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Ongoing attempts to resolve a dispute over a soap factory highlight the shortcomings of Myanmar's commercial arbitration system.

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**Work to begin in May
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New Special Economic Zone has already attracted interest from 17 foreign companies and first factories could open by the end of 2015, developer says.

Silence in the house

Communal conflict has dominated public discussion since the first outbreaks of violence in June 2012. But despite the obvious implications for the country's future, the issue has been largely absent from the parliamentary agenda, as MPs have struggled to grapple with both the extremism of their constituents and the lack of any easy answers to the conflict.

SPECIAL REPORT NEWS 6

End-of-year election showdown

NLD and USDP announce plans to contest all 30 vacant constituencies in by-elections to be held later this year, which observers say will be an important indicator of the political mood prior to the 2015 nationwide vote. **NEWS 3**

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online editor **Kayleigh Long** |
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THE INSIDER: The local lowdown & best of the web

Monk expands teachings

There's been a lot of palaver lately about responsible reporting in the media – particularly where English-language outlets and Rakhine State are concerned.

Ever a man of action, venerable monk U Wirathu took it upon himself to conduct training sessions in the Thein Kaung Monastery of Thandwe Township on March 19.

An advertisement for the session that circulated online read thus:

"Nationalist Sayadaw Wirathu will conduct media training in Thandwe Township. Take this opportunity."

The main purpose of the session, U Wirathu told Myanmar-language media, was that attendees would learn to utilise Facebook as well as "improving their skills so that [trainees] can know the baseless accusations of BBC and VOA".

While here's not really the place to embark on constructive debate about the latter part of that statement, one cannot deny social media is an area where U Wirathu has demonstrated expertise.

His lively Facebook presence is appreciated by some 29,958 followers.

It has not yet been announced if his teachings will be offered to journalists in Yangon, but a number have already expressed interest in participating and hope U Wirathu kowtows to demand.

Idle kyat: corruption crackdown clarified

Presidential Spokesman and Deputy Information Minister U Ye Htut told local media last week that an order had been circulated to inform officials of the circumstances under which accepting a gift may be considered corruption.

Speaking with Kamayut Media, U Ye Htut said that gifts valued at over K300,000 would be considered corruption – but that anything under that is tickety-boo. K300,000 is the equivalent to an MP's monthly salary in Myanmar.

Psychic breakthrough on MH370 mystery

As the search for the missing Malaysia Airlines flight drags on, and the veritable media free-for-all cartwheels merrily forward spinning speculation in lieu of actual news, one man took it upon himself to contact The Myanmar Times with what he thought was an interesting lead.

"I use guided imagery ESP and I believe MH370 landed at Yangon Airport AND Shwedagon Pagoda Temple has a connection with it," said the mysterious man from the deep south of the United States over email. Unfortunately, this was as much information as he was able to glean from his session. He says he hopes to compare findings with another ESP practitioner. So, other than that – there's not a whole lot of news about the plane.

For sale: Pol Pot's 1973 Mercedes Benz W115 LWB stretch limousine

The former vehicle of Cambodian despot and certified war criminal Pol Pot is up for grabs, having been lovingly restored by its British owner.

Phnom Penh-based financial consultant and proud owner of Pol Pot's ride James Freer has reportedly offered to give a cut of the proceeds from the vehicle's sale to the publishing efforts of journalist Nate Thayer for his new book *Sympathy for the Devil: A journalist's memoir inside Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge*.

Bidding on the car began on March 21, and will end on March 31.

The storied vehicle is believed to have been purchased initially around 1970 by then-dictator Lon Nol, who was subsequently deposed by Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge when they stormed the capital in '75. Some time after Pol Pot was done with the Merc, it was used by a watermelon farmer to transport his goods to market – which was when its current owner scooped it up for posterity and restoration.

The vehicle was later leased out to Oscar-nominated Hollywood figure Matt Dillon and featured in his sleeper hit "City of Ghosts", starring Gerard Depardieu.

A 2007 eBay auction for the car started at about US\$71,800, before being pulled from the site.

Next week:

Census adds unexpected layer of bureaucracy to one-night stand

Once was Burma...

Archival material provided by Pansodan Gallery



1980s comic by Sai Min. Illustrations by Than Win Thwin. Published by Poe Htein



San Yati Moe Myint for NOW! magazine.

Photo: Lwin Ko Teik (LKT photography)

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Hot contest expected in late 2014 vote

Election commission boss U Tin Aye tells parliament by-elections are likely to be held in November or December

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PROMINENT political parties including the Union Solidarity and Development Party and the National League for Democracy have announced plans to contest all open seats in by-elections planned for later this year, which observers said would give some indication of potential results in next year's nationwide vote.

A second round of by-elections for up to 30 constituencies will be held at the end of 2014, the head of the Union Election Commission revealed in parliament last week.

"I will announce the date of the by-elections at least three months in advance," commission chair U Tin Aye told Pyithu Hluttaw MPs on March 20. "So I want to say that all MPs should always be trying to attract voters."

30

Vacant seats that are likely to be filled through by-elections in late 2014

He was speaking in response to a question from U Phyo Min Thein, the representative for Hlegu from the National League for Democracy.

U Tin Aye later told reporters that the by-elections would have been held earlier but had been delayed because of "other important tasks", such as the Southeast Asian Games in December 2013 and this month's census.

"After the census it will be the rainy season and during that time it will be impossible to hold the by-elections. That's why we plan to do it at the end of 2014, maybe in November or December."

The by-elections will fill slots vacated by MPs who have been elevated to the government or other positions that require them to resign from the hluttaw, as well as a handful who have passed away while in office.

Currently 30 constituencies lie vacant, including 11 in regional legislatures, 13 in the Pyithu Hluttaw, or lower house, and six in the Amyotha Hluttaw, or upper house.

USDP vice chair U Htay Oo said the party planned to contest as many seats as possible. However, he downplayed the significance of the results, pointing out the vote was only to fill vacant seats and not to form a government.

"I believe we [can win] but ... the most important election is 2015, not the by-elections."

In the April 2012 by-elections, the NLD won 43 of 45 constituencies and received around two-thirds of the popular vote. The USDP won only one seat: that in which the NLD candidate had been expelled for failing to meet eligibility criteria.

The NLD will once again contest all constituencies, said U Win Htein, who was elected to represent Meiktila in April 2012. "It's sure we will compete for all seats. We are not ready for the election because we have just got the information but we will make sure we are prepared when the time comes," he said.

Other parties were more cautious about declaring their plans. "We are still thinking what kind of results we could expect if we contested. We will hold a meeting to decide at the end of this month," said U Sai Nyunt Lwin, general secretary of the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD).

U Thein Nyunt, chair of the New National Democratic Party, said his group would contest only one seat, that of South Dagon.

He said the 2014 by-elections would be a "pre-test" of the people's political views for the 2015 general election. "It will be really interesting to see who they cast votes for. It depends on their political awareness," he said.

Other potential candidates have already decided not to run. Manam Tu Ja of the Kachin State Democracy Party, who registered for the 2012 by-elections before voting was cancelled in Kachin State, said he would not take part. "For now our party wants to focus on public services activities so we can't give much time for the by-elections," he said.

President's Office told military to charge 'Unity' reporters, court hears

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THE defence team for five *Unity* journal staff members on trial in Magwe Region has accused the military of misusing existing laws to intimidate journalists. The comments came after the military plaintiff in the case revealed that charges had been filed at the request of the President's Office.

The five defendants appeared in Pakkoku District Court for a fourth and fifth time on March 17 and 18. During the session, Lieutenant Colonel Kyaw Kyaw Oo, the head of the administration department at No 24 Defence Equipment Factory, said he had been asked to press charges against the four *Unity* journalists and the paper's chief executive officer by President's Office director general U Hla Tun, according to those present at the session.

He made the comments as state-run media claimed a new Media Law recently signed into law by the president would "guarantee the protection of journalists from arbitrary arrests" and give them the right "to conduct investigative journalism".

However, a spokesperson for the President's Office said it was "impossible" that the office had recommended the charges because the case only concerned the military and the Ministry of Home Affairs.

The charges relate to articles *Unity* published in late January alleging that a defence factory in Pauk township was producing chemical weapons. The five staff were subsequently charged with trespassing and divulging state secrets under the 1923 Burma State Secrets Act.

However, the military and the government continue to maintain that there was no chemical weapons factory. During last week's court hearings, U Robert Sann Aung, a lawyer for the defence, pointed out the apparent contradiction in the military's position: asking the court to punish journalists for exposing a chemical weapons factory that it insists never existed in the first place.

U Robert Sann Aung told *The Myanmar Times* that he repeatedly pushed the judge and prosecutors on this point, and even filed appeals to higher courts. The case has continued while these objections are being examined.

U Robert Sann Aung said he believes his clients will eventually be



A *Unity* cover after five of its staff were arrested. Photo: Aung Htay Hlaing

released but warned that the military is likely to continue drawing out the process for as long as possible in order to punish the reporters and send a warning to other journalists.

U Robert Sann Aung said last week he was also surprised by how little the plaintiffs, including Lt Col Kyaw Kyaw Oo, knew about the constitution and other existing laws.

At one point during last week's hearing, he asked Lt Col Kyaw Kyaw Oo whether the factory grounds were officially designated as a restricted area by the government, which would determine the validity of the trespassing charge.

The officer said he did not know, which was confirmed by others who attended the hearing.

Additionally, U Robert Sann Aung said he asked whether Lt Col

‘The only comment that should be coming from the President's Office is, “Make it a fair trial.”’

U Thiha Saw
Press Council member

Kyaw Kyaw Oo was aware of the freedom of expression rights mentioned in the constitution. To this the officer responded the he "doesn't know" about the 2008 constitution.

Lt Col Kyaw Kyaw Oo could not be reached for comment.

Family members of the arrested journalists told *The Myanmar Times* that they are worried for the health of their relatives given the poor conditions in which they are being detained in Pakkoku prison. U Lu Maw Naing is suffering from hepatitis and a gastric complaint.

The case has dismayed many in the journalism industry, as well as international media freedom groups.

U Thiha Saw from the press council said that if the President's Office had indeed recommended the charges then it had set a dangerous precedent.

"The only comment that should be coming from the president's office is, 'Make it a fair trial,'" he said.

John Ralston Saul, president of PEN International, said he raised the case in meetings with Deputy Minister for Information U Ye Htut last week.

"We said we thought it was inappropriate ... [The state secrets act] is clearly [a law] that needs to be dealt with fast and needs to go away," he said.

The next hearings are scheduled for March 31 and April 1. - *Additional reporting by Nandar Aung*

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Miliband puts focus back on refugees

FIONA MACGREGOR

newsroom@mmmtimes.com

DAVID Miliband, the former UK foreign secretary and president of the International Rescue Committee, has urged international donors and investors to ensure refugees living in Thailand are not forgotten amid an increase in engagement with the Myanmar government.

Mr Miliband was speaking at the Foreign Correspondents Club in Bangkok on March 19 after a two-day visit to camps on the border. He said it was important that Myanmar people displaced in Thailand, some of whom left the country more than 30 years ago, are not overlooked. He added the choices refugees make about whether they return to Myanmar would "shape the country".

"Amid all the change in Myanmar, Burma ... this woman [in the camp] said to me, 'Don't forget about us.' And that is a really important message to take away. It would be a double tragedy if the people displaced from Myanmar, Burma, who are now here, are forgotten," he said.

His comments come at a time when funding is being cut to aid organisations working with Myanmar refugees in Thailand, which they say has affected their ability to provide services.

Mike Bruce, a spokesperson for The Border Consortium (TBC), said that in 2013 the consortium had to transition to a "needs-based rations distribution system, driven largely by cuts to funding".

"These cuts necessitated the restructuring of refugees' rations whereby the standard monthly rice ration was cut," he said.

"While TBC was able to ensure that children and the most vulnerable

households do not have their rations reduced, most households are having to cope with a reduction in their rations."

There are currently about 120,000 refugees living on the border.

While observers have reported a "slow trickle" of refugees returning to Myanmar following recent political reforms, people are still arriving in the camps and Mr Miliband said the majority of refugees do not feel it is the right time to return.

He said "each and every one" of the people he met in the camps had expressed "uncertainty" about the future of the country and "to what extent minority rights would be protected".

"Quite a number of refugees have been back to see how things are but the access to [basic services such as safe drinking water] are very, very challenging in that part of Myanmar," Mr Miliband added.

Mr Miliband said he believed that humanitarian efforts were as important as political reform and new investment if Myanmar is to progress successfully. He said, "The advocacy I would make is that we need joint programming on both sides of the border."

While Mr Miliband declined to comment on what the Myanmar government could do in terms of policies to improve the situation for returning refugees, Mr Bruce said there are many areas that need to be addressed.

"[T]here needs to be real progress on security and justice issues in the South East, issues regarding land ownership and seizures needs to be addressed, infrastructure need to be dramatically improved, and land mines need to be cleared," he said.

"There needs to be a durable, lasting peace process, and troop movements throughout the region needs to be reconciled. Ultimately, it is important to note that any framework for return emphasises that return is voluntary, and in conditions that ensure dignity and security."

Mr Miliband said the focus should be on making choices as "open and effective" as they could be for displaced people when it comes to the possibility of voluntary return.



The FMI Centre and the former Burma Railways building both occupy the site of the proposed Landmark project. Photo: Kaung Htet

Govt meets to discuss Landmark approvals

TIM MCLAUGHLIN

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OFFICIALS from the Ministry of Railways and the Myanmar Investment Commission were expected to meet in Nay Pyi Taw over the weekend to discuss a crucial lease extension that would allow work to begin on the Landmark development project in Yangon.

The March 22 meeting was confirmed by an official from the Ministry of Railways.

Work on the US\$400 million mixed-use project in downtown Yangon backed by business tycoon Serge Pun has been unable to get under way due to an inability to secure a lease extension from the Ministry of Railways. Once the lease extension is agreed upon, the project application will be submitted to the MIC for final approval.

Amendments to bring the original lease into conformity with the Foreign Investment Law that was approved in late 2012 have also been submitted to the Attorney General's Office.

Mr Pun, the chair of public company First Myanmar Investment (FMI), Serge Pun & Associates (Myanmar), and Singapore-listed Yoma Strategic Holdings, told *The Myanmar Times* in December that

he has applied to the ministry to extend the original 1995 lease for the maximum 70 years - 50 years, with two 10-year extensions - allowable under current investment laws.

But securing the extension has proved difficult, with the minister for railways being replaced twice in as many years. In late July U Zeyar Aung was replaced by U Than Htay, while a long-serving deputy minister, Thura U Thauung Lwin, was moved to another position.

When contacted by email this week Mr Pun declined to comment on the progress of the project.

The developers submitted the lease extension for Landmark almost immediately after the enactment of the rules for the Foreign Investment Law in late January 2013, Mr Pun said. Because of the delays in securing approval, Yoma announced in December 2013 that the project's "long-stop deadline" - the deadline for SPA to acquire the new lease, as part of the sale and purchase agreement - had been pushed back a second time, to June 30, 2014.

At the FMI annual general meeting on November 22, Mr Pun said that he remained confident that the project would gain approval by the end of year.

IN BRIEF

Elders to make second visit to Myanmar this week

Two members of the Elders will travel to Nay Pyi Taw and Myitkyina in Kachin State during a three-day visit to Myanmar this week. They will then visit the Thai-Myanmar border area to "study the long-term impact" of Myanmar's civil wars.

Former Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland and former President of Finland and Nobel peace laureate Martti Ahtisaari will arrive in Myanmar on March 24. The trip follows a September 2013 visit by the pair along with former US President Jimmy Carter.

The group said in a statement that the purpose of this visit is to meet with a wider cross-section of Myanmar society, including grassroots and ethnic minority organisations that the Elders were unable to meet on their first visit, "at a critical time for Myanmar's political and economic opening-up".

In Nay Pyi Taw the Elders will hold meetings with government officials and parliamentarians, while in Myitkyina they will meet locals to learn more about the conflict.

The Elders is an independent organisation of prominent figures that was established by Nelson Mandela in 2007. - Thomas Kean

ASEAN youth gather for forum

The youth of ASEAN came together in Yangon last week to speak up for themselves. In his opening message to the 2014 ASEAN Youth Forum (AYF), President U Thein Sein praised young people for their crucial role in shaping the region's future.

The president also said in his message that the government would soon open a youth centre in Yangon "for young people to discuss and debate among themselves the crucial issues facing our country."

Last week's AYF, which was founded in 2009, was held in Yangon University's Diamond Jubilee Hall.

National Youth Congress member Ko Moe Thwe told participants his organisation was proud to host the meeting at a time when Myanmar was chairing ASEAN and reforms were putting an end to "the conflict between the government and people in Myanmar".

In a five-point declaration approved by the 135 participants, from all ASEAN member countries, on March 19, AYF stressed the need for tolerance and human rights in a wide range of fields, and better educational opportunities.

- Aung Kyaw Min

120,000

Estimated number of Myanmar refugees in camps on the Thai border

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A town stained in blood takes tentative steps toward peace

While they remain wary of further violence, Meiktila residents are slowly regaining a semblance of normality



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ONE year ago, as the fires raged and charred bodies lay on the ground, I visited Meiktila.

I went back last week. The scene was totally different from the devastation of last year. There were people coming and going on the main road at the entrance to town. Buildings had been repaired to remove the scars of the conflict of March 2013, which left at least 44 people dead.

One year ago, there was a vast, empty expanse behind those renovated buildings. That was where the Muslims lived, until their homes were torched.

These vacant areas have also changed. No longer are they strewn with ash and the remains of homes. Today, homes and apartment buildings are being constructed. Some of the thousands who remain in camps for the displaced could move into new homes within months, according to officials, although lack of funding is an issue.

Those in the camps, however, say they are unsure of the government's resettlement plans.

"Living in a camp is not convenient for us but we have no choice for now,"

'We live here in the hope we will be able to go back to our home but we've already been here for one year.'

U Khin Maung Shwe

Muslim IDP camp committee member

said U Khin Maung Shwe, a committee member of the District Stadium camp, as he escorted me around. "We live here in the hope we will be able to go back to our home but we've already been here for one year. I want to live and die in the place I was born."

District Stadium is one of the three Muslim camps, which are collectively home to more than 3300 people. Another 850 live in two Buddhist camps.

At first there were more than 10,000 refugees but the number declined shortly after the violence, district administrator U Tin Maung Soe said.

"One month after the conflict, most of the refugees were able to return home because their houses were still in good condition," he said.

For those who still cannot return home, the World Food Programme provides rice, cooking oil, salt and tinned beans each month. Locals also donate additional food and other items to the camps, which have medical clinics, pre-schools and religious schools. The Muslim camps also have prayer rooms.

Security in Muslim camps is also much stricter than in Buddhist camps.

"We take records of their coming and going," said Police Captain U Aung San Oo, a duty officer at District Stadium.

Reconstruction of detached houses and apartment blocks in Chan Aye Thar Yar ward is being completed with funds from donors. So far the regional government is yet to allocate any funding.

"There are more than 400 households who have legal ownership according to official records. We built detached houses at a cost of K7.5 million on 1200-square-foot blocks of land. We are constructing 273 homes and we also plan to build 25 apartment blocks for refugees who can't show any ownership documents. We are now building two apartment blocks," U Tin Maung Soe said.

"We will start the moving of the refugees to detached houses when they are completed in April and May," he said.

Refugees from Meiktila's Thiri Mingalar ward are allowed to repair their



Displaced Meiktila residents sit in a makeshift home in a relief camp on March 14. Photo: Si Thu Lwin

homes if they can show ownership documents, he said.

U Khin Than, a member of the committee supervising housing construction in Chan Aye Thar Yar ward, said there was still a significant shortage of funding.

"Before there were 1500 workers a day but since March 12 we have only been able to hire 500 workers a day because we are running short on donations. We need much more financial assistance. Anyone can donate construction materials, including bricks, sand or pebbles for the buildings," he said.

While the physical scars of the conflict are quietly disappearing, the mental scars remain. Both Buddhist and Muslim refugees said their greatest desire is to return to where they lived prior to the conflict and resume their businesses.

"Buddhist and Muslim, we stayed together here since we were young. We never thought this kind of conflict would happen between us. A

bad situation erupted here but it is difficult to say who made it happen. There is no resentment between us now," said U Myo Naung, a refugee living in a camp at the Water Resources Department.

While a minority may harbour resentment, the majority want to live in peace, said U Maung Maung Lwin, a Buddhist from Thiri Mingalar ward.

"Both sides seek to coexist in a peaceful and friendly manner. There may still be some lack of trust in their mind ... It is impossible to trust each other 100 percent," he said.

The Muslim community was hit hardest by the violence. Official records show that almost 2000 have left the town completely, and only six of the 13 mosques in Meiktila remain open.

In some monasteries, meanwhile, schools have been opened to preach religious tolerance and counter any extremist sentiments. "It is a positive sign that religious training schools are

teaching children like this," said Daw Myint Myint Aye, a political activist from Meiktila.

As the first anniversary approached, however, there was some trepidation, particularly among Muslims.

Residents were concerned at Buddhist plans to offer food to monks and recite sutras in memory of the monk who was killed on March 20, at the beginning of the conflict.

"Rumours circulated around the town that Buddhists will make [the violence] an annual event. People are concerned that conflict will erupt again. I told the women not to worry and this would just be a religious event," said Muslim resident U Mote Sate.

Meiktila now looks virtually as it did before. The tensions have largely subsided and the economy is recovering but true peace remains elusive, as two communities seek to rebuild a kinship that was violently torn apart one year ago.

- Translation by Thiri Min Htun

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MARCH 21, 2013. A bay-
ing mob, enraged by
the killing of a Bud-
dhist monk, surrounds
the handful of scared
Muslim students near the madrasa
in downtown Meiktila. The township
police chief and administrator look
on as the line of police tries to main-
tain order. Here and there, individuals
threaten to break through their line
and overwhelm the small group. The
town's local parliamentarian, U Win
Htein from the National League for
Democracy, pleads with sections of the
crowd to disperse.

"Some of them knew me person-
ally; two or three groups obeyed me
and went away," he recalled recently,
sitting in his dimly lit room in the Nay
Pyi Taw Council guesthouse where he
lodges while parliament is in session.

"But [the leader of] the third one
didn't listen. He shouted at me, 'Why
are you a Muslim lover?' One police
officer dragged me away by the el-
bow and said, 'Please stay away, you
will be threatened or harmed.'"

The leaders then pulled out half
a dozen of the young students –
barely teenagers – and killed them
with knives and clubs in front of U
Win Htein's eyes. Realising he could
not stop the orgy of violence, he left
and sought out Mandalay Region
Chief Minister U Ye Myint, who
had recently arrived in the town. U
Win Htein's disbelief at the killings
is mirrored only by his inability to
comprehend the inaction of the gov-
ernment officials present, who stood
by as the violence took place.

"I told him that people were
killed in front of my eyes and the
police were there and they didn't
do anything. I told him I saw no ac-
tion since last night. They were just
standing by. The chief minister said,
'Everything is taken care of, every-
thing will be alright.'"

By the time U Win Htein returned
to the madrasa, the bodies of almost
30 people, all Muslims, lay heaped
on the ground.

In the days after the violence,
when a tense calm descended over
the town, the party organised dona-
tions for the displaced and attempt-
ed to broker some sort of peace be-
tween the Buddhist and Muslim
communities.

Months later, U Win Htein was
given permission by Pyithu Hlut-
taw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann
to report what he witnessed to par-
liament. He explained that the vio-
lence was sparked by the killing of
the monk, that this prompted gangs
of Buddhist youths to ride through
the town on motorbikes calling on
others to attack its Muslim commu-
nity, and that officials had failed to
respond decisively.

From the normally vocal parlia-
mentarians there was no discussion,
no lively debate over ways to mitigate

**'[The speakers] have
certainly sometimes
been too hesitant.
But the alternative
to their quiet caution
could have sparked
further outbreaks of
violence.'**

Nicholas Farrelly
Research fellow
Australian National University

future violence or bring the perpetra-
tors to justice, to relieve the suffering
of the displaced or strengthen the po-
lice force. There was no outrage, no
sympathy, no protest. There was only
silence.

The vow of silence

The current religious conflict erupt-
ed in June 2012 in Rakhine State
but has spread to central Myan-
mar, dominated by ethnic Bamar,
and even Shan State. This violence,
which has claimed hundreds of lives
and displaced almost 200,000, has
dominated local and international
media, and cast a pall over issues as
disparate as economic development,

"[MPs] don't find ways to solve these
problems. If they wanted to they
should discuss it or organise some
seminars, but they are afraid of [the
political consequences]."

When compared to Myanmar's
other major conflict – the war in
Kachin State – the contrast is stark.
While a motion was passed in Janu-
ary 2013 calling for a ceasefire in
Kachin, there has not been a united
call by MPs for an end to religious-
or race-based conflict. The closest they
have come to date is a November 7,
2012, statement calling for increased
security in Rakhine State and legal
action against instigators of violence
the previous month. With the excep-

tion of the clergy when he criticised a rally
at Nay Pyi Taw's Uppatasanti Pagoda
held to express support for a draft law
restricting interfaith marriage. U Min
Thu, the Pyithu Hluttaw representa-
tive for Ottarathiri, was later forced
to "beg forgiveness" from monks in-
volved in the event after he alleged
they were tricked into taking part
by groups seeking to undermine the
NLD.

While this might be construed as
something sympathetic to the Muslims,
Burmese – particularly the monks –
will take offence," said U Win Htein.
Recently, an NLD representative
found himself on the wrong side of
the clergy when he criticised a rally
at Nay Pyi Taw's Uppatasanti Pagoda
held to express support for a draft law
restricting interfaith marriage. U Min
Thu, the Pyithu Hluttaw representa-
tive for Ottarathiri, was later forced
to "beg forgiveness" from monks in-
volved in the event after he alleged
they were tricked into taking part
by groups seeking to undermine the
NLD.

hluttaw are aware of the careful bal-
ance required. They have certainly
sometimes been too hesitant. But
the alternative to their quiet caution
could have sparked further outbreaks
of violence."

Muslim and Rakhine voices stifled

The exceptions to this vow of silence
have been the Rakhine Nationalities
Development Party (RNDDP) and the
Muslim MPs representing the Union
Solidarity and Development Party
(USDP) in Rakhine State. But the
presence of the Muslim MPs, particu-
larly U Shwe Maung and U Aung Zaw
Win in the lower house, is also a ma-
jor point of contention. One MP said

The silence in

Myanmar's communal violence has been largely absent from the parliamentary agenda, with MPs struggling to



media freedom, the 2014 census and
next year's election. But in spite of its
broad impact on the political land-
scape, the issue has only rarely found
its way onto the hluttaw agenda. For
the most part MPs have played a pas-
sive role, discussing the conflict only
when necessary, such as to approve
state-of-emergency orders imposed
by the government.

The parliament is undoubtedly an
unwieldy body to discuss an event as
fast-changing and seemingly sponta-
neous as religious violence. Yet this
does not completely explain the ab-
sence of action. Rather, debate over
the conflict has been held hostage to
politics and the perceived extremism
of voters, particularly Buddhists, who
MPs fear could turn on them if they
come across as too sympathetic to
Muslims.

"There are still no deep discus-
sions [about the conflict] in the
hluttaw," said U Ye Tun, the Pyithu
Hluttaw representative for Hsipaw.

tion of President U Thein Sein, who
has focused on the conflict in his
monthly radio addresses, the elected
political leaders, and most ordinary
MPs, have avoided discussing the
conflict where possible, both inside
and outside the hluttaw.

The lack of leadership on the is-
sue has been particularly striking,
although in some ways it is also de-
ceptive. While Daw Aung San Suu Kyi
has come in for significant criticism
internationally for her failure to de-
fend the country's Muslim minorities,
she is far from alone. Union Solidar-
ity and Development Party (USDP)
leaders such as Thura U Shwe Mann
are equally reluctant to wade into a
conflict for which they see few easy
answers – and none that can be pur-
sued without potentially alienating
voters.

"The [USDP] dare not touch the
subject because it is a very delicate
subject. If they do something for the
Buddhists, then Muslim community

weakness and pandering to extrem-
ist elements, there has also so far
been a surprising reluctance to take
a populist, anti-Muslim position. This
is particularly so for the USDP, which
arguably has the most to gain from
the issue.

Nicholas Farrelly, a research fellow
at Australian National University in
Canberra who has spent a significant
period of time in the parliament, said
the speakers, wary of the "very sig-
nificant institutional downside" that
could come from allowing extremist
rhetoric into the parliament, have
acted as a braking force on debate.

"Myanmar's new legislatures are
working hard to be taken seriously,"
he said. "Of course, they could always
do more [on religious conflict], and
by the standards of many other par-
liaments they have done poorly. Yet
we should not forget that these insti-
tutions remain fragile in important
ways."

"Leaders of Myanmar's various

he had initially tried to engage with
them in the early sessions but felt
they had shown disrespect through,
for example, poor attendance and
breaking parliamentary rules.

"I am not anti-Muslim. The first
time we met we had a good relation-
ship. But gradually ... the relation-
ship is not convenient," said U Kh-
ine Maung Yi, the Pyithu Hluttaw
representative for Ahlone township.
"Those two MPs, they cannot work in
a friendly way with other MPs. This
is difficult."

Most recently, U Shwe Maung at-
tracted controversy for being quoted
in international media as suggesting
police may have been responsible for
a fire that destroyed Muslim homes
in northern Rakhine State. He was
subsequently questioned by police,
with the permission of Thura U
Shwe Mann, and could potentially be
charged with defamation.

At the same time, there is also a
widespread belief that the Rakhine

‘In our Rakhine nation, some of the people are very radical ... They don’t let you give any chance to the other side.’

U Tun Aung Kyaw
MP for Ponnagyun, Rakhine Nationalities Development Party

from the 1982 citizenship law to internal and border security in Rakhine State, and the issuing of temporary identification cards. In most cases, however, government ministries have responded in a private letter rather than fronting the parliament to answer the question, removing both the public nature of the response and the possibility for follow-up debate.

One positive, and surprising, development has been the regular discussions that take place between some RNDP members and the Muslim MPs, who controversially declare themselves to be Rohingya, in violation of the government’s diktat that no such group exists. While their views are

ing the conflict. At the same time, party leaders have attempted to keep the debate over conflict out of parliament. While this has ensured that it has not been used as a forum for extremist rhetoric or hate speech, avoidance means the underlying issues simmer unresolved.

Soon, however, all MPs will be forced to make tough decisions. A number of pieces of legislation drafted in response to the violence will be tabled later this year and in 2015, including amendments to election laws and the so-called protection of religion legislation. They are likely to come under strong pressure from constituents and people of influence,

enough to prompt a petition to remove him as a Pyithu Hluttaw representative, while his efforts to stop the killings earned him the nickname “Hajji”. U Tun Aung Kyaw similarly found himself on the wrong side of radical constituents in 2012, when he asked a gang of Rakhine not to attack a nearby Muslim community. “They got angry at me and put the dagger against my neck. They said, ‘You are one of our Rakhine leaders. You must lead us in this fight, in this conflict. You should be in the lead.’”

For on-the-ground efforts to stamp out violence to be successful, speed appears to be of the essence. In some cases, MPs have been able to intervene successfully to head off possible unrest. Shortly after violence in nearby Lashio in May 2013, a group of Muslims was arrested in Hsipaw for stealing two motorbikes. U Ye Tun received complaints from the Buddhist and Muslim communities, who both suspected the crime had been confected to deliberately instigate violence. In an effort to placate both sides, he arranged, with the permission of the police, for leaders from both communities to “interview” the four people arrested for the theft. Both groups left convinced that the theft was the act of ordinary criminals, rather than people attempting to incite conflict.

But in Rakhine State, where the communities are more polarised, options for dialogue appear more limited. For those attempting to quietly engage their counterparts on the other side of the conflict, the pressure can be intense.

“It is very difficult because ... in our Rakhine nation, some of the people are very radical,” U Tun Aung Kyaw said. “They don’t want to accept any discussions between the two communities. They don’t let you give any chance to the other side.”

U Win Htein has encountered similar difficulties trying to bring the Muslim and Buddhist communities together in Meiktila, where one year after the violence thousands are still displaced. Shortly after the killings he approached Muslim, Christian and Buddhist leaders, asking them to visit the relief camps and give sermons to calm tensions in a show of inter-faith solidarity.

“At that time it was quite shortly after the violence, so nobody was convinced,” he said. “But until now I haven’t been successful to reconcile the two sections of the community ... The element of hate still remains.”

As a result, many Muslims have drifted away from the town, living with relatives or starting afresh in Yangon, Mandalay and Taunggyi. The scars, even for someone like U Win Htein, who spent almost two decades in some of the country’s most abominable prisons, remain fresh and tender as he recounts the events of March 2013.

“These Muslims have been living in Meiktila for 60, 70 years and some of them are my closest friends,” he said, his voice faltering. “And then they were threatened and killed – killed in front of my eyes.”

‘The [USDP] dare not touch the subject ... If they say something sympathetic to the Muslims, Burmese – particularly the monks – will take offence.’

U Win Htein
MP for Meiktila, National League for Democracy

the house

respond to both the extremism of their constituents and the complexities of the conflict



Photo: AFP

MPs are too “extreme” in their views. In this context, few MPs want to raise conflict-related issues for fear of giving either side the opportunity to attack the other. “To some degree, [RNDP members] have strong, extreme views, some views that are not fair to Muslim people. So hluttaw leaders and some influential USDP members do not want to speak out,” U Ye Tun said.

This was evident most recently when Thura U Shwe Mann sent four controversial laws that were drafted by a monk-led committee – focused on interfaith marriage, polygamy, population growth and religious conversion – back to the government for rewriting rather than discuss them at length in parliament. To some extent, the government has also sought to thwart the efforts of RNDP representatives to raise issues related to communal violence. The party has submitted numerous questions to the government on issues ranging

clearly quite far apart, they both seem to recognise the need for dialogue, and can regularly be seen together in the parliamentary canteen.

“We always discuss clearly the conflict in the Rakhine State,” said U Tun Aung Kyaw, the RNDP Pyithu Hluttaw representative for Ponnagyun. “But the answer will take some time, it cannot be reached in a rush. There are very deep feelings in our hearts on both sides. Maybe, step by step, steadily, we must try to [solve it through] peaceful means.”

Toward 2015: Where are the leaders?

Despite their apparent attempts to overlook the issue, both the USDP and NLD have been criticised for their involvement in conflict-related issues outside parliament. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has been accused inside Myanmar of bias toward Muslims, while rumours abound that some senior USDP officials are secretly stoking

such as Buddhist monks, to put in place laws that discriminate against Muslims. Strong leadership on all sides will be required to ensure these bills do not become a flashpoint for further conflict in the lead-up to the 2015 election, when the temptation could arise to use the violence of the past two years for political gain.

