"

Some are hopeful that the impending conflict can be avoided through negotiation. Pyithu Hluttaw representative for Dagon Seikkan U Myo Aung, from the National League for Democracy, said he had asked the government for discussions on the issue and also raised it in the parliament but received no response.

He suggested that township officials follow the lead of nearby No 61 ward, where illegal residents were recently evicted but given a 600-square-foot piece of land in 138 ward and K200,000 as compensation.

"It is not against the law to move the squatters but these people will be homeless and in trouble if that happens," he said. "The government should take care of this issue carefully and make alternative plans. It is inappropriate to act in this way."

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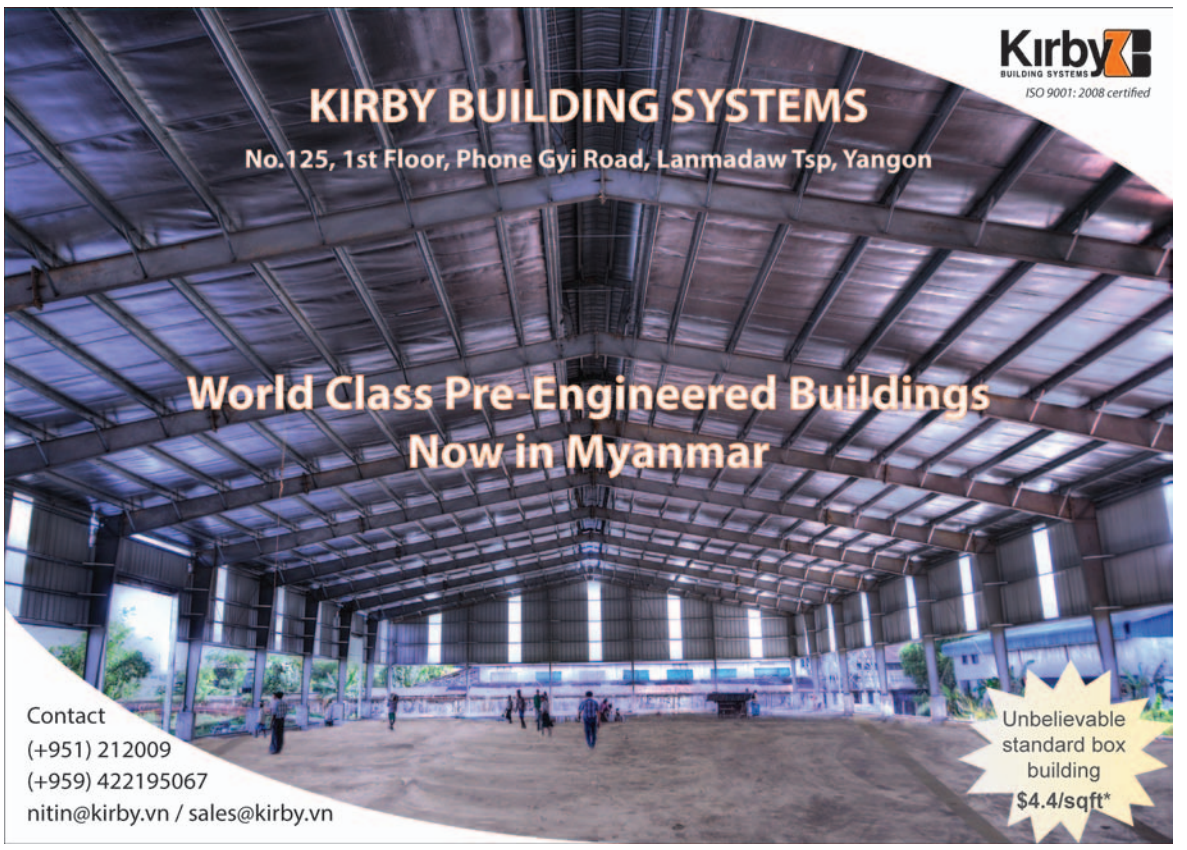

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In Loi Tai Leng, where the battle for

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TO walk in a snaking path down the middle of Loi Tai Leng's main road is to enjoy a geographic curiosity that only border towns can produce. The middle of the sloping track marks the border between Thailand and Myanmar; a few steps is enough to cross from one side to the other and then back again.

"Fall that way," one Shan State Army-South official said, pointing toward Thailand and laughing, "and we can't help you."

If you can find a map accurate enough it will place the Thai-Myanmar border as running through these densely forested hills. The fiercely independent and ethnically proud residents will tell you, however, that the line does not separate Myanmar from Thailand but the Tai (Shan) and Thais.

Further beyond the mountains is the real Burma – residents reject the use of the name Myanmar – but this mountain outpost, you are constantly reminded by the flags, the chatter of Shan language, and the red and black Shan State Army-South insignias on the soldiers' fatigues, is something different: a place controlled neither by Bangkok nor Nay Pyi Taw.

Since the early 2000s the town has served as the headquarters of the SSA-South and its political wing, the Restoration Council of Shan State. Before the SSA-South arrived "there was just jungle, elephants and tigers", said Yawd Maung, the general secretary of the group's foreign affairs department.

RCSS/SSA-South chair Lieutenant General Yawd Serk said that he chose the area due to its strategic position atop of a mountain ridge. The location also provided space to set up a training area for SSA-South troops, which have proven a constant thorn in the side of the Tatmadaw since the army was founded in 1996.

The mountaintop position proved its military worth in 2005 when the neighbouring United Wa State Army, under the command of Wei Hsuehkang, launched a major attack on Loi Tai Leng.

'[In Myanmar] it's not good. Even if I only had clothes, the Burmese military took them away.'

Me Htaung Nge
Loi Tai Leng resident

According to the RCSS, the UWSA was aided by 1000 Tatmadaw troops. One official with a macabre sense of humour joked that the attackers provided a daily 4am "wake-up call" in the form of exploding 120-millimetre mortar rounds. But the combined UWSA-Tatmadaw forces retreated after 60 days in part, SSA-South officials say, because of the difficulty of fighting on the steep mountainsides.

What started as a rough camp for SSA-South soldiers who broke away with Lt Gen Yawd Serk from Khun Sa's Mong Tai Army after it surrendered to the government in 1996 grew into a collection of small huts. Over the past decade Loi Tai Leng has expanded to include the families of military officials and some civilians.

The exact population is difficult to pinpoint as RCSS members come and go, rotating between representative offices in Shan State and Thailand. SSA-South soldiers are often training or in the field. The army also refuses to publicly discuss its troop numbers, which the Myanmar Peace Monitor estimates at more than 6000.

Houses have crept out along adjoining ridgelines to meet the needs of the growing population. With more residents, touches of civilian life have appeared. AEC Supermarket, a simple cinder block structure, sells household essentials to the wives of army officers.

Off-duty soldiers wear shirts embroidered with the red eagle logo of Freedom's Way, a popular rock band composed of military officers. Among the group's oeuvre of Shan nationalist songs are tunes that denounce the National League for Democracy as Bamar-centric and call for greater respect for human rights in Shan State.

Not short on marketing savvy, Freedom's Way also has its own brand of energy drink.

In addition the RCSS provides social services with the help of some NGOs and volunteers. In the town's clinic, visiting foreign doctors tend to ailing patients. When I visited, the school classrooms were doubling as makeshift dormitories for teachers from other parts of Shan State who had made the arduous overland trip to Loi Tai Leng to take part in a training course.

Some of the additions would not be considered wholly essential. A distillery, one resident boasted, produces rice whisky that despite its formidable potency is so pure that even after a night of overindulging you will be hangover-free in the morning.

The town's existence is still wholly dependent on Thailand, from where residents import essential goods – everything from rice to petrol. The Thai baht is the accepted currency. The clocks are set to Thailand time to avoid confusion, but this puts Loi Tai Leng half an hour ahead of the rest of Myanmar.

A Shan flag flies in front of Loi Tai Leng, the headquarters of the Shan State Army-South

Shan State Army-South soldiers parade on Shan National Day. Photo: Sam Jam

A Royal Thai Army post looms over the town. The RCSS built the post but says that it gave it to the Thai army last year as a gesture of friendship.

A large metal flagpole next to the post now flies the Thai national flag but in a bit of patriotic goading the SSA-South has planted the Shan state flag directly in front of the position.

"Tai and Thai: Historically we are relatives of the same race. So our relationship is also like that of relatives," Lt Gen Yawd Serk told *The Myanmar Times* during a visit to Loi Tai Leng.

Even as the town increasingly comes to resemble a normal settlement, life in Loi Tai Leng is not without its hardships. The fine, choking dust kicked up by the wind and passing trucks is inescapable. During the rainy season the steep rutted roads turn into mud slicks, requiring drivers to put chains around their wheels to gain traction. Water is scarce, especially in the dry winter months. The electricity supply remains sporadic, cutting out most afternoons.

Despite the hardships, for residents like Me Htaung Nge, 73, the town is a safe haven after years in the middle of a war zone elsewhere in Shan State. Land to build homes is given for free and the RCSS provides rice subsides to residents who cannot afford to buy their own food.

Originally from Pannukluk in Mong Pan township, Me Htaung Nge settled in Loi Tai Leng nine years ago after crisscrossing Shan State

Shan State continues

and its political wing, the Restoration Council of Shan State. Photo: Sam Jam

for years with her four children, trying to flee the fighting between the Tatmadaw and several armed ethnic groups. Scarred by her experiences at the hands of Myanmar soldiers, she said she never plans to return to Myanmar.

60

Days that Loi Tai Leng withstood a joint Tatmadaw-United Wa State Army offensive in 2005

"There [in Myanmar], it's not good. Even if I only had clothes, the Burmese military took them away," she said.

Many of the town's younger residents have arrived because their families are too poor to keep them in school.

Sai Tha arrived in 2011 after his parents were no longer able to care for him. Instead, they gave him to an SSA-South patrol, which brought him back to Loi Tai Leng. The diminutive 13-year-old said that after completing school he hopes to be an English teacher.

Sitting in the school's library playing chequers, another student, Kyai Won Maw, 15, said that Tatmadaw soldiers had routinely terrorised his village, stealing food and supplies from residents when they passed through on patrol. His family decided to relocate rather than live in fear.

While some have moved out of necessity, others have come purely by choice, drawn by the chance to help advance the Shan cause.

Taung Mu Shwe, 37, left Shan State to work in Malaysia in his 20s. Though he entered Malaysia legally he quit his job over a wage dispute and lost his legal status. He was arrested and placed in prison but was later resettled in Sydney, Australia, by the United Nations, and lived there for 10 years. He came to Loi Tai Leng last year with a renewed sense of Shan pride – and a deep vocabulary of Australian slang.

"I already tried chasing money, bro," he said of his decision to return to Shan State. "Here, we can study our own language and literature freely."

Among the RCSS and SSA-S leadership there is public support for President U Thein Sein and the ongoing peace process. In December 2011 the RCSS signed a ceasefire for the first time. Lt Gen Yawd Serk has publicly praised the president's efforts to bring about peace and the pair met for the first time in June last year, during the SSA-South leader's first visit to central Myanmar in decades.

"We believe that President Thein Sein is an honest person," Lt Gen Yawd Serk said.

Distrust remains, but it stems from the Shan leaderships' deep scepticism over whether the president has control over the Tatmadaw.

"The ceasefire was signed between the RCSS and the government, but the clashes are between our troops and the Burmese military. So we think that there might be some problems between the Burmese government and military."

Because of these continued clashes, very little has changed for the SSA-South foot soldiers in Loi Tai Leng, despite the leaderships' numerous meetings with the government in Chiang Mai, Nay Pyi Taw and Yangon.

On February 10, just three days days after the town swelled with revellers for a ceremony to mark the 67th anniversary of Shan National Day, a new class of recruits prepared to trek out of Loi Tai Leng for their first day of training.

Shouldering ageing automatic weapons, the soon-to-be soldiers stopped to pose for photos with friends before wading into the decades-old fight for the future of Shan State.

SSA gives cautious backing to Tatmadaw's new international ties

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Shan State Army-South chair Lieutenant General Yawd Serk speaks at a ceremony to mark Shan National Day on February 7. Photo: Sam Jam

THE chair of the Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army-South says he is not concerned about increasing cooperation between the Tatmadaw and Western military forces.

In an interview with *The Myanmar Times* at the RCSS/SSA headquarters in Loi Tai Leng, eastern Shan State, Lieutenant General Yawd Serk said that he is confident that the United States and the United Kingdom will not fully support the Myanmar military if "the norms of human rights" are not respected.

"We are not worried about that [engagement] because we believe that America and the British are democracies and they respect human rights," Lt Gen Yawd Serk said on February 7, the 67th anniversary of Shan National Day.

Lt Gen Yawd Serk, 55, began his fight for the independence of Shan State from Myanmar at the age of 16, when he joined Sao Korn Jeung's Shan United Revolutionary Army (SURA). He has been the leader of the SSA-South since it was formed in 1996. The group reached an initial ceasefire with the government in December 2011.

Lt Gen Yawd Serk is one of the first armed ethnic group leaders to comment favourably on military-to-military engagement, which so far have consisted only of classroom-based training sessions.

His comments came, however, the same day as SSA-South and Tatmadaw soldiers clashed near Kyaukme in northern Shan State. SSA-South officials said four Tatmadaw soldiers were killed in the skirmish but the government has not publicly commented on the incident.

The US took its first steps toward reengaging the Tatmadaw in late August 2013 when 20 Tatmadaw and Ministry of Defence officials attended a two-day training session with the US Defense Institute of International Legal Studies (DIILS) that focused on issues such as human rights law and rules of engagement.

"This dialogue is consistent with continuing efforts to build mutual understanding in order to promote human rights awareness, and promote the values and activities of a modern, disciplined and respected military that acts according to international norms," US ambassador to Myanmar Derek Mitchell said in a statement at the conclusion of the course.

In January the UK hosted an 11-day seminar, "Managing Defence in a Wider Security Context", in Nay Pyi Taw that was organised by lecturers from Cranfield University and the UK Defence Academy.

The US and the UK have insisted that the classes will not improve the tactical capabilities of the Tatmadaw.

Despite these reassurances and promises to closely monitor the Tatmadaw's conduct, the US and the UK have faced harsh criticism from human rights groups and pushback from members of their own political parties for the training courses.

New govt visa policy angers journalists

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A POLICY change at the Ministry of Information that will see foreign journalists given shorter visas and placed under increased scrutiny has raised concerns that the government is trying to block negative coverage of Myanmar.

Department of Personnel director general U Ye Tint said last week that foreign journalists would in future be issued one-month visas rather than the three months given previously.

However, he denied that it was because the government was unhappy with foreign journalists, saying the policy was part of a broader government effort to stop foreigners from overstaying their visas.

Journalists will also be required to give more information when applying for a visa, including information on what they plan to write about and where they will travel. U Ye Tint said the old questionnaire featured five or six questions but the new version will include up to 15.

Journalists and media organisations affected by the changes were quick to draw links to the government's recent criticism of their coverage of Rakhine State.

'Obviously this new policy is about restrictions against journalists.'

U Kyaw Zwa Moe
English editor, *The Irrawaddy*

However, one journalist at a foreign news outlet, who asked not to be named, told *The Myanmar Times* that the government had made it clear the new restrictions were a consequence of what it considered to be "irresponsible" coverage of sectarian violence.

U Kyaw Zwa Moe, editor of the English edition of *The Irrawaddy*, said the new policy is already being used against his staff. Two foreign editors based in Yangon were left stranded in Thailand last week waiting for new visas to be issued. "[The approval process] is taking longer than before," he said.

He described the sudden policy change as "questionable" and said it showed "how easily any journalists can be targeted" by officials in the Ministry of Information.

"Obviously this new policy is about restrictions against journalists," he said.

Another issue is the apparent selective application of the policy. Some media organisations that employ foreign journalists said last week they had not been informed of any changes.

In an email to *The Myanmar Times*, Deputy Minister for Information U Ye Htut said the ministry had "only reviewed and revised our policy on visa recommendations. The policy of giving more access to journalists will not change." He did not respond to requests for clarification.

That parts of the government have been displeased with recent media coverage – particularly by Associated Press and *The Irrawaddy* – is clear, however.

On January 18, the state-run mouthpiece *New Light of Myanmar* published an article with the headline "AP, *Irrawaddy* falsely reports violence occurred in Rakhine State".

Constituency funding bill a step closer

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THE upper house has passed a new version of a Union Development Fund bill after parliament made amendments earlier this month to address government concerns over its K33 billion constituency funding program.

The bill was passed 97 votes to 61, with one abstention. All military MPs voted against the bill, continuing their close adherence to government policy.

Military MPs said they were unhappy because the constituency funding program had been introduced before the legislation was enacted.

In November, MPs agreed to distribute K100 million to each of Myanmar's 330 townships in 2013-14 for development projects, including road maintenance and construction and electricity and water provision.

"I welcome this bill because it is intended to benefit citizens but it already took effect before enactment," one Tatmadaw representative said on February 11. "Another issue is that the ... funds are not used in accord with [the government's] financial procedures."

Amyotha Hluttaw representative U Myat Nyarna Soe said he agreed with some of the points made by the Tatmadaw MPs. "Their objection is morally correct ... but as the speaker said, the bill was already introduced under parliamentary procedures so we can't restart from the beginning."

The government has criticised the program as unconstitutional, arguing that by taking on administrative duties MPs are failing to respect the separation of powers enshrined in the constitution.

– Translation by Zar Zar Soe

Bus complaints hit a new record

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BUS bosses have blamed "greedy" conductors for overcharging passengers last month after a record surge in complaints. Speaking at a monthly press conference last week, U Hla Aung, the chair of Ma Hta Tha, the committee that oversees buses in the city, said the conductors had gouged the passengers to make up for losses after buses were taken off the road for repairs.

Complaints received in January reached a record high, he said.

"As of January 31, we had received 84 passenger complaints for the month, the highest ever. We welcome these complaints, which keep us in touch with what the public feels about our service. Of these, 43 concerned the collection of extra bus fares," said U Hla Aung.

The complaints mostly related to the closure of some compressed natural gas (CNG) filling stations on January 26, which caused delays in bus refuelling. In order to make up the shortfall in their earnings, some bus conductors overcharged passengers, he said.

"On January 27, only 3500 buses out of 3700 were running because some CNG stations had closed for repairs to their pipelines. But the bus workers took advantage of this opportunity to put up the fares. Some charged K700 for the route from Hlaing Tharyar township to downtown Yangon," said U Hla Aung. Other passengers complained that they had been charged K500 on a route whose normal fare was K200.

A bus conductor helps passengers onto a bus in Yangon. Photo: Kaung Htet

"This was just greed," said U Hla Aung. "The conductors were worried their earnings would decrease. We hope passengers will continue to complain so that we can try to do something about this."

A Ministry of Energy spokesperson declined to comment on the closure of the CNG stations.

During January, Ma Hta Tha inspected 6447 buses and found 565 violations, resulting in the dismissal of 26 drivers and 24 conductors.

Formally known as the Yangon Region Supervisory Committee for Motor Vehicles, the body is commonly referred to by its Myanmar-language acronym, Ma Hta Tha.

BRIEFS

Five new seismic stations planned
The government plans to set up five new seismic stations later this year with the support of the United States Geological Survey to strengthen the country's seismic network, a Department of Meteorology and Hydrology official said last week.

Deputy director general U Kyaw Moe Oo said the new stations will be set up in Yangon, Mandalay, Haka in Chin State, Homalin in upper Sagaing Rgion, and Kengtung in eastern Shan State.

"Based on discussions with officials from the United States Agency for International Development over the past week, the agreement will be signed in about March," he said. "Yangon and Mandalay will be first. Each station will get digital seismic monitoring equipment that will help to provide more detailed earthquake information in a shorter period."

Myanmar has 14 seismic stations, of which six have already been upgraded to digital systems. – *Aye Sapay Phyu*

MAI inks deal with Malaysia Airlines
A long-planned codeshare agreement between Myanmar Airways International and Malaysia Airlines that was derailed by economic sanctions has finally been signed.

Under the agreement, those who buy tickets with MAI will be able to use them on Malaysia Airlines flights and vice versa, spokesperson Daw Aye Mra Tha said. The airlines will also cooperate to establish direct flights between Yangon and the Malaysian destinations of Penang and Langkawi.

"We first agreed to do this in 2005 but because of the economic sanctions put in place in 2007 the agreement was cancelled," she said. – *Rosie*

NLD cancels event after monks object to Muslim speakers

Party slams government officials for allowing Patriotic Myanmar Buddhist Monks Union to derail public talk

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NLD secretary for Yangon Region U Tun Myint (right) talks to Ashin Susitta and others monks from the Patriot Myanmar Buddhist Union in Yangon's North Okkalapa township on February 12. Photo: Staff

A NATIONAL League for Democracy public discussion to mark Union Day was cancelled last week after a group of more than 40 monks threatened to disrupt the event because two of the four speakers are Muslim.

The event in North Okkalapa township was to feature lawyer U Ko Ni and 88 Generation leader U Mya Aye, who are both Muslim, as well as writers U Than Soe Naing and U Aung Thein, who goes by the pen name Sinphyu Gyun Aung Thein.

The NLD cancelled the event because of security concerns after the monks demanded U Ko Ni and U Mya Aye be pulled from the bill, and U Aung Thein and U Than Soe Naing refused to press on without their counterparts.

Organisers slammed local officials for letting the monks hijack the event, which had received official permission. "We had permission from the government but then this unregistered organisation stopped us from holding our event and the authorities didn't take any precautions," said U Myo Htut, the head of the event's organising committee.

"Under the 2008 constitution, everybody has the right to freedom of expression without being disturbed by others … It just shows that there is no rule of law."

NLD secretary for Yangon Region U Tun Myint said the party had done its best to negotiate with the extremists.

"We tried to negotiate as much as possible. We are sorry for the audience because the talk had to be cancelled," he said.

U Ko Ni, a respected high court lawyer, said the incident reinforced the fact that religious extremism would be a roadblock on the path to democracy.

"I'm really worried about the future of my country because [these monks] have discriminated against us based on religion and [ethnicities]," he said.

Ashin Susitta from the Patriotic Myanmar Buddhist Monks Union said his group did not want to stop the talk from going ahead.

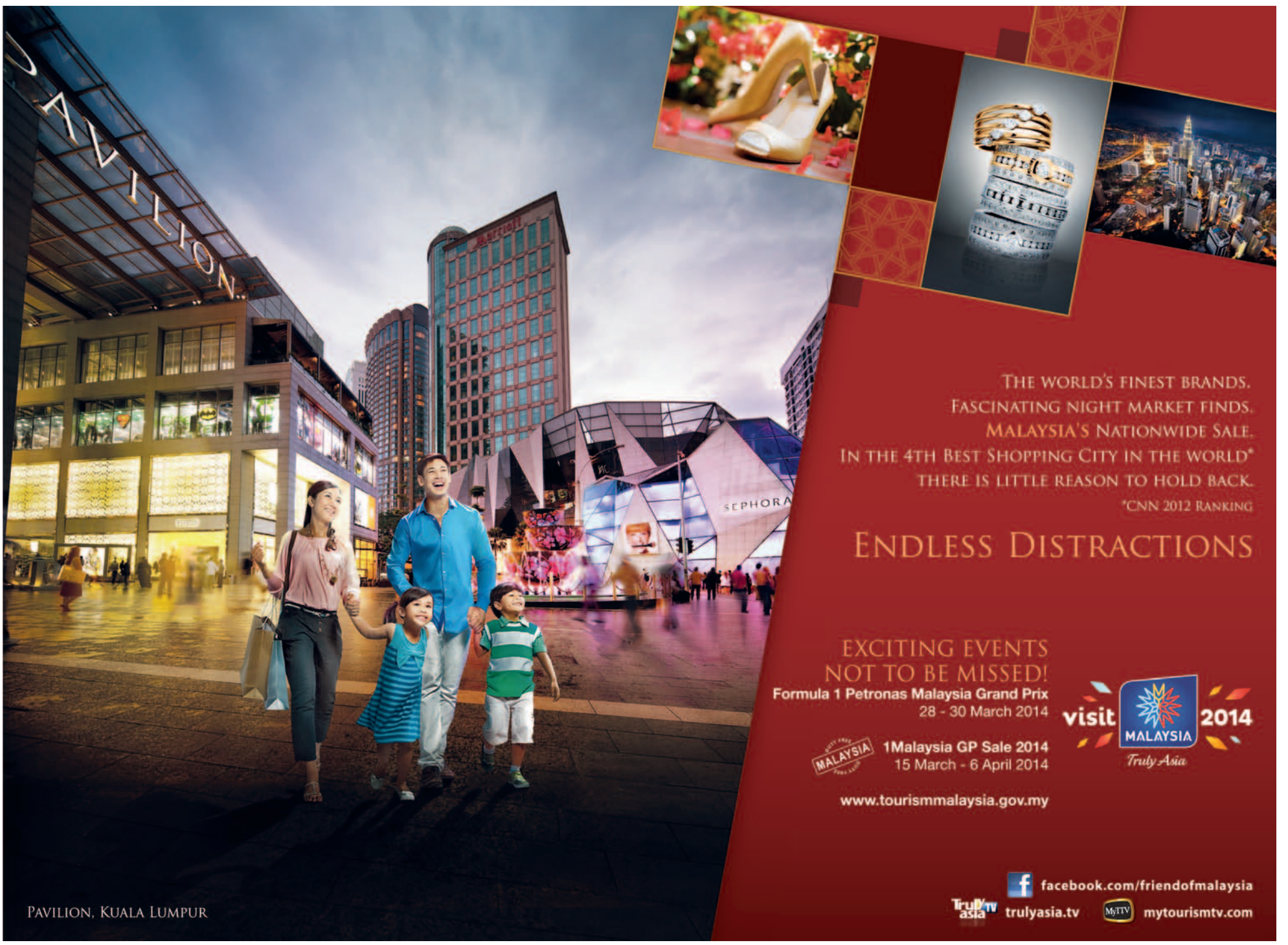
"We only want the best for our national affairs, our religion and our country – that's why we are protesting against these two Muslims writers. We don't want to stop this literature talk," said the monk, who resides at Bahan township's Bingalar Monastery.

"We sent notices to the authorities four days ago to ban these two guys from speaking, as per the decision of all of the monks from our monk union."

The North Okkalapa township administrator could not be reached for comment last week.

U Nanda Sapha from Aung Waddy Monastery in North Okkalapa said he had negotiated with the NLD to ensure the confrontation did not lead to violence. "I requested U Ko Ni to forgive [the monks] and I admire his dignity," U Nanda Sapha said.

U Mya Aye also criticised the government for failing to protect their right to speak, adding that such incident "can happen when we don't understand each other". "I don't want to blame [the monks]," he said.



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Views

A new approach to services

The lack of government capacity means alternative approaches to providing essential services should be considered

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Yangon residents wait for water deliveries during hot season. Photo: Kaung Htet

MYANMAR is a country known for excessive bureaucracy but President U Thein Sein has promised to streamline decision-making and improve delivery of public services. U Thein Sein is focusing his efforts on administrative reform – removing bureaucratic impediments and corruption to ensure that reforms translate into tangible benefits for the broader population. He has embarked on an ambitious decentralisation program that delegates many public services to regional governments, which now have the pivotal responsibility of directly meeting the basic needs of the people.

In addition to meeting these new responsibilities, regional governments are expected to act with greater accountability and community participation. Unfortunately, the existing capacities – human, institutional and financial – of these governments are rather weak and sometimes non-existent. As a result, they cannot adequately ensure effective delivery of these services.

The government is in the difficult position. It has to balance short-term needs to provide services quickly and efficiently to poor and marginalised groups without sacrificing its long-term goal to reform local public institutions so that they are capable of effectively delivering basic services to all citizens.

The central government needs to look into innovative ways of delivering public service to citizens. Alternative service delivery, or ASD, models provide the opportunity to rethink government services that have typically been provided by the central or sub-national governments. These alternative mechanisms offer a creative and pragmatic approach to improve the delivery of public services to citizens by sharing a variety of functions with individuals, community groups, social enterprises and the private sector. New service delivery arrangements break out from the traditional mould of government by providing greater autonomy and flexibility, and often involve new partnering arrangements and a desire to be more business-like.

Alternative service delivery is one of society's responses to a government that no longer provides the minimum public services needed by its citizens.

Core functions of the government need to be looked at to determine if the public sector needs to deliver these services directly or if there are other ways to deliver them. The government has to decide what it can do best with its limited resources while allowing other sectors to deliver other activities they can do better. Many service areas may in fact be unique to the government and be more effectively delivered internally. But where there are no compelling reasons for direct delivery, the government can pursue alternative models, including greater involvement of civil society and private sector. ASD options range from privatisation to "one-stop shop", where several departments provide services to the public in the same location.

Although they may not be referred to as alternative service delivery, the operating principles of ASD are already being used in a number of ways in Myanmar. Due to the lack of state provisioning of public services in Myanmar over recent years, entrepreneurial community-led models for delivering basic services have become the norm. Myanmar civil society has become increasingly instrumental in filling the holes of basic needs, such as public health and education. In these sectors, community-based groups and especially monasteries have come to fill the void for poorer sections of society. In ethnic minority areas such as Kachin State, church organisations have played a similar if slightly different role.

Service delivery is particularly weak in rural, remote and border areas and as a result non-government organisations and the private sector provide the majority of health care and education services. Poor quality of public services has resulted in a flight of citizens, even the poor, to the private sector. For example, about 80 percent of health care visits take place in the private sector. However, users are vulnerable to financial exploitation and low-quality services.

The private sector and public-private partnerships are essential for widening the spread of delivery of public services. In Myanmar the private sector plays an unusually strong role in public service delivery and has taken over many state functions. The government has even transferred a number of government-delivered services to private companies, including telecommunications, ports, fuel distribution and gas/oil production. It is likely that the government will try to privatise several other sectors, such as water supply, airports and railways, in future.

However, the involvement of the private sector in public service delivery requires adequate regulatory frameworks and systems be put in place. These should set quality standards, levels of service, performance monitoring and other conditions to ensure effective and sustainable provision of basic services. In many cases the government has privatised public services with no checks and balances in place. In future, the government must ensure the integrity of the process by establishing strict criteria for the selection of assets, rigid guidelines for the protection of public interest, enforcement of a conflict-of-interest policy and ensuring processes are open to scrutiny by parliament and the public. In order to succeed, however, the government will need very different skills and organisational structures to manage and administer these new delivery methods.

Myanmar shows that alternative service delivery is one of society's responses to a government that no longer provides the minimum public services needed by its citizens. Successful models around the country provide opportunities for the government to replicate and scale them up across the country. The major challenge for the government and the donor community is identifying the models that are workable on a larger scale and then expand coverage and mobilise adequate financial resources.

A more enabling environment for civil society and the private sector will provide a strong platform for alternative service delivery growth and help to rebuild the national social system. There is a need to think about the future role of the non-state actors and the regulatory capacity needed to enhance as well as protect access, equity and quality. Special focus should be given to ensuring accountability between different relationships within the service delivery chain, including between people and providers, the state and providers, and the people and the state.

Henrich Dahm is an independent government reform expert based in Yangon who specialises in organisational development, performance and change management. He has 20 years of experience in Southeast Asia.

Sun Quality Health network: an example of ASD

An innovative example of partnership between the private sector and local and international NGOs is the Sun Quality Health network, which was launched by Population Services International (PSI) and the Myanmar Medical Association in 2001.

The goal of the social franchise system is to use the country's existing general practitioners to provide high-quality health services and products to low-income communities. PSI provides training, patient education material, access to high-quality products and supervision. In return, the private providers commit to specified service standards and a price structure that gives them a small profit but makes their services affordable to people from low-income communities.

The partnership has been mutually beneficial as it has improved the competency and efficiency of each individual doctor and the availability of quality services to low-income clients. By working with existing private practitioners the network has been able to reach large numbers of low-income families in a short time.

According to PSI, as of December 2013 the network included 1554 clinics in 215 of Myanmar's 330 townships, and 2057 rural village health workers in 82 townships. These facilities covered 70 percent of urban areas and 30pc of rural areas.

– Henrich Dahm

Views

Chronicling a war that remains untold

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HOW many Myanmar children really know what happened on August 8, 1988?

It is an intriguing question, as certain things appear to be officially expunged from the national consciousness.

The subject is especially topical this week because it is the anniversary of one of the region's most horrific, and most forgotten, wars.

It began in the pre-dawn darkness of February 17, 1979, when hundreds of Chinese field-guns and rocket launchers opened fire on Vietnam.

The barrage was so intense and unrelenting that shells rained down on the petrified civilians of Vietnam's northern provinces at the rate of one a second.

When it stopped, 85,000 Chinese troops stormed over the frontier and tried to over-run Vietnam's defence forces in their fortified redoubts, tunnels and bunkers.

The initial human wave was a catastrophe for China, as its men were blown up by mines and cut down by batteries of machine guns.

So they pulled back, regrouped and then attacked again using more astute tactics with massive artillery and tank support.

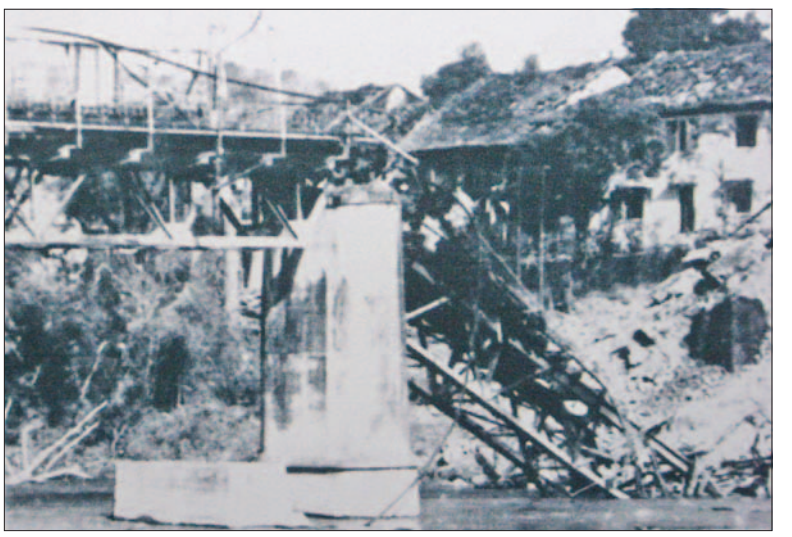
This time they prevailed and occupied a band of territory about 30 kilometres (19 miles) deep across the entire north of Vietnam, reducing the towns of Lai Chau, Lao Cai, Ha Giang, Cao Bang and Lang Son to rubble.

Then they withdrew, having achieved their objective of punishing Vietnam for invading Cambodia a month earlier to depose the Khmer Rouge regime, which Beijing supported.

The death toll in the 16-day war is disputed, but Beijing claims Vietnam lost 42,000 soldiers, and Hanoi says 62,500 Chinese troops perished.

Aside from the appalling carnage, the most shocking aspect is that both countries now actively suppress all reference to it.

There will be no ceremonies this week honouring the war's dead. History books and military museums omit all mention of it. And tombstones make no reference to those buried being victims of this idiotic battle.



This photo from a Kunming museum shows a rail bridge linking Vietnam and China that was destroyed in the 1979 war. Photo: Supplied/Roger Mitton

Of course, there are incidents that spark a recollection of the conflict.

Six years ago, when visiting the Railway Museum in Kunming, I saw a small photograph of the destroyed frontier bridge at Lao Cai. The caption said it was blown up in 1979 without further explanation.

And once, at a wedding in rural Son La province, I asked the bride's father, a former military officer, if the framed certificates were for service in what the Vietnamese call "the American War".

"Not America," he growled. "China!" But then he refused to say more.

In some ways, Beijing is even more robust in this regard, as shown by the way it stops veterans commemorating the war's victims.

On February 17, 2009, the authorities forcefully prohibited groups of grizzled survivors in Shandong province from gathering to mark the war's 30th anniversary.

The organisers of the event were placed under house arrest and one of them later lamented, "We don't understand; we just wanted to mourn our battle companions and share our memories."

But that is precisely what the Chinese authorities, like those in Vietnam, do not want to happen. In most other authoritarian regimes, such as Myanmar until recently, it is a similar story.

Try to imagine the Than Shwe regime allowing a parade down Sule Pagoda Road to mark the victims of 8888. No, it would not be countenanced.

Nor is it by the dictators in Beijing and Hanoi, who seek to expunge all memory of incidents that reflect badly on them.

Referring to this state-enforced amnesia, the Chinese writer Yan Lianke noted, "Not a word is written about how many Chinese or Vietnamese died in the pointless war between us in the late 1970s."

He asserted that it was the goal of all repressive regimes to keep their people politically at the level of schoolchildren.

In that way, they follow instructions and do not ask awkward questions – like what did happen on 8888?

He is right. And that is why this region's most bloody war of recent years will go unmarked this week.

Defining ecotourism remains problematic

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THE question of how to travel responsibly in Myanmar has long loomed over the country's tourism sector.

For many years, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi urged foreign tourists to impose a tourism boycott, while countless commentaries and blogs have grappled with the question of how to travel the country's rural areas in a way that's both environmentally sound and supportive of local communities.

'If everyone comes up with their own term, things can get messy.'

Ivy Chee
Pacific Asia Travel Association

Tourism numbers soared following the nation's opening in 2010, suggesting that many have made peace with this dilemma. However, the issue of what constitutes ethical travelling is perhaps even murkier today, as many groups in-country have started using the confusing term "ecotourism" to describe destinations and itineraries.

The ambiguity of the term is highlighted by the fact that the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism's website lists the Yangon Zoological Gardens as an ecotourism site – but paying a small fee to have your photo taken with an Asiatic black bear that spends its days chained to a park bench can hardly be considered environmentally sound or supportive of local communities.

