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**'Let's make it
a fair contest,
in front of
the public.'**

Election boss backs away from campaign restrictions

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UNION Election Commission chair U Tin Aye has rejected allegations that a recently drafted directive was designed to stop Daw Aung San Suu Kyi from campaigning on behalf of other National League for Democracy candidates.

U Tin Aye told reporters at a meeting on May 16 that the commission "will allow" Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to participate in NLD election rallies outside her own constituency.

This appeared to contradict comments he made in Patheingyi on April 7, in which he said candidates would only be allowed to campaign in their own constituency.

Draft campaigning rules recently distributed to political parties would require all speakers at election rallies to be approved by the election commission in advance.

But U Tin Aye told reporters that the draft directive could change if at least 60 percent of registered parties do not accept it.

"If they argue a lot [with the directive], let's go on like before. I will amend it with goodwill. But if it's a problem then let's stop here," U Tin Aye said.

FULL COVERAGE PAGE 3

Daw Suu dares military leaders to shed uniforms

NLD leader launches constitutional change campaign by challenging Tatmadaw leaders who want to play politics to quit the military and make it a "fair" fight. **NEWS 7**

NEWS 7

Minister reveals huge land distribution plan

U Soe Thein says regional governments will give agricultural land to landless families under a major new initiative.

PROPERTY 30

Home sizes shrinking

On the outskirts of Yangon, rising rents are encouraging landowners to illegally subdivide their 2400-square-foot blocks.



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THE INSIDER: The local lowdown & best of the web



Loyal Page 2 reader Tom suggests the Arakan Army might be walking a fine line with its logo in terms of copyright infringement. What do you think?
Send your favourite Myanmar copyright violations through to kayleighlong@gmail.com

Mystery beast terrorises village
Residents of Mohnyin township in Kachin State were forced to take up arms on May 6, in order to defend themselves against a wild beast described in the *New Light of Myanmar* as “a buffalo-like creature”.
The animal (which, judging from the picture, looks very much like a garden-variety water buffalo) attacked a bullock cart, when a valiant villager fought the beast “with a hoe”, causing it to run away.
It continued to attack residents and animals on the road to a college, at which point locals fought back with knives and spears, eventually slaying the creature. Locals have pointed to deforestation and habitat loss as the reason for animals such as this seeking food in villages.

Death Highway blues
The Yangon-Nay Pyi Taw “Death Highway” falls short of international standards, Deputy Minister of Construction Soe Tint has conceded in what was news to precisely no one, telling media at a press conference the plan is for the highway to be expanded and improved.
“Eight lanes are needed to complete a highway. Although the road was opened, it does not live up to international standards. We intended to open it early for the convenience of travellers. We are still processing it to complete with the characteristics of a highway,” Eleven reported.

This comes in the wake of last week’s accident which claimed 14 lives and saw a further 28 injured when a bus plunged off a bridge. The bus company has had its licence revoked for “reckless driving and failure to systematically supervise the safety of passengers”, and families of the victims have been given compensation in line with the new highway insurance scheme.
While the shoddy quality of the highway is certainly a contributing factor to the alarming accident stats, anyone who’s caught enough buses in Myanmar will be able to tell you that, perhaps, the more general problem could lie with driver behaviour.
With seatbelts largely considered a redundant feature of passenger vehicles, “lanes” seeming to be very much an opt-in concept, slowing down for corners virtually unheard of and honking the favoured method of indicating, catching buses in Myanmar can be a fairly harrowing experience best approached with crossed fingers and a heavy dose of non-prescription pharmaceuticals.

Footprints in the sand
On May 10, a group of monks held a ceremony at 116 Mile to facilitate the passage of souls lost on the Death Highway into the next life –



Aye Myat Thu from *NOW! Magazine*.
Photo: Pyay Han (ColorMax)

Style Statement
NOW!

something my coworker elegantly described as “visa process for ghosts”. A small sand pagoda was built and the monks made merit. Sand was smoothed over the area near the mile marker. Local media reported things then took a spooky turn when, after midnight, footprints (supposedly of the departed) appeared in the sand.

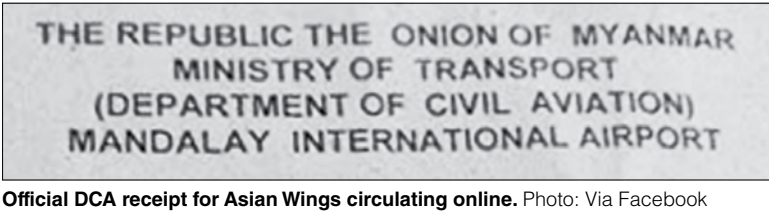
Best of the web:
Drone footage commissioned by the Yangon Heritage Trust has been released, giving viewers an aerial look at Shwedagon and downtown Yangon. It can be found on *The Daily Mail* website as well as hosted on Vimeo.

In brief:
President Thein Sein drew heavy criticism online after pictures emerged last week of his car convoy on the forecourt of Shwedagon.
Sangha reaffirms stance that monks should not be able to vote as it is not in keeping with the teachings of the Lord Buddha; agitating for repressive interfaith marriage legislation apparently still fine.
Next week:
Salaried foreigner describes US\$5000 per month apartment as “a bargain”, is blissfully unaware of his role in driving up property prices

Once was Burma...

Archival material provided by Pansodan Gallery

70s film *Kyaw Dot Hlei Thu Gyi*, or “Affair with the Ship Captain”



Official DCA receipt for Asian Wings circulating online. Photo: Via Facebook



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Bus owners could face charges after crashes

Election commission plans electoral roll pilot ahead of voter list overhaul

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BUS company officials could go to prison in the event of more accidents on the Yangon-Mandalay Highway, a local official warned last week, after 14 passengers died when a bus plunged off the highway near Nay Pyi Taw.

Nay Pyi Taw District Supervisory Committee for Traffic Rules Enforcement chair U Saw Hla, a member of Nay Pyi Taw Council, told a press conference that Yarzarmin, the company that operated the bus that crashed on May 12, is now banned from operating buses in Nay Pyi Taw.

113

Number of people killed on the Yangon-Mandalay Highway during 2013

Asked why similar action was not taken against the operator of a bus that caught fire on the highway in April, killing 12 passengers, U Saw Hla said it was because the accident had not occurred in Nay Pyi Taw district.

An inter-ministerial investigation team has been set up to uncover the

cause of the crash. The Yarzarmin driver has been charged with four offences but U Saw Hla said owners could also be liable.

"This has happened so many times. Taking action against the individual driver is not enough. We will also take action against those responsible," U Saw Hla said.

"This closure could help decrease accidents and ensure respect for rules and regulations. If a crime has been committed, we will take action through the courts. This is not a matter of paying a fine of a few thousand kyat - it could result in a prison sentence. Severe action is necessary.

"Bus drivers hold the lives of their passengers in their hands."

The bus driver was operating with a restricted licence following an accident in 2013, he said. The driver was badly injured in the accident, and has only now regained consciousness.

U Saw Hla also sought to refute allegations that the design and construction of the highway was partly to blame for the large number of accidents that have occurred since it opened in 2009. They cited official statistics that showed almost two-thirds of accidents on the highway in 2013 were caused by human error, with another 24pc attributed to mechanical failure. Just 1pc were attributed to the condition of the road, which is mostly concrete.

- Translation by Khant Lin Oo

EARLIER REPORT PAGE 17

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THE Union Election Commission plans to conduct a pilot project to improve lists of voters ahead of the 2015 general election, commission boss U Tin Aye said last week.

The pilot project will take place in Yangon's Ahlone township, Chin State's Tiddim township and Waingmaw township in Kachin State, although it remains unclear when it will get underway. Once the pilot is completed, the commission will then tackle electoral rolls nationwide.

The first data will be collected in August, U Tin Aye said, adding that he plans to ask civil society organisations for assistance.

"The commission can't fix the electoral rolls on its own. We need civil society's help as well," he said on May 15 during a meeting with political parties in Yangon.

The pilot project is being conducted as part of the Election Strategic Master Plan drafted by the UEC with support from the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES).

The overhaul will see electoral rolls stored electronically for the first time.

"We will collect data over an eight-month period and then keep the lists in a computerised system. If we want to change or update the list, we can do it easily with this system," said commission member U Win Kyi.

A number of international groups



A woman speaks to electoral officers in a Yangon polling station during by-elections on April 1, 2012. Photo: Kaung Htet

have promised to provide technology and other support to computerise electoral rolls, he said.

The commission will then release the electoral roll as soon as it announces the election date.

As in previous elections, it would be voters' responsibility to ensure their details are correct, he said.

"Commission has duty to keep the voter lists but people also have a duty

to check whether their name is on the list. We hope we can solve this issue by releasing voter lists very early," he said.

Electoral roll errors plagued both the 2010 general election and 2012 by-elections. While voter lists were posted in township offices, few people came to check their data. However, many complaints emerged on voting day when people came to polling stations but their names were not on the rolls.

Parties reject draft campaign rules

Opposition groups accuse Union Election Commission of bias after May 15 meeting to discuss draft campaigning directive

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OPPOSITION political parties are rebelling against what they call restrictive campaign rules drafted by the Union Election Commission. They say the commission, which was set up by the former military regime, is biased against the opposition and is trying to avert a landslide victory by the National League for Democracy in next year's general election through new restrictions on campaigning.

"These new restrictions would systematically bind us," said U Khin Maung Swe, head of the National Democratic Force (NDF). "They are unfair and make no sense to require a permit for all campaign activities, and even the routes we use."

Under the draft directive, parties would only be able to launch their campaigns within 30 days of election day. Parties would have to request permission to campaign in specific locations at least 15 days in advance, and the number of participants and the campaign routes would also have to be approved by the township election commission office. Meetings in party offices, meanwhile, would require candidates to inform the township commission at least two days in advance. While the UEC will enable all parties to present their policies through state media, campaigning through private media requires official permission. Party leaders wishing to support their candidates in other constituencies would also have to get permission from UEC.

It is this final provision - which observers say appears to target Daw Aung San Suu Kyi - that has drawn the most controversy.

On April 7, U Tin Aye reportedly

told election commission members and political parties in Patheingyi Region, that candidates in the 2015 general election would not be allowed to campaign outside their own constituencies. Following the reports, NLD and other parties said the restriction was prompted by fears that NLD would win by a landslide in 2015. While U Tin Aye denied making the comments, a draft of the planned directive

'The Union Election Commission wants the USDP to win.'

U Aye Thar Aung
Rakhine National Party chair

distributed to political parties appears to confirm this restriction.

In an effort to smooth over the dispute, the commission met representatives of 65 parties in Yangon on May 15 to get feedback on the directive.

U Tin Aye told *The Myanmar Times* after the meeting that he drafted the

changes to election campaign rules based on the request of political parties following the 2012 by-elections.

"I stand as a judge among political parties. In the past elections, powerful parties did campaigns very freely everywhere. Small parties did not get chances, so they suggested to me there should be disciplined rules for campaign. During today's discussions we listened to their voices and comments and if they reject this directive then I will do as they desire," U Tin Aye said.

Political parties have interpreted his comments as referring to NLD campaign activities in the 2012 by-elections. Before election day, party leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi travelled to dozens of townships to campaign on behalf of NLD candidates. The party said last week it is resolutely against the changes.

"We don't agree at all. We discussed and presented evidence to show that this directive does not comply with the laws," spokesperson U Nyan Win said.

Many other parties have also rejected the draft directive circulated by UEC. The drafts form part of the Election Strategic Master Plan written by UEC with support from the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES).

U Aye Thar Aung, chair of the Rakhine National Party, said no such directive had been issued before the 1990 elections, which the NLD won. "In 1990, all parties campaigned in various ways. If the UEC tries to restrict us with this new directive, the 2015 elections won't be free and fair," he said.

"The UEC wants the USDP to win," U Aye Thar Aung added, referring to the Union Solidarity and Development Party.

But USDP vice chair U Htay Oo said his party believes the UEC directive is "reasonable" and that the requirement to seek a permit is not burdensome. He also rejected criticisms that the UEC favoured USDP, adding that if this was the case, "Why did [the UEC] send the drafts to other political parties as well?"

The chair of the commission, U Tin Aye, is a former lieutenant-general

elected in 2010 to represent Tada U township, Mandalay Region, as a member of the ruling Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP). In early 2011 he was appointed UEC chief by the then-military government, and was forced to resign from parliament to take up the post.

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), which is working with the UEC to build capacity and promote democratic reform, said in a policy brief last week that any changes should be informed by international best practices. While it did not pass judgement on the draft directive, IDEA said in the policy brief that international protocols and guides on the holding of elections are "unanimous in stressing the need to uphold the freedom of movement for the purposes of political campaigning".

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Sangha reaffirm ban on voting

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THE State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee has reiterated a decree from 1990 banning Buddhist monks from voting in parliamentary elections.

The announcement was made at the 5th All Orders Sangha Conference, which brought together 2558 monks from nine Buddhist orders from May 11 to 13 in Yangon.

It comes amid rising concern over the growing political prominence of some members of the clergy, who have taken to holding meetings with politicians and commenting on political issues. Rumours have recently begun spreading that some monks plan to publicly campaign against the ban on voting.

The head of a township Sangha organisation who attended the conference said the ban only applies to voting, not to involvement in political activities.

"According to the code of conduct of the Buddhist order, their decision [to reconfirm the ban] is right," said the sayadaw, who asked not to be named. "But while monks are not allowed to vote, they can instruct people which party or who they should vote for as long as they do in a reasonable way."

The order was issued prior to the May 1990 election for a constituent assembly after a prominent politician, U Thu Wai, campaigned for monks to be allowed to vote. He argued that the ban was damaging because it only applied to Buddhist monks, not leaders of other religions.

Then-Minister for Religious Affairs Lieutenant General Phone Myint asked the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee to decide on the issue, and the committee ruled that voting in an election is not in conformity with the code of conduct for Buddhist monks laid down by the Buddha.

Voting for an MP would make the monks personally responsible for any actions supported by that MP. As this could include decisions on the death penalty or the forcible seizure of property, it could lead to violations of the code of conduct.

They also pointed to previous rulings by senior monks on the issue. During World War II, when the country was under Japanese control, they agreed voting is not only against the code of conduct but should be banned because it could lead to sectarianism among monks.



IN PICTURES

PHOTO: AUNG HTAY HLAING

Buddhists pour water on a bodhi, or banyan, tree at Shwedagon Pagoda on May 13, the full moon day of Kason. The festival is one of the most significant for Buddhists and marks the day that the Buddha was born, attained enlightenment and passed into Nibbana.

Monks eye reforms to bring credibility to state committee

State Sangha committee should be independent of the government and include younger members



CHERRY THEIN



AUNG KYAW MIN

A RARE gathering of senior Buddhist monks has brought to the fore tensions over government control of the Sangha and the inability of the national body that oversees monks to control extremist teachings.

A total of 2558 monks from the nine recognised Buddhist orders attended the 5th All Orders Sangha Conference at Kabar Aye Pagoda from May 11 to 13, at which they called for reform of the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee, the body that oversees all monks in Myanmar.

They proposed 18 changes to the committee's rules, including one that would give monks the right to form religious associations freely, without having to seek the committee's permission. They stressed the need for the committee to be independent of the government.

Participants also discussed the need to strengthen understanding of Buddhism, particularly given recent communal tensions. They said improved understanding of Buddhism is essential for avoiding conflict with followers of other religions and to ensure

peaceful coexistence with other faiths.

While they stopped short of directly discussing communal conflict and the growing political influence of the Sangha, sources said the committee met with members of the Committee for the Protection of Nationality and Religion, a religious group that has been criticised by some as extremist, prior to the meeting and "gave advice".

Speaking at the conference, influential monk Ashin Nyannisara, better known as Sitagu Sayadaw, suggested Myanmar follow the path of Thailand, Cambodia or Laos, which do not have a ministry for religious affairs.

Monks are instead administered by an independent national Sangha council and he said this had improved the discipline of the Sangha, he said on May 12.

'If an organisation does not have respectable rules and regulations it will never be successful.'

Sitagu Sayadaw

He said the rules under which Myanmar's national Sangha body operates were drafted with a "one-party" mindset and do not encourage cooperation between the different orders.

"If an organisation does not have respectable rules and regulations it will never be successful," he said. "All Buddhist orders should work together and each should respect the contributions of others."

He said changes introduced after the military coup in 1962 had damaged Buddhist teaching and missionary work. "It is time to change some useless sections of the rules ... such as giving more opportunities to younger monks, regardless of how long they have been in the monkhood," Ashin Nyannisara said.

First held in 1980, the national conference is supposed to be held every five years but has not taken place since 1995. Noting that the number of Buddhist monks has increased from 300,000 to 500,000 since the conference was last held, Minister for Religious Affairs U San Sint said at the opening ceremony that the aim of the event was to discuss ways to reform and strengthen the rules and regulations of the Sangha committee.

Participants discussed the current structure of the Sangha committee. While it has a broad reach, with almost 1000 offices around the country, monks said most were barely

functioning. In some areas it has been difficult to open offices because of bureaucratic delays and opposition from locals of other religions.

Monks also discussed censorship of Buddhist literature and the need to reorganise Buddhist missionary programs to make them more effective.

Participants also discussed the need to "purify and preserve" Theravada Buddhism from political and communal issues.

One monk, who works as an assistant to a prominent sayadaw who attended the conference, said it was essential to reform the Sangha committee into a more credible body that engages with the community in order to combat extremist religious teachings.

He expressed frustration at those behind the formation of the Committee for the Protection of Nationality and Religion, as its activities, which include proposing a law that would ban marriage between Buddhist women and men of other faiths, have heightened social and communal tension.

"It is very funny that this group says it is protecting our religion," he said. "But I think that if the Sangha committee can work more freely and help people to understand Buddhism better than it can defuse some of the tension. We need to work with better cooperation and coordination in the future."



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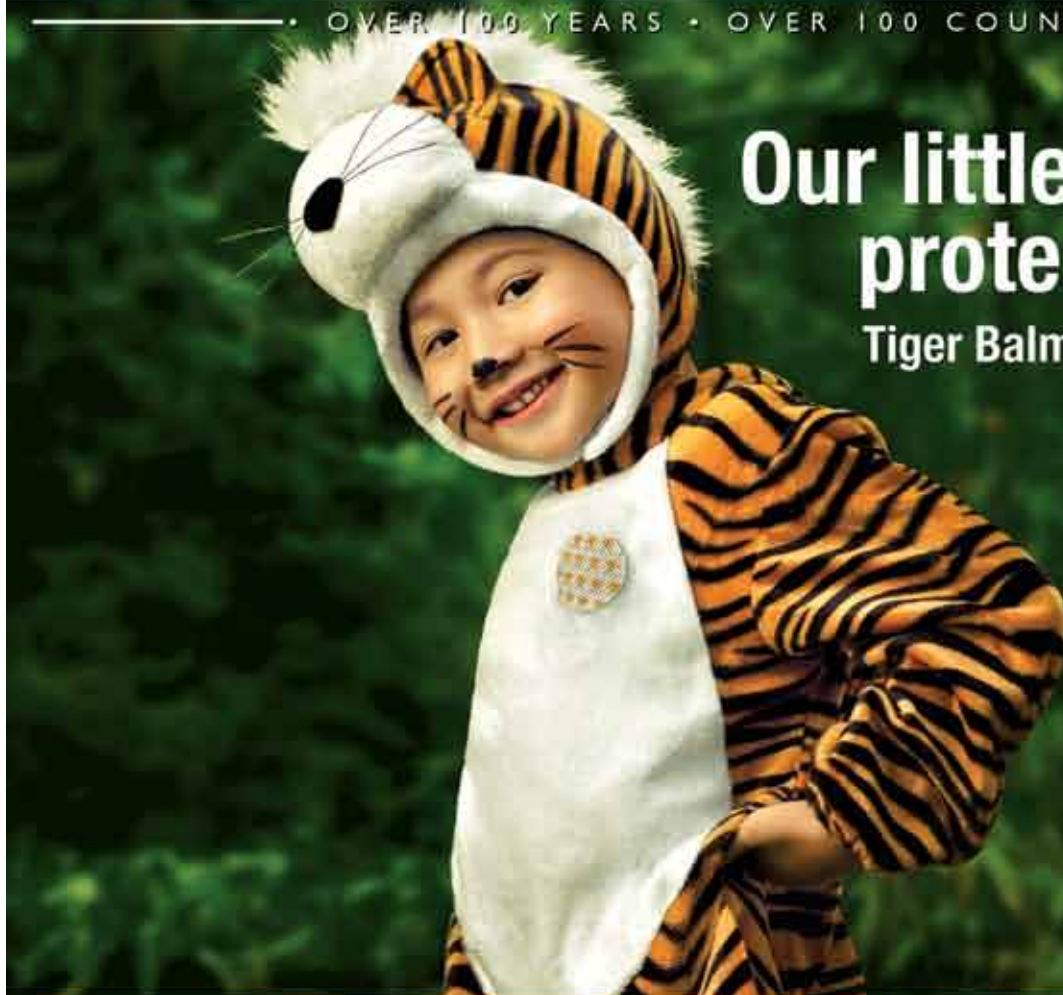


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State secrets charge in doubt as court readies for 'Unity' verdict

Defence calls for clarity over whether state secrets charge has been dropped ahead of expected verdict this week



YE MON

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AS the court hearing the *Unity* journal case prepares to hand down its verdict, defendants are calling for clarity on whether they have been charged with allegedly revealing state secrets as initially stated.

Daw Aye Aye Thet, a lawyer for the defendants, said charges filed under the 1923 Burma State Secrets Act appear to have been dropped, although a trespassing charge still stands. Pakokku District Court is expected to hand down a verdict on May 19 or 20, she said.

In late January, *Unity* published an investigative report headlined "Secret chemical weapons factory in Pauk township" and a follow-up, "Factory's in-charge denies No 24 Defence Equipment Factory as chemical weapon factory". Four of the weekly journal's reporters, along with its CEO, were promptly arrested and charged with trespassing and revealing state secrets. The military plaintiff has testified that they were charged on the orders of office of President U Thein Sein, although officials in his office deny this.



The cover of *Unity* in early February depicts the muzzling of four reporters and its chief executive officer. Photo: Aung Htay Hlaing

However, at the eighth hearing earlier this month, Police Captain Maung Maung Than from Nay Pyi Taw said the five accused had only been charged with trespassing.

"He stated that the reporters and CEO have been charged with trespassing because they have entered a banned place," Daw Aye Aye Thet said.

The police official made the comments during questioning of witnesses

from the plaintiffs' side on May 6 and 7. Daw Aye Aye Thet said that if the state secrets charge still stands it should now be formally dropped.

During earlier sessions, another defence lawyer, U Robert San Aung, told the court the state secrets charge should be dropped because the military and the government insist there was no chemical weapons factory. He said it would be incorrect to punish

journalists for exposing a chemical weapons factory that never existed in the first place.

The defence is also vigorously challenging the validity of the trespassing charges. During earlier hearings, witnesses told the court that they had not seen any signs near the factory warning against trespassing. They said signs had been erected following the arrests of the journalists.

Double trouble for Chinese traveller

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A CHINESE man has been robbed twice during a trip to Nay Pyi Taw to broker a minerals deal, police in the capital said last week. The businessman, Zan Huan Hong, 56, lost more than US\$3000 all told, along with his travel documents.

On May 13, Mr Zan was waiting at Bawga Thiri Highway Bus Station in Pyinmana for a bus to Mandalay when his bag was stolen along with his travel documents after he left them unattended while using the toilet.

His luggage contained the equivalent of around US\$2300 in various currencies, according to police.

It was the second stroke of bad luck in days for Mr Zan, who was visiting the capital with three Myanmar citizens to seal a deal on the purchase of lead.

He had earlier had lost K1 million while eating dinner at a KTV with his Myanmar companions. The trio convinced him not to inform the police by promising to reimburse him in lead, according to police.

- Translation by Zar Zar Soe



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EXCLUSIVE

Minister touts massive land redistribution program

Minister U Soe Thein announces plan to allocate vacant land to landless households, but experts question whether government has financial and technical resources to make it a success



BILL O'TOOLE **NOE NOE AUNG**

DURING a visit to Mandalay on May 11, Minister for the President's Office U Soe Thein made an ambitious claim. Speaking at the Youth and Peace Forum, the minister said regional governments would soon roll out a program to provide land to Myanmar's landless farmers.

"In the future there will not be landless people in Myanmar," U Soe Thein declared.

The statement was bold: Awarding land to potentially millions of households would undoubtedly be a massive and historic undertaking.

It was also surprising: Many land-related organisations and bodies, including government ministries, told *The Myanmar Times* they had not heard of the proposal.

It was not the first time U Soe Thein has discussed the land distribution plan, however. Eleven Media quoted him as saying on state television on February 23 that landless households would be "resettled in places where they can earn a living by growing or farming. Only then will their standard of living improve."

Several Yangon-based journalists said last week they have heard U Soe Thein make similar claims over the past year at various public events.

The minister told *The Myanmar Times* by email last week the project had been explained to regional governments, which will collect data on landless households in each township that will be combined with the results of the census.

"After getting this data, we have to find the best solution in accordance with each township development plan ... This is an ongoing process," U Soe Thein said.

When contacted about the program, however, officials from the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation in

Farmers harvest paddy in Bago Region. Photo: Kaung Htet



Nay Pyi Taw, the Settlements and Land Records Department, and the Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development said they had no knowledge of the project.

Similarly, Daw Khin Wine Kyi, a Pyithu Hluttaw representative and member of the parliament's land dispute investigation commission, said neither her committee nor the parliament had been informed of the planned undertaking.

"[The President's Office] has so many ambitions for the country and they also have many plans to solve the land grab issues and homeless, landless problems. We do not know them accurately," said the North Dagon

representative.

A number of civil society organisations said they welcomed the government's focus on landless farmers but questioned whether the President's Office has the will or capacity to properly implement the proposal.

"In principle this can be an amazing policy reversal and dramatic shift in attitude toward poor farmers," said Kevin Woods, a researcher with the environment NGO Forest Trends.

"But given the way that ... programs are implemented in this country, I would have serious concerns [about] corruption."

U Win Myo Thu, managing director of the rural development NGO EcoDev, said he was "not convinced".

"You [would] need a lot of investment and assistance. There will be huge resources required," he said.

Studies conducted by EcoDev have previously found about one-third of households do not have any access to land. The majority of landless farmers live in the Ayeyarwady delta and the Central Dry Zone, while most of the "available" land is in Sagaing Region and Kachin State.

"Unless there is a very attractive [offer], who will agree to move to the north?" he asked, adding that such a shift in population would run up against financial and cultural barriers.

In addition, land rights groups say the government's current definition of a "landless" farmer and "vacant" land do not match the reality on the ground, and must be revised before any broader reforms can take place.

Allocating land identified on a map as vacant to landless farmers is only likely to dispossess other households, they warned, citing the example of "customary" land use, an informal system common in indigenous communities.

"Much of the ... land is treated as vacant when in fact it already has customary land users. If such land is redistributed then any redistribution ... could push the customary owner off the land. Such a practice has the potential to increase conflict in the country," said U Shwe Thein, managing director of the Land Core Group.

While he remains sceptical of a nationwide land redistribution process, U Win Myo Thu said a smaller, more focused resettlement program could indeed be successful. He stressed that it should only be implemented once proper research and consultations have been conducted. "There are many good intentions [on the government side] ... but when they put these intentions into action they're quite problematic."

— Additional reporting by Mg Zaw

Daw Suu launches national campaign for change

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DAW Aung San Suu Kyi has challenged military officials to quit the army if they want to take part in politics, as she kicked off a series of public rallies in Yangon on May 17.

"If [military officials] want to play in politics, let's make it a fair contest, in front of the public. [They should] quit from the army," Daw Aung San Suu Kyi told thousands of supporters at a rally in Bo Sein Hman Compound in Bahan township.

The rally is the first in a series organised by the National League for Democracy and 88 Generation to build public support for constitutional amendments, particularly the removal of a military veto on constitutional change.

"[The military] are saying [that Myanmar is] moving to a democratic state. If they really want to change to democracy, why aren't they changing the constitution? Because some have no confidence in their relations with the people and some are afraid for their future. I want to say, do not be afraid. Let's cooperate to change our country," Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said.

The rally took place despite a warning from President U Thein Sein that a public campaign for constitutional change could bring instability and riots.

"Unrest won't do any good ... the people will suffer," he said in Mandalay on May 15.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, however, insisted that she was committed to achieving change through non-violent means.

"I always try to solve problems through negotiation," she said. "I have heard [the government is] saying that if we try [a public] approach to changing the constitution that it could result in suffering. It sounds like a threat but I believe people are not afraid of suffering."

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K5 million handed out in Buddhist literature competition

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PRIZEMONEY totalling almost K5 million has been handed out to the winners of a youth Buddhist literature competition. Organised by the Thuta-sone Lin Buddhawin organisation, winners were recognised at an award ceremony at Yangon's National Theatre on May 13.

The competition aims to encourage younger generations to learn more about Buddha's teachings, or Sasana.

The winner, Mg Kyaw Phone Ko, 14, from Nyaungdon township in Ayeyarwady Region, said the competition had enhanced his understanding of the Sasana. He received K1 million for his winning entry.

"At first I just wanted to win the prize but later I was absorbed in the teachings of the Buddha. These are priceless and I will practice them for the rest of my life," he said.

The runner up received K700, 000, while those in third and fourth place received K500,000 and K300,000 respectively. Twenty-one other entries were awarded K100,000.

The competition's spokesman, the venerable Ashin Manala, said the competition, which was organised by both clergy and laypeople, is designed to train devout Buddhists.

"It doesn't matter what their motive [for entering is], only that they have learned the literature," he said.

"The majority of people have only an average understanding of Buddhism," he said. "This is dangerous ... if they meet challenges or temptation."

Competition organisers tested entrants in Yangon, Mandalay, Nay Pyi Taw, and Pyapon and Wakema in Ayeyarwady region

While this year's event focused on middle school students aged 11-14, organisers plan to hold an open competition next year, including adults and children of other ages.

Rebuilding Buddh

Violence against a Buddhist minority in September 2012 harmed Bangladesh's s



NICHOLAS FARRELLY

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"WHO did this?" I asked the monk on a recent afternoon in Ramu, southeastern Bangladesh. "It was the Islamists," he replied. He pointed to the marks beneath the glistening new paint where a Buddha's head had been cleaved asunder. When asked about the culprits – "miscreants" in the local application of English – he gave me a glimpse of monastic resignation. "I don't know. They are people who don't understand."



A monk points to a cut on the neck of a Buddha image in a monastery in Ramu. Photo: Nicholas Farrelly

While many people have rightfully focused on the plight of Muslim Rohingya in Myanmar's Rakhine State, an adjacent and similarly messy conflict erupted in September 2012 on Bangladesh's southeastern extremity, in the area called Cox's Bazar.

Sparked by an anti-Islam Facebook post of ambiguous provenance, 22 Buddhist temples were torn down and

set ablaze, with dozens of Buddhist-owned houses destroyed. The Bangladesh government, acutely aware of the sensitivities, quickly sought to dampen the anti-Buddhist fury.

With reports that thousands or even tens of thousands of Muslims marched against the perceived blasphemy, it's hard to apportion blame. The attacks on the country's long-standing Theravada Buddhist minority – a group with a large, settled presence for centuries – were a slap in the face to Bangladesh's tolerant and inclusive self-image.

What is most remarkable about the official response to this violence is its rapid and overwhelming implementation. Instead of leaving charred neighbourhoods and demolished pagodas, the government's security and construction arms got down to work fast. At Buddhist pagodas all over Ramu, gleaming compounds have risen from the ashes. In some cases parts of the old structures survived, or have been salvaged in renovated form.

In these rebuilt compounds, piles of carefully curated Buddha fragments are a stark reminder of the damage done. They sit reverently next to new Buddha statues donated from across the world.

Thais have been particularly committed to re-seeding Buddhism in Ramu. In one of the re-built buildings hangs a portrait of King Bhumbol Adulyadej from when he was a young man. In another, a Buddha image gifted by a Thai organisation proclaims that "the body of Dharma sits inside every human being". One other is an exquisite, shiny, golden figure inscribed with the name of its donor, a Thai police colonel.

Across Ramu, other recently installed signs announce the work of Bangladesh's security forces in rehabilitating the region's Buddhist sites. Pictures of heavy machinery are pinned to new fences, while posters thank the government and army for its support. Indeed, it was a huge



Fishing boats lie moored on a beach near

effort to suture these wounds. In a country where construction is often slow and inadequately budgeted it is remarkable to see what has been

The Bangladesh government has sought to make amends, while in Myanmar there is lingering resentment that senior leaders are unwilling to condemn anti-Muslim pogroms.

INGOs return to Sittwe, with new strings attached

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THE United Nations says aid groups in Rakhine State are running at less than 50 percent of normal capacity, despite most having been allowed to return to the state following violence in late March.

The UN and INGOs are also being forced to receive approval for their operations from a new body, the Emergency Coordination Committee (ECC), which comprises representatives from the humanitarian community, Rakhine civil society, and the regional and national governments.

So far, 23 international groups have returned to the state with approval from the committee, with the first returning on April 24.

But the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) says that despite resuming operations less than one-third of the humanitarian staff relocated from Sittwe when rioters targeted their offices and residences on March 26 and 27 have been able to return.

INGOs and UN agencies are running at less than 50pc of normal capacity because of "continuous difficulties in finding accommodation for staff and other logistical constraints", with some foreign staff forced to live in hotels.

As a result, some communities in Rakhine – both Muslim and Buddhist



Protesters hold placards during a protest against Médecins Sans Frontières-Holland in the Rakhine State capital Sittwe on February 22. Photo: AFP

– are missing out on vital health assistance, as well as access to water and sanitation. "The impending rainy season will likely aggravate the impact on vulnerable people, since the risks of an outbreak of infectious diseases will increase," said Pierre Peron, a spokesperson for UNOCHA. "Operations need to be scaled up as soon as possible."

U Win Myaing, a spokesperson for the Rakhine State government, said all groups except Malteser International and Médecins Sans Frontières-Holland (MSF) would be allowed to return.

The government forced MSF to

leave the state at the end of February under fierce protests from the Rakhine community, which alleged the group was biased toward the state's Muslims. The clashes in March were sparked by allegations that the head of Malteser had mishandled a Buddhist flag, a charge that was later dismissed by a government investigation team.

U Than Tun, a member of the ECC, said international aid groups would have to accept greater scrutiny of their activities. He said the ECC has already rejected two projects because the organisations that proposed them

were "not transparent".

The state government has also ordered the groups to relocate their residences and offices to the southern part of Sittwe township, near the Sittwe Prison, for "security reasons", he said.

"We don't allow them to do whatever they want like before, when the Rakhine people were not told what they were doing in our own region," he said. "They interfered in political affairs and they broke their memorandums of understanding – they were meant to be doing health projects but they built mosques instead."

But Mr Peron said all international humanitarian organisations in Rakhine State have been operating within the terms of their letters of agreement and memorandums of understanding issued by the Union Government and relevant line ministries.

"We look forward to engaging further with the government and communities through the ECC, while continuing to provide information on ongoing operations in the spirit of transparency," he said.

But not all agree with the restrictions on humanitarian groups. Ko Tun Lin from the Sittwe Rakhine Social Network said the ECC members were not real representatives of Rakhine civil society.

"I don't think they have rights to restrain the NGOs from doing their projects," he said.

ism in Bangladesh

self-image as a secular and tolerant state – and stung its government into action



Ramu, in the Cox's Bazar area of southeastern Bangladesh. Photo: Nicholas Farrelly

done in less than two short years. Buddha images, decapitated, have been fashioned back together. Fresh paint hides other scars. Multi-storey pagodas have risen from the rubble, with new gardens planted and monastic accommodation built. There are well-funded programs for Buddhist education too.

The government has taken charge of these efforts. It is embarrassed by the violence but also hoping to prove a point about its own inclusive and secular credentials.

Asking locals who was responsible for the violence draws a mixed response. There are those who point the finger at some of Bangladesh's political parties, especially those with a nationalist and Islamic bent. These are the groups locked in a deadly and disreputable battle with the incumbent regime of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. There are few saints in Bangladesh's rough-and-tumble

national life, and some will assert that the prime minister's own party activists were also involved.

The attacks on Buddhists around Cox's Bazar occurred when turmoil in Myanmar's adjacent Rakhine State was at its hottest. Much has been made of the Myanmar government's lacklustre response to this violence, with widespread dismay at the dearth of resolute efforts to stamp out hardline Buddhist factions.

Even Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, so often deemed beyond reproach, has weathered criticism. On the Bangladesh side of the border many people fail to hide their bewilderment at what they perceive to be her weak response to Myanmar's communal conflicts.

For now, the rebuilding of Bangladesh's Buddhist monuments and the neighbourhoods that support them has left a stark contrast. The Bangladesh government has sought to make amends, while in Myanmar there

is lingering resentment that senior leaders are unwilling to condemn anti-Muslim pogroms.

On the ground in Rakhine State, mosques remain in ruins. Muslims who have been displaced from their homes are left in squalid camps, a tragic purgatory seemingly designed to encourage them to leave for good.

Back in Ramu, the wounds are yet to heal and there is trepidation among those Buddhists who have chosen to stay among the Muslim majority. Women in burkas and men with long beards are common on the streets in this part of Bangladesh. It is this imagery, and the politics it represents, that so worries Myanmar's Buddhist nationalists: It is the future they are seeking to avert.

Along this Muslim-Buddhist fault line, among the people of Ramu, resentment still simmers close to the surface. Even monks speak through clenched teeth. In Bangladesh the precarious status of Buddhists has hardly changed, even after all of the government's re-construction efforts and largesse. For these minorities the nightmare is a future where the government is less inclined to support their presence – one where Islamist strains dictate the national mood.

From this edge, there looks to be no end to the reincarnation of conflict. When I asked whether such violence could happen again, the monk in Ramu hesitated. His answer was resigned, uncommitted, impermanent. He said that there was no way to know, and that Buddhists must carry on in any case. The future, in his words, "is not ours to control".