“The entire country will benefit from the leadership of those MPs who can step outside the narrow sectarian interests of their home constituents. Offering a voice of reconciliation, in opposition to those calling for further violence and discrimination, will always come with risks,” Mr Farrelly said.

“The question will be: Who in Myanmar’s new politics can take up that challenge? Bold and courageous candidates will be required.”

But MPs have good reason to fear their constituents. For U Win Htein, the price of action – in his case, a comment in August 2013 that he was “ashamed” to be from Meiktila – was

OPINION

We must condemn messages of racism

BAN KI-MOON
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ON March 21 this year, the world commemorates the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination for the first time following the death of former South African President Nelson Mandela.

This sad reality is also a reminder of his courageous struggle against apartheid and his inspiring victory over the racist forces that had imprisoned him for 27 years.

The United Nations General Assembly, in a show of solidarity with the anti-apartheid movement, established this Day to commemorate the 1960 Sharpeville Massacre, when 69 people were killed and many others injured as police opened fire on a peaceful protest against South Africa’s appalling pass laws.

Nelson Mandela’s journey from prisoner to president was the triumph of an extraordinary individual against the forces of hate, ignorance and fear – and it was a testimony to the power of courage, reconciliation and forgiveness to overcome the injustice of racial discrimination.

He chose Sharpeville for the historic signing of South Africa’s new constitution in 1996. On that occasion, President Mandela said, “Out of the many Sharpevilles which haunt our history was born the unshakeable determination that respect for human life, liberty and well-being must be enshrined as rights beyond the power of any force to diminish.”

Today, we remember Sharpeville as a symbol of the terrible toll of racial discrimination and we honour those who lost their lives during the massacre. At the same time, we recall that President Mandela framed Sharpeville’s legacy as an unwavering resolve to protect the dignity and rights of all people.

The lessons of South Africa’s staunch defence of equality “out of the many Sharpevilles” in the country’s history can be applied anywhere in the world, not only in response to organised, institutional forms of racism but wherever this pernicious problem occurs, including in daily interpersonal relations.

I call on all people, especially political, civic and religious leaders, to strongly condemn messages and ideas based on racism, racial superiority or hatred as well as those that incite racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. On this Day, let us acknowledge that racial discrimination remains a dangerous threat and resolve to tackle it through dialogue inspired by the proven ability of individuals to respect, protect and defend our rich diversity as one human family.

Ban Ki-moon is secretary general of the United Nations.

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Views

Why donors should insist the census be postponed

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THE upcoming national census, scheduled to start on March 30, is proving to be one of the most divisive issues on Myanmar's agenda. Representatives of the country's many ethnic nationalities, as well as smaller ethnic sub-groups, are raising vociferous objections. Many feel that it violates their right to identity. Such objections generally work in two opposing directions, which only serves to highlight the complexity and dangers of such an exercise.

On the one hand, smaller ethnic sub-groups feel excluded, threatened or incorrectly classified if they cannot identify as their own ethnic sub-group. Indeed, the Palaung State Liberation Front recently issued a statement rejecting the census's categorisation of the Palaung people as one of 33 Shan sub-groups. On the other hand, larger ethnic groups feel that their own wider national identity and cause is undermined if ethnic sub-groups do not identify with them.

Furthermore, the census represents a grave risk to rights and security in the context of recent anti-Muslim and anti-Rohingya violence in Rakhine State and across Myanmar. Although Rohingya Muslims cannot explicitly state that they are "Rohingya", they can indicate their ethnicity through code 914. There are, however, concerns that enumerators, or data collectors, may simply write "Bengali" instead of "Rohingya" in an effort to deny their identity so they can continue to be portrayed as illegal immigrants. Fears have also been voiced that Muslims of other ethnicities might be told to identify themselves as "Muslim", which is of course a religious rather than ethnic affiliation.



President U Thein Sein speaks at the launch of the 2014 census in Nay Pyi Taw on March 1. Photo: Pyae Thet Phyo

Muslims were apparently underreported at 4 percent of the population in the 1983 census due to political sensitivities. There is a significant risk this time around that if the census is accurately conducted and Muslims are required to state their religion over their ethnicity then the results will show large growth in the Muslim population, which could provoke further violence.

Moreover, there are real fears about the logistics of collecting the data, both in terms of authorities using the correct forms and accessing remote, rebel-held areas or active conflict zones. This would have implications for the accuracy of data recorded on the Kachin, the Palaung of northern Shan State and the Wa, in particular. It is likely that some groups, especially in rebel-controlled parts of Kachin State, will be unable to take part in the census at all.

Finally, the consultation process

with ethnic groups has been flawed from the outset. Some groups have welcomed the fact that the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) is assisting the government. Yet this trust is misplaced: There has been little transparency, and indeed the UNFPA has been guilty of misrepresenting the views of ethnic groups in an effort to legitimise the census and its own financial and moral backing for the process.

Following a meeting on February 26 with various ethnic representatives in Nay Pyi Taw, the UNFPA disingenuously claimed that ethnic representatives have "call[ed] off postponement of [the] census". However, it would appear that ethnic groups were hoodwinked by assurances from both the government and the UNFPA that concerns over the categorisation of ethnicity would be dealt with after the census, that "census preparations

were adhering to international standards" and that the census was essential for ongoing reforms. The lack of transparency, realism and fair representation is a damning indictment of the vital role of the UNFPA – and other donors – in the census, and only serves to further undermine the credibility of these parties.

Yet this divisive and dangerous census can only go ahead with the support of the UNFPA and other donors. These donors should listen to the views of all ethnic groups and stop manipulating the discussion to suit their purposes. It is clear that this census represents a Pandora's box of potential ethnic tensions and conflict. At a time when the government claims to be striving to secure a sustainable peace deal with the armed ethnic groups and cementing political reforms before the 2015 general election, the timing and nature of the census is strange to say the least. It risks jeopardising national reconciliation, undermining the peace process and exacerbating religious violence.

This census should be postponed, and only revisited once a comprehensive political settlement has been reached with all ethnic armed groups, political reforms have been properly institutionalised after the 2015 national elections and religious violence has been tackled head-on and defused. The government and the international community cannot afford to get this wrong, especially not now at this highly volatile stage in the country's reform process.

.....
Robert Finch and Alex Moodie are political and human rights analysts for Burma Partnership, a network of organisations from across the Asia-Pacific region advocating for human rights and democracy in Myanmar.

In our region, the two women to watch

**ROGER MITTON**

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AMONG the most fruitful aspects of travelling round the region is the way one hears about things that have not yet made headlines beyond their own borders.

Usually, it is because they have been subsumed by the media's coverage of high-profile events, like the disappearance of the Malaysian Airlines jet or Russia's annexation of Crimea.

Later, they tend to burst onto the front pages in a kind of compensatory overkill, as the 1970s Watergate burglary in Washington did or as the visceral anti-Muslim sentiment of Myanmar's Buddhists has done recently.

One regional example is the explosion of coverage of the formerly little-known Joko Widodo in Indonesia. Of course, loyal readers of this column have known since mid-2012 that

Jokowi was a man to watch.

And so he has proved, first by becoming governor of Jakarta, then by his recent declaration that he will run for the presidency of Indonesia later this year. He will almost certainly win.

Today, I'll give you the names of two comparable individuals, both women, both as unknown now as Jokowi was two years ago, and both, like him, destined to become potential leaders of their countries in the near future.

The first is Grace Poe, who was abandoned in a church by her birth mother in the central Philippines city of Iloilo, 45 years ago.

Viewing her discovery as due to the grace of God, a local priest called her Grace, and after being passed from home to home, she was adopted by the film star and later presidential candidate Fernando Poe.

After an education in the Philippines and the United States, Grace worked in the US before returning to campaign for Fernando's doomed 2004 presidential bid.

When he died soon after, she stayed home and became involved in public service. Then, last year, she took the plunge to enter politics and run for the Senate as an independent.

Initially dismissed as an outsider, if not a no-hoper, she astounded everyone by winning the most votes

of any single senatorial candidate.

Now she is being touted as a future presidential prospect for 2016. If she does run, then, like Jokowi, she will probably win.

Meanwhile, in Vietnam, another woman who is similarly little known could well emulate Jokowi and Poe and become the leader of her nation in a couple of years' time.

Already, Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan, 59, is the most powerful female politician in Hanoi, since she is a member of the all-powerful Politburo, which exerts final control over everything in that Communist country.

After obtaining degrees in politics and economics, Kim Ngan served in the finance and trade ministries, before becoming Minister of Labour,

Initially dismissed as an outsider, if not a no-hoper, Grace Poe astounded everyone by winning the most votes of any senatorial candidate.

Invalids and Social Affairs in 2007.

Later, she was elected vice chair of the National Assembly, the body that, among other things, drafts and implements laws and appoints the president and prime minister.

It was in that post that she first came to public attention in a big way when she took a pivotal role in the negotiations to win the release of around 10,000 Vietnamese workers in post-Gaddafi Libya in 2011.

Currently, however, Kim Ngan's power and future potential derives from her elevation last May to the elite 16-member Politburo. She is only the second woman on this august body.

She is also close to the current Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung, who is midway through a second and final term in office, and who is expected to become the next party chief when he steps down as PM.

Likely to take over from him, according to most Hanoi insiders, is Kim Ngan, who will then become Vietnam's first female PM around the time Grace Poe could well become president of the Philippines.

Thus, it is quite possible that, along with Thailand's Yingluck Shinawatra and Myanmar's Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, they could form a formidable quartet of female leaders in this region. Now that would be something.

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Positive signs, but obstacles loom



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THE latest peace talks between the government peace team and ethnic armed groups concluded quite successfully on March 10. The ethnic armed group leaders told the media that the talks were “very positive” because several high-ranking officers participated and the Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing passed on the message that he is eager to have a nationwide ceasefire agreement signed. As a result, there is more belief between both sides. But should they be so optimistic? What are the problems or obstacles to moving the peace process forward?

What they have recently reached is a preliminary agreement to draft a new ceasefire with seven chapters. That’s all. So what’s happened to the Laiza Agreement, the Law Khee Lar Agreement and the government’s draft ceasefire? You have to at least wonder why they decided to start over again.

After signing a ceasefire, the focus should be on resolving problems that people face because of the conflict as soon as possible.

How did we get here? Government officials said in the middle of last year that they believed a national ceasefire agreement would be signed in November. A meeting could then be held to set the framework for political dialogue in February, and political dialogue with all groups could start after the Myanmar New Year. As we’ve seen, their dream didn’t come true.

The ethnic armed groups held a conference in the Kachin State town of Laiza to discuss the nationwide ceasefire agreement and the peace process more generally. They reached a common agreement and met with the government in Myitkyina shortly afterward. But all they could do at that meeting was exchange papers, because each side had its own draft ceasefire agreement.

Later, the National Ceasefire Coordination Team, which the ethnic armed groups formed at the Laiza conference, and the government’s peace team conducted another meeting in Chiang Mai, northern Thailand. The government abandoned its draft and negotiated based on that proposed by the ethnic armed groups. Reports suggested they can agree on about 80 percent of the draft.

Then the ethnic armed groups held a conference in Law Khee Lar in Kayah State. This brought about what appeared to be two different factions. One, led by the Karen National Union, wanted to start political dialogue as soon as possible. But the Kachin Independence Organisation and some groups wanted to add some political elements to the ceasefire agreement. Finally, they agreed to the latter but when they sent their draft proposal to the government there was little response. This was how both sides ended up agreeing to draft a new ceasefire agreement with seven chapters.

However, this will be easier said than done. Firstly, the draft agreement will have to be sent to all of the respective ethnic leaders to seek their agreement. Then they will need to go over the seven chapters, step by step. If even one group does not agree, there will be delays or difficulties moving forward.

In this context we should consider what the obstacles for a ceasefire agreement that leads to political dialogue are likely to be.

The first is the attitude of the Myanmar military. It is clear that it is committed to a nationwide ceasefire and to perpetuate this ceasefire agreement. However, it does not seem to have strong support for the establishment of a democratic federal union, which is one of the major demands of the ethnic groups.

The second is the doubts and desires of the ethnic armed groups. They think that they will lose out if they agree to a ceasefire with no political points. They regularly point to earlier ceasefires, which never led to political agreements. Because of this, some groups want to add political elements to the ceasefire agreement.

The third point is the most important. It is the concern that President U Thein Sein and his government will milk the signing of a ceasefire for gain both inside and outside Myanmar. There are people both inside the government and on the side of ethnic groups who fear being used as a propaganda tool. This is the main difficulty.

It will not be easy to reach political settlement between the government, which includes the military, and the ethnic armed groups. National reconciliation remains far off, and it’s hard to imagine when we will not only realise reconciliation but also establish a democratic union. The first step though is the signing of a ceasefire.

After that, the focus should be on resolving the problems that people face because of the conflict as soon as possible. This means helping refugees from conflict areas return to their homes, ensure they are properly accommodated and then take measures to develop the economy, education and social life in these formerly war-torn areas. If the ruling government and ethnic armed groups can’t do it on their own, they may need to seek international aid.

Personally I think both sides can overcome the obstacles in the current peace process if they focus on the people’s interests, whether they are negotiating a ceasefire, discussing a framework for political dialogue or starting dialogue.

— Translation by Thiri Min Htun

PEACE PROCESS



Lieutenant General Myint Soe speaks to the media at the conclusion of talks in Yangon on March 10. Photo: Thiri Lu

From adversaries to partners in peace



AUNG NAING OO

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PEACE negotiations in Myanmar have come to a critical period.

They are critical because the March 9-10 meeting between the government and the Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT) of ethnic armed groups at Myanmar Peace Center made significant progress. Now we are one step closer to signing a Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA).

Personally, the negotiations have also become very interesting for me in the sense that they have made the transformation from being adversarial to collaborative. The talks in many ways have become the integrative form of “dialogue” I dreamed of many years ago.

This bodes well for the Myanmar peace process. But the road to a possible NCA has been difficult.

By August 2012, the government had signed preliminary armistices with 14 out of 16 ethnic armed groups but the skirmishes continued. It became clear to leaders from all sides that preliminary ceasefires were not enough; they needed to be strengthened. Thus we began a journey into signing a nationwide truce. The idea was twofold; it was to bring about mechanisms to stop the fighting once and for all and to prevent truce violations. It was also very clear to all leaders that the continued hostilities would have adverse effects on the long-awaited political dialogue.

But the ultimate goal, a nationwide ceasefire, has been elusive.

The government has supported two meetings of ethnic armed groups, in Laiza and Law Khee Lar, in the hope of finding a solution to Myanmar’s problems together with its ethnic brethren. Unfortunately, the multiplicity of groups, lack of trust, security concerns and array of other issues have kept the two sides apart.

Additionally, all sides have adopted politically correct “all-inclusive and consensus-seeking” approaches to the negotiation. These are extremely important because no one wants to have to negotiate all over again just because a group or groups had been left out of the process.

However, a consequence of this policy is that all groups – be they big or small – have equal influence. If one

group is not ready or confident enough to come on board then the negotiation is unlikely to result in an agreement.

Frustrations still abound on all sides. But the potential outcome is significant. All stakeholders have little choice but to be patient and persevere, so that everyone is included in the agreement.

It has led to several ceasefire drafts being developed by different parties. The government side has had inputs from the armed forces, presidential advisers and parliamentary representatives. The ethnic groups have met over and over again to come up with a unified position. The MPC’s technical team has met all NCCT leaders both formally and informally to discuss the agreement. All these drafts were circulated, compared and debated. It was becoming a never-ending saga.

What became clear is that the winding road to the nationwide ceasefire agreement must start with a single and unified text. Therefore, before the last

Sometimes the exchanges are so open that I have goosebumps watching negotiations unfold.

meeting the government hoped it could persuade the ethnic groups to work on a single draft. The NCCT side may have had similar thoughts, for an agreement was quickly reached. A drafting committee comprising an equal number of representatives will be formed to carry out the drafting process. It was an enormous step forward.

There were also additional advances toward the agreement.

For the first time in the two-and-a-half years of working toward an agreement the armed forces were highly represented in the March 9-10 meetings. Previously, two lieutenant generals along with regional commanders participated in negotiations. This time around there were no less than four lieutenant generals and a major general negotiating with their ethnic counterparts. These four lieutenant generals hold very senior positions – only the

three highest-ranking officers in the armed forces are above them.

This very high level of representation demonstrated the desire for and commitment to peace by the entire government delegation, including the armed forces. But more crucially, it emerged during the meetings that the government wants to sign the agreement before August. Whether this is realistic I cannot tell but previous attempts to set a deadline on the ceasefire agreement had failed. These negotiations had dragged on – there was no sense of urgency. Thanks to their initiative and the agreement to work on a single text, we now have a more realistic deadline we can work toward. It is testament to the fact that armed forces are central to peace negotiations.

Of late, I have noticed that the pattern of negotiations between the government and armed ethnic groups has changed. They have become increasingly frank. Sometimes the exchanges are so open that I have goosebumps watching negotiations unfold. The March 9-10 meeting was the climax of frankness. Now we are in a real dialogue – a shift from an adversarial to collaborative process.

This change in the negotiation pattern was unexpected but very welcome.

In 2002, I went to give a talk in the Thai border town of Mae Sot. It was about dialogue and I had just published a book called *Dialogue*. Opposition leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi had also recently called for dialogue with the military regime.

Many exiles and ethnic leaders showed up at the talks, including the late Karen National Union leader General Saw Bo Mya. They wanted to understand what I meant by “dialogue”. I said that dialogue is a tool to resolve conflict by exploring possible solutions to the problem together with other protagonists and then acting together on these solutions. At the end of the talk, General Bo Mya said it was impossible to have dialogue in Myanmar.

Indeed, General Bo Mya was right at the time. But 12 years on, something that once appeared impossible may become a reality. Unlike the situation many years ago, we have now entered into a first phase of exploring solutions. From now on, the path to peace should be smoother.

Aung Naing Oo is associate director of the Peace Dialogue Program at the Myanmar Peace Center.

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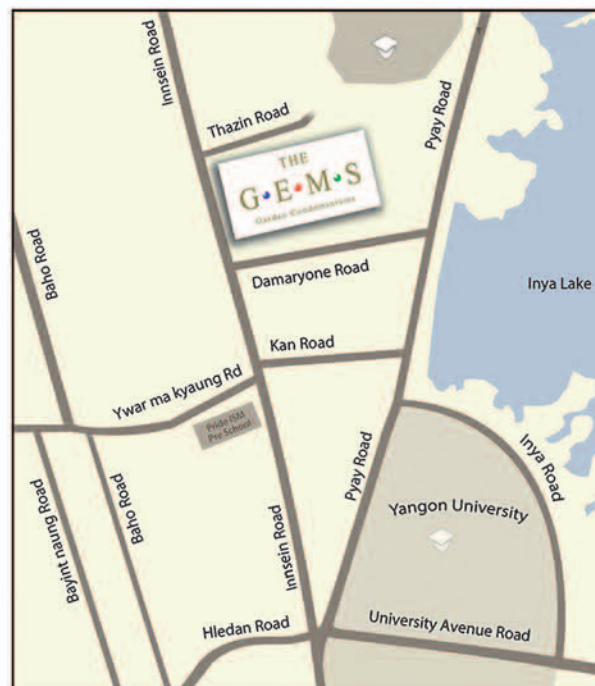
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President brings peace message to Kachin

But Kachin leaders miss out on chance to ask Senior General Min Aung Hlaing about the Kachin conflict during March 16 meeting



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THE Tatmadaw shares the president's wish for genuine peace through a nationwide ceasefire, President U Thein Sein said last week during a visit to Kachin State alongside the country's commander-in-chief, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing.

"As for the Tatmadaw, it has the same wish as the government for the peacemaking process, and is seeking to carry it out in harmony," U Thein Sein said during the one-day visit on March 16.

U Thein Sein and Senior General Min Aung Hlaing met residents, civil society leaders and religious figures, and discussed the peace process, the government's future plans and the challenges the country is facing during the transition period. The trip was his first visit to Kachin State since taking office three years ago.

Kachin State has been a constant thorn in the government's side since June 2011, when a ceasefire agreement between the government and the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO) broke down after 17 years.

In early 2012, in the midst of heavy fighting, the president instructed the Tatmadaw to stop the attack, though conflict continued. While the fighting has largely calmed, a ceasefire has yet



President U Thein Sein is greeted by Kachin in traditional dress in Myitkyina on March 16. Photo: Supplied/President's Office

to be signed.

Some residents criticised the visit, saying the Tatmadaw continues to be on the offensive even as it proclaims itself to be working toward peace.

"People don't believe too much in peace," said U Lamai Gum Ja, of the Myitkyina-based Peace-talk Creation Group, "because a ceasefire agreement hasn't been signed yet, and also combat is breaking out again very often in some places. In people's minds, they are thinking, 'When will the fight start again?'"

Outlining the government's approach to peace, U Thein Sein said ceasefires alone aren't enough. Political settlements are also needed, and political dialogue must be held.

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing didn't speak publicly during the trip but did meet in private for 40 minutes with three clergy from the Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC), which provides support for those displaced by conflict.

"He said he doesn't know about politics so he doesn't want to comment

about [political issues]," said Reverend Nawdin, one of those who met the senior general. "[He said] his Tatmadaw is mainly assisting the president's process, and will also help in the future as it is now."

Rev Nawdin reported that the senior general said people are unaware of the Tatmadaw's intentions for peace and misunderstand them.

"He added that the most important duty of the Tatmadaw is to protect people" and also stressed the importance of the KIO also showing it is

committed to peace.

Rev Nawdin said he did not have a chance to ask the commander-in-chief follow-up questions or request further details during the meeting.

"I wanted to ask him why skirmishes erupt very often here and delay the signing of the ceasefire deal even though they want peace. But I had no chance to ask about it. But he said ethnic armed groups are now asking to form a federal Tatmadaw while proposing a ceasefire agreement. He said the existing Tatmadaw is a federal Tatmadaw," Rev Nawdin said.

"Anyway, we hope peace is closer than before. If there is a wish to get peace, as [the commander-in-chief] said, a nationwide ceasefire can happen soon."

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing also met with families of Northern Region Command soldiers during his trip. He said the Tatmadaw is carrying out its defence duties under the management of the president, and that, according to the constitution, it must prevent other groups from gaining power lawlessly or bullying others through the use of arms.

Reverend Hkalam Samsun, secretary general of the KBC, said he also spoke to the president and the commander-in-chief about the stalled Myitsone hydropower project.

"When I asked if the Myitsone project will start after 2015, the president said it can't be started if people are disagreeing," Rev Samsun said.

- Translation by Thiri Min Htun



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New media laws prompt confusion, apprehension

While new Media Law states reporters will be able to report critically, many believe the government will still attempt to maintain control over coverage



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“INVESTIGATIVE journalism and critical reporting backed by gov’t” – that was how the state media announced the enactment of the media law by President U Thein Sein on March 14.

Journalists, however, are less convinced, arguing that the future is less rosy because the law and an associated Printing and Publishing Law contain vague clauses on “national security” and will give the government and parliament a level of control over a new press council.

However, many are simply confused: Why are there two laws, and how will these two laws interact with – or contradict – each other in practice?

“I have complicated feelings about the law,” said Ko Yeni, editor of the Myanmar edition of *Irrawaddy*.

He said he welcomed the abolition of the Press (Emergency Powers) Act and the 1963 Printers and Publishers Registration Act and said he expects media freedom to improve as a result of the laws. However, he expressed concern over chapter 4 of the Printing and Publishing Law, which states that printers and publishers cannot publish articles that hurt national security, law enforcement, public stability, or a citizen’s right to equality, freedom and justice. Violations can attract a fine of up to K5 million, or about US\$5000.

“I’m not clear about the definition of national security. How far we can go before we are fined?” said Ko Yeni.

Similarly, chapter 3.4(a) of the Media Law states that journalists have the right to freely criticise the legislature, executive and judiciary – but only “in conformity with the constitu-

tion”. Ko Yeni said both laws reflected the government’s concerns about giving the media unfettered freedom and its belief that this would be a threat to security.

Both laws are the result of a process that began more than two years ago with the drafting of the Printing and Publishing Law. It was delayed when current Minister for Information U Aung Kyi replaced U Kyaw Hsan and ordered a rewrite of the draft.

The Interim Press Council rejected the ministry’s draft, however, and instead wrote its own law, which would become the Media Law. This law focuses exclusively on print media, while the Printing and Publishing Law also contains sections related to broadcast and online media, as well as other forms of publishing.

‘[The law] is good on paper. But ... if we really do investigative reporting, there will be problems.’

U Myint Than
Unity journal editor

Under the Media Law, a Myanmar Media Council will be formed to monitor and develop the print media industry, facilitate the import of media services and equipment to media development, and report to the president.

The council will have up to 30 members, of which the president, the Pyithu Hluttaw speaker and the Amyotha Hluttaw speaker will nominate one

each. The rest will be from the industry, as well as individuals with expertise in relevant fields.

The council will be tasked with settling disputes and will rely on funding from the government, local and international donors, local and international non-government organisations, and media companies, according to the law. If disputes cannot be settled by the council, a case can then be brought to court.

U Kyaw Min Swe, secretary of the Interim Press Council, said the new council would be independent and that the laws would support media freedom.

“The Printing and Publishing Law has nothing that is contrary to the new Media Law,” he said.

Ko Myint Kyaw, general secretary of the Myanmar Journalist Network, said he was concerned that while violations of the Media Law cannot result in jail terms reporters could still end up in prison under other laws, such as defamation.

However, he said he was not worried about the fact that the government and parliament would be able to appoint members of the media council. “I believe the council will be independent,” he said.

Ko Yeni, however, said the three appointees would be a threat to the council’s independence.

“I personally want the council to be independent. Instead of developing freely, it will be burdened with politics,” he said.

International press freedom organisations also remain unconvinced. On March 1, the United States-based Committee to Project Journalists said the laws would be a step backward.

“Draft legislation designed to govern the media in Burma threatens to reverse fragile press freedom gains recently achieved under President Thein Sein’s democratic reform program,”



Journalists protest the arrest of a reporter from Kayah State in Yangon on January 7. Photo: Boothee

it said in a statement. In its annual World Press Freedom Index, Reporters without Borders said in February that despite increased media freedom “the promise to draft media legislation that complies with international standards has not been kept”. It said the Printers and Publishers Law was submitted to parliament without consultation and “would impose clearly unacceptable restrictions on media freedom”. Together with the draft broadcast media law, it reveals “government ambivalence about real respect for fundamental rights”, the group said.

This “ambivalence” was further reinforced by the arrest and prosecution of reporters from *Unity* journal in January. The journal’s editor, U Myint Than, said the safety of journalists working in Myanmar was far from assured. He questioned whether the government would really allow journalists to conduct investigative journalism and critical reporting, as

well as access government departments and information that is not confidential, as stipulated in the Media Law.

“[The law] is good on the paper. But it will be difficult when we are on the ground. If we really do investigative reporting, there will be problems,” he said.

The questions are likely to hang over the laws for some time as they will not come into effect until the rules and regulations are promulgated. State media reported on March 10 that the rules for the Printing and Publishing law will be drafted by the Ministry of Information and enacted within two months.

And while the laws may not be perfect, they are the result of political realities, Ko Yeni said.

“We can see that the two media laws were created through give and take between the government and the press council.”



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MPs finally pass impeachment bill

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THE lower house of parliament has made significant changes to a bill that will enable constituents to push for the removal of their representative. The Pyithu Hluttaw approved the Recall Bill on March 18 after it was re-submitted by the Bill Committee and the Hluttaw Rights Committee along with 41 proposed amendments. The amendments give MPs greater protection from campaigns to have them removed. The constitution states

that a petition signed by just 1 percent of eligible voters in a constituency is enough to initiate an investigation but there are few other details on how the process should take place. U Khin Maung Swe, chair of the National Democratic Force, said the bill was important for the development of a democratic system. “The public must have all of their rights but at the same time MPs don’t need to worry if they have not done anything wrong,” he said. The bill was submitted to parliament by the Union Election

Commission in 2012. MPs initially suspended debate on the bill, arguing that the 1pc threshold was too low and could soon be amended by the constitution review committee. However, this decision was reversed at the insistence of commission chair U Tin Aye, who wrote to Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann urging the bill be put back on the agenda. Under section 8 of the bill, after receiving a complaint that meets the 1pc threshold the commission has to examine whether the complaint can be backed up by concrete evidence.

Under the constitution, MPs can be recalled for five reasons, including high treason, misbehaviour and inefficient discharge of duties. MPs shall have the right to refute the complaint in person or through an agent. The Pyithu Hluttaw approved an amendment that will require the investigation team to examine whether the complaint is the result of instigation, persuasion, threats, misuse of power or bullying from a person or organisation toward eligible voters. Another amendment stipulates that the commission can take

action against complainants who are deemed to have made a false complaint. However, if enough evidence is found to substantiate the claims, all eligible voters will be invited to take part in a mini-election to decide whether the MP should be recalled. At least 50pc must be in favour for the recall process to proceed. The approved bill enables constituents to remove not only elected MPs but also appointed Tatmadaw representatives. - Translation by Zar Zar Soe

FEATURE

An ode to the unsung heroes of Nay Pyi Taw’s hluttaw

 NICHOLAS FARRELLY
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THE standard moaning-and-groaning about Nay Pyi Taw is getting old. Yes, the city is grandiose and appears intimidating at first glance. Yes, it can be inconvenient if you don’t have your own wheels. And, yes, I know many people quarantined in their government dormitory or hotel room, or stranded at the Junction Centre shopping precinct for the fifth night in a row, have queried the merit of the new city. I admit it can be a tough place to love. But we can’t forget that the city is evolving with purpose, seeking to exemplify the ideas driving Myanmar’s rolling transformation. It is a laboratory – filling with political, demographic, economic and cultural experimentation – where unpredicted results are mounting up. It deserves serious attention and study. One place to observe Nay Pyi Taw’s evolution up close is the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, or national parliament. The distinctive design of its 37 major buildings has made it a landmark already, as the symbol of legislative power. High fences ring this iconic complex. It is unfortunate that it is not yet open to the general public. For those of us fortunate to be inside, the hluttaw offers important lessons about the practice and prospects of democracy in Myanmar. It is where former political prisoners, retired generals, provincial school principals, ethnic rebels, serving military officers, socialist-era technocrats and business-people rub shoulders. Some are household names. Others are powerbrokers, lurking in the shadows. Then there are those thoughtful and considerate MPs, from all political parties, who are working collegially and quietly to represent their constituents and offer Myanmar early glimpses of a democratic tomorrow. These unsung heroes of the legislature begin their days with breakfast at their dormitory-style residences. Their daily allowance covers the basics. While most live alone, family members now accompany some MPs during their long stints in the capital. In all cases, the multi-ethnic residential accommodation offers a chance to get to know people from across the country. Whether they come from Kawka-reik, Khamti or Kamaryut, by now the rhythm of the day is well understood. From the guesthouse accommodation, almost everyone piles into the buses for the commute to the hluttaw complex. Once inside, MPs mill around, exchanging information about the agenda, collecting the day’s paperwork, and readying for the formalities to follow. Some will take an opportunity to catch



MPs gather on the steps in front of the hluttaw at the end of a session in November 2012. Photo: Christopher Davy

up on the news. Reports about hluttaw activities are read especially closely. Then, as the appointed hour of 10am approaches, the MPs drift into the hluttaw chamber. For a Pyidaungsu Hluttaw sitting – drawing together the membership of the upper and lower houses of the legislature – there is extra anticipation. On these days the observers’ gallery is usually filled with activists from the ranks of the major political parties. On many occasions uniformed delegations of Union Solidarity and Development Party and National League for Democracy members fill out the rows. Other days it is ethnic political groups who make their presence known. Then there are the times when schoolteachers or university students get a chance to see the action up-close. Eventually, the director general

Nay Pyi Taw’s trail-blazers have done what they can to build a hluttaw worthy of the people and their votes.

calls the hluttaw to attention. The cavernous chamber hushes. As the hush descends, the shuffling of paper stops. A senior clerk, standing near the oversized main doors, bows. It is the signal that the speaker’s arrival is imminent. Moments later, more than 1000 chairs push back as MPs, and all those sitting in the observers’ gallery, stand to attention. The sound of the heavy wooden chairs scraping the floor reverberates distinctively around the chamber. The speaker of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, Thura U Shwe Mann, follows, as does another attendant who will help him to his seat. The speaker, wearing a black gown with gold trim, a silk longyi and velvet slippers, strides confidently to his throne in the centre of the high stage at the front of the room. The configuration is an echo of the grandest classroom imaginable. The adversarial seating of Westminster-style debate has been discarded in favour of a layout where there is one *saya* (teacher) and many *tapyit* (pupils). With a rousing “*ahlonge mingalabar*” (“good morning everyone”) from the speaker, the members respond “*mingalabar*”. And with that ritual, yet another ordinary day commences in Myanmar’s extraordinary hluttaw. It must be one of the world’s most surprising and exhilarating places to study the evolution

of representative politics. The first hluttaw, elected on November 7, 2010, and then refreshed with by-elections on April 1, 2012, brings together voices from across Myanmar’s geographic and political spectrum. They are the quiet labourers, slowly building Nay Pyi Taw’s legislative system. Some MPs are easily recognisable. Chairs of committees sit in clumps with their committee members. USDP members still predominate. But there are others who are developing a profile for their legislative work, for asking tough questions or for making constructive contributions to the formulation of new laws. U Khat Htein Nan, a Jinghpaw from Kachin State, and U Nay Win Tun, a Pa-O from southern Shan State, are two prominent examples of legislative busyness. Alongside many other ethnic MPs, including prominent Mon, Chin, Rakhine, Kayin and Kayah voices, they are jostling for influence in a challenging new setting. While proud of their achievements, especially as a “check and balance” on the executive government, hluttaw members appreciate that their institution is likely to change considerably after 2015. Some MPs are already talking of retirement, content that they have fulfilled their duties to their constituents and the nation. Many are part of

an older generation, blooded in the politics of socialism and military dominance. More than a few are tired of the demands of living far from home in Nay Pyi Taw’s political hothouse. They will be replaced by the battalions of young guns now queuing up for a chance to make further changes in Nay Pyi Taw. It is this future generation of MPs, currently toiling away in NGOs, the media, the military, think tanks or the 14 state and region hluttaws, who will need to be ready for the challenges that representative democracy presents. They may well want to look to the first group of MPs for inspiration. It is never easy to be first. Nay Pyi Taw’s trail-blazers have done what they can to build a hluttaw worthy of the people and their votes. So the next time you feel like bemoaning Nay Pyi Taw’s inadequacies, spare a thought for the MPs. Against the odds, and in their quiet ways, they have helped give this city the day-to-day energy it needs.

Nicholas Farrelly is a research fellow in the College of Asia and the Pacific at the Australian National University, Canberra. He is currently undertaking an Australian Research Council-funded study in Myanmar and has attended hluttaw sessions regularly since January 2014.