In the private sector, the website of the Yangon-based Myanmar Travel Expert tour company mentions the Hukaung Valley Tiger Reserve in Kachin State as an ecotourism destination, making no mention of accusations that hundreds of farmers have been displaced from the reserve area, their land now covered with cassava, tapioca and sugarcane plantations owned by the Yuzana Corporation.

According to Ivy Chee, the regional director of the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA), despite "ecotourism" being an increasingly popular term for travel providers there is no precise, widely agreed definition.

Ms Chee explained that playing fast and loose with the word hardly makes Myanmar unique.

"Across all of [Asia's tourism market], things are not being addressed properly," she said.

To that end, PATA and its international partners plan to hold a conference in Manila in the Philippines next month at which they will push to create specific criteria for ecotourism – ones that can be applied across Asia and eventually the world.

"We will align our advocacy and speak with one voice. We will have a consensus," she said.

Ms Chee said "real ecotourism" in Asia will be successful "if you have a benchmark system everyone can follow".

"If everyone comes up with their own term, things can get messy," she said.

PATA released a report last month on sustainability in the tourism sector, identifying trends and making recommendations for the future.

"In tourism specifically, semantics still cloud the idea of corporate social responsibility through terms such as 'ecotourism', 'responsible tourism', 'green tourism', 'sustainable tourism' and so forth," the report said.

"Perhaps neither semantics (nor, arguably, motivation) surrounding [corporate social responsibility] are that important; rather what counts is the end product – that collectively, we are doing what's right, doing it with integrity, and, in the case of travel and tourism and the visitor economy, ensuring that the very reason behind why we travel does not disappear."

Popa Mountain Park in Mandalay Region offers opportunities for hiking, horseback riding, birdwatching and other outdoor activities. Photo: Douglas Long

A cabin overlooks the hills near Natmataung (Mount Victoria) in Chin State. Photo: Douglas Long

Tourism ministry slow to embrace homestays

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HOMESTAYS are an increasingly popular way for travellers to immerse themselves in a foreign culture, and many countries, including in Southeast Asia, encourage such travel as a means of developing local economies.

Myanmar, however, is far behind the curve in this regard, as the government does not officially allow foreigners to spend the night in the homes of villagers.

One of the main benefits of homestays is that they allow people from different cultures to meet and learn from one another, but U Myint Tun Oo, the deputy director of the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, sees this as a potentially negative aspect of the concept.

"The government doesn't allow homestay tourism in Myanmar because of the different cultures, languages and living standards between villagers and tourists," he told *The Myanmar Times*.

"We need to educate villagers who lack knowledge of homestay tourism. If we allow it now, there will be unnecessary problems and misunderstandings between tourists and villagers."

U Myint Tun Oo said the ministry is currently writing guidelines and holding workshops for homestays, but he was unable to say when they would be officially allowed.

While not enthralled by the concept of cultural exchange, U Myint Tun Oo was effusive about the economic benefits.

"If homestays become popular in Myanmar, the villages where tourists go will improve and get many benefits. Tourists will buy the products of the village, so the more tourists that come, the more it will benefit the villagers," he said.

'We need to educate villagers who lack knowledge of homestay tourism.'

U Myint Tun Oo
Deputy director,
Ministry of Hotels and Tourism

According to U Thet Lwin Toe, vice chair of the Union of Myanmar Travel Association (UMTA), there is more to homestays than just economic benefits.

He said they would facilitate the sharing of "knowledge and experience between tourists and villagers", which would help Myanmar become better-known to the world.

He also said there would be educational benefits.

"The main target of homestay tourism is the local community, which means local or international students could stay with a family while studying and writing their thesis about life in ordinary villages," he said.

U Thet Lwin Toe added that he thought homestays would be more appropriate for package tours than for independent travellers.

"Our country should open for homestay tourism, but first we need to train people so the tours are operated systematically," he said.

2014 CENSUS

More ethnic groups express concern over minority codes

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MORE ethnic groups have voiced concerns about the system of identification codes to be used in Myanmar's first nationwide census for decades. The census will be used, among other things, to establish the size of ethnic groups in various localities, and could have electoral and economic development implications.

The groups have been meeting to establish a common position on the codes for the country's 135 distinct nationalities, though some groups say they have not been allocated a code.

The Chin National Action Committee on Census 2014, which was formed last month by political parties, social groups and scholars in Chin State to look out for their group's interests, issued a statement on January 27 on the impact the census could have on their group and others. The group urged Chin people to identify themselves with the code 401 when filling in the census form, and asked authorities to "correct" forms if they are completed incorrectly.

The Palaung State Liberation Front (PSLF) has objected to the listing of the Ta'aung – another name for the Palaung – as a Shan sub-group because the two are not related ethnically or linguistically. And Khumi-language media are advising Khumi readers, a Chin subgroup, to identify themselves as "Khami" (code 405), which they say is a misspelling of their ethnic name.

The Zomi Congress for Democracy has urged Zomi, who live in and around Chin State, to declare themselves as "Other" and self-identify because there is no code for Zomi.

In a letter to Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann, 23 Kachin civil society groups have called for the postponement of the census to allow for a discussion of its system of categorisation.

One group lobbying to have its ethnicity recognised not only in the census but also on identity documents such as national registration cards is the Red Shan, also known as the Tai-Leng, whose members live mostly in Kachin State and Sagaing Region.

"Ethnic groups that have a code in the census should identify themselves by the appropriate number. But those who do not should mark themselves as 'Other', plus [write in] the ethnic name," U San Pyae, an Amyotha Hluttaw representative from Kachin State's Mogaung township told participants in a public meeting at Mandalay's Hopin Monastery.

In Kachin State, the Shan ethnic groups Shan Gale, Tai-Lai, Tai-Len and Tai-Lay have been allocated the code numbers 821, 827, 828 and 830 respectively.

Govt rules out extra security during census

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THE Ministry of Immigration and Population says no extra security will be dispatched to Rakhine State to maintain order during the national census, which begins next month.

Minister for Immigration and Population U Khin Yi said that citizens may be too intimidated to talk to enumerators if there is a heavy security presence and this would skew the data. "If we use security … we won't get exact data for the census. So, we don't use security," he said at a press conference in Yangon on February 10.

The minister said he did not expect any unrest or other difficulties that could disrupt the census but did concede that "conflicts and language barriers" have previously been an issue in Rakhine State.

While it has aroused controversy and debate in many parts of the country, the census is particularly sensitive in Rakhine State, where hundreds of thousands of Muslim Rohingya are not able to access citizenship. Many insist that the Rohingya are illegal immigrants from Bangladesh.

Previous attempts to count sections of the Muslim population in Rakhine State have led to conflict. On April 26, 2013, a state-level immigration official was attacked after he tried to make residents of an IDP camp near Sittwe register as Bengalis, rather than Rohingya. The incident led to several arrests.

However, Ministry of Immigration and Population officials told *The Myanmar Times* last week that they are confident both the Rakhine and Muslim communities will "actively" participate. "Both Rakhines and Bengalis are enthusiastic about taking the census," said U Myint Kyaing, director general of the Department of Population.

In an effort to put respondents at ease, U Khin Yi said enumerators – mostly local schoolteachers – would be accompanied by community leaders and volunteers who can speak local languages. He also reaffirmed that respondents would be able to self-identify as Rohingya if they wish.

At a press conference in late January, a ministry official said all relevant government departments are cooperating to ensure the census proceeds without conflict in Rakhine State. "There are not likely to be any difficulties," director U Nyi Nyi said.

The census will be conducted from March 29 to April 10. The Ministry of Immigration and Population expects to release the results to the public in early 2015.

Call for ethnicity, religion sections to be dropped from questionnaire

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THE International Crisis Group has called on the government to amend the census to remove "needlessly antagonistic and divisive" questions, including those focusing on ethnicity, religion and citizenship status.

The Brussels-based think tank said the topics should be postponed until "a more appropriate moment" to avoid inflaming tensions during and after the census, which will be conducted from March 29 to April 10.

"A poorly timed census that enters into controversial areas of ethnicity and religion in an ill-conceived way will further complicate the situation," it said in a conflict alert published on February 12.

Of particular concern is the prospect that the census will show a much larger Muslim population than when the last count was taken in 1983. The group said there were "strong indications" that the Muslim population in 1983 was more than 10 percent but a "political decision" was taken by the U Ne Win government "to publish a more acceptable figure of 4pc", which has since become the widely accepted figure.

"The results of the current census could therefore be mistakenly interpreted as providing evidence for a three-fold increase in the Muslim population in the country over the last 30 years, a potentially dangerous call to arms for extremist movements," the ICG said.

A resident watches as black smoke rises from burning houses in Meiktila on March 21, 2013. More than 40 people were killed in the riots. Photo: AFP

Similarly, officially recognised ethnic minorities have complained about the categories for responses on ethnicity, which in some cases create too many ethnic subgroups and in others lump together groups that are not ethnically or linguistically related.

The proposed census includes 41 questions. While praising the government for its technical and administrative preparations, the think tank said the number should be significantly scaled back because of the potential political risks.

"There is still time to adjust the process by limiting the census to just the key demographic questions on age, sex and marital status – that is, the first six questions on the census form. This will provide the most important data without touching at this stage on the controversial issues of identity and citizenship.

"The limited technical complication of adjusting the process pales into insignificance when placed against the much larger risk – to the very fabric of Myanmar society at this delicate stage in the country's transition – of proceeding with the current, ill-thought-out process."

Myanmar rises in press freedom ranks

But concern remains that media reforms have stalled, as long-awaited legislation to enshrine press freedom is yet to be approved by parliament

BILL O'TOOLE

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RESTRICTIONS on Myanmar's media suggest reforms in the sector may have "run out of steam", watchdog Reporters Without Borders (RSF) said last week in its annual report on global press freedom.

Although Myanmar rose 18 positions in the group's Press Freedom Index for 2013 to 151st – above Laos and Vietnam, and just behind Cambodia and Singapore – RSF painted a largely pessimistic picture of the media landscape.

The group said international human rights NGOs are "beginning to worry" that media reforms are slowing down as the government struggles to resolve sectarian and ethnic conflicts.

"The government and parliament kept the promises made in 2012 to end prior censorship and grant more freedom to the media and media organisations. But the promise to draft media legislation that complies with international standards has not been kept," it said.

A draft media law submitted to parliament in March 2013 but not yet approved would place "unacceptable restrictions of media freedom", it said. The Printers and Publishers Enterprise Law, drafted by the Ministry of Information, has attracted criticism both at home and abroad and MPs have made a range of amendments. It is expected to be approved by parliament in the coming weeks.

While international media groups are providing training for many journalists, including at state-run media outlets, the report said the law was submitted without any consultation. "The printing and publications law and the latest draft of a proposed broadcast media law also reveal government ambivalence about real respect for fundamental rights."

The Ministry of Information could not be reached for comment.

RSF did, however, stress the significance of Myanmar's media reforms in the context of Southeast Asia, where its report said media freedom was backsliding.

According to the report, both authoritarians and activists in neighboring countries are watching the nation with "great interest".

"The governments and population of [ASEAN] are following the development of a new regional model of governance in Burma, a model that is still far from proving itself. Will Burma become Southeast Asia's benchmark for positive change in freedom of information? This remains to be seen."

Bucking the regional trend in press freedom

Brunei	122	▲ 3
Indonesia	139	▲ 7
Cambodia	143	▼ 26
Malaysia	144	▼ 23
Philippines	147	▼ 7
Singapore	149	▼ 14
Myanmar	151	▲ 18
Laos	168	▼ 3
Vietnam	172	– 0

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Dated: 17th February, 2014

Copies of *Unity* journal on sale in Yangon earlier this month. Photo: Aung Htay Hlaing

Demand for 'Unity' soars after arrests

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THE arrest of four journalists from local weekly *Unity* - along with the paper's chief executive officer - over a report alleging the military is running a chemical weapons factory has sent interest in the journal soaring, journal sellers in Nay Pyi Taw said last week.

The report into the factory was published in late January and the paper's staff were arrested on January 31 and February 1 under the state secrets act. The report and subsequent arrest have sparked debate not just about media freedom but also journalism ethics, with some questioning whether *Unity* was right to publish the report.

The journal has clearly benefited from the ensuing scandal, however.

"Before I took only one *Unity* journal but always had to return it because there were no buyers," said Ma Ei Shwe Sin, who sells journals in Myomya Market. "Now three or four people come and ask every day ... They even ask for old issues of *Unity*."

Journal seller Ko Soe Min reported a similar trend. "Ninety percent of people are asking for *Unity* journal," he said.

Normally, he takes just three copies of *Unity* for a week. "Now I'll get as much as I can – at least 50 copies a week," said the 27-year-old, who migrated to Nay Pyi Taw a year ago from Meiktila to find work.

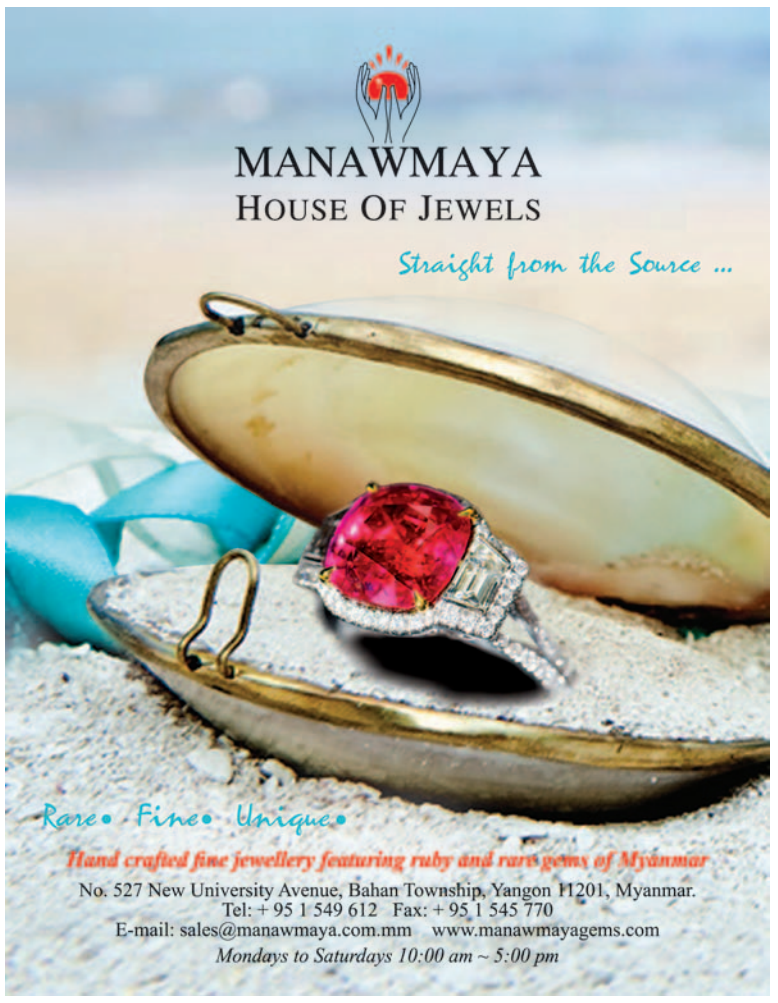
"As a vendor, I want to sell the journals that readers are interested in because the more I can sell, the more money I make and can send back home."

Ma Khin Myo Nwe, who has sold journals in Pyinmana for six years, said there is now "a lot" of interest in *Unity*. "Most [customers] take out their phones and say they want 'this journal'. Most of them don't know the name," she said.

Meanwhile, several distributors and vendors said they had been approached by a person on January 31 and February 1 who asked to buy all copies.

"He came on Saturday but I'd sold all copies on Friday," said Ko Lin from Thawdarsan distribution in Pyinmana. "He said he wanted to get all the copies of *Unity* that I had. He was not in uniform but I think he was from the government."

In Myoma Market, Ma Ei Shwe Sin had a similar experience. "A man came around on Friday morning buying all copies of Unity from every shop here. He seemed in a rush and very intent on getting all of them. I think he got at least 50 copies that day."



Review of ASEAN human rights body begins

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A REVIEW of a controversial ASEAN human rights commission got underway last week but activists say they remain sceptical that Myanmar can use its chairship in 2014 to strengthen the body.

Regional officials gathered at Parkroyal Hotel in Yangon from February 8-11 to review the terms of reference of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission of Human Rights, which has been criticised as toothless and ineffective since its creation in 2009.

The commission said in a statement released following the meeting that the commission has scheduled a series of consultations to assess its work and get feedback on ways to improve the body. These recommendations will be submitted to the ASEAN foreign ministers for approval.

The statement also said the commission has begun discussion on the drafting of a convention on the prevention and elimination of violence against women and children.

U Aung Htoo, deputy director general of the foreign ministry's ASEAN Affairs Department, said that under Myanmar's leadership the review of the terms of reference could bring about a more effective rights commission.

But Indonesian human rights activist Yuyun said ASEAN used the human rights mechanism to shield its members' rights record from international scrutiny. Ms Yuyun called on Myanmar to use its chairship to strengthen the body.

"AICHR's weaknesses are by design from the beginning. It has no mandate … to investigate, monitor and receive complaints on human rights," she said. "It is very important for Myanmar to ensure that the review is to strengthen the protection mandate rather than dilute [it]."

Activist Ma Wai Wai Nu said Myanmar could not take the lead on women's rights as chair of the commission while women in ethnic areas were still subject to abuse. "Sexual violence, especially rape and other forms of harassment, is occurring with total impunity around the country," she said.

Farmers collect paddy seedlings from flooded fields to replant in Ayeyarwady Region. Photo: AFP

USDP rep under fire for land confiscations

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A REGIONAL hluttaw MP is in hot water over a land dispute in the Ayeyarwady delta. Two farmers who say they lost 16 acres to Union Solidarity and Development Party MP U Nyein Myaing have sent a complaint letter to President U Thein Sein, Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann and the region's chief minister.

The dispute erupted on January 6 when land in Pantanaw township was allocated to U Nyein Myaing for a fish farming project, according to the complaint letter. It said many farmers had lost land to his business but they were too afraid to complain.

"They told me that this project was permitted by the regional government but they couldn't show me any paperwork," said Daw Ohn Htay, one of the farmers who sent the complaint letter.

Ko Thu Zaw, a local activist assisting Daw Ohn Htay and the other complainant, said U Nyein Myaing had been involved in many land disputes prior to the 2010 election. Meanwhile, U Tin Win, chair of the township farmers and fishermen union for Pantanaw, said about 700 farmers protested last year because they had lost their land to U Nyein Myaing. The dispute was eventually solved through negotiation with the regional government, he said.

> **'They can complain to anyone but I am right.'**
>
> **U Nyein Myaing**
> Ayeyarwady Region Hluttaw MP

"The farmers don't have land for their livelihood. They have no education so if they lose the right to run their farms their lives are broken. I think there will be many problems unless this situation is resolved," U Tin Win said.

However, U Nyein Myaing denied the accusations he had taken the land from the farmers and warned he would press charges against those who trespass on his new holdings.

"They don't own this land. It is vacant land. The [Ayeyarwady Region] chief minister has given me 34 acres to use … But the farmers trespass on my land so I'll have to sue them.

"I've got all the paperwork. The land was held previously by Yuzana company and they distributed it to us because they couldn't use it.

"They can complain to anyone but I am right. If they can show any evidence [of ownership] I'll give land to them free of charge."

Court witnesses extracting bribes to appear: MP

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A PARLIAMENTARIAN says some police, forensic physicians and other experts are colluding with judges to extract bribes from defendants and plaintiffs.

Pyithu Hluttaw representative for Amarapura U Thein Tun Oo said the officials are ignoring summons notices until those who would benefit from their testimony pay up.

Rather than charge the officials with failing to appear in court, U Thein Tun Oo said judges are "pressuring" defendants and plaintiffs to get the case moving forward – by handing over money.

He asked whether the Supreme Court was aware of the practice and whether any officials had been charged under section 172 of the Penal Code for failing to abide by a summons, which carries a potential one-month jail term. He also asked whether any judges had been reprimanded for pressuring defendants and plaintiffs to pay bribes.

Chief Justice of the Supreme Court U Mya Thein said he was unaware that this was happening and no officials have been charged under section 172.

He said that while a court can directly summon most witnesses, if the witness is a government official it has to send the summons to their superior.

"A police officer who has filed a charge has to appear in court when the head of the police station tells them to. But I don't know if there have been cases where the officer failed to appear in court," U Mya Thein said.

On judges pressuring litigants to pay bribes, he said, "We don't know about judges putting pressure on litigants instead of summoning the relevant officials directly. We have only known about it after you discussed it [in the Pyithu Hluttaw]."

– Translation by Thiri Min Htun

Consumer Trends, Marketing & Branding Strategies

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Electricity law delayed

AUNG SHIN

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MPs have agreed to delay approval of a planned electricity law so the government can get more input from the World Bank, a leading parliamentarian says.

"Last week, [the Pyithu Hluttaw] was about to discuss the electricity law but the Ministry of Electric Power requested us to suspend the process to get additional comments from the President's Office based on suggestions from the World Bank," said U Thein Lwin, secretary of the Pyithu Hluttaw Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation Committee.

Further talks are expected to take place between the parliament and the ministries of electric power and industry over the bill, U Thein Lwin said.

A senior government official, meanwhile, rejected a recent report that the bill had been put off because of a dispute between the electric power and industry ministries over pricing.

"The two ministries cannot negotiate [a solution] on matters related to electricity charges. The hluttaw will suspend the bill," said the report in *Freedom Daily*.

But U Khin Maung Win, deputy director general of the Department of Electric Power, said this was incorrect.

"There are no disagreements between the ministries," he said. "The law is almost finished. There are just a few more good points left to add based on the recommendations from the World Bank."

The Ministry of Electric Power began drafting the law in collaboration with the World Bank and Asian Development Bank about two years ago.

The new law would replace the 1984 Electricity Law, which was most recently amended in 1990.

Rakhine State Chief Minister U Hla Maung Tin (left) visits a booth set up to show the work of UN agencies and NGOs in Sittwe on February 11. Photo: Supplied/UNOCHA

UN begins outreach to counter anti-NGO anger

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THE UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs marked Union Day in the Rakhine State capital Sittwe with an outreach program aimed at educating the public about the work of NGOs and UN agencies.

At the invitation of local and state authorities, UNOCHA set up a booth on February 11 to display photos and distribute leaflets showcasing humanitarian and development initiatives being undertaken by various organisations in communities and IDP camps. OCHA staff were on hand to talk to people and answer questions.

The booth aimed to combat the rising tide of anti-NGO sentiment in Rakhine State, which has seen protests take place in recent months in Sittwe and Pauktaw townships.

"This is part of an effort to be more transparent about our work ... and improve the understanding of the humanitarian response and development projects across the state," said UNOCHA public information and advocacy officer Pierre Péron.

"[Anti-NGO sentiment] has created a difficult environment for humanitarian work and in some areas it is affecting the ability of international actors to provide assistance to ... vulnerable communities."

Mr Peron said UNOCHA believed the outreach effort had been successful and would look to set up similar displays in other townships in Rakhine State.

"Many [visitors] have never been inside these camps and did not know what the situation is like for people living in them."

IN BRIEF

Ban on protest against minister

Residents of Pyin Oo Lwin have been blocked from staging a protest calling on the government to sack Minister for Livestock, Fisheries and Rural Development U Ohn Myint, who was recently caught on camera making controversial remarks to villagers in rural Magwe Region.

The township police force blocked the application to demonstrate on the grounds that the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, or national parliament, has raised the issue and the government has promised to investigate. The protest would also cause traffic congestion and public annoyance, police said.

On January 28 U Ohn Myint was caught on video telling villagers that he planned to have the government's critics thrown in jail. He also said he was "brave enough to slap anyone in the face".

Protest organiser U Ko Gyi said he was disappointed by the decision, particularly given township officials had verbally indicated they would allow the march. Between 70 and 100 participants had planned to hold posters calling for U Ohn Myint's dismissal.

"A minister who was elected by the people insulted the public," U Ko Gyi said. "If he slaps the face of the public, he should get hit back twice." – *Si Thu Lwin, translation by Zar Zar Soe*

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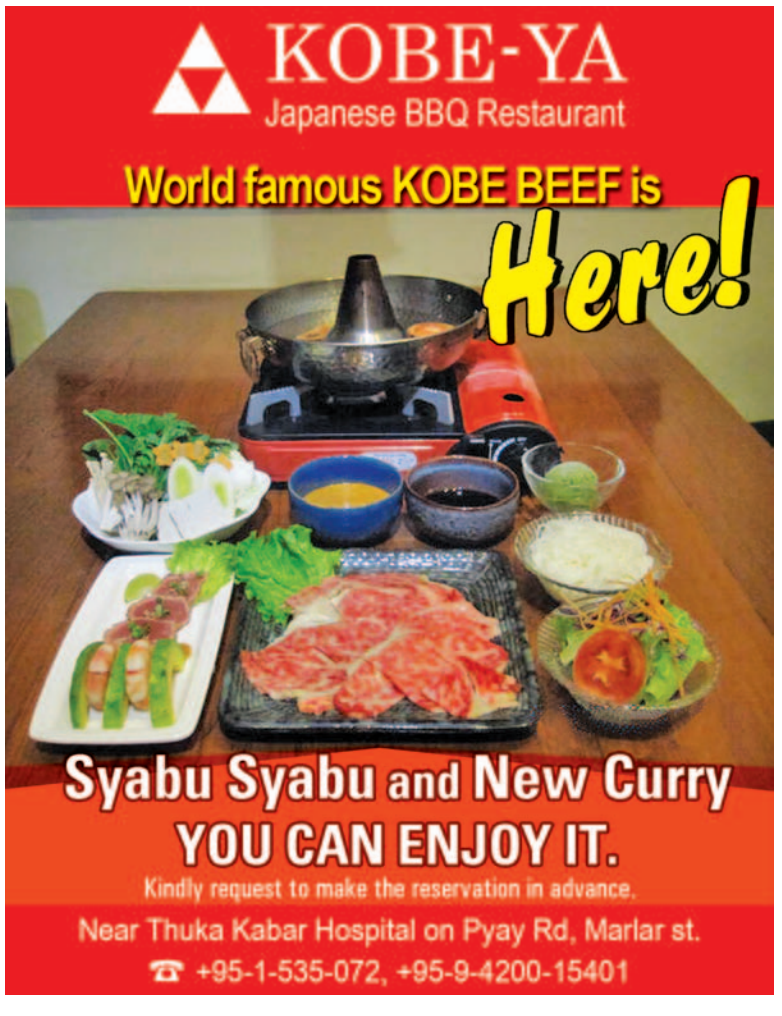

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FEATURE

For Shan, a single word means much

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A woman attends a Shan National Day ceremony at the Shan State Army-South headquarters at Loi Tai Leng on the Thai border on February 7. Photo: Sam Jam

"NAY Pyi Taw is so elegant – so different from my place," said Ma Thant Su Sin.

The 18-year-old ethnic Danu had come from the Danu self-administered zone in southern Shan State to the capital to perform for Shan State Day on February 7.

Dressed in her green Danu costume, she looked around the brightly lit conference hall in the Myanmar International Convention Centre as Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann, clad in a full Shan costume of yellow silk, danced to the beat of a live Shan drum, or *oh-si*, with Shan politicians. He later sat at the same table as National League for Democracy leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

An English major at Taunggyi University, Ma Thant Su San was visiting Nay Pyi Taw for the first time. "Back home, we have a lot of needs, from education to health," she said.

Her fellow dancer, 19-year-old Sai Aung Pa, who performed the traditional Shan dance *Ki-ta-yi Kan-ta-yar*, said he was "happy and excited to perform before such important people ... I've never seen such huge event. It's so elegant."

Despite the attention lavished by such senior political figures, the government's hosting of what it called the 67th Shan State Day has disappointed some Shan people, who question the government's sincerity.

"It used to be called Shan National Day. The name was changed in 1962. It's not good to change history," said U Sai Nyunt Lwin, secretary of the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy.

'It will always be "Shan National Day" for me ... You can re-write history but you can't change it.'

U Sai Htwe
California Shan Social and Culture

U Sai Boe Aung, of the Shan Nationalities Democratic Party, said February 7 was a "holy day" for the Shan people, commemorating the day when the Shan national flag and anthem were created. "It's more appropriate to call it 'Shan National Day' ... [It] means it can be celebrated by all Shan people, including those outside Shan State."

On February 7, 1947, Shan Saopha and General Aung San agreed to cooperate in wresting independence from Britain. The day has been celebrated by the Shan ever since.

In 1962, after the General Ne Win-led military coup, the government banned the term "Shan National Day", replacing it with "Shan State Day".

For U Sai Htwe, chair of the California Shan Social and Culture group in the United States, the continuing use of the term "Shan State Day" has created doubts about the government's commitment to the transition.

"This government is of the same generation as Ne Win. Most officials come from the military. Calling it "Shan State Day" is the same policy. It makes me wonder if they want ethnic reconciliation or not," he said.

U Sai Htwe celebrated what he called Shan National Day with other Shan people in the US.

"It will always be 'Shan National Day' for me," U Sai Htwe said, adding that the continuing use of the term "Shan State Day" would prevent young Shan people from understanding their true history. "You can re-write history but you can't change it."

For Ma Nang Sai Noon, a 26-year-old Muse native in northern Shan State, the use of "Shan State Day" denotes inequality for all ethnic groups. "Whatever the government calls it, it's still Shan National Day for us. It's rooted in our minds. Shan young people like me will keep trying to get the government to call it Shan National Day again."

'Unity' arrests send wrong message: US

Government must respect "fundamental" rights, including freedom of expression, US official says

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THE United States embassy in Yangon says the recent arrest of four journalists for a report on the military sends the "wrong message" to the international community about its commitment to the reform process.

Four journalists from the news weekly *Unity*, as well as the company's chief executive officer, were arrested on January 31 and February 1 and charged under the state secrets act for reporting allegations that the military was manufacturing chemical weapons at a factory in Magwe Region.

A spokesperson for the embassy told *The Myanmar Times* by email that it was "aware of and concerned about" the arrests.

"This sends the wrong message to the international community on the country's commitment to sustaining freedom of expression, including for the media, and political reform," the official said on February 11.

The official said that while the government has made "tremendous progress in opening the political space in the last three years and working to develop conductive to free, fair and independent media", it must also protect universal rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression.

"We urge the government of Burma to continue that trend and respect the rights of all journalists," the official said.

The embassy was not able to confirm the details of the report and the official said it remains committed "to deepening the bilateral relationship" – including on the topic of bilateral weapons, if the government follows through with promises to ratify the Chemical Weapons Convention, which bans the use, production and stockpiling of chemical weapons. "Upon ratification, the United States can provide technical assistance with national implementation."

On February 10, German President Joachim Gauck – the first German head of state to visit Myanmar since 1986 – told reporters he had not raised the issue during his meetings in Nay Pyi Taw. "I didn't know this case. If I knew, I would [have] discuss[ed] it," he said.

The reports of the factory in Pauk township, as well as the alleged Chinese workers at the site, remain unconfirmed.

Journalist Bertil Lintner, who has written extensively about the Myanmar military over the past three decades, said there was no conclusive evidence that Myanmar is producing chemical weapons.

Despite the doubts over the report's veracity, he described the *Unity* article as "perfectly legitimate" given the Tatmadaw's lack of transparency.

"I hope this will lead to Myanmar journalists asking questions about the country's defence industries [known as *Ka Pa Sa*]," he said. "More transparency is evidently needed."

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FEATURE

Palaung women watch parading soldiers from the Ta'aung National Liberation Army, a Palaung ethnic armed group, in Namhsan

New self-administered struggle to assert auth

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AS ethnic armed groups inch closer to political dialogue with the government on greater autonomy for minorities, bodies established under the 2008 constitution to give ethnic minorities more administrative control are being hobbled by Myanmar's formidable bureaucracy.

The governments of the one self-administered division and five self-administered zones formed under the political system established in 2011 have made little progress in wresting authority from the powerful central government, their leaders say.

"To put it bluntly, these are self-administered areas in name only," said U Htoo Ko Ko, the head of the Danu self-administered zone in southern Shan State. "The state government is influencing and intervening all the time.

"Authority between the district office [controlled by the Union Government] and the self-administered bodies is also unclear. We are still influenced by Taunggyi district [General Administration Department]," he said.

More than five decades of centralisation and top-down governance is a "huge barrier" to the progress of self-administration and flies in the face of the zones' bottom-up approach, said U Ro San Kyu, the head of the Naga self-administered zone in northern Sagaing Region.

"We have been living under a top-down system for virtually our entire history. We started using a bottom-up approach only now. How can such a change be made in just a few years?" he said. "But we are trying. The [Union Government] is also driving it and we at the bottom are also trying to make progress."

The constitution establishes a Union Government and 14 state and region governments. Seven of these are nominally for the major ethnic minority groups – Chin, Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Mon, Rakhine and Shan – but remain under the control of the Union Solidarity and Development Party, which is led almost exclusively by ethnic Bamar.

The self-administered zones and visions, which are overseen by governments known as leading bodies, sit below the regional governments.

Under the constitution, these leading bodies have legislative power over 10 areas, including development affairs, public health, water and electricity. But more than halfway through their five-year term, none have yet promulgated a law.

'To put it bluntly, these are self-administered areas in name only.'

U Htoo Ko Ko
Chair, Danu Self-administered Zone Leading Body

"We have many difficulties in drafting laws for self-administration," said U San Lwin, the head of the Pa-O self-administered zone.

"These complications are not just in the technicalities of the law but in the division of authority," agreed U Htoo Ko Ko.

One leading body is working to clear the confusion by enacting laws that clearly define responsibilities.

"We are discussing laws for development affairs and fire prevention that divide responsibilities between us and the General Administration Department," said U Maung Kyaw, the head of the Palaung self-administered zone. "It works – we have cleared up the confusion to some extent."

The future of the self-administered division and zones remains unclear, however. The government's concessions in the 2008 constitution to ethnic groups' desire for autonomy were rejected by many, including armed groups that are in peace talks with the government.

The talks are expected to lead to political dialogue and potentially constitutional amendments that give minorities more authority. In his monthly radio address, President U Thein Sein said in February that the parliament's constitutional amendment process should take into account the views of armed ethnic groups.

This could lead to greater autonomy for the existing self-administered division and zones – or their replacement by a completely new administrative mechanism. But more authority is not a prospect that the leaders of the self-administered areas are pushing for – or even enthusiastic about.

"We have no idea even about federalism," said U Htoo Ko Ko. "We are interested just in better development of our area. But if the self-administered system is fully realised and the technical issues are settled, [more authority] should help our development work."

U Ro San Kyu added, "Our self-administered area does not have any specific demand for greater autonomy ... But I believe that the system will gradually become settled and we will get the changes that we want."

Others are even less forceful in their demands – or have made none at all. U Myo Aung, secretary of the Wa self-administered division, said when approached by the Shan State government to discuss the constitution, the Wa leading body had said it did not want any specific constitutional changes.

"We also have no comment on the

township in northern Shan state last month. Photo: AFP

d areas
ority

demand of [the United Wa State Army for greater autonomy] but we have a smooth relationship with them. We work together with understanding."

Speaking on behalf of U Pauk U Chan, the head of the Kokang self-administered zone, translator U Maung Maung said the Kokang also have "no specific comment" on the level of self-administration granted in the constitution.

"We just want to say that the constitution should be amended based on consensus from all parties," U Maung Maung said.

Several of the leading bodies are still controlled by the USDP, and this is likely to explain their reticence to align themselves with the demands of armed ethnic groups. While the Palaung leader, for example, suggested authority should be distributed based on population, he said he would follow his party's policy on the issue.

"Our party's recommendations on constitutional change include greater autonomy for regional governments. I agree with that and for the moment I have no idea to ask for greater autonomy. If I do, however, I'll go through party channels," said U Maung Kyaw, who is also a USDP executive committee member.

The Pa-O zone, in this respect, is different, because its leading body is controlled by members of the Pa-O National Organisation, although the USDP did not nominate candidates to compete against the PNO in the 2010 election.

The PNO favours a gradual increase in autonomy rather than a rapid change, said U San Lwin.

"We have faced difficulties in drafting laws even for our self-administered zone so we don't have any specific points that we want changed in the constitution," he said. "But I support those amendments ... that support the democratisation process and improved distribution of the country's natural and human resources."

CRIME IN BRIEF

Police arrest six at Sanchaung beauty parlour

Sanchaung police have arrested six people following a raid on a beauty parlour in Sanchaung township that was secretly offering sexual services.

The raid on the beauty parlour in Shin Saw Pu ward took place about 2:30pm on February 9. Police arrested the 21-year-old manager, from Dala township, and five female staff, aged between 19 and 28, who are all from Hlaing Tharyar township.

The police also seized five pillows and five mattresses as evidence, along with K22,000 in allegedly ill-gotten gains.

Man killed neighbour whose cows ate his plants, court finds

The Yangon Southern District Court has sentenced a man to seven years' jail with hard labour for killing a man in Kawmhu township in December 2012.

U Zaw Moe was found guilty on January 31. The court heard he quarreled with his neighbour because the neighbour's cow had eaten plants in his compound. While the victim initiated the physical altercation, the court heard U Zaw Moe stabbed him 12 times.

U Zaw Moe was convicted largely on eyewitness testimony given by the deceased's wife, who had been waiting for her husband on a bridge when she saw the incident take place.

Jilted lover attempts suicide

A 39-year-old woman from Htantabin township whose boyfriend refused to marry her after the pair eloped has survived a suicide attempt.

The woman drank insecticide on the afternoon of February 8, shortly after her boyfriend, 28, sent her back to her village. She vomited within a few minutes and was sent to Hlaing Tharyar hospital. She has been charged with attempting suicide, police in Htantabin said.