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Nicholas Farrelly is a research fellow in the College of Asia and the Pacific at the Australian National University, Canberra, and is currently based in Myanmar. Mr Farrelly visited Bangladesh as part of his ongoing Australian Research Council-funded research on Southeast Asian political cultures.

Obama renews targeted sanctions

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US President Barack Obama has extended sanctions against Myanmar through the National Emergencies Act for another year, citing the military's economic and political stranglehold – as well as ongoing conflict and human rights abuses in ethnic areas – as key reasons for the decision.

Myanmar was designated under the act on May 20, 1997, providing the legislative basis for economic sanctions levelled against certain businesses and individuals.

In a letter addressed to Congress on May 15, Mr Obama stated that the decision was "necessary" despite Myanmar having taken some significant steps toward reform and a significant warming of ties between the two nations.

Mr Obama singled out ethno-religious tensions and the dire humanitarian situation in Rakhine State as of particular cause for concern.

"The political opening remains nascent, and concerns persist regarding ongoing conflict and human rights abuses in ethnic minority areas, particularly in Rakhine State, and the continued role of the military in the country's political and economic activities," he said.

Mr Obama's letter said Myanmar continues to pose "an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States".

Despite these concerns, Mr Obama highlighted his administration's commitment to supporting reform efforts, in order to ensure that the democratic transition is "sustained and irreversible".

CRIME IN BRIEF

Decomposing body found

The decomposing body of a man who is thought to have committed suicide has been found in a forest in Yangon's Hlegu township.

The body was found on May 11, about 4.8 kilometres (3 miles) west of Min Kone U Tho village. The 30-year-old male is thought to have committed suicide about a month earlier, police said.

Sister accused of murder following inheritance dispute

A 43-year-old woman has been accused of killing her sister, 46, over an inheritance dispute. Police say they were called to Hnin Si Garden restaurant in Shwe Pyi Thar township on May 10 following a disturbance and when they arrived they found the older sister had been stabbed in the head. She later died on the way to hospital.

Police allege that the younger sister stabbed her with a foot-long knife and beat her with a stick. The accused has been charged with murder.

Man dies from burns after drinking mishap

A 55-year-old man has died after he accidentally dropped a bottle of alcohol while lighting a cigarette, sparking a fire that inflicted fatal burns.

The accident occurred in his Waryarkome village home at about 5:30pm on May 13. – Toe Wai Aung, translation by Khant Lin Oo

Four men charged with tree theft

Police have charged four men in Yangon's township with stealing 150 eucalyptus trees. The men allegedly cut the 6-metre (20-foot) trees down and removed them in a bullock cart on May 7.

Officials did not notice the trees were missing until a week later. The trees are four years old and had a total value of K750,000, police said.

The four men from Chauk Eain Dan village were charged under section 6(a) of the State-Owned Property Protection Law. – Toe Wai Aung, translation by Thiri Min Htun

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Regional leaders steer clear of Rakhine violence

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THE plight of Myanmar's Rohingya Muslims was left off the agenda as leaders from Southeast Asia gathered in Nay Pyi Taw for the ASEAN Summit on May 10-11. The failure to discuss the issue drew criticism from rights groups, who called for a more active stance on human rights issues.

U Aung Htoo, deputy director general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, told *The Myanmar Times* on May 11 that the issue was not raised during the foreign ministers' meeting the previous day because ASEAN's Charter calls for non-interference in other member countries' internal affairs.



Sultan of Brunei Hassanal Bolkiah (bottom right) steps off his plane upon arrival at Nay Pyi Taw airport on May 10. Photo: AFP

"We did not discuss the [Organisation for Islamic Cooperation] or the Rohingya issue," he said.

"ASEAN has a non-interference agreement over the internal affairs of other countries."

He added that there was not enough time at regional meetings to address all of the issues facing the 10 ASEAN members.

About 140,000 Muslims have been forced from their homes in Rakhine State due to clashes with Rakhine Buddhists over the past two years. Many now reside in IDP camps in Rakhine State without access to adequate healthcare.

'ASEAN countries have never taken an active stance on regional human rights abuses and that needs to change.'

Matthew Smith
Fortify Rights

International aid groups, many of which provided humanitarian aid and healthcare to the Muslim population, were expelled from Rakhine in late March after their operations were targeted by angry mobs.

Myanmar has insisted that the issue is an internal matter, despite thousands of Muslims fleeing

Rakhine State by boat and landing in neighbouring Thailand, Bangladesh and Malaysia.

Others fall victim to human trafficking rings that operated between Southeast Asian countries.

On May 9, a day before the two-day ASEAN Summit got under way, Malaysian state media reported that about 100 Muslims thought to be from Myanmar had arrived in the country by boat and were detained by security forces.

Myanmar government spokesperson U Ye Htut, who is also a deputy information minister, said that despite this latest development the issue remains an internal affair for Myanmar.

He also expressed scepticism that the group was from Myanmar. He said people from other countries, particularly Bangladesh, are using the conflict in Rakhine State to gain refugee status in other countries by claiming they are Rohingya Muslims from Myanmar.

U Ye Htut said that when many of the individuals who have previously arrived in Malaysia were questioned by officials from the Myanmar embassy in Kuala Lumpur they were unable to provide information about where in Rakhine State they came from.

"If you are coming from Rakhine State you have to name your village. That is a problem - most cannot do that."

The reluctance to raise the persecution of the Rohingya, who are officially referred to in Myanmar as Bengali, at the regional meeting was not unexpected.

At the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Retreat in Bagan in January, Minister for Foreign Affairs U Wunna Maung Lwin said Myanmar would not allow it to be thrust onto the ASEAN agenda.

While the United Nations and the United States have both recently increased the pressure on Nay Pyi Taw to take steps to address the problem, including pushing for a full resumption of humanitarian aid in the state, ASEAN members have remained largely silent.

"ASEAN countries have never taken an active stance on regional human rights abuses and that needs to change if the region is going to grow in economic and political influence," said Matthew Smith, executive director at the Thailand-based Fortify Rights, a human rights organisation that has documented alleged abuses against the Muslims of Rakhine State.

"ASEAN countries stand to benefit from an end to the refugee crisis. Effective and coordinated pressure would decrease the reputational costs certain countries are facing and would send a message to the world that the region is serious about human rights."

The ASEAN Summit agenda has instead been dominated by an escalation in tension in the South China Sea between China and ASEAN member states Vietnam and the Philippines.

Malcolm Cook, a senior fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore, said that these increased tensions had put Myanmar, as a first-time chair of ASEAN, in a difficult position but could also help deflect unwanted attention from other issues, such as Rakhine State.

"The regional and international media will focus less on Myanmar's internal problems given the flare-ups in the [South China Sea] - a silver lining if you are the Myanmar government," Mr Cook said.



Regional leaders including President U Thein Sein (centre) join hands as they pose for a photograph at the start of the 24th ASEAN Summit.

ASEAN unites to co-ordinating South China

Regional foreign ministers take stronger stand on growing tension between



TIM MCLAUGHLIN **NYAN LYNN AUNG**

FOREIGN ministers gathered in Nay Pyi Taw for the ASEAN Summit have reiterated their concerns over rising tensions in the South China Sea as new maritime disputes put the issue back in the spotlight ahead of the regional meeting.

While there had been concerns that some members, including chair Myanmar, may lean toward China on the issue, the ministers put on a united front on May 10 to express "serious concerns" regarding incidents over the past week.

In a joint statement, they urged all parties to "exercise self-restraint and

avoid actions which could undermine peace and stability in the area, and to resolve disputes by peaceful means without resorting to threat or use of force."

The statement featured stronger language than the one issued during the Foreign Ministers' Retreat in Bagan in January and comes as confrontations between China and ASEAN members Vietnam and the Philippines have further strained already tense relations.

Vietnamese officials have accused Chinese ships of ramming Vietnamese vessels and spraying them with water cannon near the Paracel Islands. The islands are currently controlled by China, but are claimed by Vietnam.

A rig from the state-owned China National Offshore Oil Corporation began drilling for oil near the islands last week. China claims that

Vietnam is attempting to disrupt these activities.

On May 7, officials from the Philippines apprehended a Chinese fishing boat and its 11-member crew near the Spratly Islands. The Philippines have accused the fishermen of being in possession of hundreds of illegally caught turtles.

Indonesian Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa called the South China Sea a "litmus test" for ASEAN and said the foreign ministers came to a consensus on the statement quickly and without hesitation.

"I think ASEAN will not be found wanting. We will continue to be united in our pursuit of [a] diplomatic solution," said Mr Natalegawa, who added that the May 7 actions in the South China Sea were "totally disconnected from the diplomatic pathway".

Nay Pyi Taw has been eager to use the chairship of ASEAN to

President presses for regional response to climate change

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PRESIDENT U Thein Sein has warned Southeast Asian leaders gathered in Nay Pyi Taw of the growing threat posed by climate change during his opening remarks at the ASEAN Summit and urged the regional bloc to take increased measures to address the issue.

"The science of climate change is complex. But we all are aware that it is really happening and approaching with a faster speed than we may have expected," he said on May 11.

U Thein Sein made no direct reference to the current disputes in the South China Sea that were the focus of the first day of the summit.

Instead, he laid out a three-point framework that he said could stem the impact of climate change on the region. The plan begins by bolstering the ASEAN Humanitarian Assistance

Centre (AHA), which he described as unable to adequately respond to natural disasters in its current form.

The AHA headquarters in Jakarta opened in 2012 but it has relatively little capacity despite being in a region increasingly prone to natural disasters.

U Thein Sein also called for the establishment of a network of research centres to study crops that would be more resilient to climate change and in turn promote regional food security. He also identified the rehabilitation of mangrove forests to protect coastline areas from storm surges as another priority.

The Asian Development Bank has identified Southeast Asia as a region that is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change due to a number of factors, including its high population concentrations and level of agricultural activity.

"Climate change is already affecting the region, as shown by the

increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events such as heat waves, droughts, floods and tropical cyclones in recent decades," the group said in a 2009 study assessing the impacts of climate change in Southeast Asia.

"It is exacerbating water shortages, constraining agricultural production and threatening food security, causing forest fires and coastal degradation, and increasing health risks."

Domestically, climate change has not been a high priority for U Thein Sein's administration, with Nay Pyi Taw more focused on navigating the difficult process of economic liberalisation, democratic transition and attaining peace with armed groups.

However, Myanmar has recently begun rehabilitating its mangrove forests, many of which were destroyed by Cyclone Nargis in May 2008.



Summit in Nay Pyi Taw on May 11. Photo: AFP

ndemn Sea tensions

China and ASEAN’s South China Sea claimants

showcase reforms initiated by President U Thein Sein’s government, after spending the better part of 17 years on the fringes of the regional bloc because of concerns over human rights abuses.

But the meeting of the 10-nation body – one of two summits scheduled for the year – has again been dominated by the ongoing territorial disputes in the South China Seas.

Malcolm Cook, a senior fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore, told *The Myanmar Times* that the recent escalation in tensions “means that the [South China Sea] will overshadow this summit more than maybe any time since the 1990s”.

Leading up to Myanmar assuming the helm of ASEAN there had been concerns that its close ties to China could impact its handling of the South China Sea issue. In particu-

lar, some feared that Myanmar would follow a similar path to Cambodia when it held the chair in 2012.

That year Cambodia was seen as acting on behalf of Chinese interests in the region, and as a result one summit ended without a joint statement for the first time in decades.

“ASEAN states will be watching for any signs of Myanmar ‘doing a Cambodia’ and supporting clearly pro-Chinese positions on the [South China Sea] within ASEAN,” Mr Cook said.

Government spokesperson U Ye Htut, who is also deputy minister for information, spent much of the first day of the May 10-11 summit responding to questions about relations between Myanmar and China. He insisted that Myanmar continues to view China as a friend and that the relationship is not a hindrance to Myanmar’s ties with its ASEAN partners.

Govt axes civil society meet after dispute over reps

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CIVIL society leaders say they are “disappointed” by the government’s decision to cancel a planned meeting between civil society representatives and ASEAN leaders on May 11 because of a dispute over who would be allowed to attend.

However, they have praised host Myanmar – for years the bête noire of regional civil society – for its leadership and efforts to try to ensure the participation of independent civil society representatives in the ASEAN Summit meetings.

Singapore, Malaysia and Cambodia have been accused of rejecting independently chosen representatives for the meeting and replacing them with state-approved candidates.

In response to the dispute, the Regional Steering Committee of the ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ASEAN People’s Forum 2014 announced it was withdrawing from the event on May 10. In a statement, it accused the three countries of having “undermined the good faith of the host Myanmar authorities in trying to organise the interface meeting”. Its national representatives were chosen at the ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ASEAN People’s Forum (ACSC/APF) convened in Yangon in March.

Following the withdrawal, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced later the same day that it was cancelling the interface meeting because of the “untoward reaction” of civil society leaders. It defended the rights of member countries to choose their own civil society representatives for the interface, describing it as “ASEAN practice”.

The ministry’s decision to cancel the 30-minute meeting with regional leaders appeared to take the Regional Steering Committee – and civil society representatives – by surprise.

“Five of [the representatives] were on the way to Nay Pyi Taw to attend [the meeting] and then the Ministry of Foreign Affairs cancelled it,” said committee spokesperson U Aung Myo Min.

He said that despite with-

drawing from the interface the committee had agreed civil society leaders could still attend as national representatives as long as seats for those representing Singapore, Malaysia and Cambodia were left vacant.

“It’s a misunderstanding. We tried presenting our policy, which is the result of the last ACSC/APF, and also we tried to negotiate as much as we could but finally [we withdrew].

“We repeatedly presented our principles [to Myanmar’s Minis-

‘Five of [the representatives] were on the way to Nay Pyi Taw to attend [the meeting] and then the Ministry of Foreign Affairs cancelled it ... They are disappointed.’

U Aung Myo Min
ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ASEAN People’s Forum organiser

try of Foreign Affairs] and they said they would respect it but they couldn’t guarantee that other states would.

“[The representatives] are disappointed – it’s a shame and we tried our best. The ACSC/APF 2014 was still a great success.”

U Aung Myo Min also praised Myanmar’s attempts to host inclusive interface meetings for ASEAN civil society, youth and parliamentarians.

The Regional Steering Committee said it met twice with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in April to discuss the interface meeting and left those talks “encouraged and positive”.

“Myanmar put three interface meetings on the agenda ... They took initiative on that but because of the decision-making process of

ASEAN, which is a consultative process, they couldn’t [force other countries to accept independent representatives],” U Aung Myo Min said.

However, the Regional Steering Committee’s version of events was disputed by at least one of the three countries in question. In a statement to *The Myanmar Times*, the Singapore embassy in Yangon said it was “untrue” that it had replaced independently selected civil society representatives.

“We were not given the names of ‘independently selected’ representatives, which makes it impossible to replace them,” press officer William Chik said.

“In line with ASEAN’s practices and procedures, Singapore nominated youth and civil society representatives to attend the ASEAN meetings in Singapore.”

The embassy failed to respond to requests for further clarification, but U Aung Myo Min described its statement as “strange”.

“We sent our list of representatives to the Myanmar Ministry of Foreign Affairs as they are the focal point with the other governments,” he said.

Singapore has regularly been at the centre of conflicts over the civil society interface since the event’s launch in 2005, when 10 civil society representatives approved by each nation’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs met regional heads of state in Malaysia.

In 2006 and 2007 meetings the interfaces were limited to a meeting between the heads of state and the chair of the ASEAN People’s Assembly.

The first inclusive interface came in March 2009, when Thailand held a meeting between 10 ASEAN leaders and 10 independently chosen civil society representatives, but Cambodia, Myanmar and Singapore rejected their proposed representatives. At the second summit later that year, those three countries again rejected independently chosen representatives, prompting walk-outs from other civil society leaders.

No interface meetings have been held since Cambodia in March 2012, when civil society leaders boycotted an event organised by the host nation.





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ASIA'S BOUTIQUE AIRLINE



For media, summit marks a new low

Reporters endure frustration and then farce in effort to get anywhere near government officials at first ASEAN Summit

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“AT least we got to walk on the red carpet.”

A brief stroll down a decorative floor covering rolled out for Southeast Asian leaders was the silver lining one correspondent took from a disappointing press conference given by Minister for Foreign Affairs U Wunna Maung Lwin and ASEAN Secretary General Le Luong Minh on the first day of the ASEAN Summit on May 10.

Scheduled to run for 30 minutes, the press conference started nearly 20 minutes late and still managed to end on time – the pair took four questions between them from the dozens of journalists gathered in the room.

Sadly, the press conference was some of the best access most journalists – both foreign and local – got to the Myanmar leadership over the weekend, which ended with a whimper when President U Thein Sein declined to take any questions from the media at his own press conference.

If the summit was designed to keep officials away from journalists, it was an overwhelming success. As a showcase of the Myanmar government's newfound respect for independent media, it was an abject failure.

But as local and international press organisations express concern over the recent arrest and jailing of reporters, the summit highlights perhaps the greater challenge for journalists writing about Myanmar: access to information.

Thrust into the media spotlight by President U Thein Sein's reforms, some senior government officials have been slow to engage with journalists.

Many who made the switch from Tatmadaw green to white *tike pone* just a few years ago are not accustomed to being openly questioned, and have taken to this part of the job reluctantly.

The problem has been compounded by the lack of ministry-specific spokespeople. Efforts to install them in certain ministries have been met with resistance; one Ministry of Defence spokesperson spent just weeks in the job.

Journalists, for their part, have developed a resilient sense of humour when dealing with the government, and make do with what little they can pry from an administration that seems both perplexed and wary of the media.

But Myanmar journalists had reason to be optimistic that their country's turn as ASEAN chair would lead to improved access to government officials, if only for the duration of 2014.

An influx of international correspondents, some speculated, would force senior officials to open up. Others, having observed how the local press were given favourable access at earlier ASEAN summits, felt their time had come. Finally, the game was being played on their home turf.

“We were small faces while [reporting] in other countries,” Daw Kyaw Hsu Mon, a reporter for the *Irrawaddy* newsmagazine, said of her time covering ASEAN summits in Vietnam, Indonesia and Cambodia.

During the Foreign Ministers Retreat in January the early optimism appeared well founded. Minister for Foreign Affairs U Wunna Maung Lwin held a rare press conference and, though he arrived hours late, journalists were willing to wait for the chance to put questions to the minister. For many journalists, even those who had spent years covering ASEAN affairs, it was the first time they had been able to question the foreign minister.

Later, U Wunna Maung Lwin sat for a small roundtable with a hand-



President U Thein Sein addresses reporters at the end of the 24th ASEAN summit at the Myanmar International Convention Center in Nay Pyi Taw on May 11. Photo: AFP

ful of journalists. Questions had to be submitted in writing prior and the minister kept his answers short, but reporters saw the meeting as an encouraging development.

U Ye Htut, spokesperson for the government and the most visible face of President U Thein Sein's administration, stood patiently behind a podium answering a volley

media came away looking less press friendly than Myanmar – a feat that would once have appeared unlikely.

It was not to last.

At a press conference in March, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing gave his first press conference following the ASEAN Chiefs of Defence Forces Informal Meeting. The number of journalists barred from the event – 10 – was double the number of questions the Tatmadaw chief answered.

All of the questions posed were pre-approved by the government and came from state-media outlets. He spoke for about five minutes.

A reporter who attended told *The Myanmar Times* that in their years of covering ASEAN it was “the worst ASEAN-related press conference I’ve ever experienced”.

Nevertheless, the press descended on Nay Pyi Taw for the ASEAN Summit on May 10-11 with enthusiasm. After 17 years as an outsider Myanmar was at the helm of the regional bloc, and had a suite of reforms to show off, including a dramatic liberalisation of the print media sector.

But as media members were shuffled through the back entrance of the newly constructed Myanmar International Convention Centre that enthusiasm quickly evaporated.

The layout of the MICC ensured chance encounters between officials and media members were all but impossible. The windowless media centre was tucked into the building's back corner, a floor below where meetings took place, leaving reporters largely out of the loop.

The few officials the media did cross paths with were black-clad

400

Number of journalists who registered to cover the ASEAN Summit in Nay Pyi Taw, according to official figures

bomb squad members and their obedient German shepherds, who became a hit on social media, and a group of Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications officials selling commemorative ASEAN stamps, sales of which were extremely sluggish.

With off-the-cuff remarks virtually impossible, the joint press conference

with U Wunna Maung Lwin and Le Luong Minh seemed like the best, and perhaps only, opportunity to get a read on ASEAN's response to China's actions in the South China Sea, a dispute that overshadowed everything else on the summit agenda.

Arriving late, the officials took only four questions from reporters – two each – before abruptly departing. Minister of Information officials said it was necessary to cut the press conference short to keep the day's remaining meetings on schedule.

Some wondered if it had even been worth making the walk from the media centre to hear the banal platitudes.

A discussion about Myanmar's role in the ASEAN Economic Community with Minister of National Planning and Economic Development U Kan Zaw looked like a final chance to salvage the day, particularly given it was specifically arranged for the media.

But simply getting into the event was a challenge, as it required a second pass in addition to the media credentials issued for the summit.

This card allowed access to a room on the second floor of the venue. But these secondary passes were, for an unknown reason, in limited supply. By the time the press conference started, the office distributing them had inexplicably closed for the night.

This left journalists without the necessary pass stuck at the bottom of a staircase arguing with increasingly angry security officials in a futile attempt to gain access.

Not to be accused of playing favourites, security also denied entry to a cameraman and anchor from state-run MRTV.

On the second day of the summit the lack of media access turned from frustrating to farcical.

Journalists loaded on to a shuttle bus bound for Nay Pyi Taw Airport to attend a pre-departure press conference with Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak.

When the bus arrived at the airport, it was promptly turned away. Those on board were told that Mr Razak would only be speaking to members of the Malaysian press. There was nothing that could be done, Ministry of Information officials insisted.

A glimpse of the tail of the Sultan of Brunei's jet was the lone highlight of the misadventure.

As the bus began the 45-minute trip back to MICC along a stretch of empty highway, one disappointed journalist, trying to look on the bright side, chalked it up as “a free sightseeing tour of Nay Pyi Taw”.

Reporters may as well have quit there and gone to check out the capital's other sights given what was to come. In some ways, though, the summit's final press conference with President U Thein Sein was a fitting end to the weekend.

Minutes before he was about to take the stage, attendees were informed that, no, he would not be taking any questions.

After some initial confusion as to whether U Thein Sein was coming at all, the president appeared, spoke briefly and disappeared between a string of handlers.

“The press conferences are nothing,” said Daw Kyaw Hsu Mon. “U Thein Sein should answer [questions] in press conferences. That's what journalists want.”

The front of the seats in the media area for his speech had been reserved for top ministry officials, a handful of whom bothered to show up. The press seated near them joked that it was the closest anyone in the media had gotten to senior government officials all weekend.

As a showcase of the Myanmar government's newfound respect for independent media, the summit was an abject failure.

of questions. Due to a lack of interpreters he re-answered questions in English, much to the benefit of non-Myanmar speakers.

By the end of the retreat, visiting foreign delegations that spurned the

‘Beautiful’ car plate fetches K8.6m

PRICES for desirable number plates are skyrocketing, with some now fetching more at auction than a used car.

Recently the number plate 9G/9999 sold for K8.6 million (US\$8960) at auction, according to the Road Transport Administration Department.

The department has raised K1.9833 billion – more than \$2 million at current exchange rates – through the sale of 3030 “beautiful” number plates.

Car dealer U Min Nyunt said the sale of 9G/9999 was a new peak for the market, beating the K4.6 million paid for 1H/1111 and K3.4 million for 1H/9999.

“Rich people normally buy these quadruple plate numbers at auction,” said car dealer U Min Nyunt. “Some people believe that the number nine is lucky so that’s probably why this one got a higher price.”

“This is a new milestone in the market because it’s really the first time that a number plate has sold for more than a vehicle – an old model costs about K6 million.”

The auctions were launched in 2011. Previously, auspicious numbers could only be acquired by the very well connected.

– *The Wai Aung,*
translation by Thiri Min Htun

Some Meiktila IDPs get govt green light to rebuild homes

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DISPLACED families in Meiktila have been allowed to leave relief camps and rebuild their homes ahead of the fasting season for both Buddhists and Muslims – provided they can show proof of ownership, local officials say.

“After checking their ownership documents with the land records department we have allowed more than 50 households to rebuild on their original plots,” said U Tin Maung Soe, the head of the Meiktila district administration office.

“But we are still checking the land that has been subdivided and sold off many times,” he said.

The first families began returning after the Thingyan festival in mid-April, he said. Officials hope to resettle more people before the Muslim month of Ramadan, which begins on June 27, and Buddhist Lent, which begins with the full moon of Waso on June 30.

More than 10,000 people were displaced as a result of communal violence in the Mandalay Region town in March 2013. Of these, around one-third are still living in refugee camps, of which there are five.

Despite officials’ insistence that they have tried to speed up resettlement,



Workers build detached houses in Meiktila’s Chan Aye Thar Yar ward in March. Photo: Si Thu Lwin

only residents of Thiri Mingalar ward, situated on a road leading into Meiktila, have been allowed to rebuild.

In another Muslim-majority ward, Aye Chan Thar Yar, the government is overseeing reconstruction, building both detached homes and two-storey apartments.

Those who can show proof of ownership will be given one of the 350 detached houses, while the rest will receive a 600-square-foot apartment, said U Khin Than, a member of the committee supervising reconstruction.

But as *The Myanmar Times* reported last week, reconstruction has been stalled by a lack of funding, prompting concerns about living conditions in the IDP camps. It appears likely that many IDPs will be forced to remain in the camps for the duration of the coming rainy season.

U Khin Than said the committee hopes donors will step in and meet the shortfall.

“There are hundreds of workers here and it’s hard for us to cover their wages,” he said. “Donors can also provide

construction materials, such as brick, lime, cement and stones, if they don’t want to provide cash,” he said.

Refugees in the camps say they just want to return home as soon as possible.

“Some households who can afford to rent a house in the ward have already moved,” said U Phoe Seik, a Muslim refugee. “But because we have no business to support us, we have found it almost impossible to get out of the camps and move home.”


– *Translation by Thiri Min Htun*

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Donor funds fail to flow for Yangon hospital

Despite Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's backing, the Yangon General Hospital redevelopment remains totally reliant on funding from the health budget



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DESPITE pledges of support from abroad, a much-publicised plan to renovate Yangon General Hospital is still completely reliant on government financing, fundraisers say.

The project has the firm backing of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, who has even raised it in meetings with international leaders. But Dr Tin Myo Win, a National League for Democracy (NLD) member who is also on the hospital renovation fundraising committee, said no foreign cash has been provided to move the project forward.

"Three international donors promised to help fund the renovation of Yangon General Hospital but the money hasn't come yet. So far they've provided only technical advice on the renovation process," he said last week.

"Because we are reliant on the government budget for funding the process is going slowly ... [but] we intend to use government funding to raise both the buildings and human resources to international standards."

Dr Tin Myo Win said talks are continuing with the British government, the Japan International Cooperation Agency and other potential donors.

During a visit to the United Kingdom in October 2013, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi discussed the renovation plan

with Prime Minister David Cameron and International Development Secretary Justine Greening.

Mr Cameron said he supported Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's plan for the hospital and the British government said in a statement it would fund a team to assess plans for the renovation of the 1500-bed hospital.

The NLD has taken an active role in raising donations for the hospital redevelopment, helping to attract pledges totalling at least K400 million (US\$417,000) to date.

The government has allocated K4.5 billion in 2014-15 for the renovation, following on from the K5 billion allocated in 2013-14.

Last year's funding was spent on nine aspects of the upgrade, seven of which are already completed. A new five-storey building with 300 beds and facilities for a cancer screening department are still under construction, said Dr Pa Pa, deputy medical superintendent at Yangon General Hospital.

BILLION KYAT

5

Amount allocated from the national health budget in 2014-15 to upgrade Yangon General Hospital



Labourers work on a new five-storey building in the Yangon General Hospital complex last week. Photo: Yu Yu

This year's funding will be used to renovate sections of the original building and build a three-storey outpatient department.

She said no estimate for the cost of the complete upgrade of Yangon General Hospital has been calculated. "The government policy is to submit a work plan year by year, which means we can't say when the project will be completed either."

In October, the five-storey building is scheduled for completion. Patients will be transferred there from the old wards, which will then be renovated in sections.

Dr Hla Myint, medical superintendent at Yangon General Hospital, said the five-storey building would initially comprise an operating theatre on the top floor and temporary wards on the lower floors.

Once renovations on the main building are complete, the ground floor will become an X-ray department, the first floor the Department of Rheumatology and Department of Medicine, the second floor private rooms and the third floor a 50-bed

intensive care unit.

Some patients have already been transferred from the old wing of the hospital. Last year the ministry completed a new building on Pyay Road with 500 beds and a number of wards began shifting there in October 2013.

Altogether nine wards have moved to the Pyay Road site.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has been a staunch supporter of the plan to upgrade Yangon General, arguing that "reinvigorating and renovating" the hospital is the first step toward improving health care and quality of life for all, according to the website of the recently established Suu Foundation.

"Once a source of pride for the country and the region, conditions at Yangon Hospital have vastly deteriorated," it said.

"The Suu Foundation seeks investment to rebuild the hospital into a thriving institution where the best Burmese physicians want to practice."

Local health experts applauded the upgrades to Yangon General Hospital

but were mixed on whether the money could be better spent.

Daw Nwe Zin Win, chair of the National NGO network (HIV/AIDS), said the project would bring significant benefits for the community and needs more international support.

"Foreign donors should help because many people depend on Yangon General Hospital for treatment and currently it does not have enough space," she said. "Services also need to be improved and I think the hospital can become a good example for our country if it is improved."

But Dr Than Tun Sein, a former director at the Department of Medical Research (Lower Myanmar) who now works on community health development, said it would be better to spend the money on rural health and other health areas.

"People who live in rural areas cannot afford to come to Yangon General Hospital," he said.

"So updating the hospital will benefit medical students and Yangon residents, especially the middle-class ... but not poor people."

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Photo: Khin Su Wai



Federal Union Party members open the Mandalay office on May 1. Photo: Khin Su Wai

Ethnic unity party to take on NLD, USDP

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THE Federal Union Party hopes to take advantage of ethnic minority populations in majority Bamar areas to compete against the major parties in the 2015 election, its deputy leader says.

The party was formed by 19 ethnic minority parties in December 2013 to ensure minorities in the seven Bamar-dominated regions have an ethnic candidate to vote for in future elections.

Deputy leader U Sao Thar Oo said the party hopes to challenge the Union Solidarity and Development Party and National League for Democracy by winning support from communities such as the Kayin in the Ayeyarwady Region and Shan in Yangon Region.

"We aim to represent them and

speak out about their rights and needs," he said at the opening of the party's upper Myanmar office in Mandalay earlier this month.

"We are not advocating secession from the nation; we just want leadership that is in line with our culture and traditions."

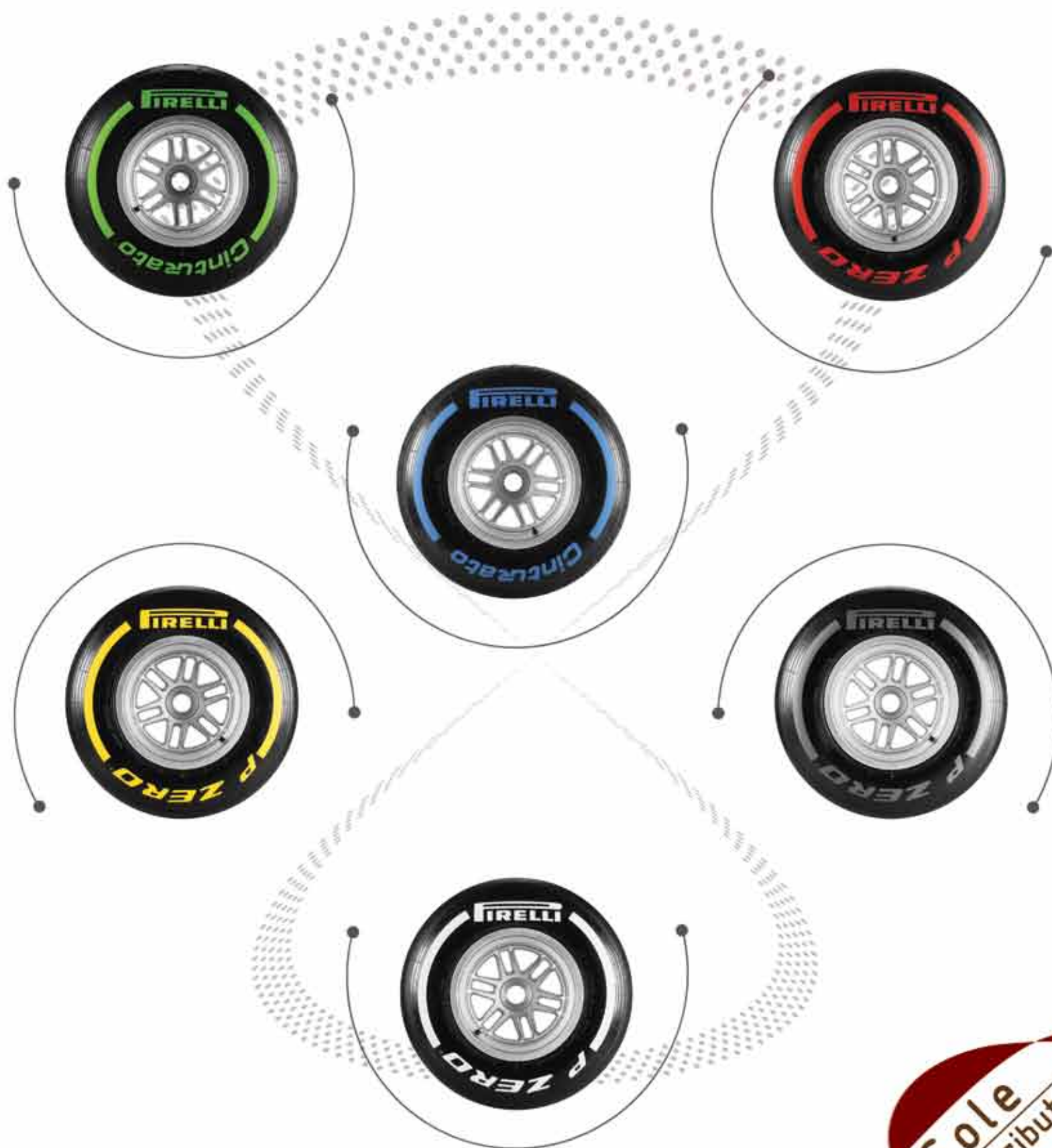
U Sao Thar Oo quit from the Shan Nationalities Democratic Party to become one of the founding members of the FUP. Under election rules, a person cannot be a member of more than one party.

Secretary U Soe Min Latt, who resigned along with 25 other members from the Inn National Development Party to join the FUP, said the new party would emphasise the importance of unity between minority groups.

The party was formed in December 2013 and has 1200 members.



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FEATURE

In Tada Oo, hotel zone brings sleepless nights

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FARMERS are accusing a development company of using rumours and threats to get them to sell their land for a hotel zone. They say the Myanmar Tourism Development Public Company has warned that farmers who refuse to sell their land could have it confiscated by the regional government without compensation.

The company, which was set up last year by industry body the Myanmar Tourism Federation, is buying up land for the regional government-backed Tada-Oo Hotel Zone Project in Mandalay Region. To be built at an estimated cost of US\$560 million, it will contain more than 1000 acres for local hotels and 500 for foreign hotels, as well as commercial and residential zones, a golf course, a handicraft market, a vocational training school, and a bus terminal and jetty.

The 5548-acre project (about 2220 hectares) covers several villages, including Gatoeseik, Thinpan, Gaungkwe, Letsaungyou, Kyeabin and Ngaryarpyar. Some residents say they are so worried by the threats they cannot sleep at night.

Myanmar Tourism Development representative U Nyan Thit Hlaing told residents of Gatoeseik village at a meeting on May 5 that the zone would give the region's economy a major boost, and create many jobs for locals.

"We will turn it into an area of cultural and scenic attractions for foreigners. Hotels, stalls, restaurants and souvenir and gift shops will comprise the hotel zone," he said.

But the company needs to acquire the land for it to get off the ground. Land purchases started in December 2012 with a price of K1.5 million an acre, but locals say it is now offering K7 million - K5 million up front and the remainder when construction begins. The company



A boy makes a tin container in a village inside the proposed Tada Oo hotel zone. Photo: Than Naing Soe

is also offering to sell shares in the project to farmers, and to employ them on a range of construction-related tasks, including carpentry and stonemasonry - or even as golf

caddies or landscape gardeners.

Villagers in the project area currently work in agriculture and animal husbandry, or make iron boxes and mats, and can earn more than K7000 a day. U Kyaw Aye from Gaungkwe village said news of the hotel zone project has many residents worried about the future of their businesses.

Farmers are also worried that their land will be confiscated if they don't sell up and are concerned about remarks U Nyan Thit Hlaing made at his May 5 meeting with Gatoeseik residents.

He allegedly said his company

would send a list of farmers who had refused to sell to the regional government, which, he said, could seize the land without compensation.

Residents question the wisdom of turning what they describe as fertile farmland into a hotel zone. The land supports paddy, wheat, tuberous roots, corn, sesame, onions, garlic, tomatoes, aubergines and various beans and pulses, providing a good income for farmers, said 60-year-old Gatoeseik resident U Hla Aung. He likened the request to sell the land as "being told to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs".

Ko Kyaw San Khine of Gaungkwe

village said farmers in the area had no desire to give up life on the land.

"As farmers, we run our own businesses," he said. "We can increase our yield through modern technology and export our produce. The world is facing a food shortage, and farmers are essential. We are benefactors in every age. And now they're trying to turn us into golf caddies."

Most of the land sold so far to the Myanmar Tourism Development Public Company is unsuitable for farming, said U Tun Tun Lwin of Gatoeseik village.