Pilgrims hit the road as tour sales take off

Annual trips have risen four-fold in just five years thanks to cheaper tickets, better service and improved infrastructure and vehicles, an industry body says

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DOMESTIC pilgrim trips are expected to hit 4.5 million this year, an industry body says, which, if achieved, would represent a four-fold increase over the past five years.

Domestic Pilgrimage and Tour Operators Association chairperson U Than Htay said improved infrastructure and cheaper packages have given Buddhist pilgrims "a taste for travel", sending annual trips skyrocketing from just 1.1 million in 2010 to 3.5 million in 2013. That figure is expected to rise almost 30 percent this year. The figures were derived from the number of pilgrimage buses that depart each day.

"Roads and vehicles are better than before and it means even people with just a little free time can go on pilgrimages. The industry is developing and the extra competition means ticket prices are also getting cheaper, making it affordable to more people," he said. "Now Myanmar people are getting a taste for travel."

The most popular destinations include Kyaikhtiyo Pagoda in Mon State, Bagan, Mandalay, Pyin Oo Lwin, Shweseetaw Pagoda in Magwe Region, and Alaungdaw Kathapa and Monywa in Sagaing Region.

The industry's growth is such that pilgrims are even straining the infrastructure at some destinations,

particularly around Kyaikhtiyo, also known as Golden Rock.

"We have never seen a traffic jam at Kyaikhtiyo like the one on Union Day [February 12] this year. Because of all the pilgrimage vehicles, it stretched [15.2 kilometres] from the town of Kyaikto to Kimpun bus station," U Than Htay said.

The increased demand for pilgrimages has resulted in operators expanding offerings to more exotic locales, including Indawgyi Lake in Kachin State and cave pagodas in Kayin State.

"It's easy for many Myanmar people to make these trips. They want to visit pagodas that are different from the ones in their own region or town. Also they just want to visit a new place," said association member U Myo Oo, who owns pilgrimage company Thukamein.

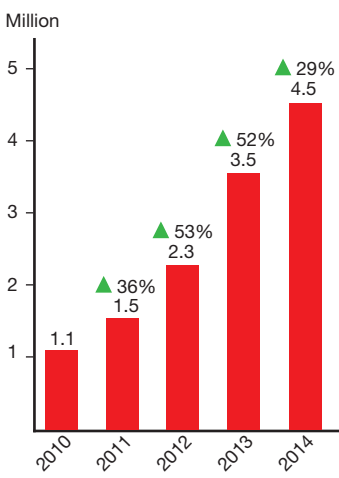
They also offer the opportunity for people to sample products from another region of Myanmar, and U Myo Oo said this supports businesses in areas near famous religious buildings.

"Domestic pilgrimages can support the development of the regional economy," he said.

Yangon resident Daw Ma Mi, 49, said she enjoys visiting new areas of the country through pilgrimage tours.

All that glitters

Annual pilgrim trips in Myanmar



Source: Domestic Pilgrimage and Tour Operators Association

Pilgrims travel to a religious festival in upper Myanmar.
Photo: Christopher Davy



"I make at least 10 trips in a year and have been to every state and region except Chin State. I can learn a lot from travelling and make new friends," she said.

The Domestic Pilgrimage and Tour Operators Association was formed in 2011 to manage the development of the industry. There are more than 300 companies offering pilgrimages, of which around 180 are association members.

Its activities range from resolving disputes between members and pilgrims to helping out with replacement vehicles when pilgrim buses break down en route.

The main complaints, U Than Htay said, include ticket prices and food – some customers say promises that "good food" would be served during a pilgrimage trip were not honoured – as well as itineraries being changed because of bad weather.

Historic caves of Kayin State put on the pilgrimage map

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THE caves of Kayin State are soon about to be rediscovered by local pilgrims, after a Yangon-based pilgrimage company launched a five-stop tour of the state.

Thukamein began the new tour in January and owner U Myo Oo said he expects demand to take off. Three trips have already been conducted.

Kayin State has more than 70 large caves, the most well-known of which include Saddan, Bayin Nyi, Khayone, Kawka Thauang and Kawgone caves.

"[Buddhist] missionary work has almost disappeared in Kayin State since the famous monk Thamanya Sayadaw died [in 2003] so we want to redevelop this tradition and create a new destination for pilgrims," U Myo Oo said.

He said historical research on inscriptions on votive tablets showed that the caves have been inhabited for at least 2000 years.

However, there are few votive tablets left, in part because of the passage of time and the lack of maintenance but also because of the belief they can offer protection from firearms, which prompted locals to remove them during times of unrest.

The Ministry of Culture is taking responsibility for maintaining the caves, which he said would be kept in their natural state.

"We can say all five of these caves are our historic heritage because of the handiwork on display in the

votive tablets, which show influence of the Bagan, Pyu, Shan and Khmer kingdoms."

Daw Ma Mi, who went on a tour in January, described Kayin State and its caves as "very beautiful".

"The pagodas in caves are very graceful and the craftsmanship is impressive. Those old artists were very clever," she said.

1000

Pilgrims purchasing packages to visit Kayin State caves with Thukamein in January and February

The Kayin State pilgrim tours are normally conducted over a weekend, with a Friday night departure and Sunday evening return. The cost is K40,000.

While Thukamein is the only company marketing the caves to local pilgrims, foreign tourists have been visiting for around two decades, said U Aye Kyaw, managing director of travel company Ruby Land. "They mostly visit Saddan, Kawka Thauang and Kawgone caves," he said. "We had sent over 1000 tourists to Kayin State until end of the February in this year."

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Warnings over religious protection draft laws

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CONTROVERSIAL bills now under consideration by a newly formed commission could harm the peace and tranquillity of the state, members of parliament and civil society groups have warned. The government and parliament have also been accused of “playing volleyball” with the proposed bills.

The draft legislation would cover religious conversion, inter-faith marriage, monogamy and population control. President U Thein Sein forwarded the drafts to the hluttaw for approval on February 25, urging MPs to enact them. But two days later, Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann sent the drafts back to the government to be rewritten. The four drafts were written by a monk-led group called the Committee for the Protection of Nationality and Religion, which is closely linked to the “969” movement.

In response, the president set up a 12-member commission on March 7, headed by Deputy Attorney General U Tun Tun Oo, to draft new bills by June 30. Other members of the commission include representatives of the Ministry of Immigration and

Population, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the president’s legal advisory team and other government bodies.

While some MPs criticised the president and parliament for “playing volleyball” with the drafts, others called them a “weapon” to advance political interests in advance of the 2015 election.

“The laws should not violate the rights of other religions or be a weapon to suppress them,” said Daw Dwe Bu, an MP from Kachin State. “We should bear in mind any negative impact on the peace and tranquillity of the state while we discuss this in parliament.”

Union Solidarity and Development

‘The laws should not violate the rights of other religions or be a weapon to suppress them.’

Daw Dwe Bu
MP from Kachin State

Party upper house representative U Hla Swe said there was no need to enact the laws, as existing legislation already guarantees the right of a woman to continue to practise Buddhism, whatever her husband’s religion. “I won’t support this draft. It will create religious extremism,” he said.

But U Ba Shein of the Rakhine Nationalities and Development Party welcomed the president’s decision to form a commission for drafting the bills, adding that he would support their enactment.

Salai Issac Khin, director of the Gender Development Initiative (GDI), which conducts gender awareness campaigns, said a key point to consider is whether the draft laws would support or disturb the peace process. “When prime minister U Nu announced that Buddhism was the national religion, the KNU took up arms. We should learn the lessons of history.”

The president instructed the commission to ensure the laws conform to the constitution, which admits the existence of diverse beliefs and religions, and should strengthen nation unity. The commission may take into consideration “suggestions from monks, citizens and experts” while drafting the law, the notification said.

Carpenters replace damaged sections of U Bein Bridge in Amarapura township on March 20. Photo: Phyo Wai Kyaw



Govt finally acts on rotting bridge

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THE regional government has begun repairing sections of historic U Bein Bridge in Amarapura township in response to concerns that a dangerous collapse could be imminent.

An official from the Department of Archaeology, National Museum and Library in Mandalay said that

the regional government had allotted K13.4 million to replace some of the bridge’s rotting teak supports and work began on March 18.

The decision was taken just days after *The Myanmar Times*’ Myanmar-language edition reported that some teak pillars were so weak residents feared the structure could be in danger of collapse, particularly during the upcoming Thingyan festivities when thousands come to celebrate water festival.

Workers have been cutting rotten sections off the supports and replacing them with new pieces of teak, as well replacing damaged support beams and planks on the bridge’s walkway.

A junior engineer at the site said that the work is scheduled to be finished before the Thingyan festival begins on April 13.

The 160-year-old structure is held up by 1000 teak pillars, of which less than 90 percent are considered sound. The 1.2-kilometre bridge is a major tourist attraction.

“The bridge is clearly weaker than it was five years ago. Thingyan and Yadanagu Nat festivals are dangerous for visitors. When we checked, we found that 18 [sections] were badly rotted, and we informed the Amarapura township administrator on March 6,” said U Nyunt Wai of Sinsweput ward.

“The parliament representative for Amarapura township [U Thein Tun Oo] commented on my Facebook account that the bridge would be rebuilt by the government in the next budget year. Currently monks from Maha Gandaryone monastery and trustees from the Taung Min Gyi Pagoda near the bridge carry out repairs as necessary,” said U Nyunt Wai.

U Soe Win, who runs a private boat association near U Bein Bridge, said the bridge’s poor condition was a danger to visitors. “Some visitors even shake the bridge for fun, which is very dangerous. Six people fell from the bridge last Thingyan and to my knowledge at least 13 people have drowned since 2011.”

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More jobs on horizon for sailors

Agreements between Maritime University and foreign companies prompt 70 percent rise in graduate jobs



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EMPLOYMENT opportunities for graduates of the Myanmar Maritime University have increased about 70 percent in the past year, the school's rector, U Myat Lwin, says – a trend likely to continue as more agreements with foreign companies are signed.

“There were job offers from [South] Korean shipping companies in the past but before this year we had never received job offers from Taiwan, Singapore and Japan ... This year the job opportunities for students have increased 70pc,” U Myat Lwin said.

To build on this momentum, he said, agreements will be signed with interested companies to give students access to guaranteed job opportunities.

‘Before this year we had never received job offers from Taiwan, Singapore and Japan.’

U Myat Lwin
Myanmar Maritime University rector

He cited a recent deal struck between the university and a Japanese company as a successful example of this approach: After company representatives were invited to visit and interview the students, 44 soon-to-be graduates were offered positions.

“This means these students don’t have to worry about finding jobs after graduation,” U Myat Lwin said.

Schlumberger and Swiber from Singapore, as well as local government offices and private companies, are among those helping graduates move straight into employment. Swiber is focusing its recruitment on female engineers who recently graduated from MMU for the first time.

“This selectivity criteria includes the cleverness of the students. Because of their outstanding abilities, the companies started noticing [our students],” U Myint Lwin said.

Noting that the university accepted 320 students in its latest intake, MMU general manager U Nyein Thu said the increased job opportunities would make the university’s entrance requirements even more competitive.

“[Matriculants] are interested in the subjects but mostly they are interested in the job opportunities,” he said.

He added that Japan is looking for engineers for seaport construction, while Singapore is hiring primarily for offshore work. Singaporean companies are hiring nine graduates, while 44 are heading to Japan. Taiwan is now in talks for about 70 positions.



Students learn at a maritime training centre in Dawbon Shipyard. Photo: Staff

“In the past, they only took two or three people,” said U Nyein Thu. “This recent offer of jobs is a first for the 11-year history of this university.”

Ko Thura Aung, a graduate who earned distinctions in five of his eight marine engineering subjects, is among those taking up work abroad this year.

“The most important thing is specialisation in my subject. It is

also important to be proficient in language,” said Ko Thura Aung, who already has a job with a German shipping line.

Since it was founded in 2002 under the Ministry of Transportation, the university has bestowed 2417 degrees and diplomas. Its eighth graduation ceremony was held on February 28.

Constitution protesters finally get green light

AFTER what organisers say was their third request, authorities in Mandalay Region have given permission for Pyin Oo Lwin residents to demonstrate in favour of changing the constitution.

The protest, scheduled for March 23, will cover a number of topics, including annulling section 59(f) and amending section 436 – which determine eligibility for the presidency and the process of changing the constitution respectively – and reducing the number of military representatives in the hluttaw, said U Ko Gyi, who was among those applying for permission.

“Most people don’t know which points are good or bad in the constitution. So we will show people about it by protesting. It’s just to open people’s eyes,” U Ko Gyi said, adding that the event will include three speakers who will debate the strengths and weaknesses of the 2008 Constitution.

The ethnic peace process will also be among the topics raised, he said.

The demonstration will begin near city hall and end at One One tea shop on Kandawgyi Kanpat Road. About 500 people are expected to attend.

– Si Thu Lwin,
translation by Thiri Min Htun

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Dated: 24 March, 2014

Security cameras installed in Bagan

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SECURITY cameras in Bagan's tourist zone have received the thumbs up from foreign visitors and locals alike. Originally installed because of rumours that pagodas might be damaged during communal conflict, cameras have now been placed around 14 of the most famous sites.

“Donation boxes were broken into before. But now there is almost no problem after the cameras were installed. Foreign visitors are also pleased,” said U Kyaw Swe, secretary of Thatbyinnyu Pagoda's board of trustees.

“Ancient historical heritage can't be remade. Providing full-time security with guards might not be possible. But these security devices don't lie,” said Ko Aung Khant Maung Maung, director of Leo Security Camera Installation company.

The Ministry of Culture is responsible for protecting pagodas in Bagan. But local authorities have also posted police to ensure security for foreign tourists as well as to protect ancient pagodas.

“There were robberies from foreigners nearly once a month before. But we don't hear of such problems since security was tightened. Some foreigners used to sleep among the pagodas, but we have cooperated with residents to prevent it,” said Police Colonel Khine Win from Bagan's tourism police.

— Translation by Zar Zar Soe



A security camera is installed near a pagoda in Bagan. Photo: Si Thu Lwin

Dawei villagers plan legal action over tin mine pollution

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VILLAGERS in Tanintharyi Region have filed a lawsuit against a Thai company and Myanmar's Ministry of Mines, demanding compensation for damage allegedly caused by the nearby tin mining project.

In a statement released earlier this week, residents of Myaung Byo allege that since 1999, when the Bangkok-based Myanmar Pongpipat Company Ltd took over the Heinda mine, the area around their village in Dawei township has been beset by environmental problems directly linked to the mine's operations.

“Many species of plants and animals

went extinct and many of our plantations, houses, wells and religious buildings were destroyed due to waste and sediment disposed by the company,” the statement said.

The problems grew worse in 2012, the statement said, when “more flooding causing further destruction of houses, plantations and water sources along the Myaung Byo creek, which is now filled with waste and sediment from the mining project.”

After the flooding the villagers took their complaints to both the Ministry of Mines and Myanmar Pongpipat's local office but no action was taken. “[We] have not received proper or meaningful responses so far. We have experienced pressure

from authorities and a lack of accountability by the company instead of meaningful and fair negotiation,” they said.

“Therefore, we, the villagers of Myaung Byo, will try to seek justice and ask that our rights be respected in a peaceful way by filing a court case to No 2 Mining Enterprise and Myanmar Pongpipat Company Ltd [which] are responsible for damages in our village.”

The Heinda mine is located in the Tanintharyi mountain range near the border with Thailand. It has been in operation since the colonial period.

Representatives from the Ministry of Mines could not be reached for comment last week.

Thousands told to leave Pyin Oo Lwin railway plot

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RESIDENTS threatened with eviction from an unused railway station are pleading with the local authorities to be allowed to stay in their homes. Many are elderly and retired, and some have lived on the site, in Pyin Oo Lwin's No 7 ward, for up to 30 years.

The 5000 residents, who live in 1150 households, have been issued with notice to move within 15 days, said an official of the Mandalay Region Ministry of Railways and Transportation. The site is a former railway station, although it remains unclear what it will be used for in future.

“Some of the residents are retired staff of the Ministry of Railways and some are squatters. On the instructions of our superiors, we sent notice

to quit within 15 days,” said U Kyaw Soe Lin, manager of the transportation department. He said he did not know where the people would go or why the eviction had been ordered. “Whether or not force is used to evict

‘Whether or not force is used to evict them is not our concern. The regional authorities will do it.’

U Kyaw Soe Lin
Transportation department manager

them is not our concern. The regional authorities will do it,” he added.

The residents, who say they are too poor to afford alternative accommodation, have submitted a petition asking the government to allow them to stay on by paying tax to the government.

“We were told to move on February 26. We don't know why they told us to move after allowing us to live here for so many years. The land is owned by the Ministry of Railways, but residents have lived here for many years. Most of them are old retired people,” said a teacher who lives in the ward, who asked not to be named because she is still working for the government. She said no response had been received so far, adding, “People will be in trouble if they have to leave.”

— Translation by Thiri Min Htun

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Indawgyi, Natmataung in line for heritage list



TWO protected areas of great natural beauty, Natmataung National Park in Chin State and the Indawgyi Lake Wildlife Sanctuary in Kachin State, may soon feature on UNESCO's World Heritage List, the international body said last week. The sites have been recommended for priority nomination.

The recommendations emerged from a meeting organised by the Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry and UNESCO in Nay Pyi Taw in February. At the meeting, government officials, NGO representatives and academics recommended the two sites from among seven that were proposed last year.

A UNESCO statement described Natmataung, formerly known as Mt Victoria, as an alpine "sky island" with a diversity of Himalayan flora. It is home to more than 800 plant species, including a rich variety of orchids, and several endemic bird species. Indawgyi Lake, one of the largest lakes in South-



Visitors walk up the slopes of Natmataung in Chin State. Photo: Douglas Long

east Asia, provides a habitat for 10 globally threatened bird species and is of outstanding value for the conservation of migrating water birds. The lake also contains important endemic fish and turtle species, such as the Burmese peacock turtle.

A signatory to the World Heritage Convention since 1994, Myanmar does not yet have any sites on the list, although three Pyu cities are likely to be accepted at a meeting in June.

Listing could help with the "effective protection and management of these irreplaceable sites", said U Nyi Kyaw, director general of the Forestry Department.

U Win Myo Thu, managing director of Ecodev, said conservation activities were sorely underfunded. "There is a long way to go in biodiversity conservation. The government's budget allocation for environmental conservation is only 0.1 percent [of the total]," he said.

India funds vessel construction for Kaladan project

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SIX "blockbuster" ships are being built to clear the waterway from Sittwe, Rakhine State, to the border with India. The 300-tonne vessels are being built at Ahlone, Dala and Dawbon, two at each dock, at a cost of more than K200 million each.

The cost is being borne by the government of India, which is also providing the plans and the ships' engines.

The Kaladan River, which runs from Sittwe to Paletwa in Chin State, is subject to blockages from avalanches and rocks that hinder cross-border trade with India. The ships, which are expected to be launched this year, are designed to break through those blockages.

"The cost of construction doesn't include the engines and the iron. They will be supplied by the Essar company, along with plans from the Indian government. The cost is much higher than normal because we are using higher technology," said U Maung Maung Lwin, general manager of Inland Water Transport. He added, "In some places, there are avalanches that could block the whole

route of the river."

The ships will ply a 225-kilometre (140-mile) stretch of the Kaladan between Sittwe and Paletwa, with the route being cleared of small islands, rocks and stones, and signposted. The ships will also transport cargo. With Indian assistance, a port for local transportation in Paletwa, and a highway from Paletwa to the Indian border, are also being built.

The refurbishment of Sittwe dock and the Kaladan water route will cost US\$74 million, while the cost of the highway from Paletwa to the border will be \$214 million. – *Translation by Hein Htet Aung*



Marchers set off for Myitsone dam site

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ABOUT 100 people were due to set off from Yangon on foot for the Myitsone area of Kachin State over the weekend, as part of a campaign calling for the cancellation of the dam project.

The march is being led by the Former Political Prisoner Organisation, member U Ye Htut Khaung said, while other civil society groups and individuals are also taking part. Participants will leave from eastern gate of Shwedagon Pagoda at 6am on March 23 and the trip is expected to take around 60 days, covering up to 40 kilometres a day.

"There will be about 100 people from different groups when we leave Yangon and we expect more people will join us on the way. We will travel along the Yangon-Pyay road, visiting cities such as Pyay, Mandalay and Bagan, which are all on the Ayeyarwady River," U Ye Htut Khaung said.

Organisers on March 17 sent a letter to the president about the march and asked the government to ensure their safety along the way. They have invited anyone who supports the cancellation of the dam and wants to join the march to contact the Former Political Prisoner Organisation.

"We aim to support the president in making a decision to cancel the Myitsone project," U Ye Htut Khaung said. "We don't plan to contest the 2015 election and this campaign is not to further any political ambitions. We are doing it with our own money and haven't accepted financial support from any organisations, whether government or otherwise."



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6's 180ml



Ks.
2,050
1,850

LACTASOY
Soy Milk Sweetened
300ml



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Free

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UHT Milk Full Cream
1Ltr



Ks.
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1,500

M-150
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150ml



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Free

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1Ltr



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Free

SUNQUICK
Syrup Orange
840ml



Ks.
4,200
3,800

QUEEN
Squash Orange (M)
750ml



Ks.
1,550
1,450

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100% Juice
-Apple
-Orange
1Ltr



each/Ks.
2,400
2,150

COCA COLA
Coke Original
1.25Ltr



Buy 3 bots, Get a free Glass.

Free

EVA
Grape Juice Non Alcoholic Still
-Red
-White
750ml



Ks.
2,700
2,430

SHOON FATT
Summer Day Assorted Biscuits
800g



Ks.
3,700
3,500

DANISA
Traditional Butter Cookies
681g



Buy 1 box, Get a free Danisa Bag.

Free

TIFFANY
Chocolate Biscuits
375g



Ks.
1,780
1,600

THAI DURIAN
(2kg-3kg)



pc/Ks.
7,800
7,000

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(200-250g)



pc/Ks.
1,480
1,350

LETTUCE ICEBERG



100g/Ks.
455
410

ZUCCHINI GREEN/ PALE GREEN



100g/Ks.
240
218

CITY FARM WATER-MELON SWEET LADY



100g/Ks.
72
65

DO DO
Crab Stick
250g



Ks.
1,750
1,580

ORION
Choco Pie
-6's 168g/ 12's 336g



Ks.
1,150
1,050

BIN BIN
Rice Cracker
-Original 150g
-Spicy Seaweed 135g



each/Ks.
2,020
1,820

AMICO
Layer Cake
-Orange
-Chocolate
-Strawberry
-Butter
24's 432g



each/Ks.
1,720
1,550

TOP
Cashew Brittle
240g



Ks.
3,250
3,000

HAMLET
-Milk Chocolate Golden
Euro Coins Net
-White Chocolate Silver Coins Net
100g



Ks.
2,400
2,150

POLAR
Ice Cream
-Double Chocolate
-Chocolate
-Strawberry Ripple
-Strawberry
0.5Ltr



each/Ks.
1,490
1,350

TRIKO
Bear Assorted Jelly
(Pink/ Brown)
580g



Ks.
5,550
5,000

RIO
Rice Snack
-Cheddar Cheese
-Thai Coconut
-Smoke Barbecue
-Nail Seaweed Wasabi
55g



each/Ks.
1,080
980

OK
Cashew/Nuts Kernels
500g/ 300g



Ks.
5,350
4,800

MY BIS
Nata De Coco Pudding
-Mango/ Lychee
-Honey Melon
420g



each/Ks.
1,350
1,220

SUNKO
Ice Pop
10's 900ml



Ks.
680
520

BH
Seedless Plum
280g



Ks.
2,850
2,580

CHUNGJUNGWON
Roasted Seasoned Liver For Kimbap
10's 20g



Ks.
1,250
1,120

SUNFLOWER
Jasmine Tea
227g



Ks.
5,000
4,500

HORLICKS
Malted Milk
-Traditional
-Light/ Light Chocolate
500g



Ks.
7,150
6,450

HORLICKS
Malted Milk
-Traditional
-Light/ Light Chocolate
500g



Ks.
8,480
7,650

NESCAFE
3 In 1 Coffee Mix Rich Aroma
27's 523.8g/ 24's 288g



Buy 1 pkt, Get 1 Tin.

Free

SUNDAY
4 In 1 Coffee Tea
30's 900g



Buy 1 pkt, Get a free Mug.

Free

DANA
Fine Sugar
1600g



Ks.
1,500
1,350

OTTOGI
Instant Noodle Ramen
-Jin Hot/ Kimchi/
-Yeu Hot
120g



Price range from, **Ks.720 to Ks.750**

MODERN
Instant Noodle
-Duck
-Tom Yum Kung
60g



Buy 5 pkts @ 10% Off.

PANKO
Bread Crumbs
1kg



Ks.
4,980
4,480

YIFON
Straw Mushroom
425g



Ks.
1,200
1,080

KNORR
Rice Porridge Chicken
25g



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Dried Noodle Egg
325g/ 650g



Ks.
750
680

GOLD POT
Dried Egg Noodle
245g



Ks.
320
290

HTAY HTAY
Sausage
-Pork
-Chicken
160g



Ks.
1,650
1,480

EIFFEL
Tower Mackerel In
Tomato Sauce
215g



Ks.
850
790

SONGHENG
Pickled Green
-Mustard
-with Chilli
350g



Ks.
800
720

HEINZ
Spaghetti Sauce (Thai)
470g



Ks.
2,150
1,980

GOLDEN MOUNTAIN
Oyster Sauce
660g



Ks.
1,200
1,120

SQUID
Fish Sauce (Glass)
730ml/ 700ml



Ks.
1,100
1,000

COOK
Sunflower Oil
1.9Ltr



Ks.
5,250
5,000

YANGON
Peanut Oil
1Viss



Ks.
4,000
3,800

THANT
Paw San Hmwe
5kg



Ks.
4,400
3,950

KANBAWZA
Sticky Rice
2kg



Ks.
2,450
2,200

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-Follow On (6 Month/10 Month)
600g
-Growing Up
500g



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-Whole Grain Rice 175g
-Wheat Semolina Milk 200g
-Fruit Milk 200g
-Rice Banana 175g



Buy 1 box, Get 1 Bowl.

Free

BETTY

Crocker Super Moist Cake
Mix Devil's Food
432g



Ks. 3,200
2,880

HAMLET

-Chocolate Winter Assorted Hazelnut
250g
-Dark Chocolate Flake Truffles
125g



Ks. 9,100
8,200

Ks. 3,350
3,020

BABY CORNER

MAMYPOKO
Diaper Pant Type



each/Ks. 9,600
8,650

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Baby Powder
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1,450

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-Body Wash Wake Me Up
550ml



each/Ks. 3,850
3,450

CLEAR

Shampoo
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-Cool Sport For Men
350ml



each/Ks. 3,100
2,800

CAMAY

Bar Soap
-Chic/ Classic/ Natural
125g



Buy 3 pcs & above,
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C' CARE

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75ml



Ks. 8,350
7,500

Ks. 8,000
7,200

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3,550

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80's/ 10's



Ks. 4,050
3,650

Ks. 1,150
1,050

ARIEL

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800g
-Liquid
3kg



15% Off
Buy 2 pcs & above
Get 15% Off.

ELAN

Dishwash Liquid Lemon
500g/ 1.3kg/ 2kg
Laundry Bar Soap
10 x 120g



Price range from,
Ks.680 to Ks.2,500

10% Off

BSC

Essence Softener Refill
-Floral
-Blossom
-Impress
-Jeans
650ml



each/Ks. 680
600

LITIAN BEIBEI

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200 x 140mm 3 x 200's
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1,900

Ks. 3,800
3,400

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1,850

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Ks. 121,000
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5's
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5's



Price range from,
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3pc Lunch Set
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21,700

LOCK & LOCK

Drinking Bottle (Pet 2's)
1.2Ltr



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DIAMOND

Aluminium Foil
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Ks. 3,380
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Ks. 2,550
2,300

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Ks. 11,000
10,700

Ks. 16,300
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Bath/ Face Towel Brown
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-12 x 12in



Ks. 1,500
1,350

Ks. 500
450

HOUSEMATE

Cooler Rectangular
2.5Ltr



Ks. 3,550
3,350

BREEZE LIVING

Paper
-Plate
20's (7in/ 9in)
Plastic
-Tea Spoon
50's 5in
-Fork 50's 7in
-Spoon 50's 7in
-Cup 50's 7oz



Price range from,
Ks.780 to Ks.1,150

10% Off

JCJ

Laundry Basket
46.7 x 33.5 x 37.4cm



Ks. 5,900
5,300

JCJ

Dish Drainer
29.3 x 40 x 23cm



Ks. 8,550
7,700

SPECIAL ELECTRIC OFFER

MD

Table Fan 12"
FT30-8NS



Ks. 20,500
18,000

PHILIPS

Dry Iron
GC-160/02



Ks. 19,200
18,200

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Air Cooler
FAC-998



Ks. 67,900
57,500

MIDEA

Air Cooler
ACS-120FR



Ks. 66,000
61,500

Kangaroo

Citrus Juicer

KG-346B



Ks. 17,000
14,500

Rice Cooker

KG-28



Ks. 19,000
16,000

Hot & Cold Water Dispenser

KG-38N



Free
Buy 1, Get a free
Yogurt Maker.

Rice Cooker

KG-371



Ks. 37,000
31,400

Food & Fruit Blender

KG-349



Ks. 48,000
38,500

Should hate speech be protected by law?

SANDAR LWIN
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MYANMAR'S new Media Law, enacted on March 14, includes a clause that prohibits "ways of writing which may inflame conflicts regarding nationality, race and religion".

At the same time, the country's peaceful protest by-laws stipulate that the Ministry of Home Affairs should scrutinise banners and slogans displayed at protest events, and ban those that promote hatred toward specific ethnic groups or religions.

These laws enjoy broad support among both politicians and the general population, including those who believe that decades of living under an authoritative and discriminatory military regime has given rise to dangerous levels of hatred and anger based on ethnicity and religion.

Such feelings are especially apparent on social media platforms such as Facebook, where many users, shielded by the remote communication made allowable by the internet, are not shy about posting denunciations of other ethnic and religious groups.

Ma Aye Chan Mon, an administrator for the ASEAN Community Myanmar Facebook page which has more than 5000 members, said some young people "are very involved in negative speech and respond to it very seriously".

"When I see this, I get worried that their behaviour could get even worse," she said.

Government officials and opposition political figures alike have expressed worry that Myanmar, during its transition period to democracy, is particularly vulnerable to violence stemming from hate speech. The concern is that there are those who might try to abuse the freedoms granted under the new, but still immature, political system.

Proposed mechanisms for controlling hate speech became a major point of contention in debates between the Ministry of Information and the media industry throughout 2013.

U Thiha Saw, vice president of the Interim Press Council, told *The Myanmar Times* that "contrary to freedom of speech, freedom of the press has its own ethics and disciplines to avoid hate speech".

"If media people follow these principles, there is no need to control hate speech in the media," he said.

Min Ko Naing, a leader of the 88 Generation Students activist group, said the number one priority in Myanmar was amending the 2008 Constitution, while number two was achieving peace and equality among the country's ethnic groups.

"While these two issues are critical, those who promote hatred are adding fuel to the fire. Some people are intentionally generating hatred - it's like they're collecting fuel and

then searching for a problematic case to ignite it. It is very dangerous," he said.

Min Ko Naing rejected the idea of promoting freedom of expression without controlling hate speech. "If we ignore such speech without controlling it, who will take responsibility when the consequences have arisen?"

Ethnic rights activist Mai Democracy, who is also the editor and publisher of *Chin World* fortnightly journal, said hate speech was a major issue among ethnic media organisations.

"Ethnic people have suffered for a long time and they write stories about it. But I've noticed that many ethnic media publications contain bad speech and unbalanced stories," she said.

"It is true that hate speech can cause the conflicts. The main example is the Rakhine issue. Some stories were presented as hate speech that emphasised religion. The racial and religious tensions sparked by these cases have not yet been settled."

But not everyone agrees that hate speech should be banned. U Myat Ko, an instructor at the Yangon School of Political Science, said that "ill speech" was natural to human beings, and nobody can eliminate it from the society.

"It is natural that people feel emotional when they encounter attacks on their race or identity, and there are those who might respond to such attacks by taking criminal action. But the vast majority of people don't act that way," he said.

"I do not accept prohibitions against hate speech from any point of view, even those that attack my own identity. I don't like any limitations on the people's right to talk freely, or their right to express themselves freely."

U Myat Ko said that while promoting freedom of expression might result in an increase in hate speech, it will also lead to a proliferation of criticism about hate speech and efforts to educate people on the subject.

"By encouraging such a process, those who are producing hate speech will gradually refrain from it. The process will also help build understanding between diverse parties," he said. "Hateful speech is partly based on misunderstanding and doubt. In this way, we can solve the problem of hate speech in a positive way."

Still, he admitted that the dangers posed by hate speech were greater during the current transitional period.

"A few people who cannot control their emotions might be driven to commit violent acts as a result of hate speech, and of course we must try to prevent any acts of terrorism or crimes committed for any reason, including agitation from hate speech," U Myat Ko said.

"For such problematic behaviour, we already have criminal laws to prevent them. To apply these laws with precision and without bias is solely the responsibility of the government."

Daily papers struggle to reshape the media landscape



A technician checks a copy of 7Day daily newspaper at a printing house in Yangon on September 6, 2013. Photo: AFP

Publishers continue to face challenges balancing costs and revenue, but major investors



AUNG SHIN

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IN April 2013 the Ministry of Information started granting daily licences for privately owned newspapers, ending a five-decade state monopoly on daily publications.

Although the ministry's Copyrights and Registration Division has granted 31 such licences to date, currently there are only 10 private dailies in the market: Some publishers returned the licences unused, while others closed under the pressures of daily publication.

Those that remain continue struggling with the challenges of supplying quality news to readers, printing and distributing their papers, and generating sufficient advertising revenue. But a few have received a boost by top businesspeople who have bought majority shares in their publications.

In the meantime, the Ministry of Information has entered into a joint venture with a Japanese company with the aim of shifting its own newspaper, *The New Light of Myanmar*, away from state propaganda and toward "public service media".

If the ministry's intentions are genuine, and if the shift is successful, it could cause further problems for private dailies who will have to compete with a newspaper that has long been established in the daily market.

Deputy Minister for Information U Ye Htut said he sees private daily newspapers as rivals for *The New*

Light of Myanmar in terms of news content and news quality, but not in terms of commercial viability.

"At the moment competition is getting harder, but private dailies are having trouble finding enough news to increase their circulation. This means the news content can sometimes be lower quality and less balanced," he said.

Some publications have already lost the struggle, including *Shwe Naing Ganthis* (Golden Fresh Land), which stopped printing on March 12 after barely a year of existence. The company decided to abandon its foray into daily publishing in order to focus on its weekly journals.

U Thiha Saw, the editor-in-chief of *Myanmar Freedom Daily* newspaper, said it takes time for newspapers to establish themselves as daily publications.