Man jailed for raping girl, 14

A Twante township resident has been sentenced to seven years' jail with hard labour for raping a 14-year-old girl in July 2013.

The man was convicted based on the girl's testimony. The judge said her aunt had reported the case to local officials and there was no evidence of any grudge or other motive for a false accusation.

The aunt had returned from dropping her children at school on July 5 when she found her niece crying in the kitchen. Asked why she was crying, the girl said a man from the village had raped her twice the previous night in her bed.

The judge accepted the girl's accusation although there were no witnesses, noting that if the victim's testimony was discounted then most rapists would be found not guilty.

Couple shows devotion through suicide attempt

A couple from Yangon's Kyeemyindaing township are recovering in hospital after attempting to prove their love by committing suicide together.

After drinking a large amount of alcohol, Ko Zaw Than Nain, 34, and Ma Nyo Nyo Htwe, 33, stabbed each other in the stomach at about 11:30pm on February 9.

The pair, from Alatchaung village across the Yangon River, are being treated at Yangon General Hospital and been charged with attempted suicide.

Police take down alleged pirate DVD business

Four men have been arrested for allegedly making illegal DVDs at a house in Yangon's Thingangyun township. The men were arrested based on a tip-off, with police raiding the Pyitharyar Road property at about 7:15am on February 11.

Taxi driver charged over death of motorcyclist

A taxi driver from Shwe Pyi Thar township has been charged with negligent homicide after allegedly knocking a motorcyclist off his bike.

U Ye Win Htun died after the motorbike he was travelling on was hit by the Toyota Corolla taxi on No 3 Main Road near Ta Gun Dine village.

– Toe Wai Aung, translation by Thiri Min Htun and Thae Thae Htwe

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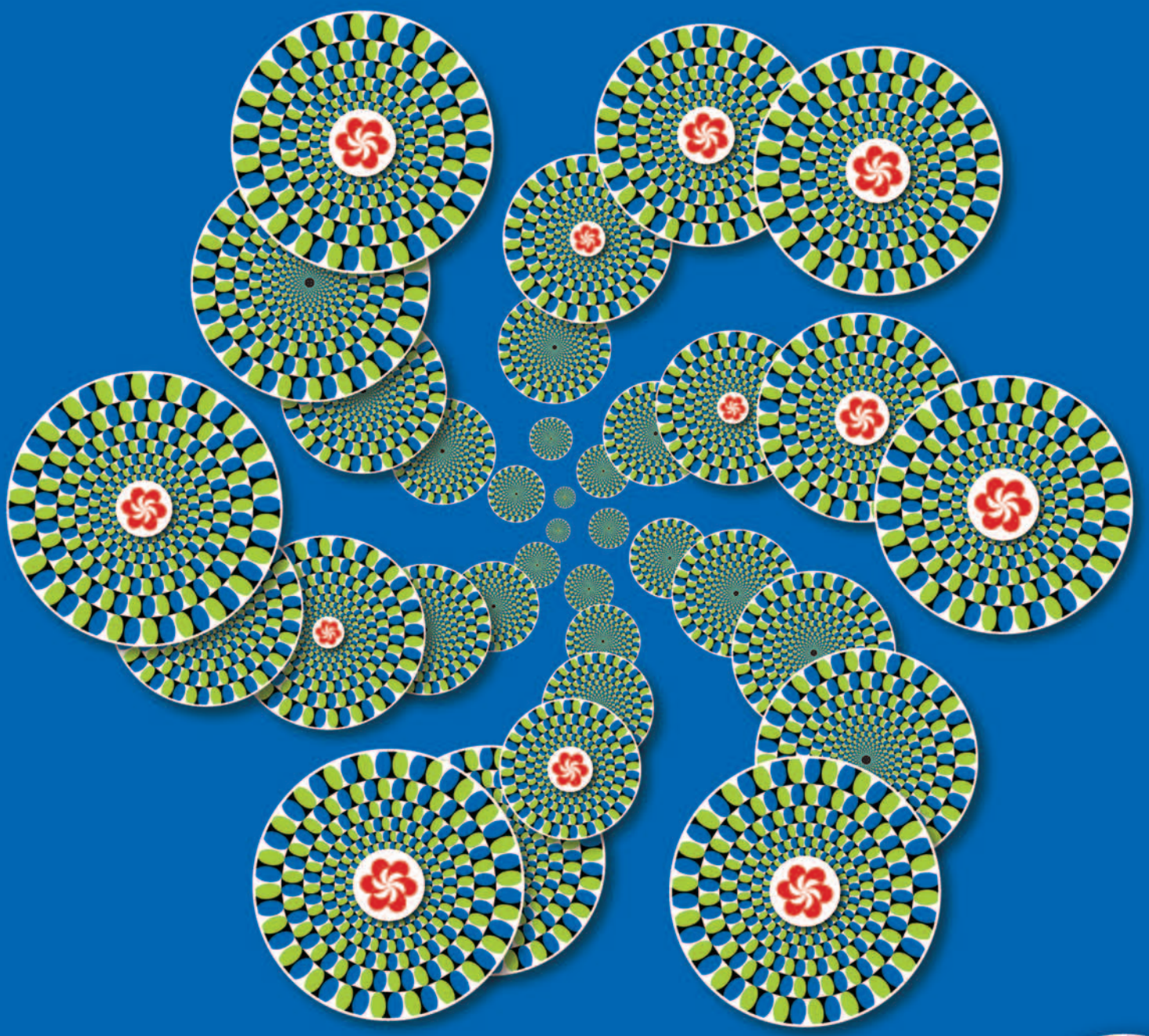

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Activists in Malaysia on alert after latest murder

NOE NOE AUNG

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MYANMAR activists in Malaysia have been placed on high alert after a former 88 Generation activist was stabbed to death in Kuala Lumpur last week.

The body of Ko Aung Gyi, who was a leading activist in the 1988 general strike committee, was found in a car in Cheras Baru near Kuala Lumpur on February 4, said U San Win, chair of the Kepong Free Funeral Service Society, which provides free funerals to Myanmar migrants.

"He was helping a friend who was looking to buy a car. That day a man called him saying he wanted to sell his car and [Ko Aung Gyi] went there at about 6pm to look it over. He didn't come back and police found his body in the car on February 5," U San Win said.

"According to the police, he was stabbed with a sharp object – police said it could be a screwdriver," he said, adding that the authorities had informed his family.

Ko Aung Gyi was cremated on February 8, U San Win added.

The activist was killed just a day before two men on a motorcycle shot at two prominent Rakhine politicians during a visit to Malaysia. Neither Rakhine Nationalities Development Party chair U Aye Maung nor Arakan League for Democracy chair U Aye Thar Aung were injured in the attack but their vehicle was sprayed with bullets. The Rakhine politicians have blamed the attack on "Islamic terrorists". In June 2013 a number of Myanmar migrants were killed in Malaysia in violence between Buddhists and Muslims.

U San Win said he believed Ko Aung Gyi had been killed because of his efforts to help migrants affected by the violence. Other activists are now taking extra precautions in case they are also targeted.

"Ko Aung Gyi strongly stood for Myanmar migrants and actively helped workers after the violence broke out in Malaysia," he said.

"Ko Aung Gyi and I – as well as many other activists here – received threatening calls at that time. Whether this murder is connected to [the violence] or not, we are on alert."

Penang Free Funeral Service Society founder Ko Mya Win said Ko Aung Gyi's death had shocked Myanmar civil society groups in Malaysia. However, he said he did not think the killing was a "threat" toward activists.

"I have to admit though that it has had some effect on us," he said. "Some groups said they are worried about their safety but I think it's not too serious yet."

The Myanmar Times contacted U Soe Win, an official at the Myanmar embassy in Malaysia, but he declined to comment on Ko Aung Gyi's death.

Ko Ant Bwe Kyaw, an information officer at the 88 New Generation Students, said Myanmar activists need to take care for their own safety.

"I hope the Malaysia police and government also take care of activists and workers," he said. "It's time for both governments to protect people because this is not the first time that Myanmar citizens have been killed in Malaysia."

U San Win agreed that neither government paid enough attention to the safety of migrant workers.

"It is so easy to kill a person in Malaysia. Many of our citizens have been killed during the past eight months but we have not seen any of the murderers arrested ... We also can't count on the Myanmar embassy."

Workers fill trucks with sand on the banks of the Ayeyarwady River in Mandalay. Photo: Phyo Wai Kyaw

Sand-filled trucks put on notice in Mandalay

KHIN SU WAI

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DRIVERS of sand trucks that pollute the city of Mandalay could face jail, city authorities warn. Mandalay City Development Committee says offenders could face a term of three months to one year, plus a fine of up to K500,000.

Trucks carrying sand from the river through downtown are being blamed for causing air pollution and accidents, as well as coating the city centre in dirt – spoiling Mandalay's image as a "clean, green city", authorities say.

The crackdown will begin at the end of this month, as staff from the departments of street cleaning, revenue, water resources and traffic administration work together to set up checkpoints.

"The road by the Ayeyarwady River is polluted and the trees are coated in dirt and dust. It creates a bad image for visitors," said U Nay Win Myint, the head of the Cleaning Department. The sand trucks are also accused of causing accidents as wet sand from the trucks makes the roads slippery, especially for motorcycles.

"It takes 80-90 workers just to clean the roads each day because the loads are not covered. Then there's the air pollution, because most of the trucks are old. It's time to enforce the regulations," said U Soe Tint Aung, assistant director of the Cleaning Department.

About 200-300 trucks are estimated to carry sand through the city centre each day, according to the Cleaning Department.

U Mg Myint, chair of a company that sells river sand, said he has repeatedly warned buyers to secure their loads. "We sell the sand from the river sediment that we pump up," he said. "We tell buyers to follow the regulations, and to make sure the load is properly covered. We tell them they could face fines."

The tough stance comes after a meeting on January 30 between city authorities and the sand dealers about the enforcement of the regulations. About 20 vehicles have received summonses in the past two months.

300

Trucks laden with sand passing through Mandalay city centre daily

Private waste management coming to Mandalay

KHIN SU WAI

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MANDALAY City Development Committee will put out a tender later this month for rubbish collection in the city.

A senior official from the committee's Cleaning Department said companies will be invited in late February to submit proposals for taking on rubbish collection responsibilities.

Mandalay current generates 750-800 tonnes a day of hard rubbish and the department's budget for vehicles and workers is about K140 million a year. Handing over responsibility to the private sector would improve the efficiency of waste management, Cleaning Department boss U Nay Win Myint said, adding that consumers would likely face more fines for breaching municipal rules. The Cleaning Department collected just K4.9 million in fines in 2012-13 but has already pulled in K17 million in 2013-14.

"If [the contract] is transferred to the private sector there will be more fines and taxes for households," he said. "There will be a range of taxes for houses, street-shops and restaurants. But rubbish collection will be free of charge for monasteries, charity clinics and social organisations."

He said there was already strong interest from the private sector and one company, Sein Yay Kan, is conducting a feasibility study in two townships.

"This company made a 30-year ... contract with Kengtung city for private hard rubbish waste collection and disposal and is approaching other cities, including Muse and Taunggyi," U Nay Win Myint said.

But the tender will be open to all, he said. "Sein Yay Kan and other interested companies will be able to compete."

MCDC has already signed a deal for one private sector waste management project, which will see rubbish converted to electric power. A Thai company, Organic Asia Group, will set up a US$44 million factory on a 29.32-acre site. However, the project has stalled because of the political situation in Thailand, U Nay Win Myint said.

Daw Kyi Kyi Sein, a retired Myanmar language professor from the University of Foreign Languages in Mandalay, said she wasn't concerned about having to pay for improved service.

"I want a more effective way of removing rubbish, such as that used in Japan," she said. "Over there they have different days for the collection of different types of rubbish."

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1500 – 1530hr	Kenwood product demonstration 1
1600 – 1630hr	Beautifying hotel rooms with maximum quality and minimum budgets – Insights to smart interior décor / Creating innovative hotel room designs to "wow" your guests
18 February 2014, Tuesday	
1030 – 1100hr	Engaging your guests – Optimizing customer experience at various touch points
1115 – 1145hr	It starts from your staff! – Engaged staff = Enhanced Guest Experience
1200 – 1230hr	Future proofing your hotel – Choosing the right in-room technology
1245 – 1315hr	Food Manufacturers – Latest technology in filling systems
1330 – 1400hr	Tasting and Demonstration 2
1415 – 1445hr	Your optimum back office accounting solution for the hospitality industry
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1630 – 1700hr	Next Gen Hotels – Creating value and maximizing revenue through next-gen technology
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Tourist drowns at Ngapali beach

AUNG SHIN THOMAS KEAN

MYANMAR'S premier beach destination has been rocked by the drowning of a Polish tourist. The 55-year-old man drowned near Ngapali beach on the southern Rakhine State coast on February 9.

Police Colonel Kan Oo from the Thandwe township police force said the incident occurred at a location known as Kwin Waing, about 30 kilometres (18.6 miles) from Ngapali Beach.

"He drowned quite far from the beach," Pol Col Kan Oo said. "It happened about 3pm."

The German embassy in Yangon, which provides consular assistance to Polish nationals in Myanmar, confirmed the death but declined to comment further.

The man was with seven other Polish tourists, including his wife, when the accident happened. Several sources told *The Myanmar Times* he was on a diving tour at the time but Thandwe township administrator U Kyaw Soe Lwin described it only as a "normal drowning".

"All the formalities related to the death have now been completed," he said on February 10.

Drownings at Ngapali are rare because the main beach is well protected from the ocean.

The Polish group was staying at Hotel ACE Ngapali Beach, located just north of Ngapali at Lintha beach, and had checked in the previous day. A Yangon-based spokesperson for the hotel said he was unsure what the group had been doing so far from the hotel.

It is also unclear which diving company the deceased was with or whether the company was licensed to provide such services.

At least one company, Cherry Island Water Sports, has been advertising diving and other activities in the Ngapali area. A pamphlet seen by *The Myanmar Times* offered a range of currently prohibited activities, such as parasailing and jet skiing, as well as "under water walking", "skewer diving" and "hores riding".

A spokesperson for the company said the deceased tourist was not their client.

"Our business has not been allowed and we are not conducting water sport activities," said Ko Pyay Sone. "We hope to get permission to do it next season [in late 2014]. At the moment we are just running a small restaurant."

Officials insisted rules banning motorised activities at the beach are being strictly enforced. "There may be some advertisements for water sport businesses but we don't allow them to operate," Pol Col Kan Oo said.

Protesters stage a demonstration in Mandalay on February 9. Photo: Si Thu Lwin

Protesters in Mandalay demand constitution changes

SI THU LWIN
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MANDALAY residents staged a demonstration on February 9 to call for amendments to the 2008 constitution and the removal of restrictions on public protest.

The demonstrators also called for the repeal of other laws that infringe on citizens' human rights and peace in ethnic minority areas.

"We don't represent any organisation or [political] party. We are just doing this because we think it is our responsibility as members of the public," said lawyer U Htay Win, who organised the event.

The demonstration took place on 86th Street, between 17th and 18th streets, in Aung Myay Thar San township. One participant said that while local officials had given permission to hold the event, organisers had been told not to conduct a planned march because it would annoy road users and pose security problems.

Land and labour rights activist U Aye Thein, who was among the participants, said there are "nearly 100 laws" that should be removed.

He also called for the constitution to be changed to allow Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to become president.

"Section 59(f) [which bars Daw Aung San Suu Kyi from the presidency] was deliberately drafted out of personal hatred," he said.

– Translation by Zar Zar Soe

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Business

SINGAPORE

Airline signs $1b lease deal

NATIONAL carrier, Myanma Airways, last week signed a deal to lease 10 Boeing aircraft worth nearly US$1 billion that will ply international routes in a bid to tap booming tourism as the once-reclusive country opens up to the world.

Under the agreement, forged on the opening day of the Singapore Airshow, state-owned Myanma Airways will lease the Boeing 737s from GE Capital Aviation Services (GECAS), the commercial leasing and financing arm of US giant General Electric.

"Myanma Airways, which has suspended international operations since 1993, is now going to re-enter the international market with the support of our good friend and partner GECAS," Myanmar Transportation Minister U Nyan Htun Aung said at the signing ceremony.

"We hope that we could become well known again to international air travellers," he said, alongside GECAS executives and US ambassador to Myanmar Derek Mitchell.

Mr Mitchell described the agreement as the "largest commercial sale" by a US company to Myanmar in decades.

"It is an important moment for both our countries and I assume it will be the first of many such moments among American businesses and Myanmar," he said.

Delivery of the planes, whose total list value is $960 million, is scheduled to begin in June next year.

"The contract calls for six Boeing 737-800 models and four Boeing 737-MAX models. The aircraft will deliver through 2020," GECAS said in a statement.

It will be a major makeover for flag carrier Myanma Airways, which was established in 1948 and currently operates mostly domestic services

MORE ON BUSINESS 28

Microfinance firms decry lo

ZAW HTIKE JEREMY MULLINS

MICROFINANCE institutions (MFIs) are worried a new directive by the sector's regulator that caps loans at K500,000 could stifle small business growth and the development of the burgeoning MFI sector as it seeks to expand its role in the country.

Myanmar's MFI sector has experienced a boost in the past two years with the establishment of internationally backed institutions looking to capitalise on the estimated 84 percent of Myanmar's population who have no access to financing.

Those institutions were only recently regulated with the passage of the Microfinance Law in November 2011, but already international finance institutions view the sector as volatile due to the inability of the regulatory body, the Microfinance Supervisory Committee (MSC), to enforce responsible lending practices.

In an effort to ensure that the estimated 150 operating MFIs are fulfilling their mission to provide financing alternatives to the poor, rather than providing loans to established businesses, the MSC on January 14 issued a directive introducing a ceiling of about US$500 per loan.

'The danger is that you have a sector that is growing very quickly and some of these MFIs have a poor track record.'

Thatha Hla
Economist
Asian Development Bank

A sandal maker, who started his family's business using a microfinance loan, sits at his makeshift workplace at his home in Yang

"Microfinance is very important for alleviating poverty. We're doing our best to make sure it helps poor people," U Win Aung, the managing director of the MSC, told *The Myanmar Times*.

The move surprised many in the industry, who said they will ask the supervisory committee to amend the new rule they claim will affect their respective bottom lines as well as the bottom lines of their clients.

"It's important not to be too restrictive," said Fahmid Bhuiya, chief

German firms make historic visit to Myanmar

BUSINESS 27

Speculation driving squatters from Dala homes

PROPERTY 30

Exchange Rates (February 14 close)

Currency	Buying	Selling
Euro	K1335	K1345
Malaysia Ringitt	K290	K297
Singapore Dollar	K770	K780
Thai Baht	K29.5	K30.5
US Dollar	K981	K984

w regulator loan cap

on. Photo: Philip Heijmans

operating officer of Pact Global Microfinance Fund. "The limit might get in the way of lending to the exceptional entrepreneurs who create employment."

Pact is Myanmar's largest non-governmental MFI, providing some 730,000 microloans worth $141 million in 2012, according to its website. Mr Bhuiya said Pact planned to work with other MFIs to have the regulator reassess the limit.

According to the law, MFIs are restricted from offering loans over 2.5pc per month, or 30pc annually – a rate comparable to the global average and significantly lower than the 10pc per month loans offered by informal "loan sharks". In addition to a set interest rate, the law stipulates on additional interest paid on deposits cannot be less than 1.25pc per month, or 15pc annually.

Kim Bunsocheat, managing director and chief executive of Cambodia-based Acleda MFI Myanmar Co Ltd, said the K500,000 cap would also cut jobs that could be created by small businesses expanding on the back of an MFI loan facility.

"If the limit were higher, they could hire a larger workforce," he said.

Acleda, which launched an MFI in Myanmar in March, will set up an additional 12 branches in addition to its current six to reflect its growing loan portfolio, said Meas Sangvath, a consultant with the MFI, adding that the MFI lent US$3.26 million to 8361 people last year.

Other MFI's are looking to make a push as well, such as Bangladesh-based BRAC, which is awaiting approval to open six branches this year.

Previously, there was no written limit on loan size and little indication a hard cap was coming, though insiders said discussions to create a K500,000 maximum loan size had been on the table for some time.

Based on limited data in the sector, the International Finance Corporation early last year estimated that the sector's loan portfolio totalled US$283 million spread over 2.8 million clients, with a market demand for microcredit at about $1 billion nationwide.

Myanmar's microfinance sector "is on the cusp of what could be an exponential growth phase", International Finance Corporation resident representative Vikram Kumar told *The Myanmar Times*.

Mr Kumar said that while a loan limit higher than K500,000 should be considered, MFIs would need to implement international standard solvency and liquidity requirements.

The MSC moved to implement a solvency ratio for deposit-taking MFIs of 15pc and a liquidity ratio of 30pc in its January directive.

While MFI officials wish to see the new directive overturned, some experts are siding with the MSC's decision, saying that the mission of an MFI is not to serve the general banking needs of the population, but to provide affordable financing to the poor.

"[MFIs] shouldn't be complaining about [the cap]. If they want to do banking then they should apply for a banking license. They already have a lot of leeway in that they don't follow the [regulations put forth by the] Central Bank," said Thatha Hla, an economist with the Asian Development Bank.

"The danger is that you have a sector that is growing very quickly and some of these MFIs have a poor track record, while others have no experience ... They are also operating with a lack of sufficient oversight and there may be reputational damage caused by MFIs not doing what they should be doing as a result," he said, adding that borrowers may become more reluctant to use financial services again if subjected to a poor experience the first time around.

Indeed, while $500 may seem low to some, the average microfinance loan in most countries is well below the mark.

For London-based VisionFund International, who offer microloans in Myanmar, the average loan size is $257, while Jeremy Kloiser-Jones, chief executive of locally-based BC Finance Limited, said the average loan offered by his firm is even lower at between $150 and $160.

"There is clearly demand for unsecured lending ... and there is space where the banks who need to take collateral are not allowed to by the Central Bank," he said.

"There is no one else to fill that gap." – *Additional reporting by Mon Mon Aye, Bridget Di Certo and Philip Heijmans*

Paddy rice prices climb on exports

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AN INCREASING demand for rice from abroad has led the price of paddy rice in Myanmar to grow 25.84 percent over the past year as recently acquired duty-free access in other countries is expected to drive exports further in 2014, experts said.

The price of emahta white rice, which makes up better than 90 pc of the country's rice production, is currently selling for US$488 per 100 baskets (or 2.05 tonnes) on the markets, up from $356 per 100 baskets sold one year ago, farmers said.

"The high price is the result of demand for rice from China and this year the EU's demand for rice from Myanmar is going up because the country entered the generalised system of preferences agreement, so the price is not likely to go down in the short term," said U Lu Maw Myint Maung, joint general secretary of the Myanmar Rice Federation.

$488

Current price of emahta white rice paddy per 100 baskets or 2.05 tonnes

Paddy rice prices usually fall early in the season and bounce back mid-season after most of the harvest has been sold, sapping farmers' profits. But last November-December, prices reached an early-season record of $377 per 100 baskets and continued increasing to its current price levels.

U Kyi Aye, chair of the Myanmar Farmers' Association (MFA) of Dedaye township, Ayeyarwaddy Region, said that high prices are driving farmers to switch out other crops in favour of rice as profits are allowing others to pay off debts accrued from years of low prices and heavy flooding.

"The current price of paddy is the best since Cyclone Nargis [in 2008]. We will be able to pay the debts that built up in previous years," he said, adding that the land used to cultivate rice could grow as much as 20pc for the coming summer crop.

MFA chair U Soe Tun said that even though the land available for summer crop was less than a quarter of the land available for rainy-season crop, it represents one-third of Myanmar's estimated annual rice production of 14 million tonnes.

"The current record prices are likely to stay high because of Chinese demand. I think farmers will profit, though many still worry about falling prices and bad weather," he said.

In addition, some experts are worried that the market is unsustainable as prices are mainly being driven by illicit trading on the Chinese side of the border. Rice producers are currently withholding stock from traditional trading partners in an attempt to secure more favourable prices from China, where traders are able to offer a higher price from dodging local taxes.

While such illicit traders are able to offer a better premium on imports than those who use the legal channels, they tend to not honour contacts and pay significantly less than promised, offsetting market gains while creating an unhealthy bottleneck for exports.

As a result of the bottleneck, government officials have said that total exports for processed rice will likely fall to less than half of the government target of 3 million tonnes in the 2013-14 fiscal year.

"We know that the government is trying to deal with the Chinese regional government to make this market legal, though there has not been seen any tangible result from it yet, so this is something we need to worry about," said U Soe Tun, adding that a shift in Myanmar's trade policy with China could upset the entire market.

According to data from the Ministry of Agriculture, 1.6 million hectares (4 million acres) of land are currently available for the summer crop, though indebted farmers have been unable to harvest some of it.

Agribusiness needs govt aid, say experts

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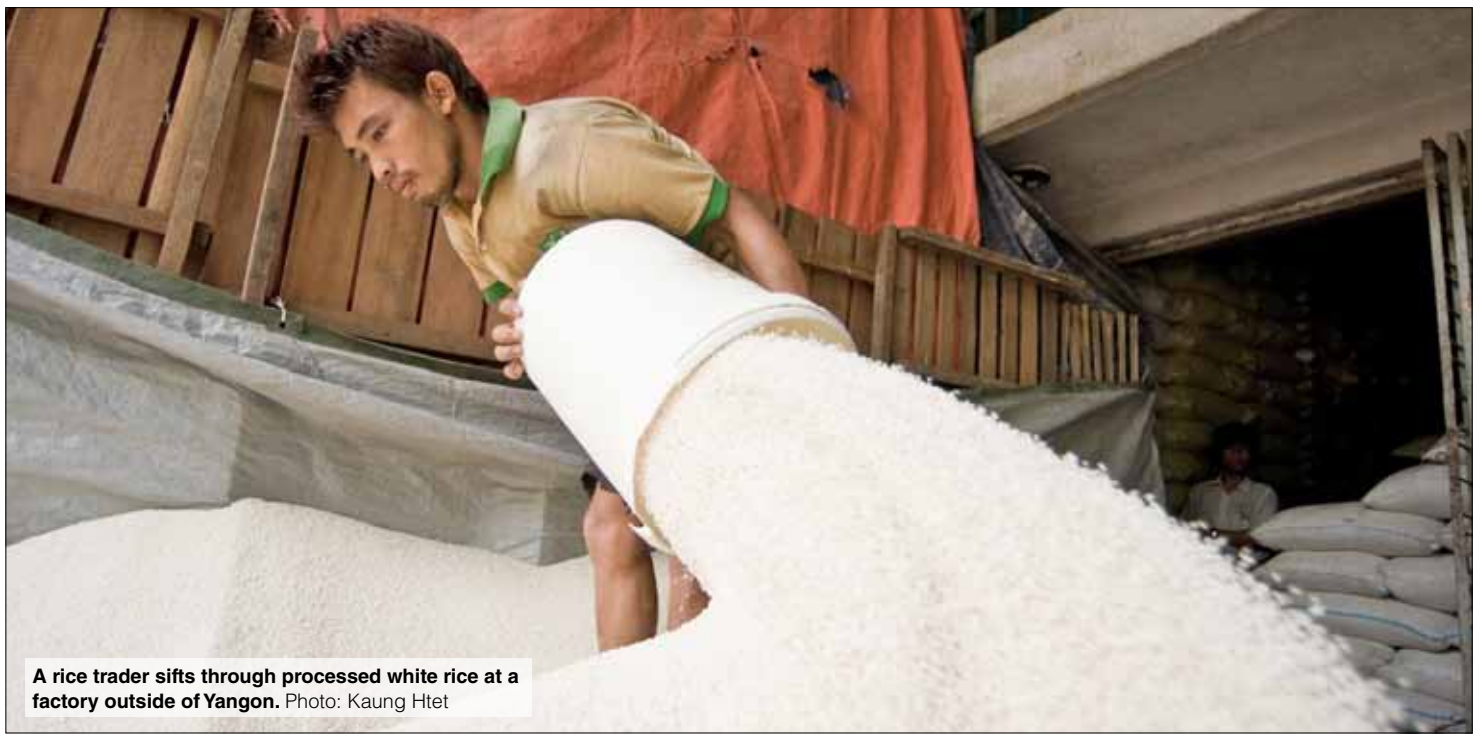

A rice trader sifts through processed white rice at a factory outside of Yangon. Photo: Kaung Htet

OFFICIAL development assistance (ODA) might be a more reliable source of funding for Myanmar's "risky" agribusiness than foreign direct investment as the sector has failed to attract significant interest from overseas since economic sanctions were lifted three years ago, experts said.

Hideaki Matsuo, an economic counsellor with the Japanese Embassy, said agricultural investment was widely regarded as too risky with short term production prospects in short supply.

"Productivity and profit are directly linked and are affected by climate change," he said, cautioning against expectations of possible Japanese investment.

Infrastructural and logistical problems also represented a hindrance for investors, he added.

"If you want investment, local development is needed to prepare in advance. But it is unlikely that people will invest in basic needs. That's why ODA plays a bigger part in agriculture, as in health and education," he said.

With little profit to be earned, some experts blame the government for not allocating enough resources to develop the necessary infrastructure to move business forward.

"It is too risky and even less profitable," said U Soe Tun, joint secretary general of the Myanmar Rice Federation. "The government has failed to upgrade infrastructure and logistics, so both local and international investors are looking at higher costs and less profit."

He also said while costs are an issue, there has been little transparency in agriculture policy as well as a general lack of supporting services that include different types of related insurance.

Myanmar's national budget for the agriculture sector came to K310,217 million (US$310 million) or nearly 5 pc of the total national budget in the 2011-2012 financial year, while making up just 6 pc of the budget in the following year.

Similarly, agriculture comprised just 29 pc of the country's roughly $60 billion gross domestic product last year.

"Myanmar's agricultural sector should be a world better [as it was in the past]. Few countries are so blessed in terms of their natural endowment, or proximity to major and growing markets [especially China and India]," said Sean Turnell, a Myanmar economy expert at Australia's Macquarie University.

But other challenges also remain as foreign investors sit on the sidelines due to insufficient provisions in the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) law pertaining to regulations for the agriculture sector.

"The law doesn't allow FDI investment in the rice sector and there is a dispute over this matter between local businessmen as some are afraid foreign firms may monopolise the entire sector," said Ko Nay Lin Zin, central executive committee member of the Myanmar Rice Federation .

Despite the issues, agriculture exports this year have already outpaced those of last year, reaching $2.16 billion in the first 10 months of the 2013-2014 fiscal year, up from $2.07 billion for all of 2012-2013, according to the figures released by the Ministry of Commerce.

Ko Nay Lin Zin said that figure is expected to grow another 30 pc over five years as the market will adapt to new demand in Europe and possibly the US stemming from duty-free access in those countries.

✝ ခရစ်တော်၌ အိပ်ပျော်ခြင်း

ရန်ကုန်တိုင်းဒေသကြီး၊ ရွှေပြည်သာမြို့နယ်၊ (၇)ရပ်ကွက်၊ ဗိုလ်ရာညွန့်လမ်း၊ ပန်းခြံ(၉)၊ အမှတ် (၂၈၂/ခ)နေ ဦးဗင်ဆင်ဒါက်(စ်)+ဒေါ်မေရီစတယ်လာ၏သား ဦးမောင်ငယ်+ဒေါ်နှင်းလှတို့၏သား/သားမက်၊ ဦးညြဂတ်စတင်+ဒေါ်ခရစ္စတီနား၊ (ဦးဖိလစ်)+ဒေါ်စူဇန်၊ ဦးလှမြင့်+ဒေါ်ဆာဖော၊ (ဦးအုန်းရွှေ)+ဒေါ်နော်အဲဗီ၊ ဦးစောရိုသ+ဒေါ်နော်ဆာစေး တို့၏အစ်ကို၊ ဦးမြင့်ဌေး+ဒေါ်နော်သူဇာ၊ ဦးကျော်ကျော်ဦး+ဒေါ်လှိုင်မာကျော့၊ ဦးကျော်စိုး+ဒေါ်နန်းအေး၊ (ဦးမင်းမင်းသက်)+ဒေါ်မိုးသူဇာ၊ ဦးကျော်စွာ+ဒေါ်နော်ထူးထူးဝါး၊ ဦးဘာဘူး+ဒေါ်ငယ်လေး၊ မဘီဂျူး၊ မောင်သဲနိုင်ထွေးတို့၏ဖခင်၊ မြေး (၁၇) ယောက်တို့၏အဖိုး၊ ဒေါ်နော်မိုးစိ၏ချစ်လှစွာသော ခင်ပွန်းဖြစ်သူ

ဦးအက်စ်(စ်)စေဗီးယား အသက်(၆၅) နှစ်

သည် ၉-၂-၂၀၁၄ (တနင်္ဂနွေ) နေ့ နံနက် (၇း၀၀) နာရီတွင် ခရစ်တော်၌ အိပ်ပျော်သွားပါသဖြင့် ကျန်ရစ်သော ရုပ်ကလပ်အား ၁၁-၂-၂၀၁၄ (အင်္ဂါနေ့) မွန်းလွဲ (၂း၀၀) နာရီတွင် ခရစ်ယာန်ဂိုဏ်းပေါင်းစုံဥယျာဉ်တော်သို့ ပို့ဆောင်သင်္ဂြိုလ်မည်ဖြစ်ပါသဖြင့် လိုက်ပါပို့ဆောင်ကြပါရန် ညှိုးငယ်သောစိတ်ထားဖြင့် ဖိတ်ကြားအပ်ပါသည်။

မှတ်ချက် - အောက်မေ့ဘွယ်နှစ်သိမ့်စည်းဝေးကို ၁၅-၂-၂၀၁၄ (စနေနေ့) နံနက် (၇း၀၀) နာရီ အချိန်တွင် ရွှေပြည်သာမြို့၊ (၇) ရပ်ကွက်၊ ဗိုလ်ရာညွန့်လမ်း၊ ပန်းခြံ (၉)၊ အမှတ် (၂၈၂/ခ) နေအိမ်တွင် ကျေးဇူးတော်ရိုးမွမ်း ဝတ်ပြုကိုးကွယ်မည်ဖြစ်ပါသည်။

နေအိမ်မှကားများ မွန်းလွဲ (၁း၀၀) နာရီအချိန်တွင် ထွက်ခွာပါမည်။

လမ်းညွှန် ၅၇၊ ၈၂၊ ၉၉၊ ၁၇၇ (ပါရမီ) ကားများစီး၍ မင်းရဲကျော်စွာ မှတ်တိုင်ဆင်းပါ။

ကျန်ရစ်သူမိသားစု

Govt to establish first fruit and vegetable wholesale markets

New markets to promote local production as well as exports says co-op minister

HSU HLAING TUN

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THE government has agreed to set up the country's first wholesale fruit and vegetable markets in an effort to bolster trade with neighbouring countries as well as to satisfy increasing demand from China, an official said.

The markets, which are to be established in each of Nay Pyi Taw, Yangon, Mandalay and Muse, along the Chinese border, came as a part of a joint agreement on February 10 between several ministries including the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Trade the Minister of Co-operatives U Kyaw San announced last week.

"There are no wholesale markets for fruit and vegetables in Myanmar. There are sudden changes in price due to lack of information and access so farmers often face losses from unseasonable low prices as they can't penetrate new overseas markets," he said.

The minister said that the wholesale markets would promote local fruit and vegetable farmers by not only creating a trade outlet for them, but also providing new services, including cold storage facilities.

"The agriculture sector is still undeveloped," said Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation U Myint Hlaing.

"Therefore the president has instructed us to seek new overseas markets to improve farmers' income," he said, adding that the he expects the new initiative to double the income of fruit and vegetable farmers.

Mandalay Region and Shan State already produce export-quality fruit and vegetables, with farmers in Shan State growing more than 42,000 acres of potatoes each year, according to government data.

The new markets would also serve other farmers growing common foods such as potatoes, honeydew melons, watermelons, grapes and plums – products already being exported to China through the Muse border gate. – *Translation by Zar Zar Soe*

'There are sudden changes in price due to lack of information and access so farmers often face losses from unseasonable low prices.'

U Kyaw San
Minister of Co-operatives

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Reception

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EITI to report on industry red flags

Accountability reports latest in effort to modernise extractives industry

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AN energy watchdog group set up to scrutinise the exploitation of Myanmar's natural resources has announced it will initially concentrate on the "most problematic and profitable" sectors – oil, natural gas and mines.

The multi-stakeholder group, an association of representatives from the government, resource extraction companies and civil society, was formed on February 8 to compile reports under the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, which seeks to apply international standards to the exploitation of natural resources.

The group's main role will be to publicise the income and tax payments of energy exploration firms operating in Myanmar, and report to the EITI, which Myanmar has applied to join. Reports will be published and audited by international experts.

90%

Companies represented in the association the EITI must report on

However, MSG member U Tun Myint Aung said the group will not have enough time to study all the industries concerned in time for the 18-month reporting deadline.

"There are many sectors like oil, gas, forest resources, water resources, hydropower and so on. It is a lot," he said.

In addition, EITI reports must cover 90 percent of the companies in the resource group.

"We are just starting this process and we are fairly sure we won't be able to manage all [extractive] sectors immediately," he said.

The group will examine government permits for resource exploration, total resource production, taxes and other income from production, the impact of production on the environment and how the government spends the income.

Deputy Minister for Finance U Maung Maung Thein will lead the multi-stakeholder group, with Deputy Minister for Energy U Myint Zaw as vice chair.

The 23-member committee also includes six other government officials, including the director generals from the ministries of finance, environmental conservation and forestry, mining, energy and home affairs, a director general from the Auditor General's Office and the managing director of the Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise.