He said farmers are being pressured to sell their land through a campaign of rumours: After U Tun Tun Lwin refused to sell, he said the village administrator visited his sister and told her that U Tun Tun Lwin would be arrested unless he changed his mind.

"I would not dream of selling my farm. What would I leave to my children?" he said, adding that he doubts that the company can offer job opportunities, or even regional development.

"They're coming because they can make a profit here. If there was no profit, they would not come."

Company director U Myint Aung, who also attended the May 5 meeting, told *The Myanmar Times* last week that the company would only offer compensation until August. He said it would not confiscate the land directly, but added that the Mandalay Region government is involved in the project and would have the power to acquire it compulsorily.

Rumours that the regional government will confiscate unsold land are also spreading rapidly.

Daw Nyi Ma Lay, 62, who lives with her 72-year-old brother, said she would not survive without her 5 acres of farmland. "We have no one to support us ... We will be in difficulty if we have no land after selling to the company," she said. "I can't sleep when I see the land buyers come here."

- Translation by Thiri Min Htun

5500

Size of the proposed Tada Oo hotel zone, in acres

Muzzling of assembly rights in Rakhine is 'disturbing', says UN

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MYANMAR'S failure to provide freedom of assembly rights to non-citizens, particularly Muslims in Rakhine State, has no basis in international law and is one of the world's most "disturbing" rights violation cases, a senior UN official said last week.

Maina Kiai, the UN special rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, made the comments in his report to the Human Rights Council on May 13. The report focuses on the challenges facing those most "at risk" when exercising their rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, a statement accompanying the report said.

"One of the more disturbing cases that the special rapporteur has examined is the situation of some 700,000 members of the Rohingya minority in Myanmar," the report reads. "The Rohingya people [who claim to] have been present in the country for centuries, have seen their assembly and

association rights entirely eliminated under the constitution due to their 'stateless' classification.

"Those at the margins of society face vicious repression, with their assembly and association rights limited by unjust legislation, harassment, violence and threats," Mr Kiai said in the statement. "These individuals - the excluded, the disfavoured, people whose voices have not been heard through more conventional means - are not always featured on the news. But they deserve our attention."

The rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association are guaranteed to everyone without distinction in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

While Myanmar has neither signed nor ratified the ICCPR, article 354 of the 2008 constitution provides the right of assembly - but only to citizens of Myanmar.

In his report, the Kenyan special rapporteur points to selective targeting of minorities in Myanmar.

"In Rakhine State, Myanmar, for example, Emergency Act 144 was

applied in June 2012 to prevent groups of five or more people from gathering in public areas," Mr Kiai writes. "The ban on public gatherings, however, has reportedly only been enforced against Rohingya. The ban has been extended numerous times, and was still in effect at the time of the drafting of the present report."

"The ban has also prevented Rohingya from gathering in local mosques to pray and celebrate religious festivals; Buddhists religious gatherings have reportedly not been disrupted."

The special rapporteur wrote that he found no basis in international law for completely divesting non-citizens of their assembly rights. The right to freedom of peaceful assembly is particularly important for non-citizens and migrants, who may lack other mechanisms with which to advance their political, social and economic interests, he said in the report.

Mr Kiai is tentatively scheduled to present the report to the Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland, on June 10.

Lack of trust with KIO my fault: U Aung Min

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LEAD government peace negotiator and Minister for the President's Office U Aung Min says he accepts responsibility for the government's inability to win the trust of the Kachin Independence Organisation, which he blamed for the recent outbreak of violence.

"Trust is important in building peace between the government and ethnic armed groups. While it is not impossible to make peace even if there is some distrust, it is a problem if there is disbelief in each other," U Aung Min said at the Youth and Peace Forum in Mandalay on May 11 organised by the Myanmar Peace Center.

"There are few clashes between the government and ethnic armed groups that have absolute trust in the government, such as Kayin, Kayah and Mon groups. But with the KIO ... we couldn't make peace and faced some conflict because there are weaknesses in building trust."

"I am mainly to blame for this because I am the one with the most responsibility," he said, adding that he was looking for ways to build "absolute trust" with the KIO.

U Aung Min was joined at the forum by fellow ministers U Soe Thein and U Tin Naing Thein and



Minister U Aung Min speaks at the Youth and Peace Forum in Mandalay on May 11. Photo: Mg Zaw

Mandalay Region Chief Minister U Ye Myint.

The previous day the Myanmar Peace Center also organised a meeting between the ministers and Mandalay-based political parties. An official from Tai-Leng (Red Shan) National Development Party, which aims to represent Shan people in Kachin State and Sagaing Region, said he told the ministers that the government should listen to the views of all people in Kachin State, not just the KIO.

- Translation by Thiri Min Htun

Driver charged over deadly crash

Fourteen killed and 29 injured after bus plunges off 45-metre-high bridge near Nay Pyi Taw in heavy rain on May 12



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POLICE say a bus that crashed off a bridge and plunged 45 metres (150 feet) on the Nay Pyi Taw Highway on May 12, killing 14 people and injuring another 29, was not speeding when the accident occurred.

However, they said the driver, who is recovering in hospital and has been charged with four offences, should have been going slower because of the bad weather.

The accident is the deadliest to occur on the highway since it officially opened in March 2009 and comes one month after 12 passengers died in a collision between a bus and a car on April 12.

“The bus went off a 150-foot-high [45-metre] bridge and hit the ground at a 45-degree angle. The accident happened on a straight stretch of road – the nearest corner is more than a furlong (201m) away,” said Police Colonel Nay Win from the Highway Police Force.

“When the accident had happen,



Officials stand beside part of the wrecked bus on May 13. Photo: Hsu Hlaing Htun

it was raining heavily. The bus was not speeding at the time – it is allowed to travel at 80 kilometres an hour – but it should have been going only 40km an hour because of the heavy rain,” he said.

“The windscreen wipers couldn’t work well in such heavy rain. The

driver wasn’t drinking while he was driving the bus but he has a responsibility [for the accident].”

The Yarzarmin express bus crashed in heavy rain at about 7pm while travelling from Nay Pyi Taw to Yangon when it hit the 197/6 mile post and tumbled off the Wetlet

railway bridge, the Highway Police Force said in a statement. Ten men and four women were killed instantly, while the 29 injured have been transferred to a hospital in Nay Pyi Taw.

Photos of the crash show the bus was almost totally destroyed in the accident, and a mile post, about 3m of the rail of the bridge and 10 barrier blocks are also destroyed.

The victims included a civil servant from the Ministry of Electric Power, the police report said, while three more civil servants were injured.

The 34-year-old driver has been charged with four offences, including causing death by negligence, causing grievous hurt, causing hurt and rash driving.

One injured construction worker from Yangon’s Taikkyi township said he wanted the bus company to pay for his medical treatment at Nay Pyi Taw hospital.

“I am living from hand to mouth. I don’t know how many days I will have to survive without being able to work. On top of that I will have to pay for the cost of my medical treatment. I think the owner of the bus line should pay for it,” he said.

– Translation by Thiri Min Htun

Govt eyes next turn as ASEAN leader

FLUSHED with success from the first ASEAN Summit, the government is already setting its sights on its next opportunity to chair the regional bloc.

“Myanmar will take on the ASEAN chairmanship again in 10 years,” government spokesperson U Ye Htut said last week.

He added that the chairing of the bloc this year was a “success” not only for the government but for the country’s political parties, parliaments and “all Myanmar people”.

“Myanmar can take on this role because of the efforts of all people. Our team spirit should not stop after the ASEAN summits – we must try to sustain this spirit forever.”

He said the military government initiated the infrastructure projects required to host the bloc, while the new government undertook the reforms needed to gain international acceptance.

– Pyae Thet Phyto, translation by Thiri Min Htun

IN BRIEF

Police arrest man posing as colonel

A Mandalay man has been charged with posing as a military official, cheating and forgery after police were called to a restaurant to investigate a report that a drunken military colonel was behaving in an unruly manner.

After arriving at Myanandar restaurant on Mandalay’s Strand Road, police found that the man, 38, from Yangon’s Kyauktada township, was posing as military officer. He was found to be in possession of allegedly fake military identity documents.

Child drowns after falling into tank

Police have ruled out the possibility of foul play after the body of a four-year-old child was found in a water tank on a construction site.

Police say the child fell into the 1.2-metre-deep (4-foot) tank while playing near the construction site in Maha Aung Myay township on May 11.

Man arrested on suspicion of stealing motorbike

Police have arrested a man for allegedly stealing a motorbike – but they are still trying to find out who the real owner is.

Police Officer San Lwin and his team from Maha Aung Myay Police Station stopped the 30-year-old man riding the bike on 73rd Street between 37th and 38th streets. They found there was no key inserted in the ignition and some wires had been cut.

After being detained, the man was unable to produce documents to prove he owned the bike, police said. – Than Naing Soe, translation by Khant Lin Oo

Two injured in stormy weather

Strong winds and heavy rain in Mandalay on the afternoon of May 10 have caused damage to vehicles and injured two people, police say.

“Four vehicles were damaged and a motorcyclist was injured by falling trees in Aung Myay Thar San township. The injured person is being treated at Mandalay Hospital,” a police spokesperson said.

In one incident, a 9-metre (30-foot) tree fell onto a vehicle carrying four Malaysians, but no one was injured.

Meanwhile, a man, 23, from Eingyi village in Patheingyi township was sent to the hospital for treatment after being hit by lightning. – Than Naing Soe, translation by Zar Zar Soe

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IN BRIEF

Golden Myanmar readies for new domestic routes

Budget carrier Golden Myanmar Airlines will later this month dramatically expand its network of domestic routes with a newly acquired aircraft.

Marketing executive John Htut said the ATR-72 will be used to fly from Mandalay International Airport to Nyaung U, Heho, Kengtung, Tachileik, Bhamo, Myittha, Thandwe, Putao and Lashio. Services will be expanded further when a second ATR-72 will arrive in mid-June, he said.

"We will start to fly on May 27 from Mandalay. While our airline is a low-cost carrier, we still make sure to give good service," he said.

Fares on the routes will range from K24,000 to K80,000, or the equivalent in US dollars for foreign passengers – a significant discount on what competitors are offering. – *Ei Ei Thu*

US warns citizens on Sittwe curfew

The United States cautioned its citizens on May 14 to respect a curfew imposed in the Rakhine State capital Sittwe, after Rakhine State police issued a statement warning that those who did not would be arrested.

In a statement from the US embassy in Yangon, officials said that while there were no specific threats against US citizens, those travelling or living in the state capital should respect the 9pm to 5am daily curfew.

The curfew was put in place in late March following an outbreak of violence that targeted NGO staff and their operations. On March 29 the US issued a travel warning for Rakhine, urging US citizens to avoid travel to the state with the exception of the beach resort area of Ngapali. The embassy reiterated its concerns in last week's statement.

"Demonstrations or mobs associated with the strife in Rakhine State, coupled with inter-ethnic and religious tensions, have occasionally led to spontaneous outbreaks of violence in other parts of the country," the statement said. – *Tim McLaughlin*

Rose Garden eyes full opening

After sitting silent for the best part of a decade, Yangon's Rose Garden Hotel has finally opened its doors.

More than 100 rooms are ready for guests following a soft opening in March, and a spokesperson for the hotel, on Upper Pansodan Road, said the rest are expected to open early next year. "We will have 296 rooms, including five different room types," said sales manager U Zaw Win Tun.

The hotel is located near scenic Kandawgyi Lake, just north of the downtown area. Owned by Hong Kong-based Emerald Development Company, the project was put on hold for more than a decade. – *Zaw Win Than*



IN PICTURES

PHOTO: KAUNG HTET

Humanitarian groups have sounded the alarm over the fate of thousands of civilians caught in clashes between the Tatmadaw and Kachin Independence Army in Kachin State. The UN said on May 16 that heavy fighting caused 2700 people to flee in April, amid a "deteriorating security situation" in the region. Many of those displaced have been made homeless for the second or third time, while an unknown number have fled across the border into China.

Constitution committee meets ahead of rally

May 15 meeting comes two days before NLD, 88 Gen launch nationwide campaign

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MEMBERS of the constitutional review committee have resumed their discussions amid indications that some military MPs might be prepared to consider a gradual reduction in their numbers. One of the thorniest issues the committee will examine concerns the role of the military in politics, and the stringent conditions set for approving constitutional amendments.

The committee's first act was to resolve to deliberate in secret. According to one source, who asked not to be identified, members who attended the May 15 meeting were asked not to leak information to the media.

The committee's focus will be on section 436, which stipulates that amendments require a 75pc majority as well as, in some cases, a majority in a referendum. That provision is widely seen as blocking National League for Democracy leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi from being eligible for the presidency.

"We reached agreement after three hours of intense argument with military MPs," said one member, speaking under condition of anonymity. "Finally they accepted that the condition of country could get worse if they didn't agree to change."

NLD, together with the 88 Generation student group, plans to mount a nationwide campaign of public rallies and petitions to show support for change. The two groups have formed an 11-member committee to organise public rallies across the nation and petition for constitutional reform, with the first events to take place on May 17 and 18 in Yangon and Mandalay. Government leaders have expressed concern that this movement could lead to unrest and even violence.

In a speech in Mandalay on May 15, President U Thein Sein warned that a confrontational approach to amending the constitution could result in "suffering".

"The amendment of the constitution and the free and fair

elections that we will face very soon are our internal issues. We can solve these issues within the legal framework," he said.

Some committee members said the majority-holding Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) have changed their policy on section 436. Previously they agreed with the position of military MPs, who said they would prefer to reduce the proportion of seats automatically allotted to them rather than the threshold for constitutional change. They gave no indication, however, of when this drawdown of military personnel would happen.

"In past meetings, [the USDP] wanted to keep the role of military in politics. But now they accept it must change. My own view is they might be satisfied with two-thirds instead of 75pc," said one member.

The next meeting of the committee will take place on May 19. It has been instructed to submit a bill to parliament no later than six months before next year's elections.

EU rights dialogue to begin May 20

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THE European Union has established a "human rights dialogue" with the government to address issues of concern, but some rights groups have warned European engagement could risk reversing progress on human rights issues.

The Council of the European Union announced last week that the dialogue would focus on "bilateral cooperation and issues of mutual interest related to human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law".

The EU statement includes 21 benchmarks for discussion, including a moratorium on the death penalty, measures to combat communal violence and hate speech, and the elimination of forced labour. The statement does not offer specifics on how the dialogue will work in practice, only saying that the main meeting will be held on an "annual basis".

Officials at the EU embassy in Yangon said meetings would take place regularly. The first, later this month, will include Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs U Thant Kyaw and the EU special representative for human rights.

"The human rights dialogue on May 20 will not be a one-off event," said Colin Steinbach, a political advisor for the EU commission in Yangon. "It is intended to be the first of regular meetings, which we are confident will gradually lead to positive change."

The establishment of the dialogue comes amid growing questioning of the EU's engagement with Myanmar, with some rights groups even accusing the bloc of pursuing policies that undermine progress on human rights.

Several told *The Myanmar Times* that while the dialogue is a positive step, it does not go far enough to address human rights concerns.

"They need to set short-term deliverable goals and set timelines for them to be achieved," said Mark Farmaner, head of the London-based advocacy group Burma Campaign UK.

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People sell goods at a street market in downtown Yangon on May 9. Tweaks to how poverty is calculated using a 2010 data set have dramatically increased the rate of urban poverty in Myanmar. Photo: AFP

Data tweaks change face of poverty

Changes to a 2010 survey reveal Rakhine to be the most impoverished state and close the gap on poverty in rural and urban areas

ARE you in the development business? Well, here's a test for you: What is the poverty rate in Myanmar? The answer is 25.6 percent, as derived from the United Nations Development Program-supported 2010 Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey (IHLCA) survey. Or rather, that was the answer. At a modest workshop held at the World Bank on May 16, they announced a new number: 37.5pc.

The bank researchers used the same 2010 IHCLA database but they made several changes. First, 300 households that had silly results were dropped, leaving 18,360 households. Then they did various changes to the measurements of welfare, adult equivalents and adjustments for regional price variations. I will spare you the details but can testify that all the changes were sensible. They are also more methodologically consistent with what is done in other countries.

The new methodology raised the national poverty line from K376,151 an adult per year to K440,345, which meant more households fell below the

poverty line. This, however, is based on hanging your hat on how many daily calories a minimum "food basket" should have. The bank said 2300.

This revision led not just to a higher national poverty rate, but also to big changes in poverty numbers all around the country. The table below shows that urban poverty is much higher than we previously thought, and only 4 percentage points below the average for rural areas. Poverty rates have gone up for all states and

Measuring poverty: The Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey

	2010 data	2014 revision
National poverty rate	25.6	37.5
Urban areas	15.7	34.6
Rural areas	29.2	38.5
Yangon	16.1	34.2
Ayeyarwady	32.2	45.7
Rakhine	43.5	77.9
Chin	73.3	71.5
Shan (south)	25.2	47.7
Shan (north)	37.4	44.6



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regions – except for Chin State, where it declined slightly.

The dramatic rise has been in Rakhine, where new data says the poverty rate in 77.9pc, not 43.5pc as previously. Further, when applying a much lower poverty line ("food poverty"), Rakhine still comes out with 64pc in extreme poverty. The changes are so dramatic that we have to worry that maybe donors have been targeting their assistance to the wrong areas. For example, we used to believe that the north of Shan State was poorer than the south but now it seems it is the other way around.

The World Bank compared its new data to various other sources of data to see if it "made sense", including figures from the Ministry of Electric Power and the World Food Programme. Descriptive data across the income

deciles (from the poorest 10pc to the richest 10pc of households) and comparing to Vietnamese household data also produced logical results. Many of us were concerned about the quality of the IHCLA database: sampling, data collection, data entry and overall quality control could have been better. But the bank has shown that, with a few tweaks – and dropping 300 households – it is something we can rely upon for detailed analysis (although apparently, and outrageously, the raw database is not yet available to the general public and academics). Conclusion: Well done UNDP – now share the database with us all by putting it up on a website.

The new database and methodology do measure poverty better. What is subjective, however, is the choice of the poverty cut-off line in terms of daily calorie intake. This is something for the government to consider when deciding the official (2010) poverty rate. The World Bank chose 2300 calories but if it is reduced to 2100 calories the national poverty rates drops immediately from 37.5pc to 28.2pc. Countries choose different cut-off lines, ranging

from 1800 calories (India) to 3000 (Uganda). Vietnam is 2300 but Indonesia and Bangladesh are 2100, while many African countries well are above 2300. The bank likes 2300, and so do I.

I think the government of Myanmar would do well to accept that Myanmar is starting a phase of rapid development but with a serious poverty problem, and agree on 37.5pc as a number to reduce as quickly as possible.

.....

Adam McCarty is an Australian economist who has been living and working in Vietnam since 1991. In 2001 he established Mekong Economics (MKE) Ltd, where he is chief economist. His work and research across the Mekong region has covered microfinance, state enterprise reform, rural development impact evaluations, trade policy, aid effectiveness, and the education sector. He first came to Myanmar in 2008 and has worked on microfinance, poverty targeting, and trade policy. MKE have an office in Yangon and are involved in projects with the World Bank, ADB and LIFT. He is also regional director of MDF, a Dutch-based training organisation (www.mdf.nl).



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Views



Peace activist U Yan Naing Tun talks to the media after his release from prison on December 31, 2013. Photo: AFP

Time for new initiative on political prisoners



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THE jailing of Zaw Pe, a journalist with the Democratic Voice of Burma, has highlighted growing concerns about the progress, or lack thereof, in securing media freedoms in Burma. It also draws attention to the fact that the problem of political prisoners in our country hasn't gone away.

The freeing of hundreds of political prisoners has been one of the acts for which President U Thein Sein has received the most praise. Political prisoners have been part of Myanmar's political life for decades. Generations have grown up without having lived through a period when there were not people in jail for their political beliefs.

Occasionally there were times when it seemed that there could be change. General Ne Win announced a general amnesty in 1980, and even former Senior General Than Shwe released hundreds of political prisoners after he became leader. But these turned out to be false dawns, and soon the jails were once again filling up with political prisoners.

We are at a critical point now in Myanmar's reform process and the issue of political prisoners. Within months it should become clear whether the president wants to go down in history as the man who finally tackled the problem of political prisoners, or whether this was just another false dawn.

Some of the indications for the future are not good. Rather than releasing political prisoners as swiftly as possible, President U Thein Sein has seemed to release them tactically - in a way that gains maximum positive publicity. Most releases are also only conditional, rather than pardons. Released political prisoners still have criminal records, and the president has never

apologised and admitted they should never have been jailed in the first place. Nor have released prisoners been given compensation and support for health and other problems as a result of torture and their time in prison. Almost all repressive laws used to jail political prisoners remain in place.

Another concern is the lack of any significant pressure from the international community. The United States and European Union lifted sanctions before all political prisoners were freed, and issued no strong condemnation when President U Thein Sein broke his promise to free all political prisoners by the end of 2013.

Although Western governments

Within months it should become clear whether the president wants to go down in history as the man who finally tackled the problem of political prisoners.

still raise the issue in meetings, it is just one of a number of talking points. President U Thein Sein is well aware that relations will not be badly affected by keeping political prisoners in jail so long as they are not too high profile. Some think that he only released political prisoners to get sanctions lifted, and now that they are lifted he doesn't need to release any more.

However, it is in his interests to address the issue of political prisoners once and for all. For a start, the political prisoners who are in jail are no real threat to him or his government. Keeping political prisoners in jail damages his reputation, within Myanmar and

internationally, for little gain. It also damages the reputation of the country. Nor does President U Thein Sein need the repressive laws to maintain control: The 2008 constitution, which he was in charge of drafting, gives the military control and major influence at every level of government.

In 2012, President U Thein Sein agreed to a proposal to establish a political prisoner review committee. However, he was unwilling to go as far as human rights advocates and Western governments were asking - to make the committee independent and include international expertise. It is now time for him to be more courageous and agree to the establishment of a comprehensive review mechanism for political prisoners.

This time the review mechanism should be genuinely independent, and involve international legal experts so that it can be genuinely impartial and honest. It should be established by law in parliament, with powers to investigate cases where people may be in jail for political reasons. It should also have the legal power to order the pardon and release of prisoners it assesses to be in jail for political reasons and to award them compensation. A committee of this kind would also be best placed to identify repressive laws, or the misuse of laws for political purposes, and recommend to parliament that they be amended in line with international human rights standards or repealed altogether.

Progress in releasing political prisoners has stalled and there is no clear mechanism in sight for addressing this problem. We can't carry on year after year waiting and hoping for the next announcement from the president about who he will release. It is time for a comprehensive mechanism to address this issue once and for all, so that our country no longer has to endure the shame of having political prisoners.

Wai Hnin Pwint Thon is campaigns officer at Burma Campaign UK.

Introducing Sir John of the double standard



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IMAGINE that the National League for Democracy wins next year's general election with a handsome majority.

Imagine also that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is allowed to run and emerges victorious as Myanmar's next president.

Go on, imagine. It's easy if you try.

But even if it happens, the people's wishes may be thwarted if Western nations, like Britain and the United States, follow the self-interest stance they have shown in the past.

You see, while these bastions of democracy claim to support free and fair multi-party elections, in truth they only do so if the victor is one they like.

If not, then they pay mere lip service to the poll result, while conspiring to bring down the victorious party.

It happened in Iran in 1953 when the democratically elected National Front government, which had nationalised the oil industry, was overthrown by the UK and US.

Indeed, it has happened often, in countries as varied as Chile, Guatemala, Turkey and, just last year, Egypt, where the situation eerily echoes what might happen here.

Remember that after the Arab Spring, which, like the opening of Myanmar, began in 2010, many of Egypt's political prisoners were released and multi-party elections were held two years later.

Mohamed Morsi, a Western-educated former political prisoner - much like Daw Aung San Suu Kyi - led his Freedom and Justice Party to victory in those polls.

But the military never like civilian leaders with a religious bent, like Islam for Morsi or Buddhism for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and so, with Saudi Arabian support, backed by the US and the UK, Morsi was overthrown and put back in jail.

It couldn't happen here, you say, because Washington and London love Daw Suu and can't wait for her to assume power.

Don't count on it. After the way she chided President Barack Obama and said it was too early to visit Yangon in 2012, his feelings for her are rather lukewarm, especially after her non-condemnation of Muslim pogroms.

As for the UK, those who recall ambassador John Jenkins, who was based here at the turn of the millennium, may find a recent move rather chilling.

Although Dr John and the

Lady formed a mutual admiration society, he was disliked by other ambassadors and by the British community, whom his staff advised to go home.

What were they doing living and working in abhorrent Burma? That was his embassy's attitude. "We call him Dr Jerkoff," said one British businessman at the time.

His hard-line stance also alienated the generals so much that they were even less inclined to engage with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

But Jenkins, a loyal civil servant who jumps when told to jump, was merely following official London policy - and was richly rewarded for doing so.

He is no longer Dr Jenkins, but rather Sir John Jenkins, Knight Commander of The Order of Saint Michael and Saint George, and currently ambassador to Saudi Arabia.

Naturally, he exerts no pressure on the autocratic Saudi rulers, as he did on the then-Senior General Than Shwe's regime; nor does he support harassed dissidents, as he staunchly backed Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

While these bastions of democracy claim to support free and fair multi-party elections, in truth they only do so if the victor is one they like.

He knows that the Saudi dictators, like the generals in Egypt and Myanmar, dislike the kind of free and open democracy that briefly flared in Egypt and led to Morsi's election.

So naturally, he skips to the Saudi tune - and safeguards British oil interests at the expense of freedom and justice.

Even worse, in a stunning and politically motivated move, he has been named to head a spurious investigation into Morsi's alleged terrorist links in Britain.

There are none. And the Brits know it.

As the academic Kenan Malik observed last month in the *New York Times*, this investigation will only embolden authoritarian regimes in Egypt, Saudi Arabia - and possibly Myanmar.

"The hypocrisies of the West over democracy," Malik said, "are not invisible to its enemies."

Bear that in mind if the NLD wins next year and Muslim massacres ensue - and if, at Saudi insistence, the chameleon-like Jenkins arrives to investigate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and her party.

Views

Tatmadaw strengthens grip on militias



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THE Myanmar Armed Forces held an unusual ceremony on May 5. At this event, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and top military officers appointed members of the Central Advisory and Supervisory Committee of Border Guard Forces as honorary gazetted Tatmadaw officers and pinned badges on their uniforms.

What does this signify, and why was this ceremony held? Shortly after the military government took power in 1988 through a military coup, it began negotiating ceasefires with ethnic armed groups, particularly those that had broken away from the Communist Party of Burma, such as the Wa, Kokang, Mongla group and New Democratic Army (Kachin). It reached a ceasefire agreement with the Kachin Independence Organisation in 1994, after which the military government announced it had reached agreements

with 17 ethnic armed groups. More groups signed up later, including the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army, which broke away from the Karen National Union.

In 2009, the government pressured these ceasefire groups to turn into Border Guard Forces (BGF) and People's Militia Groups (PMG). While some groups, such as the NDA-K, which is headed by Zahkung Ting Ring and based in Kachin Special Region 1, accepted the proposal, most groups, such as the Wa, the KIO and the New Mon State Party, did not. Even for the groups that did accept the plan, the decision was far from unanimous; there were disagreements – sometimes violent – among the leadership of both the NDA-K and the DKBA.

The ceasefire groups became 23 Border Guard Forces and 84 People's Militia Groups. Under the set-up of the militias, the younger soldiers work with the Tatmadaw while the older leaders are appointed as members of the Central Advisory and Supervisory Committee. While the regiment commander is appointed a Tatmadaw major – the highest rank in a Border Guard Force – the ethnic leaders who originally led their group and were appointed to the central committee didn't hold a formal military position.

That changed on May 5, however, when Senior General Min Aung Hlaing appointed them honorary gazetted officers. While they don't meet all of the



An ethnic Border Guard Force leader receives honorary gazetted officer status from the Tatmadaw on May 5. Photo: Facebook/Senior General Min Aung Hlaing

standards specified for a gazetted officer, the Tatmadaw explained that appointments were agreed on by a working committee from the Ministry of Defence after taking into consideration the situation in their regions, their influence within the Border Guard Forces

and the respect with which they are held by lower-ranking members. The recently appointed ethnic leaders are from forces in Kayin and Kayah states; four were appointed colonels, five were appointed lieutenant colonels and five were appointed as majors.

It is no coincidence that these appointments occurred at a time when the government is negotiating with ethnic armed groups over the proposed nationwide ceasefire agreement. Also, we are seeing some ethnic armed group leaders who are trusted by the government taking an increasingly active role in domestic political affairs.

Of these, the most active have been leaders from the Karen National Union. Late last month, KNU chair General Mutu Sae Pho met the president and commander-in-chief as well as leaders of the United Wa State Army and the Mongla group to ensure their participation in the nationwide ceasefire agreement and broader peace process.

The deputy leader of the KNU, Naw Zipporah Sein, also recently visited Yangon. During her trip, she met chief government peace negotiator U Aung Min and officials from the Myanmar Peace Center, as well as political leaders and Kayin people in Ayeiawady Region.

In this context, the Tatmadaw leadership is keen to ensure that the Border Guard Forces and People's Militia Groups under its control do not unite with those armed groups, like the KNU, that wield significantly more power with the people.

Appointing some leaders of these groups as honorary gazetted officers is a means of reminding them where their loyalties lie.

– Translation by Thiri Min Htun

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Business

Halfway to ASEAN targets: minister

But Myanmar won't meet all of the requirements for the ASEAN Economic Community by 2015



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MYANMAR has met over half of its target reforms for the ASEAN Economic Community, though more still needs to be done, said Minister of National Planning and Economic Development (MNPED) U Kan Zaw.

Reaching 100 percent implementation of all targets ahead of the AEC's launch at the end of 2015 will be impossible, he said at a press conference after a meeting of the 11th ASEAN Economic Community Council Meeting at the 24th ASEAN Summit in Nay Pyi Taw on May 10.

"[December 2015] will be the time for raising the curtain for the AEC, but more work must be done to reach the target," he said, adding he estimated between 50 and 60pc of required reforms are complete.

Myanmar has finished its overall review of what needs to be done, but is still looking at ensuring areas such as transportation, ports, customs and labour rules meet AEC standards. As a less-developed country, Myanmar will also require assistance to meet the standards and an extended timeline to meet all the requirements.

ASEAN members have set out the AEC's four key characteristics as a single market area, a competitive economic region, equitable economic development and a region integrated into the global economy. A large number of reforms are required from many countries in the 10-member ASEAN bloc.

"We will be able to reach the AEC target even if there are some weak points," said U Kan Zaw.

ASEAN secretary-general Le Young Minh said in a speech he reckoned about 80pc of actions required by all 10 ASEAN member states have



A man dares to cross a Nay Pyi Taw street before the start of the 24th ASEAN Summit. Photo : AFP

been taken, but least-developed Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam may need until 2018 to complete the reforms.

"It would be good to get everything done by 2015, but we have until 2018," said ASEAN expert Daw Than Than Lin. "It's a range of times to finish rather than a deadline."

President U Thein Sein said in his opening address at the summit that Myanmar intended to use its position as chair of ASEAN to promote economic development.

"This year, it is important to take action to promote development and competition for products among ASEAN countries," he said.

U Thein Sein pointed out that boosting SMEs is critical for Myanmar as they make up 69pc of the country's total business.

Although officials are optimistic about the future economic potential of the bloc, others noted that many of the details still need work.

ASEAN Economic Community

director U Kyaw Soe Thein at the MNPED said it will be difficult to achieve a truly free flow of goods and services.

He pointed to a number of areas as simple as deciding what units of measurement to use for trade goods as an area that is still a stumbling block for closer integration.

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Singapore Dollar	K763	K773
Thai Baht	K29	K30
US Dollar	K962	K963

Foreign banks to face lending restrictions

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THE Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) will restrict foreign banks from providing loans to local business at the initial stages of their operation, though will gradually loosen these limits, according to its vice governor U Set Aung.

Foreign banks are currently permitted only to open representative branches with a limited number of activities, though officials have pledged to eventually allow foreign-owned banks to operate in Myanmar.

"After this initial period the Central Bank will give permission to foreign banks to provide loans to local businesses," he said in an exclusive interview with *The Myanmar Times*. He added there is not yet a concrete timeline for how long foreign banks will be restricted from lending to local businesses or indeed when foreign banks will be allowed to begin other banking activities.

The CBM previously announced it will not provide retail licences to foreign banks, restricting them instead to wholesale banking.

"According to the principles underlying the wholesale licence, giving loans to local businesses doesn't need to be restricted," he said. "But local banks are very concerned about the entrance of foreign competition. The CBM needs to address these concerns."

Still, the CBM is involved in a balancing act, as it must also ensure that local businesses receive adequate access to capital for development, and foreign banks can help grow Myanmar's financial sector as a whole, he said.

The CBM plans to initially allow between five and 10 foreign-owned banks to begin operations with a limited number of activities, though a timeline has not been set. Officials declined to confirm they would allow this year at a press conference at the end of April.

Although Myanmar's bankers are keen to prevent too much competition too early, businesspeople said they support the improved access to capital they anticipate from foreign banks.

Myanmar Rice Federation joint secretary U Soe Tun said Myanmar's existing banks often cannot meet firms' capital requirements.

"Local banks are not very strong, just at the level of a family business, and don't have adequate capital," he said. "They cannot do much to help promote the country's economy."

He said local businesses looked forward to improved access to capital available from foreign banks, and restricting their ability to lend to local businesses may stunt economic growth.

"If foreign banks are restricted from lending to local businesses, what's the point in having them? How can the country's businesses develop without capital?"

Myanmar Fishery Federation vice chair U Hnin Oo said if Myanmar businesses do not have access to large amounts of capital at reasonable interest rates, their ability to compete internationally will be curtailed.

However, local bankers said it is important to develop a strong domestic banking industry before opening the doors to competition.

U Than Lwin, vice chair of KBZ, Myanmar's largest bank, said that while he does not know the details of the CBM's plans on introducing foreign banks, local banks are still much weaker in comparison to their international peers.

"They need some kind of protection," he said. "If foreign banks are allowed to provide services to local people, they will take the most market share."

The Central Bank's U Set Aung said one possibility under consideration is allowing foreign banks to lend to local business in conjunction with local banks. However, the CBM has not yet decided if foreign-local joint-venture banks will be allowed.

Some foreign bankers stationed in Myanmar said they are keen to begin lending to local businesses, if allowed by the CBM.

Nuttaphong Visitchakarn, chief representative of Thailand's Kasikon Bank - one of about 35 foreign banks with a Myanmar representative office - said the bank would follow the CBM's guidelines. Foreign banks may not be allowed to provide retail services, meaning it would not open personal bank accounts, but will likely be allowed to provide lending to local businesses following specific guidelines from the CBM, he said.

Fish exports keep slipping away

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FISH industry exports are likely to fall further this year as both over-fishing and under-investment continues to bite, officials from the Myanmar Fishery Federation (MFF) warned.

Although the easing of sanctions opened up EU and US markets to exports, the industry cannot make the necessary investments in fish processing and refrigeration that it needs if firms want to compete on the international market.

The fishing industry also began to suffer three years ago as over-fishing hit both fresh-water and salt-water fish catch sizes.

"There is no possibility to be able to provide the sector with proper capital supports. And catching the same amount of saltwater fish is harder because of over-fishing by modern techniques," MFF vice chair U Hnin Oo told *The Myanmar Times*.

The export industry was worth US\$650 million in the fiscal year of

2012-2013, but that fell to \$536 million in 2013-2014. U Hnin Oo said exports could continue falling this year.

At the moment only 14 out of more than 100 frozen seafood factories in Myanmar meet EU market standards.

"To export our fish to EU and US markets, we need to produce quality products which the Western markets will accept. For the Myanmar businessmen, they cannot afford to promote their factories to produce quality products as they don't have enough capital," U Hnin Oo said.

'Catching the same amount of saltwater fish is harder because of over fishing.'

U Hnin Oo
Myanmar Fishery Federation

Since last year Yangon-based industrial zones have also suffered from electricity shortages. During the summer period from March to May they have had to reduce their working hours and production has slowed.

"We need electricity all day," Toe Nandar Tin, owner of the Annawa Dewi seafood product factory in Yangon Region said.

Business owners are now pinning their hopes on loans from foreign banks which may be allowed to begin lending money this year, after sanctions were eased.

However the Central Bank of Myanmar has yet to confirm when licences for foreign banks will be issued and in the meantime fishers say local banks are proving inadequate.

"The interest rate of loans of the local banks is still much higher compared to that of foreign banks and loan sizes are also very small. Moreover the loan they can provide is a short-term loan and needs to be repaid after a year," said MFF general secretary U Win Kyaing.



A fisherman casts his net. Photo: Staff

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Jade dealers examine cut stones at Mandalay's Mahar Aung Myay trading centre. Photo: Hlaing Kyaw Soe

Jade sales losing their gleam

China's economic slowdown and a shortage of quality jade blamed for quiet market

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JADE sales at Mandalay's main trading centre have slowed significantly due to a drop in Chinese buyers and a shortage of high-quality cut stones, traders say.

The slowdown that began before Chinese New Year in February has not shown signs of abating, said U Myo Zaw, a trader at Mahar Aung Myay trading centre.

"The lack of Chinese buyers is very bad," he said.

"It is very hard to sell cut jade and even when we complete a transaction, we can't get a good price. The market is still dreary."

The market has seen a substantial drop-off in buyers from the world's second-largest economy – the main destination for Mandalay's jade.

The Chinese economy has seen decelerating growth in recent months, growing by 7.4 percent in the first quarter of 2014 compared year-on-year, the slowest rate since similar growth levels in the third quarter of 2012.

A scarcity in jade has also led to a steep increase for top-quality items in recent months, said jade trader Ko Soe Thu.

"There has been a drop in sales for so long," he said, adding that a jade exhibition is scheduled to be held in mid-May, which may make more good-quality jade available.

Middlemen travelling to Hpakant township in Kachin State, the source of much of Myanmar's jade, said it too is seeing a scarcity in high-quality jade, driving up prices.