"I know many private dailies are bleeding to the point of near-death. They cannot make a profit in a short time," he said, adding that it's hard to compete with government newspapers in terms of distribution and logistics.

"I would say the current publishing laws are not perfect yet, but I don't think private dailies are losing because of government laws," U Thiha Saw said.

"I admit that government newspapers are ahead in the market, but we can compete in the long term in news content and news quality if we can manage the logistics. We just need to take the time."

Another struggling daily newspaper is *7Day*, which entered the market in April 2013 and has had difficulty reconciling its high production costs and low advertising revenue.

"There are many challenges in the

market, especially since our income from advertising is lower than that of weekly journals," said U Thaung Su Nyein, the chief editor of *7Day*.

U Thaung Su Nyein refused to disclose his daily losses at the newspaper, but he said he welcomed new investors in the media industry.

"Some private daily owners are starting to understand the importance of having investors. Right now supply and demand are not balanced in the market, so it's clear that newspapers will have trouble surviving in the long term without solid investors," he said.

The Yangon Times newspaper, published by Yangon Media Group, stopped daily publication last month due to heavy financial losses. Some of the staff are now working at *Democracy Today* newspaper, which was launched on March 1 by Myanmar News Network (MNN), which is a division of Sky Net broadcaster

'Some private daily owners are starting to understand the importance of having investors. Right now supply and demand are not balanced in the market.'

U Thaung Su Nyein
Editor, 7Day daily newspaper



Banners displayed at protest events may be scrutinised by the Ministry of Home Affairs to protect against the use of hate speech. Photo: Ko Taik



Legal system used to attack journalists

BILL O'TOOLE

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IN August 2012, newspapers across the country celebrated the end of pre-publication censorship by the Ministry of Information, which journalists hoped heralded a new, more open era for the nation's media.

However, reporters quickly found that this new media environment meant they were targeted not by censorship but by lawsuits and even criminal charges.

U Thiha Saw, the editor of the *Myanmar Freedom Daily* news journal, said that before 2012 everything that was considered "detrimental" to government was deleted by censors.

"There were no stories that were printed" that would end in a lawsuit, he said. "With the end of censorship, that protection is gone. All of us are exposed to these kinds of legal suits for the first time."

U Myint Kyaw, the president of the Myanmar Journalist Network, agreed, saying that the problems of the old system have merely taken a new form. "The problems continued ... because they can control press freedom through existing laws."

Well-known cases include that of Ma Khine, a reporter from Eleven Media who last December was sentenced

to three months in jail for trespassing and using obscene language during an interview at the home of a Karen State judge.

Another case involved four reporters from *Unity* journal who in February were charged under the Official Secrets Act of 1923 for reporting on the location of an alleged chemical weapons factory.

"These are sort of like intimidation, these methods," said U Thiha Saw. "Be careful: [The government] can use these laws against you"

U Thiha Saw and U Myint Kyaw agreed that they had seen a sharp

'These are sort of like intimidation, these methods. Be careful: [The government] can use these laws against you.'

U Thiha Saw

Editor, *Myanmar Freedom Daily*



The 2008 Constitution is ambiguous on the question of whether journalists are guaranteed the right to free speech. Photo: Staff

rise in lawsuits against other Yangon-based journalists in the past two years.

The most common charges are defamation and trespassing, but U Thiha Saw added, "There could be many more laws they could use against us."

The two men also agreed that the relative lack of experience and training among local reporters was making the problem worse.

"It's kind of a booming media industry," U Thiha Saw said. "Right now we have about 400 publications and 10 daily newspapers, and not all of us are well-trained."

He said many local journalists working today do not have training in media ethics or correct codes of conduct, so they are more likely to make mistakes that might make them targets for lawsuits.

"We need to build up our capacity and try to build up these [new] journalists," he said.

U Thiha Saw and U Myint Kyaw both sit on the Myanmar Press Council and continue to urge President U Thein Sein to sign the group's news media law, which is aimed at enhancing legal protections for journalists.

However, U Thiha Saw told *The Myanmar Times* that he expects the government to continue meddling with the press for some time.

He said that even if the National League for Democracy wins big in next year's national election, he can easily imagine the party using many of the same laws against journalists.

"We love [Daw Aung San Suu Kyi], we adore her, we fought for her, we worked for her. But that doesn't mean we can totally trust her not to use these laws," said U Thiha Saw.

"This government or the next government, whoever is the ruling class, they are prone to use the law to protect themselves [and] their interests."

are coming to the rescue

Shwe Than Lwin.

U Hlaing Bwar, the deputy chief editor of *Democracy Today*, said these new investors

"will be helpful to the publishing industry".

Surge Pun, the chairman of Yoma Strategic Limited and First Myanmar Investment (FMI), bought a majority share in the Mizzima Media Group in late 2013. U Sonny Swe, the co-founder of *The Myanmar Times*, was appointed chief executive officer.

He agreed that the influx of new investors in the media was a positive development, as long as these investors did not try to interfere in editorial matters.

"We have been able to increase our distribution to remote areas of the country, but we still have to work hard for editorial content and advertising revenue," U Sonny Swe said.

"I think only serious players will survive in the long run. In the future we need to go into digital publishing, but for now we are investing much money in logistics and human resources."

Another top businessman, U Thein Tun, recently became the majority shareholder in *The Myanmar Times*, which is expected to launch its daily newspaper later this year.

Ross Dunkley, the chief editor and managing director of *The Myanmar Times*, said the company will form a new board of directors, adjust its structure and move toward well-defined targets.

"For us the daily newspaper market is where we will be, there is no doubt, and at the same time we will be pondering how we may work in a new mobile phone landscape, and how to gain a foothold into television and radio," he said.

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Business

Tourism and travel sectors to find continued growth in 2014: report

PHILIP HEIJMANS

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MYANMAR'S travel and tourism sectors are set to grow 9.5 percent in 2014 to reach K933 billion (US\$971 million) as the number of international visitors to the country, especially from Asia, is expected to continue climbing, according to a study published last week by London-based research group the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC).

According to the study, *Travel & Tourism Economic Impact 2014*, direct capital into the tourism and travel sectors accounted for K849 billion (\$885 million) last year, or 1.6pc of the total gross domestic product (GDP), with capital likely to grow an average 6.9pc

annually over the next 10 years up to 1.8pc of the GDP.

"Domestic travel spending generated 68.8% of direct Travel & Tourism GDP in 2013 compared with 31.2% for visitor exports [i.e. foreign visitor spending or international tourism receipts]," the study said.

With tourism on the rise, total investment in the sector is expected to grow 4.3pc year on year, up from K108.3 billion (\$187.8 million) in 2013, while employment in the sector is expected to grow 6.5pc to reach 877,500 jobs in 2014, according to the study.

"[Sustaining growth] will require governments to implement more open visa regimes and to adopt intelligent rather than punitive taxation policies," said David Scowsill, chief executive of

WTTC.

"It is also critical that public and private partnerships ensure that long-term infrastructure and human resource needs are planned responsibly and sustainably, to absorb the inevitable growth that we are forecasting."

Despite marked improvements for the tourism and travel sectors, Myanmar is still far behind its more developed regional neighbours, the study shows.

Direct investment in Thailand's travel and tourism sectors reached \$34.9 billion last year - compared to \$971 million in Myanmar, while capital investment in those sectors in Indonesia reached \$15.5 billion last year, compared Myanmar's \$187.8 million.

Social security to be compulsory for enterprises next month

New plan would also allow independent workers to apply for social security for a fee

AYE THIDAR KYAW

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SOCIAL security rules and regulations to be promulgated on April 1 will make it compulsory for most companies to cover its employees regardless of income, said U Sein Hlaing Myint, head of Kyauktada township branch of the Social Security Board.

The new law, which was passed in 2012 but will be enacted April 1, is designed to attract more contributions from companies to provide government benefits, though concerns remain that struggling businesses may try to evade making payments.

The fees will be based on employee salaries that will be submitted to the Social Security Board while vendors, students and farmers can alternatively register with the board separately

to become eligible for benefits, he added.

"We will accept reports identifying the salaries of employees according to proposals made by the employers before we decide on a floor for the fees," U Sein Hlaing Myint said.

Social security would require compulsory payments from companies employing two or more workers in the manufacturing, entertainment, transportation, ports, the extractive industries, foreign enterprises and financial sectors.

Contributions and benefits will vary depending on the kind of business, said U Sein Hlaing Myint, adding that employers should consider social security a shield to protect them from workers' claims for compensation resulting from workplace accidents.

Economist U Hla Maung said similar systems are in place in other countries, notably Singapore, adding, "The government should survey living costs and income for each class of worker before setting the minimum payment. It is impossible to take contributions from low-income workers, even 1 percent."

A consultant with a leading commercial bank who requested anonymity as he is not authorised to speak to the media said that most employers traditionally avoid making contributions to social security, preferring instead to negotiate directly with employees on any payments, while others did not register the true number of their staff or pay contributions regularly.

"Until the playing field is levelled, employers will be reluctant to pay," he said.



Demonstrators take to the streets of Yangon holding candles as a sign of protest against parliament has passed new legislation that would see electricity prices increase come April

Electricity price h



ZAW HTIKE

EI EI TOE LWIN

IN an effort to reduce state spending, Pyidaungsu Hluttaw last week voted to move forward with a plan to increase the price of electricity as of April 1 for households by as much as 42.8 percent for units used over a certain threshold, parliament announced last week.

Though households will still pay K35 per unit up to 100 units, they will pay K40 per unit up to 200 units, and K50 for any units used above that.

Industrial users will pay K75 per unit up to 500 units, K100 from 501 to 10,000 units, K125 from 10,001 to 50,000 units, and K150 from 50,001 to 300,000 units. Above 300,000 units, the unit price will drop to K100.

Passage of the plan, which has been on the table since November and was delayed in a vote last month, has drawn the ire of the political opposition as well as industrialists who now question whether their businesses will survive.

The law was passed after extensive discussion with MPs concerned that rates should not be increased to the extent they are a burden on low-income users, or a barrier to job opportunities or national and industrial



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Dupont talks food chain

BUSINESS 31



Thilawa factory construction to start in May

PROPERTY 34

Exchange Rates (March 21 close)		
Currency	Buying	Selling
Euro	K1325	K1335
Malaysia Ringitt	K280	K295
Singapore Dollar	K755	K765
Thai Baht	K29	K30
US Dollar	K960	K965



t power shortages in Yangon in May 2013. Despite a lack of proper power supply, April 1. Photo: Kaung Htet

ike set for April 1

development. They also discussed action against people stealing power, and extending access to regions without electricity.

At current rates, the government loses K284 billion a year, a figure that will fall to K12 billion with the new rates, Minister for Electric Power U Khin Maung Soe told the hluttaw on March 17.

Reducing these losses would enable the government to build the power stations, lines and sub-stations needed to expand electricity supply to some of the 70 pc of households that are currently off the national grid.

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann urged the ministry to extend power access to other regions

by reducing the rate of loss to power leakage, which amounts to between 26pc and 39pc.

“The ministry’s total income is K1.853 trillion. If the ministry can eliminate a 30pc power loss, it can recover K618 billion. If it can eliminate just 20pc, it can save K400 billion. That money could be used for development, including raising the wages of its staff,” the speaker said.

The law also faced objections from some National League for Democracy members, who argue that the government should be prepared to provide electricity at a loss because it is a public service.

MORE ON BUSINESS 30

Exchange rate fluctuation smooth as USD falters

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MODERATE depreciation of the US dollar against Asian currencies over the past three months has resulted in marked improvements for the kyat, which has appreciated as much as 2.42 percent against the greenback since mid-February.

According to official exchange rates in Yangon, the value of the kyat against the dollar has grown from K988 on Feb 13 to K964 on March 20.

The dollar started rising in international markets in November, reaching a high in January before receding. The kyat’s resilience against the dollar, local experts said, is a testament of prudent monetary policy imposed by the Central Bank of Myanmar in recent years.

“The floating system seems to be working,” said U Hnin Oo, vice chair of the Myanmar Fisheries Federation, referring to the Bank’s implementation of a floating exchange rate in April 2012.

In addition to a floating exchange,

the Bank established a foreign exchange market, abolished the multiple exchange rate system and narrowed the gap between the official exchange rate and the black market rate, with the difference between the two sitting at about K6, a Central Bank spokesperson said.

Prior to monetary policy reforms, exchange fluctuations against foreign currencies were volatile, with the dollar appreciating to as much as K1300 in late 2010, and falling to K700 just six months later.

“The rate has changed at a smooth pace of 0.1 to 0.3pc per day since February 26,” said the Bank official. “That is compared to international rates of about 0.45pc, which occurs even as dollars have flooded into domestic markets as a result of the peak trading season.”

He said that the foreign exchange markets meanwhile have seen increased trading, with trading volume between banks and traders up from \$3 million to \$4 million per day, while inter-bank market dealing has cooled.

FEATURE

No room at the table for progress

Dispute between UMEHL and partner highlights Myanmar’s failed arbitration system

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Outside, the broken sidewalk is splattered bright red from the career betel-nut seller’s eager clients. Beside him is a narrow doorway with a long-ago etched “121”. The wooden steps are uneven and, like most stairs in downtown colonial buildings, offer a degree of give that borders on alarming.

A small door frame on the first floor, too short not to bow through, leads into a sweltering 2 metre by 5 metre room. The glue holding the brash blue paisley linoleum has long ago bubbled and disintegrated.

At a small wooden table, with a bottle of water, a roll of loo paper, a pen and paper, sits the man who will decide the fate of K1.2 billion (US\$1.24 million).

This is U Maung Maung Ohn Myaing, the arbitrator on a dispute between military-backed Myanmar Economic Holdings Limited (UMEHL) – one of the largest commercial conglomerates in the country – and its commercial partner in its Mon State Padomar Soap factory, TAG Company Limited.

To the arbitrator’s left are three men from TAG Co crowded together on withered plastic chairs. Everyone is wearing their very best and whitest *taikpons* – a traditional Myanmar garment men don for official occasions. Across from the

TAG team, barely half a metre away in the tiny room, is an empty table where UMEHL representatives have been summoned to sit.

“All I can say is we will continue calling them to appear before the Arbitral Tribunal,” U Maung Maung Ohn Myaing said. “I cannot estimate how long we will keep calling them,” he added, in response to being asked what he will do if UMEHL continues refusing to cooperate with the tribunal.

In the messy dispute, TAG Company took an operation contract from UMEHL’s subsidiary Myawaddy Trading Company for the Padomar Soap factory. TAG would pay rental charges and also purchase raw materials from the conglomerate. TAG alleges UMEHL ceased providing the raw materials and enforced distribution restrictions. Consequently TAG stopped paying regular rent to UMEHL.

UMEHL has calculated the dispute, which began in July 2012, to be worth K1.2 billion as of February 2013.

But the arbitrator they appointed to the arbitral panel recused himself seemingly at the behest of UMEHL and the military commercial enterprise declared the proceedings void.

With the case still ongoing, however, the conglomerate have not only failed to comply with summonses to appear before the tribunal, but intentionally sabotaged it by removing furniture from a room where the three parties were

expected to meet and on one occasion even went as far as to physically lock the arbitrator and TAG Co representatives out of the hearing chambers.

TAG Company president Than Oo said his was the first local company to bring UMEHL to arbitration.

“These performances of them [UMEHL] are unfair and ugly,” U Maung Maung Ohn Myaing said in a statement obtained by *The Myanmar Times* and expected to go public on March 24.

UMEHL has also publically accused U Maung Maung Ohn Myaing of bias and unethical behaviour in the local press, accusations the arbitrator vehemently denies.

“If all of you do [is] not exercise in accordance with provisions of existing laws naturally and respectfully ... you seem to be force the youths of the next generation toward wrong way so that those youth may take false manners,” U Maung Maung Ohn Myaing said in the statement

The admonishment, while dramatic, goes to the heart of the failed arbitral proceeding’s impact.

As investment increases, the need for a cost-effective, expedient and reliable commercial dispute resolution process will also increase.

In McKinsey Global Initiative’s 2013 report on doing business in Myanmar, the need for reliable

MORE ON BUSINESS 30

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Garment sector to hit \$1.5b revenue mark, experts say

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REVENUES in the garment sector are expected to grow by as much as 50 percent for the 2013-14 fiscal year and reach US\$1.5 billion, experts said.

Daw Khaing Khaing Nwe, secretary of the Myanmar Garment Manufacturers' Association, told *The Myanmar Times* that the sector has continued to benefit from relaxed trade rules from abroad, while the country has seen a distinct uptick in foreign interest in the sector.

"After we officially got GSP [Generalised System of Preferences] status from the EU in mid-2013, exports began to substantially increase," she said.

With revenues growing and international brands such as Tesco, UK-based Dewhirst and US apparel giant Gap Inc looking to invest in Myanmar in the near future, growth would likely continue in the coming years, she said.

"This will give the local garment industry the ability to develop even further," she said. "[Representatives from US-based retailer] Guess came to speak with me just this morning."

Before the US and the EU imposed sanctions during military rule, the Myanmar garment industry earned more than \$800 million from exports, with the figure increasing to just over \$1 billion in 2013 after sanctions were lifted. With a US GSP yet to be reinstated, however, exports to the US remain small.

Still, the number of garment factories has grown to more than 200, up from 181 in November 2012, according

to MGMA data.

Nevertheless, the sector has been plagued by a number of issues including labour shortages, logistics, infrastructure and electricity supply problems continue to hamper profits.

"We've started providing training and we're planning to launch mobile training sessions and encouraging owners to start in-house training in their factories," Daw Khaing Khaing Nwe said.

Daw Aye Aye Han, managing director of Shweyi Zabe garment factory in Shwe Pyi Thar township, Yangon, said that additional problems have also arisen with the tide of new investment, including inadequate sewing

fees being offered by European companies, while other foreign retailers have been reluctant to follow through investment promises.

"Only 30 percent of the EU businesses that have discussed working with local factories have actually worked with us," she said. "Most EU businesses are still offering the same prices they paid before sanctions. In their countries, prices have not increased much over the past decade, but in Myanmar prices are increasing all the time. So are wages."

She said that with the expansion of factories also comes a growing need for workers, a need that has grown from 80,000 to about 250,000 over the past three or four years.



Factory employees stitch garments at a site in Yangon. Photo: Staff

Poor practices prove taxing for government



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RAMPANT corruption and poor collection practices will likely make it impossible for the government to fully benefit from the recently enacted 2014 Union Tax Law, experts said.

On paper, the 2014 Union Tax Law would increase the tax to gross domestic product (GDP) ratio from 3 to 4.5 percent this year providing much needed revenues to the government, but staffing issues as well as taxpayer bribery will continue to be factors moving forward, legal expert U Thaw Nay Zaw told *The Myanmar Times* last week.

"In the 2010-2011 fiscal year, earnings from tax amounted to 2.3 percent - which is very low - because of widespread evasion and inadequate collection practices," he said. "People didn't see the benefits of government services and the government relied solely on income from natural resources."

"Until 2011, the tax laws had effectively remained unchanged for 40 years," he said.

One business expert, who asked not to be named for fear of repercussions,

said it has become commonplace for would-be taxpayers not to expect public services would be offered in exchange for their hard-earned income.

"We see no benefit in paying taxes. The only difference between white [legal] money and black money is that people with black money have much more of it," he said, adding that tax collection procedures were negligible under military rule and people are slow to trust the government.

According to the new law, income tax rates for the next financial year will grow to 5pc for a yearly personal income from K2 million to 5 million, 10pc for the K5-10 million band, 15pc for K10-20 million, 20pc for people earning K20-30 million, and 25pc for those earning above K30 million.

Of a population of 6 million in Mandalay, only 44,892 individuals and 207 firms paid any taxes during the 2012-2013 financial year, Mandalay Region's chief minister U Ye Myint said during a seminar last month.

"A worker's tax payments should not exceed his rent. It's also important to keep the gap between the poor and the rich narrow," said U Ye Myat Thu, joint secretary of the Mandalay Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The law provides for imprisonment of one to three years for failing to declare income, and from three to 10 years for fraud.

ELECTRICITY CONTINUED FROM 28

"What about the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Religious Affairs?" National League for Democracy Representative Daw Sandar Min asked. "They never make a profit."

Raising rates would also raise the price of any goods produced with electricity, she added.

In the new rates the government will cut the cost of electricity for heavy industrial users that consume more than 200,000 units a month, though most mid-sized factories use far less than that amount, Toe Nandar Tin, owner of the Annawa Dewi frozen seafood factory in Yangon Region, told *The Myanmar Times*.

"A moderate-sized factory, using

30,000 units a month, could end up spending at least 60pc more on power," she said.

"The new rate will cost much more. I don't know whether my factory will survive or not, especially as the minimum wage law will raise the cost of labour as well."

According to figures from the President's Office, there are 127,000 businesses registered in Myanmar, of which 99pc are SMEs thought to use up to 20,000-30,000 units a month.

Economist U Hla Maung said the government's rationale for increasing prices was "nonsense". "Increasing rates will push up the cost of business and impact commodity prices. Everybody and every sector will suffer, and so will poverty reduction measures

and the economy in general. The government is talking nonsense," he said.

He added that instead of raising rates, the government should subsidise the development of industry, to be paid for through future tax collection.

International finance institutions including the World Bank and Asian Development Bank, however, have said in the past that not increasing the prices could stunt economic growth and that consumers would eventually need to pay more.

"Without new funding, the electricity supply will not improve and the shortages which affect Myanmar's towns and cities presently will get worse," the World Bank said in a statement in November.

— Translation by Thiri Min Htun

UMEHL CONTINUED FROM 29

arbitration practices was highlighted.

"Our interviews with many investors and embassy trade representatives indicate that concerns about whether the rule of law is fully established and embedded into the business environment in Myanmar is a major source of uncertainty for prospective investors," the report read.

"Instilling confidence in the sanctity of contracts and ensuring that arbitration is available in the event of disagreements are both important considerations for investors contemplating deals with local partners and the government."

Worldwide, arbitration is the preferred commercial dispute resolution process, allowing companies to operate in an often opaque arena and, through the oversight of an arbitrator or arbitral panel, negotiate a resolution.

But a lack of experienced

arbitrators and legal counsel, coupled with a dearth of arbitration throughout Myanmar's 20th and 21st century legal and business history and the rebellious actions of UMEHL in the current arbitration, highlight the system's weaknesses.

The arbitration tribunal at No 121 Anawrahta Road is modest to say the least. There are no computers, there is no board for displaying evidence. No-one has the reams of paperwork that in the West is commonly seen being dragged by hapless junior staffers to tribunals like this. There are no recording devices and there are no filing systems.

Physically - and legally - arbitration tribunals in Myanmar are lacking, experts agree.

U Maung Maung Ohn Myaing, the arbitrator in this dispute, said arbitration in Myanmar faces a rocky road ahead.

"To date, arbitration in the country has been okay, but in the future it will not be sufficient."



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WASHINGTON

EU will not investigate Cambodia trade deal

THE European Union's top trade official said last week that while a delegation from the European Parliament will look at land-dispute claims on Cambodian sugar farms later this month, an investigation into the country's duty-free access to the EU market is, at the moment, unwarranted.

Speaking to reporters at Raffles Hotel Le Royal in Phnom Penh, European trade commissioner Karel De Gucht sidestepped demands by rights groups and from within the EU that the country's trade preferences under the Everything But Arms agreement be revoked in light of scathing allegations tied to the expanding sugar industry.

"It is obvious that it is a very sensitive matter in Europe, and while if there is a structural offence of human rights, we have to launch an investigation, then we would do it," Mr De Gucht said. "But on the other hand, we are of the opinion that this is not the case with respect to sugarcane," he added.

Sugar companies in Cambodia have been accused of widespread land grabbing and forced evictions, leading to calls from rights groups to reconsider the EBA trade scheme that they say is benefiting Cambodia's wealthy at the expense of the poor.

21

Protesters detained in a nationwide garment strike in January

Their calls have not gone unnoticed, as the impending delegation's visit and actions by other firms with interests in Cambodia make clear. Coca-Cola is conducting its own investigation into Cambodian sugar producers and the industry's impact on the local community.

Mr De Gucht is in the region about a week after bilateral meetings between Cambodia and the EU were held in Brussels, when items ranging from trade to politics were raised. The trip was part of a four-day visit to Vietnam, Cambodia and Myanmar during which Mr De Gucht will try to strengthen EU trade links with the Asean countries.

Mr De Gucht met last week with Minister of Commerce Sun Chanthol, Justice Minister Ang Vong Vathana and Deputy Prime Minister Sok An at Mr Chanthol's office.

The commissioner said the delegation arriving later this month, a visit connected to an ongoing working group on sugar issues that has involved meetings between local officials and the EU's ambassador to Cambodia, would include two land rights experts.

Mr Chanthol, the commerce minister, said that the meeting at his office lasted for one hour and that they discussed issues of land concessions for sugar plantations and the status of 21 protesters that were detained in January as part of a nationwide garment strike.

"I informed the EU Commissioner of the Royal Government's commitment to resolve the allegation of land grabbing linked to the land concession for sugar plantation and refinery," he said. "I informed the Commissioner that the Ad hoc committee met three times, twice with the participation of the EU Ambassador, to find solutions that can satisfy all concerned parties."

— The Phnom Penh Post

BUSINESS PROFILE

Focus on the food chain

DuPont makes its debut in Myanmar

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FOR Hsing Ho the best business approach is to think globally and act locally – an approach the recently opened DuPont operation in Myanmar plans on taking seriously as it turns its eye and expertise toward the fragile food chain in the long isolated nation.

"We believe that as a global company there is a lot to be learned at each locality. The local characteristics are unique for example in the farming community, uniqueness around the weather, the soil, the conditions and so on and so forth that is very locally based," Mr Ho said at the launch of DuPont in Myanmar.

As DuPont ASEAN managing director, Mr Ho has seen a natural marriage between the US-born science company's new focus on agriculture and the food chain and the needs of predominantly agriculture economies in the region.

"Myanmar today and in the past has been an agriculture economy and the kinds of agriculture development that would be relevant and important for Myanmar is first and foremost rice," Mr Ho said of the primary food chain needs in the country.

"As you may know, rice was the number one export commodity for Myanmar for many years, several decades ago," he said on a recent trip to Myanmar to launch the DuPont operation here.

"Myanmar wants to drive in that direction and regain that position as a major rice producer. So rice is important to the country and also to us because in Du Pont we have a significant initiative in our research and development effort focusing on rice so we believe that we can support the country's direction in developing higher yield and higher productivity."

Higher productivity is especially critical for accelerating the process of urbanisation, a characteristic linked to growth of GDP, Mr Ho said.

"For a country to grow in a sustainable manner at a high rate, it needs to continue to urbanise," he said.

Improving agricultural yields and productivity freed up an element of the rural workforce that would turn toward urbanisation and provide human capital for modern industry and manufacturing, Mr Ho explained.

As the GDP grows and the country looks to modernise, reliance on rice will be supplemented with an increased demand for meat, Mr Ho



Hsing Ho, left, director of Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation Thant Lwin Oo, center, and Sittideth Sriprateth cut a ribbon at the opening of DuPont Myanmar last month. Photo: Supplied

said, adding that DuPont was also working on corn technology projects in this respect.

"As you know, corn is the major feed stock for poultry and other livestock," Mr Ho said.

"As the country of 60 million people begin to develop, as the people begin to get better income, they will want to eat probably more meat and

more nutrition and more protein, and as the demand of that goes up, the demand for corn and the feed for livestock will go up significantly. That's our experience in Thailand where the consumption of feed is quite high. We believe that Myanmar is going to move in that direction for increasing the demand for corn as well."

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NEW YORK

Alibaba and Weibo see advantages in US listing

IN picking the US to launch initial public offerings rather than their home market, Chinese technology companies Alibaba and Weibo are opting for maximum visibility and access to capital.

Alibaba, an e-commerce giant that blends elements of Google, eBay and Amazon, confirmed its plans last week to launch a US listing. US press reports have said the offering could be as big as US\$15 billion, which would make it the largest Chinese IPO ever and the biggest since Facebook's in 2012.

Weibo, considered the Chinese version of microblogging site Twitter, said Friday it planned a US offering to raise \$500 million.

A third Chinese technology company, JD.com, an online retailer and a smaller competitor of Alibaba, in January filed to launch its own IPO in the US for up to \$1.5 billion.

The listings have sent a charge through Wall Street, where new offerings through January and February are at their highest level since 2000, just before the internet bubble burst, according to Renaissance Capital.

Investors are "salivating" over Alibaba, the best known of three companies, said Mace Blinksilver, director of Marblehead Asset Management.

For Alibaba, a New York listing allows it to avoid an offering on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange, which balked at efforts by founders and senior management to retain control over the board by issuing dual classes of stock.

But the US listing also means the company "will have access to the most liquid market in the world, where investors surely prefer to buy stock minted

on Wall Street rather than in Hong Kong", said Gregori Volokhine, president of Meeschaert Capital Markets.

A US listing sends a message to investors that "we are international, even though most of our business is in China", said Jack Gold, president of the research firm J Gold Associates.

Mr Gold said a US listing could also enable the companies to grow more easily.

"The internet these days is about growing by acquiring other companies," Gold said. "It's easier to pick up other companies while being US-listed than Chinese-listed."

Scores of Chinese companies have gained US market listings in the past decade, the number of Chinese IPOs peaking in 2010 with 39 offerings, according to data from Dealogic.

But they sank to just two in 2012, amid investor distrust after numerous accusations of fraud and other ills, which led to plunging share prices and forced delistings.

Such problems were particularly acute in cases of "reverse mergers" in which Chinese companies bought publicly traded but essentially defunct US companies, taking a backdoor route to a public listing.

Mr Blinksilver said investors are sceptical about small names, but that a big blue chip company like Alibaba will get the benefit of the doubt.

"Certainly that's been a problem in the past," Mr Gold said of the Chinese listings. "But there have been other Chinese companies - Lenovo comes to mind - that have done OK in this regard. We'll have to see." - AFP



The headquarters of Japan's electronic commerce and internet company Rakuten is seen in Tokyo. Rakuten is the world's largest online marketplace for elephant ivory and whale meat products, an environmental campaign group said.

Photo: AFP

Japan retailer slammed over ivory and whale meat products

JAPANESE e-commerce giant Rakuten is the world's largest online marketplace for elephant ivory and whale meat products, an environmental campaign group said last week, saying that running advertisements was akin to arming poachers.

The Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) said a search for "ivory" on Rakuten's Japanese website last month yielded more than 28,000 ads for elephant ivory products.

A search on the site in June 2013 for "whale" called up more than 1200 food products, many of them originating from protected species, the London-based group said in a report.

EIA President Allan Thornton said the advertisements were "effectively as deadly as giving bullets to elephant poachers and harpoons to whalers".

"Rakuten must act immediately to ban all ads selling elephant and whale products or its global brand will be irrevocably tainted with the

ongoing mass slaughter of these species," he urged.

The Tokyo-based company owns several shopping sites around the world including Rakuten Shopping in the United States, Play.com in Britain and PriceMinister in France. It also owns Canadian e-book reader Kobu and is a major shareholder in Pinterest.

The commercial hunting of whales is prohibited in the Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary, which

was designated by the International Whaling Commission in 1994, but Japan catches the animals there under a "scientific research" loophole in the moratorium.

Ivory trading was banned in 1989 under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, an international agreement between governments, but the illegal ivory trade - estimated to be worth up to \$10 billion (7 billion euros) a year - continues to be fuelled by demand in Asia and the Middle East.

Africa's elephant population is estimated at 500,000 animals, compared with 1.2 million in 1980 and 10 million in 1900, and they are listed as vulnerable.

The EIA ran a successful campaign against Amazon.com in 2012 to force it to ban the sale of all whale products, and last year condemned Google for failing to abide by its official policy banning sale of elephant ivory or whale products.

- AFP

BILLION

\$10

Estimated global earnings from the illegal ivory trade

TAIPEI

Official from Taiwan's Acer held over alleged insider trading

AN official from Taiwanese computer maker Acer was formally detained last week on insider trading charges, a day after prosecutors searched the firm's headquarters.

The prosecutors along with intelligence officers raided 14 different locations including Acer's headquarters north of Taipei.

They detained for questioning Acer's acting spokesperson, a human resources division manager and six other people not from the company.

After an initial investigation, the Acer acting spokesperson and a stockbroker not employed by the firm were taken into custody while the others were released on bail.

"The two were held on grave suspicions of insider trading, and if released, they might collude and destroy evidence [against them]," prosecutor Feng Cheng told reporters.

Local media said the alleged insider trading may have taken place after the company reported a worse-than-expected third-quarter loss of Tw\$13.1 billion (US\$442.2 million) last year.

Senior executives have taken voluntary salary cuts of 30 percent since January as the company struggles financially.

Acer has set up a business restructuring group led by founder Stan Shih, who also returned as chair late last year and aims to revive the company by targeting cloud-computing services.

Mr Shih founded Acer in 1976. He built it into the world's second-largest PC maker in its heyday, and one of the best known Taiwanese brands internationally, before retiring in 2004.

But Acer's fortunes have worsened in recent years as sales have been hit by competition from Apple and other rivals. - AFP

Fitch downgrades Russia outlook to negative over Ukraine crisis

THE Fitch ratings agency last week revised its outlook for Russia to negative from stable after the United States slapped new sanctions against Russian officials amid the Ukraine crisis.

"The revision of the outlook to negative reflects the potential impact of sanctions on Russia's economy and business environment," Fitch said in a statement.

"Since US and EU banks and investors may well be reluctant to lend to Russia under the current circumstances,

the economy may slow further and the private sector may require official support," it said.

On March 20, US President Barack Obama announced a new round of punitive measures against 20 Russians, including some of President Vladimir Putin's closest allies, for Moscow's takeover of Crimea, while the European Union also slapped an asset freeze and travel ban on 12 more Russians and Ukrainians.

"The direct impact of sanctions

announced so far is minor, but the incorporation of Crimea into the Russian Federation will likely lead the EU and US to extend sanctions further in response," the rating agency said.

"Furthermore, foreign investors may anticipate further official action and restrict Russian entities' access to external financing," it added.

"In a worst-case scenario, the US may prevent foreign financial institutions from doing business with Russian banks and corporates." - AFP



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Sr.	Position	Type of Contract	Duty Station	Deadline
1.	Database consultant	Special Service Agreement	Yangon	4 April 2014

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Email: myanmar.office@unfpa.org

For further details, please see the vacancy announcement posted at UN billboard. No.6, Natmauk Road, Yangon and also at UNFPA website (<http://myanmar.unfpa.org>)

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



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Sr.	Position and Grade	Type of Contract	Duty Station	Deadline
1.	Project Assistant (Communication) SC5	Service Contract	Yangon	7 April 2014
2.	Senior National Programme Officer (NOC)	Fixed-Term	Yangon	7 April 2014

Applications should be addressed to **UNFPA** Representative. **Attention:** International Operations Manager, Room A-07, UNFPA, No.6, Natmauk Road, Yangon.