It features six members from the private sector, including representatives from Petronas, Total and MPRL, and nine from civil society, including members of the 88 Generation, Paung Ku, Seinyaungso, Shwe Gas Movement, Dawei Development Association and Eco-Dev.

German delegation makes historic visit to Myanmar

AYE THIDAR KYAW
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A DELEGATION of 150 German businesses, lead by German President Joachim Gauck, visited Myanmar last week in an attempt to bolster bilateral relations between the two countries.

The delegation, representing global firms such as Siemens, BMW and Deutsche Bank, discussed the prospect of local partnerships, investment strategies and introducing international corporate, labour and social practices.

The conference also marked the opening of the Delegation of German Industry and Commerce, the first from Europe to set up in Myanmar.

"Myanmar is a fast-growing economy. It is starting from a relatively low level, but it has opportunities," said Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce or Deutscher Industrie- und Handelskammertag (DIHK) chief Volker Treier, adding that Germany had already established representative offices in the auto industry and in chemical engineering last year.

He said that if international companies are to invest in Myanmar, it is imperative the country set up a reliable legal framework, train qualified staff and install an integrated financial structure.

"German businesses are not the biggest risk-takers, but they come to stay. Making a fast profit and then leaving is not our way. We have a sustainable approach," he said.

According to the Directorate of Trade and Company Administration (DICA), German investment in Myanmar amounts to some US$17 million per year, though Mr Treier said that continued economic reform in Myanmar would result in that figure ballooning into the billions of dollars in the coming years.

"The current [level of investment] is almost nothing from our point of view compared to other countries," he said.

Udo Mohrstedt, president of photovoltaics firm IBC Solar, said that German firms would likely begin investing in Myanmar thanks to the EU Generalised System of Preferences (GDP), which was reinstated last year. He also said his firm would likely put plans forward to establish a factory in Myanmar pending meeting government officials.

German President Joachim Gauck speaks in front of an audience at the Myanmar-German Business Forum in Yangon February 11. Photo: Philip Heijmans

"Our aim is to show our products and then [we] plan to build factories here, but first we must see clearly the intention of the government," Mr Mohrstedt said.

During his visit last week German President Joachim Gauck met with local officials to complete a landmark deal to clear half a billion euro ($682 million) in debt owed by Myanmar.

As a part of the deal, Germany agreed to cancel half of the arrears owed to them by Myanmar in two phases, while rescheduling the remaining 542 million euros ($740 million) over the next 15 years.

JOB WATCH

Australia Awards

Australia Awards Scholarships

Information Session

The Australian Embassy invites all interested persons to attend an information session on the Australia Awards Scholarship program.Full details about the application process will be explained and answers given to all your questions.

Venue: Sedona Hotel, Yangon
Date: Saturday 22 February 2014
Time: 10am - 12pm & 2pm - 4pm.
Further information

Website: **www.australiaawards.gov.au**
Email:**australiaawards.myanmar@dfat.gov.au**
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The Fine Print

Legal & tax insight

Special Economic Zones Law: Part II

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WITHIN a special economic zone (SEZ), the management committee can demarcate "exempted zones" and "promotion zones". Businesses in an exempted zone have to manufacture primarily for export.

The maximum percentage of goods which may be sold locally, meanwhile, will be laid down in implementing guidelines, while goods manufactured in a promotion zone must primarily be produced with local content and directly transported and sold to businesses in an exempted zone.

Exempted zones are regarded as if they were located outside the country. An investor in an exempted zone therefore does not have to pay import duty on construction materials, raw materials, machines and other goods used in the construction of the factory or the production process.

Usually, an importer has to pay 5 percent commercial tax in addition to import duties, though the new law does not state clearly whether this tax will be waived in an exempted zone.

However, an investor in an exempted zone does not have to pay income tax in the first seven years of operation and pays only 50pc income tax during the following five years. If, during a subsequent five-year period, profits are reinvested within a short period of time, the income tax rate for profits derived from such reinvestment is also reduced by 50pc.

The developer of an SEZ and investors in a promotion zone are entitled to the same income tax benefits with the exception that the tax holiday period (complete exemption from income tax) is not seven but eight years in case of the developer and five years in case of an investor in a promotion zone.

Interestingly, businesses outside an exempted or promotion zone do not have to pay income tax during the first five years of operation, while the SEZ management committee may grant further exemptions.

A business outside an exempted zone producing for export may be designated as an "exempted zone business" and sealed off with a fence. Such a business should – but the law is not entirely clear in this respect – enjoy the same benefits as a business located inside an exempted zone.

A developer and every investor in an SEZ may carry forward losses for up to five years. Currently, the carry-forward period is three years maximum.

The new SEZ Law aims to bring customs procedures in line with international standards and to accelerate customs clearance in exempted zones. It requires the customs department to reduce controls to a level that is absolutely necessary.

As is the case under the Foreign Investment Law, investors should take care to stick to their timelines submitted as part of the investment proposal. If deadlines for constructing the factory and starting operations are not met without sufficient cause, the management committee may withdraw the investment permit.

The SEZ Law states that businesses in an SEZ may "receive and make payments in a foreign currency" and that the developer and investors are "entitled to exchange and transfer foreign currency within the SEZ or overseas", but it is to be hoped that future implementing guidelines will contain more explicit guarantees on the repatriation of profits.

Like the Foreign Investment Law, the SEZ Law prohibits the employment of unskilled foreigners, stipulating that 25pc of the skilled employees must be locals within the first two years of operation. This threshold increases to 50pc in the third and fourth, and to 75pc in the fifth and sixth years.

Sebastian and Kyaw are consultants with Polastri Wint & Partners Legal & Tax Advisors.

CONTINUED FROM BUSINESS 24

using Fokker F28 jets and ATR turboprops.

For flights to smaller domestic airports, Myanma Airways uses Beechcraft and Cessna planes.

"We are pleased at GE to work with Myanma Airways to provide new, state-of-the-art Boeing aircraft," said Norman Liu, president and chief executive of GECAS.

"This is an important milestone for the airline and for the development of Myanmar's aviation industry."

U Nyan Htun Aung said the new Boeing planes would be used to expand the carrier's routes to Japan and South Korea.

He said the rapid rise in both domestic and international passenger growth rates since decades of junta rule ended in 2011 provided the impetus for the airline to expand.

He said the 10 leased Boeing aircraft would "greatly enhance" the reform of Myanma Airways as well as the government's push to develop the country's air transport sector.

The carrier's sole international destination currently is Gaya in India, which is important for Buddhist pilgrims. It carried 500,000 passengers last year compared to 230,000 in 2010.

Japan's All-Nippon Airways last year acquired 49 percent stake in another Myanmar-based carrier, Asian Wings Airways, which commenced its first international service to Thailand in January.

– AFP

An aircraft belonging to Myanmar Airways International (MAI) sits on the runway of Yangon Airport last week. Photo: Philip Heijmans

UNOPS

The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) in Myanmar is inviting qualified candidates to apply for the following positions:

Sr.	Title and level	Duty Station	Position	Deadline
1.	Monitoring & Evaluation Officer, HIV/AIDS (LICA-7) (Vacancy extended)	Yangon	National	19 Feb 14
2.	Partnership Analyst (Intern)	Yangon	International	20 Feb 14
3.	Programme Development (Intern)	Yangon	International	21 Feb 14

The benefit package for the above positions includes an attractive remuneration, 30 days annual leave and 10 holidays per year, medical insurance (for national positions), learning and development opportunities and a challenging work environment with 250 national and international colleagues.

All applications must be made through the UNOPS E-recruitment System. Please go to **https://gprs.unops.org** and click on the post that you are interested in applying for. If you do not have access to the internet, please contact UNOPS directly on the numbers below.

For any quires please do not hesitate to contact UNOPS at 95 1 657 281-7 Ext: 147

SINGAPORE

Indonesia's Garuda to build new hub near Singapore

INDONESIAN flag-carrier Garuda is developing a new aviation hub on Bintan Island near Singapore to strengthen its domestic and international network, it was announced last week.

Garuda entered into a partnership with Singapore-based firm Gallant Venture, which will invest Sg$300 million (US$237 million) into the project.

The two firms signed an agreement at the Singapore Airshow to jointly develop Bintan as Garuda's new hub with a dedicated airport for the carrier and its subsidiary as well as a centre for aircraft maintenance.

Garuda will also promote Bintan, an island with white-sand beaches and resorts less than an hour by boat from Singapore, as a tourism destination.

"Currently the airport is under construction. They have started with a runway that is 3000 metres [10,000 feet] that is quite long and can land wide-body [aircraft]," Emirsyah Satar, CEO of Garuda Indonesia, told a media briefing.

"This new operation out of Bintan will help strengthen Garuda's network development, with a potential to connect East Indonesia with West Indonesia and become the meeting point for our international flights to Europe and the Far East," Mr Satar added.

"With our regional fleet stationed in Bintan, Garuda will be able to be more competitive to service the second tier tourist and business destination cities within ASEAN."

Indonesian carriers are setting up aviation hubs across the vast archipelago because of congestion at the main airport in Jakarta.

Bintan will be Garuda's fifth hub in Indonesia after Jakarta, Makasar in Sulawesi, Denpasar in Bali and Medan in Sumatra.

The Bintan aviation hub will include a 177-hectare (438-acre) aerospace industrial park housing a maintenance, repair and overhaul facility. – *AFP*

HECTARES

177

Size of an aerospace industrial park housing a maintenance, repair and overhaul facility to be built within the Bintan Island aviation hub.

SINGAPORE

Vietnam jet deal boosts role in global aviation

FLEDGLING carrier VietJetAir on Tuesday ordered 63 Airbus A320 jets with a list price of US$6.4 billion in a massive expansion program that underscores Asia's central role in the future of world aviation.

The deal, signed on the opening day of the Singapore Airshow, also covers rights to acquire or lease 38 more A320s, potentially boosting the budget carrier's current fleet of 11 A320s tenfold.

"The A320 has proven to be extremely efficient in service with VietJetAir and is a favourite with our passengers," the firm's managing director Luu Duc Khanh said in a press statement issued by Airbus.

The Vietnamese airline, founded only in 2011, plies domestic routes as well as services to Bangkok, Seoul and Kunming in China with its current fleet of leased planes.

"We look forward to developing our business across the Asia Pacific region," Luu said, adding that Airbus would be a "strategic partner" in its regional expansion.

Fabrice Bregier, the president and chief executive of Airbus, said the order "reinforces the A320 family's position as the preferred choice in the single aisle market, both for full service and low cost carriers".

"We look forward to working with VietJetAir as it brings ever more affordable air travel to the fast growing South East Asian market," he said in the statement.

Fabrice Bregier, President and CEO of Airbus presents an Airbus model to Nguyen Thi Phuang Thao, CEO of VietJetAir after a signing ceremony during the Singapore Airshow on February 11. Photo: AFP

In addition to the 63 A320s on firm order, VietJetAir has rights to buy 30 more and lease another eight from third parties for a total of 101 new planes.

Mr Bregier said at a media briefing that the carrier may need even more orders because of the explosive growth in passenger traffic in Vietnam.

"In Asia, we expect a [passenger traffic] growth year-on-year of close to 6 percent for the next 20 years. In Vietnam, it will be close to 30 pc year-on-year. This is really impressive."

There have been more than 10,100 orders and 5900 deliveries of the A320s since it hit the market to over 300 customers and operators, making it the world's bestselling single-aisle aircraft, according to Airbus.

Chu Viet Cuong, a member of VietJetAir's board of directors, told AFP the airline will fund the purchases with money arranged by international financial institutions. – *AFP*

Careers at MCM

Myanmar Consolidated Media, Ltd (MCM), the respected and well-established publisher of *The Myanmar Times* (in both English and Myanmar) and NOW! magazine, is seeking to hire ambitious, highly competent professionalsfor the following positions in Circulation & Distribution (Myanmar nationals only).
Proficiency in spoken and written English and solid computer skills are required for both positions.

Customer Care Representative (2)
Serving as the human interface between MCM and the public, the Customer Care Rep:
- calls new subscribers to verify their info
- calls current subscribers to ensure satisfactory delivery
- handles subscriber suggestions and complaintsonducts phone polls.

Requirements: University degree, good communications skills, pleasant phone voice; experience in customer relations or telemarketing a plus.

Copy Controller
Serving as the link between the Printing and Finance, the Copy Controller:
- confirms print runs and double-checks data against physical output
- ensures accurate allotment of copies to various depts
- maintains list of complimentary copies are accounted for and delivered in a timely ashion

Requirements: University degree, highly organized and efficient; background in accounting or auditing a plus.

Application deadline: 5pm Mon, 3 March, 2014
Early applications will receive priority consideration.
To apply, send a one-page CV and one-page cover letter explaining how your skills, experience or degree are relevant to the position.
Include specific ideas about what you would do on the job to add value to the newspaper and the company.

MCM

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379-383 Bo Aung Kyaw Street, Kyauktada T/S, Yangon
Email applications to: mcmhrd@myanmartimes.com.mm

Property

BUSINESS EDITOR: **Philip Heijmans** | **pheijmans13@**gmail.com

Dala squatters ordered off land

Land speculation in Yangon's Dala township sees new buyers snatching up old properties as hundreds of families are forced into desolation

SHWE GU THIT SAR

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A woman and her son sit at their makeshift home in Dala township after having been evicted from their squat residence. Photo: Boothee

LAND speculation is driving hundreds of squatters in Yangon's Dala township from their homes as new owners acquire the land on which their houses are built and evict them, residents said.

The new owners typically fence in their land and order those living there to demolish or dismantle their houses. More than 20 houses have already been razed, and about 100 more are slated for demolition, said a Dala resident.

"We have to rebuild our house on Bo Min Yaung Road after dismantling it. The new owner of the land said we could live here until the end of the month," said a resident of Dala's Mindone Street.

Speculators can acquire a 12x18 metre (40ft-by-60ft) plot in Dala's Yarza Thingyan ward for K45 million, or K16 million for a 6-by-8m (20ft-by-60 ft) plot, local real estate agent U Hla Chit told *The Myanmar Times*.

He added, "Chinese are buying land in our ward. Then they tell the people living on the land they bought to move. About 20 houses have been demolished. Some residents rent their land, but they have to pay a year in advance." This could be up to K90,000, he said.

"People who don't have enough money move to Naungdone. Some squatters or tenants are lucky because landowners haven't sold [yet]."

Daw Aye Sein, 77, of Bo Min Yaung Street, Yarza Thingyan ward, said "I have been here for 17 years. We have eight household members including an adopted child. Now the plot we live on has been sold and the new owner fenced it, and our house was knocked down."

She said she has to live on the street because she cannot afford rent or rebuilding costs.

"We have nowhere to go. We have to sleep under a makeshift roof. In the daytime, we have to sit at the roadside outside the fence," she added.

"We have to depend on charity for our food. My sons are working as [dock loaders] at Dala port, but my daughter lives with her husband."

A Yangon City Development Committee spokesperson said he was unaware of the evictions.

"Most Dala residents are not landowners, and they built their house on vacant land they did not own," said the head of the ward administration office of Yarza Thingyan.

"The price of land here is high due to the news that a bridge would be built between Yangon and Dala. The new landowners are also worried that the squatters could claim their land in the future," he added.

– Translation by Thiri Min Htun

Yangon hotel room supply now set to double: minister

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YANGON'S current stock of 9000 rooms is set to more than double in coming years, a regional government minister says.

While the city has 190 licensed hotels with more than 9000 rooms, the government has granted permission for about 250 hotels with more than 20,000 rooms, Yangon Region Minister for Hotels and Tourism U Soe Min said at a ceremony on February 8 to mark the first anniversary of the Myanmar Hoteliers Association (Yangon Zone).

"As tourist arrivals have increased, more hotels are needed and some hotels are expanding," U Soe Min said.

"Some [of the new projects have] already opened and some are under construction. The development of the hotel sector is helping to increase the country's income."

Hoteliers Association secretary U Pyae Phyo Tun, who is also general manager of Yangon's Pho Sein Hotel, said the increase in applications to open hotels in Yangon has been driven by the local business community.

He said many Myanmar businesspeople are opening hotels with 50-60 rooms, which can be built relatively quickly. These hotels would be essential for Myanmar in 2014 because it is hosting hundreds of ASEAN meetings.

"Foreign investors weren't interested in doing hotel projects for ASEAN," he said. "Only local investors were interested to build small hotels and quickly finish them by the end of 2013."

Among the new investors is Adventure Myanmar Tours & Incentive. A spokesperson said the company planned to invest US$56 million in a "five-star" hotel in Yangon and has received permission from Myanmar Investment Commission.

"We have also got permission from the government to build a high-standard hotel in Mandalay," the spokesperson said.

MILLION

$56

Amount that Adventure Myanmar Tours & Incentive plans to invest in a new five-star hotel in Yangon

Authorities to crack down on illegal wastewater dumping

Mandalay authorities threaten to shut down businesses conducting illegal dumping in local waterways with industrial factories at the forefront of the investigation

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FACTORIES dumping waste into Mandalay's waterways could be closed down, the city's development committee has warned. Mandalay City Development Committee has given industries 15 days to comply with clean-water regulations.

"Factories near ditches and creeks shouldn't take the easy way out in disposing of their liquid waste. The Sedawgyi irrigation channel is for surplus water from the dam. But some companies in the industrial zone are dumping their wastewater into it," said MCDC member U Tun Kyi at a February 8 meeting.

He added, "We have given priority to the development of business in the past. But development can bring pollution, and from now on, we will take action against pollution under the law."

Laying down a 15-day deadline for companies to ensure that their waste was carried in the pipelines provided, he added: "After the deadline, if we find unsystematic discarding of waste water, we will confiscate the licence, and close the factory until you follow the instructions."

About 36 industrialists from 90 factories attended the meeting, which was called to discuss the entry of liquid waste from tanneries, distilleries and soap factories in the industrial zone into Nat Yay Kan fishery through the irrigation channel.

U Maung Maung Oo, secretary of the Industrial Zone Management Committee, said, "At first, factories in the industrial zone used to dispose of wastewater in a ditch. But that generated pollution and a stench, so in 2006 we built a 10-inch-waste pipe for polluted water. Industrialists themselves built it with technical assistance from the department of engineering. It cost K110.15 million."

Saying companies would follow the regulations, he asked for more time to comply, and for technical assistance from the sanitation department.

The 28 owners of the tanneries in the industrial zone started laying the 1000-foot pipeline on February 10, said U Maung Tint, a member of the management committee. "We are starting now because we were asked to provide a model for other industries," said U Maung Tint of the Swan Inn tannery.

"We are consulting to use a 5-6-inch pipeline, though MCDC allows a 3-inch pipe. The cost may be from K20 million to K50 million. We will try to finish it within 15 days, but we are not sure it will be finished before the deadline."

The 10-inch waste pipe discarding wastewater into Taung Inn Myauk Inn is 11,000 feet long and there are nine factories using that pipe, according to MCDC's water and sanitation department.

– Translation by Thiri Min Htun

MILLION

K50

Potential cost of a new pipeline in Mandalay meant to deter further pollution in the area

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"We have nowhere to go. We have to sleep under a makeshift roof. In the daytime, we have to sit at the roadside outside the fence."

— Daw Aye Sein

Riot police move in on Thai protesters

WORLD 34

Yangon govt draws lots for affordable housing

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THE Yangon regional government is set to draw lots to decide which of more than 13,000 applicants will receive permission to buy new low-cost housing at North Dagon township's new Bo Ba Htoo housing project, a Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC) official said.

Located on Bo Ba Htoo road, the new housing project comprises a total of 593 apartment units, 330 of which are 55 square metres (614 sq ft) and will be sold for K25.5 million each. An additional 90 units, at 83 sq m (927 sq ft) each, are the most expensive in the compound and will be sold for K34.7 million each, said U Nay Win, deputy head of the department of engineering for the YCDC.

"Since this project is implemented by Yangon Regional Government, they will carry out drawing the lots," said U Nay Win.

"After the Bo Ba Htoo project, another project, the Bo Min Yaung housing project, will be allocated to the public after it is completed," he said, adding that the YCDC's engineering department received more than 13,000 applications for the Bo Ba Htoo apartments during the three-week application window last month.

He also said that successful applicants may either pay the entire cost of a unit by taking out a bank loan or through instalments that will be offered with a 30-percent down payment.

– Translation by Thiri Min Htun

YCDC to demolish illegal buildings

MYAT NYEIN AYE
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PARLIAMENT has approved a new law authorising the Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC) to demolish buildings constructed without a permit, said deputy director of the engineering department U Nay Win.

Alarmed at the number of buildings going up without a permit – YCDC estimates there may be 1000 this year – the city sought legal authorisation from parliament to take action. They also have in their sights construction that takes place on land sold without an official sales contract.

Now that the hluttaw has agreed, YCDC plans to enforce the new law.

"We have to take effective action against construction without a permit. We are prepared to demolish buildings under construction if they are at the foundation stage. We will take legal action against the owners of buildings in a more advanced state of construction," U Nay Win told *The Myanmar Times*.

Next month, engineering department workers will start making field observations. They are prepared to order four or five demolitions in each township as an example to others.

Even buildings with permits could be in violation if the terms are exceeded. "We might give a permit for a three-storey house on land which is bought without a sale contract that is registered with YCDC. But if the builder goes above three storeys, we will take action against them too," he said.

Estate agent Ko Min Min Soe welcomed the YCDC action, saying residents in no-permit buildings were at a disadvantage.

In the current financial year, YCDC has issued permits for 625 high-rise buildings, 2496 houses and 132 fences.

HOUSE OF THE WEEK

The family nook

This spacious home, set in a 720 sq m (8000 square-foot) compound convenient for Ocean Supercentre and the Myanmar Convention Centre, offers plenty of room for a family. The two-storey house covers 360 sq m (4000 sq ft), including four double bedrooms and two single rooms, plus living and dining rooms. Seven air conditioners keep it airy and cool. A carport adjoins the house.

Though not close to downtown, Mindhamma Road, Mayangone township, is convenient for transportation.

The house is newly decorated and furnished, offering a telephone landline, tube well and municipal water, and power meter.

– Myat Nyein Aye

Location	:	Mindhamma Road, Mayangone tsp.
Price	:	US$6000 (rent)
Contact	:	Estate Myanmar real estate agency
Phone	:	09 43118787 09 25408567

COMMENT

Yangon: a city caught in a state of gridlock

STUART DEED
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YANGON is my home, but the introduction of epic traffic jams has revealed the inadequacy of the road network. Simply put: It wasn't built to handle the number of cars on the streets but more new vehicles are joining the backs of the lines every day.

The city's planners are busy trying to solve the problems but they are fighting a losing battle. The traffic jams are here to stay until expensive public transport works are completed, and it appears that municipal-level talks over such an undertaking are only preliminary.

There are major projects underway to ease congestion at the Bayintnaung junction, which will combine an overpass with a new bridge over the river. When it's finished it will join the recently opened Shwegondaing overpass and the marginally older Hledan fly-over; both are already doing a fine job cutting travel times from north to south and vice versa.

However, both have shown that easing traffic at one spot only passes the congestion downstream – a logical analogy given how traffic flows.

And in the case of both overpasses the next snarl heading south is a roundabout – at U Wisara for Pyay Road and at the south-eastern corner of Shwedagon after the Shwegondaing junction.

Teams of traffic police are doing well to keep the traffic moving during the day, particularly along the north-south routes, and ensure the relatively swift movement of vehicles in those directions. But herein lies the problem: What about getting from east to west and vice versa?

Yangon's biggest and most efficient roads run north-south, mostly feeding traffic into downtown.

East-west, however, is more challenging: Strand Road, Merchant Road, Anawrahta Road and Bogyoke Aung San Road prove to be an obstacle and it is often quicker to simply walk between the vehicles caught in gridlock traffic. The situation uptown is just as bad as motorists have these few options: Ahlone Road and its extensions to the east, Natmauk around Kandawgyi Lake, Dhammazedi and Shwegongdaing – all of which can become congested with bumper-to-bumper traffic.

Further north, however, gets better with University Avenue Road, while Parami is probably the best east-west road in the city. To the east and west of Inya Lake there are other east-west roads that operate quite well, especially feeding Yankin, South Okkalapa and Thingangyun townships.

Even removing the quagmire that is downtown, getting east-west across the city during working hours is a nightmare. The emphasis on moving traffic north-south means long waits at roundabouts and major intersections, while the proliferation of schools and shopping centres on east-west roads add unpredictable blockages, multiplied by the city's fleet of public buses.

Improving flows east-west is not an easy thing to do and the most obvious short term fix will be to replace the roundabouts with traffic lights, which should at least end the gridlock that happens at those sites when the police are not diligent. Further attempts to manage traffic will surely result in more overpasses – and the extensive delays and chaos they bring.

Of course, the long-term solution is upgrading public transport – beginning with the existing Yangon Circular Railway, but even without it, the train currently manages to get from Central Station to Ahlone Station in about 15 minutes, much faster than by car.

Stuart Deed, formerly business editor at *The Myanmar Times*, has lived in Yangon since 2006. He now works as director of operations for local realty firm Myanmar Real Estate.

ISTANBUL

Turkey to build new airport despite order

Authority claims court decision does not halt operations carried out in accordance with prior contracts

TURKEY vowed last week to press ahead with the construction of what could become one of the world's busiest airports despite a court order halting work over environmental concerns.

A court last month suspended work on Istanbul's third airport after local residents and environmental groups filed a lawsuit, arguing that the operations caused serious damage to the environment, the *Hurriyet* newspaper reported.

But Transport Minister Lutfi Elvan said the suspension was temporary and that it would not interfere with construction of the airport, which Turkey estimates will handle 150 million passengers annually when complete.

"This was a decision only for a temporary suspension pending the environmental impact approval report. In no way will it affect the construction of the airport," he told reporters.

Environment and Urban Development Minister Idris Gulluce said his ministry would appeal the decision, which he believed was a "factual mistake".

"We will appeal ... Our airport will be built without any interruption or break," he said. "No one should come to the conclusion that the airport will be prevented and Turkey's world-famous project will be halted."

Turkey's General Directorate of State Airports Authority (DHMI) also said construction would continue.

"The said court decision does not halt operations carried out in accordance with the New Istanbul Airport contract signed in May 2013," it said. "Processes regarding the project continue as planned."

The court requested an expert report on construction plans and is expected to make a final decision on the fate of the project within one year.

Cengiz-Kolin-Limak-Mapa-Kalyon Consortium, a Turkish joint venture, won a tender for the project last May after bidding 22 billion euros (US$30 million) for a 25-year lease to build and operate the planned airport.

The first stage of the construction would be completed in four years.

The new airport has the potential to make Istanbul a mega aviation hub, as the city's current Ataturk airport, which has come close to reaching its limits, reported a record 16.7 percent jump in passenger numbers in 2012, surpassing its European rivals, according to the International Air Transport Authority (IATA).

The announcement of the plans to build a third airport in the north of Turkey's biggest city was greeted with anger by many groups.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government is frequently criticised for its ambitious construction plans for the bustling city of 16 million people – which also include a third bridge across the Bosphorus and a canal parallel to the international waterway to ease traffic congestion.

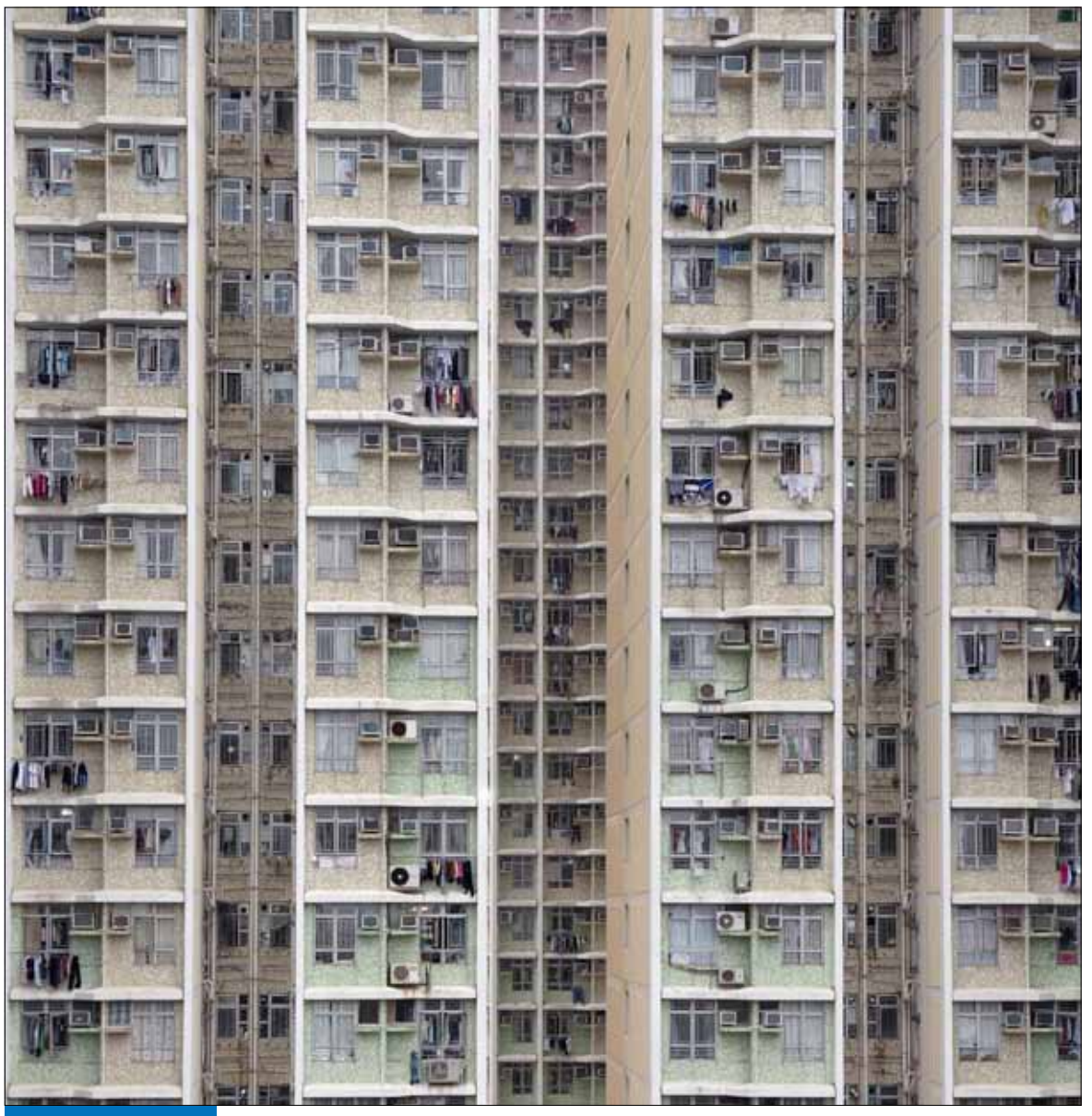
The building industry has boomed under Mr Erdogan but a controversial corruption probe is currently investigating allegations of high-level bribery linked to some construction projects.

The probe has implicated members of Mr Erdogan's inner circle, including high-profile businessmen and has posed a major challenge to the premier's 11-year-rule. – *AFP*

MILLION

$30

The winning bid to build and operate a planned airport in Turkey



IN PICTURES

Apartment units are clustered tightly together in Hong Kong last week. Home prices in the southern Chinese city have risen by 120 percent since 2008, and by more than 30 pc from their previous peak in 1997, with prices in the luxury market being pushed up by wealthy buyers from mainland China. *Photo: AFP*

PANAMA CITY

Panama, Spanish-led consortium bargain over canal expansion

WORK on expanding the Panama Canal was unlikely to resume at the end of last week as local officials face negotiations with foreign builders after the project was halted in a dispute over cost overruns.

The multi-billion-dollar plan to build larger locks on the 50-mile (80-kilometre) waterway linking the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans stopped last week in a row over who will pay an additional US$1.6 billion bill.

The independent Panama Canal Authority (ACP) and GUPC consortium – a group of international builders headed by Spain's Sacry Vallehermoso – exchanged proposals throughout the day, but without a deal.

"We keep open the possibility of reaching an agreement, and we are making an effort towards that goal," said ACP chief Jorge Quijano.

According to the builders, "talks with the ACP are ongoing and are expected to continue next week."

Bankers financing the $3.2 billion contract to expand the canal visited the worksite earlier this month.

The project is designed to widen the canal so that massive cargo ships can pass through. It is one of the world's most ambitious biggest civil engineering projects and was due to be completed next year.

The builders have said completion may be delayed by up to five years.

The consortium has accused the Panama Canal Authority of breaking off negotiations. It says the authority failed in obligations to pay a $50 million bill and to help pay workers and subcontractors.

GUPC had offered to split the cost of finishing the dig with the Canal Authority and then let arbitrators decide who pays for the overrun.

The Panamanians suggest a deal could be reached if the builders commit to specific dates for stages of the job to be ready. There would also be a ban on further cost overruns.

The GUPC claims unforeseen geological difficulties have forced them to spend much more on cement than expected. They say that they based their estimates on data provided by the Canal Authority that was incorrect.

The consortium of builders includes Italy's Impreglio, Jan de Nul from Belgium, and Panama's Constructora Urbana. The original canal, built by the United States mostly with workers brought in from the Caribbean, was completed in 1914.

It offers a shortcut and safer journey for maritime traffic, is used by 13,000-14,000 ships each year, handling five percent of world sea trade.

The canal generates $960 million a year for Panama, nearly 10 percent of the country's total annual income. – *AFP*

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Reg.No.IV/471/2001 Reg.No.IV/7116/2007
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Dated. February 17, 2014

Will cheap SIM cards end the black market?

AUNG KYAW NYUNT

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THE black market in SIM cards appears to be on the brink of extinction. Now that Ooredoo and Telenor have been selected as operators to develop the nationwide mobile network, savvy customers are waiting to go legit.

Qatari telecoms provider Ooredoo says its cards will be available in six months, and Norway-based Telenor says its 30 million cards will be on the street by October.

A GSM SIM card with a face value of K1500 can now be had under the table for about K11,500, while K5000 top-up cards can fetch K60,000-K70,000.

"The black market in SIM cards is down a little as demand sags. Many people are waiting for the release of the operators' SIM cards. If they release enough of them, I think the black market could disappear," said Ma Pa Pa of KKA Mobile shop in Kyauktada township.

"I will buy the operators' SIM cards because they will be cheap and plentiful. They will also guarantee the best internet connection. I think the SIM card black market will disappear" agreed mobile aficionado Ko Aung Thu.

Myanma Posts and Telecommunications has been distributing 35,000 cheap SIM cards via the state and regional governments since last April, and the K1500 SIM cards since last July. The scarcity has driven the unofficial rate as high as K180,000.

'The black market will disappear if the operators sell unlimited numbers.'

U Htet Lin Kyaw
GM of Mr Fone Telecom Centre

"People don't buy the K1500 CDMA SIM card because CDMA handsets are rare. We're looking forward to the operators' cards. The black market could disappear," said tech enthusiast U Min Nin.

"People with K500,000 and K200,000 SIM cards are trying to sell them. But the black market will disappear if the operators sell unlimited numbers," added U Htet Lin Kyaw, general manager of Mr Fone Telecom Centre in South Okkalapa township.

MPT began distributing 500,000 WCDMA SIM cards for pensioners last month, and told *The Myanmar Times* it is welcoming the coming rush of cheap SIM cards. "MPT will be in competition with the operators, but our advantage is that we know the states and regions. We may just reduce the rates a little," said an MPT engineer.

GADGET REVIEWS

Martell MP3 Speaker (DS-XO01)
The 'novelty' bottle design is a bit strange, but don't let that turn you off. This MP3 Speaker has ports for both a memory stick and micro SD Card. Rechargeable and usable with a 5C Battery. All in all, a fine purchase for the audio-lover in your life.
K 22,000

Nook (e-book Reader Tablet)
This is a good present for the lover who loves reading. It has built- in memory 16GB for games and applications, but it can add Micro SD Card for more applications. With day and night mood for reading. Some English books have sound function to be able to listen the story. **K 105,000**

COCO Phone (Bluetooth)
A handset for those who miss the feel of yester-year's phones . However, for this price, you need to *really* miss them. Compatible with all Bluetooth devices. Rechargeable.
K 30,000

– Myo Set

These fine gadgets are available at Beno Sony game Enterprise Ltd.
No.259, Barr Street (Upper Block), Kyauktada township, Yangon. Ph: 01-256 417, 09-8622744

IN BRIEF

Civil society wary of World Bank telecom project

A group of 61 civil society organisations have joined forces to express their dismay over the World Bank's Telecom Sector Reform project, which will award the government US$ 31.5 million of credit to put towards revamping the nation communication networks.

Given the former government's long history of spying on citizens and the lack of privacy rights under current law, groups like the US Campaign for Burma are worried the innovations brought by the project will make invasions of privacy even easier.

"The World Bank's failure to promote privacy and security reform in Burma while expanding telecom capacity will enable the Burmese government to further engage in surveillance, censorship, and other abuses" reads a statement from the US Campaign for Burma. – *Staff*

Moderation Training

--- Do you want to become a professional moderator? ---

The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH hereby announces trainings in the field of

Moderation Skills Development

offered to Myanmar nationals who intend to work as a freelance moderator.

During the training the participants will be enabled to act as a professional fascilitator in a workshop or conference environment.

Structure and Schedule of the Trainings

The training will be offered in two consecutive courses: Selected participants of the basic course will granted the opportunity to complete an advanced course depending on the trainer's evaluation.

The training will be held in Yangon in March (Travel cost cannot be reimbursed).

Requirements

- Participation in both of the training sections (exact dates t.b.a.),
- Motivation and enthusiasm to work in groups and interact with people,
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- Participation fee of 30,000 Kyat

Contact and Application Process:

Kindly provide us with your CV and explain us in a free-text email

1. Your motivation to apply for the course and
2. How you would apply the competencies acquired during the training in your future.