– Translation by Zar Zar Soe

Mandalay's mango growers trumpet their national award wins

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MANDALAY Region mango growers bagged a top prize at this year's Mango Exhibition in Yangon, said Mandalay Region Mango Association vice chair Ko Kyaw Soe Naing.

The city's mango growers won a number of the awards despite being able to send only 20 participants, competing against hundreds of growers and 195 different varieties of mangoes from across Myanmar for the inaugural exhibition.

Buoyed by Mandalay's success, Ko Kyaw Soe Naing said he hopes more Mandalay contestants will take part next year – even hinting that a clean sweep of the awards might be possible.

Prizes were awarded for the five most common types of mango – Sein Ta Lone, Shwe Hin Thar, Padamyar Nga Mauk, Yin Kwe, Mya Yauk, and a sixth prize for the other varieties. Mandalay growers took home two top spot awards for Sein Ta Lone mangos, a second place prize for Shwe Hin Thar mangos, and its Yin Kwe mangos came in third.

The mangos were judged based on a number of criteria including weight, colour, sweetness, taste and physical beauty of.

Attendees said they are pleased by this year's success, while others said they looked to emulate the glory of fellow growers next year.

Ko Nay Lin Maung

Maung, vice chair of the Mandalay Mango Association, said he will "absolutely" take part in next year's competition, after missing this year's due to not enough advance notice.

"Having high-quality mangoes in Mandalay, mango producers will take part in next year's contest. And I believe we will win top prizes," he said.

The event also saw a number of experts discussing mangoes with potential buyers, looking to dispel common mango myths and promote their products. It was organised by the Myanmar Fruits, Flowers and Vegetable Growers association, and received Asupport from export and development organisations.

– Translation By Thiri Min Htun



Standard Chartered looks to Myanmar

STANDARD Chartered Bank's newly appointed head of ASEAN Lim Cheng Teck visited Myanmar last week, looking at the role the bank can play in Myanmar's future. Standard Chartered opened a representative office in Yangon in February 2013, but current restrictions limit foreign banks' operations – though reforms to open the sector to international competition have been promised. *The Myanmar Times* reporter Aung Shin met with Mr Lim to discuss Myanmar's financial sector during a period of change. This interview has been edited and condensed.

First of all, what makes you excited about the ASEAN market, as freshly appointed CEO for the region?

ASEAN has exciting opportunities for bankers. It represents a growth market.

Collectively, if you look at ASEAN, it is the third-largest economy in Asia after China and Japan, not just based on size of the economy but its fast growth. This year we expect growth of about 5.3 percent. We are also excited about ASEAN trade flows – at an annual rate of 10.9 or 11pc, it's a very sizeable trade.

The other thing we are interested in is investment flows. Last year, ASEAN was the single largest recipient of FDI, totaling US\$128 billion, more than China received. As a global bank, we can leverage our network advantage. We have been in ASEAN for a long time.

What is Myanmar's economic outlook?

Growth is strong in Myanmar at 7 to 7.3pc. Even though the base has been smaller, it is stronger growth. We are



Standard Chartered Bank's ASEAN CEO Lim Cheng Teck speaks to reporters in Yangon last week. Photo : Zarni Phyo

excited not only about the growth, but also its trend. Growth is in the high single digits, and could possibly be in the double digits [in the future].

How long it will take?

Of course economic growth depends on a few things. We are excited about liberalisation and the reforms that Myanmar has taken. If it continues, you can expect stronger growth. But if the reform agenda, liberalisation

agenda, for some reason gets stopped, then growth will be impacted.

Myanmar is largely an agriculture based economy, 70 percent of GDP. Growth in the agricultural sector can be harder because gains in productivity take longer.

So you need basic investment in infrastructure, energy, communication, financial services. There are many many different opportunities in Myanmar.

What do you think of Myanmar's current financial sector?

I think you need a healthy financial services sector. International players [foreign banks] bring in expertise that we experienced from other markets. We have proven capability in the financial services sector supporting small and medium enterprises. Medium-size enterprises are the backbone of many developing economies ... you also need to have well-established rules and regulations. And you also need to promote competition, because competition promotes all different kinds of innovations.

So how are you getting ready for the government's plans to allow foreign banks?

We are looking forward to the announcement. We are very committed to participating in the Myanmar market because we believe that we have the capability to support economic growth as well as the financial sector. We have established connectivity in ASEAN.

Do you think the AEC [ASEAN Economic Community] is going well?

Some things are going well such as trade. Trade flows freely within ASEAN member countries. I think we have other dimensions to look at. The financial sector is still different among member countries. But I think we all are headed in the right direction.

What competition will you see from foreign banks after the Myanmar government allows it?

First of all, you want to look at the market. It must be opened up in an orderly manner. One good approach is limiting banks. If you allow a large number of banks, it would be chaotic,

it won't provide capacity. You need to go step by step. A number of licences will be ready in the first stage and then other licences after a few years within regulator. We have been here for a long time and can play a very useful role.

What will be the priority once you are allowed to run financial services in Myanmar?

Firstly we need to update infrastructure. We need to train our local staffs. For that we have the advantage of sending them to our well-established markets. Yes, building capacity would be our first priority, and sharing our experience with local banks.

What challenges face foreign banks coming to Myanmar?

Today we all have [representative] offices. But we have limitations, because we are not allowed yet to run other financial services. That limits our ability to participate in the financial services market.

How do you view local banks?

I believe that competition always benefits industry. So you need to have competition with local and international banks.

This will lead to a healthier industry, which of course benefits the community and consumers. Collectively local and international banks promote economic growth.

How would you like to encourage this country in developing its banking sector?

What the government is doing right now to open up and liberalise the financial sector is definitely the right direction.

We are positive there will be further liberalisations in this sector.

Hong Kong touts entry to Chinese markets

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HONG Kong aims to serve as a business entry port to the Chinese market for Myanmar's companies, as it moves closer to signing an Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (IPPA) with Myanmar, said its Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development Greg So.

Hong Kong – a Chinese Special Administrative Region – also plans to begin free trade negotiations with ASEAN in July, he said in an interview with *The Myanmar Times*.

Firms from Hong Kong have extensive experience doing business in the China, the world's second-largest economy, he said.

"The latest development [in China] is that as it moves up the value chain, consumption will be affected as the demand for quality has increased," he said. "There's a lot of potential as a consumer market."

Mr So visited Myanmar last week to explore business cooperation and



Hong Kong official Greg So speaks to reporters. Photo: Yu Yu

meet Myanmar officials.

"Myanmar businesses can partner with Hong Kong businessmen, and through licensing and franchising, and without spending a lot of money, can crack open Greater China," he said.

Hong Kong is Myanmar's third-largest investor, while ASEAN is Hong Kong's second-largest market after China. Mr So said the investment

promotion and protection agreement (IPPA) between Myanmar and Hong Kong should be completed soon, allowing businesses more certainty when making bilateral investment. A future free trade agreement could also help Myanmar businesses access greater China.

Hong Kong businesses are particularly interested in Myanmar's jade and jewellery businesses, as well as agricultural products, he said.

Union of Myanmar Chambers of Commerce and Industry president U Win Aung said Hong Kong is the third-largest investor in Myanmar in terms of approved projects, with some 68 projects worth US\$6.47 billion having receiving Myanmar Investment Commission approval.

Hong Kong Trade Development Council deputy executive director Margaret Fong said the introduction of Myanmar's Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) law in 2012 spurred interest in the country.

"All are very interested in investing in the friendly environment the new government has created since it introduced the FDI law," he said.

Bilateral trade has grown about 62pc from 2009 to 2013, reaching \$152 million last year.

Intellectual property rules move closer after a century

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A DRAFT set of intellectual property rights (IPR) laws has been completed by experts and will be submitted for parliamentary approval shortly, but the laws themselves will not end infringement problems in Myanmar, officials said.

The laws come about a century after the 1914 copyright law was enacted during the British colonial period, which still governs many aspects of Myanmar's IPR. However, experts warn the new laws will not immediately solve the problem of IPR violation.

The draft laws have been sent to the Attorney General's office, following which it will be sent to parliament for approval. Four laws, covering trademarks, patents, copyright and design, have been worked on for over a decade, and aim at rectifying IPR violations, an often-criticised area of Myanmar's business environment.

"IP regulation is essential for Myanmar's economy," said Mr Mukai Naoto, an advisor with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), which has been working on the project.

"An IP law would boost foreign investment and protect locally created products, as well as enhancing their value," he said.

U Min Tayza Nyunt Tin, director

from IP law firm MN Associates, said there will be a transitional period following the passing of the law as companies learn to work within the new rules.

Under the new laws, IPR will generally be granted to the first to file a specific trademark or patent, but a system needs to be in place to ensure the process is fair, he said.

"Unless there's such a system, it will be too easy for a VIP with a government or crony relative to register. If so, that might cause some problems," he said.

U Aung Soe Oo, a lawyer with the ASEAN Intellectual Property Association, said there are many issues to resolve after the laws are enacted. New procedures and offices will need to be set up to ensure it is possible to protect IPR.

U Thein Aung, an IP consultant from Myanmar Trademark and Patent Law Firm, said that it is impossible to fully protect copyrights under the present system, with trademark violations and literature and art violations proving the biggest headaches.

However, the change to the new rules will not solve the problem overnight.

"The system will face its troubles," he said. "It needs to be given time. All the participants who were involved in drafting the [new] IP laws have a headache from it."

Australia eyes food exports

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AUSTRALIAN firms are lining up to look at food exports to Myanmar, though officials say they would first like to see an improved regulatory climate in the country.

Australian investment in Myanmar's food trade industry could begin as soon as the next financial year.

"We have a desire to begin trade engagement on both the government to government and business to business level," said Ron Harris, an official from Australia's Victoria State Department of Environment and Primary Industries.

'We have a desire to begin trade engagement.'

Ron Harris
Australian official

Australia already exports food products such as dairy, wheat and beef to several ASEAN nations, according to its South East Asia Market Engagement Plan. Officials told *The Myanmar Times* that a number of Australian firms are closely eyeing the Myanmar market as a future area of expansion.

Australian Senator Brett Mason, parliamentary secretary to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said Australia is still mulling how to conduct future trade engagement with Myanmar, particularly as the market is a new one and the sustainability of development and stability are still concerns.

Myanmar should also work to improve intellectual property laws, consumer rights and competition, said Rod Sims, chair of the Australia Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC).



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COMMENT

ADB needs a dose of Abenomic reforms

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MEERA KUMAR

WITH Myanmar's continued opening to the world, the nation was back on the agenda at the annual Milken Institute Global Conference, with appearances by businessman Serge Pun and democracy activist Ko Ko Gi, among others.

As always, the premier West Coast conference attracted a who's who in finance, business, government and civil society – from former UK prime minister Tony Blair to basketball legend and businessman Earvin “Magic” Johnson to the CEOs or chairpersons of Sony Corporation and The Walt Disney Company.

Yet something was different this year when it came to Asia. Beyond discussion of Southeast Asia, longtime economic laggard Japan also was back in the limelight with a panel dedicated to “Abenomics” – the nickname given to a three-pronged economic revitalisation effort being undertaken by Japan Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

Amidst concerns raised over revisionist statements coming out of Japan's government and discussion of the impact to date of Japan's fiscal stimulus and monetary easing policy under Abe, a critical question persisted. Is the “third arrow” of Abenomics – essential structural reforms – on target, particularly with the failure to announce any significant progress on Trans-Pacific Partnership trade talks during the recent visit of President Barack Obama to Asia?

As we speak of structural reforms in Japan, it is hard to ignore the urgent need for such reforms in development institutions and aid agencies serving the Asia and Pacific region, including those increasingly seeking to increase engagement in Myanmar.

Let's begin with the heavily Japan-influenced, if not dominated, Asian

Development Bank. In an unwritten agreement, Japan – the co-equal largest shareholder of the ADB along with the United States – has held on to key positions at the Manila-based international financial institution, with the president always coming from Japan. In a similar vein, the heads of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have been American and European respectively.

Just more than a year ago, Haruhiko Kuroda stepped down as ADB president to become the current governor of the Bank of Japan. Fittingly, one of his last official visits was to Myanmar – long prevented from further borrowing from the ADB due to arrears, now rescheduled with Japanese support.

Mr Kuroda was one in a long line of bureaucrats from the Japanese Ministry of Finance to take the reins of the ADB, an institution that is set for reform should Mr Abe choose to direct his attention there.

This reform process and change is both inevitable and necessary because the new Asia demands new approaches.

If any economist had said on December 19, 1966, when the ADB was founded, that in just 45 years China would become the world's second-largest economy and India the fourth in terms of purchasing power parity, he – and no doubt it would have been a man – would have been scoffed at, dismissed or perhaps even considered a bit insane.

But time would have proven him to be right.

So should the ADB take a self-congratulatory bow and leave the stage? Nearly five decades on, parts of Asia are awash in capital and foreign direct investment, and numerous showcase infrastructure projects in the region are the envy of the world.

Despite these impressive top-line statistics, many pockets of tremen-

dous poverty remain in the region. Asia's journey toward more sustainable economic development, equal opportunity and the most efficient utilisation of financial and human capital is far from over despite billions of dollars in development loans and official development assistance.

At the 47th annual meeting of the ADB, held May 2-5 in Astana, Kazakhstan, it was clear that the institution must continue to re-evaluate its strategies to address the reality of two-tiered growth, with large populations from within developing nations such as China and India not benefiting from a region on the rise.

We suggest some near-term next steps so the ADB can lead the way and perhaps set the pace for change at its sister organisation, the World Bank, as well.

First, the ADB should address outdated internal incentive and management systems that undermine development effectiveness. More emphasis must be placed on the quality, rather than the quantity, of lending and other assistance provided in the name of development. Too often the measure of success by management and staff remains board approval of and size of a loan – the bigger and faster, the better

– and not the consequences and outcomes that follow.

Second, the ADB must recommit to helping the smallest and least-developed nations in Asia. The limited ability of small nations – whether Afghanistan or Laos – to make effective use of development assistance, be it grants or loans, works against them in a system where attention is unwaveringly focused on the biggest borrowers, including India, Indonesia and even China, which continues to borrow despite the size of its economy.

Third, and in a break from its erstwhile pattern, ADB should place immediate and forceful emphasis on skills training and education. The demographics of many parts of Asia are heavily tilted toward the young, who will increasingly fail to gain employment without the skills required in a knowledge economy.

Every day, new developments in technology displace workers. With such “progress”, manufacturing will no longer provide the large numbers of jobs sought after by one-time agricultural workers hoping to take advantage of the region's overall growth. It is thus imperative that the ADB re-evaluates static approaches based on old models of growth, and also its own abilities to deliver the best people, best experiences and best ideas to developing Asia.

In short, the ADB is in need of its own third arrow of reforms.

Creating and sustaining a fertile ecosystem of prosperity will require more than spending money, no matter how efficiently and transparently such funds are used. With employment mainly driven by small- and medium-sized enterprises, creating an environment in which entrepreneurship can flourish is essential. That, in turn, rests on an ecosystem where innovation flourishes.

Scoff at us, dismiss us or even call us a little insane – but we believe there

It is time to bid farewell to systems and institutions that help ensure development money flows without regard to results, impact and outcome.



Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe rides a train. Photo : AFP

is room in development for strong, viable and relevant institutions that place precedence on loan quality over quantity, ensure access to quality education and skills, and prize innovation and entrepreneurship as a means to job creation.

Let us envision the Asia of tomorrow in order to best prepare for it. As Asia's economic growth continues to drive the global economy, it is time to bid farewell to systems and institutions that help ensure development money flows without regard to results, impact and outcome.

Curtis S Chin, a former US ambassador to the Asian Development Bank under Presidents Barack Obama and George W Bush, is a managing director with advisory firm RiverPeak Group. Meera Kumar, a public relations professional and a regular contributor to Gateway House (Indian Council on Global Relations), worked at the ADB in the 1990s.

Car import policy will ‘never change’, minister promises



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THE government will not consider any more changes to its car import policy, Minister for Commerce U Win Myint has promised, in a move that industry sources say is likely to boost sales by stabilising prices.

Changes to car import rules since late 2011 have removed thousands of clapped-out cars from the roads, made newer vehicles more affordable and prompted dramatic growth in sales centres, including those selling new cars from international manufacturers. More than 300,000 new vehicles have been imported since the changes were launched, the majority to Yangon.

But U Win Myint said at the opening of the Mercedes-Benz showroom on May 8 that the frequent policy changes are now a thing of the past.

“In the past, car prices were very expensive and it was hard to get a permit to import a car. During my time as minister, the government has ... changed the car import policy eight times. We will never change the import policy again, even if there is a change in minister,” U Win Myint said.

Vehicles that were valued at US\$100,000 just a few years ago today fetch barely a quarter of that figure and this has enabled many to upgrade or become car owners for the first time. However, policy changes have been controversial because of their dramatic impact on prices.

Many dealers have been left with stock that is worth far less than what they paid to import it. Thousands of vehicles have even been abandoned at Yangon port because the taxes owed are higher than the sale price they would fetch.

Because of their impact, new policies were always a closely guarded secret – which encouraged buyers to hold out in the hope that rumoured changes would materialise and reduce prices further.

Dealers said the minister's announcement would encourage more sales.

“This announcement is good news. It can stabilise the market and consumers can buy cars without any worries,” said U Soe Htun from Farmer Auto.

Broker U Aung Than Win said that the changes would give a further boost to a market already benefiting from reductions in commercial and registration tax that came into effect on April 1.

“Consumers are more interested to buy cars and the market has come to life again,” he said. “This has pushed [auction] prices in Japan up a little bit but if the government stays true to its words and the policy remains stable then the car market will be quite good in future.”

But Ko Khant Win from ASE Auto said he was less convinced. While overall a positive move, he said it means that the government will retain some elements of the current import policy that need to be rectified.

“Frankly,” he added, “I never believe anything the government says about its policy anyway.”



A man signals for a bus to change lanes in crowded Yangon traffic. Photo: Thet Htoo

BANGKOK

Is ‘Teflon Thailand’ finally losing its sheen?

THAILAND’S once-vibrant economy is buckling under the strain of months of political turmoil that has paralysed government policy, scared off tourists and spooked foreign investors, analysts warn.

Long hailed as “Teflon Thailand” for its enviable record of economic resilience in the face of political upheaval, the fallout from a six-month crisis that has left 28 people dead and hundreds wounded is mounting.

Official statistics due for release on May 19 are expected to show that the economy contracted in the first quarter of 2014 from the previous quarter, and experts fear the poor performance will drag on until the deadlock is resolved.

“When there is no government, people lack confidence to spend and invest because they fear constant political chaos,” said Thanavath Phonvichai, director of the Center for Economic and Business Forecasting at the University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce. “Also foreigners will not dare to travel to Thailand.”

Mr Thanavath said there was a high risk that the economy would shrink in the second, third and fourth quarters of 2014.

“It is possible that we will have neither a government nor prime minister throughout this year,” he warned.

Southeast Asia’s second-biggest economy has not had a fully functioning parliament or government since December, bringing major infrastructure projects to a halt and disrupting wider state spending.

Consumer confidence is at the lowest level in 12 years while foreign tourist arrivals slumped and foreign investors nervously watch the saga unfold.

International tourist arrivals to Thailand were down by roughly 8 and



A cleaner lowers himself outside a window of a Bangkok skyscraper. Photo: AFP

9 percent in February and March respectively from a year earlier, according to government figures, but have since shown signs of stabilising.

A grenade and gun attack on anti-government protesters in Bangkok on May 15 that left three people dead has added to fears that the unrest could spiral, with the coup-prone army warning that it might have to intervene to quell the violence.

Some government supporters have warned of possible civil war if demon-

strators achieve their goal of appointing an unelected premier following the recent removal of Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra from office in a controversial court ruling.

Poll officials say a planned July 20 general election is now in jeopardy because of the risk of a repeat of the chaos seen in February when opposition demonstrators blocked voting.

Thailand’s economic growth already slowed sharply in the fourth quarter of 2013, to just 0.6pc year-on-

year, from 2.7pc in the previous quarter, according to official figures.

Fitch Ratings has warned that Thailand’s “BBB+” sovereign credit rating could be under threat if the deadlock continues through the second half of this year.

“Failure to establish a functioning government by mid-year would have a major impact on medium-term capital investment, consumer confidence and fiscal planning,” it warned in a statement. - *AFP*

Mandalay chamber of commerce queried

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QUESTIONS surrounding the funding of office renovations and buying furniture dogged officials at a Mandalay Region Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MRCCI) press conference earlier this month.

Some officials said they have been unable to scrutinise expenditures on the project despite being executive members of the organisation.

U Mya San, executive committee member of the MRCCI, said during a press conference he had not been able to look at inventory lists and expenditure statements put together by organisation executives, and asked for further information.

“I have made a request to the chairman for a copy of the inventory list, but haven’t received a response,” he said. “But I know [accountants are] tackling the inventory list and watching the issue.”

MRCCI general secretary U Aung Than said the entire list covering the cost of constructing the offices is not yet complete, but will be presented at the annual meeting on May 31.

Another executive member said the cost of constructing the meeting rooms was K1.2 million, claiming it was a bargain and that another outside company may have cost K2 million.

MRCCI aims to connect the private sector with the government as well as outside investors, and provide education, said joint secretary U Ye Myat Thu.

Large business to begin tax self-assessments

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LARGE local enterprises will begin self-assessing their taxes for the 2015 fiscal year, part of a move to reduce tax dodging, according to government officials.

The Large Taxpayer Office is assembling a list of up to 600 big companies for the end of May that will be affected by the change in policy, said Internal Revenue Department director U Zay Ya Kyi Nyunt.

The firms on this list will now self-assess and submit the paperwork to IRD officials for scrutiny. Audits will follow if there appear to be discrepancies in the self-assessment paperwork.

The new scheme aims to reduce tax avoidance “to some extent”, though with more than 75 percent of local companies not producing financial statements and a sizeable number avoiding tax altogether, the challenge is large, he said.

Under the current system, an IRD official is assigned to assess each company, which some insiders claim can lead to informal payments to officials to lessen assessments.

“Our office just beginning this new system, and it’s a strange thing for our staff, so we can expect some problems and challenges ahead – though we have set up a plan,” said U Zay Ya Kyi Nyunt. He added that public and joint-venture companies with a foreign partner are usually the most consistent taxpayers.

The office aims to notify all affected firms by May 30 with details of the new system, according to an announcement. Firms that wish to be included in the self-assessment

system can submit requests to do so by June 13.

IRD official U Zay Ya Kyi Nyunt said the penalty for failing to pay tax is 10pc on the total amount, though deliberate evaders can be charged up to 50pc.

About 8200 of the total 22,000 registered companies failed to pay tax last year, according to IRD Companies Cycle Tax Office (CCTO) director U Tin Tun Naing.

He estimated about 2000 companies had disbanded in the period without a formal announcement, while many of the others simply did not get in touch with CCTO to pay taxes, he said.

The IRD has insufficient information about most local companies, which means it can be difficult to accurately audit many of the firms suspected of tax avoidance, he said. Assessors will look for telltale signs of tax avoidance, such as continually claiming annual losses but expanding businesses anyways, when deciding which company to audit.

The government generated some K3.5 trillion in revenue for the fiscal year 2014, with a tax-to-GDP ratio of 7pc. State-owned enterprises contributed some revenue to state coffers, though most is generated from tax collection efforts.

Retired IRD director and current private sector expert U Han Htun said one of the biggest problems in Myanmar’s state revenue generation efforts is a lack of personnel in the government with knowledge of taxation and finance, from the lower level employees to the top bosses.

“This is the main reason state revenue cannot easily increase,” he said.

JAKARTA

Asia’s palm oil to face an El Nino price spike

SOUTHEAST Asia’s booming palm oil industry is facing a double blow from a recent drought and a possible El Nino weather phenomenon later this year, with analysts warning a production shortfall could spark a jump in consumer goods prices.

From biscuits to shampoo and make-up, the oil has become a key ingredient in numerous products found on supermarket shelves across the globe, fuelling rapid growth of the industry in the world’s top two producers, Indonesia and Malaysia.

But a drought in January and February in the countries, which provide some 85 percent of the world’s palm oil and are home to vast plantations where swathes of rainforest used to stand, has raised the prospect of a drop in production later this year.

Dry weather does not have an immediate effect on the fruit, which needs to be deprived of water for some months before any impact is noticeable.

While palm oil prices have risen slightly in recent months in Indonesia, the country’s Palm Oil Association put it down to other factors, and industry observers predicted the drought’s impact would start to be felt later in 2014.

“We are likely to see the effects starting in September to October, and in terms of production, we are likely to see a double-digit percentage drop in Indonesia and Malaysia,” said Tan Chee Tat, a Singapore-based investment analyst at Philip Futures whose work has focused on palm oil.

“There is a high likelihood that companies will pass on this increase in



A man works in a palm oil orchard. Photo: AFP

price to consumers.”

Another threat could come hot on the heels of this year’s dry weather-forecasters are predicting an El Nino weather phenomenon later this year, which could spark another drought that will hit production in 2015.

The Australian Bureau of Meteorology issued an El Nino alert last week, warning the likelihood of the weather pattern developing was at least 70 percent, and it could appear as early as July.

This follows recent warnings from other weather agencies there is a good chance of an El Nino.

El Nino, which develops every two to seven years, occurs when water

warms around Indonesia, shifts eastwards and rises to the surface in the eastern Pacific.

The warming water changes wind patterns and draws rain and thunderstorms towards South America and away from countries in the western Pacific.

It typically brings floods to usually arid countries in western South America and drought to Indonesia and other countries in the region.

If this year’s El Nino is as strong as the 20th century’s worst in 1997-98, which was blamed for tens of thousands of deaths and billions of dollars in damage, it could wreak havoc on palm oil crops, analysts fear. - *AFP*

COMMENT

Essential expat health

ANDREW WOOD

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MANY expats in Myanmar take the attitude that their health is good and nothing bad will ever happen to them. They have fallen for the notion that the status quo will never change. If you are one of these you better think twice; ageing and the unforeseen eventually catches us all.

Some perceive situations they may encounter as easy to cope with: a knee complaint, skin condition or perhaps another ailment you feel you need to consult a doctor about, which you do not consider serious. But what about the true emergency? A burst appendix, a heart attack leaving you unconscious, a brain aneurysm, an accident with injuries necessitating immediate medical attention and possibly medical evacuation? Would you know what to do, where to go, who to ask in very short time?

The attitude that "it will never happen to me" is so far from the truth; terrible shocks are common when it comes to real emergencies. The cost of healthcare in serious situations can be very prohibitive. The amount you need to raise can be so high that some need to take such drastic action as selling their home leaving themselves penniless.

For those expats who realise the importance of having some sort of insurance cover in place, congratulations.

The next challenge is how to arrange this in Myanmar. There are no local firms offering comprehensive medical insurance cover in country. However, there are international companies offering expats such opportunities from outside Myanmar, covering local treatment and medical evacuation for treatment abroad, where this is necessary.

Cover can be tailored to specific regions these days. Certain parts of Asia, all of Asia, global excluding the USA, even including the USA. As well as these geographic choices, which would allow options for you to seek treatment in another country within a region, there are also a number of deductibles. Also known as an excess, a deductible is the amount you would pay toward the cost of treatment. Thus if you opted for, say, a US\$500 excess you would pay the first \$500 of any claim, or sometimes the first \$500 of all treatment for a year regardless of the number of claims.

These choices will give you the

flexibility to reduce premiums for your cover. If you feel premiums are a little high they may be reduced to reflect your chosen area of cover and the amounts of excess you are prepared to pay. For some high net worth individuals this gives good possibilities for catastrophe cover. Perhaps you are prepared to pay the first \$10,000 of a claim. If the claim were \$250,000 the cover would be well worthwhile. Such options allow for premiums to be reduced significantly.

These different options are all available via your professional adviser. He or she will usually be able to provide something tailored to your needs and budget. This will mean access to different international providers and the ability to recognise what will suit you best as an individual. Cover is provided by major underwriters and backed by international insurance giants.

As things develop in Myanmar these types of insurance will become easier to arrange. At present expats here seem to have difficulty in finding and securing meaningful cover for themselves. As with so many things it is a question of discovering who can help. Once you have established this, it is much easier to arrange the right cover for yourself.

Questions to the author can be directed to PFS International on +66 2653 1971 or email to enquiriesmyanmar@fsplatinum.com.

As things develop in Myanmar these types of insurance will be easier to arrange.

Survey a good example of donor coordination – a response to Dr McCarty

MARGIT MOLNAR
MASATO ABE

THANK you for your interest in the OECD-UNESCAP-UMFCCI first country-wide survey of businesses in Myanmar ("Enterprise surveys: a fine example of donor non-cooperation", by Adam McCarty, issue 728 of *The Myanmar Times*). We felt compelled to grab a pen to reply to avoid any misperceptions and wrong assertions.

The business survey we have just completed, in contrast to what you wrote in your article of 11 May, is an excellent example of collaboration. We shared our questionnaires with DEVAL and intentionally featured a couple of dozen common questions so that two datasets could be merged. We are not aware of any similar type of collaboration in Southeast Asia, a region where we have worked for more than two-and-a-half decades.

Another model example of collaboration is with the UMFCCI, which is genuinely interested in the survey results and contributed to its conduct both financially and in kind. We met with several dozen chairpersons of business associations before the start to explain to them the value of the survey for policy making to create a more business-friendly regulatory environment. All of the business associations, the best business experts and UMFCCI strongly supported the whole process.

The initiative came to life not for the sake of doing a business survey. If an existing business survey had been available, we would have preferred to use it, as our major goal is to provide options for the government in institution creation and policy making as we did in our *Multidimensional Review of Myanmar* published last year. Due to the lack of existing information for our business sector analyses, we decided in January 2013 to conduct a business survey.

In contrast to your assertion, the survey is not short with 73 questions. It does, however, respect the limits of what is considered a decent request for business managers' time. Furthermore, instead of seeking opinions, over 80 percent of the questions are objec-

tive. Incidentally, seeking opinions aims to capture complex relationships and interactions among various business factors as well as stakeholders. This is a well-established method in business climate surveys, such as the World Bank's "Enterprise Survey", that are also conducted in many countries in Asia as you correctly mentioned in your article.

Our sample is not representative in a statistical sense but it covers a very large number of firms, larger than any of the other surveys planned that we are aware of. It also covers all states and regions, which is again unique. Furthermore, it is perhaps naive to aim at a representative sample simply using a conventional sampling method without knowing the total business population and its distinct characteristics in a country like Myanmar. A number of key enterprises in Myanmar are still controlled by the public sector and its associates, in particular in such key sectors as agri-business, mining, energy, industry, transport and trade. These are not easily accessible for international surveys like ours. Since the early 1990s, a number of SMEs have also been relocated to 18 regional industrial zones (plus 34 district-level industrial zones). Access to informants in these zones are often difficult, or even impossible, without formal introduction by the authorities. Without recognising the issues, the surveys may unintentionally produce biased samples although researchers adopt the best sampling methods.

Should you need any further clarification or information on the first business survey in Myanmar, we would be happy to provide this.

Dr Margit Molnar and Dr Masato Abe are the main authors of the *Multidimensional Review of Myanmar*, a comprehensive assessment of economic policy challenges the country faces. They are senior experts on Asian economies at OECD and UNESCAP, respectively, with decades of experience in the region and in business sector analyses and policy advice. The views expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the OECD and UNESCAP.



AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY YANGON

JOB VACANCY

The Australian Embassy is seeking applications for the following position.

SENIOR POLICY OFFICER SALARY: USD \$3,000 PER MONTH

The Australian Embassy in Yangon is a medium sized diplomatic agency representing the Australian Government in Myanmar. It is staffed by employees of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Australian Federal Police, the Department of Immigration and Border Protection, the Australian Trade Commission and the Department of Defence.

The Senior Policy Officer carries out duties within the Political and Economic Section of the Embassy.

The Senior Policy Officer's direct supervisor is the Deputy Head of Mission, to whom the Senior Policy Officer provides information and advice on the current political and economic situation in Myanmar. The Senior Policy Officer also monitors, researches and analyses public debate and policy developments on a range of domestic and political issues in Myanmar including trade and investment issues as directed.

The Senior Policy Officer also undertakes a wide range of tasks associated with implementing the Australian Government's engagement agenda with Myanmar, including government liaison and organising high level visits. The Senior Policy Officer also contributes to the Embassy's public diplomacy program, organises associated public diplomacy events and assists with the Embassy's Direct Aid Program.

Please note that the specific duties of these positions may evolve over time, as the Embassy's operational requirements change, so the successful applicants will need to be adaptable.

This challenging position would best suit candidates with a can-do attitude, who are self motivated, possess great communication skills (both verbal and written), who have an eye for detail and are well organised. The successful applicant will have an opportunity to work in a professional and rewarding work environment with an attractive salary.

The application form, selection criteria and duty statement can be obtained from the Australian Embassy, 88 Strand Road, or downloaded from the Embassy website at: <http://www.myanmar.embassy.gov.au>

Applications should be lodged at the Embassy or emailed to austembassy.yangon@dfat.gov.au together with a one page summary addressing the selection criteria and a copy of your CV with one recent passport sized photo. The closing date for applications is 4:00 pm on Friday 30 May 2014.

Qualifications and Experience

The appointee should have the following qualifications and experience:

- A native speaker level of written and spoken English. Myanmar language skills are highly desirable, but not essential;
- Hold a relevant university degree or lower qualification with related practical experience in relevant aspects of the position;
- Experience and a demonstrated ability in the areas of research, information and policy analysis. Experience working in Myanmar and engaging with government and non-government agencies in Australia and Myanmar is desirable but not essential;
- Good knowledge of modern office procedures, practices, methods and equipment including use of standard personal computer software programs such as Microsoft Word and Excel, Access, PowerPoint and web-based applications;
- Affinity for team work, initiative and ability to determine and achieve objectives;
- Excellent communication and analytical skills, including the ability to write high quality reports within short time-frames;
- Excellent interpersonal and liaison skills;
- Australian citizenship;
- Employment is subject to a successful security clearance.

Note:

1. The Australian Embassy does not discriminate in regards to race, ethnicity, gender and age.
2. Only those candidates whose qualifications and experience are of further interest will be contacted for an interview.

Japanese firm plans Mandalay hospital

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TWO Mandalay developers have begun discussions with Japanese firm Itabashi Medical Systems to develop a private joint-venture hospital in Mandalay Region.

The project will be the first international hospital in Myanmar if it gets built, company officials claimed.

"There's no foreign-owned or foreign-Myanmar joint-venture hospital open in Myanmar. But I don't think it's prohibited. People just haven't started work on it," said Ko Zin Min Swe, an official with CAD Construction.

CAD Construction is one of two

'We have not received any applications for private foreign hospitals to date.'

Mandalay DICA official

partners aiming to work with Itabashi Medical System on a 300-bed facility on about 4 acres in Mandalay's Pyi Gyi Takhon township.

"They [Itabashi] want to promote Myanmar's medical sector and have also committed to opening further international hospitals in Myanmar," he said, adding he declined to provide a timeframe for the project as it is at early stages.

Shimba Kazuya, vice-chair of the Japan-Myanmar Friendship Association and member of Japan's Parliament said the private sectors of the two countries could be effective at fostering cooperation.

An official from the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration in Mandalay told *The Myanmar Times* that under an announcement in 2013 from the Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development, a foreign-owned hospital is allowed as long as the owner has a Myanmar joint-venture partner.

"But we have not received any applications for private foreign hospital to date – only enquiries," he said.

– Translation by Zar Zar Soe



JOB VACANCY



About DFAT and DFID

The Australian Government Aid Program, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) are responsible for managing Australia's and the UK's overseas aid programmes respectively. DFAT and DFID's work contributes to a global commitment to achieve eight 'Millennium Development Goals' to:

- Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger;
- Achieve universal primary education;
- Promote gender equity and empower women;
- Reduce child mortality;
- Improve maternal health;
- Combat HIV & AIDS, malaria and other diseases;
- Ensure environmental sustainability; and
- Develop a global partnership for development.

DFAT and DFID work in close partnership with foreign government officials, international and multilateral organisations, the private sector, non-government and community organisations, and civil society.

Australian Government's Myanmar Program

The DFAT Yangon team administering the Australian Aid Program is headed by a Counsellor and comprises a mix of Australian-based and locally engaged staff, working in a close team environment. Focus of the program is on health, education, and sustainable economic development in rural areas. The office in Yangon is located at the Australian Embassy.

The Australian Aid Program and the UK's Department for International Development operate a Joint Liaison Office in Nay Pyi Taw. The liaison officer is based in this office in Nay Pyi Taw, but may occasionally be required to travel to Yangon.

DFID's Burma Programme

The DFID Burma team, headed in Yangon and supported by staff in Bangkok and Hanoi, deliver a rapidly expanding aid programme in one of the most interesting and challenging country contexts. We support work on civil society, education, health, growth and livelihoods, and conflict within Burma, as well as supporting refugees on the Myanmar / Thailand border.

LIAISON OFFICER – Nay Pyi Taw Temporary Contract – Minimum 6 months

The Liaison Officer will be based in Nay Pyi Taw and provide administrative and logistical support to the Joint Liaison Office located in the Thingaha Hotel. The specific responsibilities of the position include the following:

1. Liaison between DFAT and DFID and the Myanmar Government
2. Management of the Administrative Assistant and oversight of logistical management of the Nay Pyi Taw office

In undertaking these responsibilities the Liaison Officer may carry out the following tasks:

1. Liaise and maintain strong relations with government stakeholders, including developing an understanding of government systems, requirements and processes;
2. Analysis of key government policy on development issues and the business of Parliament, report key messages to DFAT and DFID, and translate as necessary;
3. Liaise and maintain strong relations with other donors and implementing partners;
4. Oversight of high level meeting and travel plans for visiting missions for DFAT and DFID staff;
5. Guidance and management to Administrative Assistant to assist with daily logistical requirements of the office including arranging meetings and calendars, and provide guidance and compliance with DFAT and DFID hospitality policies and guidelines; and
6. Other duties as required.