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

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3.	Monitoring and Evaluation Officer (IICA-3)	Yangon	International	31 March 2014
4.	M&E Specialist (IICA-3)	Yangon	International	31 March 2014
5.	Finance Officer- Capacity Building, Monitoring and Assurance (LICA-6)	Yangon	National	2 April 2014

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Property

BUSINESS EDITOR: Philip Heijmans | pheijmans13@gmail.com

First Thilawa SEZ factory construction to start in May



ZAW HTIKE

zawhtikemjn1981@gmail.com

CONSTRUCTION on the first factories to be built in the multi-billion dollar Thilawa Special Economic Zone (SEZ) will begin in May, the chief executive for the project announced last week.

Takasahi Yanai, president and chief executive of Myanmar-Japan Thilawa Development Co, announced the SEZ's latest plans during a speech at Yangon's Sedona Hotel on March 18, adding that some of those factories could be operational before the end of 2015.

The announcement comes after more than US\$21 million worth of shares of SEZ went on sale earlier this month, while land leasing for the SEZ is still expected to go forward before May.

The large-scale project worth at least \$3.28 billion has drawn 17 foreign companies thus far across the manufacturing, garments, processed foods and electronics industries. Though the names of those firms have yet to be released, Mr Yanai said some that the interested parties hail from Australia, China, Japan and Hong Kong.

"We're in a better position than we expected," he said.

With some investors are concerned that the industrial zone could face a labour shortage, Mr Yanai said his firm would be prepared to discuss a labour training program if need be.

"We think industries investing in Thilawa will be able to find enough labour resources, as the SEZ is very near to Yangon, which has 6 to 7 million people in it," he said.



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

Still, others are worried that renting land in the SEZ would likely be unaffordable to many potential investors.

"The rent would not be affordable for local businesses over the long term," said U Myat Thin Aung, chair of the management committee for Hlaing Tharyar industrial estate in Yangon. "They may be able to do

it however under a shorter period than what is being asked, say five years."

Under the law, foreign investors are permitted to rent land in Myanmar for up to 70 years. The zone is being developed by a Japanese consortium as a 39pc shareholder with participation from Mitsubishi, Marubeni and

Sumitomo corporations, and locally run Myanmar Thilawa SEZ Holdings (MTSH), who together have 41pc of the shares.

An additional 10pc of the project belongs to the Thilawa SEZ management committee, while the remaining shares belong to the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

Construction on Cambodia Plaza finally resumes

AFTER postponing construction due to the 2008 economic crisis, work on the ambitious Cambodia Plaza in Phnom Penh is gradually being resumed.

The plaza is a mixed development project along Russian Boulevard close to the western end of the 7 January Overpass.

Cambodia Plaza project manager Adam Liv said the project is moving forward, and four floors of office space will be open next month, while a three-storey hotel with 72 rooms and an automobile showroom will open together at the end of the year.

Some parts of the project continue to be on hold, he added.

"The supermarket and the apartment units have been on hold since 2009, and I don't know when the projects will restart," Mr Liv said, adding that the project owner is hiring an American architect to redesign and develop the blueprints of the mall and hotel, replacing the previous ones prepared by a Chinese designer.

According to Mr Liv, Cambodia Plaza occupies 15 hectares, and half of the land would be used for gardens and a landscaped lake.

Mr Liv was unable to confirm the total investment capital for the project, but said that \$3 million has been spent on compacting the land.

Cambodia Plaza is being developed by Lipo Politan Corporation in cooperation with Knight Frank, which will be managing the office space and property services.

'The supermarket and the apartment units have been on hold since 2009, and I don't know when the projects will restart.'

Adam Liv

Cambodia Plaza Project Manager

HOUSE OF THE WEEK



The house that counts

This three-bedroom, 1300-square-foot luxury apartment in tranquil Shwe Hinn Thar Road, Hlaing township, is convenient for Yangon International Airport, Inya Lake and Yangon University.

The European-style design also includes a maid's room, living room, dining room, three bathrooms and a kitchen. It is fully furnished, and includes basement car parking.

- Myat Nyein Aye

Location: Shwe Hinn Thar Road, Shwe Hinn Thar Tower C1, Hlaing township
Price: US\$4500.00 a month (negotiable)
Contact: U Tin Tun (James), [Owner]
Phone: 09421021621 / 09254001189

Myanmar sees more real estate advertising online as internet users grow

NOE NOE AUNG
noenoeag@gmail.com
TIN YADANAR HTUN
yadanar.mcm@gmail.com

ONLINE advertising is increasingly becoming the way to advertise property, industry professionals said.

Though print advertising still dominates the market, improving internet speed and expanded access to mobile phones are encouraging customers to go online.

"Banking is also more devel-

oped," said Michiel Bakker, country manager at online estate agents house.com. "A website that is completely free, always accessible from your phone and easy to use in Myanmar and English is a clear revolution for the Myanmar market," he added.

U Hein Moe Myint Lwin, CEO of Estate Myanmar, said viewing properties via websites could be the future of real estate. "Advertising properties online is quite supportive for the business," he said. "Since the traffic got so bad, we cannot reach as many customers. Still, there are many customers who enjoy looking at a real house. So we can't count on online advertising very much. I expect advertising online will be really widespread in the next couple of years, depending on connection speed," he added.

Several agencies are venturing online, setting up or upgrading websites. More than 50 new websites have appeared, he said.

50

Estimated new websites featuring local realty classifieds

Po Eavkong, managing director of Asia Real Estate, said that the project had not seen any remarkable developments since being put on hold in 2009. However, he also noted that, since the completion of the 7 Makara Flyover, access to the project had improved.

He also noted that the overpass, with its attendant traffic noise, might be a disincentive to potential homeowners.

In theory, Mr Eavkong said, apartments in the area might sell for as much as \$290,000, but since the completion of the nearby flyover demand had been weak, and apartments might actually sell for as little as \$220,000.

General manager of VMC Real Estate Dith Channa said the fact that the project had been subject to such long delays made it more risky because there were now so many competing projects.

But he also pointed out that for Cambodia Plaza itself, the flyover was more of an advantage than a problem.

Because the project is located on the main road and at a distance from the flyover, it was unaffected by traffic noise, he said.

- The Phnom Penh Post

“We think industries investing in Thilawa will be able to find enough labour resources, as the SEZ is very near to Yangon”

— Takasahi Yanai, president and chief executive of Myanmar-Japan Thilawa Development Co

Thai election invalidated

WORLD 38



IN PICTURES

A worker sits on scaffolding at the entrance to Bago Region's Shwemawdaw Pagoda earlier this month.

Photo: Philip Heijmans

World Bank approves \$73m for DR Congo hydro project

THE World Bank last week approved US\$73.1 million in financing to the Democratic Republic of Congo to support development of the massive Inga 3 hydropower project in the energy-hungry country.

In mid-February the IMF executive board delayed an official review of the proposed technical assistance package for the project that faces opposition from Congolese social and environmental groups.

The \$73.1 million grant, along with \$33.4 million approved by the African Development Bank late last year, will provide the Democratic Republic of Congo with the world-class expertise to develop its hydropower potential, the World Bank

said in a statement.

“By being involved in the development of Inga 3 BC from an early stage we can help ensure that its development is done right so it can be a game changer by providing electricity to millions of people and powering commerce and industry,” Makhtar Diop, the World Bank's vice president for Africa, said in the statement.

DR Congo, Africa's third-largest country, is estimated to have the world's third-largest hydropower potential, after China and Russia.

The huge Inga 3 Basse Chute project near Matadi would divert Congo River waters into a 7.5-mile (12-kilometre) channel and then pass them through a 330-foot (100-metre) high

hydropower dam on the Bundi Valley before releasing the water back into the river.

The intake would be above the existing Inga 1 and Inga 2 dams, and the outflow downstream from both.

Inga 3 is expected to generate 4800 megawatts of power, equivalent to the output of three third-generation nuclear reactors.

The World Bank said the technical assistance project will finance environmental and social assessments to guide the development of the project; it does not include any construction or operational activities.

No decision has been taken on whether it will support the eventual construction of Inga 3, the global development bank said. — AFP

WASHINGTON

US housing falls short in February

NEW US home construction fell slightly in February from January, the Commerce Department reported last week, as the market continued to suffer from harsh winter storms.

New home starts took place at an annual pace of 907,000 units, compared to a 909,000 unit pace in January.

That was around 11 percent lower than December's strong level and down from 969,000 a year ago, but still relatively strong.

Meanwhile the issuance of building permits for housing rose in

February after a two-month slump, suggesting a potential rebound in overall construction as the winter ebbs.

The sluggish activity in the housing and construction sector since December has sparked worries among some economists of a fundamental slowdown in the economy.

But most analysts are chalking it up to the series of severe winter storms that have swept across the eastern half of the country since December, dampening much other economic activity. — AFP

WARSAW

Volkswagen gets set to build new \$1.1 billion factory in Poland

GERMAN auto giant Volkswagen will invest 800 million euros (US\$1.1 billion) in a new factory near the western Polish city of Poznan, Poland's foreign investment agency said last week.

“The group will invest close to 3.4 billion zloty in Wrzesnia, where it will employ more than 2,300 people” to produce its popular Crafter utility vehicles, the government agency said in a statement.

Volkswagen said in a separate statement on March 18 that construction of the factory was scheduled to start at the end of 2014 with the first cars expected to roll off production lines in the fourth quarter of 2016.

The new facility, “will become the second site in Poland for Volkswagen commercial vehicles after Poznan,” where the Caddy delivery vehicle has been in production “for more than a decade,” it said.

“With the decision to build the new Crafter in Poland we are setting a new strategic course for our light commercial vehicles,” Volkswagen board member Leif Oestling said in the company statement.

“The Crafter is the ideal candidate for all growth markets in the world and will further advance Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles along its path as a globally operating manufacturer,” he added.

The Crafter model is now manufactured in Germany at Mercedes plants in Ludwigsfelde and Duesseldorf under an agreement with Volkswagen Daimler, which will soon expire.

The Volkswagen Group already produces Caddy 3 and T5 utility vehicles in Poland.

It also manufactures buses and engines.

— AFP

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SYDNEY

Chinese property investment faces Australia scrutiny

An increase in Chinese investments is being met with criticism from local buyers who claim they are losing out

FOREIGN investment in Australia's housing market will be examined by a national parliamentary committee, its chair said last week, following a study that said Chinese investors are squeezing out local buyers.

Kelly O'Dwyer said the House Standing Committee on Economics inquiry into affordable housing would probe the foreign investment framework to see whether it helps increase housing stock, and whether it is driving up prices.

"We know that the great Australian dream is to own your own home and we know that that's pretty difficult - even with two incomes and lots of years of savings and a large mortgage," Ms O'Dwyer told ABC radio.

"So we want to make sure that we're not making it even more difficult."

Chinese investment is a sensitive issue in Australia, where rural politicians have argued against selling valuable farm and mineral land to foreigners, and there are indications of an influx in Chinese investors in housing.

Investment bank Credit Suisse this month estimated that Chinese investors could pour AU\$40 billion (US\$36 billion) into Australia's residential property over the next seven years and this could push up prices in what is already one of the world's most expensive housing markets.

In a report, Credit Suisse said Chinese buyers - who are restricted to buying only new homes - purchased 12 percent of new housing across Australia per year.

But they concentrated their buying in Sydney and Melbourne, acquiring 18 pc and 14 pc of new supply respectively, meaning they were a much more powerful force in those cities where home prices are climbing.

"The Reserve [central] Bank governor made some comments in the recent parliamentary oversight hearing of the Economics Committee, where he said all foreign investment does have an effect on prices," Ms O'Dwyer said.

"We want to know though whether or not the current laws and the current framework is being properly adhered to and whether it is a truly distorting impact."

- AFP

BILLION

\$36

Credit Suisse's estimate of what Chinese investors could spend in Australia's residential property over the next seven years

FRANKFURT

Heidelberg Cement is confident for 2014

HEIDELBERG cement, a leading producer of building materials, said last week it expects sales and earnings to grow this year as it benefits from the emerging recovery in key markets.

"The management board has set the goal of further increasing revenue, operating income and profit for the financial year in 2014 on a comparable basis," Heidelberg Cement said in a statement.

"In 2014, we will benefit from the economic development in the industrial countries, particularly in North America, the United Kingdom, Germany, and northern Europe," said chief executive Bernd Scheifele.

Those countries generated nearly

half of the group's revenues.

"Furthermore, we are improving our market position in growth markets with the commissioning of modern production facilities. In view of these factors ... we consider ourselves well-equipped to benefit over-proportionally from the accelerating economic growth," Mr Scheifele said.

Last year, Heidelberg Cement posted its "best results since the financial crisis," the CEO said.

Net profit jumped 79 percent to 945 million euros (US\$1.3 billion) and underlying or operating profit was unchanged at 1.607 billion euros (\$2.23 billion), while sales slipped by 0.6 pc.

- AFP

Israel approves 186 new east Jerusalem homes: councillor

ISRAEL granted final approval last week for plans to build another 186 new homes in annexed Arab east Jerusalem, a city councillor told AFP.

Yosef Pepe Alalu said the city's local planning council had granted "final approval" to plans to build 40 new homes in Pisgat Zeev and 146 in Har Homa.

Both are settlement neighbourhoods built on territory seized by Israel during the 1967 Six Day War and later annexed in a move never recognised by the international community.

The decision comes as US-led peace talks teeter on the brink of collapse ahead of an April 29 deadline, with Washington fighting an uphill battle to get the sides to agree to a framework proposal to extend the negotiations to the year's end.

So far, the Palestinians have flatly refused to countenance any extension, partly due to Israel's ongoing settlement construction which has shown no let-up since talks began in late July 2013.

Lior Amihai, a spokesperson for the settlement watchdog Peace Now, said, "This is a sad decision by the



Ultra-orthodox Jewish boys wearing costumes stand on the balcony of their house in Jerusalem during the Purim holiday March 17. The Israeli government is moving forward with its controversial plans to expand construction of new homes in disputed territories. Photo: AFP

Jerusalem municipality, with the government's approval, to advance the construction of 186 new homes in

east Jerusalem as the international community is trying to keep the negotiations alive." - AFP

FEATURE

Boosting Ethiopia's economic growth with building boom

ABOVE Addis Ababa's concrete skyline, cranes tower high amid blasts from nearby drills and diggers. At the feet of buildings shrouded in bamboo scaffolding, excavators dig up dirt tracks, to be replaced by paved roads and a modern railway.

It is a scene common to most neighbourhoods in the Ethiopian capital, which has turned into a giant building zone and a city in transformation.

"It looks like a construction site when we compare from the previous time," said Berhanu Kassa, manager of B.B. Construction in the Ethiopian capital.

"Especially in the past five years, it's a really big change," he added, speaking at the site of his latest project, a mixed-use commercial building on one of the city's main thoroughfares where workers unload concrete slabs from a delivery truck.

Addis Ababa's construction boom - funded both from private and public coffers - is being driven by the country's recent rapid economic growth.

But the government hopes it will attract further investment and help industrialise the economy in order to reach middle income status by 2025.

The public works projects, worth billions of dollars, include new roads, railways and massive power generation schemes across the country.

Meanwhile the majority of new buildings are owned by private investors, who by law must be Ethiopian citizens.

The development promises to boost Ethiopia's economic growth, officially 9.7 percent last year, though the International Monetary Fund (IMF) pegs it at closer to 7pc.

"The basic engine blocks of economic transformation are the infrastructure," said Zemedeneh Negatu, managing partner at Ernst & Young in Ethiopia.

"The Achilles heel of Africa is power, lack of power, lack of road

networks, lack of the basic needs that you need to transform your economy."

But analysts point out that the boom in construction is also a symptom of the weakness of the financial system, which leaves the business community with few investment opportunities outside of the sector.

"This is the most attractive investment opportunity in the country for the time being since we do not have a financial market that is working properly," said the head of the IMF mission in Ethiopia, Jan Mikkelsen.

"There's no financial markets, no stock exchange, so real estate investments seem to be the most attractive from that point of view," he added.

The majority of the new buildings are hotels, apartments and offices.

Most are being built by Ethiopian-owned construction firms, though foreign-owned contractors from China or Turkey are cashing in too.

The government said the big push in the sector - which is bolstered by state-led incentives such as tax breaks and ready access to land - is driven by the need to create jobs for Ethiopia's 91 million people, about one in four of whom are unemployed.

"We are struggling to eradicate poverty and create jobs," said Desalegne Ambaw, state minister for urban development and construction.

Officials say 4 million jobs have been created in the last three years, including an increase in construction sector employment.

But Mr Mikkelsen warns that resources should not be pooled too heavily into infrastructure projects, no matter how crucial for development.

"There is a need for construction, but of course there's a limit to how much you can get out of that and these are potential resources

that could have been used for other means and maybe more export-oriented businesses as well given that there is an urgent need for more foreign exchange," he said.

Imports outweigh exports by a factor of four, according to IMF data, which starves the country of foreign exchange.

The ambitious state-funded infrastructure projects also threaten to strain public finances in Ethiopia.

IMF forecasts see the public deficit possibly swelling to 44pc of gross domestic product within several years, nearly double the current level that means the country is borrowing a fifth of what it spends.

As it is, the financing shortfall for public works projects is already 10pc of GDP.

But for now, Mr Berhanu said he is grateful for the government's focus on the construction sector, since his business is booming.

"From a business perspective we are busy. Sometimes it is even beyond our capacity," he said, adding that his company has grown from three people to over 300 over the last 20 years.

Mr Berhanu said Ethiopia's economic growth is fuelling the expansion of his business by creating a demand for new infrastructure, and he in turn was contributing to this by creating employment and supporting local industries.

"I hire a lot of workers here, I use a lot of local materials, I use a lot of subcontractors, and because of that all we grow together and the country benefits," he said.

Mr Zemedeneh is confident it will continue to attract investors from abroad who witness the country's growth for themselves and said he only expects the city's transformation to continue.

"The bottom line is you will not recognise Addis if you come 10 years from now. It will be a completely, completely different city," he said.

- AFP

Yoma Strategic Holdings Ltd. plans to develop and operate a mixed use complex in downtown Yangon. As part of its due diligence, the International Finance Corporation (IFC) has publicly disclosed the project's Environmental and Social Review Summary and Action Plan. Anyone interested in accessing these documents can contact the company as follows:

Business Development Department
Yoma Strategic Holdings Ltd. Tel: +951 240 363; 240 373
Fax: +951 246 881; 246 882

Gadget Reviews

by Myo Satt

Elecom Mobile Battery(DE-AO1-0810)

This sleek mobile battery can store 3.7 V/2200mAh, and can charge an depleted iPhone to 90 percent, 100 percent on Android phones. Small, light, and easy to travel with.

K 30,000



Elecom Rechargeable Battery (12024)

This external battery can recharge your smartphone as well as transfer your data via USB. It can charge a depleted Android phone up 70 percent. Three months warranty.

K 12,000



Elecom Stereo Earphone (EHP-CS3510M)

Switch between listening to music and talking on the phone at the press of a button with this combination of mic and headphones. Available in six colours.

K 10,200



Elecom Audio Receiver (LBT-AR120)

Connects with any Bluetooth-enabled iPhone, smartphone, or MP3 player. Enables you to switch between devices while they sit in your backpack. Battery lasts up to six hours.

K 27,500



Elecom Memory Card Reader(MRS-MBO5)

This card reader can work directly with smartphones and tablets; no need to connect via computer to transfer data and photos. Maximum transfer rate 2.1, and accepts 32GB SD cards and Micro SD cards.

K 12,600



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Photo: Zarni Phyo

Drive a trishaw from home

AUNG KYAW NYUNT

aungkyawnyunt28@gmail.com

HOW do serious gamers celebrate Thingyan? By playing a Thingyan-based computer game, of course. Total Game Play Studio is offering free downloads of “Trishaw Man Nga Pain Thingyan”, which can be played on iOS or Android smartphones.

Total also invented a chinlone-based game to mark last year's SEA Games, said the firm's chief technology officer U Myint Kyaw Thu, who said his team was working

on releasing the game in time for the water festival with the highest quality.

The 20MB game depicts the efforts of eponymous Nga Pain to deliver water to a baby while dodging Thingyan revellers and other hazards, to the backing of popular festival songs.

“Later, we will market the game in Asia, then the rest of the world,” said U Myint Kyaw Thu.

“I look forward to playing this game,” said U Kyaw Win, an Android user who lives in Kyauktada township.

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World

WORLD EDITOR: Fiona MacGregor

BANGKOK

Talks of new poll as election invalidated

THAILAND'S general election held last month was declared invalid on March 21 setting the scene for possible talks between warring political parties about new polls to end the deadlock.

While the ruling from the Constitutional Court further delays the formation of a new government, it also offers a possible exit from the political stalemate if the opposition agrees to end its boycott of the ballot box.

The country's Election Commission said it planned to propose talks between political party leaders about a new election date. But Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra's supporters fear she will be removed from office before another vote is held.

She has been charged with negligence by the National Anti-Corruption Commission in connection with a rice subsidy scheme, and could face an impeachment vote in the upper house of parliament within weeks.

Ms Yingluck has faced more than four months of street demonstrations seeking to force her from office and install an unelected "people's council" to oversee political reforms.

"Their aim is to put pressure in every possible way to appoint a neutral prime minister," said the chair of the pro-government "Red Shirts" movement, Jatuporn Prompan.

The backdrop is a years-old struggle between a royalist establishment, supported by the judiciary and the military, and Ms Yingluck's family, which has traditionally enjoyed strong support in the northern half of Thailand.

Ms Yingluck's Puea Thai party strongly criticised the election ruling, accusing the court of trying to "write its own constitution and expropriate sovereignty from the people".

The kingdom has been deeply polarised since a military coup in 2006 that ousted Ms Yingluck's brother Thaksin Shinawatra, a tycoon-turned-politician who lives in Dubai to avoid prison for a corruption conviction.

Political violence has claimed the lives of 23 people in recent weeks in gun and grenade attacks, mostly targeting protesters.

The Constitutional Court, set up after a 2006 coup, has a record of ruling against Ms Yingluck's family and its po-

litical allies, and the March 21 verdict raised eyebrows among some observers.

"The court has too obviously and too openly appeared to side with the agenda of the anti-government groups," said Thailand-based author and scholar David Streckfuss.

The court ruled 6:3 to nullify the election on the grounds that voting was not held for the entire country on the same day. Protesters blocked candidate registrations in 28 constituencies, and also caused the closure of about 10 percent of polling stations.

The opposition Democrats said on March 21 that it was too soon to say whether they would participate in a new election, but hinted they might be willing to return to mainstream politics.

"If we can talk with the government to ensure that the election is peaceful, without protests and acceptable to all parties, then the Democrats as a political party are ready to contest the polls," spokesperson Chavanond Intarakom-alyasut said.

Opposition protesters, however, have threatened to block any new ballot, calling for vaguely defined reforms first to tackle alleged corruption.

Thailand has not had a properly functioning parliament since early December when Ms Yingluck called early elections after opposition lawmakers resigned en masse from the lower house.

If Ms Yingluck is ousted, it could fall to the Senate, the upper house, to choose a new interim premier, according to experts.

The speaker of the senate - about half of whose members are unelected - was indicted by the National Anti-Corruption Commission on March 20 in connection with a failed bid to make the upper house fully elected.

Tensions on the streets have eased since protesters scaled down their rallies at the start of March, prompting the government to end a state of emergency on March 18.

Puncturing the relative calm, two grenades were fired on March 21 in a residential district home to a Constitutional Court judge, wounding one local resident, according to police. - AFP



BRUSSELS

Ukraine edges to EU as

UKRAINE took steps toward the EU on March 21 after the European bloc and the US put in place sanctions on Russian figures close to President Vladimir Putin as punishment for Crimea's annexation.

Moscow has said it will retaliate by issuing its own list of sanctions against senior US officials but there were already signs of the harsher toll Russia was having to bear as the crisis rumbled into a new phase.

Fitch on March 21 followed fellow ratings agency Standard & Poor's in downgrading Russia's credit rating outlook to negative from stable because of the growing risk due to the West's sanctions.

"Since US and EU banks and investors may well be reluctant to lend to Russia under the current circumstances, the economy may slow further and the private sector may require official support," Fitch said in a statement.

Europe and the United States on March 20 imposed sanctions on several high-ranking figures in Russia.

They were punishment for a Russian-engineered referendum in Crimea that saw most voters opting to have the peninsula separated from Ukraine and absorbed into the Russian Federation.

US President Barack Obama announced the new round of punitive measures against 20 Russian lawmakers and senior government

officials, in addition to 11 individuals already targeted. Mr Obama said Russia risked further isolation if it did not reverse course.

Among those named were top businessmen close to President Vladimir Putin such as billionaires Gennady Timchenko, Arkady Rotenberg and Boris Rotenberg plus a bank used by close associates.

In Brussels, European Union leaders slapped an asset freeze and travel ban on 12 more Russians and Ukrainians, bringing to 33 the number of figures targeted by the European bloc. The dozen new figures were to be identified on March 21. European Council president Herman Van Rompuy said some are "really highly-placed".

The 28-nation bloc also cancelled an EU-Russia summit planned for June and called for the dispatch of international or EU monitors to Ukraine.

Moscow responded to the US move by launching sanctions against nine US officials, including ranking political figures and presidential aides.

"There should be no doubt: Each hostile attack will be met in an adequate manner," the Russian foreign ministry said.

There was no immediate Russian response to the EU sanctions.

Europe's leaders stopped short of wider economic sanctions but insisted they were ready to ratchet up the pressure in case of further signs of Russian aggression.

"If there's any further destabilisation in Ukraine, then there should be further wide-ranging measures taken," said British Prime Minister David Cameron.

But some EU nations are heavily dependent on Russian oil and gas. Consequently, the bloc is divided on how far it should go, and many members are reluctant to raise the economic stakes.

In a fresh sign of support for Ukraine's transitional authorities, EU leaders were preparing on March 21 to sign with interim premier Arseniy Yatsenyuk the political sections of a broad EU Association Agreement. Its rejection back in November by Ukraine's pro-Kremlin president Viktor Yanukovich sparked the protests that led to his fall.

A key area of concern is energy, with Russia supplying more than a

33

The number of Russians and Ukrainians facing EU assets freezes and travel bans over Crimea action

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Dated: 24th March, 2014



Over 10,000 US troops set for landing drill in South Korea

WORLD 46

More attacks on HK journalists

WORLD 43



Fishing otters under threat in Bangladesh

WORLD 47



IN PICTURES

A Syrian man evacuates a child found in the rubble of a building reportedly hit by an explosives-filled barrel dropped by a government forces helicopter on March 18, in Aleppo. Iran's foreign minister said that Tehran is "ready to help any logical attempts" to end the Syrian conflict, during a visit by UN-Arab League envoy to Syria Lakhdar Brahimi.
Photo: AFP

SYDNEY

We owe jet families information: Abbott

AUSTRALIAN Prime Minister Tony Abbott on March 21 defended his decision to reveal authorities had spotted possible wreckage from a missing Malaysia Airlines plane, saying he owed it to the families affected.

Mr Abbott told parliament in Canberra on March 20 that satellite images had shown two objects in the southern Indian Ocean which could have come from flight MH370, raising hopes of a breakthrough in the Malaysian plane's mysterious disappearance.

Asked whether he had "jumped the gun" on the release of the information, given that the grainy images taken on March 16 were indistinct, he said the families of those onboard were owed the information.

"We owe it to the families and the friends and the loved ones of the almost 240 people on Flight MH370 to do everything we can to try to resolve what is as yet an extraordinary riddle," he told reporters.

"We owe it to them to do everything we can to resolve this and because of the understandable state of anxiety and apprehension that they're in, we also owe it to them to give them information as soon as it's to hand and I think I was doing that yesterday in

the parliament."

Details about MH370 have been clouded by mystery and misinformation since it went missing on March 8, with 239 people on board as it headed from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing.

Speculation about the fate of the flight has ranged from hijacking to pilot suicide, with Malaysian authorities unable to say definitively whether it was headed north or south when it vanished.

Nearly two-thirds of the passengers on board were Chinese nationals and their angry relatives have protested Malaysia's handling of the crisis, accusing authorities of withholding information and not doing enough to find the plane.

Malaysia on March 18 asked Australia to take charge of the southern vector of the search.

Mr Abbott said, "We've been throwing everything we've got at that area to try to learn more about what this debris might be."

He added, "Australia will do its duty. It's about the most inaccessible spot you could imagine on the face of the Earth, but if there is anything down there, we will find it."

- AFP

Russia faces sanctions

quarter of the EU's gas.

EU efforts to diversify energy supplies after Russia cut deliveries to Ukraine in 2006 and 2009 have so far failed to make much headway and the EU leaders are due to discuss the issue again.

The International Monetary Fund said meanwhile it made "significant progress" in talks with Ukraine's new Western-backed government over the resumption of a vital support program for the crisis-hit state.

Standard & Poor's on the other hand revised the outlook on Russia's credit rating to negative from stable on rising political and geopolitical risks linked to the Ukraine crisis and accompanying Western sanctions.

Sanctions and calls for talks have so far done nothing to halt Russian military advances, with Kiev's new Western-backed government preparing a Crimean evacuation plan for thousands of Ukrainian soldiers and their families.

The march by Moscow's troops and pro-Kremlin militias across the mostly Russian-speaking region roughly the size of Belgium has been unrelenting since the day Mr Putin won parliamentary approval to use force against his ex-Soviet neighbour following the February 22 fall of Mr Yanukovich.

Kiev's untested leaders have voiced fears that President Vladimir Putin has set his sights on



A Russian soldier stands in front of a recruitment poster for the Ukrainian armed forces in an area surrounding the Ukrainian military unit in Perevalnoye, outside Simferopol, on March 20. *Photo: AFP*

Russified southeastern swathes of Ukraine as part of his self-declared campaign to "protect" compatriots.

Mr Yatsenyuk said Ukraine would "respond firmly, including through military means", if Russia attempts to annex the country's mainly Russian-speaking regions.

But the Pentagon said Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu promised his US counterpart Chuck Hagel in a telephone call on March 20 that Moscow would not assault eastern Ukraine.

Mr Hagel voiced concern about Russian military movements but

Mr Shoigu assured him that "the troops he has arrayed along the border are there to conduct exercises only and they have no intention of crossing the border into Ukraine and that they would take no aggressive action", Pentagon spokesperson Rear Admiral John Kirby told reporters.

But Russia's Federal Customs Service announced tougher and more time-consuming inspections of goods entering the country from Ukraine that it said were aimed at intercepting possible illicit shipments of arms. - AFP



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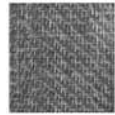
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Dated: 24th March, 2014

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Dated: 24 March 2014

KABUL

Reporter and family among at least nine killed in Taliban hotel attack

At least nine civilians including an Agence France-Presse reporter, children and foreigners were killed in a Taliban attack on a luxury hotel in Kabul, on March 21, just weeks before Afghanistan's presidential election.

Four teenage gunmen with pistols hidden in their socks managed to penetrate several layers of security at the Serena hotel, a prestigious venue favoured by foreign visitors to the capital.

Sardar Ahmad, a 40-year-old journalist in AFP's Kabul bureau, was among those killed, along with his wife and two of their three children.

The family's youngest son was undergoing emergency treatment after being badly wounded in the attack.

Mr Ahmad joined AFP in 2003 and became the international news agency's senior reporter in Kabul. He covered all aspects of life, war and politics in his native Afghanistan.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai said he was deeply saddened by Mr Ahmad's death.

"The killing of Sardar Ahmad, his wife and two children was a big crime and is heartbreaking and sorrowful," Mr Karzai said in a statement.

The Serena attack was claimed by the Taliban, who have vowed a campaign of violence to disrupt the April 5 poll that will decide a successor to Mr Karzai.

Previous Afghan elections have been badly marred by violence as the Islamist militants displayed their opposition to the US-backed polls.

Another bloodstained election would damage claims by donors that the expensive intervention in Afghanistan since 2001 has made



Sardar Ahmad, 40, a Kabul based staff reporter at the Agence France-Presse (AFP) news agency poses for a photo at the AFP office in Kabul on March 20 - hours before he, his wife and two of his three children were gunned down when four teenage gunmen attacked Kabul's Serena hotel. Photo: AFP

progress in establishing a functioning state, as US-led NATO combat troops wind down their long deployment.

"We believe that such attacks have a direct link to the upcoming elections, and the enemies try to stage such attacks to frustrate the people of Afghanistan about their future," interior ministry spokesperson Sediq Sediqqi told a news conference.

The attackers reached the hotel's restaurant around 8:30pm (1600 GMT) and began firing indiscriminately at diners, Mr Sediqqi said.

Nine people were killed in the assault, including several foreigners. Four women and two children were

among the dead.

One of the civilians killed in the attack was Luis Maria Duarte, a former Paraguayan diplomat in Afghanistan as an election observer, Paraguay's foreign minister said.

Canada's foreign ministry said two Canadians were among the victims.

The Afghan foreign ministry said the dead also included two Bangladeshis - one of whom was a dual US national, the American Embassy in Kabul tweeted.

The attack ended around 11:30 pm, when Afghan security forces killed the last of the attackers. Most of the hotel guests had been able to take shelter in special safe rooms.

It took place on the eve of Nawroz, the Persian New Year that is a major holiday in Afghanistan, and the hotel was hosting special celebrations.

The United States and the United Nations secretary general denounced the attack, the latest in a wave of violence that has left more than 50 civilians dead in Afghanistan last week.

US Secretary of State John Kerry "is incredibly sorry for the loss that AFP has experienced, and certainly, our heart and our condolences go out to the family of that reporter," State Department spokesperson Jen Psaki said.

A spokesman for UN chief Ban Ki-Moon said he condemned the bloodshed "in the strongest terms".

"These attacks took place as Afghans prepare to celebrate Nawroz ... a time when Afghans celebrate the values of peace and solidarity among communities," he said.

"The deliberate targeting of civilians is a flagrant breach of these values as well as of international humanitarian law," - AFP

HANOI

Rights organisations speak out as another political blogger is jailed

VIETNAM jailed a prominent blogger for 15 months on March 19 on a charge of anti-state activity, the second such sentencing in a fortnight, prompting rights groups to condemn the alleged muzzling of dissent in the communist country.

Pham Viet Dao, 61, a Communist Party member and a former official at the Ministry of Culture, was charged with "abusing democratic freedoms to infringe on the interests of the State" after a half-day trial in Hanoi.

In addition to his own blogs, Mr Dao's popular site included links to dozens of other commentaries critical of Vietnam's politics and society.

The court ruled that the posts "defamed the party and state ... blackening the honour and prestige of the [communist] party leader and the prime minister", presiding judge Ngo Tu Hoc said.

"His online distortion and defaming of party and state leaders caused confusion over the party leadership and undermined people's trust in the party," Mr Hoc added.

Mr Dao apologised for "having posted some incorrect information", but added that he did not think his posts had "badly influenced society".