We are looking forward to receiving your application **before 24 Feb 2014** to **giz-myanmar@giz.de**. Interviews will be conducted on 28 Feb 2014.

World

WORLD EDITOR: **Bridget Di Certo** | **bridget.dicerto**@gmail.com

JAVA

Volcano erupts in Java

A SPECTACULAR volcanic eruption in Indonesia has killed at least two people and forced mass evacuations, disrupting long-haul flights and closing international airports.

Mount Kelud, considered one of the most dangerous volcanoes on the main island of Java, spewed red-hot ash and rocks high into the air late on February 13 just hours after its alert status was raised.

TV images showed ash and rocks raining down on nearby villages, while *AFP* correspondents at the scene saw terrified locals covered in ash fleeing in cars and on motorbikes towards evacuation centres.

A man and a woman, both in their 60s, were crushed to death after volcanic material blanketed rooftops, causing their separate homes in the sub-district of Malang to cave in, National Disaster Mitigation Agency spokesman Sutopo Purwo Nugroho said.

"The homes were poorly built and seemed to have collapsed easily under the weight," he said.

Some 200,000 people in a 10-kilometre (6-mile) radius from the volcano were ordered to evacuate, according to national disaster officials, though many tried to return to their homes to gather clothing and valuables -- only to be forced back by a continuous downpour of volcanic materials.

"A rain of ash, sand and rocks is reaching up to 15 kilometres (nine miles)" from the volcano's crater, Nugroho said.

Virgin Australia said it had cancelled all its flights to and from Phuket, Denpasar, Christmas Island and Cocos Island on February 14, saying in a statement that "the safety of our customers is the highest priority" and that the airline would keep monitoring the plume.

A spokeswoman for Australian airline Qantas said that February 14 flights between Jakarta and Sydney had been pushed back to the following day.

"Flight paths from Australia to Singapore have been altered as a result of the volcanic ash cloud in Java," she said.

The ash has blanketed the Javanese cities of Surabaya, Yogyakarta and Solo, where international airports have been closed temporarily, while Metro TV showed images of grounded planes covered in ash.

On the outskirts of Yogyakarta, authorities closed Borobudur – the world's largest Buddhist temple, which attracts hundred of tourists daily – after it was also rained upon with dust from the volcano some 200 kilometres east.

At a temporary shelter in the village of Bladak, roughly 10 km from the volcano's crater, around 400 displaced people, including children, slept on the floor wearing safety masks.

The Center for Volcanology and Geological Hazard Mitigation said there was little chance of another eruption as powerful as the one of February 13, but tremors around the volcano could still be felt on February 14 as volcanic materials continued to blanket the rooftops of entire villages.

Communities within the affected 15-km radius began clearing piles of grey ash as high as five centimetres from roads, Nugroho said.

The National Search and Rescue Agency warned residents not to return home as lava was still flowing through some villages, while sulphur was lingering in the air in others.

The 1731-metre Mount Kelud has claimed more than 15,000 lives since 1500, including around 10,000 deaths in a massive 1568 eruption.

Earlier this month another volcano, Mount Sinabung on western Sumatra island, erupted leaving at least 16 people dead. –*AFP*

Indonesian soldiers evacuate ash-covered residents in Malang, East Java province on February 14. Photo: AFP

IN PICTURES

Elephants are pictured ahead of a religious procession in Colombo, Sri Lanka on February 14. Some 70 elephants, most of them from the central part of the island, together with thousands of traditional drummers, dancers, and monks gathered in the Sri Lankan capital to participate in the city's biggest two-day annual Buddhist procession which was first held in 1979. *Photo: AFP*

BANGKOK

Riot police move in c

THOUSANDS of riot police have been deployed in the Thai capital to clear areas occupied for weeks by opposition protesters, reclaiming the besieged government headquarters with no resistance.

The operation on February 14 marked an unexpected shift in tactics by the embattled government, which has allowed the protesters to camp out at locations around Bangkok for several months in their bid to force Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra from office.

Security forces easily re-took areas around Government House, which Ms Yingluck had been unable to use for about two months, according to *AFP* reporters. Most protesters appeared to have left the area already.

"Officials will return to work at Government House on Monday," Labour Minister Chalerm Yubamrung, who oversaw the operation, told reporters as he inspected the building.

Ms Yingluck and her cabinet have been forced to work from undisclosed locations around the city for weeks due to the demonstrations.

The operation was focused on the government district rather than major intersections in the commercial centre that have become the main focus of the rallies in recent weeks as part of what protesters have described as the "Bangkok shutdown".

So far the authorities have not announced any plan to clear those intersections, where hundreds of protesters are gathered.

But there are plans to re-take several other sites including the interior

BEIJING

Kerry meets Xi amid territorial tensions

US Secretary of State John Kerry has met with Chinese President Xi Jinping as US security allies Tokyo and Manila expressed increasing concern over China's far-reaching territorial claims.

Mr Kerry met Mr Xi at the Great Hall of the People, followed by talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

The top US diplomat's trip came at a pivotal moment for the region, with flaring disputes between Beijing and Tokyo over their World War II history and disputed islands in the East China Sea sending relations between the Asian powers plummeting to their lowest point in recent years.

China stands ready to work with the US, Mr Wang said, "so that we can truly reflect the principle of non-confrontation, non-conflict, mutual respect and win-win cooperation in all aspects of our relationship".

Later, Mr Kerry stressed the need to "set an example for this major-power relationship".

"I think the world is always waiting to see whether China and the United States can find the common ground despite some differences," he said.

Fears of an aerial or maritime clash over the East China Sea islands have spiked following Beijing's recent declaration of an air defence identification zone in the area's skies, which Washington condemned. Chinese and Japanese patrol boats regularly shadow each other in the waters near the islands.

At the same time Beijing has been acting increasingly assertively in the South China Sea, which it claims almost in its entirety. – *AFP*

Malaysia's Banksy takes street art world by storm

WORLD 37

China eyes South Pole in race for resources

WORLD 39

Syrian refugees tell how they lived off leaves and worms

WORLD 43

on Thai protesters

ministry, National Security Council chief Paradorn Pattanatabut told AFP, saying officials would attempt to negotiate with the demonstrators first.

"We will re-take wherever we can and arrest protest leaders," he said. "It's not a crackdown on the protests -- it's enforcement of the law over the protest sites."

Riot police removed protesters' tents and warned demonstrators through a loudspeaker not to resist the operation, according to AFP reporters at the scene. There were no reports of clashes.

"Police must clear this area where it is dangerous and there are constantly incidents," police announced.

"There are also many suspects wanted for arrest who are mixing with protesters," they said. "We ask all protesters not to resist or obstruct police work."

Ms Yingluck's government held a general election earlier this month in an attempt to assuage opposition protesters who have staged more than three months of mass street demonstrations demanding her resignation.

Mr Paradorn said there was illegal assembly and possession of weapons at the rally sites.

"These are all government offices and the government has to serve the people," he said.

The protesters want Ms Yingluck to stand down to make way for an unelected "People's Council" to enact reforms to tackle corruption and alleged vote-buying before new polls are held.

The main opposition Democrat Party boycotted the February 2 vote, saying it would not end a political crisis stretching back to a military coup in 2006 that ousted Ms Yingluck's elder brother Thaksin Shinawatra as premier.

Demonstrators prevented 10,000 polling stations from opening in the vote, affecting several million people, mainly in opposition strongholds in Bangkok and the south.

Protesters have occupied major intersections in the capital since January 13, although disruption to people's daily lives has been limited.

Attendance has fallen sharply, with most sites nearly deserted for much of the day and several thousand people joining the rallies in the evenings.

'We will re-take whatever we can and arrest protest leaders'

Paradorn Pattanatabut
National Security Council Chief

There has been a series of grenade attacks and shootings in the capital: part of a wave of political violence linked to the protests that has left at least 10 people dead and hundreds injured.

Ms Yingluck's opponents say her government is controlled by Mr Thaksin, who fled Thailand in 2008 to avoid going to jail for a corruption conviction and now lives in Dubai.

Pro-Thaksin parties have won every election for more than a decade, most recently in 2011 under Yingluck, helped by strong support in the northern half of the kingdom.

The Election Commission on Tuesday set a date of April 27 for election re-runs in constituencies where voting was disrupted by protesters.

But there is still no decision on what to do about 28 constituencies that have no candidates because demonstrators blocked the registration process.

On February 12, in a boost to the government, the opposition lost a legal bid to nullify the election held earlier this month.

Ms Yingluck also faces an investigation by an anti-corruption panel into possible negligence of duty in connection with her flagship rice subsidy scheme, a move that could potentially result in her impeachment. – *AFP*

WORLD NEWS IN BRIEF

MOSCOW
Russia slams EU over Ukraine
Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has rebuked the European Union for trying to extend its "sphere of influence" amid deteriorating relations over the political crisis in Kiev.

"Pressuring Ukraine in one direction, while warning that it faces an 'either-or' choice, either the EU or Russia, is essentially trying to create a sphere of influence," Mr Lavrov said at a press conference on 14 February with his German counterpart Frank-Walter Steinmeier, who is on a two-day visit to Moscow.

"That is obvious and no beautiful words can change that," Russia's top diplomat said.

Ukraine, an ex-Soviet nation of 46 million people, has been in chaos since November when President Viktor Yanukovych ditched a planned EU trade and political pact in favour of closer ties with Moscow, stunning pro-EU parts of the population and sparking violent protests.

TAIPEI
Intelligence agent indicted
A Taiwanese military intelligence officer who went AWOL and unsuccessfully sought political asylum in Britain was indicted on February 14 on desertion charges, prosecutors said.

Yeh Mei, a 33-year-old lieutenant with the Military Intelligence Agency, had been put on Taiwan's wanted list after failing to return for duty following an overseas trip in 2012.

Ms Yeh confessed to seeking permission from her superior for a sightseeing trip to Thailand with the intention of deserting her duties because she could not adjust to a military career, and fled to Britain via Bangkok in June 2012, prosecutors said in a statement.

The offence is punishable by a maximum five-year jail term.

ROME
Italy's PM resigns amid turmoil
Italian Prime Minister Enrico Letta has formally stepped down in a flash political crisis and his 39-year-old leftist challenger Matteo Renzi is poised to win the nomination to replace him.

Mr Letta announced on February 13 that he would submit his resignation to President Giorgio Napolitano following his final cabinet meeting after less than a year in power at the head of an uneasy coalition.

The drama in Rome comes after weeks of feuding between Mr Letta and Mr Renzi, the newly-elected ambitious leader of the governing centre-left Democratic Party.

NEW DELHI
Hindu book ban laws condemned
Publisher Penguin has blamed India's "intolerant" laws for its decision to pull and pulp a book on Hinduism in the country, that sparked a furious free speech row.

Days after agreeing to withdraw a 2009 book "The Hindus: An Alternative History" to settle a court battle, Penguin India insisted it was committed to free thought and expression.

But Penguin said it also "has the same obligation as any other organisation to respect the laws of the land in which it operates, however intolerant and restrictive those laws may be."

"We also have a moral responsibility to protect our employees against threats and harassment where we can," its statement on February 14 added.

Penguin drew fire from writers and champions of free speech over its decision on February 10 to pull the book rather than fight the case, brought by an activist group which took offence to the depiction of the Hindu religion.

BRUSSELS
Belgium backs child euthenasia
Belgium has become the first country to allow euthanasia for terminally ill children of all ages, after a heated debate in which critics questioned a child's ability to make the decision to die.

Despite opposition from the Church, and some pediatricians, parliament adopted the legislation on February 13 by 86 votes to 44, with 12 abstentions.

The ground-breaking legislation makes the largely Catholic country the second after the Netherlands to allow mercy-killing for children, and the first to lift all age restrictions.

"It is not a question of imposing euthanasia on anyone ... but of allowing a child not to agonise in pain," said Socialist MP Karine Lalieux. – *AFP*

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Pomellato

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Khine Khine U, Advocate
LL.B, D.B.L, LL.M (UK)
For **Sergio Rossi S.p.A**
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Dated. February 17, 2014

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U Kyi Win Associates
For **Heinz Italia S.p.A.**
P.O. Box No. 26, Yangon.
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(**Reg. No:** 354/2014 in classes 32 and 43)

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U Kyi Win Associates
for **Evolution Fresh, Inc.**
P.O. Box No. 26, Yangon.
Phone: 372416 Dated: 17th February, 2014

BANGKOK

Thailand returns Rohingya refugees

THAILAND has sent around 1300 Rohingya refugees back to Myanmar, a top official has acknowledged.

Thai authorities began deporting the Rohingya in September through a border checkpoint in the province of Ranong, national immigration chief Lieutenant General Pharnu Kerdlarpphon, told AFP on February 13,

"The whole deportation process was completed in early November," he added.

It was the first official news of the deportation, and was condemned by rights campaigners who warned the minority Muslims faced persecution on their return.

Thousands of Rohingya, described by the United Nations as among the world's most persecuted minorities, have fled sectarian violence in western Myanmar in rickety boats since 2012, mostly heading for Malaysia.

Many of those who arrived in Thai waters were locked up in overcrowded immigration prisons.

"The deportation of Rohingya is a blatant violation of international laws that prohibit sending back refugees and asylum-seekers to a place where they can face danger and persecution," said Sunai Phasuk, a senior researcher with New York-based Human Rights Watch.

Rights groups say the Rohingya often fall into the hands of people-traffickers, sometimes after they are deported by Thailand.

Sunai urged the Thai authorities to explain what had happened to the 1300 Rohingya, saying the foreign ministry did not appear to have been involved in the deportation.

There was no immediate comment from the ministry..

But National Security Council chief Paradorn Pattanatabut said the majority of the Rohingya had wanted to leave Thailand.

"Most of them volunteered to go back because Thailand was not their destination anyway," he said. "We facilitated their return and I am sure that in Myanmar they have their place."

Thailand said last year it was investigating allegations that some army officials in the kingdom were involved in the trafficking of Rohingya.

Rights groups have also raised concerns about alleged cases of boats being pushed back out to sea after entering Thai waters.

Hundreds are believed to have died making the perilous sea voyage from Myanmar.

Roughly 500 Rohingya are believed to remain in detention in Thailand following a raid on a suspected people-trafficking camp last month.

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

More than 200 people have been killed and more than 140,000 left homeless in several outbreaks of Buddhist-Muslim violence since June 2012 in Myanmar's Rakhine state.

Rakhine has been left almost completely segregated on religious and communal grounds by the unrest, with many thousands of Muslims living in squalid camps nearly two years after being displaced. – *AFP*

SEOUL

North and South Korea reach rare agreement

HIGH-level talks between the rival Koreas have ended with a rare agreement to go ahead as planned with a reunion for divided families, despite the North's objections to overlapping South Korea-US military drills.

The two sides also agreed to stop exchanging verbal insults and to continue their nascent dialogue at a convenient date, according to a joint statement read to reporters in Seoul by South Korea's chief talks delegate Kim Kyou-Hyun on February 14.

The agreement, which was also carried on the North's official KCNA news agency, suggested a significant concession by North Korea which had wanted the South to postpone the February 24 start of its annual military drills with the United States until after the reunion.

The South had refused, arguing that the two issues – one humanitarian and one military – should not be linked.

The apparent concession and the commitment to continue what has been the highest-level official contact between the two countries since 2007, will fuel hopes that they might be entering a period of genuinely constructive engagement.

"Agreement was reached today after North Korea accepted our position that the family reunion event is important ... as the first step to build trust" Mr Kim said.

It followed two days of talks on February 12 and 14 in the border truce village of Panmunjom where the armistice ending the 1950-53 Korean War was signed.

The dialogue was the first substantive follow-up to statements by the leaders of both countries, South Korean President Park Geun-Hye and the North's Kim Jong-Un, professing a desire for improved inter-Korean ties.

There had already been signs of a shift in the North's position at the week's first round, when it demanded the military drills be postponed: a change from its usual position that they be cancelled entirely.

Seoul's unequivocal rejection of any change to the drills' schedule because of the family reunion was lent weight on February 13 by visiting US Secretary of State John Kerry.

US Secretary of State John Kerry (L) and South Korea's Foreign Minister Yun Byung-Se attend a press conference in Seoul on February 13. Photo: AFP

Addressing a press briefing in Seoul, Mr Kerry urged Pyongyang to act with "human decency" and not try to use "one (issue) as an excuse to somehow condition the other".

Millions of Koreans were separated by the 1950-53 war, and the vast majority have since died without having had any communication at all with surviving relatives.

> **'The US will not accept tals for the sake of tals.'**
>
> **John Kerry**
> US Secretary of State

Mr Kerry left for China on the morning of February 14 following his brief stop in Seoul, where he had focused on efforts to curb North Korea's nuclear weapons programme with Mr Park and other officials.

While welcoming the North-South talks in Panmunjom, Mr Kerry stressed that Washington was not ready to accede to Pyongyang's demand that it get involved in direct negotiations.

"We've been through that exercise previously, we want to know that this is real," he said, adding North Korea had to take "meaningful action" towards denuclearisation before a dialogue could begin.

"The US will not accept talks for the sake of talks," he said.

North Korea and its main ally China have both urged a resumption of stalled six-party negotiations on the North's nuclear programme, but South Korea and the US have resisted.

During his visit to China, Mr Kerry indicated that he would push Beijing to do more to rein in Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions.

"China has a unique and critical role it can play... and no country has a greater potential to influence North Korea," he said, praising moves by Beijing last year to help reduce tensions after Pyongyang carried out its third nuclear test.

An analysis of new satellite images posted on the 38 North website on February 14 showed stepped up excavation activity at the North's main nuclear test site, although there were no signs that any further test was imminent. –*AFP*

GEORGETOWN

Malaysia's Banksy has the 'Ernest Factor'

A Lithuanian street artist is breathing new life into the country's art scene

IN a crumbling, disused bus depot, hundreds of Malaysian art lovers and the merely curious crowd around an unusual sight for this artistically conservative country: street art.

Its creator, 27-year-old Lithuanian Ernest Zacharevic, arrived three years ago as a backpacker with little more than some paint supplies and the yo-yo that he performed tricks with on the street to earn money.

Since then, his often cheeky works have given a jolt to a nascent street-art scene struggling to find greater acceptance in a society where conservative Muslim attitudes and censorship linger.

"Before, we didn't have this kind of thing," said CP Lim, 33.

The visitor to Mr Zacharevic's first solo show in the city of Georgetown, examined a life-sized installation of a knife-wielding robber in the style of a Lego figurine, about to pounce on a Lego woman carrying a Chanel bag.

Many political, social and racial issues remain touchy topics in Muslim-dominated yet ethnically diverse Malaysia, which is ruled by an authoritarian national government.

Experts say this has constrained art, which also suffers from government underfunding.

The Lego scene was initially a wall mural in southern Malaysia – where a Legoland theme park is sited – painted late last year as a tongue-in-cheek reference to the sensitive subject of growing crime in the country. Embarrassed local authorities quickly whitewashed it.

But photos went viral, touching a raw nerve among Malaysians tired of crime and strictures on expression.

Copycat mutations sprung up around the country, and Mr Zacharevic was hailed as an artistic breath of fresh air.

He has been called "Malaysia's Banksy", a reference to the UK-based street-art superstar, but the lanky, introverted Mr Zacharevic rejects that label.

"For me it's not about the culture of really running around in the streets at night and spraying the trains, but it's more of a reaching out to the audience," Mr Zacharevic said.

"Street art has grown into a thing of galleries, and travelling, and big festivals and commissioned walls and murals, which is an amazing experience."

> **'His art touches people and communities'**
>
> **Christine Ngh**
> Art Consultant

People are now talking about "The Ernest factor".

"The 'Ernest factor' became a tipping point in the street-art scene, which is now moving toward wider acceptance," bringing more attention to Malaysian street artists, said Christine Ngh, founder of art agency Bumblebee Consultancy.

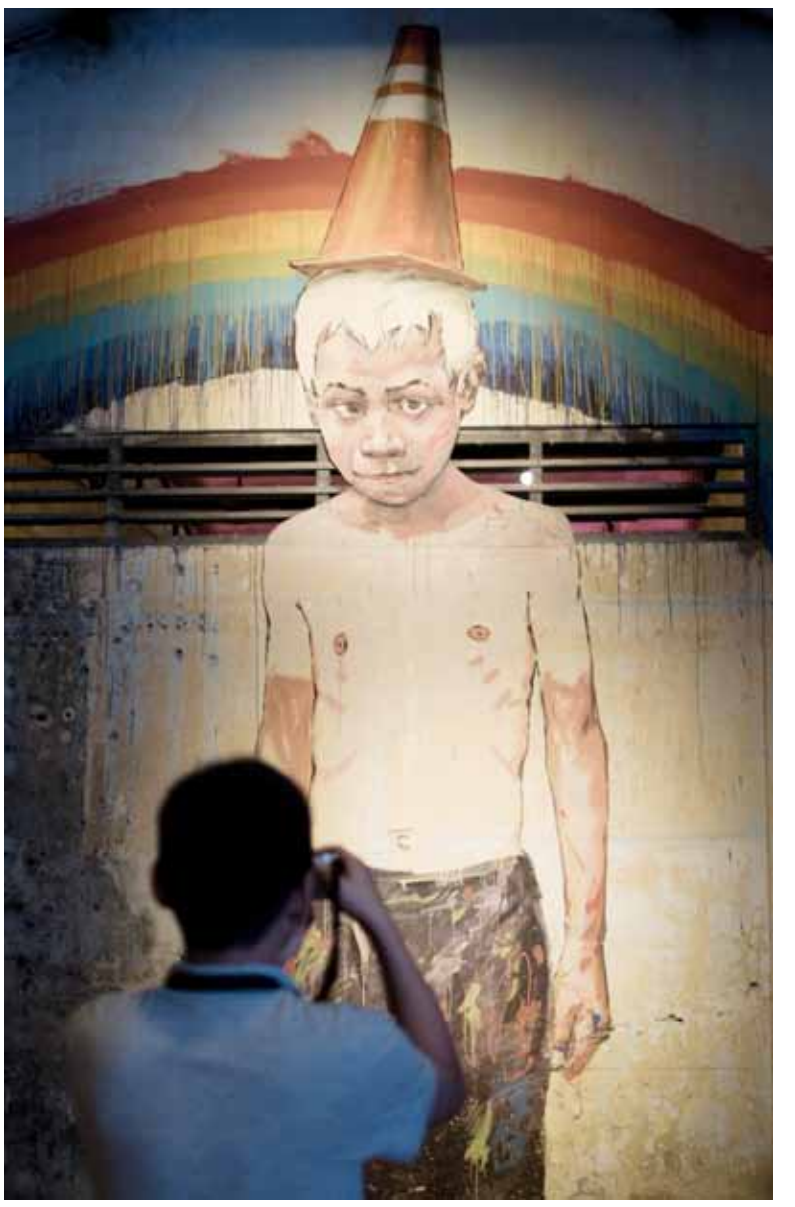
"The reason is simple: His art touches people, community and social issues, which creative people in Malaysia are somewhat conditioned to shy away from."

Mr Zacharevic is generally careful to avoid politics or provoking authorities. He typically obtains permission before doing a wall mural.

"There are bigger risks, like sometimes I hang on six-storey tall [buildings] doing the murals," he said.

Growing up in a family of artists in Lithuania, Mr Zacharevic studied fine arts in London. After he reached Malaysia in 2011, he painted on the streets, selling his first canvas for less than US$70.

His works go for thousands of dollars now, and his murals, dot the artsy capital of Penang state, Georgetown. Many were done for a 2012 festival celebrating its UNESCO World Heritage status. – *AFP*



A visitor takes pictures of a mural during Zacharevic's first solo show in Georgetown on the Malaysian island of Penang. Photo: AFP

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IN PICTURES

Brides and grooms pray during a mass wedding held by the Unification Church on February 12 in Gapyeongm South Korea. Two thousand-five hundred couples from 52 countries were married in the ceremony – the second such event since the death of their "messiah" and controversial church founder Sun Myung Moon. *Photo: AFP*

ANTARCTICA

China turns up heat on South Pole

CHINA'S fourth Antarctic research station – the flying saucer-shaped Taishan – has officially opened, in another step for the country's exploration ambition. The station, named for one of China's five sacred mountains, sits at an altitude of 2600 metres (8530 feet) between China's Zhongshan and Kunlun stations, according to the State Oceanic Administration (SOA).

The state-run Xinhua news agency reported the weekend of February 10 that President Xi Jinping ha offered written congratulations, calling scientific research in the frozen continent important for exploring nature and developing mankind.

State media announced in December that workers were on their way to construct the facility to be used during summer for research into "geology, glaciers, geomagnetism and atmospheric science", saying its main building would be shaped "like a Chinese lantern". A fifth station is also being planned, reports said.

Pictures of the Taishan facility released by Xinhua show a 12-sided structure raised on stilts above the ice.

The latest facility marks increasing competition in the resource-rich region. Approximately 30 nations operate permanent research stations in Antarctica including the US, China, Russia, Australia, Britain, France and Argentina.

The continent's oil reserves are estimated at up to 203 billion barrels – the third-largest in the world – and perhaps even more importantly in the coming century, its ice holds 90 percent of the world's fresh water.

China is a relative latecomer to Antarctic exploration, sending its first exploration team to in 1984 and establishing its first research base a year later.

"The country is rapidly building research stations – a method of assertion on a continent where sovereignty is disputed," wrote Nicola Davison in *China-Dialogue* in November.

In *Stars and Stripes*, Seth Robson commented last year that "China is boosting its presence in Antarctica with an eye on the icy continent's vast untapped resources."

For now, mining is prohibited under the Antarctic Treaty, but that will be up for review in 2048 and a number of countries may try to jockey for position before then. – *AFP*

BANGKOK

Boy, 9, latest child victim of Thai sectarian clashes

SUSPECTED Thai militants shot dead five people, including a nine-year-old boy and a Buddhist monk, in the latest attacks in the kingdom's insurgency-torn deep south, police have said.

The killings appeared to be revenge attacks for the recent deaths of three young Muslim brothers.

Four gunmen on motorcycles opened fire at the monk while he was collecting alms in Mae Lan district of Pattani province on the morning of February 13, killing him and three villagers including the boy, police said.

Six other people were wounded, including a police officer providing a security escort for the monk.

On the evening of February 12 in Pattani's Yaring district, a 29-year-old Buddhist woman riding a motorcycle home from work was shot dead and her body set on fire, police said.

A note left at the scene said, "To the army chief: this is not the last body for the three brothers."

The brothers – aged three, five and nine – were gunned down last week in front of their home in neighbouring Narathiwat province after returning from evening prayers at a mosque. Their pregnant mother and father were also shot in the attack but survived.

The Muslim-dominated region near the Malaysia border is in the grip of a decade-long insurgency that has claimed over 5900 lives, mostly civilians, in near-daily bomb and gun attacks. – *AFP*

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P. O. Box 60, Yangon
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Dated: 17 February 2014

TOKYO

A dog wears a "Petfit" tag equipped with 3G and Bluetooth to let its owner check its well-being remotely. Photo: AFP

Give the dog a phone, says Tokyo firm

A HIGH-TECH collar attachment that will allow pet owners to monitor their dogs at a distance – checking how much they sleep and how many calories they are burning – has been unveiled in Japan.

NTT Docomo, the country's largest mobile phone operator, said the new gadget would give smartphone users peace of mind about the animal's health and whereabouts at all times.

The "Petfit" tag, complete with a satellite positioning system, sends information to a designated mobile phone on whether a dog is sleeping, walking or running.

It also monitors how many steps a hound has taken, what the ambient temperature is and whether or not they're getting enough shut-eye.

"The number of dog owners [in Japan] is estimated at 11 million and it is regarded as a sizable market," a company spokesperson said.

"In addition, dogs' presence is quite important to their families," the spokesperson said. "This is part of our proposal for a smart life with mobile phones."

The Petfit goes on sale in March priced at 25,900 yen (US$253), including data transmission fees for the first year. – *AFP*

KUALA LUMPUR

Controversial Borneo leader finally resigns

After three decades in charge the billionaire accused of destroying Sarwak's environment and native cultures for personal gain is to end his scandal-hit tenure

A CONTROVERSIAL Malaysian state leader who has faced mounting accusations of corruption and environmentally disastrous policies has announced his resignation but is expected to retain influence from behind the scenes.

One of Malaysia's most powerful political figures, Taib Mahmud, 77, has been chief minister of resource-rich Sarawak since 1981, implementing ambitious plans to develop the state, Malaysia's largest, on Borneo island.

But he has come under fierce criticism over the years amid allegations of blatant graft, rainforest destruction and ill-treatment of Sarawak's native tribes.

"Taib Mahmud will retire as chief minister of Sarawak with effect from February 28," Samuel Simon, a Sarawak government spokesperson, told AFP on February 12.

Mr Taib – who has a private jet and is known for driving around in his Rolls-Royce cars – made the widely rumoured announcement in the state capital Kuching, Mr Simon said.

No reason for the move was given.

But Malaysia's ruling coalition has been steadily losing voter support in part due to recurring corruption scandals and allegations of poor governance, and is believed to have been pressing Mr Taib to quit for years.

Mr Taib's Sarawak-based party is part of the Barisan Nasional (National Front) coalition that has ruled Malaysia since independence in 1957.

Speculation is rife that Mr Taib will continue pulling Sarawak's strings by assuming the traditionally ceremonial position of state governor.

"That can be translated to mean he still retains power," said political analyst Khoo Kay Peng.

Photo Caption. Photo: AFP

With a population of 2.5 million people, Sarawak is crossed by powerful rivers and was once home to some of the world's most magnificent rainforests.

Activist groups say Mr Taib and his clan have plundered that bounty, running Sarawak like a family business by routinely awarding major government contracts to companies they control and decimating forests via logging and development of lucrative oil-palm plantations.

Mr Taib will be replaced as chief minister by his former brother-in-law, state official Adenan Satem.

"Mr Taib will never give up power willingly. He has too much at stake in terms of his businesses in Sarawak and his vulnerability to prosecution," said Clare Rewcastle Brown, a Sarawak-born Briton who operates the anti-Taib website Sarawak Report.

Observers say Mr Taib has dodged prosecution because parliament seats he controls are vital to the Barisan coalition retaining power.

The country's longest-serving chief minister, Mr Taib has long denied allegations of improper activity.

But Swiss-based rainforest-protection group Bruno Manser Fund, citing financial documents, said in 2012 that Mr Taib's family controlled Sarawak's biggest companies and stakes in hundreds of corporations in Malaysia and abroad.

Though Sarawak is one of Malaysia's poorest states, the fund estimated Mr Taib's wealth at $15 billion, which would make him the richest Malaysian. The various indigenous tribes who have traditionally dwelt in Sarawak's forests have increasingly staged protests, alleging they were being illegally run off ancestral lands.

"Taib's rule has been horrendous," said Peter Kallang, a native activist involved in a campaign to stop a series of dams being built by Mr Taib's government.

"I am happy he is resigning but my greatest fear is that the new leader will be a Taib clone and continue his destructive polices."

Mr Taib has pushed a campaign to build as many as a dozen hydroelectric dams – Sarawak already has three – in the state's wild interior, hoping cheap electricity will lure foreign industrial investment.

Tribal opponents call the dams white elephants that are inundating huge swathes of rainforest and will produce far more electricity than Sarawak needs. –*AFP*

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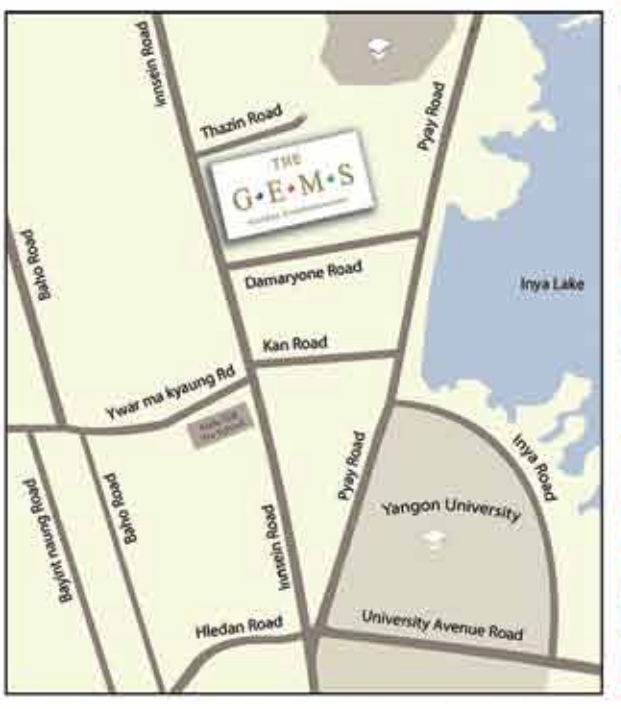

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BERLIN

EU challenges US over web control

THE European Union's executive body has called for new steps to dilute America's broad influence over the architecture of the internet, exposing a growing transatlantic rift in the aftermath of revelations about US spying in the region.

In a communiqué presented in Brussels on February 12, the European Commission said it would seek a firm timetable to limit US influence over institutions that control the nuts and bolts of the internet and oversee tasks such as the assignment of .com and .org domain names used to access websites.

The commission additionally said it would seek other ways to "globalize" key decisions about the expansion of the internet that are now largely concentrated in the US. Those include the assignment of names and numbers used to direct web traffic around the globe.

Changes were needed, the commission said, because the world has lost confidence in US stewardship of the internet after the snooping programs revealed by former National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden.

"Recent revelations of large-scale surveillance have called into question the stewardship of the US when it comes to internet governance," the commission said in a statement.

The language used by the European Commission illustrates the continuing fallout of the Snowden revelations, which have deeply rattled millions of Europeans. Negative reactions have been particularly strong in Germany, where reports have emerged that US intelligence eavesdropped on the phone calls of Chancellor Angela Merkel and former chancellor Gerhard Schroder.

'Recent revelations of... (internet) surveillance have called into question the stewardship of the US.'

EU Statement

References to the Snowden scandal in the commission statement, however, were perhaps more consequential than the contents of the policy paper itself. The commission has previously stated its desire for more international oversight of internet governance, and it did not offer any new concrete plans for change.

Instead, it effectively called for an acceleration of a global debate that is already underway about whether the oversight of the mechanics of the internet should remain concentrated in the US. That issue will take centre stage at a summit in April called by the Brazilian government in response to the Snowden scandal. There, observers say, the US can expect to face the anger of governments that have been stung by the surveillance scandal and feel that the Americans have abused their role as a technological gatekeeper of the internet.

In the communiqué, however, the Europeans agreed with the Americans on one of the most important points of global contention. The commission effectively dismissed calls by Russia and China that multilateral bodies such as the United Nations could take a larger role in internet governance.

– *Washington Post*

HONG KONG

Press freedom under threat in Hong Kong

HONG Kong's status as a bastion of press freedom is being eroded by creeping self-censorship under pressure from Beijing and media bosses loath to lose business in China, insiders have warned.

Compared to the tightly controlled state press on China's mainland, Hong Kong's newsstands and networks offer a noisy jungle of competing outlets from across the political spectrum.

But analysts caution that reputation is now under threat as journalists increasingly steer clear of topics that could anger the Communist Party or jeopardise media tycoons' commercial interests on the mainland.

Two reports this week have highlighted an increasingly restricted media landscape some 17 years after the former British colony was handed back to China, under a deal that supposedly guaranteed media independence and other rights for half a century.

The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) on February 12 said media freedom in Hong Kong was currently "at a low point", citing self-censorship among reporters, financial and physical threats against the media and legislative steps that could hinder investigative reporting.

Paris-based Reporters Without Borders also said Hong Kong's media independence "is now in jeopardy" as the world's second-largest economy flexes its muscles to stifle critical coverage.

"The Chinese Communist Party's growing subjugation of the Hong Kong executive and its pressure on the Hong Kong media ... is increasingly compromising media pluralism there," it said as it published its annual press freedom index.

Under a deal struck between London and Beijing in the run-up to Hong Kong's 1997 handover, the semi-autonomous city of 7 million is guaranteed freedom of speech, a liberty China's mainland residents are denied.

But a series of recent incidents have raised concern, including the February 12 sacking of Li Wei-ling, a prominent talk show host known for her biting criticism of Beijing, from her job at Commercial Radio. No official reason was given for her dismissal.

A woman distributes newspapers in Hong Kong. Photo: AFP

In January, the leading editor of the respected *Ming Pao* newspaper was replaced by a pro-Beijing editor from Malaysia, prompting protests by staff who feared the move was an attempt to stifle the paper's strong track record of investigative reporting.

And the same month another liberal paper, *AM730*, said advertising had been cut from a number of China-affiliated organisations.

The CPJ report said more than half of Hong Kong's media owners have been given roles in China's political assemblies, making them reluctant to anger Beijing and lose their elite status and commercial advantage.

Media outlets in both Hong Kong and Taiwan have "provided comprehensive, independent coverage of China, filling a gap left by the tightly restricted mainland press", it said, adding that interference imperiled that critical watchdog role.

Hong Kong journalist groups have called on authorities to protect the city's media.

"We welcome the organisations' spotlight on a darkening climate of self-censorship, against a backdrop of official and commercial interference as well as physical violence, that threatens to erode Hong Kong's unique position as a bastion of free expression under Chinese rule," the Foreign Correspondents' Club said.

Fears for press freedom come at a time of fervent debate over political reform. China has promised the city, whose current chief executive is appointed by a pro-Beijing committee, will see a transition to universal suffrage by 2017, but has ruled out demands for voters to be able to choose which candidates can stand for the top position.