QUALIFICATION AND EXPERIENCE:

The appointee will have the following qualifications and experience:

Essential

1. Relevant qualification in education or related discipline, preferably at postgraduate level, or equivalent experience in education policy, education management and programming in development contexts.
2. Extensive international development experience in the education sector,
3. Proven technical skills in one or more fields of education such as education policy, education management, education economics, education systems strengthening, education finance, program evaluation and/or education sector planning.
4. Extensive experience in Southeast Asia in an advisory capacity in a public service environment, providing strategic support and quality assurance to education sector activities.
5. Substantial international experience in supporting transition processes to sector approaches in education, and education sector development and reform.
6. Demonstrated ability to conceptualise and think strategically in a dynamic environment.
7. Proven ability to cultivate productive and collegial working relationships with a range of internal and external stakeholders, and communicate in fluent English and with influence in a wide range of contexts.

Selection criteria and duty statement can be obtained from the Australian Embassy, 88 Strand Road, or downloaded from the Embassy website at: <http://www.myanmar.embassy.gov.au>.

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The closing date: **4PM (Yangon time) 28 May 2013.**

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Property

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Korean project to be country's biggest hotel

TIN YADANAR HTUN
yadanar.mcml@gmail.com

THE Daewoo Amara Hotel aims to be Myanmar's largest hotel complex when it opens its doors in 2016, according to company officials.

The projects spans two high-class hotels on Sin Phyu Shin Avenue near Inya lake in Kamaryut township at a cost of more than US\$200 million – or about \$300,000 for every one of its 661 rooms.

It's a joint venture between a group of Korean companies with an 85 percent stake – including Daewoo International, KDB Daewoo Securities, POSCO E&C and Lotte Hotels & Resorts – and a group of Myanmar companies with a 15pc stake.

The high-rise hotel will have 29 floors with 315 rooms and the luxury hotel 15 floors with 346 rooms, said Han Chan Kan, the CEO of the project.

The luxury hotel will offer a convention hall, indoor and outdoor pools, Korean and Chinese restaurant, and all-day dining and club lounge.

"The high-rise hotel's interior main design motif is Myanmar, the country with beautiful lakes, going through a transition stage while preserving tradition," said Mr Han.

"These hotels will fit with the beauty of Inya Lake," he added.

Construction began in February on the site and the complex will encompass a floor area of 104,123 square metres when it is finished.

"This hotel symbolises the friendship between Korea and Myanmar. Citizens will gain many job opportunities from this five star hotel," U Myint Swe, the chief minister of Yangon Region, said of the project.

Living in Yangon's ever-shr

KYAW
PHONE
KYAW

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IF Ma Nwe Aye stretches out her arms, she can almost reach from one wall of her house to the other. But she does not live in a cramped downtown apartment – rather, an illegally subdivided block in Yangon's South Dagon.

The lack of privacy is the biggest drawback.

"If someone farts in one of these houses everyone else next door will hear it," said Ma Nwe Aye, who lives in South Dagon's No 56 ward with her father, husband, two children, sister, brother-in-law and niece.

"When summer comes, we are always worried about fires. A few years ago a fire started in our neighbour's house. You just don't know where to run. It's scary."

The house is owned by Ma Nwe Aye's father, and they stay rent-free. She sees little alternative, as she is unemployed and her husband is a casual labourer.

"No one would live in a 10-foot-wide house if they had the choice," she said.

South Dagon, along with other satellite areas developed in the late 1980s and early 1990s, was originally envisaged as having homes on 40 by

'It's difficult to stop people from dividing land into smaller parcels and then selling it.'

U Nay Win
YCDC official



Residents of a house built to accommodate a divided lot stand in front of their home. Photo: Zarni Phyo

60 foot (2400 square foot) plots. Yangon's growing housing affordability crisis has resulted in many of these blocks being divided, increasingly below the 20-foot minimum set by Yangon City Development Committee.

Residents and agents say these subdivisions have become common in not only South Dagon but also

North Okkalapa, Dawbon and Hlaing Tharyar townships, particularly in the past two years, during which time land prices and rents have grown dramatically.

In part it is being driven by owners, who can make more money by carving up the land and renting it out in smaller parcels.

"If you own a small house on a 40-foot-wide block you can rent it for at most K40,000 [in South Dagon]. But if you divide it and build four houses you can charge K30,000 for each one," said South Dagon property broker Daw Shwe, who has been living in the area for 14 years. "That's one of the main reasons these small

HOUSE OF THE WEEK



Great for a green thumb

IT'S not easy finding room to stretch your legs in Yangon. With property prices increasing, lots seem to be shrinking every day. So it's nice to stumble across a home with room to move around.

This house on University Avenue in Bahan township has plenty of room for outdoor activities, like kicking around a football and planting gardens. The house occupies 1257 square feet of a 10,000-square-foot lot.

It comes with one master bedroom and two other bedrooms, but with only

one bathroom the competition may get a little fierce for a morning shower.

There are also no furnishings included, but it comes with air conditioners, a telephone land line and a few other amenities. Rental prices are admittedly a bit steep compared with similar homes in the area, but it's negotiable, and nicely located near the American Embassy, Sedona Hotel and a short drive from Hledan Junction. It also might be worth the cost if you value your green space. – Tin Yadanar Htun

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LONDON

City of the Super Rich

LONDON has more billionaires than any other city in the world, and Britain has more billionaires per capita than any other country, new data showed last week.

The survey of Britain's super-rich compiled for the *Sunday Times* newspaper is likely to prompt debate in a country where many still struggle financially and where food banks are a fact of life, despite economic growth recently returning to levels not seen since the 2008 financial crash.

London is home to 72 of Britain's 104 sterling billionaires, well ahead of Moscow in second place with 48 people worth the equivalent of £1 billion or more. New York is in third place with 43 billionaires, San Francisco in fourth place with 42, Los Angeles next with 38 and Hong Kong in sixth place with 34.

Indian-born brothers Sri and Gopi Hinduja top the British list with a fortune of £11.9 billion (US\$20.1 billion), amassed through the family-owned Hinduja Group, which has interests in oil, banking, the automotive industry, property and the media.

The pair nudged last year's top of the billionaire list, Alisher Usmanov, to second place. The Uzbekistan-born Russian's fortune has been hit by the

fall in value of the rouble and Russian stock prices due to the Ukraine crisis.

Others in the top 25 include Ukrainian-born internet, chemicals and music industry investor Len Blavatnik in fourth place, property magnate the Duke of Westminster, Gerald Grosvenor, in tenth place, and Saudi-born Mohamed Bin Issa Al Jaber and his family, known for their hotel and resort investments, in thirteenth place.

This year is the first year the minimum wealth of Britain's 50 richest people has topped £1.5 billion. Only £700 million was needed to join the exclusive club a decade ago.

Britain's 104 billionaires have a total wealth of £301.13 billion, compared to 88 a year ago with a combined worth of £245.66 billion.

The combined wealth of Britain's super-rich is now well ahead of pre-recession levels of 2008, which then totalled £201.99 billion.

On May 16 independent think tank the National Institute of Economic and Social Research said British per-capita gross domestic product – often used to indicate a population's average wealth – was "well below" the pre-2008 peak, and unlikely to exceed it before 2017. – AFP

“If foreign banks are restricted from lending to local businesses, what’s the point in having them?”

— U Soe Tun, Myanmar Rice Federation

State media talks of ‘war’ over S China Sea dispute

WORLD 34

inking homes



Assistant head of the department, U Nay Win, said it is illegal to sell a property below that width and YCDC does not issue grants – leases ranging from 10 to 90 years that denote ownership – for such properties. Instead, the new owners only receive a photocopy of the original ownership documents, which he said is often enough to dissuade buyers and sellers from going below 20 feet.

“We are trying to ensure the number of these houses does not increase from current levels,” U Nay Win said. “It’s difficult to stop people from dividing land into smaller parcels and selling it but if they do this and there is a problem then the seller and buyer have to resolve it themselves. Our department will not be able to help them at all.”

Daw Shwe agreed that the lack of ownership documents is an issue, particularly when the plots are resold for a second and third time. The 10-foot-wide blocks now sell for around K8 million (about US\$8300).

“Owners of 10-foot-wide plots will have to face difficulties when they want to re-sell their house as they don’t have the ownership paperwork,” she said. “But if you don’t have money for anything bigger, then it’s really your only option ... They are particularly popular with migrants and retired civil servants.”

Ko Maung Zaw once lived on a 2400-square-foot block on Tay Oo Yin 1st Street near Mee Gwat market in Hlaing Tharyar township. Today his plot has been cut down to just 600 square feet – sold off in 600-square-foot parcels to pay for medical treatment after his father suffered a stroke.

The lack of space clearly grates. Unable to afford anything larger, Ko Maung Zaw said he dreams of quitting city life and moving to a rural village.

“But what would I do there?” he said. “Now I work as a labourer in the fish market at Kyeemyindaing. I don’t know how to do any other job.”

blocks have been growing so fast.”

Because the subdivisions are done with municipal permission, Yangon City Development Committee’s Building Department does not have figures for the number of 10-foot-wide properties.

The committee only recognises plots that are 20 feet wide or larger.

Yangon market losing its steam

MYAT NYEIN AYE

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TRANSACTIONS in Yangon’s property market have slowed perceptively in 2014, with buyers unwilling to pay the high prices on offer, real estate agents say.

Prices have so far not shown the massive increases of the last two years, and appear to be levelling off, said U Khin Maung Aye, senior agent at Shwe Kan Myae.

“Yangon’s real estate market is facing slowing transactions,” he said. “Numbers are quite down compared with 2012 and 2013 because of high property prices.” He estimated that transactions are occurring about 50 percent less as they did 12 months ago.

Current prices in Yangon’s core townships sit around K100,000 to K300,000 for a square foot, said Mya Pan Than Khin real estate agent Ko Min Min Soe.

In downtown Yangon, street-level apartments begin selling at about K150

million, with the upper floors starting at K40 million and reaching as high as K500 million depending on quality and location.

Properties in Yangon’s outskirts vary significantly, with land starting at K50 million for 2400 square feet in back corners of New North Dagon, according to brokers, while commanding up to K500 million for 2400 square feet on main roads in South Okkalapa township.

Prices vary based particularly on street access, but are little changed on 2013, said Ko Min Min Soe.

Soaring land costs priced many would-be buyers out of the market, and led to a pause for many speculators. Government officials have also made moves to cool the market in recent months, such as attempting to enforce a tax on property transactions.

“People were asking for very high prices, but it means it’s getting difficult to find buyers. There are worries now that it is not easy to sell,” said Phoenix real estate agent Ko Htun Htun.

High prices in the downtown core pushed many buyers to seek land in Yangon’s outskirts, with North and South Dagon and some streets in South Okkalapa seeing increased attention.

“Some owners are asking too much for land not near main roads or central regions, and nobody is interested in buying it. Prices in the outskirts are cheaper and so more investors are interested in it,” he said.

One bright spot in the market is land suitable for high-rise construction and big projects, which are still being snapped up, said Ko Htun Htun.

When land prices are too high, builders cannot buy land, so often they agree to pay land-owners with in-kind apartments once construction on a project is complete, he said.

Overall, real estate agents said Yangon’s property market will continue pushing into the outskirts due to unattainably high prices at present for downtown properties. Still, most said that growing prices are set to decelerate in the coming months.



IN PICTURES

A seven-storey building tilts to one side in the South Korean city of Asan. Construction workers believe that the unfinished hotel in South Chungcheong Province, which was expected to be completed soon before it began tilting to one side, is in danger of collapsing. *Photo: AFP*

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MOSCOW

Intl space trio returns to Earth in Russian capsule

A RUSSIAN and an American returned to Earth on May 14 with their Japanese commander aboard a Soyuz capsule in the first such landing since Moscow's ties with the West imploded.

Koichi Wakata – the first Japanese leader of an International Space Station mission – NASA's Rick Mastracchio and Russian cosmonaut Mikhail Tyurin completed a 188-day stay that began months before Europe was thrown into its worst security crisis since the Cold War.

Ex-Soviet Ukraine has since seen a part of its territory seized by Kremlin forces and the West retaliate with sanctions that have prompted Russia – provider of the sole manned link to the orbiting laboratory – to question the wisdom of future cooperation in space.

A top Russian minister stepped up the rhetoric on May 13 by warning that Moscow may reject Washington's request to extend the station's lifespan by four years until 2024.

The trio were all smiles as they clam-

'The landing was outstanding ... We do have some wonderful technology!'

Mikhail Tyurin
Russian Astronaut

bered out of the capsule in their bulky space suits after touching down without mishap in the steppes of Kazakhstan.

But Mr. Tyurin hinted of the overriding tensions by singing the praises of Russian space equipment that may one day slip out of Western hands.

"The landing was outstanding," Mr. Tyurin said in comments broadcast on Russian state television.

"It was simply ideal. We do have some wonderful technology!"

Moscow is fiercely proud of its rockets and still fetes its ability to trump the United States during the Soviet-era space race by putting the first man in orbit in 1961.

And a top minister in charge of the military-industrial complex warned that Moscow may strike back at new high-technology export restrictions that Washington imposed in retaliation at the Kremlin's Ukrainian land grab by limiting US access to Russian space equipment.

Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin said that Russia was "planning to only need the ISS until 2020" and then spend funding "on other promising space projects".

NASA had said in January it would like the orbiter's lifespan extended in order to improve its marketability and chances of getting commercial investment in space.

The US government agency said only that it had "not received any official notification from the government of Russia on any changes in our space cooperation at this point".

But State Department spokesperson Jen Psaki suggested that the United States might not be as reliant on Russia's space technology as some in Moscow might like to think.

"We do have a number of materials of the same kind that we can use in the future," she said.

Mr. Rogozin added on Tuesday that Moscow could also prohibit the United States from using a Russian engine crucial to some Pentagon launches of its military satellites.

Space expert Vadim Lukashevich of Moscow's state-funded Skolkovo Foundation said the absence of Russia's RD-180 engines could ground the US Defence Department Atlas V rocket for "two to three years".

Yet he noted that the RD-180 deal requires Russia to also disclose to the United States all the details of the engine's design.

"So in three years, they will be able to develop their own engine and we will lose that market for good," Mr. Lukashevich said in a telephone interview.

NASA hopes to keep the ISS spinning 400 kilometres (250 miles) above Earth a bit longer to help private US firms such as SpaceX upgrade rockets it now uses to ferry up cargo to also be able to accommodate astronauts.

The United States has relied on the Soyuz for all manned missions since retiring its Shuttle Programme in 2011. – AFP

JAKARTA

Ailing BlackBerry fights back with budget smartphone

LAST week, BlackBerry launched a new budget handset in Indonesia, one of its last bastions, in the hope it will take off in emerging markets and stem a decline in the smartphone maker's fortunes.

The touchscreen Z3, which is slated for release in six other fast-growing markets after Indonesia, is the first new BlackBerry phone since chief executive John Chen took the helm of the crisis-hit company in November.

The handset is also the first to be produced from the Canadian firm's partnership with Taiwanese tech giant Foxconn, which also makes gadgets for Apple, and is a key test of whether the new strategy will work.

BlackBerry hopes the Indonesian model – whose full name is the Z3 "Jakarta Edition" – will be a hit in Southeast Asia's biggest economy, where the company maintains a loyal following, thanks in part to the popularity of its BBM messaging service.

The phone will be available in shops from May 15 and will cost 2,199,000 rupiah (\$190). It will be released later in countries including Malaysia, the Philippines, Vietnam and India, Mr. Chen told reporters at a launch event in Jakarta.

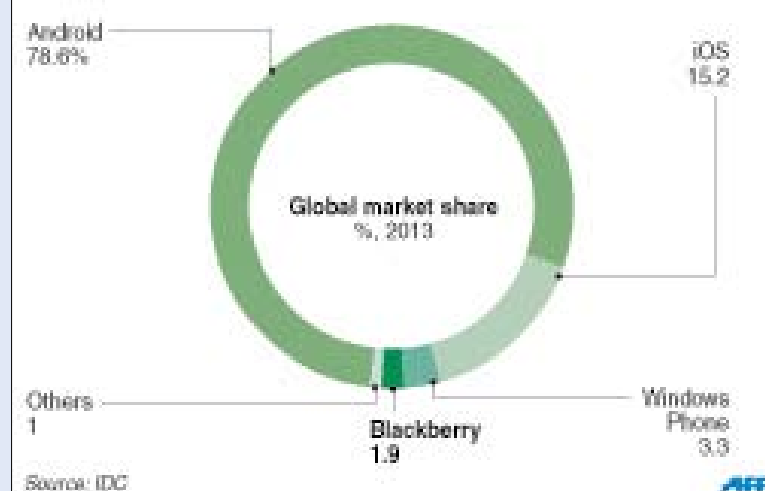
But even in Indonesia, the company's biggest market in Asia according to IDC telecoms consultancy, sales have dropped dramatically in the past year and analysts are sceptical the new phone will do much to help.

"The launch of this device is really BlackBerry's final stand in the Indonesian market," IDC's Sudev Bangah told AFP.

IDC said BlackBerry's market share had collapsed from about 40 percent in 2011 to around 5 pc in the fourth quarter of 2013, due in particular to fierce competition from Samsung.

It is the same story in other markets worldwide as BlackBerry fights a losing battle to keep up with fierce competition from Apple's iPhone and devices using the Google Android operating system.

Smartphone operating systems



The once-dominant smartphone maker has suffered heavy losses and slashed thousands of jobs in recent years.

The company even put itself up for sale last year but abandoned hopes of finding a buyer several months later, and ousted chief executive Thorsten Heins.

Since Mr. Chen took over, there have been small signs of improvement. The company reported a loss of \$423 million in the three months to March 1, which was not as bad as had been feared.

As part of its turnaround strategy, the smartphone maker announced the tie-up with Foxconn in December.

It involves transferring manufacturing and inventory management to the Taiwanese company, while allowing BlackBerry to focus on software and services.

At the Jakarta launch, Mr. Chen said the company aimed to "re-pivot to make very sure that our customers are taken care of".

He also revealed that the phone had been codenamed "Jakarta" during production, adding, "Jakarta is

a very, very strong market for the BlackBerry".

The Z3 has a 5-inch (13-centimetre) touchscreen, without the physical keyboard of older devices.

The Jakarta Edition's BBM messaging service comes loaded with pictures of local cartoon characters for users to send to one another.

There is also a limited edition with the inscription "Jakarta" on the back.

BlackBerry's most recent phones have not fared well in Indonesia but the company believes the Z3 will be popular, in particular due to its lower price.

Retailers say that online pre-orders, which began on April 28, have been healthy.

Prayudi Aji, who moderates a BlackBerry chat forum with thousands of users, said the long battery life on the new phone would prove popular due to Indonesians' love of chatting.

"BlackBerry's market in Indonesia has shrunk but actually [the] phones still have features Indonesians love," he told AFP at the Jakarta launch.

– AFP

TOKYO

Shares in Sony drop steeply on loss warning

INVESTORS dumped Sony shares last week following a warning from the Japanese electronics giant that it would remain in the red for another year after booking a US\$1.26 billion annual loss.

The Tokyo-listed stock closed at 1,695 yen (\$16.50), down 6.09 percent, on the back of the May 14 announcement, which aggravated concerns about a turnaround in Sony's hard-hit consumer electronics division.

Sony announced just after markets closed on that costs tied to its exit from the personal computer business – part of a wider restructuring – were largely to blame for its woeful bottom line.

The firm posted a full-year net loss of 128.37 billion yen, and said it expected to lose 50 billion yen in the current fiscal year to March 2015, despite seeing losses narrow in its embattled television business.

The announcement came a day after Sony said it would not pay

bonuses to senior executives for the third straight year.

Earlier this month, the company said it would lose more than the 110 billion yen shortfall it had forecast just three months ago, when it announced 5000 job cuts in its struggling computer and television units.

Sony President Kazuo Hirai has led a sweeping restructuring, including liquidating assets that saw the \$1.0 billion sale of the firm's Manhattan headquarters, in a bid to

resuscitate the once world-beating company.

After suffering four years of losses, Sony had crept back into the black in the previous fiscal year – although that was mostly due to asset sales and a weak yen, which inflated repatriated profits from business overseas.

Last week, the firm said it would close its ebook Reader Store in Europe and Australia following a similar pullout in North America.

It is also selling properties at a prestigious Tokyo site where Sony had its headquarters for six decades.

Mr. Hirai has repeatedly shrugged off pleas to abandon the ailing television unit, which he insisted remains central to Sony's core business.

Japanese manufacturers have suffered badly in their TV divisions as razor-thin profit margins and fierce overseas competition weighed on earnings.

– AFP

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Sony's net losses in 2013

WASHINGTON

US experts urge focus on ethics in brain research

ETHICS must be considered early and often as the field of modern neuroscience forges ahead, to avoid repeating a dark period in history when lobotomies were common, experts said May 14.

President Barack Obama sought the recommendations of the Presidential Commission for the Study of Bioethical Issues, as part of his \$100 million Brain Research through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies (BRAIN) Initiative announced last year.

It is “absolutely critical ... to integrate ethics from the get-go into neuroscience research”, and not “for the first time after something has gone wrong”, said Amy Gutmann, Bioethics Commission Chair.

However, the first of two reports due from the commission stopped short of establishing guidelines for research, saying that ethical issues “will not be extensively analyzed or resolved in this report”.

Instead, it called for institutions and individuals engaged in neuroscience research, as well as government agencies and other funders, to integrate ethics early in research.

It also urged innovative approaches to integrating ethics, making sure ethics is introduced at all levels of education, and explicitly including ethical perspectives on advisory and review bodies.

Ms. Gutmann said it was important to learn from the practices of the 1940s and 50s, when thousands of lobotomies were performed in the United States as enthusiasm swept the media and the medical field and the dangers were largely ignored.

The surgery involved poking holes in the skull and brain in an effort to alleviate symptoms of mental illness. The procedure often left patients incapacitated, and lobotomy was eventually discredited in the 1950s.

“In the case of the history of lobotomy, there was great hype and great damage done, so it is very important that we learn from this history,” Ms. Gutmann told reporters.

Contemporary neuroscience is a relatively new field that includes research on Alzheimer’s, traumatic brain injury, depression, Parkinson’s disease and more.

All told, neurological conditions affect more than 1 billion people globally, the commission said in its report.

Science is moving fast on im-

‘In the case of the history of lobotomy, there was a lot of hype and great damage done.’

Dr. Amy Gutman
Bioethics Commission Chair

provements in brain imaging, dementia research, deep brain stimulation to alleviate symptoms of Parkinson’s disease, as well as electrical implants that could boost memory and brain function.

But each of these areas raises ethical concerns, including at what point people with dementia can truly give informed consent to researchers, and whether cognitive enhancements could be unfairly distributed in society, Ms. Gutmann said.

Advances in brain imaging could also lead to questions about privacy, amid fears that doctors and researchers could garner more information than intended about a

patient.

Deep brain stimulation, a risky and sometimes controversial procedure that aims to cut back on tremors associated with Parkinson’s and is being explored for use in depression and obsessive compulsive disorder, should be rigorously studied “to separate hope from hype”, Ms. Gutmann said.

Commission member and neuro-immunologist Stephen Hauser said the field is poised to accelerate rapidly in the coming years, and that means all neuroscientists must be aware of the many ethical questions involved.

“Not all neuroscientists are equally attuned,” Mr. Hauser said.

Miguel Faria, a neurosurgeon and author who has written extensively on the history of brain research, agreed.

“Technology has outpaced ethical considerations and many young medical scientists have not been properly introduced to medical ethics,” said Mr. Faria, who was not involved in the commission’s work.

Mr. Faria said any ethics approach must be based upon respect for the individual, as doctors pledge according to the Hippocratic oath which includes vows be humble, respect privacy and avoid harm.

On the other hand, pursuing a path based on population ethics is just as dangerous as having no medical ethics at all, he said.

“Why? Because it is centered on utilitarianism and monetary considerations rather than committed to placing the interest of the individual patient or experimental subject above all other considerations,” he told AFP in an email.

Ms. Gutmann said the next phase of the commission’s work is to examine more deeply the ethical implications of neuroscience research and its effects on society. – AFP

Gadget Reviews

by Myo Satt

CAPDASE



Car Cup-holder Charger

This gadget is perfect for those who spend a lot of time in a car. The cup-shaped base can connect with your car’s cigarette lighter. Also, there are two USB slots on the cup, making it easy to charge your IT devices.

K44,000

Power Travel Adapter

This device with universal plugs and sockets will help you stay charged around the world. There is also a USB slot, so you can recharge directly. It also includes automatic power cut system for when the voltage is too high.

K26,000



Dual Car Charger

With two USB slots, this charger can be used for two devices at the same time. Input is 12V DC and Output 5V DC.

K19,000

CAPDASE



Versa Dock

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K20,000

Translation by Thiri Min Htun

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World

WORLD EDITOR: Fiona MacGregor

BEIJING

State media talks of 'war' over South China Sea

A STATE-RUN Chinese newspaper backed the use of "non-peaceful" measures against Vietnam and the Philippines on May 16, as it considered the possibility of war in the strategically vital South China Sea.

Vietnam is experiencing its worst anti-China unrest in decades following Beijing's deployment of an oil rig to disputed waters, with two Chinese workers killed and more than 100 injured.

"The South China Sea disputes should be settled in a peaceful manner, but that doesn't mean China can't resort to non-peaceful measures in the face of provocation from Vietnam and the Philippines," the *Global Times* newspaper, which often takes a nationalistic tone, wrote in an editorial.

"Many people believe that a forced war would convince some countries of China's sincerely peaceful intentions," the paper added.

Beijing claims almost the whole of the South China Sea, including areas close to the coasts of other littoral states, and the Philippines has provoked its fury by seeking United Nations arbitration in the dispute between the two.

China's foreign ministry has condemned both Manila and Hanoi, and accused Vietnam's leaders on May 15 of "indulgence and connivance" with anti-China demonstrators for failing to rein in the protests.

Foreign minister Wang Yi denounced the riots in a telephone conversation on the night of May 15 with his Vietnamese counterpart, according to the *Global Times*.

Beijing has also dispatched to Vietnam a working team led by assistant foreign minister Liu Jianchao, according to a diplomatic statement.

At a news conference on May 16, Chinese Commerce Ministry spokesman Shen Danyang warned that the riots could have repercussions for Vietnam's business interests.

"The incident has led Chinese companies to stop operations and suffer enormous property losses," Mr Shen said. The state-run *China Daily* newspaper weighed in, warning that if the violence continues to escalate, "it will only add to the distrust and enmity between the Vietnamese and Chinese peoples".

"The lethal riots are proof that China's calls for dialogue over the two countries' conflicting territorial claims in the South China Sea have fallen on deaf ears in Vietnam," the paper wrote. "That our restraint has been replied with such bloody violence is intolerable."

The official Xinhua news agency, meanwhile, wrote in a May 16 commentary that Hanoi "bears unshirkable responsibility for the violent attacks against Chinese companies and nationals, and must take all necessary and effective measures to ensure the safety of foreign companies and nationals in Vietnam".

Xinhua appeared to take a more measured tone towards the confrontation than the *Global Times*, however, noting that "violence and provocation should never be the answer to disputes between countries, and must be stopped immediately".

FULL COVERAGE PAGE 36

GAJARIA

Scores feared dead as Bangladesh ferry sinks

DIVERS battled on May 16 to recover bodies trapped in the wreckage of a Bangladesh ferry that was sunk by a giant wave, as the death toll from the disaster rose to 26 with scores more feared drowned.

As survivors blamed the captain of the *MV Miraz* for refusing to take shelter from a gathering storm, an investigation was launched into whether it had been carrying too many passengers.

Officials said as many as 200 people may have been on the ferry when it sank to the bottom of the river Meghna on

the afternoon of May 15, some 50 kilometers (30 miles) southeast of the capital Dhaka.

As distraught relatives gathered by the side of the river where bodies were being laid out, two initial bids to raise the ferry failed.

"Many of the passengers rushed to lower decks of the ship to escape from heavy wind. They were trapped. I am afraid most of the bodies will be found there," Bangladesh's water transport authority chief Shamsuddoha Khandaker said. - *AFP*

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IN PICTURES

A Palestinian boy holds a cutout symbolizing a key as he takes anniversary of the "Nakba" on May 14 in the West Bank city of It refers to the creation of the state of Israel 66-years-ago in British of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who either fled or were followed. *Photo: AFP*

BANGKOK

Thai army threatens 'for to impasse after three p

THE chief of Thailand's coup-prone army has warned his troops "may use force" to quell political violence, after three people were killed in a grenade and gun attack on protesters in Bangkok.

The rare official statement from General Prayut Chan-O-cha on May 15 followed a call by Thai election authorities for July polls to be postponed because of the unrest.

"I want to warn every group, especially those who use violence and war weapons against innocent civilians, to stop now because if the violence continues the military may be needed to come out ... to restore peace and order," Mr Prayut said in unusually strong comments.

He said his troops "may need to use force to resolve the situation", threatening "decisive measures" if civilians are hurt.

Unknown assailants fired two grenades into a rally camp early on May 15 at the Democracy Monument, a stone's throw from the city's famed backpacker zone, followed by a burst of gunfire.

Bangkok's Erawan emergency centre said three people were killed and 23 wounded.

The latest bloodshed comes as demonstrators push for the appointment of an unelected premier in a move that has infuriated government supporters, who earlier this month



Thai military stand guard during an anti-government protest rally at the Air Force auditorium in Bangkok on May 15. *Photo: AFP*

were dealt a blow after a controversial court ruling ousted Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra from office.

Her dismissal by the Constitutional Court has sent tensions soaring in the Southeast Asian nation, which has endured years of political turmoil pitting Ms Yingluck's family against the kingdom's royalist establishment.

The Thai military, which has staged

18 successful or attempted coups since 1932, has been at pains to stay neutral in public during the six-month crisis, despite pressure by anti-government protesters to step-in on their behalf.

Observers say the army may be chastened by events of 2010, when it led a crackdown on pro-government "Red Shirts" gathered in Bangkok that left scores dead.



Nigerian president's future uncertain amid kidnap outrage

WORLD 38

Victorious Modi says 'good days ahead' for India

WORLD 41



Mine disaster prompts mass strikes in Turkey

WORLD 40



part in a commemoration on the eve of the 66th Ramallah. “Nakba” is an Arabic word for “catastrophe”. -mandate Palestine which led to the displacement driven out of their homes during the 1948 war that

ceful resolution’ rotesters killed

Red Shirt leaders, who are hosting a mass rally on the city's outskirts, have warned of an imminent military coup and the risk of civil war if power is handed to an unelected leader.

The deaths on May 15 take the toll from six months of protests aimed at toppling the government to 28, with hundreds of others wounded in attacks mostly targeting opposition protesters.

Demonstrators also stormed a meeting between the government and vote officials on May 15, forcing caretaker Prime Minister Niwattumrong Boonsongpaisan and other ministers to flee.

The ruling party wants to bolster its authority and is likely to win fresh elections. Parties led by or allied to Yingluck's older brother, Thaksin Shinawatra, have swept every poll since 2001.

But Election Commission secretary general Puchong Nutrawong said that the July 20 poll “is no longer possible”, adding that early August was one option although polls “cannot be held if protesters do not agree”.

An election held in February was later annulled after demonstrators blocked voting in many areas.

Anti-government protesters refused to back new polls without vaguely defined reforms first, saying the rul-

ing Puea Thai party administration lacks the legitimacy to govern.

They are calling on the upper house of parliament to invoke a clause in the kingdom's constitution to remove the government and appoint a new premier.

But their critics say such a move has no legal basis.

Protesters have recently moved to a heavily fortified area immediately around Government House in the city's historic quarter: a short walk from the site of May 15 attack.

Protest leaders now occupy a wing of the government headquarters, holding press conferences in an attempt to show the government lacks the authority to rule.

Thailand has been cleaved apart by political divisions since Mr Thaksin was ousted in a military coup in 2006 and later fled overseas to avoid jail for corruption.

The billionaire former telecoms tycoon is reviled by the Bangkok elite and many southerners who accuse him of driving rampant corruption, cronyism and of being a threat to the revered monarchy.

But he has traditionally drawn strong support among the northern rural poor, who say he is the first Thai leader to improve their situation with populist policies and increasing political power.

— AFP

KIEV

US threatens to raise sanctions ahead of Ukraine president vote

THE United States has warned Russia of punishing new sanctions if the Kremlin and its allies in Ukraine disrupt crucial presidential elections in the former Soviet republic less than 10 days away.

Kiev's interim leaders were battling on May 16 to keep Ukraine from disintegrating ahead of the May 25 vote, pressing on with a military offensive to put down a bloody pro-Moscow insurgency in the eastern industrial heartland.

“Our message is really, quite simple: Let Ukraine vote. Let the Ukrainian people choose their future,” US Secretary of State John Kerry said at a meeting with European counterparts in London.

He said the separatists who have seized over a dozen towns in a month of fighting and declared independence in two industrial regions in defiance of Kiev and the West were “sowing mayhem”.

“Far from defending the rights of the people in the east they are seeking to speak for everybody through the barrel of the gun,” Mr Kerry told reporters.

He said the US and its European allies would impose sectorial sanctions “if Russia or its proxies disrupt the elections”.

The tough talk came as Ukraine pressed on with a military operation against rebels around Slavyansk, the epicentre of the uprising, despite the launch of “national unity” talks in Kiev on May 14.

The round-table discussions are part of a initiative launched by the pan-European Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to try to resolve the escalating crisis on Europe's doorstep.

Crucially, however, the rebels were not invited despite Western calls for inclusive talks, and no progress was reported.

The east of Ukraine remains on edge, with fighting flaring almost every night around rebel flashpoints and reports, which have been difficult to confirm, of attacks on election centres and government officials.

Around Slavyansk, Ukrainian forces have set up control posts with tanks and armoured vehicles backed up by helicopters and anti-aircraft guns to try to seal off the rebel-controlled city.

“We are defending ourselves against the separatists who constantly

attack us with automatic weapons, rifles and grenade launchers,” one National Guard officer said.

Ukraine's central bank also said it was forced to close its branch in the main eastern city of Donetsk and evacuate staff after being threatened by separatists demanding money.

Dozens of people have been killed in the southeast since mid-April as government troops battle to dislodge the insurgents.

Fears are growing that Ukraine could tear apart after rebels declared “sovereignty” in Donetsk and neighbouring Lugansk following referendums earlier this month that were branded illegitimate by Kiev.

15

Percentage of all gas consumed in Europe that comes from Russia through the Ukraine

Interim President Oleksandr Turchynov has said his administration is ready to reach out to pro-Russians in the east but that the separatists must first lay down their arms.

Mr Turchynov is to meet EU Enlargement Commissioner Stefan Fuele on May 16 while Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski will discuss the crisis with his Ukrainian counterpart Andriy Deshchysya and Mr Turchynov.

In a bid to pressure the Kremlin, President Barack Obama has already drafted an executive order for sanctions across key sectors such as banking, energy, defence and mining, adding to punitive measures already imposed by Washington and Brussels.

“There are a lot of things we can do to create bleeding,” a US official said, adding that the aim was “to use a scalpel rather than a hammer”.

Western leaders see the May 25 vote as crucial for the future of Ukraine after Russia's much-criticised annexation of Crimea in March, which plunged relations between Moscow and the West to their lowest point since the Cold War.

President Vladimir Putin said last

week Russia had withdrawn its estimated 40,000 troops from the border, but the West says it has seen no sign of a major pullback.

With tensions running high, a French reconnaissance vessel and a US destroyer entered the Black Sea on May 15 boosting the international ship presence in the area, Bulgarian media reports said.

Russia and Europe are also locked in a dispute over Ukraine's gas debt after Moscow threatened to turn off the taps if Kiev fails to pay a US\$1.6 billion bill by early June.

Mr Putin said on May 15 that Russia was still open to talks on the issue but complained that Brussels had failed to make any specific proposals.

European Commission spokeswoman Pia Ahrenkilde-Hansen said however that Putin's “criticism is ... unfounded”, as talks between Russia, Ukraine and the EU have been held at different levels.

Another meeting between the EU's energy commissioner and Russia's energy minister was due to be held May 19 in Berlin, she added.

Nearly 15 percent of all gas consumed in Europe is delivered from Russia via Ukraine, which is facing further economic gloom despite a \$17 billion IMF aid package.

The International Crisis Group think tank said the Kiev government, set up in February after months of pro-EU protests triggered the ouster of the Kremlin-backed administration, faced an “uphill struggle” to make it to the election.

It said the “weak” interim leadership, often depicted as fascists by Moscow, appeared incapable of keeping order in the southeast and called on it to urgently reach out to the people there to listen to their demands for minority rights and self-government.

The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe roadmap calls for “restraint from violence, disarmament, national dialogue, and elections”.

While voicing support for the OSCE plan, the Kremlin insists Kiev first halt so-called “reprisal raids” against the separatists and hold talks on rights for Russian speakers.

Moscow has however rolled back its vehement opposition to the election, with the speaker of the State Duma describing it as “the lesser of two evils”. — AFP



Ukrainian soldiers stand guard at a checkpoint on the road near the eastern city of Izum near Donetsk on May 15. Photo: AFP

HANOI



Anti-China protesters wave Vietnamese flags and shout slogans in front of the Chinese embassy during a rally in Hanoi on May 11. Protesters staged one of Vietnam's largest ever anti-China demonstrations decrying Beijing's deployment of a deep-water drilling rig in contested waters as territorial tensions soar. Photo: AFP

Two dead as anti-China protests escalate

ANTI-China riots at a steel plant in Vietnam left two Chinese workers dead and 100 injured, officials said on May 15, as unrest triggered by an escalating territorial dispute spreads across the communist country.

Beijing's deployment of a deep-water drilling rig in contested waters has sparked the worst anti-China backlash in Vietnam in decades, with protests in major cities and angry mobs torching foreign-owned factories.

Worker protests have spread to 22 of Vietnam's 63 provinces, Vietnam's minister of planning and investment said on May 15, calling for "tough measures" to bring the situation under control before alarmed foreign investors pull out of the country.