The Paris-based International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) condemned the sentence and called for the release of an estimated 200 political prisoners.

"Vietnam continues to behave as an authoritarian government that perceives every freedom, including free-



Writer and blogger Pham Viet Dao (right), 61, stands trial at the local People's Court in Hanoi on March 19. Photo: AFP

dom of opinion and expression, as a threat to its rule," said FIDH president Karim Lahidji.

"Vietnam must end the harassment, arrest, and imprisonment of dissidents."

International rights groups said lawyers, bloggers and activists in the country are regularly subject to arbitrary arrest and detention.

Two weeks previously, popular blogger and journalist Truong Duy Nhat was jailed for two years for the same charge, which prompted the US to say it was "deeply concerned".

According to Reporters Without Borders, Vietnam was second only to China in the number of bloggers it detained, with at least 34 currently behind bars.



IN PICTURES

A supporter painted as the bull mascot of Indonesia’s main opposition party the Democratic Party of Struggle shouts slogans in a rally on Java island on March 17. Some 180 million Indonesians are set to vote for a new president in July. *Photo: AFP*

TOKYO

UN predicts Mekong Basin water disputes

SURGING populations and economies in the developing world will cause a double crunch in demand for water and energy in the coming decades, leading to disputes particularly in Asia, the UN said on March 21.

In a report published on the eve of World Water Day, it said the cravings for clean water and electricity were intertwined and could badly strain Earth’s limited resources.

Asia will be the biggest hotspot for disputes over water extraction, where water sources straddle national borders. “Areas of conflict include the Aral Sea and the Ganges-Brahmaputra River, Indus River and Mekong River basins,” the report stated.

“Demand for freshwater and energy will continue to increase over the coming decades to meet the needs of growing populations and economies, changing lifestyles and evolving consumption patterns, greatly amplifying existing pressures on limited natural resources and on ecosystems,” the report said.

It predicted global water demand is likely to increase by 55 percent by 2050. By then, more than 40pc of the world’s population will be living in areas of “severe” water stress, many of them in the broad swathe of land from North Africa and the Middle East to western South Asia.

Already, 768 million people do not have access to a safe, reliable source of water, 2.5 billion do not have decent

sanitation and more than 1.3 billion do not have mains electricity.

“Lack of access to water, sanitation and sustainable energy is an aggravating factor for poverty,” Michel Jarraud, secretary-general of the World Meteorological Organization, told a conference at the United Nations University in Tokyo.

“We need to adopt more integrated policies and innovative strategies to tackle the issues.”

About 20pc of the world’s aquifers today are depleted, according to the UN report.

Agriculture accounts for more than two-thirds of water use.

The *World Water Development Report*, the fifth in the series by the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), is an overview collated from data from scientific studies and investigations by agencies.

It said ever more freshwater will be needed for farming, construction, drinking, cooking, washing and sewerage, but also for energy production – 90pc of which uses water-intensive techniques today.

Global energy demand is expected to grow by more than a third by 2035, with China, India and Middle Eastern countries accounting for 60pc of the increase, it said.

In 2010, energy production gobbled up 66 billion cubic metres (2,300 billion cubic feet) of fresh water – more

than the average annual flow of the River Nile in Egypt.

By 2035, this consumption could rise by 85pc, driven by power plant cooling systems that work with water.

Shale deposits and tar sands, driving an energy boom in North America, are especially hefty in their demands for water to force out the precious gas and oil, the report said.

Even so, “they are outstripped by far by biofuels,” said researcher Richard Connor, who headed the study.

Renewable sources like solar and wind energy that use far less water are gaining ground, and accounted for about a fifth of global electricity output in 2011, the report said.

But they are unlikely to expand this share significantly if fossil fuels continue receiving the bulk of subsidies, it said.

Oil, gas and coal had subsidies of US\$523 billion in 2011, nearly 30pc more than in 2010, compared to \$88 billion for renewables, the report said, citing International Energy Agency (IEA) figures.

Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean have plenty of potential for hydro-energy, which reuses the precious resource, it added.

The report also called for smart choices in allocating the trillions of dollars likely to be invested in water and energy infrastructure over the next two decades. – *AFP*



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More journalist attacks hit HK

The pair were taken to hospital for treatment.

The city's police chief earlier came in for criticism by saying there was no evidence the attack was linked to Mr Lau's work. — *AFP*

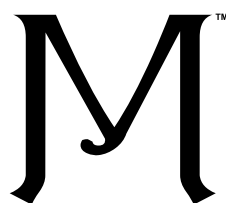


Indian revellers cover each other with coloured powder during celebrations for the Holi festival in Siliguri on March 16. Holi, the Festival of Colours, is a popular Hindu spring festival observed in India and Nepal at the end of winter season on the last full moon day of the lunar month. *Photo: AFP*

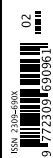
Foreign Correspondents' Club
Hong Kong

Secretary for Security Lai Tung-kwok said police would investigate the March 19 assault "to the best of their ability".

Dated: 24th March, 2014



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Dated: 24 March 2014

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BRITISH COLUMBIA

Canadian divers catch Asian riches with clams

CLEMENT SABOURIN

FROM a basket hoisted on the back of his trawler, fisherman Freddy Gutmann proudly picks up a giant geoduck clam fresh from the frigid waters off the northwestern Canadian coast.

"This one is a great specimen," Mr Gutmann says as sea water gushes from the large mollusk that measures around 20 centimeters (8 inches).

Mr Gutmann has good reason to be in high spirits since within 24 hours, the shellfish – generally shunned by Western chefs – will be served at top restaurants in Hong Kong, Beijing or Tokyo for a premium price.

The 35-year veteran of the Pacific waters off northwest Canada swiftly fills three orange cases with his sorted and cleaned catch so they can be rushed to the airport in Vancouver and on to Asia.

While a kilo (2.2 pounds) of geoducks goes for some C\$30 (US\$27) these days – a sixth what top Asian eateries will ask their patrons to fork over – that wasn't always the case, according to Mr Gutmann.

"Fifteen years ago, its price was around 30 cents per pound, maximum," he said.

He added that licences to harvest such clams were once available for a pittance.

"License owners got them for a couple bucks. Sometimes they were given by the government," said the native of Tofino, a small seaside town in the province of British Columbia popular with surfers and aging hippies.

Today, however, "they're worth \$4 to \$5 million," he added.

Just 55 fishing permits have been issued by Canadian authorities who are not planning to increase that quota, even though environmentalists say the geoduck population is overabundant.

The clams can be found all the way from Mexico's Baja California peninsula to Alaska. But they are particularly common off the shores of the US state of Washington and in neighbouring British Columbia.

However, harvesting the shellfish is no easy task and, except for slightly more modern equipment, the job hasn't changed much since Mr Gutmann started his career more than three decades ago.

It takes two divers weighed down by 30-kilogram belts and taking turns over 12 hours to plunge 15 to 20 metres into the dark waters to wrest the geoducks from their perch on the sandy Pacific floor.



Christian Tulloch, 27, chops freshly harvested geoduck clams, before eating them raw, near Tofino, in British Columbia, Canada, on January 24. Photo: AFP

Dressed in thick wetsuits and attached to a boat by a 300-metre-long air hose, the divers scour the sea floor for tiny holes that suggest the presence of a clam, often buried under a metre of sand.

"You've got your ears against the sand, you hold it, but it's fighting to leave," said David Thomas, who has spent 27 of his 48 years searching for geoducks.

"It's really hard to catch, especially for young divers." Mr Thomas, who works with Mr Gutmann, swears this season will be his last.

Sometimes, the underwater current is so strong that it plasters you to the sea floor, said the family man,

adding that he's even come face-to-face with a sea lion.

Interest in geoducks is so strong that once the Tofino fishing season ends, the modest local fleet of 30 trawlers heads further north to the Alaska border.

"There's nothing out there. You go from one bay to another and you don't see anybody," Mr Thomas said as he pointed to a map on board the trawler known as the *Hideaway II*. "It's all white here."

Yet despite having spent so many years in pursuit of geoducks, neither Mr Thomas nor Mr Gutmann have become culinary fans of their lucrative catch. – AFP

MANILA

Poverty reduction targets missed

THE Philippines will have to downgrade its target to reduce poverty, officials have warned, a move which would leave an additional 4 million people virtually destitute in 2016.

Socio-economic Planning Secretary Arsenio Balisacan said on March 18 that although economic growth had remained strong, it had failed to lift as many people out of poverty as expected.

The Philippines had originally projected that 16.6 percent of its 100 million people would still be living in poverty by 2016.

But Mr Balisacan said the poverty rate was now forecast to be 18-20pc by 2016, when President Benigno Aquino's term ends.

"This new target takes into consideration the slow response of poverty to

economic growth beginning 2006 and the setback in 2013 due to the wide-scale destruction resulting from natural and man-made disasters," he said.

A super-typhoon which hit central provinces last November triggered unprecedented destruction that left 4 million without homes.

The official poverty rate measures how many people can barely afford food and other essentials.

Despite remarkable economic growth under Mr Aquino, the poverty rate has stayed around 25pc since 2003.

Economists and business leaders have warned that growth has been largely limited to only a few sectors like exports and business outsourcing, leaving sizeable segments of the population such as farmers untouched.

"Some cities or provinces have been experiencing economic growth, but the poorest families are being left behind," Mr Balisacan told a business forum.

He said the Philippines must train poor families to get better jobs while linking small farms to the larger economy to provide them with greater opportunities.

Mr Aquino took office in 2010, vowing to help the poor and fight the massive corruption that has long weighed down the Southeast Asian archipelago.

Budget Secretary Florencio Abad said the government had made significant achievements, citing the 7.2pc economic growth rate last year.

But he added, "We know that much has to be done. We have lost a decade to meaningfully bring down poverty."

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Dated: 24th March, 2014

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SEOUL

South Korean conservative activists hold placards showing portraits of North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un during an anti-North Korea rally in Seoul on March 19. South Korea's military is keeping a close watch for North Korean troop movements following a series of missile and rocket test-launches into the sea over joint US-South Korea military drills. Photo: AFP

US to stage major landing drill

MORE than 10,000 US troops will participate in a large-scale landing drill in South Korea next week, the US military said on March 20, days after North Korea test-fired 25 projectiles in apparent protest at the continuing joint exercises.

The drill, code-named Ssang Yong (“Twin Dragons”) and billed by local news media as one of the largest-ever amphibious landing exercises by the two allies, will take place from March 27 to April 7 on the southeast coast of South Korea.

It will involve 7500 US Marines, 2000 US Navy personnel, and an undisclosed number of Australian and South Korean forces, a US military spokesperson told AFP.

Yonhap news agency said 3500 Marines and 1000 Navy sailors would take part from South Korea.

“Ssang Yong 14 is an annual combined exercise conducted by Marine and Navy Forces with the ROK [South Korea] in order to strengthen the interoperability and working relationships of the two militaries across the range of operations – from disaster relief to complex expeditionary operations,” US Forces in Korea said in a

press statement.

The US Marines taking part in the drill belong to the 3rd Marine Expeditionary Brigade, based in Okinawa, Japan, it said.

A total of 12 South Korean and US Navy amphibious ships will also participate in the drill, Yonhap said.

South Korea, which hosts 28,500 American troops, and the US kicked off the annual Key Resolve and Foal Eagle exercises on February 24. They will run until mid-April.

In a show of force apparently intended to express anger at the continuing exercises, North Korea carried out a series of rocket and missile launches in recent weeks, sparking condemnation from Seoul and Washington.

The North has habitually slammed the exercises – along with other military drills south of the border – as rehearsals for an invasion.

Seoul and Washington say they are purely defensive.

Last week, the North's powerful National Defence Commission threatened to demonstrate its nuclear deterrent in the face of what it called US hostility.

But Seoul's defence ministry said there was no sign of an imminent nuclear test by the North, which staged three atomic tests in 2006, 2009 and last year.

China's special envoy Wu Dawei, who arrived in Pyongyang on March 17, has been in talks with North Koreans to discuss ways to resume six-party talks on its nuclear programs.

“Special Representative Wu Dawei ... held consultations with the DPRK [North Korea]. Major topics include the situation of the Korean Peninsula and how to resume the Six-Party Talks,” Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Hong Lei told journalists on Wednesday.

Six-party talks involving the two Koreas, China, the US, Russia and Japan have been stalled since December 2008.

The North and China want to resume the negotiations, but Washington and South Korea say before a resumption of discussions, the North must first show it is serious about the process, notably by shutting down a uranium enrichment program which the West believes could be aimed at building a nuclear bomb. – AFP

TOKYO

‘Respect sovereignty’ in S China Sea

VIETNAM'S president has warned against the use of force in territorial disputes as his nation and its neighbours lock horns with an increasingly assertive China over competing claims in the South China Sea.

President Truong Tan Sang made the comments in Japan's parliament on March 18 during a four-day visit.

“Vietnam has always maintained these principles over maritime disputes – resolution by peaceful means, compliance with international law, and respect for each other's due rights and sovereignty,” the Vietnamese leader said.

“Countries concerned should not make the situation complex, but rather exercise self-restraint. They should neither use force nor threaten to use force.”

Mr Sang did not make a direct reference to any particular country. But Vietnam and three other members of the Association of the Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) – the Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei – have opposed Beijing's attempt to claim almost all of the South China Sea.

Mr Sang said he hoped to strengthen ties with Japan, which is also embroiled in a separate and bitter territorial dispute with China.

Tokyo has called for stronger security ties with ASEAN members to try to ease the growing territorial tensions.

“We deeply believe that relations between the two countries will be strengthened and expanded every day ... which will make a significant

contribution to securing peace, stability and cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region,” he added.

Japan and China are locked in a bitter row over islands in the East China Sea administered by Japan as the Senkakus but claimed by China as the Diaoyu Islands.

Chinese government ships and planes have been seen off the disputed islands numerous times since Japan nationalised some of the archipelago in September 2012, sometimes within Japan's territorial zone.

The dispute with Tokyo, which has sparked air and sea confrontations, has exacerbated animosity over Japan's military incursions across East Asia in the first half of the 20th century. – AFP

NARAIL



Otter fishing tradition under threat

CHARLOTTE TURNER
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SWIMMING in circles alongside a fishing boat, the excited cries of two short-haired otters ring out across a river in southern Bangladesh that feeds into the Sundarbans, the world’s largest man-grove forest.

The fishermen lower a net into the water close to the banks of the river, and one by one, tails up, the animals dive under the water with a splash.

It is a rare technique that relies on coordination between man and trained otters, a centuries-old fishing partnership that has already long died out in other parts of Asia.

“Our job depends on the otters,” says Shashudhar Biswas, a fisherman in his 50s, whose family has trained the ani-

mals to help them fish for generations. The otters do not catch the fish themselves, instead they chase them toward the fishing net placed next to the boat.

“The otters manage to spot fish among the plants, then the fish swim away and we stay close with our nets. If we did it without them, we wouldn’t be able to catch as many fish,” says Mr Biswas’ son Vipul, standing as he steers the boat along the leafy canal.

Fishing is usually done during the night when the fishermen can expect to catch between 4 and 12 kilograms (8.8 and 26 pounds) of fish, shrimp and crabs.

The family earns around US\$250 a month selling their catch at the local market.

But in recent years, once abundant fish are increasingly scarce and when

they drag up the nets they are often empty.

“The kinds of fish we used to find with our father, we don’t see here anymore,” says Vipul.

Natural fish populations have reduced drastically in recent years, says Mohammed Mostafa Feeroz, a zoology professor at Dhaka’s Jahangirnagar University, because “the fish simply cannot breed.”

“Over-sedimentation, water pollution from oil and the use of pesticides in [rice] paddy fields, as well as over-catching are all having an impact,” Mr Feeroz told AFP.

Mr Feeroz has been studying otter fishing in Bangladesh for 25 years and over this period the number of families involved has dropped from 500 to just 150.

“Go back 50 years and the practice has declined by about 90 percent,” he says.

If the trend continues he believes otter fishing will be “completely wiped out” within the next two decades.

Though still in his 20s, Vipul is equally pessimistic.

“If there are no fish, then there’s no point in having the otter fishing system,” he says.

“Just look at my family’s situation. My brothers and sisters, they all want to study. They don’t want to get into the river and catch fish. If they study then they will obviously move out of the village to find better jobs or they will buy fish from the wholesale and sell them,” he adds.

He worries his only source of income will soon no longer be profitable.

Each month almost half of his earnings is spent on feeding his five otters – two fully trained adults and three young apprentices – who consume 3-4kg of fish a day.

And wildlife experts fear it is not only the livelihoods of the fishing families that are under threat.

Short-haired otters are an endangered species in Bangladesh and otter fishing plays a key role in their conservation, according to Mr Feeroz.

“The captive population here is very healthy because of the fishing,” he says.

Sometimes fishermen release otters into the wild which strengthens that population, research shows.

“But as the practice gradually decreases, the wild population will face increased pressure,” he adds. - *AFP*

BANGUI

Central African violence is at ‘terrifying level’, warns UN

THE UN’s rights chief has expressed horror at the level of violence in the Central African Republic, citing cannibalism, child decapitations and gruesome lynchings.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay warned on March 20 that the world’s response was alarmingly slow and made a passionate appeal for greater mobilisation.

“The inter-communal hatred remains at a terrifying level,” she said at a press conference in Bangui.

“This has become a country where people are not just killed, they are tortured, mutilated, burned and dismembered ... Children have been decapitated, and we know of at least four cases where the killers have eaten the flesh of their victims.”

The chronically unstable country sank into chaos when rebels who had helped topple president Francois Bozize a year ago went rogue.

The ensuing campaign of killing, raping and looting by the mainly Muslim former rebels prompted members of the Christian majority to

form vigilantes known as “anti-balaka” (anti-machete).

France has around 2000 troops in the country, and the African Union three times that number, but they have struggled to prevent what the UN has described as ethnic cleansing against the Muslim minority.

Ms Pillay said the military deployment had helped curb large-scale killings of the type witnessed in December and January but warned that much more was needed to pacify the country.

“People continue to be killed on a daily basis, especially by the anti-balaka groups,” she said.

The UN rights envoy said foreign peacekeepers and aid workers faced “terrible dilemmas such as choosing between unwillingly aiding the ‘cleansing’ of trapped Muslim populations, or leaving them – against their will – in places where they are in real danger of being slaughtered en masse.”

She said around 15,000 Muslims were trapped in little pockets of territory in Bangui and elsewhere in the country, under international protection.

According to figures from the UN and other relief agencies, nearly a quarter of the country’s population of 4.6 million has been displaced in more than a year of conflict.

Ms Pillay said her interaction with the interim administration of President Catherine Samba Panza offered a glimmer of hope but she warned a much stronger international commitment was needed.

France justified sending troops into its former colony in December by warning that a genocide could be in the making and Ms Pillay hinted that threat may not have fully dissipated yet.

“I am deeply concerned by the slow response of the international community. The vital humanitarian aid effort is deplorably under-funded, with only 20 percent of requirements met so far,” she said.

“The international community seems to have forgotten some of the lessons it learned in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Rwanda, Kosovo and East Timor – to mention just a few.”

The French general of a European Union force which had been due to deploy this week complained on March 19 that he did not have enough soldiers.

With the world’s eyes firmly trained on the Ukrainian crisis, the largest troop contributor so far, Georgia, with 150 soldiers, is not even a bloc member.

Ms Pillay echoed fears by some Central African leaders that a failure to stem the chaos and insufficient international assistance would attract al-Qaeda-inspired groups.

“I cannot help thinking that if the Central African Republic were not a poor country hidden away in the heart of Africa, the terrible events that have taken place and continue to take place would have stimulated a far stronger and more dynamic reaction by the outside world,” she said.

“How many more children have to be decapitated, how many more women and girls will be raped, how many more acts of cannibalism must there be, before we really sit up and pay attention?” – *AFP*

Get your finger on it

P

the pulse

After ten years, the complex stories of the nat spirits still intrigue artist Sein Myint and his collectors

Photo: Si Thu Lwin

A CHANNEL TO THE SPIRIT WORLD



By Nyein Ei Ei Htwe
nyeineiehtwe23@gmail.com



Photo: Sithu Lwin

P

AINTINGS, some finished and some alive with still-wet pigments, were scattered about the room.

Artist Sein Myint was at home working on yet more paintings of the 37 nats (spirits) of Myanmar, which he has depicted for the last 10 years of a career spanning decades.

"Without knowing about each nat – their history and their personality – there's no way to paint these spirits. I try to read everything I can about them," Sein Myint said.

Nats are believed to have special powers to protect or destroy humans. They are said to have died thousands of years ago, after leading prominent lives as kings, queens, generals and the like with strong passions and aggressions. Legends tell of many

nats with many names, but only 37 are famous all over the country and celebrated on special occasions.

Sein Myint's paintings of the spirits have caught the imagination of curators and collectors worldwide. Currently, he is working to finish a series to exhibit in Hamburg, Germany, later this year.

"I've finished 13 smaller works and am now focusing on 24 bigger ones [5 feet by 3 feet]. I'm trying to finish before Thingyan so they can all be shipped," he said.

It will be the first exhibition of his nat paintings in Germany, but since the 1970s the artist has exhibited overseas many times, in ASEAN exhibitions and art exchanges with Western countries.

Sein Myint started to study art in his 20s and held his first exhibitions in the 1970s. He studied at the State of Fine Arts (Mandalay).

Some of his artworks have hung at UN headquarters New York since 1990, and he has received letters of

congratulation on his work from President U Thein Sein and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

The Mandalay-born and based artist staged the first of his three 37 nat series solo exhibition in 2001 in Yangon. But his many overseas exhibitions have attracted attention mainly for his use of colour, he said.

"In international exhibitions, people didn't know about the spirits, but they noticed my colours. I depicted Ko Gyee Kyaw [a spirit renowned for his anger and drinking], in strong colours other artists rarely use," said the 69-year-old. He said his study of the nats' history had enabled him to develop different styles to express their clothing, nature and behaviour.

"I prefer to paint motion rather than still pictures, and mixed the colours to portray their attitudes. Though I have painted the same spirit many times, I try to find ways to do it differently," he said.

To guide his approach, he used to

watch *nat kanar pwe*, celebrations of the spirits through songs, dances and food.

"When I painted Ma Ma Hnae [a girl who died young], I listened to songs about her. But sometimes it is better to paint in silence," he said. When not seeking artistic inspiration, Sein Myint admits listening to western blues and jazz.

"As I live in Upper Myanmar, I just know and can cover only the 37 nats which are believed in here. But there are so many spirits that the various nationalities and tribes believe in, and I would like to paint them too," he said. He has covered thousands of canvases, and some collectors have bought 300 or 400 of the series. "Some buyers are content with only sketches. I don't need to worry about what collectors want. I can follow my art," said Sein Myint.

His paintings are representational but they also use abstract elements to convey motion.

"Motions in my brushwork is the

most important thing. Though it may look abstract, my work is based on true stories and derives background and clothing from the traditional arts, so my work could be called semi-abstract," he said.

A believer in the otherworldly himself, he trusts that the spirits of his great-grandparents are protecting and guiding his artwork.

"It's as if the wind is at my back in battle. I think the spirits helped me."

The process of painting the nats has brought forth many memorable and even disturbing moments, the artist said. Through his brush, he believes he has conjured the invisible hand of the spirit world.

"When I paint a spirit, related spirits also feature in my work. When my friends asked about them, I was surprised. I'd never intended to paint them," he said.

"When I face challenges, my paints are of the spirits of knights, giants and dragons with fire or sword. I put my emotions in my painting."

IMAGES FROM A STATE OF NOWHERE

BANGKOK

Greg Constantine's eight-year project to photograph Rohingya communities offers a glimpse of the struggle of the stateless



"Exiled to Nowhere" is on display in Bangkok until March 23. Photos: Fiona MacGregor

By Fiona MacGregor

THE walls of the space where Greg Constantine's photo documentary "Exiled to Nowhere" is on display are peeling and streaked with grime.

Constantine said the abandoned Bangkok bank had lain empty for about 15 years until he decided to mount the show. Although it appears dilapidated, most of the people featured in the American photographer's work would probably be glad of such solid shelter.

His subjects are a stateless people. Denied citizenship by the Myanmar government, they have fled to neighbouring Bangladesh in the hope of avoiding persecution or remained living in a state of apartheid within Myanmar.

They call themselves Rohingya while the government insists they should be called Bengalis – denying them a name as well as basic human rights.

Over eight years, Constantine recorded their lives. Initially, he photographed those living as refugees in Bangladesh. When communal violence broke out in northern Rakhine State in 2012, leaving over 140,000 people homeless, he photographed life in the IDP camps and ghettos where some were trapped.

The black and white images – displayed without frames, just stapled to wooden bars nailed to the walls – depict lives made in tents and make-shift shelters. Many of his subjects appear almost as silhouettes, perhaps fitting for a people who exist

mostly in the shadows.

"Exiled to Nowhere" is part of a wider project called "Nowhere People" in which Constantine has recorded the lives of stateless people across the world.

Describing himself as a self-taught photographer, his website says "Nowhere People" aims to give "a small voice" to some of the 15 million people worldwide that the United Nations estimates to have no recognised nationality and no state.

As a mix of Thai and foreign visitors wandered the exhibition and stopped to ask Constantine questions, he told *The Myanmar Times* that the subjects of "Exiled to Nowhere" were suffering "the most extreme" consequences of statelessness he has ever witnessed.

"I was so shocked in 2006 at the condition of the Rohingya living in Bangladesh and the stories they were telling me, and these people weren't known about [in the outside world]," Constantine said.

"For me the situation was so complex, and it was really important to be able to tell it responsibly. Going back each time [to take more images] has exposed different threads over the years."

The photographs show people in different situations: Children play in filth-ridden pathways, families live in cramped quarters, and men and women try to escape to a better life by boat only to be turned back.

There are portraits too, of men,

women and children with haunted eyes. They are not entirely hopeless but know they are without a platform of their own and must rely on others to tell their tale.

"I feel a huge sense of responsibility to the people," Constantine said.

"[Their stories] need to be told. People need to see them and need to be aware and to ask questions."

The exhibition has already been shown in London, Washington, Canberra, Phnom Penh and Brussels, all capitals where influential policymakers are based. Constantine said he chose those cities because he thought his works would be most effective at awareness-raising there.

He added that he would like to bring the exhibition to Yangon at some point, but he said that, given current tensions within Myanmar, now is not the best time.

"I worry that in Yangon various [groups] might exploit it in a way it was not intended for and take it out of context."

The fears of the photographer, who has won numerous prizes for his work including awards from Pictures of the Year International, Prix de la Photographie Paris, and the International Photography Awards, are well-founded. But the Yangon public will, for the time being at least, miss out on a valuable insight into the reality of a stateless existence.

"Exiled to Nowhere" can be seen at 171 Surawong Bangkok until 6:30pm on March 23. For more information about Greg Constantine and "Nowhere People" see www.nowherepeople.org.



What's on

MARCH 24 - 30

Got an event?
List it in What's On!
Email: whatsonmt@gmail.com

ART

MARCH 15-29 "The Arts Gate" group show from the State School of Fine Arts Yangon, Gallery of the State School of Fine Arts, 131 Kabar Aye Pagoda Road, Bahan

MARCH 22-29 "Myanmar's Images" Thit Nay Sann solo show. Nawaday Tharlar Gallery, 304, 20B Yaw Min Gyi Road, Dagon

MARCH 22-APRIL 21 "Sparkle 2014: Volume 2" group show. KZL Art Studio & Gallery, 184/84A Than Lwin Road, Golden Valley Ward 2, Bahan

MARCH 26 Opening of "Beyond the Itch," Htein Lin solo show. River Gallery II, 33/35 37th and 38th streets, Kyauktada 6-8pm (Show runs until April 6)

MARCH 26-28 All Myanmar Photography Festival exhibition and talks, Strand Hotel, 92 Strand Road, Kyauktada 10am-6pm

FILM

Start times at **Mingalar 2, Shae Shaung (1, 2) and Nay Pyi Taw cinemas** are 10am, noon, 2pm, 4pm, 6pm and 8pm. Start times at Junction Square and Maw Tin are 10am, 1pm and 4pm daily and 7pm and 9:30pm on Friday and Saturday.

Nay Pyi Taw Cinema, near Sule Pagoda *Need for Speed 3D*. Directed by Scott Waugh. A blue-collar mechanic on a cross-country race proves that the underdog can finish first.

Mingalar 2 Cinema, at Dagon Center 2, Myaynigone, Sanchaung *300: Rise of an Empire 3D*. Directed by Noam Murr. Based on Frank Miller's graphic novel *Xerxes*, a Greek general tries to unite all Greece by leading a charge that changes the course of the war.

Shae Shaung Cinema 1, Sule Pagoda Road, Kyauktada

300: Rise of an Empire 3D.

Shae Shaung Cinema 2, Sule Pagoda Road, Kyauktada

The Four 2 3D. Directed by Gordon Chan and Janet Chun. Four detectives use their unique skills to help Master Zhuge solve crimes and punish criminals.

Junction Square Cineplex, Kamaryut *Machete Kills*. Directed by Robert Rodriguez. An ex-federal agent hired by the president must take down a madman revolutionary and an eccentric billionaire bent on spreading anarchy across the globe.

Need for Speed 3D.

Junction Maw Tin Cineplex, Lanmadaw *Need for Speed 3D*.



Gail Waterman, *Only Blue Skies From Now On*. Photo: Gallery 65

MUSIC

MARCH 24 Live blues guitar. Mojo Bar, 135 Inya Road, Bahan

MARCH 25 Brigitte. Pop lounge and retro folk concert Free. Institut Français de Birmanie, 340 Pyay Road, Sanchaung 7pm

MARCH 26 "Rock the Night" modern rock music with live bands. Flamingo Bar, Yangon International Hotel, 330 Ahlone Road, Dagon 9-11:30pm

MISC

MARCH 24-29 South African food fair. International guest chefs host dinners, cooking classes and wine tastings. Contact 1 544 500 ext 6286, 6287 or fb.chry@chatrrium.com for more details. Chatrrium Hotel, 40 Natmauk Street, Tarmwe

MARCH 24 Pub quiz. 50th Street Café, 9/13 50th Street, Botahtaung 8pm

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Int'l Class 37: The construction and maintenance of residential apartment buildings; refurbishment services.

Int'l Class 39: Parking place rental; car parking; garage rental; delivery of goods; storage of goods; parcel delivery; stroller and wheelchair lending services; porter services.

Int'l Class 45: Concierge services; concierge information services; housekeeping services; maid services; baby sitting; personal shopper services; computerized security and surveillance services for business establishments; security administration for house and real estate; housekeeping security services."



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Shang Palace

Reg. No. 4/2058/2014

Hnin Wai speaks

An interview with an advocate for women’s rights and business advancement



SINCE 2001, Hnin Wai has worked for greater participation of women in business with the Myanmar Women’s Entrepreneur Association, where she is now secretary general. Her own experiences as an ambitious student and entrepreneur strengthened her interest in development issues and helped pave the way for others. While completing an MBA at the Yangon Institute of Economics in 2002, she helped organise the city’s first hosting of the Global Conference of Women Entrepreneurs. Later, she won a scholarship to do a second MBA at Japan’s prestigious Hitotsubashi University Graduate School of International Corporate Strategy (ICS) where, as only the second Myanmar student ever to complete the course, she burnished the reputation of Myanmar post-grads. She became the leader of the MWEA’s education committee, and this year there are about a dozen Myanmar students at ICS, including five women from the association. *The Myanmar Times* spoke with Hnin Wai recently at her Dagon office.

Are you an entrepreneur yourself?
During my MBA here, I was doing export-import managing at a company. We exported rattan furniture overseas.

I also ran a private school, my own business. I come from Myeik, which is a city famous for business. So my family also did business – normally we are involved in fisheries, because it’s a place of many islands, and also there is a local shipping industry and sales of goods, like clothing. But I wanted to transition to a broader business world, so I moved to Yangon. In my life, I say, the opportunities always come together. I applied to my first degree in English (BA, 1996), and then got the position at the rattan company for five or six years before I applied to the second MBA.

How did your two MBA experiences differ?
The MBA here was based only on textbooks. Class discussion and business cases, we didn’t have. With the Japanese professors we could have a lot of class discussion, and the courses were registered from Harvard University, and there was class participation and group work. It was very challenging compared to the program here. Here, the experiences shared in school were very local. I explained to the prof that I wanted to study operations management.

What has changed for business-women since 2001?
In early 2000, because our country was so closed, we had no exposure to outside, especially for women. Passports were very difficult. Because



Photo: Aung Htay Hlaing

of this association, after 2002 and the global women’s conference, the MWEA organised a women’s group of people who wanted to go overseas to visit trade fairs. After ASEAN countries, we could also visit Japan. We had made contacts. We got invites to international workshops and we could apply for passports. We had already 1000 members and many who were interested got this international exposure.

Are you seeing a rise in migrants to the city?
A young generation of women have got their degree, or some education, and they don’t want to stay in their

home town, so they come to Yangon and Mandalay looking for job opportunities. Mostly I see that in the garment industry. For women from rural areas, it provides a place to live and work.

We have some friends in the garment industry, and when the country was closed, they trained and kept their labour. The workers had experience and they were maintained. There was no foreign demand. When the country opened, the garment industry lost their experienced labour because foreign companies could pay better and they had better facilities. So the losers were the Myanmar garment companies. On the other hand, the local companies are getting more contracts now from abroad.

To what extent are returnees involved at the MWEA? Do they face special challenges?
Returnees, they say, ‘We’ve just came back, and according to the news the Myanmar is a good place to be,’ but they don’t know where to start. For the young generation of paid salary people, it’s okay. They can join a big company, because even the local big companies are paying the same as ones abroad. But for the people who want their own business, they are a little far from the Myanmar business situation, its rules and regulations. So they are looking for local people who they can partner with, because information is not clear, even for local people! The procedures change

every time, and there’s no notice. So if we want to extend the company registration, we have to go to the office and ask, ‘What is the procedure now?’ Most countries you can go onto a website and find that information. You don’t need to take time to visit the office.

What is the greatest challenge women face starting businesses?
Finance. If we don’t have money, we cannot do business even if we have a great idea. The MWEA can provide loans to women with a good business plan. Now we have SME Development Bank, but we need to give collateral to get a loan. In Cambodia, if we have a proper business plan we can go to the bank and get the loan. That is international practice. Myanmar and Laos are the only countries in ASEAN where it’s difficult like this to get a loan.

How does feminism intersect with traditional family values?
We have obligations according to our culture. When we do business with family we need to pretend we are not knowing 100 percent for this process. Just give the role to the husband and support from the back. This culture we need to adjust. Some women, they have a strong participation in their own business. Experience sharing is important. We learn from family how to integrate work and life and tradition to do business successfully. ■



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Newsroom	1	Editorial Secretary
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Applications close at 5pm on Friday, 28 March 2014.