In October, tens of thousands protested over the government's refusal to grant a licence to a new free-to-air television operator, with the demonstrators believing the decision was made at the behest of Beijing.

Meanwhile, public trust in the city's media appears to be decreasing. A study by Hong Kong University interviewing some 1000 people last October found half of respondents thought the media self-censored.

Hong Kong lawmaker Claudia Mo said, "At the end of the day, it's a job. How firm can journalists actually stand when it comes to political pressure? You can't expect everyone to be a hero." – *AFP*

BEIRUT

‘The bombs couldn’t get us out, but the hunger won the game’

Syrian evacuees from Homs have told how they lived on leaves, worms and cats to survive amid the conflict

IN besieged areas of the Syrian city of Homs, even evergreen trees were stripped bare this winter.

Evacuees who fled in a United Nations-brokered ceasefire, which was extended for a further three days on February 13, have described being driven to desperation eating leaves, foraged plants, cats and earthworms.

The aid deal that has allowed civilians to flee and aid to travel into rebel-held neighborhoods of Old Homs, where food supplies have been scarce for the past year-and-a-half and non-existent for months, has provided a small glimmer of hope as a second round of peace talks in Geneva remain deadlocked.

After sideline talks with the US and Russia on February 13 UN envoy Lakhdar Brahimi admitted “failure is always staring at us in the face.”

He described the deal in Homs, and the extension of the cease-fire there, as a positive development, which he hoped could be replicated elsewhere, but without the need for “a miracle for our people to come out alive” — referencing the deliberate targeting of aid convoys with mortar shells.

Abu Nizar, 72, who lived all his life in the Old City, fled with the first batch of evacuees a week before the February 13 talks.

One of his group was shot in the stomach by a sniper as they crossed through open ground flanked by U.N. vehicles. But Nizar wasn’t deterred.

He was desperate: and it was not his first attempt to leave.

Seven months ago, he tried to escape through a tunnel that had been smuggling precious supplies of food in and out of the area, but he says it was blown up by Syrian government forces and partially collapsed while he was inside.

After the tunnels were closed, the situation got worse, and for the last three months, he said he ate no bread, wheat or rice.

The opposition has accused Assad of using starvation tactics as a weapon of war, and the U.N. says that as many as 200,000 civilians are living under siege across the country.

“I’d eat worms,” Nizar, who used a nickname for security reasons, said in a Skype interview. “It’s so disgusting, but we had to eat.”

Another evacuee, Abu Jalal Tilawi, said he been forced to kill and eat cats, and if there were any left in Old Homs, he wouldn’t have left his ancestral home.

“The bombs couldn’t get us out, but the hunger won the game,” said

A child cries as Syrian civilians are evacuated from Homs. Photo: AFP

the 64-year-old, his voice cracking with emotion as he spoke. “People would gather grass, we were like herds of animals.”

When the World Food Program made its first deliveries this week, Matthew Hollingworth, the agency’s Syria director, said he had never come across scenes of such destitution. “People were living in their basements, crawling between them in tunnels, existing, not living.”

About half of the 2500 civilians that were estimated to be trapped in the Old City have now been evacuated.

With living conditions so desperate, hundreds of men between 15 and 55 who, under the terms of the deal, must undergo questioning by Syrian security forces before leaving, have decided to take the risk.

Mr Abu Jalal said state security attempted to take him for questioning, but a U.N. official intervened.

“He shouted at them and said we are old men and cannot be arrested,” he said. “We managed to leave.”

Mr Hollingworth said there is “extreme concern” for those that remain. Mr Abu Nizar and Mr Abu Jalal have sons who stayed.

But even those who have left fear that the cycle will only repeat itself. On their exit, evacuees were able to choose where they would be taken, with many choosing the neighborhood of Al-Waer, which is partially under rebel control.

Mr Abu Jalal said that there, too, food is scarce, and when he tried to leave the area to buy groceries this week, he was turned back at a government checkpoint.

“I’ve told people to start raising cats and dogs because you never know when you are going to need to eat them. Once the world has stopped watching, it will happen here too.” – *Washington Post*

KABUL

Karzai defends prisoner releases

SCORES of alleged Taliban fighters walked free from an Afghan jail on February 13, triggering condemnation from the United States, as President Hamid Karzai accused Washington of “harassing” his country’s judicial authority.

The decision to release the prisoners further worsened the bitter relationship between Kabul and Washington as US-led foreign troops prepare to withdraw after 13 years of fighting militants.

US officials said those released from Bagram prison were responsible for killing NATO and Afghan soldiers as well as civilians. But Mr Karzai defended the move.

“Afghanistan is a sovereign country. If the Afghan judicial authorities decide to release the prisoners, it is of no concern to the US and should be of no concern to the US,” Mr Karzai said. “I hope that the United States will stop harassing Afghanistan’s procedures and judicial authority.”

Afghan officials said the 65 men were vetted before their release.

“Their cases were reviewed and we had no reason to keep them in jail,” said Abdul Shukor Dadras,of the Afghan government’s review body.

The US Embassy in Kabul criticised the releases as “a deeply regrettable”. – *AFP*

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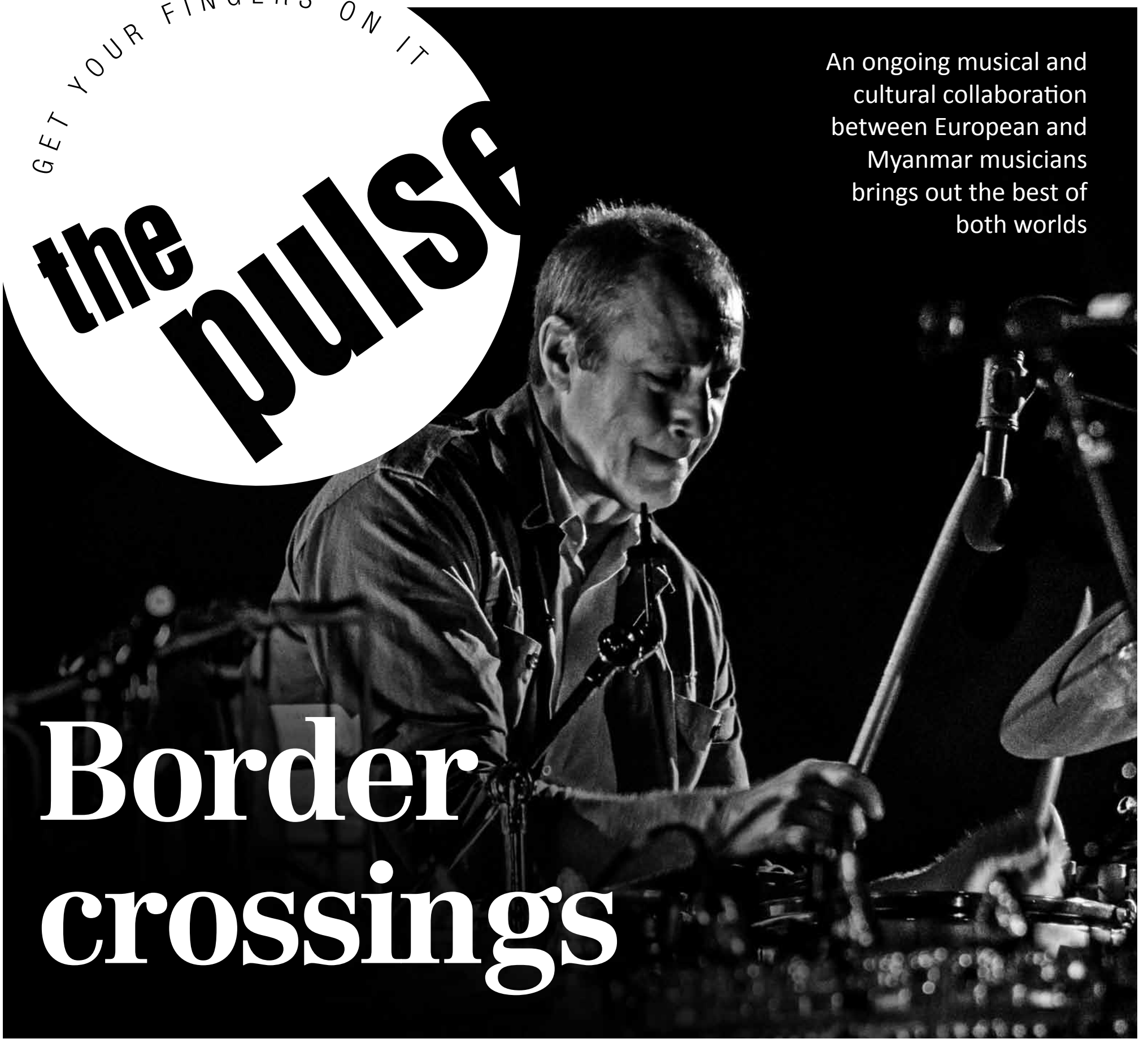

An ongoing musical and cultural collaboration between European and Myanmar musicians brings out the best of both worlds

Border crossings

WADE GUYITT
wadeguyitt@gmail.com

EVERYTHING compared to the drums could be a bit louder," German musician Jan Klare said, one hand on his alto saxophone and the other waving the band to a halt.

The players prepared to start over, each one noodling a bit as they set up, producing the percussion taps, bass notes and guitar licks of a rehearsing jazz combo at work.

But there are other sounds too: American Michael Vatcher's kit is flanked by Nan Win's *si* and *wa* percussion. At the centre of the group is Hein Tint's *pat waing*, or diatonic drum circle, and behind that, to Klare's right, stands Htun Oo with his *hne* (Burmese oboe) and flute. Next to German bassist Tim Isfort is Kyie Myint and his *chauk lone pat* and bass gongs. Italian Francesco Diodati's guitar and foot pedal cords snake past Hla Myint's *maung zaing*, or chromatic gongs.

When the song picks up again, it's fusion in the truest sense: tight and intricate, the groove of jazz blending with the colour and detail of a traditional Myanmar orchestra.

This is Myanmar Meets Europe, a group of performers combining European jazz with the sounds of Myanmar's top traditional players.

The band is prepping for a command performance: They're set up on the lawn of Bogyoke Aung San's former offices, where later that day visiting German President Joaquim Gauck would inaugurate the building as the new home of the relaunched Goethe Institute, part of a series of events last week celebrating the renewal of cultural exchange five decades after all foreign institutes were evicted under General Ne Win.

Isfort called the gig an honour they could never have imagined back in 2010, when the German embassy invited him and a few other musicians to Yangon to give a jazz workshop at Gitameit Music Center.

"We tried to teach some standard jazz as we used to learn it," Isfort recalled. But they also discovered the *pat hlaing*, the circle of 21 tuned drums which is the beating heart of the traditional Myanmar folk ensemble called *hlaing waing*, or hanging drum. Its versatility, which Isfort compares to that of a piano, astonished them. "It's their main melody instrument. Like the conductor and the main soloist at the same time."

Isfort and the other musicians were hooked. In January 2011 they gave a concert at the Strand Hotel, with two German musicians, the Gitameit students and traditional *hsaing waing* players. For the first tunes of the show, they shared the stage.

But Isfort said it wasn't a matter of simply coming to Myanmar and saying, "'Oh, it's open; let's play together.'"

Hein Tint, the *hsaing saya* or leader of the Hein Tint Hsaing Waing Orchestra, said he and the other local musicians had nearly no jazz knowledge before meeting Isfort, aside from the few songs they'd heard performed by Myanmar singer Htoo Eain Thin.

Likewise, Isfort said he had only the barest understanding of *hsaing waing* music when the groups first met.

At first he tried to transcribe the melodies he was hearing to help him learn. "I worked really hard on it. In the night at the hotel I wrote it down one more time and rehearsed. The next day I was very proud when we came to rehearse it."

But when the band started playing, "It had nothing to do with the tune I wrote down the day before. This was the first time that I realised, 'Ah, this music is working in other ways.'"

There are no notes, no scores in Myanmar music. Songs are taught "from teacher to student and from generation to generation". That's how it works in Myanmar Meets Europe also. The players are teachers of their own traditions and students to their counterparts.

"Western style is always to be on the beat properly, and tight. Harmonic thinking," Isfort said. "The Burmese way is very melodic and has lots of little melodies all around." A handy but inexact comparison in the Western canon is New Orleans jazz, he said, in which one player leads while the rest play complementing melodies.

Mixing the two is best explained via their rendition of an Ornette Coleman number. "It makes a carpet, a sound carpet. And then on the next accent, everybody is together again."

But reaching the point where everyone can hit that beat together has taken three years and constant logistical problem-solving. The group has worked together seven times in Myanmar and five times in Europe, for 10-14 days each visit, and each trip to Europe requiring the shipment of 700 kilograms (over 1500 pounds) of supplies.

And that's the least of their worries.

"There were some difficulties for some people in the Myanmar orchestra because they [the Europeans] used the English language," Hein Tint recalled when asked about the rehearsal process. "But they finally understood us when we used music notes, and took our time explaining things to them." They used to need a translator, but no longer.

Still, confusion abounds sometimes. At first, the stage delivered for the band to play on at the inauguration measured 6 by 4 – feet, not metres. Even practice times are hard to pin down: 9am may mean 10am or 11am one day, and 8am the next.

The son of a clockmaker, Isfort said it's hard to adjust sometimes. But somehow, "Everything is working. Although it looks like it won't work, it is working."

Vaulting bureaucratic and cultural hurdles is the only way to do what matters: playing music together. Earlier last week they also played a public show to celebrate the return of the Goethe Institute to Myanmar.

"Yesterday I really loved the concert because we had this eye contact on stage," Isfort said. "In the beginning it was very friendly and southeast Asian kindliness … Since 2012, I think, there's more trust in each other. We have fun. There are some friendships now. They are a little bit closer to the Western culture and we feel like home in Yangon." He paused. "Well, not really, but it's getting closer."

A documentary charting the development of the band – and the country – since 2010 is in the works, and last autumn they recorded tracks in Bonn for an upcoming album release. It will feature strings by German Sebastian Reimann as well as DJ sounds and electronics courtesy of American Jim Campbell – two more of the 21 different musicians who've been involved in the fusion project over the years.

3

1

2

Photos: Supplied, except 1, 2, 3 by Boothee

Isfort said that its the ability to adapt and improvise which makes Myanmar music "one of the few folk musics I know on this planet which is really open for influences".

Not that their project involves "modernising" *hlaing waing*.

"Most of all we try to respect the other culture. There are limits. There are borders. We say, okay, let's play 'doo doo doo'," Isfort said, demonstrating a few air bass-guitar notes and then miming a sceptical look in response. "That means 'no'. When they play too Burmese-style, we're not able yet to follow."

Band members also compose works – one number was written on the flight over from Europe – but they don't write lyrics. Partly, Isfort said, that's because many in the West want to reduce Myanmar culture to something revolutionary. That's also one of the reasons outsiders are often so fascinated to find out about Yangon's punk music scene.

But seeing everything through a political lens "doesn't give a true image of the culture", he said, and it's important for the band to deliver something that won't be "used" for someone else's purpose.

"The Western magazines or newspapers, they love to write what they want to hear about Myanmar," Isfort said, whether by tying everything to politics or – as in a recent German television program that gave the impression Shwedagon Pagoda is right next to Ngapali beach – by giving the impression Myanmar is a fabulous paradise.

At the same time, he said, the decision to engage the *hsaing waing* tradition is also "in a way, a political thing".

At first the Gitameit students were only interested in taking on Western influences. "For example, the drummers and the guitar players wanted in the beginning just to make hard rock or Western styles, grunge, whatever."

That is not Isfort's interest. Germany has a wonderful and diverse musical culture of folk songs and classical music, but pride in that heritage has been discouraged after the Second World War, he said. He doesn't want to see the same happen in Myanmar.

"We told the students here in Myanmar, 'You have such a unique music. It was treasured for 50 years, under the military system. But the world doesn't know of your music, your singular way of music."

There have been, he said, "small successes". One drummer decided to take up the *pat hlaing*. Another student is now practising traditional flute.

These small successes can make big differences in young students' lives. In 2013 Isfort and saxophonist Klare visited the Democratic Republic of Congo with their 25-piece band The Dorf (The Village), to work with former street kids aged 10 to 20. A cultural centre in Kinshasha invites "actors, musicians, painters, artists, to work with kids to give them perspective", Isfort said. With a melodica, keyboard and computer, and working in rudimentary French, they developed a musical theatre piece and eventually brought 10 of the kids back to Germany to perform there.

"I thought after five or six visits to Myanmar I'd seen a lot of things. No, Congo is much harder. It's more brutal. There is more vitality, but it's also more brutal." Still, he said, the former street kids-turned-artists are "so talented. They're playing music. They're acting. They're building artwork. They're building sculptures out of waste."

The next step for Myanmar Meets Europe is something called Eye Contact, a multimedia show in which the group, plus local string players, performs with one local and one German cartoonist.

"The content is a dialogue, a non-verbal dialogue, which mirrors the same problems we have in the music group in our progress as we can't speak. But the painters, they have the possibility to do a dialogue without words by drawing."

On a specially designed desk, each artist shows his work in turn through a projector, and the band accompanies. "So from small talk it starts into history and to political things then to religion and then philosophy and perhaps there's also a dispute, sometimes."

Describing Eye Contact, which they hope to tour in major European cities, Isfort could almost be describing everything the Myanmar Meets Europe initative stands for.

"We want to show the real Myanmar. This dialogue is so great. It's political. It's funny. It's sad sometimes. It's surprising. It's sometimes very deep."

And after final rehearsals in Germany in September 2014 the show will return to Myanmar. The special desk has been built so it can be packed small enough to fit on a plane or in the back of a van. Isfort's real dream is to bring the show to out-of-the-way places, the small villages in between Mandalay and Nay Pyi Taw, or around Lashio and the northeast. "These are, for me, the real Myanmar places."

Most of all, he said, all the members involved in Myanmar Meets Europe want to avoid what he calls "ethnotourism": the presentation of local culture as if it were a display piece.

"Our way is perhaps longer, or harder, but I hope it will be continued for years."

'This dialogue is so great. It's political. It's funny. It's sad. It's surprising. It's sometimes very deep.

Tim Isfort, bassist
Myanmar Meets Europe

Side Effect gets set to perform at JAM IT!, held at Right Track bowling alley in September 2012. Photo: Greg Holland

Side Effect to play SXSW

Yangon's favourite indie band gets a rocky start as they attempt to crowd-fund travel to the world's largest music festival

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SIDE Effect have cancelled their fundraising concert for their SXSW music tour because they could not afford a permit to perform.

"Kandawgyi Park gave us a place to hold the concert, but the show permit was not so easy to get. At first we thought it would cost only K200,000 for a show permit. In fact, it was about K600,000," said Darko, 32, guitarist and lead vocalist.

He added, "We wanted to make some money to fund our tour to SXSW, but we had to invest K600,000 first. We weren't sure we would get our money back."

The South By Southwest (SXSW) music festival in Austin, Texas – the world's largest – will be held from March 7 to 16. More than 2200 bands from around the world will be participating in more than 100 venues.

"We're all really excited about taking part. We've seen videos of our favourite bands there, which is why we wanted to play," said Darko, who said he hoped to find a producer looking to make an album with a Myanmar band.

"Now we can meet and share music with other bands and we've got a chance to perform in the festival," he said.

The band's application to play SXSW went in at the last minute, said drummer and backing vocalist Tser Htoo, 31. "A week later, they approved. We jumped for joy," said Darko. The band is now preparing 10 tracks for their 40-minute slot, some old, some new, some in English, some in Myanmar. After Austin, they hope to tour Los Angeles and New York – two more cities to add to their list of gigs after last years appearences in Berlin and Indonesia.

The band has been together pretty much for 10 years, though bassist Zaw Htet Wai and drummer Chan Hein Soe quit in 2005, making way for Tser Htoo and Darko's brother Joseph. Tser Htoo started playing the drums when he was 11. A Christian, he would sing in his church choir. "In Sunday school there were guitar classes. Then I went on to drums," he said.

"When we formed the band, indie rock was not very popular or well-known here," said Darko. "At first, we created more alternative songs. We were influenced by our favourite bands" – the Strokes, The Libertines, Franz Ferdinand, Yeah Yeah Yeahs, The White Stripes, Arcade Fire and so on. On the slow and primitive internet of 2002, Darko spent untold time and money downloading his favourite acts before the arrival of VCDs and music video CDs.

"We tried not to create the same music as them, and although we recorded half the world away, our music shared a style with some foreign alternative bands," said Darko.

From about 2008 or 2009 the band began to find its own indie voice, in some contrast to the Yangon underground music scene that had started up in 2002. Audiences were sparse.

"In the underground scene, heavy metal and metal rock ruled, and our music was alternative. Audiences didn't recognise us, and some thought we were heavy metal," said Darko. Others took them for punk, which they were not. "Some of our songs resembled punk, and we liked the DIY behaviour of some bands, but we were never a punk band," said Darko. Most music magazines and media correctly identified them as an indie rock band, he said.

They will organise their rescheduled fundraising show for March 1 at the Flamingo Bar with support from local hip-hop bands. "Flamingo Bar sponsored us for a venue and we will hold a small gig. Let's hope we can raise enough money for the tour," Darko said.

They are also raising funds through the website www.pledgemusic.com/sideeffect. They need about $20,000, but are asking for total contributions of $12,500 online.

The Q&A

Ma Thanegi speaks

An interview with one of Myanmar's leading writers

As one of Myanmar's best-known authors writing in English, Ma Thanegi is in high demand amongst editors. "I never have to pitch stuff. They come to me," said the 68-year-old writer, noted for the time she spent in the 1980s as Aung San Suu Kyi's assistant, followed by a three-year stint from 1989 to 1992 in the infamous Insein prison, as well as numerous books on Myanmar including memoirs, travelogues, cultural history and an award-winning cookbook, *Ginger Salad and Water Wafers*, which was recently re-released by her Hong Kong publisher. At the time of interview, she was busy writing an article on "soulful cooking" with Buddhist monks for *Saveur*, an American food magazine. When she finds the time, though, she plans to concentrate on books again. "I'd like to write more travelogues of Myanmar, about out-of-the-way places," she said. "I've got a bunch of stories in my head. I'd like to try a historical novel about our kings and queens. The Elizabeth I novels I enjoy so much. I'd like to try something similar." *The Myanmar Times* caught up with Ma Thanegi at her apartment in Chinatown, where she's lived for the past 20 years.

'Not that I was a good Girl Guide. You had to be spick and span and neat and tidy, and I was not that.

Ma Thanegi
Writer

What is your idea of perfect happiness?
The first thing that comes to my mind is: To be left alone.

What is your idea of misery?
People that I don't know well or don't like. Crowds.

What is your current state of mind?
Right now I'm hoping that I can give funny answers.

Who are your favourite authors?
In Burmese it would be Ludu Daw Amar and Journal Kyaw Ma Ma Lay. I just love their writings. For Ma Ma Lay I love *Not Out of Hate* and one that I translated, *A Man Like Him*. I hate translation but I had to do it. It's about her husband, who was a journalist and editor.

In English, Hilary Mantel. There are others I like so much. Wesley Stace. He's a singer, and his voice is musical and poetic. His first two books, *Misfortune* and *By George*, are excellent. Lovely language. The third one I couldn't read. The voice was so stilted. I've been in touch with him and I said, "What were you doing?" He had a character narrate the story and so the voice had to be the character's personality.

What books are you reading?
Wolf Hall, again, by Hilary Mantel. I don't know how many times I've read it.

What is your greatest fear?
I have none. Oh, yes I do: That I would grow old and feeble and be dependent on other people.

What do you consider your greatest achievement?
I would say this [holds up her translation of *A Man Like Him*]. I don't like to translate because it's so restrictive. It was very hard for me. It was a really bad four months that I ploughed through it. And then all the corrections over and over again, hundreds of times, and that was before I knew I would have a publisher. For four years I was waiting for someone to do it. Then I had some free time, so I decided I would.

What natural talent do you wish you possessed?
Singing. I wish I could sing. My brother could sing. He had a garage band that performed on the Burma Broadcasting Service. Every Saturday at 9pm to 9:15pm there would be local talent. His band was called Teen Angels. It's the name of a song that was popular back then. They played covers of Willie Nelson and Elvis Presley. That would have been in the late 50s and early 60s.

What do you do for relaxation or leisure?
I read, and some nights when I'm too stressed out I cook. Not just ordinary stuff. I make apple pies or something like that. I have an oven. When I was younger, I would get orders for my Devil's Food cake. That was back in the early 80s. Each cake would go for K200 and that was a lot of money back then! And each October, during Thadingyut, I would make K3000! We didn't have good bakeries then. As soon as the country opened up and bakeries came in, I gave away all my baking equipment.

What is the most surprising thing you have observed in Myanmar?
I would say the fast changes that came after 2010. We were expecting slow changes and small changes, and to have the freedom of publication come in 2012, that was the greatest surprise.

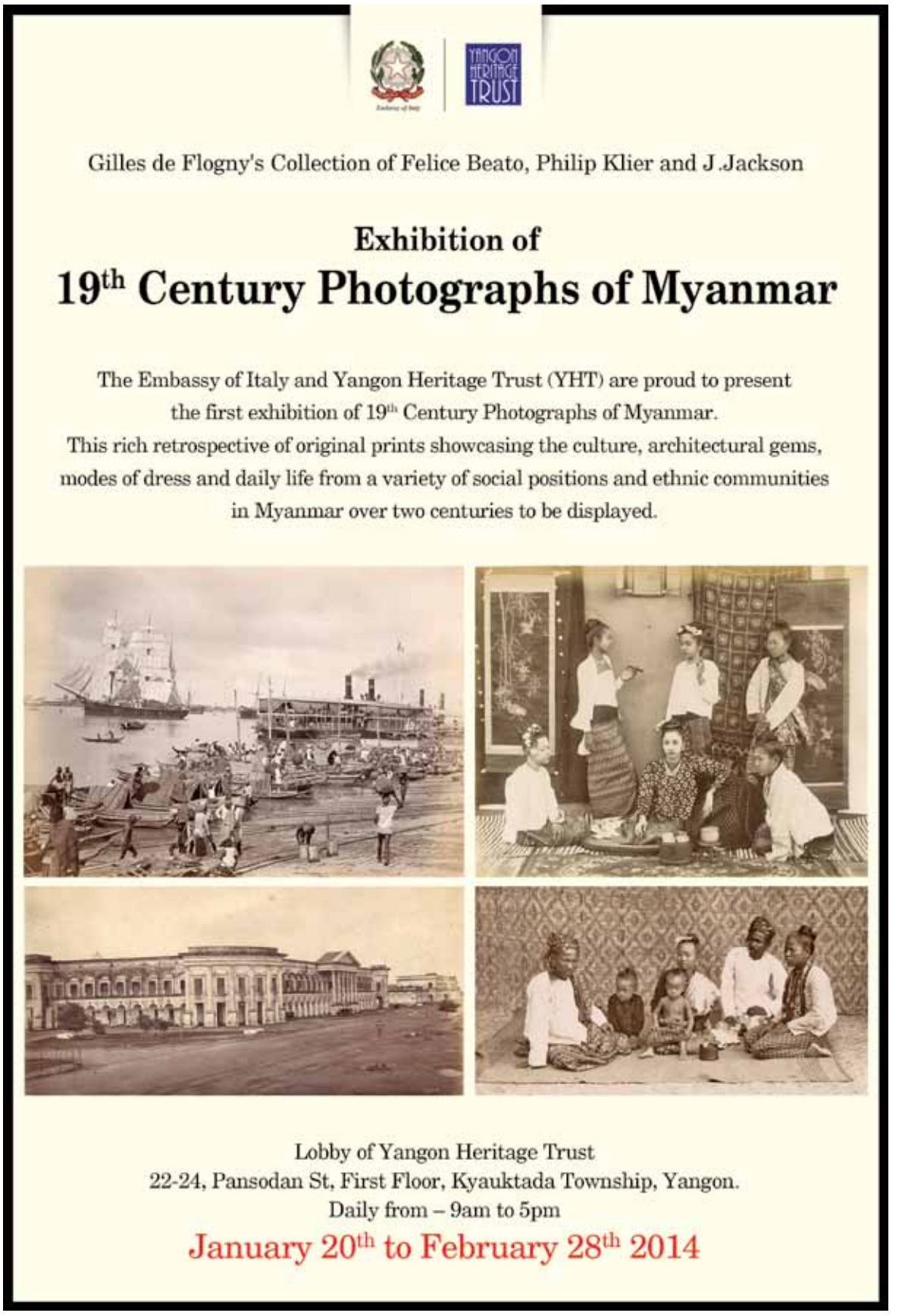
Where and when were you happiest?
When I'm with friends and especially the friends I made in jail. They are like my daughters, that generation, and they are the most mischievous group of people you could ever meet. They are still the same. Until the military left we dared not meet. It would have been dangerous for them. Now that it's open we've met several times. It's the greatest fun. There are maybe 20 or 30 of us. Some from my generation but more the younger ones. They are in their 40s now. But they were kids when they were with us, and they revert to that state when we're together.

What is your most treasured possession?
I don't have much attachment to possessions, but I like the stuff that I have there [points to shelf of Buddha figurines]. This Buddha, I saw it at a craft shop at the southern walkway of Shwedagon and it was so beautiful I couldn't put it down. It's wood. He was asking K35,000 and I only had something like K27,000 and still needed taxi fare to get home, so I asked if he would accept less and he gave it to me anyways.

What is it that you most dislike?
Hypocrisy.

What is your favourite motto?
Be prepared. From my Girl Guide days, but it's useful in life too, you know. Not that I was a good Girl Guide. My brother was a dedicated scout. You had to be spick and span and neat and tidy, and I was not that.

Author Ma Thanegi poses at home, on February 11. Photo: Whitney Light



Breaking barriers

One of Yangon's five-star hotels hires its first female general manager

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IT has received guests from around the world: Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Grammy award-winning singer Jason Mraz. Now another big event has turned up at Yangon's five-star Chatrium Hotel. It is welcoming its first female, and first Myanmar, general manager.

Ma May Myat Mon Win, who has nearly 20 years experience in the hotel industry, is replacing Thai businessman Bhongbhichia Bhitukburi, one of six foreign male general managers at the hotel since its opening in 1998. Fighting discrimination based on her gender, nationality and age by constantly improving and proving herself to superiors, Ma Mon has climbed to where she is today: the first Myanmar woman to reach the top position at any of the country's five-star hotels.

"I always thought, Why can't I do it if a foreign expert can do it? But you need to be good at everything," said the smart and attractive 40-year-old.

During our interview in the hotel's club lounge, she leaped up to greet a Thai guest who entered. "It isn't too long that I've had this responsibility, but I am already having high blood pressure," she said.

In conversation, she is strikingly open-minded. Her speech is straightforward and assertive. She values women's education and leadership. In fact, other women general managers she's met have expressed admiration for what she has achieved as a Myanmar woman, she said.

"In the region, Thailand has some female GMs. Whenever I find out another has been hired, I am so pleased because men control 90 percent of the general manager jobs in the world. Why can't women do it?"

The phrase "you can get it if you try" sounds nice, but it's not easy to actually make happen, especially for those who grew up in the country while it was ruled by the military government.

"We had no opportunity in 1989, 1990, 1991. We did not have anything in Myanmar. When the universities shut, people were hopeless. Then we were open for two months and shut again for an indeterminate period. We did not know what we should do. I grew up enough to work, but I had not finished university. It was really a bad time," Ma Mon said.

But her life changed when she noticed that Summit Parkview Hotel was looking for staff. She got a job as a secretary for the hotel's financial controller in 1993.

"I arrived in the hotel field without knowing anything about it. Only Strand and Inya Lake hotels were in Yangon in 1993, and at the time, people thought that hotels were bad places to go. But when I saw the hotels featured in magazines, they all looked amazing." Ma Mon said.

"When I actually worked at the hotel, I realised that a hotel is like a big factory. As I came to know about it, I really loved the hotel life. Big challenges have inspired me to stay in it," she added.

> *'I valued everything I did, even if it was typing and filing.'*
>
> **Ma May Myat Mon Win**
> GM, Chatrium Hotel

Describing her work philosophy, she said, "I don't agree with people who think you don't need to try hard because your position is not very good or well paid. I valued everything I did, even if it was typing and filing."

Later, she moved to the five-star Nikko Hotel – which changed its name to Chatrium Hotel six years ago when new management took over – working as director of sales and marketing.

Speaking with Ma Mon now, there's no doubt that marketing is her favourite subject, though on top of those duties at Chatrium she tackled new areas, becoming assistant general manager of marketing and operations. It was difficult to decide whether to take that responsibility, she said.

"I had to think very deeply. The general manager has to take the responsibility of all the bad and the good. Finally, I decided on the basis of one inspiration: I can do it if others can do it."

Watching her predecessors work, she noticed how they seemed like performers playing on a stage. Now, she said, she goes onstage herself.

"The decisions they made were good. I always imagined what I would say if I was in their places. Now I am being watched," Ma Mon said.

She is optimistic that Myanmar general managers can help clients better than foreign general managers in the same role. She expects the staff will be happy to work with her.

"Ninety-five percent of staff at the hotel is local. So I understand their needs and feelings and can fulfill them. For a non-Myanmar GM, he or she needs an interpreter. So communication is not as effective," she said.

Some residences, not five-star hotels, like Grand Mee Ya Hta and MiCasa, have had Myanmar general managers. But, she said, they have not reached her level of professional achievement. Ma Mon has her own explanation for this.

As a married woman with three sons, it's hard to find the right balance between work and family, she said. "When women have a baby, they have more household responsibilities. And the more they have a higher position at work, the more they have to think whether they should keep pursuing their career or stop and raise children," Ma Mon said.

She is not an exception, she said. There were many physically and mentally exhausting moments when she thought of getting off the career ladder altogether.

"Whatever happens at home, you have to be at the office at 8:30 the next morning. If I have a meeting to attend, I have to be ready at the meeting place at the right time. I have felt so tired," she said.

But, her face shone with delight when she described how her sons have expressed their pride in her. For the foreseeable future, Ma Mon will keep marching on.