The latest riots broke out on May 14 at a steel mill owned by Taiwanese industrial conglomerate Formosa in Vietnam's central Ha Tinh province, around 500 kilometres from Hanoi.

Local officials said two people had died in the incident and that three houses at the Formosa plant for Chinese workers had been destroyed.

Local police told AFP they were working to identify the body of one of the victims.

A Taiwanese diplomat said that 100 Chinese workers had been injured.

"The rioters have gone but we are all still concerned they might come back," Ambassador Huang Chih-peng said, adding that no Taiwanese nationals were hurt.

A doctor at the emergency department of Ha Tinh provincial hospital said medical staff were treating several Chinese patients for injuries.

China and Vietnam are embroiled in long-standing territorial disputes in the South China Sea over the Paracel and Spratly islands, which both claim.

Tensions have risen sharply since Beijing moved a deep-water drilling

rig into waters that Hanoi claims a move Vietnam has denounced as "illegal".

The widespread unrest has broken out since Vietnam's communist rulers, who usually tightly control dissent, allowed rallies against Beijing at the weekend.

Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung described the situation as "very serious" and said that, while the recent groundswell of patriotism was "the correct thing," instigators who broke the law would be punished, according to a statement on a government website.

In the southern province of Binh Duong, riot police were deployed on May 14 after anti-China riots and arson attacks forced several factories to temporarily suspend operations, including a supplier for Nike and Adidas.

Police said they had detained some 500 people after nearly 20,000

workers poured onto the streets May 13 and a hardcore began looting and attacking security guards and factory management before setting fire to at least 15 factories.

Export-orientated manufacturing is a key pillar of Vietnam's economy, with high-profile firms, from electronics giants such as South Korea's Samsung to US sportswear companies, producing goods there.

Taiwan is one of the top foreign investors in Vietnam.

Formosa said the trouble had begun when Vietnamese workers at its plant staged a strike on May 14 which quickly became violent.

Workers began "attacking some Chinese workers and damaged offices and equipment," Formosa said in a statement.

"Chinese workers under attack were evacuated by police," the statement said, adding that local authori-

ties had forced the rioting workers to disperse.

"The company is still assessing financial damage," it added.

Vietnam's Minister of Planning and Investment Bui Quang Vinh said on May 15 that some 400 businesses had "been smashed".

"I have asked the prime minister for tough measures," he said.

"The image of our investment climate, which we have built up painstakingly over 20 years with many good records, is being affected," he said, according to Lao Dong online newspaper.

"Production in this quarter will seriously be down," he added.

There have been repeated skirmishes near the controversial oil drilling rig in recent days involving vessels from the two countries, with collisions and the use of water cannon. — AFP

SEOUL

Ferry captain and three crew charged with manslaughter

THE captain and three other crew members of the ferry that sank off South Korea last month were indicted on May 15 on charges of manslaughter through gross negligence, *Yonhap* news agency reported.

If convicted, Captain Lee Joon-Seok of the Sewol ferry, two navigators and a chief engineer could be handed the death sentence, although that penalty is very unlikely to be carried out.

They are accused of leaving the ship as it was sinking while telling passengers, mostly high school students on a school excursion, to stay where they were.

The four, together with 11 other lower-ranking crew members, are ac-

cused of being the first to scramble to safety, while hundreds of passengers remained trapped in the sinking vessel.

The four not only failed to issue an order for passengers to leave the ship but also kept to themselves the information that a rescue boat had arrived, investigators were quoted as saying by the *Munhwa Ilbo* daily.

They took off their uniforms and changed into civilian clothes, being aware that uniformed crew members should be the last to evacuate, the daily said.

Even after being instructed by maritime safety authorities to help passengers evacuate the ship, they failed to take any action and almost an hour

later got on the first rescue boat, it said.

The death penalty is rarely applied in South Korea, where a moratorium has been in place since the last execution took place in late 1997. Currently, there are some 60 people on death row.

The 11 other crew members were indicted on less serious charges including wrongfully steering the vessel, and abandoning a ship and leaving passengers in a sinking boat without making efforts to rescue them.

Coastguard spokesman Ko Myung-Suk said on May 15 that a further five bodies were retrieved on May 14, including one found floating on the surface.

The confirmed death toll now

stands at 281, with 23 still missing.

The Sewol was carrying 476 people when it sank on April 16 after listing sharply to one side.

Of those on board, 325 were children from a high school in Ansan City in the southern suburbs of Seoul who were on an organised trip to the southern resort island of Jeju.

Initial investigations suggest the ferry was carrying up to three times its safe cargo capacity, and that it had been habitually overloaded.

Coastguard chief Kim Suk-Kyun said on May 14 that divers engaged in retrieving bodies were being seriously hampered as waterlogged partition walls inside the ship collapsed.

"As time goes by, the interior is cav-

ing in faster and faster, posing serious threats to divers' safety," he said.

One diver, Chun Kwang-Geun, said poor visibility inside the ship forced them to blindly grope through the debris to find victims.

"If we stumble upon something, we grope it by hand [to determine whether it is a body]," said the 40-year-old diver, who has been working on the scene since the day after the disaster.

"Many partition walls have collapsed, blocking our access," he told the media.

Another diver, Lee Sun-Hyong, 35, said the collapsing walls threatened to cut off air supply to divers who mostly use breathing systems tethered to the surface. — AFP



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LAGOS

Kidnap response leaves president's future shaky

NIGERIAN president Goodluck Jonathan faces an uncertain political future after attracting a torrent of criticism over his handling of the mass abduction of more than 200 schoolgirls by Boko Haram extremists.

Mr Jonathan was on the back foot even before Boko Haram kidnapped 276 girls from the remote northeastern town of Chibok in April, sparking a global social media campaign and international outrage.

His People's Democratic Party (PDP) has been hit by mass defections, eroding his power base and parliamentary majority and strengthening the hand of the main opposition All Progressives Congress (APC).

Mr Jonathan, 56, was still expected to declare his candidacy for next year's elections and seek a second term in office, but with anger growing over the government's lack of response in the first weeks after the kidnapping, some commentators say his political stock has been irreparably damaged.

Dapo Thomas, a political commentator from Lagos state university, called for Mr Jonathan to step down.

"In a sane society, Mr Jonathan should have resigned or (been) impeached," he said.

"In South Korea, the prime minister had to resign because of a ferry accident that claimed hundreds of lives.

"But in Nigeria, where politicians lack morality and integrity, more than 200 girls were kidnapped and the president is acting as if nothing has happened."

Mr Nigeria is almost equally split between a Muslim majority north and predominantly Christian south, with an unwritten rule that presidential candidates rotate between the two regions.

Mr Jonathan is a southern Chris-

tian and stepped up from vice-president in 2010 after his predecessor Umaru Yar'Adua, a northern Muslim, fell ill and later died.

It has been claimed that he promised privately to serve only one term after winning the last election in 2011.

Critics claim he has done little to improve life in the north, where poverty, poor services and mass unemployment are seen as a factor in

'Jonathan is a disgrace. He has no reason to remain in office and if he ... seeks a second term he will not get 20 per cent of the votes.'

Dapo Thomas
Lagos State University

fuelling the five-year Boko Haram insurgency.

Some attribute the government's lack of response to the kidnapping as a reflection of his indifference to the region and the lack of values in Nigerian politics.

Olatunji Dare, a popular columnist with independent daily *The Nation*, said Mr Jonathan "had proved unequal to the task".

"No matter how this crisis is resolved, Dr Jonathan is unlikely to emerge as a president who can be trusted to lead Nigeria through the challenges that lie ahead," he wrote in the paper's May 13 edition.

"It would be selfish and unpatriotic of him to seek to continue... If the ruling PDP loves and cares about Nigeria, it should urge Dr Jonathan not to seek another term. If he refuses, it should reject him decisively."

Mr Thomas described the latest Boko Haram video, which showed about 130 of the 223 girls still missing, as an indictment on Mr Jonathan and his acceptance of international support an embarrassment.

The invitation to US, British, French and Israeli teams to assist Nigeria's military in the rescue effort was "a shame on Nigeria, which claims to be the giant of Africa", he added.

"Jonathan is a disgrace. He has no reason to remain in office and if he decides to seek a second term he will not get 20 percent of the votes," he said.

Others have argued that Mr Jonathan was right to accept foreign assistance and seek talks with Boko Haram.

In the complicated, internecine world of Nigerian politics, nothing is guaranteed and observers have cautioned that Mr Jonathan could yet emerge from the crisis favourably, taking credit in the event of a rescue and shifting blame if the girls are not found.

Niyi Akinassio, a columnist with the *Punch* newspaper, also criticised Mr Jonathan's response to the abduction but said domestic politics should be put to one side to concentrate on the search.

"It is hoped that participating Nigerian security agents would learn something useful from the experience," he said.

"Whatever the case is, however, we must now rally round our president to complement international efforts to find and rescue the girls."

— AFP



Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan at the presidential villa in Abuja on May 14. Photo: AFP

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SYDNEY

Sub' issues delay jet searchers

THE hunt for the missing Malaysian passenger jet in the Indian Ocean was put on hold on May 15 after technical issues with a US Navy mini-submarine that require spare parts to be sent from Britain.

Australia's Joint Agency Coordination Agency (JACC), which is leading the search, revealed on May 14 that the Bluefin-21 submersible lasted only two hours in the water this week before it had to be raised.

The JACC blamed "communications problems" for the aborted mission and after a more thorough examination, announced that spare parts will be needed before the sophisticated mini-sub can be used again.

Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 vanished on March 8 with 239 people on board.

It is believed to have crashed far off Australia's west coast after mysteriously diverting from its Kuala Lumpur-Beijing route.

The mini-sub had only arrived back in the remote southern Indian Ocean search zone on May 12 following a port visit to Perth onboard the Australian vessel Ocean Shield.

Ocean Shield is once more steaming for land in order to pick up the spare parts, which were due to arrive in Australia on May 18. — AFP



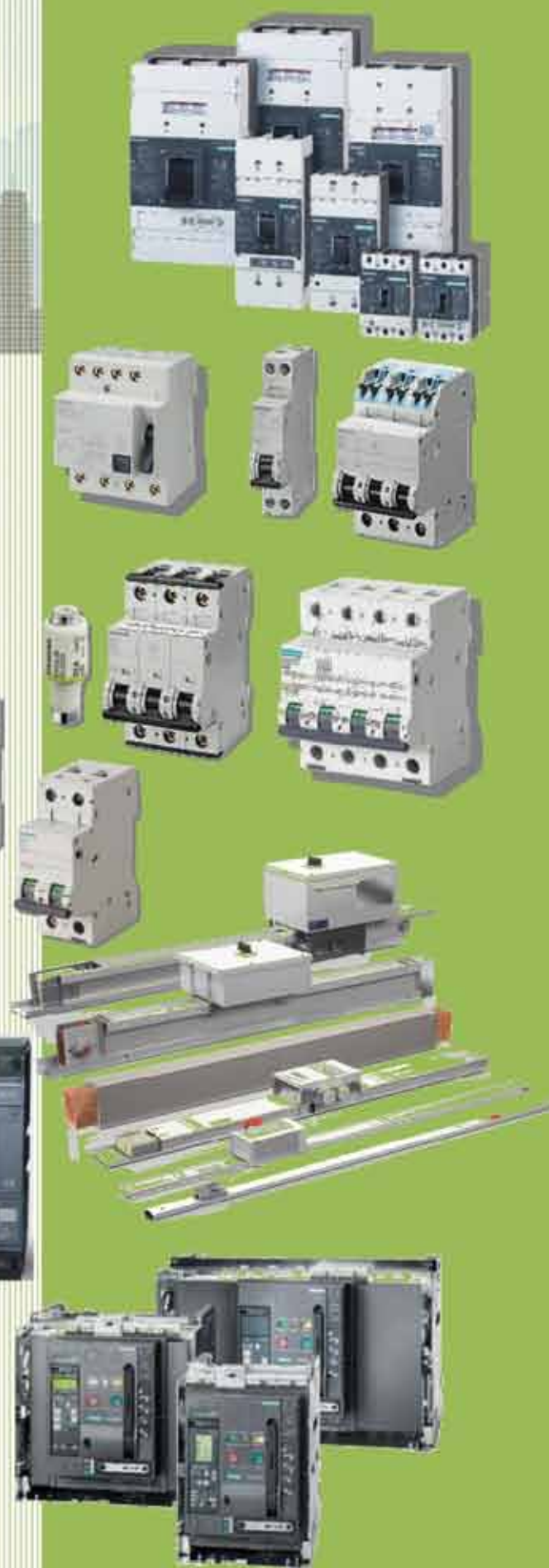
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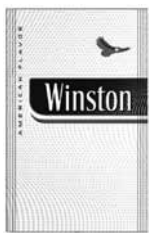
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LIMA

Land right ‘killers’ go on trial

THE trial began in Peru on May 14 of members of Amazonian indigenous communities accused of killing 18 police and civilians in their fight to be consulted over commercial use of their land.

Largely seen as a symbol of the communities’ struggle against the Peruvian state to defend their territories and natural resources, 23 people will stand trial over deadly clashes that broke out in June 2009 following massive protests.

The communities, which were not consulted over decrees that paved the way for exploration and extraction projects by mining and oil firms, were demanding repeal of the measures.

Established under former president Alan Garcia, the decrees were never ultimately implemented.

Prosecutors have requested sentences of between six years and life in prison over charges of homicide, serious injury, rebellion, sedition and mutiny.

Defendants include members of the

Awajun and Wampis communities, who inhabit the region 1000 kilometers (600 miles) northeast of Lima.

Indigenous leaders Alberto Pizango, head of the AIDESEP campaign group gathering dozens of indigenous communities in the Peruvian Amazon, and Santiago Manuin face between 35 years and life in prison if found guilty.

The accused dressed in traditional clothes for their court appearance to hear the charges, local television showed.. – *AFP*

SOMA

Turkish people mourn in a cemetery in Manisa on May, during the funeral of miners killed in a mine blast the day before that claimed at least 282 lives in the western Turkish province . Photo: AFP

Mine disaster provokes mass strike and protests

TURKEY’S biggest union called a massive strike on May 15 amid mounting anger over the country’s worst mining accident, as the toll from the disaster rose to 282, with scores still trapped underground.

“Those who keep up with privatisation... policies, who threaten workers’ lives to reduce costs... are the culprits of the Soma massacre and they must be held accountable,” Turkey’s Public Workers Unions Confederation (KESK), which represents 240,000 employees, said on its website.

Desperation and anger were rising as hopes fell for dozens of workers still trapped in the collapsed coal mine in the western town of Soma in the Manisa province.

Thousands of protesters clashed with police in Ankara and Istanbul on May 14, accusing the government and mining industry of negligence.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan promised investigations would be launched into the causes of the disaster but rejected claims of government culpability, saying that “such accidents happen”.

“We have witnessed one of the biggest work accidents in our recent history,” Mr Erdogan said after visiting the mine, where grieving relatives of the victims called for him to resign.

Mr Erdogan said figures remained uncertain but mining operators thought around 90 workers were still trapped following the huge explosion at the mine on May 13 which was believed to have been set off by an electrical fault.

Reports from rescue workers on the scene suggest the figure could be far higher. Most of the victims died of carbon monoxide poisoning.

The premier also appeared to downplay the seriousness of the accident, comparing it to other mining disasters elsewhere, saying “204 people died in the UK in 1862 and 361 people in 1864”.

Hundreds of distraught family and

friends gathered near the building where Mr Erdogan gave his press conference were outraged, with some kicking his vehicle. Public anger also spilled onto the streets.

Police used tear gas and water canon to disperse between 3000 and 4000 protesters in Ankara’s downtown Kizilay Square, as well as thousands of demonstrators in Istanbul.

Earlier in the day, they also used tear gas against around 800 students marching on the energy ministry, and 50 protesters who threw eggs at the mining research directorate in Istanbul, AFP photographers reported.

The disaster has added to the political pressure on Mr Erdogan, who faced mass protests last summer and a huge corruption scandal involving his family and key allies in recent months.

“If the claims of negligence at the mine prove true, it will have a political price. Such a development would render corruption allegations targeting Erdogan’s government more convincing,” Professor Ilter Turan of Istanbul’s Bilgi University told AFP.

Turkish Energy Minister Taner Yildiz said early on May 15 that the provisional toll had risen to 282 after more bodies were pulled out of the pit.

Raging fires had been hampering efforts by rescue workers still battling to find survivors and rescuers still hadn’t been able to reach two underground shafts.

A miner from a different site who joined the effort, Murat Kurkoglu, said on May 14. We will try to save those who are still stuck one by one, but you know very well that there is no more hope. It’s finished for them.”

Early reports said 787 workers were underground when the blast occurred. By late May 14, “close to 450” workers had been rescued, according to the mine operator, Soma Komur Inc, but accounts from rescue workers cast doubt over the numbers.

Erdem Bakin, a doctor with the

Search and Rescue organisation, said the transformer that exploded, triggering the collapse had been found. Those between the transformer and the entrance of the mine, around 70-80 people, survived.

“But those who were beyond were taken by the fire and they are all dead,” he said.

Harun Unzar, a miner at the site, said: “We are a family and today that family is devastated. We have had very little news and when it does come it’s very bad.”

Explosions and cave-ins are common in Turkey, particularly in private mines, where safety regulations are often flouted.

Turkey’s previous worst mining accident happened in 1992 when 263 workers were killed in a gas explosion in a mine in Zonguldak.

A lawmaker from the main opposition Republican People’s Party (CHP) said it submitted a parliamentary motion 20 days ago to investigate work-related accidents at coal mines in Soma but it was rejected by the government.

The CHP’s Manisa deputy Ozgur Ozel told local media: “We receive tip-offs every day that workers’ lives are under threat.”

“We lawmakers from Manisa are tired of going to miner funerals.”

Turkey’s ministry of labour and social security said the mine had been inspected eight times in the last four years, most recently on March 17, and was found to comply with safety regulations.

But Oktay Berrin, a miner, said: “There is no security in this mine. The unions are just puppets and our management only cares about money.”

Mining company Soma Komur said it had taken maximum measures to ensure safety.

Soma is a key centre for lignite coal mining and is located around 480 kilometres (300 miles) southwest of Istanbul. – *AFP*

NEW DELHI

Victorious Modi vows 'good days' ahead for India

INDIA's triumphant Hindu nationalists declared "the start of a new era" in the world's biggest democracy on May 16 as Narendra Modi swept to victory in the country's presidential election.

The ruling Congress conceded defeat following the vote that exposed anger about sickly economic growth and rampant corruption.

Preliminary results and media projections at the climax of the marathon six-week election showed the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its hardline leader Mr Modi on track for the first parliamentary majority by a single party in 30 years.

Mr Modi, the 63-year-old son of a low-caste tea seller tainted by anti-Muslim violence in his home state of Gujarat in 2002, wrote on Twitter that "India has won. Good days are coming."

The stunning results exceeded all forecasts. Firecrackers exploded at BJP offices around the country and sweets were handed out in celebrations that began only a few hours after the first figures filtered out.

"This is the beginning of change, a people's revolution and the start of a new era," senior BJP leader Prakash Javadekar said at the party's headquarters in New Delhi.

Media projections showed the

BJP winning more than the 272 seats required for a majority on its own in the 543-seat parliament, with victories by its allies taking it easily in excess of 300.

The Congress party, the national secular force that has run India for all but 13 years since independence, was set to crash to its worst ever result after a decade in power.

"We accept defeat. We are ready to sit in the opposition," senior Congress leader and spokesman Rajeev Shukla told reporters at party headquarters in New Delhi as preliminary results showed it winning only 49 seats.

"Modi promised the moon and stars to the people. People bought that dream," he added.

The disastrous showing for Congress is another blow to the scion of the Gandhi dynasty, 43-year-old Rahul Gandhi, known throughout India by his first name, whose first performance as chief campaigner will likely lead to acrimonious fallout.

The country's most illustrious political family has provided three prime ministers but preliminary results showed Rahul with only a wafer-thin lead in his constituency of Amethi.

A group of Congress supporters shouted slogans in support of Rahul's more popular sister Priyanka

outside party headquarters on May 16.

"The politics of inheritance, the politics of dynasty, the politics of entitlement is being punished," BJP spokesman Ravi Shankar Prasad told the CNN-IBN news channel.

Mr Modi has reinvented himself from a controversial regional leader accused of turning a blind eye to religious riots in 2002 to an aspiring prime minister intent on helping India fulfil its potential.

After a presidential-style campaign built around him and his record during 13 years running Gujarat, expectations are sky-high of what Mr Modi will deliver in a chaotic and still poor country that is home to one-sixth of the world's population.

Modi's promises to revive the flagging economy have won him corporate cheerleaders, while his rags-to-riches story and reputation as a clean and efficient administrator satisfy many Indians' desire for strong leadership.

He was always assured the votes of his core Hindu nationalist supporters, but his election pitch has drawn the urban middle classes as well as the poor, whose loyalty has traditionally been to Congress and its welfare schemes.

Attacks from his opponents -

Narendra Modi

- 63 years old
- Born to low-caste parents from western Gujarat state
- Hardline Hindu nationalist leading India's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)
- Has campaigned on a platform of good governance and economic revival
- Was seen as a business-friendly administrator during 13 years as chief minister in Gujarat
- The failure of his administration to control anti-Muslim violence in Gujarat that left more than 1,000 dead in 2002 has left a legacy of distrust



one called him a "devil" and the "Butcher of Gujarat" - as well as warnings from secular-minded critics and religious minorities appear to have failed to dent his rise.

The BJP's previous best showing was in elections in 1998 and 1999 when it won 182 seats and ran the country until a shock defeat to Congress in 2004.

While 81-year-old outgoing Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was hailed by US President Barack Obama as a "wise and decent man", Mr Modi will be an awkward prospect for Washington and other Western powers.

The bachelor, elected three times as chief minister in his home state, was boycotted by the US and

European powers for a decade over the 2002 riots in Gujarat that left around 1000 people, mostly Muslims, dead.

He denies that he turned a blind eye to the bloodshed and his focus on the campaign trail has been jobs.

But the BJP manifesto includes a pledge to build a temple to honour the Hindu god Ram at the site of a former mosque in northern India, a religious flashpoint that sparked deadly rioting in 1992.

"He has to succeed on the economy and that's the thing on which he will be judged," said Christophe Jaffrelot, an academic on India from Sciences Po university in Paris and King's College London. - AFP

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Printing	1	Printing Director (7+ years experience required, returned national a plus)
Human Resources	1	HR Director (5+ years HR exp required, Management degree, returned nation a plus)
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	2	Marketing Assistant (1+ years experience in sales and marketing)
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KABUL



Afghan presidential candidate Abdullah Abdullah gestures as he leaves a press conference at his residence in Kabul on May 15. Photo: AFP

Abdullah and Ghani in election run-off

AFGHANISTAN’S election will go to a run-off vote between former foreign minister Abdullah Abdullah and ex-World Bank economist Ashraf Ghani, results confirmed on May 15, as the country enters a new era without NATO combat troops.

The head-to-head election, scheduled for June 14, will choose a successor to President Hamid Karzai in Afghanistan’s first democratic transfer of power.

Whoever wins will have to oversee the fight against a resilient Taliban insurgency as 51,000 US-led troops depart this year, as well as try to strengthen an economy reliant on declining aid money.

“We were number one and we will be number one,” Mr Abdullah, a trained ophthalmologist and former anti-Taliban fighter, told supporters.

“The success of our team, which is the bigger and more inclusive team, is ensured by the will of the people. I am sure that millions of people will participate in the election.”

Mr Abdullah secured 45 percent of the April 5 vote, with Mr Ghani on 31.6 pc, according to the final results, which came after weeks of deliberation over fraud allegations.

“We accept the result of the first round,” Mr Ghani, a former US-based

academic, told supporters. “We are fully prepared to go to this brave nation and see who they trust and give authority to.”

The 2009 election, when Mr Karzai beat Mr Abdullah, was marred by rigging in a chaotic process that shook confidence in the multinational effort to develop the country after the Taliban were ousted 13 years ago.

Nations that have fought in Afghanistan and donated billions of dollars in aid since 2001 see a smooth handover as a key benchmark of success, despite continuing violence.

The run-off is necessary under the Afghan constitution as no candidate got more than 50 percent of the vote in the first round, when eight men ran.

The UN mission in Afghanistan welcomed the May 15 results, but warned that the run-off would pose a test for candidates and election authorities.

“Candidates have a responsibility to call on their supporters to refrain from inflammatory rhetoric, intimidation, and threats,” said UNAMA chief Jan Kubis.

“(They) must also instruct their supporters not to commit fraud on their behalf”

The US embassy described the results as “a milestone in Afghanistan’s democratic development”.

The second round was originally set for May 28, but ink and other material was damaged in an insurgent attack on the election authorities’ warehouses further extending the months-long election process.

Mr Abdullah’s campaign this week

‘The success of our team, which is the bigger and more inclusive team, is ensured by the will of the people.’

Abdullah Abdullah
presidential candidate

received a boost with the endorsement of third-placed Zalmay Rassoul, a close ally of Mr Karzai, who has stayed publicly neutral in the election.

Mr Rassoul’s support for Mr Abdullah increased pressure on Mr Ghani to concede, and another election could be avoided by deal-making

in the coming weeks.

The final results were closely in line with preliminary figures released late last month, despite officials examining more than 900 serious fraud complaints.

Mr Abdullah, who had raised most of the fraud allegations, said he accepted the result without complaint.

Mr Karzai, who has ruled since the end of the austere Taliban regime, is constitutionally barred from a third term in office.

The first-round election last month was hailed as a major success, with turnout far better than in 2009 and the Taliban failing to launch a significant attack despite threats to disrupt the vote.

But the run-off will be a major challenge for Afghanistan’s police and army at the height of the traditional “fighting season”.

Voting could also whip up ethnic tension as Mr Abdullah’s support is based among the Tajik minority and other northern groups, while Ghani is a Pashtun, Afghanistan’s largest ethnic group, which is strongest in the south and east.

At a donors’ meeting in Tokyo on May 15, deputy foreign minister Ershad Ahmad asked nations not to reduce financial aid to Afghanistan,

which has suffered more than three decades of conflict since the Soviet invasion of 1979.

“It is important to recognise that the war is not over yet,” he told delegates.

An International Crisis Group (ICG) report released this week concluded that “the overall trend is one of escalating violence and insurgent attacks”.

The Taliban this week marked the start of their annual “spring offensive” with rocket attacks on Kabul airport and a suicide attack on government offices in the eastern city of Jalalabad.

The Islamist extremists said that the offensive would cleanse “the filth of the infidels” from the country and also would target Afghan translators, officials and politicians.

Mr Abdullah and Mr Ghani are pro-Western moderates who have pledged to sign a deal with Washington that could allow up to 10,000 US troops to stay on after this year on a training and counter-terrorism mission.

Previous steps to begin a peace process with the Taliban ended in failure, but the incoming president may revive efforts to open negotiations.

Preliminary results of the run-off will be released on July 2 and final results on July 22.

JUBA

Heavy fighting as civil war ceasefire collapses in South Sudan

WARRING forces in South Sudan battled on May 15, trading blame for breaking a ceasefire as the civil war entered its sixth month amid warnings of famine if bloodshed continues.

Both sides reported heavy fighting in the key oil-producing state of Upper Nile, which now pumps almost all of South Sudan’s crude after intense battles shut down most fields in the other main area of Unity state.

Both army spokesman Philip Aguer and his rebel counterpart Lul Ruai Koang reported heavy artillery barrages and fierce gun battles at Dolieb Hill, south of Upper Nile’s war-

ravaged state capital Malakal, and in the northern Renk district.

“We will continue to strictly abide by the peace agreement, but we will not allow this ceasefire to be used by rebels to continue moving and attacking our positions,” Mr Aguer said.

Rebel spokesman Mr Koang charged government troops May 15 of “relentless and intensive shelling” of their positions at Dolieb.

He claimed government troops had fired shells as rebels gathered for a morning military parade to listen “to agreement messages being read

out to them by their respective field commanders.”

The war in the world’s youngest nation has claimed thousands, possibly tens of thousands, of lives, with more than 1.2 million people forced to flee their homes.

In Renk district, a strategic region just north of the main oil-field still left pumping, Palouch, the rebels said government troops were “continuously attacking”.

Mr Aguer said it had been the guerrillas who had attacked.

President Salva Kiir and rebel chief Riek Machar signed a fresh ceasefire

last week but fighting broke out hours later, the second time a truce has failed to stick.

The ceasefire agreement, signed last week in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa, was the fruit of weeks of mounting international pressure and shuttle diplomacy.

But fighters on the ground appear to have paid little if any notice to it.

The United States called on May 14 for an immediate deployment of African troops from regional nations to safeguard the ceasefire, with Washington seeking a UN resolution to ensure the force is in place “quickly

as possible,” said Linda Thomas-Greenfield, Assistant Secretary for African Affairs.

Thomas-Greenfield warned of possible dire consequences should the shaky peace deal fall apart.

“There is a famine that is looming if this fighting does not stop,” she said.

The war erupted on December 15 when Mr Kiir accused Mr Machar of attempting a coup. Machar then fled to the bush to launch a rebellion, insisting that the president had attempted to carry out a bloody purge of his rivals.

GET YOUR FINGERS ON IT

the pulse

Califor

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Photos: Supplied



INTERNATIONALLY, vocal group the Me N Ma Girls used to get noticed, if at all, because of the political situation where they come from. But that's something the band is now working hard to change. It's not that they're not proud of their country – it's in their name, after all – it's just that they want the focus to be squarely on their music.

"Kimi and I are working hard on songs not only in the band but also as solo singers, so people around the world can know us for our songs, not just for the country's political stories," member Ah Moon said.

Kimi and Ah Moon are the remaining two founding members, after three left the group in 2013. Performing with back-up dancers, they're continuing to carry the band forward. It's a long way from Ah Moon's birthplace of Myitkyina, in Kachin State, to Los Angeles, where she finds herself now, but the band has caught the eye of major talent scouts. They're now busy recording tracks in LA at Paramount Studios for their first international release, as yet untitled. They say nine of the tracks are almost complete.

"We've just finished filming the new music video, called 'Cheap Sunglasses,'" Ah Moon said, squeezing in an interview in the midst of her busy schedule. In addition to recording and filming for the upcoming Me N Ma Girls album, she's also pursuing a project of her own.

"I'm working on my Burmese solo album," said the multi-lingual Ah Moon, who graduated from the University of Foreign Languages in Yangon with a major in Russian.

Bandmate Kimi, from Kalay in Chin State, moved to Yangon in 2005 and graduated from Dagon University with a degree in mathematics. "After graduation, I started learning basic music theory at Grace Music Institute," said Kimi.

When she applied to be part of Tiger Girls – the precursor of Me N Ma Girls – the now-27-year-old couldn't have known where it

would lead: a chance to follow the path blazed by her musical idols Britney Spears and Taylor Swift.

Despite their flashy stage dress and K-Pop/R&B sound, both artists have deep roots in their faith. Ah Moon, who counts Beyonce, Rihanna, Shakira and Lorde as influences, first learned music from her church. And Kimi's currently working on a solo gospel album. "I hope to eventually be myself and I hope to have people like what I'm doing," Ah Moon said.

Tiger Girls was founded by Australian dancer Nicole May in 2010. Under their first producer, U Moe Kyaw, they released their first album, *Year of the Tiger Girls*, in 2011. After the band split up with their producer after one year over contract disputes, the five members – Ah Moon, Kimi, Cha Cha, Htike Htike and Wai Hnin – reformed with a new name and a new album, 2011's *Mingalabar* (Welcome).

"Me N Ma Girls stand for orphans, women and people who are in need, especially from Burma," said Ah Moon of the wordplay of their name. "We also stand for the change. We need to prove that Burmese girls are capable of anything – like any other girls in the world."

The chance to prove that came with their 2012 breakthrough, when LA label Power Music signed them in June to a one-and-a-half-year contract, which Ah Moon said they fully confident about despite their past management trouble. She called the big break a "chance from God."

Producer Daniel Hubbert got involved with the band via his friend Jeff Mitchell, brother to US ambassador to Myanmar Derek Mitchell. After seeing a video of the band performing in a bar, Hubbert saw the potential for stardom, but also knew it wouldn't be easy: The band was far from the polished icons the international market would expect.

Nonetheless, things started taking off in a hurry. After Skype

nia Dreamin'



*ME N MA GIRLS
TALK ABOUT LIFE
IN LA, RECORDING
THE NEW
ALBUM, THEIR
PAST TROUBLES
AND WHY THEY
THOUGHT IT WAS
TIME TO BRING IN
A NEW MEMBER*



calls, and then a meetings in real life, in 2013 the group flew to LA in April to record, then in June went to Singapore to perform for the entire Asian music industry at the Music Matters conference. In July the band returned to LA to film a video for "Girl Strong", and shot another video in Myanmar in December.

Unfortunately, the group also faced challenges staying together. "Not all members are created equal in groups," said Mr Hubbert. "They never are, not even in the Beatles, who are the most famous group of all time ... It's important to know the perfect place so each member can best serve the group in order to advance your own life. Ah Moon and Kimi were mature enough to understand this, and were happy to cooperate from the beginning."

But two others, he said, weren't able to carry their parts, while another had challenges with stage fright.

Things came to a boiling point with one member after she failed to turn up and left camera crews waiting as the band was attempting to shoot a video.

"They signed a contract with me and they have violated that contract. I hate lawsuits and I never want to hurt anyone. But the way these girls acted is not only unprofessional, it's wrong," said Mr. Hubbert.

A lawsuit is being considered, though for her part Ah Moon said she tries not to let professional fallouts override their bond.

"We are all like sisters," she said. "We went through hard times together and had fun. Now I'm really sad for them but that is their choice. So I wish things will turn out peacefully."

Despite the challenges, "Girl Strong" earned a nomination for Best Music Video at the VIMA Music Awards in March – a first for a Myanmar band.

"The first thing I always say when people ask about these girls is, "They are musicians,"" he said.

Ah Moon is a strong singer and dancer, as well as a multi-

instrumentalist (violin and piano) and a songwriter; Kimi has a warm voice, an aptitude for high notes, dances well and plays guitar.

Talent, of course, only takes you so far. The rest is hard work. Between vocal and dance classes, Ah Moon said, "the main thing is to try as much as we can."

She said the shot at stardom has brought a lot of changes to their lives, but they try to be enthusiastic rather than anxious, to keep from getting nervous.

"LA and Yangon? Of course, things are completely different," said Ah Moon. "In LA, some of many things that I'm impressed by are respecting each other's time. I mean always on time, giving all they got for a project. People are really hard-working and being excited and helpful for new artists."

She said they are "tired because of the training, but still happy", and that the company supports them in anything they need so that they can focus only on their music.

That includes building up the band again: Moi Moi, a dancer from Uranium dance crew, became a member just this month.

Ah Moon said many artists want to join Me N Ma Girls, but Moi Moi was chosen without an audition after they saw her skills. Ah Moon said it's important for Me N Ma Girls to be a collective, not just a duo in front of back-up dancers.

"Audiences noticed us as a group," Kimi agreed. "So, we can't keep working as only two members. We want to make ourselves a strong girl group. Three is better than two."

Me N Ma Girls aims to keep on getting bigger – in more ways than one.

"The dream is to become international artists," Ah Moon said, "and to help people from Burma and around the world who are in need."

Recording their new album, the first is already under way. And given what they've accomplished so far, the second may soon follow.



Worshippers celebrate the full moon of Kason at the Wat Kangyeema, a Buddhist temple dedicated to the spirit of the Mother Naga, or mother serpent, known as Naga Mae Daw. Photos: Stuart Alan Becker



Snake eyes: Jade traders look to Naga spirit for luck

How a serpent pagoda outside MDY celebrates Kason

STUART ALAN BECKER
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IF you go about 10 miles south of Mandalay along the old AH-1 highway, you'll see a red and gold entrance on the left that leads down a rural road to Wat Kangyeema, a Buddhist temple dedicated to the spirit of the Mother Naga, or mother serpent, known as Naga Mae Daw.

According to local history, during the early 1990s a jade trader and his daughter visited Kangyeema and the daughter was overtaken by the Naga Mae Daw "serpent" spirit. The jade trader listened carefully to what his daughter said during her trance and the result of following his daughter's instructions was a fortune in jade trading.

In keeping with Buddhist tradition, the jade trader returned and donated money for the building of the Naga pond structure in the temple compound dedicated to the Naga Mae Daw spirit, believed to have underground connectivity with hidden treasure and therefore of great interest to those in the gems and minerals trade.

The money to construct the Naga pond was provided by the very same jade trader, U Thein Win, and his wife Daw Mya Win in a dedication ceremony that took place on December 29, 2010. Their daughter Sandar Win,

who is mentioned on the plaque, was the one possessed by the Naga Mae Daw spirit.

Last Tuesday, May 13, during the full moon day of the month of Kason, the dancing area at Wat Kangyeema, adjacent to a special shrine dedicated to the Naga Mae Daw, was filled with dancing women, some going into a trancelike state, surrounded by onlookers and participants. At the same time, women and men approached the adjacent shrine and presented offerings to the Naga Mae Daw statue, including bowls of jasmine flowers. They also presented their wallets and purses, in an effort to open a spiritual door to good financial luck.

Wat Kangyeema was built in 1365 by King Innwa Tha Toe Min and later fell into disrepair. Overgrown and disused for many years, the rural pagoda was rebuilt in 1977.

During the 1990s, a Mandalay lady named Daw Aye Aye Khaing first visited Wat Kangyeema where she came in contact with a *weiza* spirit who instructed her to construct an image of the *weiza* himself. For the last ten years she has lived at Wat Kangyeema, providing spiritual counseling to those that seek it, among several statues of *weiza* spirits.

Daw Aye Aye Khaing – who for the last seven years has lived a celibate, vegetarian life similar to that of a Buddhist nun – says the condition of

any good luck gotten from the *weiza* spirits is that the lucky must return to Wat Kangyeema and share their good fortune.