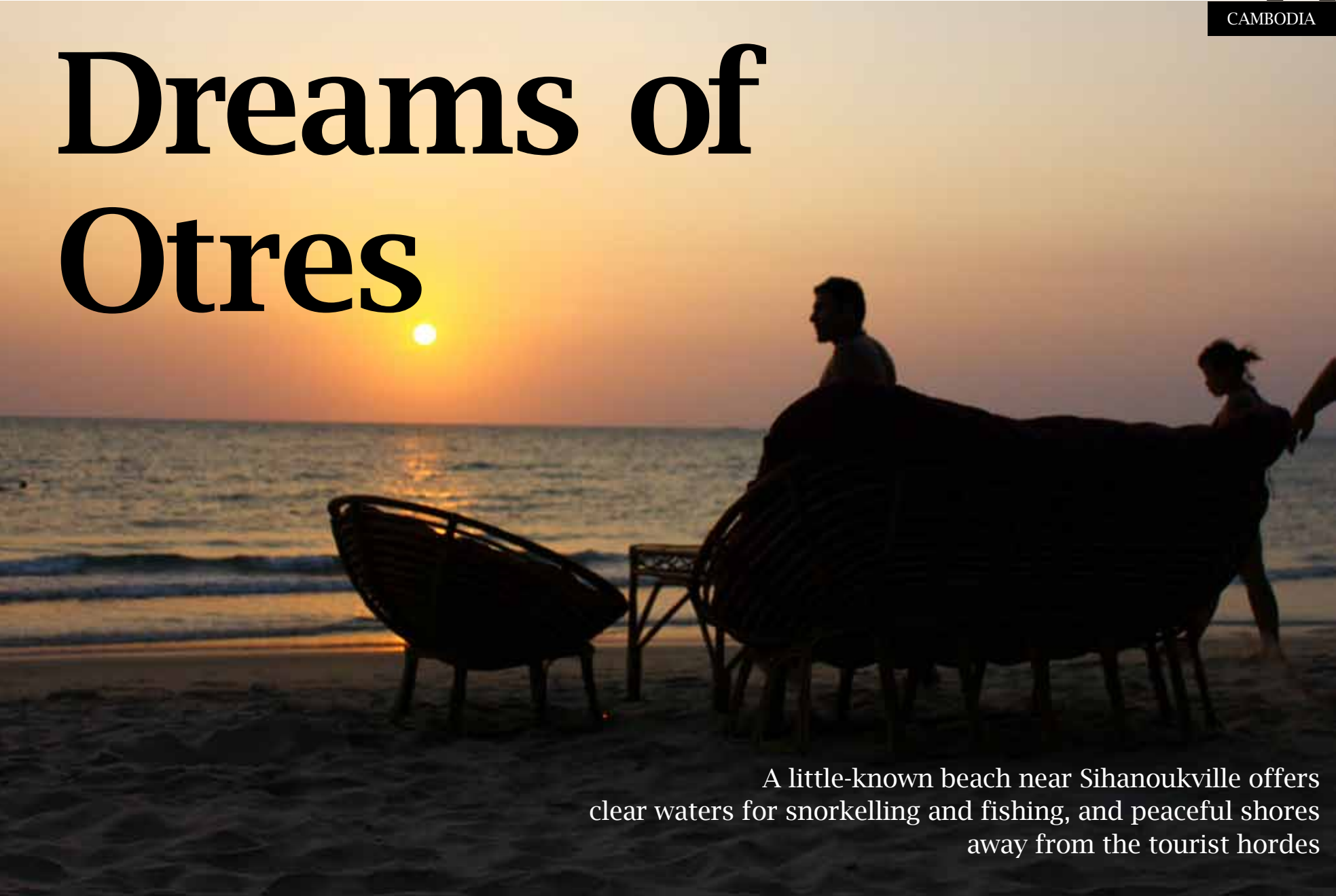
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Include specific ideas about what you would do on the job to add value to the newspaper and the company.

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A little-known beach near Sihanoukville offers clear waters for snorkelling and fishing, and peaceful shores away from the tourist hordes

Photos: Bridget Di Certo

By Bridget Di Certo
bridget.dicerto@gmail.com

BACKPACKERS with irrelevant tribal tattoos, persistent hawkers and overcrowded beach fronts seem all too common in Southeast Asia, and many dream of escaping for a weekend to clear waters, white sand and uninterrupted serenity. In Cambodia, such dreams can be realised at Otres Beach, located just 20 minutes away from the tourist hub of Sihanoukville.

Development is still in its infancy here, and until a few months ago the beach was only accessible by a deeply rutted dirt road. The arduous trip out to this secluded beachfront has helped to preserve the hidden paradise from some of the more obnoxious tourist traps of Sihanoukville.

The 10-kilometre-long beach may



Beach menu. Photo: Bridget Di Certo

not be as wide as its rivals – Occheuteul and Serendipity beaches – but the sand is whiter and the water clearer. Looking across the Gulf of Thailand affords a spectacular view of some of Cambodia’s many islands. During dry season, phosphorescence sometimes gathers along the water’s edge at night so that a midnight dip will stir up magical bright-green clouds.

The village of Otres is essentially one road, about 2 kilometres long, with bungalows and bars on each side. South lies Otres 2, a smaller strip of bungalows and shacks that is severed from the main beach by a large tract of land purchased for a development that has yet to start.

In terms of activities, the Gulf of Thailand is your oyster. Visitors can explore deserted tropical islands with the help of a local fisherman guide, who can take a private boat to secret snorkelling spots and jungle paths that lead to stunning panoramic views of the gulf. Local guides will also take amateur anglers out for night fishing excursions, leaving Otres at 6pm and returning either past midnight, after a shore lunch on one of the islands, or at 6am, after a snooze on the beach.

Alternatively, jump aboard your own Hobie catamaran and sail around at whim. For those seeking a bit more physical exertion and adrenaline, kayaks, kite boards and jet skis can be hired. Parasailing and banana-boat rides are also on offer, as is a daily yoga class from 4pm to 6pm at Blame Canada beach huts.

A number of women patrol the beach offering massages, manicures, pedicures and threading — a painful but effective hair removal process. Indulge in the greatest outdoor beauty spa Cambodia has to offer, or simply take advantage of the long stretch of beach and stroll along the sands. Every Saturday night Otres Market opens, featuring live entertainment, an open mic night, souvenirs, handicrafts, and food and drink stalls. It’s a great way to indulge in a little tourist revelry.

When it comes to indulging, seafood

is king at Otres. A must-try is fried langoustine with pepper and lime, offered by sellers carrying large trays on their heads as they pace the beach looking for hungry customers. Other enterprising women with hot coal buckets will freshly grill squid to order, and fresh fruit is only ever a wave of the hand away.

Apart from the peddler fare, the beach shack restaurants at the water’s edge all offer eclectic menus and plenty of seafood and cocktails. Most places have a nighttime seafood BBQ special for about \$5. Several places also serve vegetarian and European cuisine.

Over the past two years, the number of accommodations and watering holes

has more than doubled as entrepreneurs prepare for Otres’ growing popularity. The majority of sleep options are fan-only bungalows and rooms with shared, cold-water bathrooms. Some more up-market bungalows have private shower facilities, and a few have hot water. Expect to pay around \$5 for a dorm and \$25 or more for a private bungalow with hot water. Only Secret Garden, at Otres Beach 2, has air-conditioning and a private pool. However, it is rarely too hot in the thatched fan bungalows by the beach.

Otres is the perfect escape from the hot rush of Phnom Penh as well as Southeast Asia’s tourist hordes. Blissful beaches, scrumptious seafood, sea-

breeze shacks and adrenaline-fuelled activities are all at your fingertips at Sihanoukville’s most magical stretch of coastline.

GETTING THERE

With a newly paved road, the coastal retreat is now easier to access than ever. The cheapest way is a \$5.50 bus journey from Phnom Penh with Sorya Bus Company. You will be dropped off at a bus depot outside of Sihanoukville. From here, a moto to Otres is about \$4 and a tuk-tuk up to \$10 depending on the season. For groups, a private taxi is the quickest way from Phnom Penh to Otres. Cars are \$50 one-way, and vans are \$70. ■

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CAMBODIA

Yang Na's parents built her a 'girl's house' when she was 13.

Photo: Charlotte Pert

The Kreung have been known for building teenage girls their own private quarters for premarital sex, but Emily Wight travelled to villages and found the custom has almost completely disappeared



Still looking for love, but less freely

By Emily Wight

IT'S nearing sunset on a Friday evening in the dry season, and in the village of Tang Kamal in Ratanakiri, women gather by the well to bathe and collect water.

When the sun sets, many of these women will sleep at home with their families. But some of the teenage girls won't. It is a tradition for Kreung people, scattered in 27 villages around Ratanakiri's Ochum District, to build girls their own private huts when they hit puberty. The huts, or "girls' houses", in local parlance, provide the space for the young women to invite boys over, get to know them, and have sex if they want to.

Yang Na is 16, and her parents built her a girl's house when she was 13 years old. If a boy pays her a visit, sometimes they stay up all night talking. It's entirely up to her, she said, and she feels very much in control: "I have the power to sleep with a boy if I want, but if I don't like him, I always say no, and he goes away."

The Kreung community values premarital sex, she said. "If we have sex, and we are sure we love each other, and so are our parents, then we can get married."

Tang Kamal is 7 kilometres north of the provincial capital of Banlung, and is home to 100 Kreung families. Their survival depends on farming land that's a more than 10km walk away through dense forest and growing cashew nuts that they sell in the markets. There is no electricity or running water.

But Tang Kamal stands out in particular from other Kreung villages: It is one of the only communities that still builds the love huts for its teenage girls. As the people have gained greater exposure to modernisation and Khmer culture, the custom has been disappearing. Parents are increasingly choosing to give their daughters a private room inside the house rather than build a new hut outside.

Economic development and improved livelihoods have afforded this option, said Jan Noorlander, program co-ordinator of the marginalised and ethnic minorities program at CARE.

"Their traditional houses are much smaller, but they also have to be rebuilt every year because they are bamboo, and they get damaged in the rainy season. Building a bigger, timber house is much more practical," he said.

Khoun Roeun is deputy community chief at Laork, a village of at least 150 Kreung families. He said that about two years ago the people stopped building love huts.

'I have the power to sleep with a boy if I want, but if I don't like him, I say no and he goes away.'

Yang Na | Teenager, Tang Kamal

"Before, this community practised this old custom - parents would make girls' and boys' houses," he said. "But based on experience, there were too many problems, like the girl becoming pregnant with no husband, or boys fighting over girls."

Parents still allow their daughters to have premarital sex, Roeun said, but if a girl sleeps under the same roof, they can have more control over who she is spending the night with.

Naoung Tien, 53, also from Laork, said the custom disappeared in her village after the Pol Pot regime. She was just a child when the Khmer Rouge came to power, and she remembers being sent away to work elsewhere in Ratanakiri. When she returned, she said, girls' houses were a thing of the past. "There were huts in 1975, but I remember when I came back there weren't any more."

With her late husband, she constructed separate rooms in her house for her daughters when they were growing up, and allowed them to bring boys back, she said. "It's OK for girls to sleep with boys if they love each other, and if the parents meet and approve."

Subtle differences in customs make each Kreung community unique. Kala

village, for example, is 20km from Banlung. Here there are both girls' and boys' houses, the decipherable difference being that a boy's house is built on higher stilts. But they're no longer used for the traditional purpose, according to 70-year-old Ravee.

She and her husband had built a hut for their daughter, who got married before she had the opportunity to use it, Ravee said. Since their daughter married, she's used the hut to store their pots and pans. Underneath, three pigs snoozed in the shade.

Kala's residents are also building bigger houses. There is no longer a need for a separate love hut, but like in Laork, girls will sleep in a separate room in their family home.

There are no statistics to point to, but even when love huts were common, rape wasn't a problem for Ravee's community, she said. "Our tradition says that if a boy has sex with a girl by force, he gets fined by the village chief, who will take away livestock from his parents. Boys are usually very scared of this."

According to Sarim Heang, executive director at the community development organisation CANDO Cambodia, Kreung villages used to be cut off from the rest of society, which enabled them to preserve their traditions. But now, he said, they have access to Khmer culture through TV and radio.

"They know that according to Khmer culture, it's not good to have sex before marriage. They also go to Cambodian schools, where teachers will educate them according to mainstream society," he said.

Noorlander emphasised, however, that change in indigenous customs has to come from the people themselves.

"Indigenous people are undergoing changes, but so are Khmer people, and it's very important that people are in charge of their own change," he said.

- Additional reporting by Vandy Muong



There is no running water or electricity in Tang Kamal. Photo: Charlotte Pert

BEYOND THE ITCH

HTEIN LIN SOLO SHOW

Date: Opening: Wednesday, March 26th
Time : 6.00 – 8.00 pm
Venue: River Gallery II
Exhibition continues until April 6th

PAINTINGS
VIDEO
PERFORMANCE

River Gallery II 33/35, 37th and 38th Street Tel: 378617
www.rivergallerymyanmar.com rivergalleryart@gmail.com



Spaghetti with bacon and zucchini. Photo: Phyo

food

Refreshing pasta to beat the heat

Quick-cooking zucchini makes an ideal ingredient for one-dish summer meals

Phyo's cooking adventure
phyo.arbidans@gmail.com

THE summer temperatures are rising quickly. It's not easy to cook stews and curries in the kitchen all the time. I'm getting too hot. For that reason, one-pot dishes are ideal this season, as are lots of greens. I have seen so much zucchini at the supermarkets recently, and lots of my Myanmar friends are wondering about how to cook it. I love zucchini, and its flower is my favourite. Try stuffing ripe cheese into zucchini flowers and frying them. Delicious! Here I offer two zucchini dishes

that are similar, but one is best as side dish. The pasta dish is also good for little men and women: My little sweet-pie enjoyed picking bacon from the pasta. Then she asked for more bacon to finish her pasta – good to have a spare bowl of bacon around the table.

SPAGHETTI WITH BACON AND ZUCCHINI

Serves 4

- 350g dried spaghetti
 - ¼ cup olive oil
 - 250g bacon
 - 3 cloves garlic (crushed)
 - 2 medium zucchini (grated)
 - Zest from 1 lemon
 - 1/3 cup of Cheddar cheese (grated)
 - Handful of parsley
- Cook the spaghetti as per

package instructions, but do not add oil. Meanwhile, wash the zucchini, and grate them coarsely. Finely grated zucchini will turn out too watery. Cut the bacon into strips. When ready to cook, add 2 tablespoons olive oil into a non-stick pan and fry bacon until golden. Add remaining oil into the pan and sauté garlic for 30 seconds. Add grated zucchini and fry for 3-4 minutes. When the spaghetti is ready, drain it, saving ¼ cup of the cooking water. Transfer all to the pan with the zucchini mixture. Turn the heat off and remove from the stoves. Salt to taste and add freshly ground black pepper and lemon zest. Garnish with parsley leaves. Serve with cheese. ■

A woman with short dark hair, wearing an orange top, is smiling and holding a white bowl of zucchini salad with a spoon.

ZUCCHINI SALAD WITH BACON

Serves 4

- ¼ cup olive oil
- 250-300g bacon
- 3 cloves garlic (crushed)
- 2 medium zucchini (grated)
- Zest from 1 lemon
- 1 ½ tbsp lemon juice
- Handful of parsley

Cook the spaghetti as per package instructions, but don't add oil. Meanwhile, wash the zucchini and grate them coarsely. Cut the bacon into strips. When ready to cook, add 2 tablespoons olive oil into a non-stick pan and fry bacon until golden. Turn off heat and remove from stove. Add remaining oil to the pan along with the grated zucchini, lemon zest and lemon juice. Salt to taste and add a generous grind of black pepper. Garnish with parsley leaves. Goes well served with meat dishes.



A private spot in the garden awaits diners. Photo: Supplied

YANGON

To the last detail, a dinner fixed for romance

Couples-night tasting menu aims to stimulate senses and psyches

By Whitney Light
light.whitney@gmail.com

MENU planning is an art, but rarely in Yangon has it been approached with the conceptual acuity evident in the new Friday night tasting menu at the Governor's Residence starting March 28. Drawing inspiration from the combined wisdom of two unlikely sources – Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love; and Sigmund Freud, the Viennese psychoanalyst – “Afreudite Flames Night” is just for couples, and it's designed specifically to heighten senses and enflame passions. The setting is the hotel's beautiful lamp- and candle-lit garden, where bistro tables for two are tucked behind giant parasols resting on their sides for maximum intimacy. The tables are laid with more utensils than you'll know what to do with, as well as bits of supposedly aphrodisiac herbs and spices – star anise, cinnamon sticks, rose petals, a pot of basil. Those aren't the only romantic touches. Midway into the evening, after a live chamber orchestra struck up on the lawn, our server took our photo on a Polaroid and gave it to us to keep. Later, we were offered to draw Freudian “love poems” from a basket of tiny scrolls tied with shiny ribbon. They included such gems as: “A strong egoism is a protection against disease, but in the last resort we must begin to love in order that we may not fall ill, and must fall ill if, in consequence of frustration, we cannot love.” A conversation starter, to be sure. As for the food, the menu truly is for tasting, as hearty appetites not

busy supping from their partner's eyes may find they go home hungry. But the decision to serve each dish on one plate does enhance – as sharing always tends to do – the enjoyment of the atmosphere and the relaxed pace of the evening, and fosters the requisite leaning-in of a successful evening for two. The menu itself was ambitious – evidently too much so at times, though it seemed to improve as the evening progressed. To start was prawn and eggplant *escabeche*, which refers to poached or fried fish served in an acidic marinade. While a refreshing idea, the prawns were overcooked and the overwhelming flavour was indeed one of vinegar, which masked the eggplant and the tumeric aioli. Next came lobster-cinnamon cappuccino, an exotic and impracticable combination in sound and execution. Ostensibly it was a “cappuccino” because the liquid was accompanied by a dot of foam. But as my dining partner pointed out, there was nothing milky or creamy about it. The broth was thin and an unfortunate brown colour, tasting of lobster but carrying a burnt taste as well. With a better soup, the caramelised cashew nut in the bottom of the bowl might have been a nice touch, but it was burnt as well. Next came a passion-fruit sorbet to cleanse our palette, and things started to look up. The delicious sorbet did its job and renewed our appetite for the rest of the meal, which took fewer risks with greater success. Scallops and tenderloin were served on small beds of a date and pancetta mixture and a ginger-

lentil puree, respectively, both tasty morsels. Our tenderloin was cooked to order, and the scallops were tender and wrapped in bacon. A modest amount of roast potatoes and grape tomatoes was sandwiched cosily in the middle of the plate. For dessert came chocolate-banana cake, elegantly presented with ice cream and diced mango and a razor-thin sheaf of strawberry fruit leather. It was a sweet and simple end to a sweet and complex evening. The entire Friday-night tasting experience for two will set you back \$70, which seems quite reasonable on account of the lovely setting, the attentive service and the little entertainments. Once the kitchen achieves the optimal balance of aphrodisiacal effect and just plain old culinary delight, this promises to be a memorable destination evening for those looking for a little weekend romance. ■

Governor's Residence

“Afreudite Flames Night”
35 Taw Win Road, Dagon

Restaurant Rating
★★★★★

Food	7
Service	9
Beverage	7
X-factor	9
Value for money	6

Pride ISM completion ceremony



Robin Peter Hamilton



Yacoob Siddique and Ayesha Kabul



Joseph Charles



Tun Shwe and Hla Yin Win

Kids' talent show



Cho Zin



Htwe Mon Kyaw, Thin Thin Aye and Pyay Nyein



A contestant



Tun Ko Ko and Patricia

Myanmar-Pakistan golf tournament



Col Azhar Yasin, Lt General Soe Thein, H E Mr Ehsan Ullah Batth, Maj General Sann Oo and Colonel Seng Ear

Red Square drinks launch



Yan Yan Chan, Ki Ki and Phyo Lay

SCG 100th anniversary dinner



Wilawan Posungnoen and attendee



Krittameth Aueamornrat



Joshua Labya



Chana Poomee



Attendee



Htoo Aung and friend

Fuji restaurant new branch launch



Pe Thwin Tun and Kyi Kyi Nwe



Hnin Yamon San, Krissadakorn Luwai and Nan War Thwe

NIEC graduation ceremony



Teacher and students



Teacher Nelson



Mingalabar! fans of Socialite. If anyone says it's too hot in Yangon to go outside, you can point out that Socialite attended events even when it was 38 degrees Celsius. She attended SCG building products' 100th anniversary and Nang Khin Zayyar's birthday party at Kandawgyi Palace Hotel on March 12. On March 14, she was at Fuji restaurant's new branch opening at Market Place and the Indee Myanmar dinner at Kandawgyi Palace Hotel. The following day, she was busy at the Ninolac baby products launch at Sedona Hotel, Red Square's beverage launch at Kandawgyi Palace Hotel, the NIEC graduation ceremony at Sky Star Hotel and the Ocean Kids talent show at Ocean Super Center. On March 16, she attended the Schneider Electric products launch at Sedona Hotel and the Pride ISM completion ceremony in Insein Township.



Nay Ye Win Lae

Ninolac baby cereal launch



Myint Myint Kyi Nyein Chan Moe Phyo Kyaw Thu Su Mon and daughter

Nang Khin Zayyar's birthday



Nang Khin Zayyar with her friends



Gucci Aung and make-up artists

Schneider Electric product launch



Mar Lar Pascal Reigner Poe Madi Tin Latt

Indee Myanmar company dinner



Ms Paulami Rakesh Shah and Mr C MuRali Bhaskar Sarkar, Gurvinder Singh and Myo Thwin Htut



Thax Soe and wife



Make-up Bo Ni

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DOMESTIC FLIGHT SCHEDULES

YANGON TO NAY PYI TAW				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
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	
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 909	Daily	6:00	7:40	
YJ 891	1,2,3,4,5,7	6:00	8:05	
YJ 891	6	6:30	8:35	
K7 282	Daily	6:30	8:40	
YJ 901	Daily	6:10	7:35	
YH 917	Daily	6:10	8:30	
Y5 234	Daily	6:15	7:30	
6T 401	Daily	6:20	8:25	
YH 833	2	7:00	8:40	
YH 831	4,6	7:00	8:40	
W9 201	Daily	7:30	8:55	
K7 266	Daily	8:00	10:05	
K7 642	Daily	8:30	12:20	
8M 6603	2,4,7	9:00	10:10	
YJ 751/W9 7751	5,7	10:30	12:25	
YJ 761	1,2,4,6	10:30	12:25	
K7 844	Daily	11:00	14:10	
YJ 211	5,7	11:00	12:25	
YJ 201	2,3,4	11:00	12:25	
YJ 601/W9 7601	6	11:15	12:40	
YH 737	3,5,7	11:15	13:25	
YH 727	1	11:15	13:25	
YH 729	2,4,6	11:15	14:15	
W9 251	2,5	11:15	12:40	
YJ 003	3	11:30	12:55	
6T 807	7	11:30	12:55	
6T 807	1	12:00	13:25	
K7 226	2,4,6	13:00	14:25	
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	Daily	7:50	9:55	
YH 910	Daily	7:40	9:45	
Y5 233	Daily	8:10	9:25	
YJ 891	1,2,3,4,5,7	8:20	10:15	

YJ 891	6	8:50	10:45
YH 918	Daily	8:30	10:45
6T 402	Daily	8:45	10:45
YH 918	2	9:10	11:05
W9 201	Daily	9:10	11:05
W9 144	Daily	9:20	10:45
Y5 132	3,5,6,7	9:30	10:30
K7 267	Daily	10:20	12:25
K7 823	2,4,7	11:25	14:25
YH 834	2	12:00	13:55
YH 832	4,6	12:30	13:55
K7 643	Daily	12:35	16:25
6T 808	7	13:15	15:15
6T 808	1	13:45	15:45
YJ 212	5	15:00	16:25
YJ 212	7	15:00	16:55
YJ 202	2,3,4	15:30	16:55
YJ 762	1,2,4,6	16:05	17:30
YJ 602/W9 7602	6	15:55	17:20
W9 120	1,3,6	16:30	17:55
YH 728	1	16:45	18:10
YH 738	5	16:50	18:45
K7 227	2,4,7	16:50	18:15
W9 129	Daily	17:10	18:35
YH 732	Daily	17:10	19:15
W9 211	Daily	17:10	19:15
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	2	18:00	19:25

YANGON TO NYAUNG U				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YJ 891	1,2,3,4,5,7	6:00	7:20	
YH 909	Daily	6:00	8:25	
YH 917	Daily	6:10	7:45	
YJ 901	Daily	6:10	8:20	
W9 141	Daily	6:15	7:35	
6T 401	Daily	6:20	7:40	
K7 282	Daily	6:30	7:50	
YJ 891	6	6:30	7:50	
6T 351	1,2,3,4,6,7	6:30	7:50	
W9 143	Daily	7:15	8:35	
YJ 601/W9 7601	6	11:15	13:20	
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	1,2,3,6	7:35	10:15	
YJ 891	4,5,7	8:05	10:45	
YH 918	Daily	7:45	10:45	
W9 141	Daily	7:50	10:40	
YH 910	Daily	8:25	9:45	
YJ 901	Daily	8:35	9:55	
W9 144	Daily	8:50	10:10	

K7 283	Daily	10:40	12:00
6T 351	5	10:50	13:55
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	10:05	
YH 831	4,6	7:00	10:35	
K7 642	Daily	8:30	10:50	
YJ 201	2,3,4	11:00	13:50	
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	
YH 834	2	12:55	15:20	
YJ 202	2,3,4	14:05	16:55	
K7 643	Daily	14:05	16:25	
W9 252	2,5	16:05	19:00	

YANGON TO HEHO				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YJ 891	1,2,3,4,5,7	6:00	8:50	
YH 917	Daily	6:10	9:35	
W9 141	Daily	6:15	8:20	
6T 401	Daily	6:20	9:20	
YJ 891	6	6:30	9:20	
6T 351	1,2,3,4,6,7	6:30	8:45	
K7 282	Daily	6:30	9:30	
W9 201	Daily	7:30	9:40	
K7 828	1,3,5	7:30	8:45	
K7 822	2,4,7	7:30	10:20	
K7 266	Daily	8:00	9:15	
YJ 751/W9 7751	5,7	10:30	11:40	
YJ 761	1,2,4,6	10:30	11:40	
YH 505	3,4,6,7	10:30	11:55	
YH 505	2	11:00	12:25	
K7 844	Daily	11:00	15:00	
YH 737	3,5,7	11:15	12:40	
YH 727	1	11:15	12:40	
W9 203	Daily	11:00	12:10	
W9 119	1,3,6	11:15	12:25	
6T 807	7	11:30	13:50	
6T 807	1	12:00	14:20	
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	
6T 352	Daily	9:00	11:10	
YJ 891	1,2,3,4,5,7	9:05	10:15	
YJ 891	6	9:35	10:45	
YH 918	Daily	9:35	10:45	
6T 402	Daily	9:35	10:45	

YH 918	Daily	9:35	10:45
K7 283	Daily	9:45	12:00
W9 201	Daily	9:55	11:05
K7 267	Daily	11:10	12:25
YH 506	3,4,6,7	11:55	14:00
W9 204	Daily	12:25	13:35
YH 506	2	12:25	14:30
K7 829	1,3,5	13:50	15:05
6T 808	7	14:05	15:15
6T 808	1	14:35	15:45
K7 845	Daily	15:15	18:10
W9 120	1,3,6	15:45	17:55
YJ 762	1,2,4,6	15:20	17:30
YJ 212	7	15:45	16:55
YH 728	1	16:00	18:10
YH 738	3,7	16:40	18:50
W9 129	Daily	16:25	18:35
YH 732	Daily	16:25	19:15
6T 501	Daily	16:55	19:55
YH 738	5	17:35	18:45
YH 730	4	17:35	18:45

YANGON TO SITT WE				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YH 511	1,5	10:30	12:05	
6T 605	Daily	11:15	13:15	
W9 309	1,3,5,6,7	11:30	12:55	
K7 422	Daily	13:30	15:25	
6T 611	4,6	14:30	15:55	

SITT WE TO YANGON				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YH 511	1,5	12:05	13:55	
6T 606	Daily	13:35	15:00	
K7 423	Daily	15:40	17:00	
6T 612	4,6	16:15	17:40	

YANGON TO MYEIK				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YH 633	1,3,5,7	7:00	9:15	
K7 319	Daily	7:00	9:05	
6T 707	1,3,5,6,7	7:45	9:45	

MYEIK TO YANGON				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YH 634	1,3,5,7	11:25	13:25	
K7 320	Daily	11:30	13:35	
6T 708	1,3,5,6,7	12:10	14:10	

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	1,5	10:30	13:05	
YH 505	3,4,6,7	10:30	13:10	
YH 505	2	11:00	13:40	
6T 605	Daily	11:15	12:10	
W9307	2,4	11:30	13:50	
W9 309	1,3,5,6,7	11:30	13:50	
K7 422	Daily	13:30	14:25	

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	1,5	13:05	13:55	
YH 506	3,4,6,7	13:10	14:00	
YH 506	2	13:40	14:30	
W9 307	2,4	14:05	14:55	
W9 309	1,3,5,6,7	14:05	14:55	
K7 422	Daily	14:40	17:00	

Domestic Airlines

Air Bagan Ltd. (W9)
Tel : 513322, 513422, 504888, Fax : 515102

Air KBZ (K7)
Tel: 372977-80, 533030-39 (Airport),
Fax: 372983, Hot Line: 373766

Air Mandalay (6T)
Tel : (Head Office) 501520, 525488,
Fax: 525937. Airport: 533222-3, 09-73152853.
Fax: 533223.

Asian Wings (YJ)
Tel: 951 515261-264, 512140, 512473, 512640.
Fax: 951 532333, 516654

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	16:40
PG 708	Daily	15:20	17:15
8M 331	Daily	16:30	18:15
PG 704	Daily	18:25	20:20
Y5 237	Daily	18:15	20:05
TG 306	Daily	19:45	21:35

YANGON TO DON MUENG			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
DD 4231	Daily	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	Daily	21:30	23:15
DD 4239	Daily	21:00	22:55

YANGON TO SINGAPORE			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
MI 509	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	Daily	10:25	14:45
3K 586	Daily	11:40	16:20
MI 517	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 1425	Daily	8:30	12:45
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	15:55
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	14:20	16:10

YANGON TO HANOI			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
VN 956	1,3,5,6,7	19:10	21:25

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 401	3,6	8:35	12:30

YANGON TO SEOUL			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
OZ 770	4,7	0:50	8:50
KE 472	2,3,4	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
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
TG 303	Daily	8:00	8:45
PG 701	Daily	8:50	9:40
8M 336	Daily	11:55	12:40
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	18:40
8M 332	Daily	19:20	20:05
PG 705	Daily	20:00	21:15
Y5 238	Daily	21:05	21:55

DON MUENG TO YANGON			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
DD 4230	Daily	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	Daily	20:15	20:55
DD 4238	Daily	19:25	20:15

SINGAPORE TO YANGON			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
SQ 998	Daily	7:55	9:20
3K 585	Daily	9:10	10:40
8M 232	Daily	13:25	14:50
TR 2826	2,3,4,5,	15:00	16:30
MI 518	Daily	14:20	15:45
TR 2826	1,6,7	13:10	14:30
Y5 234	Daily	15:40	17:10
3K 587	2,3,5	17:20	18:50
8M 234	5,6,7	19:25	20:50
MI 520	5,7	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	9:50

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	16:40	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 618	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 402	3,6	13:30	14:55

SEOUL TO YANGON			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
KE 471	2,3,4	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
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													
Subject to change without notice													
<table><tr><td>Day</td><td></td><td>4 = Thursday</td></tr><tr><td>1 = Monday</td><td></td><td>5 = Friday</td></tr><tr><td>2 = Tuesday</td><td></td><td>6 = Saturday</td></tr><tr><td>3 = Wednesday</td><td></td><td>7 = Sunday</td></tr></table>		Day		4 = Thursday	1 = Monday		5 = Friday	2 = Tuesday		6 = Saturday	3 = Wednesday		7 = Sunday
Day		4 = Thursday											
1 = Monday		5 = Friday											
2 = Tuesday		6 = Saturday											
3 = Wednesday		7 = Sunday											

Universal Crossword

Edited by Timothy E. Parker

CHANGE OF DIRECTION By Tim Burr

ACROSS

- 1 Couch's cousin
5 Long heroic tale
9 Glide on the ice
14 Desktop graphic
15 Gaucho's gear
16 Cabinet department
17 Ignore
20 "Falstaff" composer Sir Edward
21 White halos, as around suns
22 Afternoon naps
25 Gown's partner
26 Fortunate
28 Annoying person or bug
32 Skillful quality
37 Broad-winged hawk
38 Decision-maker's critical moment
41 Nice forecast
42 Pick out of a lineup
43 Former items
44 Breakfast side
46 ____ capita
47 Scoundrels, in British slang
53 Divide
58 Goldfinger's first name
59 Disgust
62 Rock climber's ridge
63 Gather leaves, in a way
64 Line-____ veto
65 Other nations, to Israelites
66 Chinese monetary unit
67 Extinct bird not known for its smarts

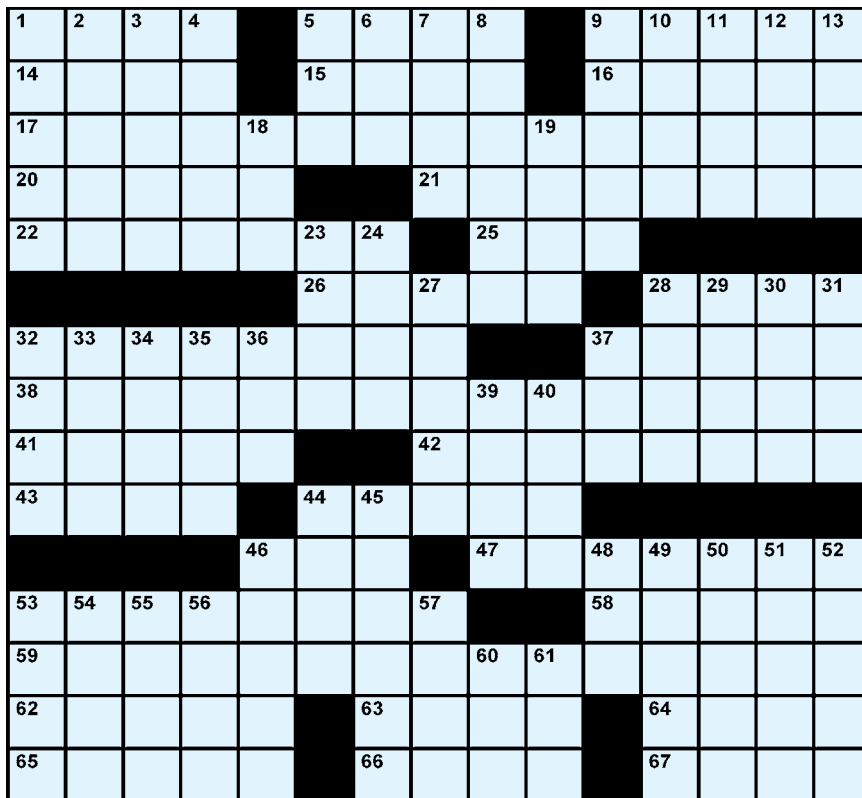
DOWN

- 1 Builders' offices
2 Eyes, to Nero
3 Smithy's furnace
4 Kournikova and Kendrick
5 Fall back, tidewise
6 D.C. dealmaker
7 What hipuggers hug

- 8 Vancouver hockey player
9 Nap
10 Boxing victory
11 Biblical shepherd
12 Big bag
13 Cupid, to Greeks
18 "How Great Thou ____"
19 Low, sturdy cart
23 Tenor's neighbor
24 Navigate waves, in a way
27 Glass-half-empty sort
28 Golf's shortest stroke

- 29 Toiletries case
30 Lord's subject
31 Lead Soprano?
32 It abuts the bema
33 Flour-and-fat sauce thickener
34 Pitchfork piece
35 Quaint lodgings
36 Barnyard home
37 "Gentle" TV bear
39 Strong smell
40 Western Nevada city
44 Jumping, kidney or lima
45 Blood line
46 Introduction to a book

- 48 Way of Lao-tzu
49 Puffy
50 Poetry Muse
51 Prepared hashbrowns, say
52 Average Joe
53 Doe's mate
54 Currency on the Continent
55 Mouse, to a mouser
56 "Freeze" or "dote" preceder
57 Grandson of Abraham
60 Calypso offshoot
61 Countdown start, often



DILBERT

BY SCOTT ADAMS



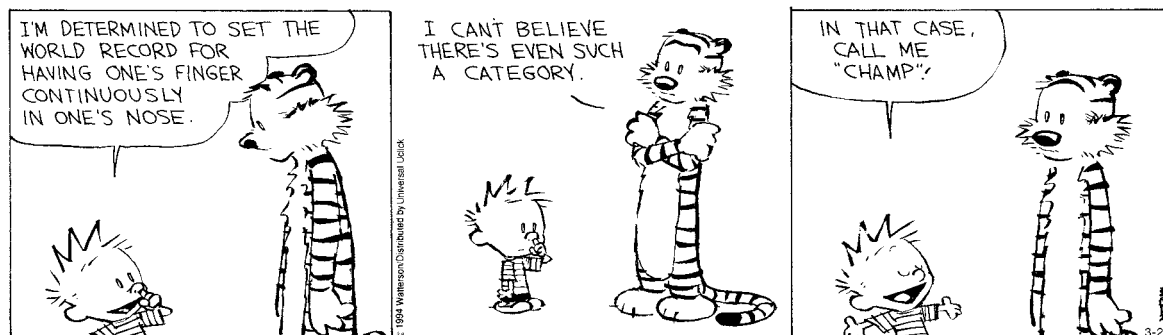
PEANUTS

BY CHARLES SCHULZ



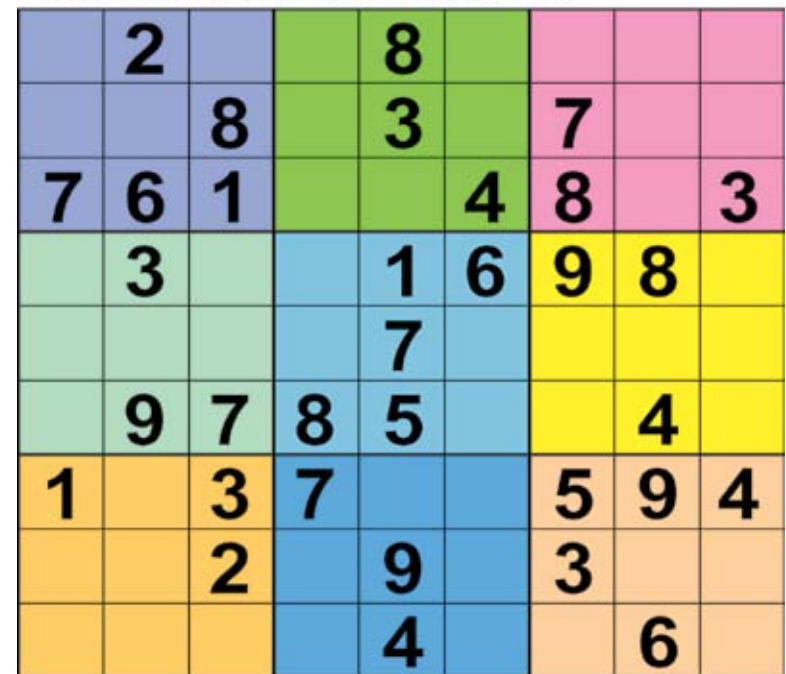
CALVIN AND HOBBS

BY BILL WATTERSON



SUDOKU PACIFIC

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains every digit from 1 to 9 inclusively.