What's On

Nann Nann, *Red in Nature*, acrylic on canvas. On show at Trish Gallery. Photo: Supplied

THIS WEEK Got an event? List it in What's On! Email whatsonmt@gmail.com

ART

February 17-March 8 10am-6pm "Sparkle 2014: Volume 1" painting exhibition, KZL Art Studio & Gallery, 184/84A Than Lwin Road, Bahan
February 17-23 9am-5pm Paintings by Nann Nann, Trish Gallery, 46A, G/F, flat C, Excellent Condominium, Min Kyaung Street at corner of Pantra Street, Dagon
February 17-28 9am-5pm Rare 19th century photographs of Myanmar, Yangon Heritage Trust, 22-24 Pansodan Street, Kyauktada

FILM

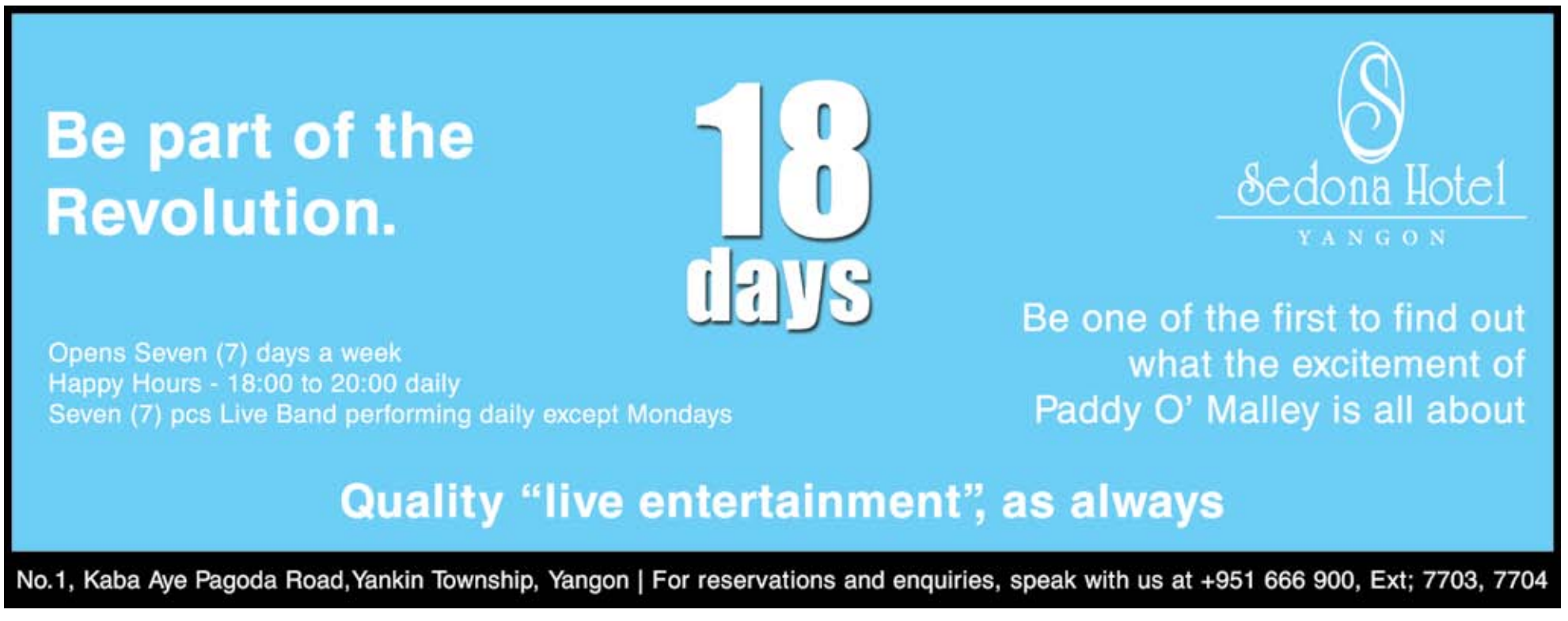
Film start times at Mingalar (2), Shae Shaung (1, 2) and Nay Pyi Taw cinemas are 10am, noon, 2pm, 4pm, 6pm and 8pm.
Film start times at Junction Square and Maw Tin are 10am, 1pm and 4pm daily, as well as 7pm and 9:30pm Friday and Saturday.
Nay Pyi Taw Cinema, near Sule Pagoda
Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit 2D, directed by Kenneth Branagh.
Mingalar 2 Cinema, at Dagon Center 2, Myae Ni Gone, Sanchaung
3AM Part 2 3D, directed by Patchanon Tummajira, Kirati Nakintanon and Isara Nadee.
Shae Shaung Cinema (1), Sule Pagoda Road, Kyauktada
The Monkey King 3D, directed by Cheang Pou-soi.
Shae Shaung Cinema (2), Sule Pagoda Road, Kyauktada
3AM part 2 3D
Junction Square Cineplex, Kamaryut
Frankenstein 3D, directed by Stuart Beattie.
The Lego movie 3D, directed by Chris Miller and Phil Lord.
Junction Maw Tin Cineplex, Lanmadaw
Frankenstein 3D

MUSIC

February 17 8:30-11:30pm Live blues guitar, Mojo Bar, 135 Inya Road, Bahan
February 19 7-10:30pm Pizza and jazz night. Enjoy live music, pizza specials and happy hour cocktails. 50th Street Bar, 9/13 50th Street, Botataung

MISC

February 17 8-11pm Pub quiz night. Free entry and your chance to win free pitchers of beer or the grand prize of K30,000 of pub credit, 50th Street Bar, 9/13 50th Street, Botataung
February 18 9:45am Dance fitness. A 60-minute workout inspired by Zumba and led by a longtime hip-hop dancer. No experience necessary. K7000, five-class passes K30,000. Grace Dance Studio, Pearl Condo, corner of Kabar Aye Pagoda and Sayar San roads, Bahan
February 19 7-8:30pm "Public Memory", a talk by James Scott, Yale professor of political science and anthropology and author of *The Art of Not Being Governed*. Pansodan Scene, 2nd floor, 144 Pansodan Street, Kyauktada
February 22 4pm Burmese language club. Come practise your language skills in a group setting. All levels welcome. Pansodan Gallery, 286 Pansodan Street, Kyauktada



Kia Motors, the major sponsor of the Australian Open 2014

The Power to Surprise

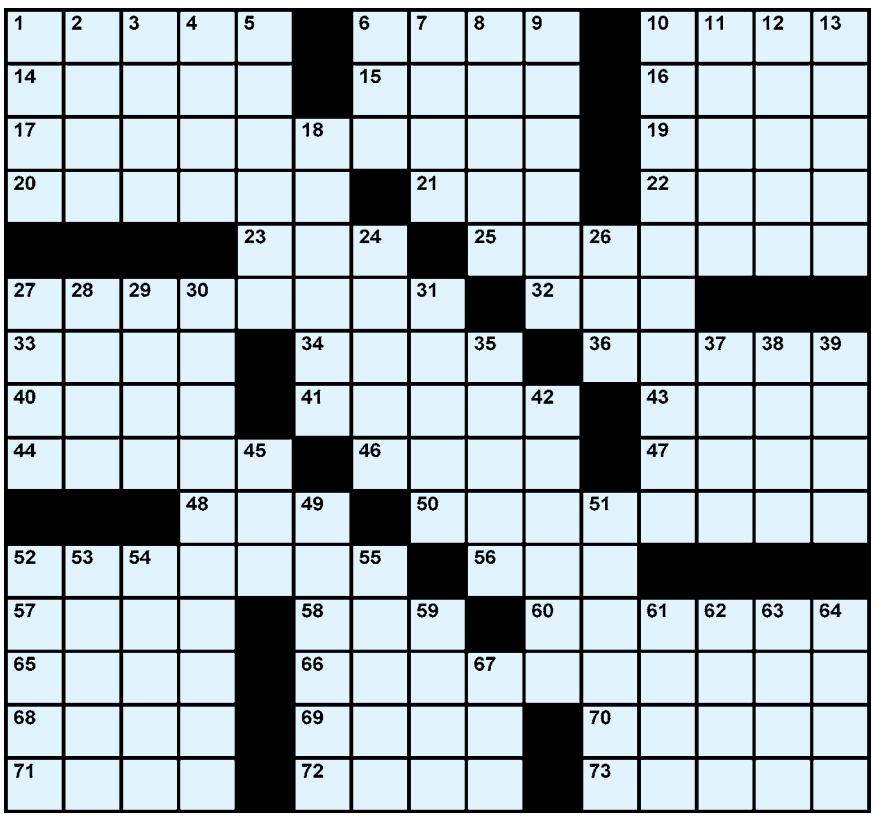
Universal Crossword

Edited by Timothy E. Parker

GOOD TO GO *By Mary Jersey*

ACROSS
1 Pre-delivery period
6 Beaver-built blockages
10 Fall on ___ ears
14 Visibly astonished
15 To shelter, on waves
16 Wise about
17 Words in a phrase after "ashes"
19 Higher than
20 Playground fixture
21 They love pas
22 Beat badly
23 Peer group
25 Class within a class
27 Chief artery
32 Old hand
33 Chevron rival
34 En route, as a package
36 Adjust as you must
40 Albanian bucks
41 Greek underworld
43 Bassoon kin
44 Ply
46 Spice world?
47 Yorkshire river
48 Preschooler
50 Ushered
52 Redo, as a room
56 Chow down
57 Impulse carrier
58 "American Dad!" org.
60 "Can't complain"
65 "Less Than ___"
66 Type of combat
68 Precambrian and Paleozoic
69 Obsessed with
70 Inclined, in England
71 Eye-opening problem
72 It's right on an atlas?
73 Lessens a load

DOWN
1 Fellas
2 Chills, fever and sweating
3 Acid's opposite
4 Chooses (to)
5 Direct-to-the-consumer
6 Mom's mate
7 Reunion attendee
8 Butte kin
9 Establishes
10 A way to sell
11 Accredited diplomat
12 Consumed with gusto
13 Loud, in music
18 Like some scholars
24 Do a pizzeria chore
26 Auto protector
27 Retail center
28 Field of expertise
29 Unpleasant to the touch
30 Confrontational position
31 Endow, as with a quality
35 In need of a rubdown
37 Lie adjacent to another
38 Raise, as a question
39 Started a golf game
42 Trigonometry ratio
45 Angler's requirement
49 Computer expert
51 "Lawrence of Arabia" portrayer
52 Brings down the house
53 Put forth, as effort
54 Brightly colored eel
55 Woody vine
59 Bugs on a hill
61 "___-Team" (Mr. T's old show)
62 Pasture sounds
63 "Green Gables" girl
64 Silent-spring causers
67 E, in Morse code



SUDOKU PACIFIC

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains every digit from 1 to 9 inclusively.

				5				3
	8			4	9	5		
4				3			6	8
8						9		
	4	1				3	7	
		3						1
1	9			8				2
		8	5	6			3	
5				2				

2/20

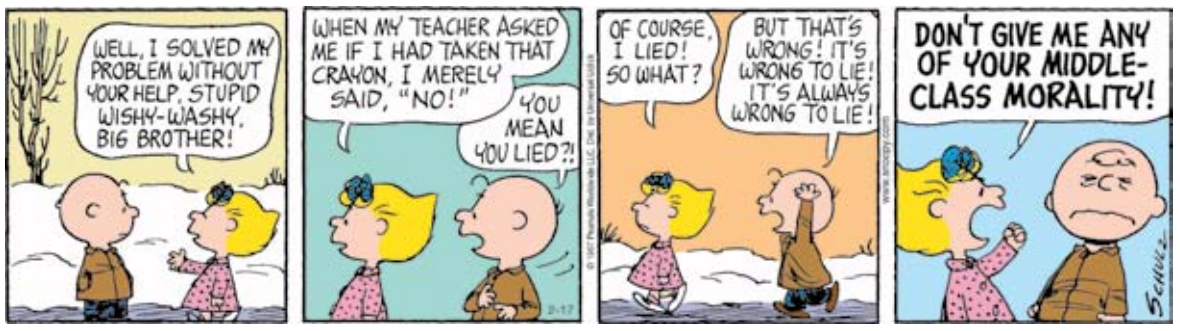
DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★☆☆

DILBERT

BY SCOTT ADAMS

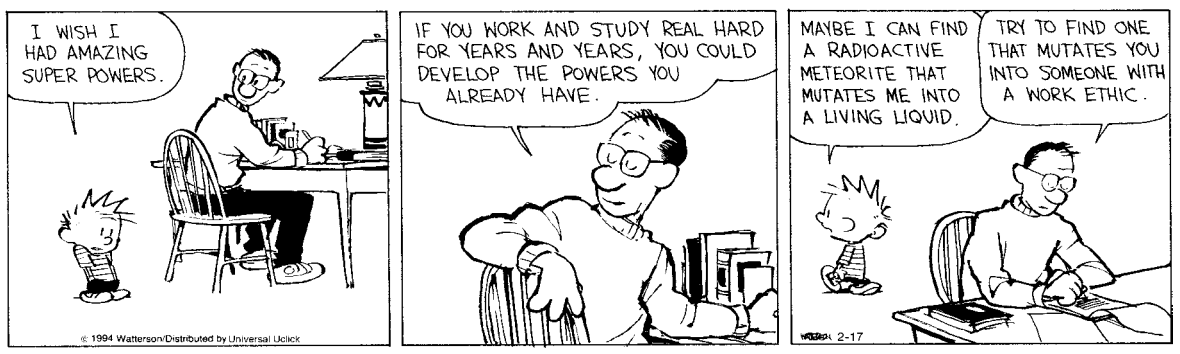
PEANUTS

BY CHARLES SCHULZ



CALVIN AND HOBBES

BY BILL WATTERSON



WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and **CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD.** The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

JIMMY FALLON STARTS 'THE TONIGHT SHOW' Solution: 8 letters

H	E	N	R	O	L	Y	E	G	S	T	E	V	E	R
H	I	S	T	A	R	V	L	I	O	H	D	V	E	E
S	O	G	O	A	E	O	N	P	E	N	U	T	I	P
H	E	S	G	N	R	G	E	T	A	P	I	N	G	L
O	A	M	T	I	E	N	W	B	S	R	D	S	I	A
W	N	S	A	R	N	L	S	E	W	T	G	E	D	C
Q	M	E	O	J	K	S	H	I	H	U	B	T	S	E
U	I	L	A	O	V	C	N	G	E	J	O	S	H	K
E	C	Y	Y	K	T	N	I	S	T	U	D	I	O	L
S	H	T	E	E	I	N	T	R	R	V	S	S	M	A
T	A	S	K	E	E	S	E	N	F	O	T	K	I	T
L	E	S	R	T	H	O	M	A	S	N	O	I	L	U
O	L	O	A	N	N	O	U	N	C	E	R	T	E	B
V	S	L	S	R	E	E	H	C	R	N	Y	S	S	E
E	S	N	A	F	U	N	N	Y	D	E	M	O	C	D

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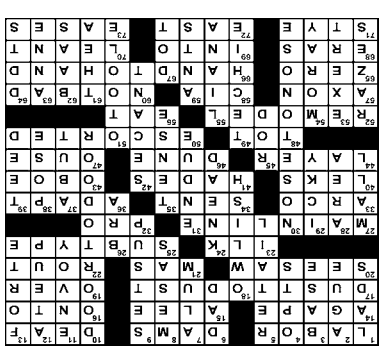
PUZZLE SOLUTIONS



5	3	6	9	2	1	7	8	4
7	2	8	5	6	4	1	3	9
1	9	4	7	8	3	6	5	2
9	6	3	4	7	5	8	2	1
2	4	1	8	9	6	3	7	5
8	7	5	3	1	2	9	4	6
4	5	9	1	3	7	2	6	8
3	8	2	6	4	9	5	1	7
6	1	7	2	5	8	4	9	3

Laugh all the way to the bank when you rent this space.

The tea break page is being re-formatted in readiness for our move to a daily cycle. It may look something like this in the future.
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PHYO'S COOKING ADVENTURE

31-minute meals

Family dinners for those days you don't have time to cook

I'M moving house and also in the middle of a renovation at our new place. It's driving me crazy, since that means moving my kitchen – herbs, spices, pots, gadgets, plant pots and bottles and bottles of homemade sauces and pickles.

At the same time, I still have to feed the family each day. Writing this column this week was a challenge. I was going nuts.

Then I came across my copy of Jamie Oliver's *30-Minute Meals*. Thank you, Jamie! I was hit with the inspiration and energy to make great meals happen fast.

Barbecued chickens are so easy to get in Yangon these days, and they always make my Aussie family happy. I picked up a few chickens and bread rolls. Then all the leftovers in the fridge became the ingredients for my recipes. Here are a couple to try when you feel like you just have no time to cook.

BBQ CHICKEN, PEPPER AND GREEN PEA STIR-FRY
SERVES 4

5 pieces BBQ chicken
2 red onions or Asian shallots
1-inch cube ginger
2 tsp Kikkoman soy sauce
1 tbsp black pepper
1 tsp Chinese five-spice or masala
1 cup green peas
2 ½ tbsp vegetable oil

Cut the BBQ chicken into bite-size pieces. Chop the onions roughly (8 pieces per onion). Peel and slice the ginger thinly.

Heat the vegetable oil in a wok on medium heat. Fry the onions. Fry black pepper and ginger slices for 1 minute after the onions become translucent. Then add frozen peas to wok and keep frying. Add soy sauce and cover the wok with lid for 5 minutes. Stir from time to time.

Serve with plain steamed or fried rice.

Chicken stir-fry with green peas. Photo: Phyo

Some readers might find the idea of eating chicken feet a bit strange. But they're tasty, easily found at the supermarket, and great in a pinch. I always keep them in my freezer to make quick meals. My favourite recipes are spicy and sour chicken-feet salads or dim sum-style chicken-feet stew. They also make a nice, rich soup stock.

SWEET-AND-SOUR CHICKEN-FEET STIR FRY
SERVES 4

1 pack frozen chicken feet (no bones and pre-cooked)
2 red onions or Asian shallots
2 tomatoes
1 ½ tbsp chilli sauce
1 ½ tbsp tomato sauce
2 tbsp vegetable oil

Boil the frozen chicken feet for 5-6 minutes and cut into 2-3 pieces. Cut onions roughly. Cut the tomatoes into 8 wedges or cubes.

Heat the vegetable oil in a wok on medium heat. When the oil is hot enough, fry the onions. Add tomatoes to fry for 3 minutes after the onions become translucent.

Combine chilli and tomato sauce with ½ cup water and mix well. Then add mixture into wok and stir to coat the chicken feet. Cover the wok with lid and simmer 4-5 minutes.

Serve with steamed or fried rice.

Trendy bistro offers nice spot to sit, just don't eat

WHITNEY LIGHT
light.whitney@gmail.com

FAT Man has good intentions. Set in the heart of Yangon's trendy Nawaday area, the tiny bistro makes good use of its patio space. A small garden of potted plants surrounds attractive wood tables. A chalkboard advertises menu and drink specials, and outdoor speakers play trendy tunes. The staff are always smiling and eager to please. It's a charming, informal spot to enjoy a cocktail on a weeknight when you have nothing to do.

But appearances don't make up for sloppy execution of the menu and snail-slow service. And although the quality of coffees, smoothies and cocktails is pretty good, beverages alone do not a restaurant make.

Our party arrived at roughly 8:20am on a weekday, hoping to enjoy a nice coffee and breakfast before carrying on with our respective workdays. We placed our orders promptly after being seated. Then the waiting began.

Our drinks – a cappuccino, coffee and avocado smoothie – started to arrive almost 30 minutes later in a painstaking one-by-one procession. I'd seen this happen before, having come for coffee some weeks earlier. On that occasion, the server begged for patience: The fancy imported coffee machine is a bit difficult to operate. Probably true, but if you're going to bother spending on fancy imported equipment, you'd best make sure staff know how to use it.

The first food item to arrive was the American breakfast (K3000), which is the standard eggs and toast with choice of meat. In fact, it shared much more in common with an English breakfast. The scrambled eggs were shiny with oil, the toast more like fried bread. The ham was of the pre-sliced variety, fried to chewy and accompanied by equally chewy sausages. There was even a roasted tomato – a nice touch.

About 15 minutes later, the French toast (K2000) arrived, evoking a hearty laugh from our party. The menu advertised toast with sugar, whipped cream and condensed milk. None of those things were present. Instead, the pale pile of barely coated bread (a generous serving) was served with a garnish of shredded carrot and radish. At our request, a server came through with a spiral of spray-can whipped cream, as well as a shot glass of Myanmar honey, helping the dish attain edibility.

Things continued to slide downhill. We were now an hour into breakfast and still waiting for an avocado shake and a "Healthy Breakfast". By this time, the staff evidently felt they were falling behind. A server delivered a complimentary pancake topped by thin slices of apple, crispy bacon and a dot of whipped cream. This turned out to be the best dish, though the speed with which this extra plate was turned out was somewhat baffling.

The Healthy Breakfast (K3000) arguably wasn't healthy at all, unless you're still on the Atkins Diet. It turned out to be a salad: a visibly oily pile of shredded green lettuce, cabbage and carrot topped by wedges of hard-boiled egg and fatty curls of bacon.

On other occasions I've sampled the tuna sandwich, French fries and chicken skewers. Not terrible, but not great either. It will do if you're just really craving a North American-style greasy spoon meal. The menu also offers hamburgers and a selection of snacks and sandwiches. But if Fat Man wants to stay competitive in this gentrifying neighbourhood, it's going to have to step up its game.

Of course, it isn't the only restaurant suffering from lack of efficient service, and some might pity the ambitious new restaurateurs who are trying hard to find good help and give Yangonites new dining options. Then again, tea houses and bakeries across town often demonstrate extremely efficient service, with full cups and plates of snacks flying onto the table at china-breaking speed. Change counted out in seconds. If a little of that energy mobilised Fat Man, it might be on to something.

Fat Man Steak Bistro & Café

26A Bo Yar Nyunt Street, Dagon township, Yangon

Food	5
Beverage	8
Service	5
X-factor	7
Value for money	7

Total Score: 6.4/10

The patio at Fat Man. Photo: Aung Htay Hlaing

Wine This Week

K14,000

Cave Vinicole d'Andlau-Barr Riesling Alsace

The growing popularity of Riesling wines can be attributed to their refreshingly light body and their complex fruity and mineral flavors. Known to be acidic and best served cold, they offer much needed relief in balmy climes and pair well with spicy foods. This Riesling's lemony flavor is indicative of an early ripening, perhaps coming to maturity during a cold snap. It's sweet citrus nose seemed bland compared to other, riper Rieslings, which are often described as smelling of peach and pineapple. A fresh and dry front quickly faded into a disappointingly watery finish. Riesling wines are know for highlighting the flavors of their terroir, or the area in which the grapes were grown; the diverse and unpredictable flavours of Alsace were not apparent in this tame wine. It's refreshing enough, and avoids the sweetness that has tarnished Riesling's good name in the past, but does little to push the boundaries. Reasonably priced at K14,000, this wine isn't a rip-off, but discerning drinkers will steer clear in favour of more complex wines in the same price range.

Grade: 5/10

Independence Day of Sri Lanka

Mr Bruce, Ms Elizabeth and Mr Dom Scalpeth

Sri Lankan Ambassador

Okano Lubricant press conference

Ko Maung Maung

Soe Thu Aung

Mr Isao

Yangon Hotel Zone Party

Nay Zaw Aung, Khin Maung Pyone and Theingi Lin

Daw Khin Marlar and Mr Gilbert

RVI graduation ceremony

Craig Shim

James Stedtler and Susan Lim

City Mart's award ceremony

Than Htut Kyaw

Ma Thazin Khine

Graham Lim

AGE Dinner

Me Me and Noe Noe

Khine Maung Myat

Ye Aung Thu and Nan Nyi's wedding ceremony

Bridegroom, bride and friends

Madoca beauty products

Mitsuo Tanaka

Khin San Win

Ma Ni Lar

MOH MOH THAW

mohthaw@gmail.com

Mingalabar! fans of Socialite. It's February, yet the weather is still pleasant. Socialite kicked off her week on February 4 with the 66th celebration of Independence Day of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka at Chatrium Hotel, and then attended the opening of UCHINO Bath Designs on New University Avenue Road. On February 5, she descended on the official launch event of Madoca beauty products at Traders Hotel. The next day, she attended the Okano Lubricant press conference at Royal Garden, and she enjoyed City Mart's award ceremony for Myanmar gold medalists. On February 7, she was at Casio's official showroom opening at Traders Hotel. She had three events on February 8: a graduation ceremony at RVI Institute, the wedding reception for Myanmar Academy Award-winning actress Melody, at Dolphin Restaurant, and the ASUS dealer's award ceremony at Traders Hotel. She attended ISIS skincare products official launch on February 9.

Bridegroom and bride

Ko Tha Kaung and Melody wedding

Ko Zay Thiha and Nandar Hlaing

Ma Pont and On Saing

ISIS skincare products

Aye Thazin Myo and Tin Moe Aye

Ma Yu Yu Khine

Panasonic new camera product launch

Phau Cheng

Mr Hisakazu

Ma Su Myat, Ma Mon and Ma Saw Thida

ASUS dealers' award ceremony

Kyaw Htut

Thant Zin Tun

UCHINO Bath Designs new shop

Hnin Wut Yee, Ma Kay Khine and Wut Hmon Yee

Sandar Lwin and Hnin Oo Wai

DOMESTIC FLIGHT SCHEDULES

YANGON TO NAY PYI TAW

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
YH 833	2	7:00	8:10
FMI A1	1,2,3,4,5	7:30	8:30
Y5 777	1,2,3,4,6	7:45	8:25
FMI A1	6	8:00	9:00
FMI B1	1,2,3,4,5	11:30	12:30
FMI A1	7	15:30	16:30
FMI C1	1,2,3,4,5	16:30	17:30

NAY PYI TAW TO YANGON

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
FMI A2	1,2,3,4,5	8:50	9:50
FMI A2	6	10:00	11:00
YH 731	2	13:00	13:55
FMI B2	1,2,3,4,5	13:00	14:00
FMI A2	7	17:00	18:00
Y5 778	1,2,3,4,6	17:30	18:10
FMI C2	1,2,3,4,5	18:00	19:00

YANGON TO MANDALAY

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
YH 917	2,5	6:00	7:40
YH 909	1,3,4,6,7	6:00	7:40
YJ 891	Daily	6:00	8:05
YJ 901	2,3,4,5,6,7	6:10	7:35
YH 917	1,3,4,6,7	6:10	8:30
Y5 234	Daily	6:15	7:30
6T 401	Daily	6:20	8:25
K7 222	Daily	6:30	8:40
K7 626	1,5	6:45	8:10
K7 226	2,4	6:45	8:10
YH 831	4,6	7:00	8:40
YH 833	2	7:00	9:10
W9 201	Daily	7:30	8:55
8M 6603	2,4,7	9:00	10:10
K7 624	Daily	10:30	11:55
YJ 751/W9 7751	5,7	10:30	12:25
YJ 761	2,4,6	10:30	12:25
YJ 211	5,7	11:00	12:25
YJ 201	2,3,4	11:00	12:25
YJ 601/W9 7601	6	11:00	13:05
YH 729	4	11:15	12:55
YH 737	3,7	11:15	13:25
YH 727	1,7	11:15	13:25
YH 729	6	11:15	14:15
YH 737	5	11:30	13:40
YH 729	2	11:30	14:30
W9 251	2,5	11:15	12:40
6T 807	7	11:30	12:55
6T 807	1	12:00	13:25
K7 224	Daily	14:30	16:35
W9 129	Daily	15:00	16:55
YH 731	Daily	15:00	17:10
6T 501	Daily	15:30	17:30
W9 211	Daily	15:30	16:55

MANDALAY TO YANGON

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
YJ 901	2,3,4,6,7	7:50	9:55
YH 910	1,3,4,6,7	7:40	9:45
Y5 233	Daily	8:10	9:25
YJ 891	Daily	8:20	10:15
YH 918	1,3,4,6,7	8:30	10:45
6T 402	Daily	8:45	10:45
K7 223	Daily	8:55	11:00
YH 918	2,5	9:10	11:05
W9 201	Daily	9:10	11:05
W9 144	Daily	9:20	10:45
YH 922	1	9:20	10:45
Y5 132	3,5,6,7	9:30	10:30
K7 227	2,4	10:35	12:00
K7 627	1,5	10:55	12:20
YH 834	2	12:00	13:55
YH 832	4,6	12:30	13:55
K7 845	2,4,7	12:50	16:00
6T 808	7	13:15	15:15
YJ 212	5	15:00	16:25
6T 808	1	13:45	15:45
YJ 212	7	15:00	16:55
YJ 202	2,4	15:30	16:55
YJ 202	3	16:00	17:25
YJ 762	2,4	16:05	17:30
YJ 762	6	16:05	18:10
YJ 602/W9 7602	6	16:20	17:45
W9 120	1,3,6	16:30	17:55
YH 728	1	16:45	18:10
K7 225	Daily	16:50	19:00
YH 738	5	17:05	19:00
W9 129	Daily	17:10	18:35
YH 732	Daily	17:10	19:15
W9 211	Daily	17:10	19:15
K7 625	Daily	17:10	18:35
8M 6604	2,4,7	17:20	18:30
YJ 752/W9 7752	5,7	17:20	18:45
YH 738	3,7	17:25	18:50
6T 502	Daily	17:50	19:55
YJ 004	3	18:00	19:25
YH 730	6	18:00	19:25

YANGON TO NYAUNG U

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
YJ 891	Daily	6:00	7:20
YH 909	1,3,4,6,7	6:00	8:25
YH 909	2,5	6:10	7:45
YH 917	1,3,4,6,7	6:10	7:45
YJ 901	2,3,4,5,6,7	6:10	8:20
W9 141	Daily	6:15	7:35
6T 401	Daily	6:20	7:40
6T 351	1,2,3,4,6,7	6:30	7:50
K7 222	Daily	6:30	7:50
YH 921	1	7:00	8:35
W9 143	Daily	7:15	8:35
YJ 601/W9 7601	6	11:00	12:20
K7 224	Daily	14:30	17:25
YH 731	Daily	15:00	17:55
W9 211	Daily	15:30	17:40
6T 501	Daily	15:30	18:20

NYAUNG U TO YANGON

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
YJ 891	Daily	7:35	10:15
YH 917	1,3,4,6,7	7:45	10:45
W9 141	Daily	7:50	10:40
YH 918	2,5	8:25	11:05
K7 222	Daily	8:05	11:00
YH 910	1,3,4,6,7	8:25	9:45
YJ 901	2,3,4,5,6,7	8:35	9:55
YH 922	1	8:35	10:45
W9 144	Daily	8:50	10:10
YJ 902	1	9:15	10:35
YH 910	2,5	9:35	10:55
6T 351	5	10:50	13:55
YJ 762	6	16:50	18:10
K7 225	Daily	17:45	19:00
W9 211	Daily	17:55	19:15
YH 732	Daily	17:55	19:15
6T 502	Daily	18:35	19:55

YANGON TO MYITKYINA

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
YH 833	2	7:00	10:35
YH 831	4,6	7:00	10:35
K7 844	2,4,7	7:30	11:05
K7 624	Daily	10:30	13:25
YJ 201	2,4	11:00	13:50
YJ 201	3	11:00	14:20
W9 251	2,5	11:15	14:10

MYITKYINA TO YANGON

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
YH 834	2	10:35	13:55
YH 832	4,6	10:35	13:55
YJ 202	2,4	14:05	16:55
YJ 202	3	14:35	17:25
K7 625	Daily	15:40	18:35
W9 252	2,5	16:05	19:00

YANGON TO HEHO

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
YJ 891	Daily	6:00	8:50
YH 917	1,5	6:00	9:55
YH 909	2,5	6:10	8:40
YH 917	1,3,4,6,7	6:10	9:35
W9 141	Daily	6:15	8:20
6T 401	Daily	6:20	9:20
K7 222	Daily	6:30	9:30
6T 351	1,2,3,4,6,7	6:30	8:45
W9 201	Daily	7:30	9:40
K7 828	1,3,5	7:30	8:45
YJ 751/W9 7751	5,7	10:30	11:40
YJ 761	2,4,6	10:30	11:40
YH 505	3,4,6,7	10:30	11:55
YH 737	3,7	11:15	12:40
YH 727	1	11:15	12:40
YH 505	2,5	11:30	12:55
YJ 201	3	11:00	12:10
W9 203	Daily	11:00	12:10
W9 119	1,3,6	11:15	12:25
6T 807	7	11:30	13:50
K7 826	2,6	11:45	13:00
6T 807	1	12:00	14:20
K7 224	Daily	14:30	15:45
W9 129	Daily	15:00	16:10
YH 731	Daily	15:00	16:25
6T 501	Daily	15:30	16:40

HEHO TO YANGON

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
W9 141	Daily	8:35	10:40
YH 910	2,5	8:40	10:55
6T 352	Daily	9:00	11:10
YJ 891	Daily	9:05	10:15
YH 918	1,3,4,6,7	9:35	10:45
6T 402	Daily	9:35	10:45
K7 223	Daily	9:45	11:00
YH 918	2,5	9:55	11:05
W9 201	Daily	9:55	11:05
YH 505	3,4,6,7	11:55	14:00
W9 204	Daily	12:25	13:35
K7 829	1,3,5	13:50	15:05
6T 808	7	14:05	15:15
6T 808	1	14:35	15:45
W9 120	1,3,6	15:45	17:55
YJ 762	2,4	15:20	17:30
YJ 762	6	15:20	18:10
YJ 762	1	15:35	17:45
YJ 212	7	15:45	16:55
YH 727	1	16:00	18:10
K7 224	Daily	16:00	19:00
YH 738	3	16:40	18:50
W9 129	Daily	16:25	18:35
YH 731	Daily	16:25	19:15
6T 501	Daily	16:55	19:55
K7 827	2,6	17:25	18:40
YH 730	4	17:35	18:45
YH 738	5	17:50	19:00
YH 730	2	18:15	19:25

YANGON TO SITTWE

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
6T 605	Daily	11:15	13:15
YH 511	5	11:30	13:05
W9 309	1,3,5,6,7	11:30	12:55
K7 426	Daily	12:30	13:50
6T 611	4,6	14:30	15:55

SITTWE TO YANGON

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
YH 511	5	13:05	14:55
6T 606	Daily	13:35	15:00
K7 427	Daily	14:05	15:25
6T 612	4,6	16:15	17:40

YANGON TO MYEIK

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
K7 319	Daily	7:00	9:05
YH 633	3,5,7	7:00	9:15

MYEIK TO YANGON

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
YH 634	3,5,7	11:25	13:25
K7 320	Daily	11:30	13:35

YANGON TO THANDWE

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
W9 141	Daily	6:15	9:35
6T 351	1,2,3,4,6,7	6:30	10:00
YH 511	1	10:30	13:05
YH 505	3,4,6,7	10:30	13:10
6T 605	Daily	11:15	12:10
YH 505	2	11:30	14:10
W9307	2,4	11:30	13:50
W9 309	1,3,5,6,7	11:30	13:50
YH 511	1,5	11:30	14:05

THANDWE TO YANGON

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
W9 141	Daily	9:50	10:40
6T 632	1,2,3,4,6,7	10:15	11:10
6T 605	Dailys	12:25	15:00
6T 632	5	13:00	13:55
YH 512	1	13:05	13:55
YH 506	3,4,6,7	13:10	14:00
W9 307	2,4	14:05	14:55
W9 309	1,3,5,6,7	14:05	14:55
YH 512	5	14:05	14:55
YH 506	2	14:10	15:00

Domestic Airlines

Air Bagan Ltd. (W9)
Tel : 513322, 513422, 504888, Fax : 515102

Air KBZ (K7)
Tel: 372977~80, 533030~39 (Airport),
Fax: 372983

Air Mandalay (6T)
Tel : (Head Office) 501520, 525488,
Fax: 525937. Airport: 533222~3, 09-73152853.
Fax: 533223.

Asian Wings (YJ)
Tel: 951 516654, 532253, 09-731-35991~3.
Fax: 951 532333

Golden Myanmar Airlines (Y5)
Tel: 95 9 400446999, 95 9 400447999,
Fax: 01 860 4051

Yangon Airways(YH)
Tel: (+95-1) 383 100, 383 107, 700 264,
Fax: 652 533.

FMI Air Charter - Sales & Reservations
Tel: (95-1) 240363, 240373 / (+95-9) 421146545

Domestic

- 6T = Air Mandalay
- W9 = Air Bagan
- YJ = Asian Wings
- K7 = AIR KBZ
- YH = Yangon Airways
- FMI = FMI AIR Charter
- Y5 = Golden Myanmar Airlines

Subject to change without notice

Day
1 = Monday
2 = Tuesday
3 = Wednesday
4 = Thursday
5 = Friday
6 = Saturday
7 = Sunday

INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT SCHEDULES

YANGON TO BANGKOK

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
PG 706	Daily	7:15	9:30
8M 335	Daily	8:40	10:25
TG 304	Daily	9:50	11:45
PG 702	Daily	10:30	12:25
TG 302	Daily	14:55	16:50
PG 708	Daily	15:20	17:15
8M 331	Daily	16:30	18:15
PG 704	Daily	18:20	20:15
Y5 237	Daily	18:05	19:50
TG 306	Daily	19:45	21:40

YANGON TO DON MUENG

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
DD 4231	1,3,5,7	8:00	9:45
FD 2752	Daily	8:30	10:20
FD 2756	Daily	12:50	14:40
FD 2754	Daily	17:35	19:25
FD 2758	1,2,3,4	20:55	22:50

YANGON TO SINGAPORE

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
MI 509/SQ 5019	1,2,6,7	0:25	5:00
8M 231	Daily	8:00	12:25
8M 233	5,6,7	14:00	18:25
Y5 233	Daily	10:10	14:40
SQ 997/MI 5871	Daily	10:25	14:45
3K 586	Daily	11:40	16:20
MI 517/SQ 5017	Daily	16:40	21:15
TR 2827	1,6,7	15:10	19:35
TR 2827	2,3,4,5	17:10	21:35
3K 588	2,3,5	19:30	00:10+1

YANGON TO KUALA LUMPUR

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
8M 501	1,3,5,6	8:55	12:55
AK 1427	Daily	8:30	12:50
MH 741	Daily	12:15	16:30
MH 743	Daily	16:00	20:15
AK 1421	Daily	19:05	23:20

YANGON TO BEIJING

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
CA 906	2,3,4,6,7	14:15	21:55

YANGON TO GAUNGZHOU

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
8M 711	2,4,7	8:40	13:15
CZ 3056	3,6	11:35	15:50
CZ 3056	1,5	17:40	22:05

YANGON TO TAIPEI

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
CI 7916	1,2,3,5,6	10:50	16:15

YANGON TO KUNMING

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
MU 2012	1,3	12:20	18:20
MU 2032	Daily	14:40	18:00
CA 906	2,3,4,6,7	14:15	17:35

YANGON TO CHIANG MAI

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
W9 9607	4,7	14:30	16:20

YANGON TO HANOI

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
VN 956	1,3,5,6,7	19:10	21:30

YANGON TO HO CHI MINH CITY

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
VN 942	2,4,7	14:25	17:10

YANGON TO DOHA

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
QR 919	Daily	7:30	11:15

YANGON TO PHNOM PENH

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
8M 403	1,3,6	8:35	12:30

YANGON TO SEOUL

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
OZ 770	4,7	0:50	8:50
KE 472	Daily	23:35	07:45+1

YANGON TO HONG KONG

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
KA 251	1,2,4,6	01:10	05:35

YANGON TO TOKYO

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
NH 914	Daily	22:10	06:45+1

YANGON TO SIEM REAP

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
8M 401	1,3,6	8:35	10:45

YANGON TO GAYA

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
8M 601	1,3,5,6	9:00	10:20

YANGON TO DHAKA

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
BG 061	1,4	19:30	20:45

MANDALAY TO BANGKOK

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
TG 2982	1,2,4,6	9:50	12:00
TG 2984	3,5	19:35	21:45
PG 710	Daily	14:15	16:40

MANDALAY TO DON MUENG

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
FD 2761	Daily	12:50	15:15

MANDALAY TO KUNMING

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
MU 2030	Daily	14:40	17:20

NAYPYIDAW TO BANGKOK

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
PG 722	1,2,3,4,5	19:45	22:45

BANGKOK TO YANGON

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
8M 336	Daily	11:55	12:40
TG 303	Daily	8:00	8:45
PG 701	Daily	8:50	9:40
TG 301	Daily	13:00	13:45
PG 707	Daily	13:40	14:30
PG 703	Daily	16:45	17:35
TG 305	Daily	17:50	18:45
8M 332	Daily	19:20	20:05
PG 705	Daily	20:00	21:15
Y5 238	Daily	21:10	21:55

DON MUENG TO YANGON

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
DD 4230	1,3,5,7	6:30	7:15
FD 2751	Daily	7:15	8:00
FD 2755	Daily	11:35	12:20
FD 2753	Daily	16:20	17:05
FD 2757	1,2,3,4	19:35	20:25

SINGAPORE TO YANGON

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
SQ 998/MI 5872	Daily	7:55	9:20
3K 585	Daily	9:10	10:40
8M 232	Daily	13:25	14:50
TR 2826	1,6,7	13:10	14:30
MI 518/MI 5018	Daily	14:20	15:45
TR 2826	2,3,4,5	15:00	16:30
Y5 234	Daily	15:35	17:05
3K 587	2,3,5	17:20	18:50
8M 234	5,6,7	19:25	20:50
MI 520/SQ 5020	1,5,6,7	22:10	23:35

BEIJING TO YANGON

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
CA 905	2,3,4,6,7	8:05	13:15

KAULA LUMPUR TO YANGON

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
AK 1426	Daily	6:55	8:00
MH 740	Daily	10:05	11:15
MH742	Daily	13:50	15:00
8M 502	1,3,5,6	14:00	15:00
AK 1420	Daily	17:20	18:25

GUANGZHOU TO YANGON

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
CZ 3055	3,6	8:35	10:35
CZ 3055	1,5	14:40	16:40
8M 712	2,4,7	14:15	15:50

TAIPEI TO YANGON

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
CI 7915	1,2,3,5,6	7:00	9:55

KUNMING TO YANGON

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
MU 2011	1,3	8:25	11:40
CA 905	2,3,4,6,7	13:00	13:15
MU 2031	Daily	13:30	14:00

CHIANG MAI TO YANGON

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
W9 9608	4,7	17:20	18:10

HANOI TO YANGON

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
VN 957	1,3,5,6,7	16:35	18:10

HO CHI MINH CITY TO YANGON

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
VN 943	2,4,7	11:40	13:25

DOHA TO YANGON

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
QR 918	Daily	21:15	06:29+1

GAYA TO YANGON

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
8M 602	1,3,5,6	11:20	14:30

PHNOM PENH TO YANGON

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
8M 404	1,3,6	13:30	14:55

SEOUL TO YANGON

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
KE 471	Daily	18:30	22:30
OZ 769	3,6	19:30	23:40

TOKYO TO YANGON

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
NH 913	Daily	11:45	17:15

HONG KONG TO YANGON

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
KA 250	1,3,5,7	21:50	23:45

DHAKA TO YANGON

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
BG 060	1,4	16:15	18:30

BANGKOK TO MANDALAY

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
TG 2981	1,2,4,6	7:45	9:00
TG 2983	3,5	17:30	18:45
PG 709	Daily	12:05	13:25

DON MUEANG TO MANDALAY

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
FD 2760	Daily	10:55	12:20

KUNMING TO MANDALAY

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
MU 2029	Daily	13:55	13:50

BANGKOK TO NAYPYIDAW

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
PG 721	1,2,3,4,5	17:15	19:15

International Airlines

Air Asia (FD)
Tel: 251 885, 251 886.