"This is the serpent pagoda," she said. "It is about all the hidden treasure that is piled up."

She receives visitors once a week, including her three sons and two grandchildren who live in Mandalay.

"Sundays are the best days to come, especially on a Buddhist holiday."

This phenomenon of people looking to *weiza* spirits for guidance is also alive and well in Mandalay's Minde Ekin quarter where, on the holy evening of the full moon of Kason, local shaman U Soe Min took on the spirit of Bo Min Gaung, a shaman who lived in Poba during the 1930s and was the head of the Weiza Association at the time.

Just before midnight, about a hundred people showed up Sekka Byoo Ha Marshal Arts School in Minde Ekin quarter where he gave blessings to both men and women.

Residents of Mandalay say they've witnessed an increase in the popularity of shamen, *weiza* and Naga spirits, which in years past would have been frowned upon by the government.

But the popularity of the Mother Naga spirit at Wat Kangyeema and shamans like U So Min provide evidence of how deep interest in the supernatural runs, and how Buddhism operates in conjunction with many other equally powerful belief systems – deep-rooted pathways to the hidden treasures of Myanmar.



Shaman U Soe Min channels the spirit of Bo Min Gaung, head of the Weiza Association in Poba during the 1930s, in Mandalay's Minde Ekin quarter.

Photo: Stuart Alan Becker





Aye Ko poses next to the artwork at New Zero Art Space. Photo: Aung Htay Hlaing

WHITNEY LIGHT

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AYE Ko lives to create. The artist, born in Patheingyi in 1963, started out as an impressionist and abstract painter before turning to performance in the mid-1990s. He has shown his work in international exhibitions and residencies from Southeast Asia to France, from Germany to New York.

In 1990 he organised “Modern Art 90”, a group show of 15 Myanmar artists that challenged local concepts of beauty in art. Subsequently jailed for three years as political prisoner, upon his release in 1993 he gravitated toward performance art in pursuit of a more direct means of expressing his thoughts about the social and political turmoil of his country. At the same time, the artists of “Modern Art 90” also came to redefine themselves as socially and politically engaged artists and changed the movement’s name to New Zero, referencing the new century and a new spirit.

Recently, *The Myanmar Times* spoke with Aye Ko at New Zero Art Space, a gallery he and his partners set up in United Condo in 2008 to showcase the work of the Myanmar avant garde and encourage the talents of young students. He talked where his inspiration comes from and what hopes and hurdles are ahead for the new generation of artists.

What’s changed over the years that the gallery has been open?

After [Myanmar’s] opening-up, we could invite artists to our country. They could never come before. So many foreign artists came, and some offered training programs here, so the young generation is getting experience in techniques and ideas. We’ve probably had 100 artists already or more from the US, Europe, Asia, Southeast Asia, Latin America, India, Bangladesh.

How do Myanmar performance artists engage audiences?

It’s very difficult to explain to censors and still is, so we can’t do it properly. We want to show audiences [our work] and we don’t know if we can get a permit or not so it forces us to do it privately, underground or in embassies. Sometimes we do performances on the street and nobody notices. [The artist] is just like a crazy man, and we document it with photo and video. That’s no problem. Most of the performance art is done about a social issue or politics or gender. Most of the young artists are symbolists. It’s emotional.

Which art movements have been most influential for local performance artists?

It’s difficult to say, because artists often want to perform individually. Foreign art is very important. I think the most important festivals are the Nippon International and Asiatopia performance art festivals. Our artists always participate in these.

For you?

Before, my painting was influenced by the New York School. For performance, mostly my friends from Japan. I saw Seiji Shimoda’s performance art in 1998. He came to Myanmar then for the first time. He was organising the Nippon festival. I’ve worked with him for 15 or 16 years. He is really good at expressing emotion. He is powerful. His concepts are time and balance. Mine are political. He has a very simple technique. He always makes a balance. His masterpiece is “On a Table”. He’s naked. He moves around the table and crawls under the table and on it. It’s very beautiful.

What was the most important moment in your formation as an artist?

I’m getting old. I need to share with the young generation, which is important for the future.

You know, the study period is difficult. After you’re over the technique, though, you get automatic inspiration. When I finished a painting, I would get a feeling greater than orgasm.

What compelled you to do performance art?

When I was in prison, I thought about my art. Painting is not enough to express my feeling. There were times we suffered very hard and so I wanted to express something strong about this issue. Painting is not strong that way, so I decided to do it directly to audiences. I didn’t know performance art. I was thinking of how to connect with the audience. After I left prison I found a way, and I found books and documents. You couldn’t have paints or paper or television in your cell. From 1988 to 1996 it was very strict. After that it was more flexible for prisoners.

What was the philosophy of Modern Art 90?

At the time, every exhibition was traditional, and so we needed to show something new. The government and the rich people don’t care about culture and art. They think culture is history, old stuff. Now the foreign countries and historians and critics are talking about contemporary heritage. This concept did not exist here. When I first organised Modern Art 90, most of the artists were abstract and symbolist. This was new. It was about going inside the mind, expressing what’s in the individual mind.

How did people respond?

We had government permission except for a few works. Most people said, “This is not art.” We didn’t care. Many people came to see the show because it was in Bogyoke Market at the Art Association.

Did you sell any work?

No. No one was interested. Now some of those artists’ work is very high-priced. They are senior artists now.

Do you still have to ask the ministry for permission?

Now it’s a bit freer, but you still have to have permission. Before, when there was an exhibition, they’d always send someone to check it. Now they don’t. We want to do our next performance festival in a public area and we are trying to get permission.

You are also an art critic and writer. What do you try to accomplish in that role?

An art writer is important for an art scene because they can promote it and connect audiences and artists. My country had no such writers. So, sometimes with performance art, the people didn’t understand. What do we do? We need to explain. What is performance art? What are the issues? Nobody knew, and I was angry, so I wrote some articles in some magazines.

You also publish two magazines, *Fashion and Hlaing Thit* [New Wave]. People might be surprised that an artist publishes a fashion magazine. Why do you do it?

Artists cannot get money here, so I need to find money another way. Five years I spent losing money on the magazine. I got money over the past two years. If I could get money some other way I wouldn’t do it. I want to do only art. But my family is not rich. The government doesn’t support art. Never any grants.

What about the art magazine?

New Wave. It’s so crazy. Nobody reads it. Every month I lose money, but my country needs art and literature. We publish art, poetry, short stories, essays and political articles, art criticism. We support the young generation especially. They need to put themselves out there. We print 500 copies. I sell 50 each month.

How do you make time for everything you do?

I never think about it. I have depression, but because I give

myself very hard work I just keep doing. I make myself motivated. If I have time, I take another project. I’ve used it as a drug for 10 or 15 years.

What excites you about the art scene now?

It’s disappointing. You know, it depends on the government. We don’t know if we have democracy yet. We have only a small light; we slowly are making a big light. Our focus is on the next 10 or 15 years because we are focused on the young generation. The work is not really interesting right now. Our generation, they were very poor. They didn’t get money. They couldn’t survive as artists. Still very few are choosing art now. Because of universities, students are becoming artists but not contemporary artists. They are following money.

Is money going to the wrong place?

Most of the paintings are commercial. The buyers are foreigners. Tourists. They buy it like souvenirs. Dealers, collectors and some museums have bought very artistic work. This is very difficult. They look for quality paintings, but there are no masterpieces. There are few good artists. It’s the government. They need to change their minds.

Can artists aid that process?

An artist never fights the government. He expresses only. He is suffering, and suffering creates strong work.

Some say suffering is necessary for good art. Do you agree?

One of my friends told me – he’s always making political statements in his art and activities, and this was the Suharto era in Indonesia. He said that after Suharto, his country was a free land, and he felt crazy. He thought, “What can I do? How do I create art?” So he looked inside himself. This situation is a little similar in my country.

**1st Myanmar Bartenders’ Competition 2014**

Myanmar Restaurant Assoc(MRA) will be holding the 1st Myanmar Bartenders’ Competition on June 3rd and 4th 2014 at “DJ’s BAR” in the compound of Inya Lake Hotel, Yangon. The prizes are for the winner Kyats 500,000, 2nd place winner Kyats 300,000 and 3rd place winner Kyats 200,000 plus Certificates and gifts. The first two winners will be eligible to compete in the Final 11th AHRA / ASEAN BARTENDERS’ CHAMPIONSHIP 2014 to be held on June 20 in Yangon, Myanmar Convention Centre also. The 3rd place winner will be a reserve for the Championship. Please obtain the Application forms from the following places as well as by downloading from www.myanmar-restaurantassociation.com

- 1.Monsoon Restaurant & Bar, No.85/87, Theinbyu Road, Bohtahtaung T/S, Yangon
- 2.Padonmar Restaurant, No.105-107, Kha Yay Pin Road, Dagon T/S, Yangon
- 3.Myanmar Restaurant Association (MRA), No.40/42, 5th Floor, Bo Soon Pat Street, Pabedan T/S, Yangon

Tel : 09 250087536, 09 73192200, 09 5000164, 09 5183545

Email : mraorg2011@gmail.com, nyinyi2006@gmail.com, hanthi.hts@gmail.com

Application Closing Date is May 20, 2014.

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Residents in Aung Myay Thar San township, Mandalay Region, hold a tug-of-war event in late April. Photo: Si Thu Lwin

Pulling down the rain in Mandalay

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ABLESSING in disguise, this hot summer has kept alive an old tradition: organising a tug-of-war to encourage the rain to fall.

In April, residents of Mandalay and Pyay, Bago Region, hosted a *Moe Khaw Lun Swae Pwe* (rain-calling festival) tug-of-war competition. The time-honoured event is usually practised in the dry regions of Upper Myanmar during the summer months of drought. Residents take part in the competition, giving a prayer and offerings to the spirit Moe Khaung Kyaw Swar in the belief that the rain will pour down to beat the summer heat. It is also celebrated as part of the festivities for Union Day and Independence Day to stoke community spirit.

For the record, a series of rain-calling festivals in Pyay in early May was followed by rain within four days.

"A strange thing happened when two huge groups were celebrating the festival in Pyay. Wind suddenly blew and the branches of trees started to sway. It rained just days

after the festival," said U Kyaw Thu, founder of the Free Funeral Society, who took part in the festival on May 3.

Hundreds of residents of Sae Kyi Swae, Mya Kan Thar and Aung Thukha quarters in Pyay took part in the festival to bring on the monsoon.

Dr Wunna Win, a Pyay resident and founder of Parahita Family, a free welfare service, said, "The festival was held because there was an increase in deaths of older people aged between 60 and 70 from hotter weather in Pyay. I distributed mineral water, soft drinks and purified drinking water to residents to avoid heat-related ailments. That's more effective than praying for rain."

Moe khaw means "rain-calling", while *lun swae* means "rope-pulling". The custom is believed to have originated in Bagan in the 12th century.

"According to the historical record, the custom stemmed from King Narathu's reign in the Bagan era. At that time, Bagan was affected by severe drought, though the rain drenched surrounding areas," said U Wunna, an astrologer and member of the Myanmar Astrological Research Bureau.

"The king was told that he was being punished by the spirit Kyaw Swar for killing an innocent father and child. Therefore, the angry spirit held back the rain from his town," he added.

His counsellors advised him to host the *lun swae pwe* or tug-of-war competition in order to appease the spirit, so his sin would be forgiven.

The other meaning of the word *lun* is "committing" and the word *swae* means "taking back". In organising the competition, the king was committing himself to take back his offence.

"According to the record, rain clouds loomed on the horizon soon after the event was hosted and heavy rain poured down on Bagan," he said.

The spirit was named Moe Khaung Kyaw Swar (*moe khaung* means "drought") after the incident and it has become a tradition related to the drought.

"But in astrology, the drought and rain-calling festival are not connected. The drought and abnormal weather conditions were caused by an eclipse of the sun that occurred on April 29," he said. "I think it might be a coincidence if the rains come after the competition."

WEEKLY PREDICTIONS

MAY 12 - 18, 2014

AQUARIUS | Jan 20 - Feb 18



You cannot simply go on and hope that the world will catch up. Your golden progressive ideas will be lost through your wrong concepts, destructive actions and irrelevant theories. Sudden change and violent reversal will be the consequences of your unsound visions and eccentric interests. Your innovative intellectual ideas may disappear soon.

LEO | July 23 - Aug 22



You are a wizard at organisation and delegating duty. You exhibit sheer genius when you advise others how to operate effectively. It's a sign of extraordinary intellect and intuition, and you are becoming a high-profile person. You will become generous beyond the point of being sensible, and you can expect gratitude and devotion in return.

PISCES | Feb 19 - March 20



Don't be a proud master of marketing illusion. You should decide to stop drifting downstream and turn your visionary wizardry toward real-world goals. Organise yourself to possess an understanding of all human experience as well as a unique compassion that develops out of such knowledge. Your intellect will move everything to higher planes, which means inroads in the tech industry.

VIRGO | Aug 23 - Sept 22



You will get a strong desire to restore the world's order and calm. Any wise and wealth-driven executive would search far and wide for a teammate like you, especially this week. Unexpected disturbances will be unavoidable, but no one can stop you, the brainy communicator. Think of potential dangers in your financial road ahead. Your heart needs more time to enjoy love.

ARIES | Mar 21 - Apr 19



You may be destined for hand-to-hand combat out on the battlefields of finance. You are by no means a behind-the-scenes planner, but hang loose even if you are not at the centre of the game. Know that a high-profile career serves your ego well, but even prestige and power play second fiddle to your need for independence and self-expression.

LIBRA | Sept 23 - Oct 22



Make your life better by yourself. Your lifestyle and social engagements should be free in nature. Your social life must be limited according to your own rules, and you should follow social customs and their boundaries. Your harmonising symbol, the zodiac, keeps you alive and smart. You can expect an emotional response with sound language.

TAURUS | Apr 20 - May 20



Patience, one of your most admirable virtues, may be lost because of your doubtful interference. Your uncertain promises don't help. It's not easy to gain personal trust and agreement when taking financial risks. Believe that part of your dislike of high risk comes from your fixed nature, as it's called in astrology. Be guided by a little progress at each stage of the journey to success.

SCORPIO | Oct 23 - Nov 21



Do not be driven by the tension of destruction. Accept nothing that goes against the law. Information must be classified if you want to make the right choice. Your sign is associated with the power of the underworld, so you can be comfortable dealing at the crossroads of light and darkness, success and failure. Start up enterprises will test your strength.

GEMINI | May 21 - June 20



You are sure to be famous as a cosmic communicator before long. No one thinks or acts faster than you. You can sell any idea or product to even the greatest sceptics. Don't dash off in one direction then suddenly change course with the same speed. Love should not to change according to a feeling of minor dissatisfaction.

SAGITTARIUS | Nov 22 - Dec 21



Be an extroverted individual with a fun-loving manner if you seek a high-profile career that puts you in the centre of the latest action. To ensure you can measure up to your ideals, you should develop a great sense of integrity and always show yourself your best performance. You must calculate your actions and fire with precision when it counts. Love is not to be calculated.

CANCER | June 21 - July 22



Good luck will be with you as you face uneasy financial problems. They are coming to an end soon. Your special mental power is an uncanny ability to understand the basic needs of other people. Be sure to provide a comfortable and secure environment in which employees and your enterprise can grow to full potential.

CAPRICORN | Dec 22 - Jan 19



The concept of conservation opposes the extreme. It means good balance in action. Know that action must be well-timed, right and straightforward. Always be prepared and you will find your balance before you make your first move. Embrace justice and challenges. Understanding yourself is essential to your endeavours.

IN PICTURES

Two men sit waiting expectantly for news of a delivery at Central Women's Hospital in Yangon.
Photo: Zarni Phyo



AUNG MYIN KYAW

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Photos: Supplied

Meet the Pizh'duks

Václav Havel’s fable for children of life under communism receives a Myanmar translation with art by Min Ko Naing

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A RARE genre in children literature is now stretching the limits of Myanmar children’s knowledge. *The Pizh'duks*, written by Václav Havel, is a tiny book describing a very big theme: the ridiculousness of life under communism.

Playwright, poet, politician and the first president of the Czech Republic, Mr Havel wrote this, his only children’s book, in 1975 while under communist rule in the former Czechoslovakia. The book was translated into the English language in 2008 and was translated from English to Myanmar by Maung Day in 2013.

The new edition launched on May 14 at Gallery 65 on Yaw Min Gyi Road, Yangon. It is illustrated with water-colour pictures by poet, writer, artist and dissident Min Ko Naing.

The facetious stories of Pho Sis – Pizh'duks rendered in the Myanmar translation – come in three parts. The first, “Conspiracy”, describes criticism of self-seeking Pho Sis. “Telephone” shows how unwise the Pho Sis are to place faith in telephones. The third part, “Outdoorsman”, depicts how Pho Si lead a life of luxury and privilege.

“It is a kind of art project, aiming to provide children’s books to the mobile library of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi,” Michal Svoboda, the charge d’affaires of the Czech embassy, told *The Myanmar Times*. The result, he said, is a collaboration of minds

that transcends geography and time – revered at home and internationally, the ninth and last president of Czechoslovakia (1989-1992) and the first president of the Czech Republic (1993-2003) passed away in 2011.

“Mr Havel, the former political prisoner, meets another former political prisoner, Min Ko Naing from Myanmar. Together, they do the children book which talks about politics for children,” he said.

“Havel wrote this book to express criticism of communism, criticism of bad politicians, and he described for children in soft way how absurd the dictatorship was. So I believe this is of relevance here because of the close connection between Havel and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the connection between Czech Republic and Myanmar.”

The NLD leader has often expressed her admiration for her fellow Nobel Peace Prize laureate, and he in turn lobbied for her freedom when she was under house arrest.

The Pizh'duks is Mr Havel’s second book to be translated into Myanmar, after *The Power of the Powerless*, a collection of essays.

“The Czech embassy requested that I draw illustrations for Havel’s book,” said Min Ko Naing. “I told them that there are many established artists and I am not a professional. But they pushed me into drawing and they said I am a fellow politician and I have been in the same situation as Havel.”

Min Ko Naing was denied the chance to draw during his first 15-year-term in prison, until 2004,

and in his second term starting in 2006 was only allowed to paint during the last year.

In prison Min Ko Naing was forced to write by sticking plastic sheets on the lime-coated walls and scrawling on them with bamboo.

“When I read *Pizh'duks*, a desire to draw grew, and we owe [Mr Havel] a debt of gratitude. He once proposed a woman of our nation be conferred a Nobel Prize. I thought my contribution to his book will return our country’s gratitude,” Min Ko Naing said.

His paintings – drawn in prison in acrylic and watercolour and painted when he was freed – were on display at the book’s launch.

Min Ko Naing added that this meeting of minds isn’t the first interaction between the two artist-dissidents.

“I hadn’t read Havel’s works before. But I learned of him when I was serving my first imprisonment. When I was released in 2005, I sent a painting painted by my father as a token of my gratitude for his efforts for my country,” he said.

“I received a reply letter from him. He wrote he would value the painting and he was glad to have such a warm relationship between us.

“The illustration got off to a remarkably smooth start because I could catch what he wanted to tell through his tale, and the inspiration struck at the time,” he said.

His idea for the first part of the book was to portray prehistoric people from the Stone Age, to show that the book didn’t represent any one time or society in particular but was universal.

What's on

ART

MAY 18 “&Proud” LGBT photo exhibition. Witness Yangon Art Space, 3rd floor, 4A Parami Road, Mayangone 12pm-5pm

MAY 11-31 “Maika Elan The Pink Choice” World Press Photo Competition Award-winning exploration of same-sex couples in Vietnam. Witness Yangon Art Space, 3rd floor, 4A Parami Road, Mayangone 12pm-5pm

FILM

MAY 29-JUNE 1 Second Brazilian Film Festival. Films in Portuguese with English subtitles. Tickets distributed 1 hour before showtime. Contact 507-225 or cultural.yangon@itamaraty.gov.br. **Nay Pyi Taw Cinema**, near Sule Pagoda. Films start at 3:30pm and 6:30pm

ONGOING Start times at Mingalar (1,2), Thwin, 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 *Make Me Shudder 2 3D*. Directed by Poj Apirut. Thai horror-comedy.

Mingalar 2 Cinema, at Dagon Center 2, Myaynigone, Sanchaung *Make Me Shudder 2 3D*.

Shae Shaung Cinema (1), Sule Pagoda Road, Kyauktada *The Amazing Spider Man 2 3D*. Directed by Marc Webb. Spidey saves the day.

Shae Shaung Cinema (2), Sule Pagoda Road, Kyauktada *Rio 2 3D*. Animated sequel about a group of goodhearted animal friends, this time in the Amazon.

Mingalar (2), Junction Square, Kamaryut *The Amazing Spider Man 3D*. *She Devil*. Directed by Susan Seidelman. Classic 1989 dark comedy starring Ed Begley Jr, Meryl Streep and Roseanne Barr, in which a spurned wife takes revenge on her affluent replacement.

Junction Maw Tin Cineplex, at Junction Center (Maw Tin), corner of Anawrahta and Lanthit, Lanmadaw *The Amazing Spider Man 3D*

MAY 19 - 25

Got an event? List it in What's On! Email: whatsonmt@gmail.com

Mingalar San Pyan Cineplex, Phone Gyi Street and Anawrahta Street, Lanmadaw **Cinema (2)** *Make Me Shudder 2 3D*. **Cinema (3)** *The Amazing Spider Man 2 3D*.

MUSIC

MAY 19 Live blues. Mojo Bar, 135 Inya Road, Bahan 8:30-11:30pm

MAY 30 Notte Jazz: Francesco Cafiso Duet in Concert presented by the Embassy of Italy. National Theatre, U Wisara Road, Dagon 7pm

MAY 31 Hip-Hop Party with DJ Wine, DJ Mickey, Snare, G-Tone, Bobby Soxer, Lil Z and more. Tickets K6500 at Bo Bo Music Production, City Mart, Ocean, Orange, Nobody, Fashion Star and Run YGN, or phone 095108634. Kandawgyi Park, 5:30pm

MISC

MAY 20 Gallery conversation and drinks. Pansodan Gallery, 289 Pansodan Street, Kyauktada, 7pm-late

MAY 22 Topsy Travel Talk Thursdays. Discuss alternative travel in Myanmar over drinks. Off the Beaten Track Café, Kandawgyi Oo Yin Kabar, Kandawgyi Park, Mingalar Taung Nyunt

MAY 22 International Friendship Group cocktail evening for locals and expats. Vietnam Kitchen Restaurant, 1A Phoe Sein Road, Bahan, 6:30-8:30pm

MAY 24 The Pop Up Club Ultimate House Party. Tickets K45,000 each or two for K75,000. Call 09448013450 to reserve. Watch Facebook event page for details. Location TBA

MAY 31 Fab Party. Yangon’s #1 party for gays and lesbians. VIP Bar, Hotel Yangon, 8 Mile, corner of Pyay and Kabar Aye Pagoda roads, Mayangone



In Hollywood

O'Keefe portrays an FBI agent on the TV show *King & Maxwell* (2013). Photo: Supplied

The Zen of Michael O'Keefe

An interview with the longtime American film and TV actor

STUART ALAN BECKER
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WHEN I recently re-watched the 1979 movie *The Great Santini* starring Robert Duvall, the story reminded me of my own childhood. Duvall plays a jet pilot and colonel of the US Marine Corps – a gung-ho officer father who subjects his military brat teenage son to scrutiny. The son is played by a young Michael O'Keefe.

The film struck such an emotional chord that I searched Google for O'Keefe and sent him an email, which turned into an interview for *The Myanmar Times*.

O'Keefe has appeared in many movies and television shows over the years. When he made *The Great Santini*, he worked alongside Blythe Danner when her daughter, Gwyneth Paltrow, was 11 years old. He's acted with George Clooney, Jack Nicholson, Bill Murray, Tommy Lee Jones and the late Phillip Seymour Hoffman.

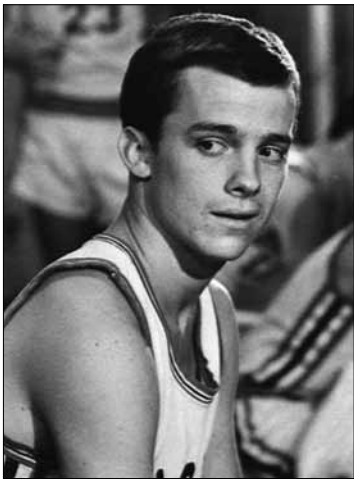
Formerly married to country singer Bonnie Raitt, O'Keefe is now a devoted father to his baby son, Aiden. He spends time meditating and traveling to places like Northern Ireland to support the teaching of Zen.

Why did you become an actor?

I was always aware of television and film as a child and had a fascination beyond the usual TV watching of childhood. At the age of 15 I saw Sam Waterston in *Trial of the Catonsville Nine* and *Much Ado About Nothing*. I remember thinking, "I want to do that." (Whatever "that" was.)

How old were you when you did *The Great Santini*? How did it impact you?

I was 23 when we made *Santini*. That movie had, and still has, a profound influence on me. Working with Robert Duvall at the height of his powers was amazing, edifying and exhilarating. I still have a close friendship with Pat Conroy after all these years. We all hope to make

O'Keefe in *The Great Santini* (1979). Photo: Supplied

his memoir, *Death of Santini*, into a film with Duvall, Blythe and me.

What do you remember of Phillip Seymour Hoffman?

Since Phillip Seymour Hoffman died I am reminded of how I marvelled at his capacity to create a wide range of believable and utterly distinct characters. We weren't close but we did know each other for many years. While I was getting my MFA in Poetry at Bennington College he was there with the Labyrinth Theater for their summer workshop. He was gracious enough to sit for an interview with me in front of the entire writing program. He was forthright, fascinating, smart, funny and brilliant, both in the interview and in his work.

What role brought out the best in you?

To be honest, I don't think I've ever found the role that shows me at my best in film. That's not to say I'm not grateful for the career, because I am, and grateful to have worked with some of the best in the business. But one of the reasons I keep going is that I have an inner sense that there's a part for me that will allow me to distinguish myself as an actor. So, I keep auditioning, working on my craft and looking for that part, which I hope is out there somewhere in the future.

What's been your favourite role?

I don't really have a favorite role as much as I have great memories from projects over the years. Certainly, working opposite Robert Duvall was an amazing opportunity for me as a young actor. Being on camera with George Clooney and Sydney Pollack in *Michael Clayton*, two films with Jack Nicholson, one of which was directed by Sean Penn. The national tour of Aaron Sorkin's *A Few Good Men* [...] and now being in Steven Soderbergh's production of *The Library* at the Public Theater in New York. I guess what I am saying is as a 15-year-old I had this compelling need to become an actor and it turns out that I did. That's my favorite thing about acting, that I found a way to make it my life.

Would you tell us how you got into the practice of Zen?

As a teenager I'd read a great deal of Ginsberg, Kerouac, Corso and, most importantly, Gary Snyder. Snyder was one of the first Americans to live in Japan and receive Dharma succession. Years later I met him through our mutual friend Peter Coyote and was able to tell him of the influence he had on me. For my 30th birthday a friend took me to an Introduction to Zen Practice with Bernie Glassman's lineage, at the Zen Community of New York in Riverdale. I never looked back.

Why did Zen appeal to you?

The sitting leads to development of concentration, sensory clarity and equanimity. The long hours of meditation have a settling effect and as I settle, so do my conflicts, shortcomings and concerns. To lose oneself in meditation is to lose one's attachments. To meditate is to end the separation between oneself, others and the universe. And when the separation, or illusion of separation, is resolved then things appear as they are.

Now that I'm a father my motivation to practise is stronger than ever. I don't want to tell my son how to live. I want to live in a way he can model and see its merits without me having to explain anything.



NEW YORK Barnett Newman painting sells for \$84 million

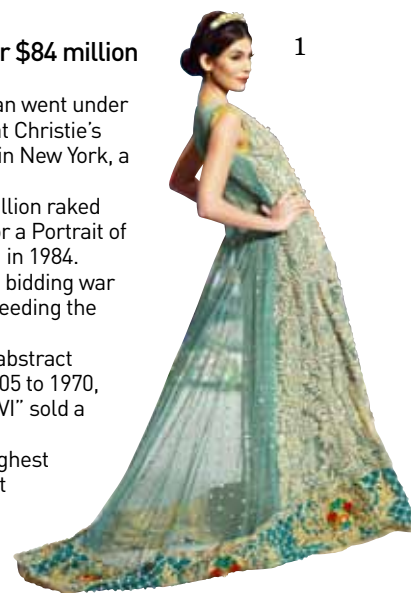
A painting by American Barnett Newman went under the gavel for US\$84 million on May 13 at Christie's postwar and contemporary art auction in New York, a record price for the artist.

"Black Fire I" topped the \$80.805 million raked in for Francis Bacon's "Three Studies for a Portrait of John Edwards", three canvases painted in 1984.

"Black Fire I" sparked a contentious bidding war between two telephone bidders, far exceeding the estimated value of \$50 million.

The previous record for Barnett, an abstract expressionist painter who lived from 1905 to 1970, was \$43.8 million, when his "Onement VI" sold a year ago at Sotheby's.

However, the world record for the highest price fetched at auction for a work of art remains with Bacon, whose triptych, "Three Studies of Lucian Freud", was sold last year by Christie's for \$142.4 million.



1

2



STOCKHOLM Swedish 'Sugar Man' documentary maker dies at 36

Swedish director Malik Bendjelloul, who won an Oscar for his 2012 documentary, *Searching for Sugar Man*, died in Stockholm on May 13, the TT news agency reported. He was 36.

The circumstances of his death were not immediately clear, but police said it was not a murder. They gave no other details of where the death took place, but said the body was found in the afternoon.

First-time director Bendjelloul won an Oscar for Best Documentary Feature last year for *Searching for Sugar Man*, which told the story of a musician who became famous without knowing it.

Born to an Algerian father and a Swedish mother in 1977 in the small southern town of Ystad, the young filmmaker moved to Stockholm as his career became more successful.

Bendjelloul first discovered Rodriguez while travelling for six months in Africa in 2006, and was fascinated by his story.

CANNES Film fest opens with critical mauling for Kidman's 'Grace of Monaco'

The world's biggest film festival opened in Cannes on May 14 with a blast of controversy as critics savaged the opening movie about Hollywood-darling-turned-princess Grace of Monaco, starring Nicole Kidman.

The Monaco princely family disavowed a film they say bears no resemblance to reality, and critics who got a sneak preview made no secret of their contempt.

"The cringe-factor is ionospherically high," *Guardian* film maestro Peter Bradshaw wrote.

"A fleet of ambulances may have to be stationed outside the Palais to take tuxed audiences to hospital afterwards to have their toes uncured under general anaesthetic."

On the red carpet, Kidman sparkled in a blue, jewelled strapless dress, smiling for the cameras next to downcast-looking French director Olivier Dahan.

In the film, the Australian-born actress portrays an unhappy Grace who contemplates divorce from Prince Rainier before rallying to help her husband solve a 1962 political crisis with France.



3



WASHINGTON Greenwald says book reveals true picture of Snowden

Journalist Glenn Greenwald said May 14 his book describing the sequence of events around Edward Snowden's release of classified documents demonstrates the fugitive former contractor was neither "reckless" nor "treasonous".

In an appearance in Washington, Greenwald said the former National Security Agency contractor carefully sorted the material into items he felt should be made public and those he asked the journalists he met to decide whether to publish.

"There was other information he was insistent should not be published," Greenwald told a group as part of his tour promoting his book, *No Place to Hide*, released earlier this week.

"He did not come forward in order to harm the United States," said the journalist who led the Pulitzer Prize-winning team at *The Guardian* that broke the story about NSA surveillance based on Snowden's files.

1, 2: Models display the Chanel 2014-15 Cruise collection in Dubai on May 14. Photos: AFP/Marwan Naamani

3,4: Models present creations by Pakistani designer Tabassum Mughal during the last day of the Bridal Couture Week in Karachi on May 11. Photos: AFP/Rizwan Tabassum

Make time with easy grilled chicken



PHYTO ARBIDANS
phyto.arbidans@gmail.com

ITALIAN SUMMER RICE SALAD

Serves 6

- 3 cups cooked rice
- 1 cup frozen peas
- 100g green beans
- 1 bunch asparagus
- 1 cup pitted olives
- 12 leaves basil or Asian basil

FOR DRESSING

- 1 clove garlic
- ½ cup olive oil
- ¼ cup balsamic vinegar
- ½ tsp sugar
- Ground black pepper and salt

For the dressing, add all the ingredients to a jar and shake well.

Defrost the frozen peas at room temperature. Boil water in a sauce pan with 1 tsp of salt. One ingredient at a time, blanch the peas, beans and asparagus.

Refresh veggies in an icy cold water bath to stop the cooking. Dry well.

Just before eating, prepare all the rice in a big bowl, sprinkle on the veggies and olives, and pour the dressing over. Mix well.

food



Photo: Phyto

JAMIE Oliver's 30-minute meals cooking series is inspiring me a lot these days. When I come home, I just want to unwind and enjoy time with my daughter and my hobbies. My daughter is old enough now to participate in making crafts and I want to start having a regular "craft night" with her.

Thus I am experimenting with quick-and-easy dinners, which I will add to my weeknight dinner menus, leaving more time to be crafty. I think there are a lot of you out there like me, so here are the recipes.

You can marinate the chicken before you leave the house in the morning and leave it in the fridge. When you are back from work it will be ready. You just have to throw it on the grill. While the meat is resting, you can refresh yourself for dinner. How cool is that!

I've also included a rice salad recipe that's great for the lunch box or a healthy TV dinner.

HERB AND LIME GRILLED CHICKEN

Serves 6

- 12 chicken thighs, skins left on
- 7 tbsp fresh lime juice
- 1 long green chilli
- 2 cups mint leaves, or 1 bunch
- 2 cups coriander, or 1 bunch

FOR GARNISH

- 3 limes
- 2 long green chillies

Wash the chicken and discard the fat as much as you can. Pat dry with kitchen paper.

Halve the chilli, discard the seeds and slice it finely. Wash the coriander and mint leaves and dry them well. Chop finely. Reserve a third for garnish.

In a glass bowl, mix chilli, mint, coriander, lime juice and oil. Marinate the chicken in the bowl, rubbing the mixture over it thoroughly. Leave in the fridge for at least 4-5 hours.

Before grilling, bring the chicken back to room temperature for half an hour.

Heat a grill pan on high. Arrange the chicken on it with the skin side down. When the skins are nicely cooked, turn and cook the other side.

Turn the chicken a few times to cook through. Brush the tops and sides of the chicken with the marinade while grilling to keep it moist. Check for doneness with a pointy knife.

When all the chicken is cooked through, transfer to a plate and cover with aluminium foil. Let rest 10 minutes.

Garnish with mint and coriander leaves. Serve with lime and chillies.

Restaurant Review

Mr Chef

112 Kyauk Myaung Street, Tarmwe, open 10am-11pm

A local diner keeps it simple

NYEIN EI EI HTWE
nyeineiehtwe23@gmail.com

THE striking black and white decor at Mr Chef is enough to wake up diners even through the high temperatures of a summer afternoon. Black and white paintings decorate the tables. The sofas are black and white, and so are the walls. There's air-con, and the tables are topped with small colourful vases of flowers.

My dining partner and I visited the Tarmwe township location of this restaurant chain, where you can eat Chinese, Thai and traditional Myanmar curries with rice. There are franchises also at Dagon Center II, Ruby Mart and AKK mall.

Kyaw Zaw Linn opened the first Mr Chef in Dagon Center II in 2010.

"I want my restaurants to be a place to rest and eat after you're tired from shopping," he said. "I offer one-set dishes [rice with curry] because you don't need to calculate how much things cost and you don't need to share the food."

All Mr Chefs boast the same black-and-white colours, a scheme chosen by Kyaw Zaw Linn with the desire to create a family-restaurant ambience. "Except at Kyauk Myaung, we don't sell beer or any alcoholic beverages because we hope our main customers are students, families and friends after shopping," he said. "I chose the name Mr Chef because when we hear those words, it makes us think of food and it makes us hungry."

All the chefs at the restaurant are local, and are trained by the chef-in-

chief who works at the Dagon branch. They offer 70 different dishes in categories including appetizers, soup and dim sum, noodles, salads and mains. For cold drinks and dessert there are frappés, sodas, smoothies, ice cream and other confections.

I chose a yogurt and kiwi blend while my companion went for the blueberry soda, both priced at K1800. As a starter, I ordered fried sausage with seaweed from among many small dishes priced at K2500.

For our mains, we ordered chicken curry in Kachin traditional style (with bamboo roots, chilli, coriander, sour mustard and carrot) and fried kimchi rice (with sour vegetables in Korean traditional sauce) and fried pork ribs. The dishes cost only K2700 and K2800.

After a few minutes our drinks arrived and they were even fresher and more attractive than we'd hoped. Though neither of the juices were served cold enough (just with a little ice), we liked their taste and forgot our hot-weather woes.

The fried sausage with seaweed tasted good to me, but I wanted it fried crisper, as it was a bit chewy.

Rice with chicken curry was nice but spiced on the hot side. It was the same for the fried rice with pork ribs. The chicken curry was well-cooked in red chilli paste, but it won't appeal to diners who don't like sweet and rich food.

We ordered ice cream to cool our tongues. The "banana boat" is filled with three kinds of ice cream, including chocolate, vanilla and milk,



and chopped banana (K1500). It was average compared to other similar restaurants, except for the attractive decoration with banana and chocolate sprinkles.

The free Wi-Fi is easy to connect to and of so-so quality. But factor in the air-con and you'll find Mr Chef is a pleasant choice for weary budget diners with a taste for black-and-white fashions and reliable Myanmar and Asian dishes.