3/27

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

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.

LORDE (MUSICIAN)

Solution: 6 letters



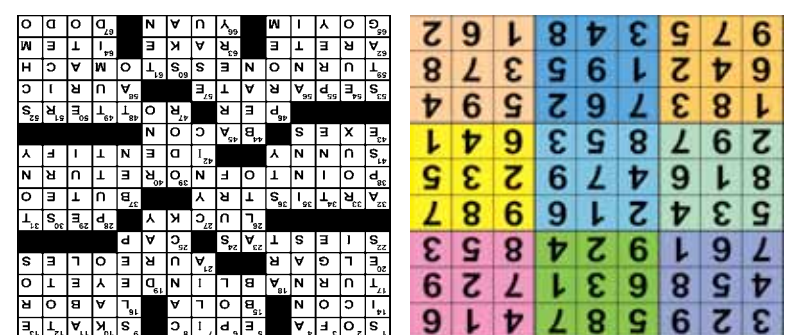
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3/24

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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

Kuwait 62-B, Shwe Taung Kyar St, Bahan Tsp. Tel : 01-230-9542, 230-9543. Fax : 01-230-5836.

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

Nepal 16, Natmauk Yeiktha, Yangon. Tel: 545880, 557168, fax: 549803, email: nepemb@mptmail.net.mm

Norway, No.7, Pyi Thu St, Pyay Rd, 7 Miles, Mayangone Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 01 - 9669520 - 17 Fax - 01 - 9669516

New Zealand No. 43/C, Inya Myaing Rd, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel : 01-2306046-9 Fax : 01-2305805

Netherlands Diplomatic Mission No. 43/C, Inya Myaing Rd, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel : 01-2305805

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

Russian 38, Sagawa Rd, Yangon. Tel: 241955, 254161,

Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia No.287/289, U Wisara Rd, Sanchaung. Tel : 01-536153, 516952.

Serbia No. 114-A, Inya Rd, P.O.Box No. 943, Yangon. Tel: 515282, 515283, email: serbemb@yangon.net.mm

Singapore 238, Dhamazedi Road, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 559001, email: singemb_ygn@sgmfa.gov.sg

South Korea 97 University Avenue, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 527142-4, 515190, fax: 513286, email: myanmar@mofat.go.kr

Sri Lanka 34 Taw Win Road, Yangon. Tel: 222812,

Switzerland No 11, Kabaung Lane, 5 ½ mile, Pyay Rd, Hlaing Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 534754, 507089.

Thailand 94 Pyay Rd, Dagon Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 226721, 226728, 226824

Turkish Embassy 19AB, Kan Yeik Thar St, Mayangone Tsp, Yangon. Tel : 662992, Fax : 661365

United Kingdom 80 Strand Rd, Yangon. Tel: 370867, 380322, 371852, 371853, 256438,

United States of America 110, University Avenue, Kamayut Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 536509, 535756, Fax: 650306

Vietnam Bldg-72, Thanlwin Rd, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 511305

UNITED NATIONS

ILO Liaison 1-A, Kanbae (Thitsar Rd), Yankin Tsp, Tel : 01-566538, 566539

IOM 318 (A) Ahlone Rd, Dagon Tsp, Yangon. Tel - 01-210588, 09 73236679, 0973236680, Email- iomyangon@iom.int

UNAIDS 137/1, Thaw Wun Rd, Kamayut Tsp. Tel : 534498, 504832

UNDCP 11-A, Malikha St, Mayangone tsp. Tel: 666903, 664539.

UNDP 6, Natmauk Rd, Bahan tel: 542910-19. fax: 292739.

UNFPA 6, Natmauk Rd, Bahan tsp. tel: 546029.

UNHCR 287, Pyay Rd, Sanchaung tsp. Tel: 524022, 524024.

UNIAP Rm: 1202, 12 Fl, Traders Hotel. Tel: 254852, 254853.

UNIC 6, Natmauk St., Bahan, tel: 52910-19

UNICEF 14-15 Flr, Traders Hotel. P.O. Box 1435, Kyauktada. Tel: 375527-32, unicef.yangon@unicef.org,

UNODC 11-A, Malikha Rd., Ward 7, Mayangone. tel: 01-9666903, 9660556, 9660538, 9660398. email: fo.myanmar@unodc.org

UNOPS Inya Lake Hotel, 3rd floor, 37, Kaba Aye Pagoda Rd, Mayangone Tsp. Tel: 951-657281-7. Fax: 657279.

UNRC 6, Natmauk Rd, P.O. Box 650, TMWE Tel: 542911-19, 292637 (Resident Coordinator),

WFP 5 Kan Baw Za St, Shwe Taung Kyar, [Golden Valley], Bahan Tsp. Tel : 2305971-6

WHO No. 2, Pyay Rd, 7 Mile, Mayangone Tsp, Tel : 650405-6, 650416, 654386-90.

ASEAN Coordinating Of. for the ASEAN Humanitarian Task Force, 79, Taw Win st, Dagon Tsp. Tel: 225258.

FAO Myanma Agriculture Service Insein Rd, Insein. tel: 641672, 641673.

General Listing

ACCOMMODATION-HOTELS



ASIA PLAZA HOTEL YANGON

No. 277, Bogyoke Aung San Road, Corner of 38th Street, Kyauktada Township, Yangon, Myanmar. Tel : (951) 391070, 391071. Reservation@391070 [Ext] 1910, 106. Fax : (951) 391375. Email : hotelasiaplaza@gmail.com

Avenue 64 Hotel

No. 64 (G), Kytewine Pagoda Rd, Mayangone Tsp, Yangon. Tel : 09-8631392, 01 656913-9

Chatrium Hotel 40 Natmauk Rd, Tarmwe. tel: 544500. fax: 544400.



No.7A, Wingabar Road, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel : (951) 546313, 430245. 09-731-77781~4. Fax : [01] 546313. www.cloverhotel.asia. info@cloverhotel.asia

Clover Hotel City Center

No. 217, 32nd Street (Upper Block), Pabedan Tsp, Yangon, Myanmar. Tel : 377720, Fax : 377722 www.clovercitycenter.asia

Clover Hotel City Center Plus

No. 229, 32nd Street (Upper Block), Pabedan Tsp, Yangon, Myanmar. Tel : 377975, Fax : 377974 www.clovercitycenterplus.asia

Confort Inn

4, Shweli Rd, Bet: Inya Rd & U Wisara Rd, Kamaryut, tel: 525781, 526872



No. (356/366), Kyaikkasan Rd, Tamwe Township, Yangon, Myanmar. Ph: 542826, Fax: 545650 Email: reservation@edenpalacehotel.com



M-22, Shwe Htee Housing, Thamine Station St., Near the Bayint Naung Point, Mayangone Tsp., Yangon Tel : 522763, 522744, 667557. Fax : (95-1) 652174 E-mail : grandpalace@myanmar.com.mm



No. 12, Pho Sein Road, Tamwe Township, Yangon Tel : (95-1) 209299, 209300, 209343, 209345, 209346 Fax : (95-1) 209344 E-mail : greenhill@myanmar.com.mm



Green Paradise Hotel 7, Yeik Tha (1) St, Waizayandar Housing, Tamwe Tsp, Yangon. Tel : 01-566727, 1222635 09-4200-33335, 09-4200-33337. Email : greenparadisehotel.mynld@gmail.com www.greenparadisemyn.com

Hotel Yangon

91/93, 8th Mile Junction, Tel : 01-667708, 667688.

Inya Lake Resort Hotel

37 Kabar Aye Pagoda Rd. tel: 662866. fax: 665537.

MGM Hotel No (160), Warden Street, Lanmadaw Tsp, Yangon, Myanmar. +95-1-212454-9. www.hotel-mgm.com



No. 205, Corner of Wadan Street & Min Ye Kyaw Swa Road, Lanmadaw Tsp, Yangon. Myanmar. Tel: (95-1) 212850 ~ 3, 229358 ~ 61, Fax: (95-1) 212854. info@myanmarpandahotel.com http://www.myanmarpandahotel.com

PARKROYAL Yangon, Myanmar

33, Alan Pya Pagoda Rd, Dagon tsp. tel: 250388. fax: 252478. email: enquiry.prygn@parkroyalhotels.com parkroyalhotels.com.



Royal White Elephant Hotel No-11, Kan Street, Hlaing Tsp. Yangon, Myanmar. (+95-1) 500822, 503986. www.rwehotel.com

Savoy Hotel

129, Damazedi Rd, Kamayut tsp. tel: 526289, 526298,

Sedona Hotel

Kabar Aye Pagoda Rd, Yankin. tel: 666900.

Strand Hotel

92 Strand Rd. tel: 243377. fax: 289880.

Summit Parkview Hotel

350, Ahlone Rd, Dagon Tsp. tel: 211888, 211966.

Traders Hotel

223 Sule Pagoda Rd. tel: 242828. fax: 242838.

Winner Inn

42, Than Lwin Rd, Bahan Tsp. Tel: 503734, 524387. email: reservation@winnerinnmyanmar.com

Windsor Hotel No.31, Shin Saw Pu Street, Sanchaung. Yangon, Myanmar. Ph: 95-1-511216-8, www.hotelwindsoryangon.com

Yuzana Hotel

130, Shwegondaing Rd, Bahan Tsp, tel : 01-549600

Yuzana Garden Hotel 44, Alanpya Pagoda Rd, Mingalar Taung Nyunt Tsp, tel : 01-248944

ACCOMMODATION LONG TERM

Golden Hill Towers

24-26, Kabar Aye Pagoda Rd, Bahan Tsp. tel: 558556. ghtower@mptmail.net.mm.



REAL ESTATE & PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

Tel: 09-7349-4483, 09-4200-56994. E-mail: aahappyhomes@gmail.com, http://www.happyhomesyangon.com

Marina Residence

8, Kabar Aye Pagoda Rd, Mayangone Tsp. tel: 6506 51~4. fax: 650630.



17, Kabar Aye Pagoda Rd, Yankin Tsp. Tel: 650933. Fax: 650960. Email : micprmi@myanmar.com.mmwww.myanmarmicasahotel.com

ACCOMMODATION-HOTELS (NAY PYI TAW)



Reservation Office (Yangon) 123, Alanpya Pagoda Rd, Dagon Township Tel : 951- 255 819-838 **Royal Kumudra Hotel, (Nay Pyi Taw)** Tel : 067- 414 177, 067- 4141 88 E-Mail: reservation@maxhotelsgroup.com

RESORTS



Reservation Office (Yangon) 123, Alanpya Pagoda Rd, Dagon Township. Tel : 951-255 819-838 **Hotel Max** [Chaung Tha Beach] Tel : 042-423 46-9, 042-421 33.

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Traffic Control Branch ☎tel: 298651
Department of Post & Telecommunication ☎tel: 591384, 591387.
Immigration ☎tel: 286434.
Ministry of Education ☎tel: 545500m 562390
Ministry of Sports ☎tel: 370604, 370605
Ministry of Communications ☎tel: 067-407037.
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.

HOSPITALS

Central Women's Hospital ☎tel: 221013, 222811.
Children Hospital ☎tel: 221421, 222807
Ear, Nose & Throat Hospital ☎tel: 543888.
Naypyitaw Hospital (emergency) ☎tel: 420096.
Worker's Hospital ☎tel: 554444, 554455, 554811.

Yangon Children Hospital ☎tel: 222807, 222808, 222809.
Yangon General Hospital (East) ☎tel: 292835, 292836, 292837.
Yangon General Hospital (New) ☎tel: 384493, 384494, 384495, 379109.
Yangon General Hospital (West) ☎tel: 222860, 222861, 220416.
Yangon General Hospital (YGH) ☎tel: 256112, 256123, 281443, 256131.

ELECTRICITY

Power Station ☎tel: 414235

POST OFFICE

General Post Office
39, Bo Aung Kyaw St. (near British Council Library). ☎tel: 285499.



INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Yangon International Airport ☎tel: 662811.



YANGON PORT

Shipping [Coastal vessels] ☎tel: 382722



RAILWAYS

Railways information
☎tel: 274027, 202175-8.

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No. 2/1, Than Thu Mar Rd, Thuwunna Junction. Tel : 09-4224-64130

BARS

50th Street
9/13, 50th street-lower, Botataung Tsp. Tel-397160.

the LOBBY BAR
Lobby Bar
PARKROYAL Yangon, Myanmar. 33, Alan Pya Phaya Road, Dagon Tsp. tel: 250388.

Strand Bar 92, Strand Rd, Yangon, Myanmar. tel: 243377. fax: 243393, sales@thestrands.com.mm www.ghmhotels.com

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California Skin Spa
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Esthetic

Marina Residence, Yangon Ph: 650651-4, Ext: 109 Beauty Plan, Corner of 77th St & 31st St, Mandalay Ph: 02 72506

La Source
Beauty Spa

YANGON
La Source Beauty Spa
80-A, Inya Rd, Kamayut Tsp. Tel: 512380, 511252
Beauty Bar by La Source
Room (1004), Sedona Hotel, Tel : 666 900 Ext : (7167)
LS Salon
Junction Square, 3rd Floor. Tel : 95-1-527242, Ext : 4001
MANDALAY
La Source Beauty Spa
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Candidates must:

- Be permanent residents of Myanmar or returning to Myanmar having completed a course of study and/or term of related employment abroad
- Be fluent in written and spoken Myanmar and English
- Hold a university degree or higher
- Have at least three years of management experience in either middle management or at directorial level
- Be IT-literate (Word, Excel, DTP skills an advantage)
- Excellent communicators with some knowledge of film and/or media
- Be driven, dynamic, creative and a good team player
- Be able to take on an international standard management role

Applications :

Applications should be please submitted to Win Naing at the YFS house, 51E, U Po Tet Lane, Kaba Aye Pagoda Road, Mayangone Tsp., Yangon or via email to yfs.yfs@googlemail.com by **24 April, 2014**. Only shortlisted applicants will be invited for an interview.

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Senior Solution Architects will be responsible for analyzing, designing and developing commercially viable end-to-end technical solutions for the customers. You will translate customer needs and technology opportunities into a detailed technical offering, solution and proposals. You will be at the forefront of technology and its business implications, and you are expected to become a world-class authority across many technology areas. You will also drive joint customer activities such as Performance Partnerships, in close cooperation with senior colleagues in Myanmar, across Southeast Asia, and in our headquarters in Sweden.

- Master of Science or similar education, additional business education such as MBA a plus.
- Passion for technology, business and learning
- High performer, positive and open mindset, can-do attitude, drive, creativity
- Willing to travel internationally, for best practice sharing, learning and development
- 3-10 years previous relevant work experience in Telecom or IT sector, preferably in international environment

2. Administration Manager

As Line Manager within Local Administration Services Support you are responsible for a team of specialists who are supporting internal stakeholders in the company. The team is specialized in different process areas which require competencies in any of the following areas: finance and financial administration, car fleet management, corporate credit cards handling, financial administration including taxes, invoice administration, records retention, and travel & expenses, among others.

- Bachelor in Business and Administration or equivalent
- Several years of line management experience and proven skills in a global/multi-country position in a service oriented environment
- Result-oriented person with solid experience in driving global standard implementation and change management in multicultural organizations
- Financial knowledge is essential

3. Customer Project Managers

The customer project manager is responsible for managing projects towards their goals in terms of scope, time, cost, risk and quality. This includes monitoring and tracking the project time-schedules and focusing on the customer's needs and priorities.

- 3 years' relevant experience in the Telecom industry with at least 1 year experience in the role of project manager
- Bachelor Degree in telecommunication, engineering, IT or business discipline
- Ability to co-operate with other managers, employees and sub-contractors
- Good presentation and communication skills
- Project Management Professional (PMP) certified or equivalent is a great advantage

4. Junior Engineers or Fresh Graduates

We are also looking for highly motivated fresh graduates or junior engineers who have the potential to excel within the organization. We offer challenging work assignments complemented by a learning component for those who seek a career in the telecommunications industry. Successful candidates can look forward to gaining practical work experience and skills training with a unique opportunity to develop and assume a challenging and progressive career path within the organization.

- University Degree in Telecommunication, Electronic Engineering, IT, Science or equivalent
- Self-starter, fast learner, creative, resourceful and able to adapt to a fast paced working environment.
- Result-oriented team player with strong organizational and leadership qualities and ability to interact well with all levels of employees in the organization.
- Good computer skills (e.g. Microsoft Office)
- Able to speak and write in English at an acceptable level.

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5. Operations Team Leader

An Operations Team Leader is responsible for managing contracted service scope ensuring the fulfillment of obligation by the Company, the Customer and Suppliers, in order to secure quality, profitability and Customer satisfaction. Operations Team Leaders will also work with growth planning and retention planning in order to evolve customer needs.

- 2 years relevant experience
- Bachelor Degree in telecommunication, IT, science, engineering or business discipline
- Good knowledge of GSM & WCDMA networks
- Good knowledge of Operational processes and tools handling event, incident and fault management

6. Back Office Engineers

A Back Office Engineer is responsible for coordination, management and execution of optimization activities to improve the overall performance of the network or IS/IT infrastructure and of a service, acting on an end to end view. This Job Role should assure that all services are implemented correctly and according to Customer's request.

- 2 years relevant experience
- Bachelor Degree in telecommunication, IT, science, engineering or business discipline
- Ability to troubleshoot equipment failure in a logical structured manner able to escalate faults and liaise with 3rd party support centers
- Ability to Plan, Design and Optimize a GSM & WCDMA network
- Ability to perform configuration changes of network management object and circuits

7. NOC Engineers

A NOC Engineer is responsible for the coordination, support, management and execution of 1st Level proactive and reactive maintenance activities to ensure that services provided to customers are continuously available and performing to Service Level Agreement (SLA) performance levels. This Job Role is also responsible for receiving trouble reports from the Operator's Customer Care Center, resolving them to the customer's satisfaction and providing meaningful status on repair and/or restoration activity.

- 2 years of relevant experience
- Bachelor Degree in telecommunication, IT, science, engineering or business discipline
- Must have the ability to identify equipment failure in a logical structured manner able to escalate faults and liaise with 3rd party support centers

8. Field Technicians

This Job Role is responsible for the coordination, management and execution of Field Services activities supporting other Service Function (SF) in Operations and Engineering when in-site activities must be performed, to ensure that services provided to customers are continuously available and performing to Service Level Agreement (SLA) performance levels.

- 1 year relevant experience
- Bachelor Degree in telecommunication, engineering, IT or business discipline.
- Good technical knowledge of at least one the following:
 - IT Transport/ Microwave/ Optical fiber Transmission equipment
 - GSM & WCDMA Radio BTS and feeder system

9. Integration Engineers

The Integration Engineer is responsible for configuration and integration of the hardware and software into the customer's network and systems, in accordance with Ericsson Integration Processes.

- Bachelor Degree in telecommunication, engineering, IT or business discipline.
- 2 years' relevant experience
- Experience in IP, programming/coding is an advantage
- Able to work independently, as well as in a team.

10. Commissioning Engineers

The Commissioning Engineer is responsible for performing commissioning of various kinds of equipment, from nodes and antenna systems to complete systems solutions. The Commissioning service applies to all network elements (new, upgrade, expansion, and swap).

- Bachelor Degree in telecommunication, engineering, IT or business discipline
- Experience in IP, programming/coding is an advantage
- Able to work independently, as well as in a team.

11. HR Administrators

HR Administrator is responsible for managing payroll, supporting recruitment, training administration, and Occupational Health and Safety (OHS).

- At least few years HR work experience
- Proven skills in a global/multi-country position in a service oriented environment
- University Degree in management, business, or equivalent
- Good knowledge of Myanmar labor laws and preferably taxation laws
- Good communication and interpersonal skills

12. Administration Officers

The Administration Officer is responsible for administrative tasks such as air ticket and hotel booking, car booking, visa handling for guests/visitors, and ensuring office supplies are always sufficient to support operations

- 5 years relevant experience
- Bachelor degree in business/management

13. Finance Supports

The Finance support is responsible for accounting administration such as Supplier Invoice Management, local cash management, record management, employee expense claim.

- At least 5 years Accounting experience
- Bachelor degree in business/management

14. Site Handler Administrators

The Site Handler Administration is responsible for the proper definition of project information in the Site handler system. Site Handler Administration also needs to set up standard report structures as decided by the Project Managers.

- A University qualification or equivalent, preferably in the multimedia, IT or telecommunications field
- Skilful user of MS Access and MS Project
- Good knowledge and experience on Telecom Project Planning and Project Management processes
- Good presentation and communication skills

15. Project Support Professionals

Project Support Professional (PSP) is providing support to projects, service and support contracts with financial management, financial reporting and operational financial, including:

- Project structure and set up in compliance with Ericsson process
- Project follow up in term of revenue, budget, billing
- Project governance in compliance with Ericsson standard.
- 3+ years working experience in Finance/ Accounting as Business/ Project Control preferably in the telecom/ IT industry
- Bachelor Degree in Finance/ Accounting/ Business or equivalent qualifications
- Good knowledge and hands on experience in SAP System in Project and Accounting Modules
- Good knowledge and experience on Telecom/ IT Industry Project Planning and Project Management processes
- Experience in project finance is an advantage

16. Project Administrators

Project Administrator supports the customer project manager in administration activities such as preparing and monitoring the status of the project procurement documentation; administering project correspondence and project activity; and ensuring that all project documentation required for invoicing and project completion, will be collected correctly and completely.

- 3 years working experience in relevant project management activities
- Bachelor degree in science/business/management/accounting

How to apply:

All positions require good command of written and spoken English, and good computer skills (MS office).

Myanmar Candidate who has working experience abroad is an advantage.

Only applicants with Myanmar citizenship or valid working visa should apply.

Interested candidates are requested to send cover letter that mentions location that you would like to work and CV to: hr.myanmar@ericsson.com.

Please do not send certificates, degrees or other reference documents, as we will request these when candidates reach the final stage of our recruitment process.

Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted for interview.

Closing date for applications: 04 April 2014



Brazilians power Yangon United over South China

KYAW ZIN HLAING
kyawzinhlaing91@gmail.com

YANGON United defeated Hong Kong's South China 2-0 in AFC Cup play last week on a strong showing by their Brazilian duo of Emerson and Cezar.

Striker Cezar put the home side up 1-0 in the 35th minute on March 18 with a header off Yan Aung Kyaw's corner that South China goalkeeper Yapp Hung Fai was unable to keep out of the net.

Emerson's goal in the 77th minute put the match out of reach for South China as they failed to find a way around Yangon defenders Kazuki and Yan Aung Kyaw.

South China's frustration only grew in the 88th minute when defender Lee Chi Ho was collected his second

'As I said before the match, their Brazilian forwards could cause some problems for my team.'

Yeung Ching Kwong
South China coach

yellow card for pushing Yangon United's David Htan, causing an eruption of challenges from the team's bench.

South China has failed to collect any points in the AFC and find themselves at the bottom of Group G. Yangon United is in second in the group, three points behind group leaders Ninn Binh of Vietnam, who beat Malaysian side Kelantan on March 18.

After the match, Yangon coach Eric Williams said that he was pleased with his team's play following a tough schedule of domestic and AFC games.

"I am happy that we won this game because that's what we were aiming for. Although my players are tired after playing games in both our local league and the AFC Cup, they did their best," he said, but added that he felt the team's younger players were struggling to compete in the international setting.

"Half of my players are very young and not ready to play at this level, so I can only use them in local games," Williams said.

South China coach Yeung Ching Kwong cited Myanmar's heat, which is quickly becoming common for visiting coaches, as an issue for his players.

"The weather was too hot for my players although they tried hard," he said.

"As I said before the match, their Brazilian forwards could cause some problems for my team."

Myanmar National League club Nay Pyi Taw lost to Hong Kong's Kitchee 2-0 on March 19 in Hong Kong. They now stand in second in Group H.

Group G								
TEAM	PLD	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
Vissai Ninh Binh	3	3	0	0	9	5	+4	9
Yangon United	3	2	0	1	9	6	+3	6
Kelantan	3	1	0	2	7	8	-1	3
South China	3	0	0	3	1	7	-6	0

Group H								
TEAM	PLD	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
Kitchee	3	2	1	0	9	2	+7	7
Nay Pyi Taw	3	1	1	1	5	5	0	4
Tampines Rovers	3	1	0	2	4	9	-5	3
Pune	3	0	2	1	5	7	-2	2

CONTINUED FROM SPORT 28

After being successful in their grant request, the newly established Myanmar Celts Gaelic Sports Association hope to soon be competing against other members of the almost paradoxically titled Asian County Board and are already training for their first game, also against neighbouring Thailand.

All three sports have been first established by a group of enthusiasts, people with genuine passion for the game.

The Celts and Fighting Cocks have become de facto national sides due to the size of their sports but rugby, now a global game and soon to be recognised as such with a place

in the 2016 Olympics, requires that there be four full men's sides active before a country can apply to be a fully recognised federation.

Myanmar is one of only two ASEAN nations not to have a recognised rugby union and so that is the ultimate aim for the Yangon Dragons.

In a year they've moved from a downtown bar and a benign dictatorship to holding open elections to the 11 positions on the club's board.

"We've been in existence for more than a year now and the next step is to establish a Myanmar Rugby Federation. Talks are well underway with local universities and interested parties to approach the government to form a Federation," Slow said.



Above, Lee Chi Ho of South China is sent off. Below, Emerson celebrates scoring a goal in the 77th minute.
Photo: Aung Htay Hlaing



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Sport

Yangon United top
South China in AFC Cup play

SPORT 66

A whole new ball game

Yangon's expats fuel sporting growth with hopes of attracting local talent

MATT ROEBUCK

matt.d.roebuck@gmail.com

If you find yourself at Yangon United's Insein Road training facility on a Sunday morning you may be surprised by the unusually shaped balls in play.

Over the past year the options on the football scene in Myanmar have expanded beyond the 'association' game, also known as soccer, to now include its cousin sports rugby, Australian rules and Gaelic football.

This expansion started, much like the opening to a joke, when a Scotsman, a Frenchman and a Kiwi walked into a bar. The trio of rugby fans agreed to send out an e-mail that night to a group of potential players to gauge interest. A few days later a dozen more people met up to discuss starting a team.

Within a few weeks, the group had moved from the local drinking hole to the sports field and the newly formed club, the Yangon Dragons, was attracting 25 people to training on a weekly basis.

"We've gone from a bunch of guys and girls meeting up on a Sunday morning to chuck a ball around, to a well-established and closely-knit club with well-organised sessions every weekend," says board member Oli Slow, 27.

The club has already sent male and female "touch rugby" teams - a semi-contact version of the sport - to international tournaments and last week took part in their second full-contact festival.

As Herbert Thirkell White, the lieutenant governor of Burma from 1905-1910, noted in his book *A Civil Servant in Burma* that, "To think of hot-headed Burmans engaged in the rough-and-tumble of Rugby excites lurid imaginings." Fortunately, the Dragons do not share the same misguided fear.

Their interest extends beyond just providing themselves and fellow ex-



Members of the Yangon Dragons Rugby Club practice in Insein. Photo: Thiri

pats a chance for a run-around.

"An integral part of what we are doing is to attract locals to the game," said Slow.

"Despite the British history of the country, rugby never really took hold here. But we've been really surprised and encouraged by the enthusiasm shown by a number of the local lads. At first, many of them are naturally apprehensive to the game, but gradually as they learn a bit more about the game, many seem to take to it with an incredible level of enthusiasm."

The club turned to fundraising and pulled in sponsorship to send Myanmar national Aung Ba Kyaw to play in tournaments in both the Philippines and Thailand. The club believes the trips abroad have earned him the distinction of being the Myanmar's first international rugby player.

If the Dragons get their way Aung Ba Kyaw won't be the last. They have

established a kids training group every Sunday morning at International School Yangon.

But Slow recognises there is a still a long way to go if they are to achieve their aim of one day fielding an exclusively Myanmar national 15-a-side team on the international stage.

"That will be done through a series of programs where we look to establish the sport in schools around the country and encourage the country's services, the army, air force and police, to play the game, something has been hugely successful in Thailand," Slow explained.

They would also like to introduce the game into a number of the country's orphanages.

The Dragons are not alone in their hopes to spread the game to their adopted homeland.

In November 2013, Julian "Big Rooster" Clark first looked to

introduce Australian rules football to the Golden Land when he established the Myanmar Fighting Cocks.

Clark hoped of competing in the 2013 Indochina Cup held that month in Hanoi, but was unable to pull together a full team quickly enough.

But training began in earnest last week in preparation for what will be Myanmar's first international test match against the Thai national side in May.

Clark has established sides around the world. He's already credited with introducing the sport to China and Finland and now he hopes to do the same in Myanmar, the 23rd nation he will have dressed for, playing the game he loves.

As a veteran of 20 AFL Asia seasons, the "Rooster" admits that he is no longer as quick as he once was and must now rely on strategy rather than speed to defeat his opponents.

It is for this reason that the Fighting Cocks have assumed their name. Choosing an animal to represent the team, Clark first considered the python and peacock before learning about the local fighting cocks.

"They too are known for their strategic ability. The Thai cockerels are stronger but the Burmese are well known for their fighting skill and spirit, so that seemed appropriate for a team that is new on the scene and might have to take a few bruises before hopefully coming out on top," Clark said.

Just like the rugby team, Clark hopes that, "one day the country might be able to field a team of home grown players as Singapore sometimes does".

But for now his primary aim is that the Myanmar Fighting Cocks become a regular contender at the AFL Asia Championships and that next year they will be able to visit Kanchanaburi, Thailand, home of the Death Railway, for a special ANZAC Day match to commemorate those who died building it under forced labour.

Association football spread across the world in the wake of British imperialism and was introduced to colonial Burma by Sir James George Scott, journalist, colonial administrator and under the pseudonym Shway Yoe, author of *The Burman*.

In the post-colonial age of soft-power politics, the Irish government has sought to increase its recognition on the world stage through its significant diaspora.

An open call for funding applications from the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Emigrant Support Program and the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) to support "projects which foster a more vibrant sense of community and of Irish identity" helped bring yet another variety of the beautiful game to Yangon - Gaelic football.

MORE ON SPORT 66

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