Air Bagan Ltd.(W9)
Tel : 513322, 513422, 504888, Fax : 515102

Air China (CA)
Tel : 666112, 655882.

Air India
Tel : 253597~98, 254758. Fax: 248175

Bangkok Airways (PG)
Tel: 255122, 255 265, Fax: 255119

Condor (DE)
Tel: + 95 1 -370836 up to 39 (ext : 810)

Dragonair (KA)
Tel: 95-1-255320, 255321, Fax : 255329

Golden Myanmar Airlines (Y5)
Tel: 95 9 400446999, 95 9 400447999,
Fax: 01 860 4051

Malaysia Airlines (MH)
Tel : 387648, 241007 ext : 120, 121, 122
Fax : 241124

Myanmar Airways International(8M)
Tel : 255260, Fax: 255305

Silk Air(MI)
Tel: 255 287~9, Fax: 255 290

Thai Airways (TG)
Tel : 255491~6, Fax : 255223

Vietnam Airlines (VN)
Fax : 255086. Tel 255066/ 255088/ 255068.

Qatar Airways (Temporary Office)
Tel: 379845, 379843, 379831, Fax: 379730

Biman Bangladesh Airlines (BG)
Tel: 371867~68, Fax: 371869.

International

FD & AK = Air Asia
TG = Thai Airways
8M = Myanmar Airways International
Y5 = Golden Myanmar Airlines
PG = Bangkok Airways
MI = Silk Air
VN = Vietnam Airline
MH = Malaysia Airlines
CZ = China Southern
CI = China Airlines
CA = Air China
KA = Dragonair
Y5 = Golden Myanmar Airlines
IC = Indian Airlines Limited
W9 = Air Bagan
3K = Jet Star
AI = Air India
QR = Qatar Airways
KE = Korea Airlines
NH = All Nippon Airways
SQ = Singapore Airways
DE = Condor Airlines
MU=China Eastern Airlines
BR = Eva Airlines
DE = Condor
AI = Air India
BG = Biman Bangladesh Airlines

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		7	= Sunday

TOKYO

Daily life in Japan lures tourists

FORGET Mt Fuji, Kyoto and other common sightseeing destinations. Many foreign tourists are heading for off-the-beaten-path spots where they can enjoy a real taste of daily life in Japan.

Showcasing food menu items made with wax for display in front of restaurants may be unique to Japan, which probably is why tourists want to try their hand at it.

Amy and her 12-year-old son Jordan attended a workshop at Ganso Shoku-hin Sanpuru-ya, a kitchenware store on Kappabashi Dogu-dori Street, Tokyo. Amy, a 48-year-old visitor from Seattle, made samples of shrimp tempura. "It looks real, and every piece is beautiful," she said as she admired her work.

According to the shop, elaborate and realistic samples as well as sushi magnets are popular among foreign tourists. "They seem to be fascinated with all the various colours used in Japanese food," an employee said.

Japanese farms are another popular destination. In December, 50 people from Thailand boarded a tour bus to visit Migita Persimmon Picking Garden in Kurume. It was something they had never tried before.

A Thai visitor, 36, picked 20 fuyugaki persimmons at the farm. "I'm going to give them to my friends and family when I return home," he said. A single persimmon costs about 100 baht in Thailand (US$3), about four times more than Chinese persimmons.

Though Thailand is a major exporter of fruits, such fruits as peaches, melons and strawberries grown in Japan are regarded as luxury items in Thailand due to their taste, shape and colour, according to the Thai tourists, who added that the fruits are popular among the middle class.

Factories are also on the tourists' itinerary. At the end of last year, 33 students from other Asian countries and Africa visited Nippon Steel & Sumi-tomo Metal Corp's Yawata Steel Works in Kitakyushu. They were stunned by the organisational structure and atmosphere.

"I was impressed by the disciplined, devoted workers. This is Japan's strength," said a 38-year-old Sri Lankan.

"I was interested in the corporate history of combating environmental pollution," a 29-year-old Filipino said.

Overseas visitors looking for souvenirs often make a beeline for Don Quijote stores in Tokyo, as the general discount giant's outlets are open until midnight and crammed with piles of miscellaneous goods.

"The stores are filled with interesting stuff, and the prices are cheap. I've never seen shops like this before," said a 39-year-old hotel manager from Thailand. He bought some bags of green tea at the flagship store in Ginza, Tokyo.

Don Quijote offers a wide range of products from watches and bags to detergent and snacks. The stores are like a theme park for foreigners to observe Japanese consumption habits.

According to the Japan Tourism Agency's survey of foreign tourists, more than 70 percent said experiencing the Japanese lifestyle was satisfying, while more than 50pc said they enjoyed wandering along the streets and shopping.

Offering a taste of daily life in Japan seems to be an integral part of the nation's soft power.

– *The Yomiuri Shimbun*

Clockwise from left: Shopping at Don Quijote, a general discount store crammed with miscellaneous goods; making wax food samples; and picking fresh fruit at the Migita Persimmon Picking Garden. Photo: Yomiuri Shimbun

Myanmar artist Htoo gives a performance at Ngapali Beach, 2012. Photo: MARCA

TALKING ART

New art education centre prepares for launch

WHITNEY LIGHT
light.whitney@gmail.com

WHEN a young Myanmar artist wants to gain insight into the international art world, he or she can call up an established professional for tea, said Zoncy (aka Zon Sapal Phyu), a Yangon-based performance artist and one of five co-directors of a new art education centre and library located in a small flat on Old Yadashe Street. "You'll learn something that way," she said. "But where else can you go? There's nothing."

While the country opens up to freedom of expression and art practice and research in Myanmar blossoms, the co-directors – who also include artist and gallerist Khin Zaw Latt, researcher and Myanmar art expert Nathalie Johnston and Italian researchers Ilaria Benini and Thomas Poletto – noticed through their professional experiences a lack of basic resources for artists, arts writers and researchers, both local and foreign. In response, the group founded the Myanmar Art Resource Center and Archive (MARCA), a bilingual English and Myanmar venue open informally since late December for all who would benefit from artist talks, film screenings, guest lectures and a library of print and digital records related to contemporary art.

The co-directors hope to bridge the gaps that currently separate artists, researchers and the public. "You find that artists in this country are unaware of other artists who are working," Johnston said, who met Zoncy in 2010 in the course of interviewing Myanmar performance artists for a master's thesis. At the time, Zoncy was helping archive a private collection at New Zero Art Space, a gallery in Dagon township. Both women saw a need for a widely accessible institution dedicated to fostering the growing arts community. The idea for the centre was born.

That some artists work in isolation here is perhaps not a surprise given the paucity of such venues for art education and discussion. Although there are technically four schools for fine art in Myanmar, including two state schools and two campuses of the National Art and Culture University, they primarily focus on traditional arts rather than contemporary practice viewed in an international context. Venues for senior artists to speak publicly to younger artists and interested audiences just don't exist, Zoncy said.

Having studied computer science at university, she got into art by studying painting with a private teacher. It wasn't until she started volunteering and later working at New Zero that she had access to over 1000 records related to the arts, as well as history and social science.

"Most of the artists surviving here day-to-day need exposure to the global art scene through books and resources. Not everyone gets to go abroad," she said, emphasising that the centre is not a gallery. "There are already venues to see paintings and beautiful artwork."

> *"You find that artists in this country are unaware of other artists who are working,"*
>
> **Nathalie Johnston**
> Art reseacher

The group also hopes to encourage more indigenous arts journalism and critical writing. "If you research online, you'll find very little written on Myanmar art. It's always the same people. You don't have a plurality of voices. You don't have a wide view or a point-of-view from people who grew up and work here," Benini said.

Located in a small, fourth-floor flat provided by the artist Khin Zaw Latt, the fledgling organisation is still looking for stable sources of funding, including private donors. For now, the co-directors are volunteers, paying for the centre's activities out-of-pocket and through sporadic grants. The centre has received donations from the private collection of Khin Zaw Latt as well as titles on Asian art from a Thai publisher. Johnston has given her collection of books, catalogues and digital records acquired through her years of academic research.

In late January and early February, the centre hosted its first two public events. Organised by Benini and Poletto, visitors were treated to free presentations of *The Artist is Present*, a documentary about the renowned Yugoslavian performance artist Marina Abramovic, and of *Blissfully Yours*, a feature film by the Thai artist Apichatpong Weerasethakul. Benini and Poletto are taking charge of communications and event planning and hope to have more screenings and artist talks lined up in the weeks to come.

The co-directors also hope that donors will come through soon so that they can acquire such basic items as a printer and scanner and software to create a digital archive. Eventually they would like to launch a website, hire translation services and subscribe to magazines like *Art in America* and *Arts of Asia*.

Although so far the group has kept its activities quiet, feeling unprepared yet for an official launch they're also keen to put the centre's future on solid footing. Khin Zaw Latt donated the space to the group for one year to see if they can make something happen, Johnson said.

"We're lucky to have the space," Benini said. "We want to use it a lot."

For events and information on the Myanmar Art Resource Center and Archive, visit https://www.facebook.com/myanmartresourcecenter.

WEEKLY PREDICTIONS

FEBRUARY 17 – 23, 2014

AQUARIUS | Jan 20 – Feb 18

You may have to take financial risks but you'll be richer for the struggle. No matter how much you believe you can get around hazards, you will be wiser to take another course entirely. A relationship with an old friend will test your creativity. Your sweet sense of whimsy will make your love life magical and filled with dreamy possibilities.

PISCES | Feb 19 – March 20

Make sure to balance your self-confidence with humility. Know that holding attention will be a test in itself. Your sincerity and honesty will be noticed in social relationships. Your analytical nature will give you satisfaction and awaken you to enjoy many thrills. Sentimental gifts are keys that unlock the heart. Sincerity and honesty are also the best ways to be noticed in love.

ARIES | Mar 21 – Apr 19

Excitement is not only a great way to get attention but also a great way to keep it. Don't wait to start new relationships and nurture them, but don't get overwhelmed that life is passing to quickly. You and your potential partner are assertive to a fault. When the time comes, be flexible and take full advantage of your receptivity.

TAURUS | Apr 20 – May 20

What is of value today is to make a beautiful tomorrow. You should not pretend to be an expert on something you're not. Your ways of getting what you want without having to ask for it and without any social challenge are sometimes unforgivable and frequently unfavorable. Concentrate on the similarities and the differences between you and others, especially your close confidante.

GEMINI | May 21 – June 20

Allow your close friends to know what is in your heart as well as what is in your head. Never feel afraid of keeping your emotional responsibilities a priority. Keeping things balanced and harmonious is your key to happiness. Try to keep attraction simple and true to build trust in your love life. Increase your enthusiasm to share with others and stand for social justice.

CANCER | June 21 – July22

The true blue of heaven is larger than the cloud. Just make sure you get to know the nature of everything before any decisions are made. Make a real impression on others and shift your psychological gears to transform your sense of humor. Social interference must be managed. Continue to build self-worth in those around you. Love needs your heated interest.

LEO | July 23 – Aug 22

A successful person always looks to see what's ahead but never forgets who's behind. You should quietly do the next thing that has to be done and allow other things to follow. You must put effort and uprightness into your actions and indulge your sentiments in order to let others know the responsibilities of leadership. Link your heart with love by recognising good deeds.

VIRGO | Aug 23 – Sep 22

Make sure you learn to compromise but never with your principles. Your simple words can have the most complicated meanings. Stay close and ready for your right action and challenge. Get ready for a flood of emotion and settle for the basics, if you are approached correctly and with love. Don't be afraid of your heart and beware your tendency to live in your head.

LIBRA | Sep 23 – Oct 22

Time does its work very simply and honestly. Fear can stop everything but encouragement can start anything. You will be surprised at how much you like the taste of new things and you will get self-confidence by challenging yourself. What seems to be a challenge today will be an accomplishment tomorrow if you follow your daily action plan. Giving of yourself is the best gift of all.

SCORPIO | Oct 23 – Nov 21

No man knocks himself down. If your destiny knocks you down, your destiny is sure to pick you up again. Make sure you are not the killjoy. Keep yourself cool and prepared for anything that may happen, and it will be the better for you. Your strong desire to love and be loved can result in an overflow of emotion or sensual behaviour.

SAGITTARIUS | Nov 22 – Dec 21

Keep open to all things new and exciting, and you can drive to a new social position with good opportunities. Don't take things personally. If you wish to touch your listeners, you must seek your inspiration from on high. Sometimes all you need is for time to pass in order for things to happen. Don't be too demonstrative or overwhelming until you have laid the emotional groundwork.

CAPRICORN | Dec 22 – Jan 19

Give yourself a new view of the world around you and bring out the best in each other at every turn. You and an intelligent Virgo can be the perfect combination of yin and yang energy. Spiritual reflection will help you to inspire yourself, and charm will prove to be irresistible to you. What is in your head must be able to balance with your heart.

AUNG MYIN KYAW
4th Floor, 113, Thamain Bayan Road, Tarmwe township, Yangon.
Tel: 09-731-35632, Email: williameaste@gmail.com

QUICK GUIDE

FAX : 951-254158
EMAIL : CLASSIFIED.MCM@GMAIL.COM
WWW.MMTIMES.COM

The Essentials

EMBASSIES

Australia 88, Strand Road, Yangon. Tel : 251810, 251797, 251798.

Bangladesh 11-B, Than Lwin Road, Yangon. Tel: 515275, 526144, email: bdootygn@mptmail.net.mm

Brazil 56, Pyay Road, 6th mile, Hlaing Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 507225, 507251. email: Administ. yangon@itamaraty.gov.br.

Brunei 17, Kanbawza Avenue, Golden Velly (1), Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 566985, 503978. email: bruneiemb@bruneiemb.com.mm

Cambodia 25 (3B/4B), New University Avenue Road, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 549609, 540964. email: RECYANGON @ mptmail.net.mm

China 1, Pyidaungsu Yeiktha Road, Yangon. Tel: 221280, 221281.

Danmark, No.7, Pyi Thu St, Pyay Rd, 7 Miles, Mayangone Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 01 – 9669520 - 17.

Egypt 81, Pyidaungsu Yeiktha Road, Yangon. Tel: 222886, 222887, Egyptembassy86@gmail.com

France 102, Pyidaungsu Yeiktha Road, Yangon. Tel: 212178, 212520, email: ambaf rance. rangoun@ diplomatie.fr

Germany 9, Bogyoke Aung San Museum Road, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 548951, 548952, email: info@rangun. diplo.de

India 545-547, Merchant St, Yangon. Tel: 391219, 388412, email: indiaembassy @ mptmail.net.mm

Indonesia 100, Pyidaungsu Yeiktha Rd, Yangon. Tel: 254465, 254469, email: kukygn @ indonesia.com.mm

Israel 15, Khabaung Street, Hlaing Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 515115, fax: 515116, email: info@ yangon.mfa.gov.il

Italy 3, Inya Myaing Road, Golden Valley, Yangon. Tel: 527100, 527101, fax: 514565, email: ambyang. mail@ esteri.it

Japan 100, Natmauk Rd, Yangon. Tel: 549644-8, 540399, 540400, 540411, 545988, fax: 549643

State of Kuwait Chatrium Hotel, Rm: 416, 418, 420, 422, 40 Natmauk Rd, Tarmwe Tsp, Tel: 544500.

Lao A-1, Diplomatic Quarters, Tawwin Road, Dagon Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 222482, fax: 227446, email: Laoembcab@ mptmail. net.mm

Malaysia 82, Pyidaungsu Yeiktha Road, Yangon. Tel: 220248, 220249, email: mwkyangon@ mptmail.net.mm

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New Zealand No. 43/C, Inya Myaing Rd, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel : 01-2305805

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North Korea 77C, Shin Saw Pu Rd, Sanchaung Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 512642, 510205

Pakistan A-4, diplomatic Quarters, Pyay Rd, Yangon. Tel: 222881 (Chancery Exchange)

Philippines 50, Sayasan Rd, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 558149-151,Email: p.e. yangon@gmail.com

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Immigration ☎tel: 286434.
Ministry of Education ☎tel:545500m 562390
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Myanma Post & Telecommunication (MPT) ☎tel: 067-407007.
Myanma Post & Tele-communication (Accountant Dept) ☎tel: 254563, 370768.
Ministry of Foreign Affairs ☎tel: 067-412009, 067-412344.
Ministry of Health ☎tel: 067-411358-9.
Yangon City Development Committee ☎tel: 248112.

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Naypyitaw Hospital (emergency) ☎tel: 420096.
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Yangon Children Hospital ☎tel: 222807, 222808, 222809.
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Employment

UN Positions

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Ingo Positions

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MYANMAR Red Cross Society is seeking **Assistant Finance Officer** 1 post in Nay Pyi Taw: University Degree. Relevant educational background (accounting, finance). Effective English language skills. Effective computer knowledge. Red Cross Volunteers are preferable. Pls send application letter, CV and related documents to Myanmar Red Cross Society Head Office. Yazathingaha Rd, Dekkhinathiri, Nay Pyi Taw. Or mrcshrrecruitment@gmail.com, Closing date : 18.2.2014.

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(1) **ADMIN & Finance Assistant** - 1 post Application process: Pls send your application letter, CV and related documents to Myanmar Red Cross Society(Head Office) Yazatingaha Rd, Dekkhinathiri, Nay Pyi Taw. Ormrcshrrecruitment@gmail. com For more information & application, pls visit to www.anmarredcrosssociety.org Pls mention "Position Title" in subject if you apply.

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Local Positions

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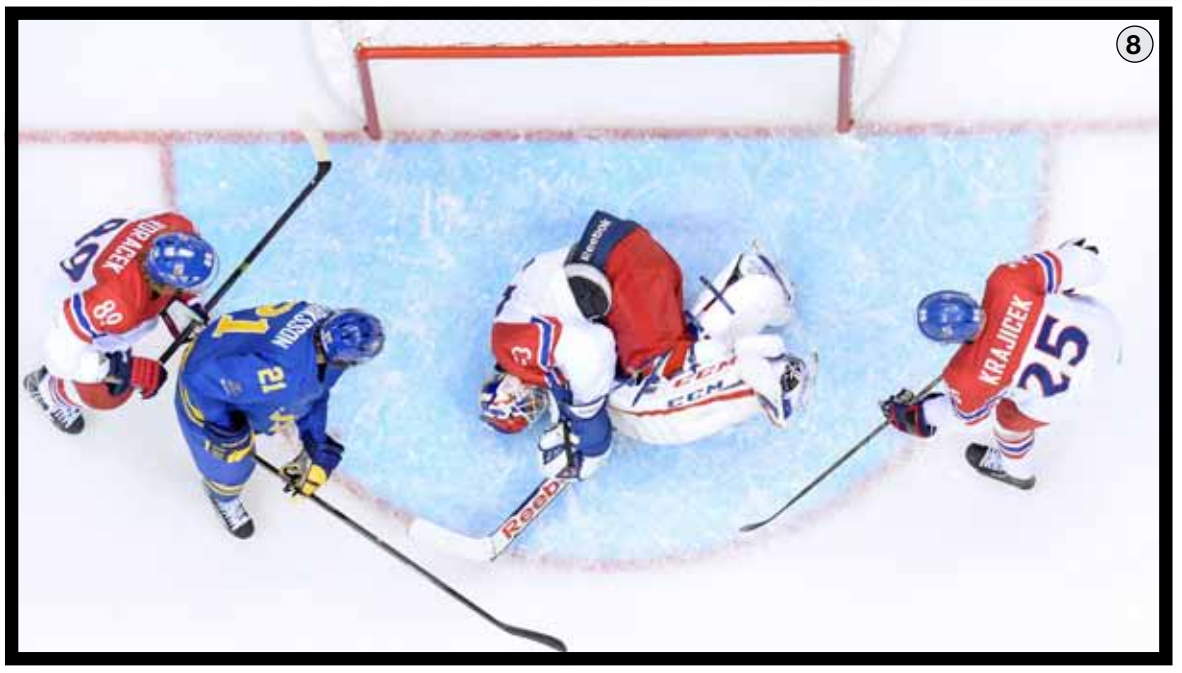
Going for gold: The athletes of the 2014 Winter Olympic Games in Sochi



1. **Sweden's Niklas Edin reacts during the men's curling round robin session 3 match between Sweden and Canada at the Ice Cube Curling Centre on February 11.**
2. **Canada's Sarah Reid takes off during skeleton training at the Sanki Sliding Center in Rosa Khutor on February 11.**
3. **Poland's Maciej Bydlinski takes part in a men's alpine skiing super combined downhill training session at the Rosa Khutor Alpine Center on February 11.**
4. **Tied gold medalists Tina Maze of Slovenia (right) and Switzerland's Dominique Gisin stand on the podium at the women's alpine skiing downhill flower ceremony at the Rosa Khutor Alpine Center on February 12.**
5. **American Shaun White competes in the men's snowboard halfpipe Final at the Rosa Khutor Extreme Park on February 11.**
6. **The Netherlands' Jan Smeekens competes during the men's speed skating 500m at the Adler Arena on February 10.**
7. **Russia's Tatiana Volosozhar and Russia's Maxim Trankov perform their figure skating pairs free program at the Iceberg Skating Palace on February 12.**
8. **The Czech Republic's goalkeeper Alexander Salak (centre) makes a save in front of Sweden's Loui Eriksson during the Czech Republic vs Sweden ice hockey game at the Bolshoy Arena on February 12.** Photos: AFP

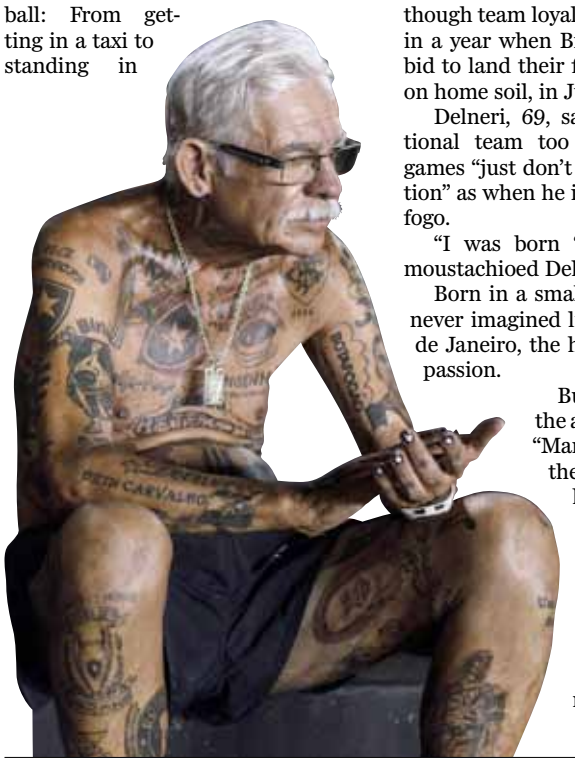
RIO DE JANEIRO

Soccer passion that is more than skin deep

FOR Brazilian football fans, love of the sport goes more than skin deep, and Delneri Martins Viana wears his heart and a good deal more besides on his sleeve as a fanatical supporter of Rio side Botafogo.

Retired soldier Delneri describes himself as the club's "most fanatical" fan – and he certainly looks the part, with his body covered in no less than 83 tattoos showing the sporting love of his life.

Brazilians live and breathe football: From getting in a taxi to standing in the supermarket queue, the conversation almost always comes round to it as a perfect way to break the social ice.



Men, women, children, everyone has a view on a subject that fascinates everyone.

There's the trader who years ago made a solemn promise to wear his club's colours day after day.

And then there are the families who, almost as soon as their child is born, rush to have it registered as a club member.

Club often comes before country – though team loyalties will be put aside in a year when Brazil's national team bid to land their fifth World Cup, and on home soil, in June.

Delneri, 69, says he likes the national team too but explains their games "just don't have the same emotion" as when he is watching his Botafogo.

"I was born 'botafoguense'," says moustachioed Delneri.

Born in a small southern town, he never imagined living one day in Rio de Janeiro, the home of his sporting passion.

But, aged 23, he joined the army and came to the "Marvelous City." Since then, his allegiance has been black and white – the colours of Botafogo, once the team of the legendary Garrincha.

"There's nothing else in my wardrobe," grins Delneri, who does all he can to attend all of Botafogo's games, home or away.

Delneri Martins Viana watches a Botafogo match at Sao Genario stadium in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on January 21. Photo: AFP

Once at the stadium, he makes his way with purpose up to the terraces clad in black and white shorts, of course, and flip-flops likewise in club colors.

No need for a shirt either; his tattoos make his loyalties perfectly plain.

Many of those gathered come over to greet him and have their picture taken with "the tattooed one", who has become something of a celebrity.

Delneri doesn't stop at tattoos either, carefully painting fingers and toes black and applying the white star club logo on top.

"Getting a tattoo done is painful. But if you do it because you want to then it's a pleasure," he beams, indicating he may have some more done to cover the few bits of skin which remain bare.

Brazilians refer to such football fanatics as *torcedor doente* (a sick fan).

Delneri retorts, "The ones who don't support Botafogo are the sick ones."

Delneri had his first tattoo done 14 years ago and dedicated it to Garrincha.

Since then he has become a walking advert for the club, his works of body art ranging from badges to mottos and anthems.

He even has one in honour of Biriba, a dog belonging to a former club chairman who would take the animal to games in the belief that he brought the team luck.

Botafoguense are superstitious like that, and that goes for Delneri's daughter Glaucia, who won't take her place in the stands unless she is wearing an official team jersey.

Glaucia, 44, and younger sibling Marcela, 38, each have their own tattoos – albeit 'only' 10. But they both accompany their father to matches whenever they can.

"I went to the Maracana from the age of six. I learned to love the club as my father does and now it's my passion," says Glaucia, whose Botafogo page on Facebook has 2800 followers.

Brazilian women in general take their football very seriously and more than hold their own when it comes to debating performances and tactics.

Delneri's wife Malvina Gonçalves only attends games occasionally. But she carefully maintains the home they have shared for 45 years as a shrine to their team.

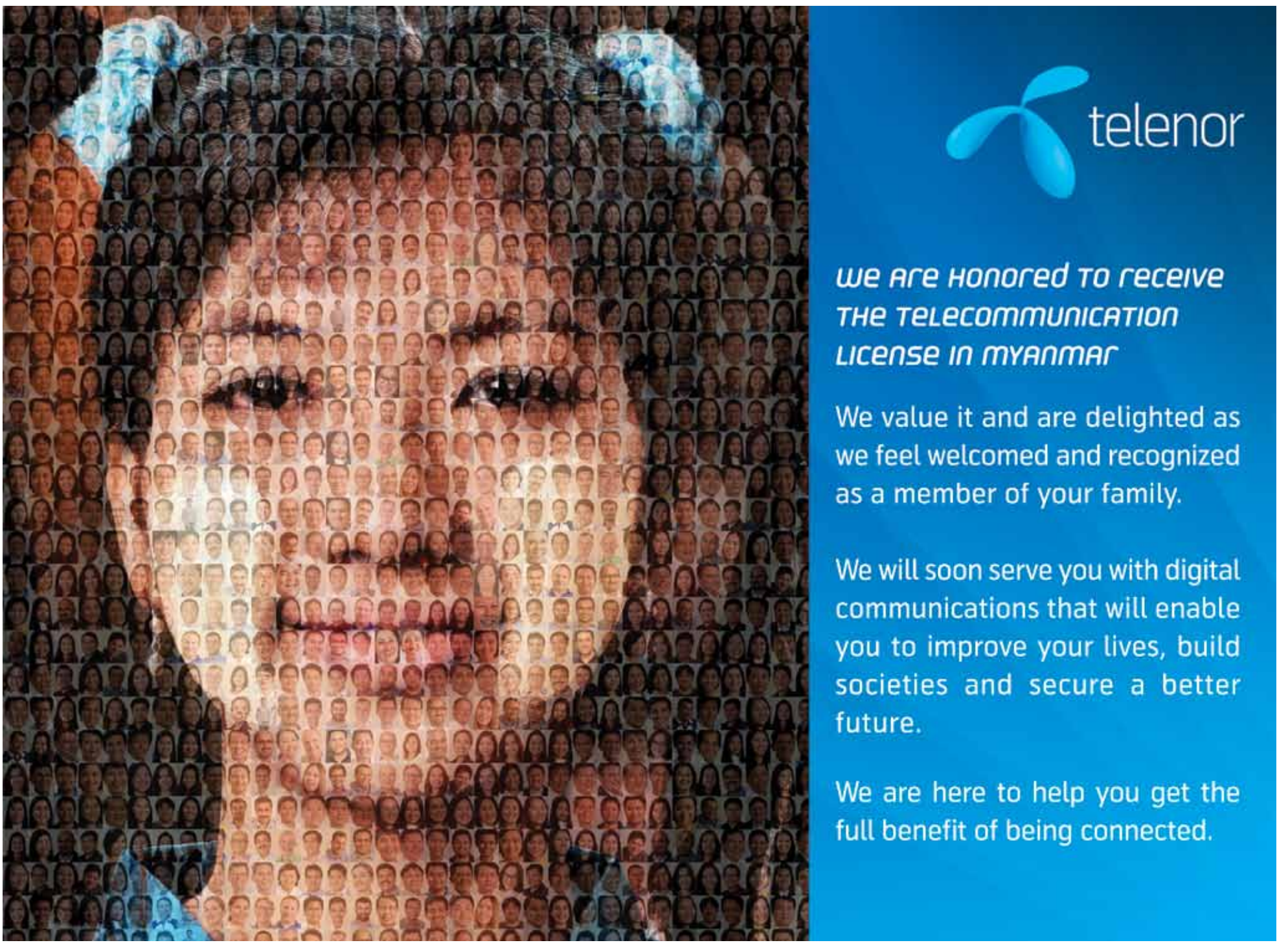
Their house in the modest Rio suburb of Bangu bears a sign reads, "Welcome – but please don't speak ill of Botafogo."

Inside, the decor is black and white, and several pictures of the team are on display with other club effects.

In addition, the family dogs are named after Garrincha and former Uruguayan favorite Loco Abreu.

"I think I love my club more than I do myself," chortles Malvina.

Her husband interjects that she comes first for him – but Botafogo are a close second. – *AFP*



SPORT EDITOR: **Tim McLaughlin** | **timothy.mclaughlin3**@gmail.com

Sport

The 2014 Winter Olympics in pictures
SPORT 62

LOS ANGELES

American football prospect announces he's gay

AN American university football star, Michael Sam, has publicly revealed that he is gay, placing him in the unprecedented position of likely becoming the first openly homosexual player drafted by an NFL team.

In interviews last week with ESPN's "Outside the Lines" and *The New York Times*, Sam said he was going public with information that was already known to his teammates and coaches at the University of Missouri.

"I am an openly, proud gay man," Sam, a 24-year-old defensive lineman who was the Southeast Conference's Defensive Player of the Year, told ESPN.

Sam is eligible for the NFL draft in May. If drafted, he would be the first openly gay player in the ultra-macho league's history.

"I understand how big this is," he told ESPN. "It's a big deal. No one has done this before. And it's kind of a nervous process, but I know what I want to be .... I want to be a football player in the NFL."

Sam, projected to be a middle-round draft selection, said he decided to speak out now because he wanted to tell his own story.

"We're really happy for Michael that he's made the decision to announce this, and we're proud of him and how he represents Mizzou," University of Missouri coach Gary Pinkel said in a statement.

"He's taught a lot of people here first-hand that it doesn't matter what your background is, or your personal orientation. We're all on the same team and we all support each other."

Publicly, the NFL also voiced support.

"We admire Michael Sam's honesty and courage," the league said in a statement. "Michael is a football player. Any player with ability and determination can succeed in the NFL.

"We look forward to welcoming and supporting Michael Sam in 2014."

Sarah Kate Ellis, head of GLAAD, a lesbian, gay and bisexual rights group, offered her group's support and claimed that it's "clear that America is ready for an openly gay football star".

– AFP

SOCHI

For many, Sochi is a family affair

THE Winter Olympics may be a multi-billion dollar enterprise reaching every corner of the globe – but for many the Sochi Games are a strictly family affair.

There are Dutch speed skating twins, three Canadian freestyle skiing sisters, another three Swiss siblings in the biathlon and a father-and-son combination in ice hockey among many other family groups.

Not content with reaching the moguls final all together, the Dufour-Lapointe sisters made off with gold and silver at the Rosa Khutor Extreme Park.

It was 19-year-old Justine, the youngest of the three, who triumphed – and she admitted she had been inspired by her siblings.

"I saw my sisters in the World Cup and I watched Chloe (who won silver in Sochi) in Vancouver. I decided I wanted to train hard. I have always been a competitive tiger. I take after my dad. It's how I grew up so it's normal."

Proud father Yves said the success was partly down to strong "family values" and mum Johane said sisterhood has always come first.

"At times, one sister would be happy for her high result, but we would try not to make them feel better than the others. We consulted a psychologist," she said.

South Korea's Park Seung-Ju competes on February 11. Photo: AFP

Silver medallist Chloe Dufour-Lapointe (L) holds hands with her sister gold medallist, Justine Dufour-Lapointe at the Rosa Khutor Extreme Park in Sochi on February 8. Photo: AFP

"We wanted to treat all the girls equally. They are first and foremost sisters. Sometimes they fall out, but now they are mature enough to handle themselves."

And the sisters are not the only family threesome at the Games.

South Korea's short-track skater Park Se-Yeong is in Sochi alongside big sisters Park Seung-Hi, also a short-track skater, and speed skater Park Seung-Ju.

And the Swiss Gasparin sisters – Selina, Elisa and Aita – are among seven sibling combinations competing in biathlon.

Elsewhere, the Dutch Mulder twins, Michel and Ronald, took gold and bronze in the men's 500m speed skating event.

"Of course the perfect scenario would be for me to win gold and my brother after me," said Ronald. "But I'm really happy I made it to the podium."

US Nordic combined brothers Bryan and Taylor Fletcher admit there is an edge when they compete but say they also look out for one another.

"There's definitely sibling rivalry, but we have each other's back and work together to try to get the best result for both instead of one-up on each other," said Bryan, the older by four years.

"I will try to give him tips but he doesn't need too many," Taylor said of Bryan. "Like how to race the rhythm of the course and stick behind someone on the downhill so you can slingshot past them."

US-born ice dancers Cathy Reed and brother Chris are competing for Japan in Sochi.

Born in Michigan, the brother-sister duo began their ice dance career competing for the United States but later switched to representing the country of their mother's birth.

"The Japanese fans have been so supportive of us," Chris Reed said. "We want to honour that support with our skating. We want to give the support they have given us back to them."

At the 2010 Vancouver Games there were three Reed siblings competing – with younger sister Allison Reed representing Georgia. She has since switched both partners and countries to Israel but is not competing in Russia.

Veteran Russian luger Albert Demchenko, who won silver on February 9 in his seventh Winter Games, had hoped to compete alongside his daughter, Viktoria, but those hopes were dashed when the 18-year-old failed to qualify for the national team.

But Slovenian ice hockey head coach Matjaz Kopitar is at the Olympics alongside his son Anze – the only player from the country in the National Hockey League.

"He was always pushing himself. He had good genes, worked hard and became a good hockey player," said Matjaz, remembering his son as a young boy.

With brothers David and Marcel Rodman also playing an important role for Slovenia, the coach said the key to success at the Games was creating a family feeling.

"We must be like the big family off the ice that we are. And on the ice we need to be more than 100 percent."

– AFP