Restaurant Rating

★★★★★

FOOD	7
BEVERAGE	8
SERVICE	8
VALUE FOR MONEY	7
X-FACTOR	6



Photos: Aung Htay Hlaing

bYSI fashion store opening



Gonyi Aye Kyaw



Khine Thazin Ngu War



Htay Min Tun



Nang Khay Mar



Khine Thazin Yu War

On Saturday, May 10, the Majestic Trading Co., Ltd opened their third shop of Singapore branded bYSI at Sky Walk Shopping Mall in Mandalay. Managing director Daw Khin Thidar Win explained that the shop offers evening dresses and smart casuals for the ladies from the age of 20 to 45. After that, the attending customers and media enjoyed the show performed by many famous celebrities and models showing off bYSI's 2014 spring and summer fashion collections.



Tun Eindra Bo



Daw Khin Thidar Win



Thinzar Wint Kyaw

Sky Walk mall opening



Daw Mya Mya Win, Daw Nang May and Daw Khin Hnin Phyu



Daw San San Win, Daw Aye Aye and Daw Myint Myint



Daw Myint Myint Win



Ma Lin Lin, Ma Sa Sa Chan Myae, Ma Khin Than Than and U Eike Sann

The famous shopping mall Sky Walk reopened on May 10 at the corner of 78th and 34th streets in Mandalay after six years. The invited guests, media and visitors turned out for the ribbon-cutting ceremony by managing director Daw Myint Myint Win and Mayor U Aung Moun and enjoyed a day of shopping at the mall following the opening of a number of well-known brand shops.



Ma Phyo Phyo Hlaing and Ma Theingi Nyein

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- * Dagon Center (I) : 09 317 86835, 01-527292, 526971, 536796 Ext.: 224
- * 9 Mile : 09 48208234, 250722149
- * United Living Mall : 09 3030645

၄၆ Sales Agent များဆောင်ရွက်ထားပါသည်။

YANGON ICT FAIR 23.5.14 ~ 25.5.14

Tatmadaw Hall 30.5.14 ~ 1.6.14

2nd Mobile and Tablet Fair

Cefkin at Jefferson Center Library in Mandalay



The US Government's Senior Advisor for Myanmar Judith Beth Cefkin participates at Jefferson Center Day on May 10 in Mandalay.



Nann Thein Thein Htike and Erik Eisele

The US government's Senior Advisor for Myanmar Judith Beth Cefkin visited Mandalay last Saturday, May 10, to welcome educators from all over upper Myanmar to the Jefferson Center Library on 26th Street, a location which served as Mandalay's US Consulate in years past. On hand was the US Embassy's Cultural Affairs Officer Erik Eisele (standing in for Ambassador Derek Mitchell, who had taken ill) and other officials who welcomed more than 100 visitors to the fully equipped library that offers print and online materials. The library welcomed book donations from the Asia Foundation to 86 community libraries, colleges, schools and centres in Upper Myanmar. The Jefferson Center is part of the US Embassy's expanding cultural program including English language classes and library facilities.

French Love Fridays



Pierre, Hugo and Jeremie



Chris and Anna

The first rains didn't stop hundreds of people from gathering in the gardens of the French Institute on May 9 for the third edition of the monthly electro open air party, French Love Fridays. When he is not leading the French Institute, Oliver Stockholm is a DJ, combining progressive house with 80s sounds (synthpop, new wave, Eurobeat, Italo-Disco, Eurodance), and dancefloor music, with "French Touch" influences.



Naithy, Julia, Fabrizio and Joanna



Graemie, Nenen and Karen



Matt and Laura

Yangon Boat Party



John and Tamir



Kelsey



Colton



Katie



Katie

On May 10th, Yangonites boarded at Warden Jetty for a wonderful sunset cruise organised by the Yangon Boat Party, complete with a grandiose burning sky, a lot of dancing, a free flow of drinks and a roasted pig!



Marshall and Shawn



Dan and Maria



Zin Mar Lwin



Zay Yar Lwin



Kyaw Kyaw Htet, Suu Yi Lwin and Bo Bo Win



Ko Sai



Myat Thu



Photos:
ima/Emmanuel Maillard
imaphotodesign@gmail.com



Bangkok's Count the Thief

Another strike for the JamIt! movement: On May 10 JamIt! rocked the Right Track Bowling Center in Tarnwe Lay. Direct from Bangkok, the band Count the Thief played their first gig in Myanmar, while Big Bag's Han Htue Lwin and Ye Zaw Myo performed with their other band, Blood Sugar Politik.

JamIt!



Happy fans



Eugene



Zaw Myo Tun



Ye Naing Tun and friend



Han Htoo Lwin

Vaclav Havel book launch



Thu Thu,

Marke Ta

Theikdi

On May 14, at Gallery 65, the Embassy of the Czech Republic launched the Myanmar translation of *The Pizh'duks*, the famous children's book by the former Czech president and writer Vaclav Havel. The book is illustrated by artist and activist Min Ko Naing, whose work was on exhibit at the gallery.



Min Ko Naing



Kay Khaing Theint and Ju Jue Thet Lwin



Wai Linn

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	16:45	17:45	

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	18:05	19:05	

YANGON TO MANDALAY				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YJ 761	6	6:00	7:25	
YJ 891	2,4,5,7	6:00	8:05	
YJ 891	1	6:00	7:55	
YJ 211	5,7	6:00	7:25	
YJ 201	2,3,4	6:00	7:25	
K7 282	Daily	6:30	8:40	
YH 917	Daily	6:10	8:30	
Y5 234	Daily	6:15	7:30	
6T 401	Daily	6:20	8:25	
YJ 003	3,6	7:00	8:20	
YJ 233	1	7:00	8:25	
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	
K7 844	Daily	11:00	14:10	
YJ 233	6	11:00	12:25	
YJ 761	1,2,4	11:00	12:55	
YH 727	1	11:00	13:10	
YH 737	3,5,7	11:00	13:10	
YH 729	4,6	11:00	14:00	
YH 729	2	11:00	16:40	
W9 251	2,5	11:15	12:40	
YJ 601	4,6	12:30	13:55	
YJ 761	5	13:00	14:25	
K7 226	2,4,6	13:00	14:25	
6T 501	Daily	14:30	16:30	
YH 731	2,6	14:30	16:40	
W9 129	Daily	15:00	16:55	

MANDALAY TO YANGON				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
Y5 233	Daily	8:10	9:25	
YJ 891	1	8:10	10:05	
YJ 891	2,4,5,7	8:20	10:15	
YH 918	Daily	8:30	10:25	
6T 402	Daily	8:45	10:45	
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	
YJ 761	6	10:30	11:55	
YJ 202	6	10:30	11:55	

YJ 212	5,7	11:00	12:25
K7 823	2,4,7	11:25	14:25
YH 728	1	13:10	18:45
YJ 234	1	13:20	14:45
YJ 004	3,6	13:30	15:25
K7 643	Daily	12:35	16:25
W9 120	1,3,6	16:30	17:55
YH 732	2,6	16:40	18:45
K7 227	2,4,7	16:50	18:15
6T 502	Daily	16:50	18:55
YH 730	2	16:40	18:05
YJ 204	4	16:55	18:20
YJ 602	4,6	17:10	18:35
W9 129	Daily	17:10	18:35
YH 738	3,5,7	17:10	18:35
W9 211	Daily	17:10	19:15
8M 6604	2,4,7	17:20	18:30
YJ 761	5	17:30	19:25
YH 730	4,6	17:45	19:10

YANGON TO NYAUNG U				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YJ 891	2,4,5,7	6:00	7:20	
YH 917	Daily	6:10	7:45	
W9 141	Daily	6:15	7:35	
6T 401	Daily	6:20	7:40	
K7 282	Daily	6:30	7:50	
YJ 003	3,6	7:00	8:20	
W9 143	Daily	7:15	8:35	
6T 501	Daily	14:30	17:20	
YH 731	3	14:30	16:50	
YH 731	2,6	14:30	17:25	
W9 211	Daily	15:30	17:40	

NYAUNG U TO YANGON				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YJ 891	2,4,5,7	7:35	10:15	
YH 918	Daily	7:45	10:25	
W9 141	Daily	7:50	10:40	
6T 401	Daily	7:55	10:45	
W9 144	Daily	8:50	10:10	
K7 283	Daily	10:40	12:00	
YH 732	3	16:50	18:10	
YH 732	2,6	17:25	18:45	
6T 502	Daily	17:35	18:55	
W9 211	Daily	17:55	19:15	

YANGON TO MYITKYINA				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YJ 201	2,3,4	6:00	8:50	
YJ 211	5,7	6:00	8:50	
YJ 233	1	7:00	9:50	
YH 826	2	7:00	9:40	
YH 826	6	7:00	10:00	
K7 642	Daily	8:30	10:50	
YJ 233	6	11:00	13:50	
W9 251	2,5	11:15	14:10	
YH 826	4	14:00	16:40	

MYITKYINA TO YANGON				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YJ 202	2,3,4	9:05	11:55	
YJ 212	5,7	9:05	12:25	

YH 827	2	9:40	11:05
YH 827	6	10:00	12:25
YJ 234	1	11:55	14:45
K7 643	Daily	14:05	16:25
YJ 203	4	15:15	18:20
YJ 234	6	15:55	18:45
W9 252	2,5	16:05	19:00
YH 827	4	16:40	19:05

YANGON TO HEHO				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YJ 891	1	6:00	8:40	
YJ 891	2,4,5,7	6:00	8:50	
YH 917	Daily	6:10	9:15	
W9 141	Daily	6:15	8:20	
6T 401	Daily	6:20	9:20	
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 761	1,2,4	11:00	12:10	
K7 844	Daily	11:00	15:00	
W9 203	Daily	11:00	12:10	
YH 737	3,5,7	11:00	12:25	
YH 727	1	11:00	12:25	
W9 119	1,3,6	11:15	12:25	
YJ 751	5,7	12:30	13:40	
6T 501	Daily	14:30	15:40	
YH 731	2,3,6	14:30	15:55	
W9 129	Daily	15:00	16:10	

HEHO TO YANGON				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
W9 141	Daily	8:35	10:40	
YJ 891	1	8:55	10:05	
YJ 891	2,4,5,7	9:00	10:15	
YH 918	Daily	9:15	10:25	
6T 402	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	
W9 204	Daily	12:25	13:35	
YH 728	1	12:25	18:45	
K7 829	1,3,5	13:50	15:05	
YJ 004	3,6	14:15	15:25	
K7 845	Daily	15:15	18:10	
W9 120	1,3,6	15:45	17:55	
YJ 761	1,2,4	15:50	18:00	
6T 501	Daily	15:55	18:55	
YH 732	2,6	15:55	18:45	
YH 732	3	15:55	18:10	
YH 738	3,5,7	16:25	18:35	
W9 129	Daily	16:25	18:35	
YJ 751	5,7	17:00	18:10	
YJ 751	3	17:35	18:45	

YANGON TO SIT T WE				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
6T 607	1	11:15	12:40	
6T 613	2,3,4,6,7	11:15	12:40	

6T 605	5	11:15	12:10
K7 422	Daily	13:30	15:25

SIT T WE TO YANGON				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
6T 614	2,3,4,6,7	13:00	14:25	
6T 608	1	13:00	15:00	
6T 606	5	13:35	15:00	
K7 423	Daily	15:40	17:00	

YANGON TO MYEIK				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YH 633	1,3,4,5,7	7:00	9:15	
K7 319	Daily	7:00	9:05	
6T 707	1,2,4,5,6	7:45	9:45	

MYEIK TO YANGON				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YH 634	1,3,4,5,7	11:25	13:25	
K7 320	Daily	11:30	13:35	
6T 708	1,2,4,5,6	12:10	14:10	

YANGON TO THANDWE				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
W9 141	Daily	6:15	9:35	
6T 605	5	11:15	12:10	
6T 607	1	11:15	13:50	
K7 422	Daily	13:30	14:25	

THANDWE TO YANGON				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
6T 605	5	12:25	15:00	
6T 608	1	14:05	15:00	
K7 422	Daily	14:40	17:00	

YANGON TO DAWEI			
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
6T 707	1,2,4,5,6	7:45	8:55
YH 633	1,3,4,5,7	7:00	8:25

INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT SCHEDULES

YANGON TO BANGKOK				
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr	
PG 706	Daily	6:15	8:30	
8M 335	Daily	7:40	9:25	
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	
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	12:15	14:05	
FD 2754	Daily	17:50	19:35	
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	
Y5 233	Daily	10:10	14:40	
SQ 997	Daily	10:25	14:45	
3K 586	2,4,6	11:20	15:50	
TR 2827	1,6,7	15:10	19:35	
TR 2827	2,3,4,5	17:10	21:35	
3K 588	1,3,4,6	19:15	23:45	

YANGON TO KUALA LUMPUR				
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr	
8M 501	1,3,5,6	8:55	12:55	
AK 1425	Daily	8:30	12:50	
MH 741	Daily	12:15	16:30	
8M 9506	Daily	12:15	16:30	
8M 9508	Daily	15:45	20:05	
MH 743	Daily	15:45	20:05	
AK 1421	Daily	16:45	21:00	

YANGON TO BEIJING				
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr	
CA 716	3,7	23:50	0550+1	

YANGON TO GAUNGZHOU				
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr	
8M 711	2,4,7	8:40	13:15	
CZ 3056	3,6	11:25	16:15	
CZ 3056	1,5	17:30	22:15	

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	
CA 906	Daily	12:15	15:55	
MU 2012	3	12:20	18:20	
MU 2032	1,2,4,5,6,7	14:50	18:20	

YANGON TO HANOI				
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr	
VN 956	1,3,5,6,7	19:10	21:30	

YANGON TO HO CHI MINH CITY				
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr	
VN 942	2,4,7	14:25	17:15	

YANGON TO DOHA				
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr	
QR 919	1,4,6	7:40	11:10	

YANGON TO PHNOM PENH				
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr	
8M 403	3,6	16:50	19:15	

YANGON TO SEOUL				
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr	
OZ 770	4,7	0:35	9:10	
KE 472	2,3,4	23:35	8:05+1	

YANGON TO HONG KONG				
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr	
KA 251	1,2,4,6	01:10	05:45	

YANGON TO TOKYO				
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr	
NH 914	Daily	21:45	06:50+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	3,5,6	7:00	8:20	

YANGON TO DHAKA				
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr	
BG 061	1,4	19:45	21:00	

YANGON TO INCHEON				
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr	
8M 7702	Daily	23:35	8:05	
8M7502	4,7	0:35	9:10	

MANDALAY TO BANGKOK				
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr	
PG 710	Daily	14:05	16:30	

MANDALAY TO SINGAPORE				
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr	
Y5 233	Daily	8:05	14:40	

MANDALAY TO DON MUENG				
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr	
FD 2761	Daily	12:45	15:00	

MANDALAY TO KUNMING				
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr	
MU 2030	Daily	14:40	17:30	

MANDALAY TO GAYA				
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr	
8M 603	4	11:10	12:15	

NAYPYIDAW TO BANGKOK				
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr	
PG 722	1,2,3,4,5	19:30	22:30	

BANGKOK TO YANGON				
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr	
TG 303	Daily	7:55	8:50	
PG 701	Daily	8:50	9:40	
8M 336	Daily	10:40	11:25	
TG 301	Daily	13:00	13:55	
PG 707	Daily	13:40	14:30	
PG 703	Daily	16:45	17:35	
TG 305	Daily	17:50	18:45	
8M 332	Daily	19:15	20:00	
PG 705	Daily	20:00	21:30	

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	11:10	11:45	
FD 2753	Daily	16:35	17:20	
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	1,3,4,6	9:10	10:45	
TR 2826	1,6,7	13:10	14:30	
8M 232	Daily	13:25	14:50	
MI 518	Daily	14:20	15:45	
TR 2826	2,3,4,5	15:00	16:30	
Y5 234	Daily	15:35	17:05	
3K 587	2,5	17:05	18:35	
MI 520	5,7	22:10	23:35	

BEIJING TO YANGON				
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr	
CA 905	3,5,7	19:30	22:50	

KAULA LUMPUR TO YANGON				
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr	
AK 1426	Daily	6:55	8:00	
MH 740	Daily	10:05	11:15	
8M 9505	Daily	10:05	11:15	
8M 502	1,2,3,5,6	12:50	13:50	
8M 9507	Daily	13:30	14:40	
MH 742	Daily	13:50	15:00	
AK 1420	Daily	15:05	16:15	

GUANGZHOU TO YANGON				
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr	
CZ 3055	3,6	8:40	10:25	
CZ 3055	1,5	14:40	16:30	
8M 712	2,4,7	14:15	15:50	

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.
Nok Airline (DD) Tel: 255050, 255021, Fax: 255051

TAIPEI TO YANGON				
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr	
CI 7915	1,2,3,5,6	7:00	9:55	

KUNMING TO YANGON				
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr	
MU 2011	3	8:25	11:40	
CA 905	Daily	10:45	11:15	
MU 2031	1,2,4,5,6,7	13:30	14:00	

HANOI TO YANGON				
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr	
VN 957	1,3,5,6,7	16:50	18:10	

HO CHI MINH CITY TO YANGON				
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr	
VN 943	2,4,7	11:40	13:25	

DOHA TO YANGON				
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr	
QR 918	Daily	20:30	6:15+1	

GAYA TO YANGON				
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr	
8M 602	3,5,6	9:20	12:30	

PHNOM PENH TO YANGON				
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr	
8M 404	3,6	20:15	21:40	

SEOUL TO YANGON			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
KE 471	2,3,4	18:45	22:35
OZ 769	3,6	19:50	23:45

Universal Crossword

Edited by Timothy E. Parker

PICNIC IT By Tim Burr

ACROSS

- 1 "Get outta here!"
5 Ski lift
9 Prepare, as a violin bow
14 Corkscrew-horned antelope
15 Rice-A-____
16 Sports venue
17 Persia, today
18 Tired-blood vanquisher
19 Poe bird
20 City moneymakers
23 Prime meridian letters
25 Common Market abbreviation, once
26 Watchful and ready
27 Some fetes
29 Tax assessment
31 Tree-shaded place
32 Scotch or masking
33 Singer Tori
37 First National of Wyoming?
40 Snow-day vehicle
41 Horse's fare
42 Dweebish
43 Heal
44 Part of a foot
45 Kind of jar
48 Hartebeest kin
49 Umbrage
50 It deals with recreation
54 Native Alaskan
55 Round farm building
56 Three-piece piece
59 Play for time
60 Lie at ease
61 Pins and needles case
62 Overstuffed with dialogue
63 "So what ____ is new?"
64 Request on an invitation

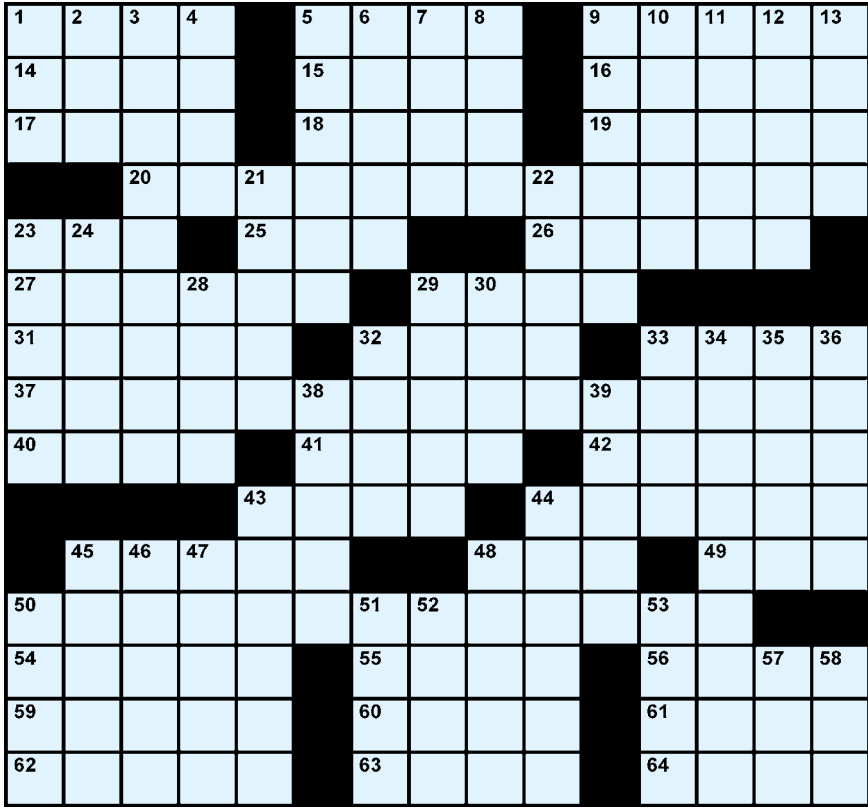
DOWN

- 1 Snowmobile part
2 Mean mutt
3 Not limited to one use
4 Popular salad fish

- 5 Tots' wheels
6 ____ acid (mild antiseptic)
7 In a bit, to Shakespeare
8 Symbol of a commitment
9 Hardly ever
10 Stand up and speak
11 Cut, as ties
12 Not exactly active
13 Fabray and Bobbey
21 Stylishly old-fashioned
22 Acknowledged expert
23 Shows one's age

- 24 Edible mushroom
28 Auctioneer's closing word
29 Espresso with milk
30 Grand poetry
32 Old Russian royal (Var.)
33 Lummoxes
34 Rigid disciplinarians
35 Law's partner
36 Online call company
38 Got the watch going
39 Boredom
43 Expensive
44 Foot pad?

- 45 Valletta's island
46 "You did ____ nice job"
47 Hide in the dark
48 Underwater breathing organs
50 Time machine's destination
51 Robinson Crusoe's home
52 Fretted fiddle
53 In excess of
57 Vehicle not chosen for its mpg
58 Cash left behind



DILBERT

BY SCOTT ADAMS



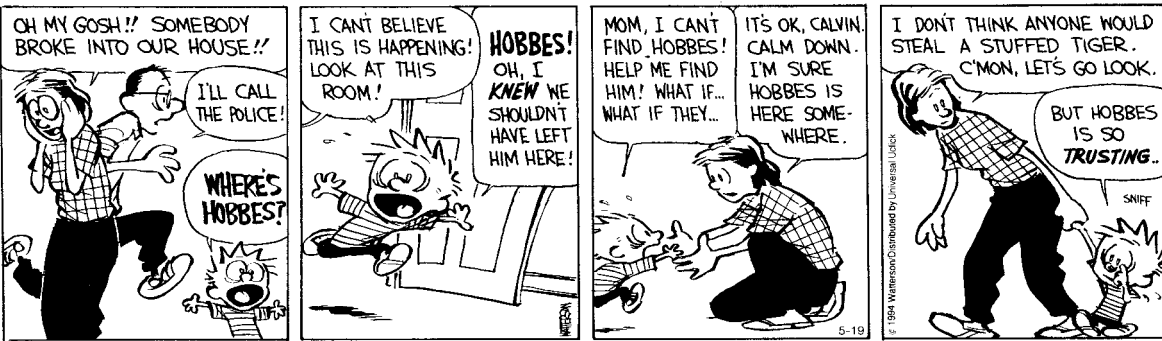
PEANUTS

BY CHARLES SCHULZ



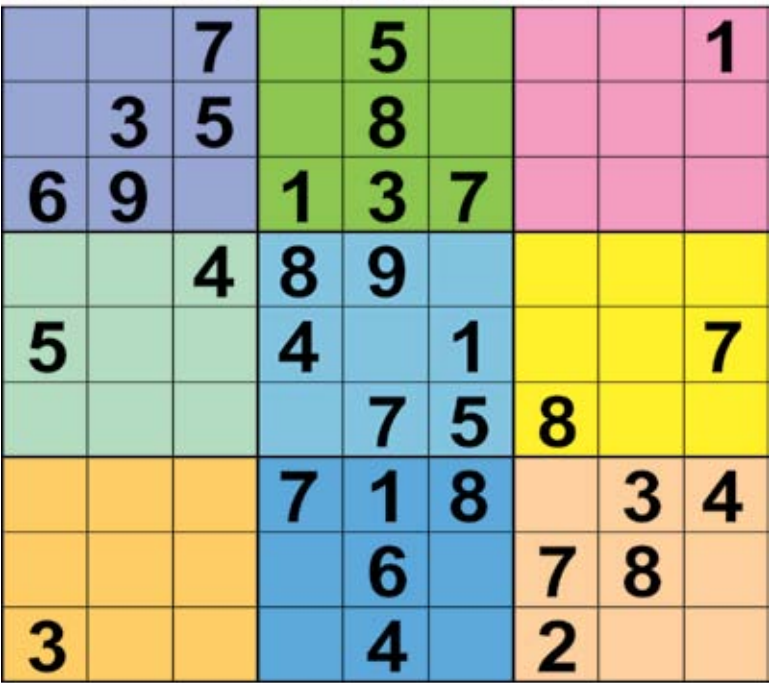
CALVIN AND HOBBS

BY BILL WATTERSON



SUDOKU PACIFIC

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains every digit from 1 to 9 inclusively.



5/22

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

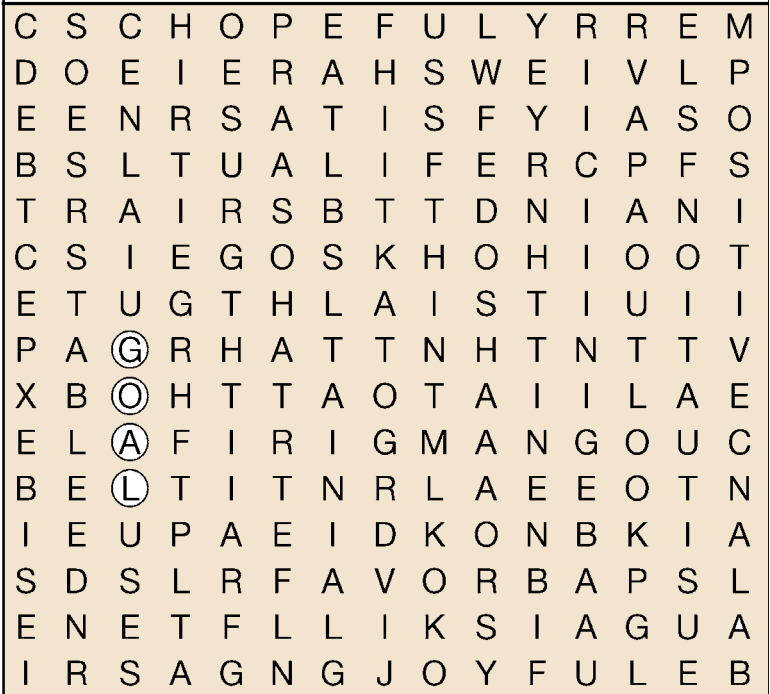
WONDERWORD

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.

BE OPTIMISTIC

Solution: 8 letters



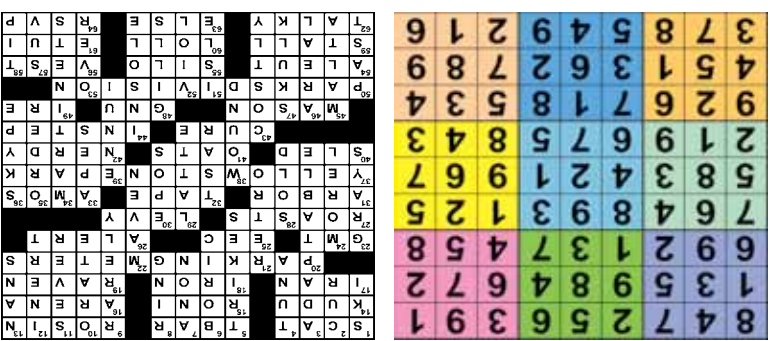
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5/19

Affirmations, Assures, At Ease, Attitude, Balance, Basic, Begin, Best, Bright, Calm, Control, Delight, Drive, Expect, Faith, Favor, Glad, Global, Goal, Health, Hopeful, Idea, Inspiration, Joyful, Life, Manage, Merry, Outlook, Positive, Relationships, Satisfy, Self-Talk, Share, Situation, Skill, Stable, Strength, Trust, Upbeat, Views

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Australia 88, Strand Road, Yangon. Tel : 251810, 251797, 251798.

Bangladesh 11-B, Than Lwin Road, Yangon. Tel: 515275, 526144, email: bdootygn@mptmail.net.mm

Brazil 56, Pyay Road, 6th mile, Hlaing Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 507225, 507251. email: Administ.yangon@itamaraty.gov.br.

Brunei 17, Kanbawza Avenue, Golden Velly [1], Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 566985, 503978. email: bruneiemb@bruneiemb.com.mm

Cambodia 25 [3B/4B], New University Avenue Road, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 549609, 540964. email: RECYANGON@mptmail.net.mm

China 1, Pyidaungsu Yeiktha Road, Yangon. Tel: 221280, 221281.

Danmark, No.7, Pyi Thu St, Pyay Rd, 7 Miles, Mayangone Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 01 - 9669520 - 17.

Egypt 81, Pyidaungsu Yeiktha Road, Yangon. Tel: 222886, 222887. Egyptembassy86@gmail.com

France 102, Pyidaungsu Yeiktha Road, Yangon. Tel: 212178, 212520, email: ambaf rance.rangoun@diplomatie.fr

Germany 9, Bogyoke Aung San Museum Road, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 548951, 548952, email: info@rangun.diplo.de

India 545-547, Merchant St, Yangon. Tel: 391219, 388412, email: indiaembassy@mptmail.net.mm

Indonesia 100, Pyidaungsu Yeiktha Rd, Yangon. Tel: 254465, 254469, email: kukygn@indonesia.com.mm

Israel 15, Khabaung Street, Hlaing Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 515115, fax: 515116, email: info@yangon.mfa.gov.il

Italy 3, Inya Myaing Road, Golden Valley, Yangon. Tel: 527100, 527101, fax: 514565, email: ambyang.mail@esteri.it

Japan 100, Natmauk Rd, Yangon. Tel: 549644-8, 540399, 540400, 540411, 545988, fax: 549643

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, Kabauang Lane, 5 1/2 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 120/0, Pyi Thu Lane, 7 Miles, 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.

For more information about these listings, Please Contact - classified.mcm@gmail.com

Emergency Numbers

Ambulance ☎tel: 295133.
 Fire ☎tel: 191, 252011, 252022.
 Police emergency ☎tel: 199.
 Police headquarters ☎tel: 282541, 284764.
 Red Cross ☎tel: 682600, 682368
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.

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.

Clover hotel
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

Eden Palace Hotel
No. [356/366], Kyaikkasan Rd, Tarmwe Township, Yangon, Myanmar.
Ph: 542826, Fax: 545650
Email: reservation@edenpalacehotel.com

GRAND PALACE HOTEL
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

Hotel Yangon
91/93, 8th Mile Junction, Tel : 01-667708, 667688.



No. 12, Pho Sein Road, Tarmwe Township, Yangon Tel : [95-1] 209299, 209300, 209343, 209345, 209346
Fax : [95-1] 209344
E-mail : greenhill@myanmar.com.mm

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

MiCasa Hotel Apartments
17, Kabar Aye Pagoda Rd, Yankin Tsp. tel: 650933. fax: 650960.

PANDA hotel
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@mymyanmarpandahotel.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

Sakura Residence
9, Inya Rd, Kamaryut Tsp. tel: 525001. fax: 525002.

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.

The Grand Mee Ya Hta Executive Residence
372, Bogyoke Aung San Rd, Pabedan Tsp. tel 951-256355 [25 lines].

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.

HAPPY HOMES
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.

MiCasa Hotel Apartments
YANGON.MYANMAR
17, Kabar Aye Pagoda Rd, Yankin Tsp. Tel: 650933. Fax: 650960. Email : micprmm@mymyanmar.com.mmmwww.myanmarmicasahotel.com

ACCOMMODATION-HOTELS (Nay Pyi Taw)

ROYAL KUMUDRA HOTEL
(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

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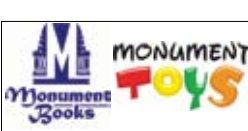


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SPEAKING Class (Myanmar, English, Chinese, Japanese). For foreigners - We do teach Myanmar Language 4 skills by (TeacherTun). Available home tuition or group class. Basic Class - 3 Months. Intermediate Class - 3 Months. Advanced Class - 3 Months. English Language - For adults and young learners. We do teach 4 skills face to face group teaching. Available home tuition or group class. Chinese Language - For all grades & classes. (Taiwan Teacher Mr. Lin) teach 4 skills to be native speaker. Intend to go abroad to study or work students can contact us. Basic Class - 3 Months, Intermediate Class - 4 Months, Advanced Class - 6 Months, Super Advanced Class - 6 Months. We do service. Japanese Language - For all students who want to go to JAPAN for Work or study. We do teach 4 skills and practice very well. Contact us - 09-4211-47821, 01-243420.

ENGLISH for any age. I have a bachelor's degree in elementary education with a concentration in English as a Second Language from the USA and also have experience teaching adults English as well. If you want to improve your English

skills for any variety of purposes email me and we will arrange a meeting. During the first meeting we will discuss your goals and objectives for learning English and develop a curriculum custom-tailored to your goals. Justin: jhemming@nmsi.org

GERMAN native teacher available for private individual courses or small groups. All levels possible. House calls on request. Call 09-421012160 for more information!

ENGLISH & FRENCH courses by experienced language trainer. Special courses for tourism industry available (guides, hotel and restaurant staff, management level possible). Contact 09-421012160 for details!

CHINESE language : For all grades & classes (Taiwan Teacher Mr Lin) teach 4 skills to be native speaker. Intend to go abroad to study or work students can contact us. Basic - 3 Months, Intermediate - 4 Months, Advanced - 6 Months. Super advanced - 6 Months, we do service of interpreting Chinese - Myanmar language service. Japanese language : for all students who want to go to Japan for work study. We do teach 4 skills & practice very well. 09-4211-47821, 01-243420.

For Sale



ကားရောင်းနေသည့် နေရာကို ချက်ပြင်ဆင်ခြင်း။ ကားသွားနေသည့် အခါမှစ၍ တစ်ပြည်လုံးကို ကြည့်ရှုနိုင်ပါသည်။ ကားသွားသည့် လမ်းကြောင်းကို ကြည့်ရှုနိုင်ပါသည်။ ယခု ၂ သိန်းခွဲသာ ကျယ်ပြန့်စွာ အစမ်း စမ်းသပ်ကြည့်ရှုနိုင်ပါသည်။ လက်စပျောက်လျှို့ဝှက် တစ်ဆင့်ပေးပါသည်။ No.165/167, 35th Street, (Middle), Kyauktada Township, Yangon. Tel: 20 40 20, 24 52 30, 09 50-30177, facebook.com/DPSMyanmar

TOYOTA BELTA (grey) year : 2011, Dec, mileage : 22,000 km, excellent condition. fee : \$500 / month, no driver, only car. I am real owner, pls contact directly. ryankim aceyangon79@gmail.com. Ph: 09-4313-2872



DPS ရဲ့ GPS
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- ဆွဲအားကောင်း
- အမြင့်မှန် Barometric Altimeter
- SD Card
- မြန်မာပြည်မြေပုံ
- ရောင်း/ငှား နှစ်ချိုးစလုံးရ
ဇုန် - 20 40 20, 255 725 947

TOYOTA PRADO, 2006 Model/ White Colour Left Hand Drive/4Doors Very Good Driving Condition (No Accident) Only serious buyer can contact. Ph : 09-515-0751

Public Notices

WE ARE pleased to inform you that Delegation of the European Union will move to its new office premises, effective as of Monday 31 March 2014. The new address and contact information of the Delegation of the EU are as follows: EU Delegation Myanmar, Hledan Centre - Corner of Pyay Road and Hledan Road, 6th Floor, Kamayut, Yangon, Myanmar. Telephone: +95 (1) 2305650. Fax: +95 (1) 2305651. In the context of its move, the EU Delegation will be closed on Thursday 27 March (public holiday) and on Friday 28 March 2014. Last but not least, we would like to request to receive all the future/ pending invoices with our NEW address as well. Thank you for your attention and support.

Terre des hommes Italia [TDH Italia] : We would like to inform, our new office address. Operation will start at 19 May 2014. Office address is: No.48, Shwe Hinn Thar Street, 11 Ward, Hlaing, Yangon. Contact phone number is : (95)1- 654 604

1ST MYANMAR Bartenders' Competition 2014 Myanmar Restaurant Association (MRA) will be holding the 1st Myanmar Bartenders' Competition on June 3rd and 4th 2014 at "DJ's BAR" in the compound of Inya Lake Hotel, Yangon. The prizes are for the winner Kyats 500,000, 2nd place winner Kyats 300,000 and 3rd place winner Kyats 200,000 plus Certificates and gifts. The first two winners will be eligible

to compete in the Final 11th AHRA / ASEAN BARTENDERS' CHAMPIONSHIP 2014 to be held on June 2 in Yangon, Myanmar Convention Centre also. The 3rd place winner will be a reserve for the Championship. Pls obtain the Application forms from the following places as well as by downloading From www.myanmar-restaurantassociation.com, (1). Monsoon Restaurant & Bar :85/87, Theinbyu Rd, Bohtaung, (2). Padonmar Restaurant : 105-107, Kha Yay Pin Rd, Dagon, (3). Myanmar Restaurant Association (MRA) : 40/42, 5th Flr, Bo Sun Pat St, Pabedan, Yangon, Tel: 09-2500-87536, 09-731-92200, 09-500-0164, 09-518-3545, Email : mraorg2011@gmail.com, nyinyi2006@gmail.com, hanthi.hts@gmail.com, Application Closing Date is May 20, 2014.

WOULD you like to kill Two birds with One stone? If so conduct your meeting at Mary Chapman School for the Deaf "Holding a meeting means donating the Deaf children's Rooms available: (1). Air con room for 25 person per day kyats50,000/(fifty thousand) (2). Air con room for 50 person per day kyats80,000/(eighty thousand) (3). Hall for 100 person above per day kyats100,000/(one hundred thousand) Reservation please! Mary Chapman School for the Deaf : No. 2, Thantaman St, (Near American center), Dagon Tsp, Yangon, Myanmar. Tel: 01-221872, 01-218342, 01-218343. "Those who see what God sees... find ways to help the HELPESS"

Training
WEB Development & Design Training Sat & Sun - 5:00 ~ 7:00pm. Contact: 09-4211-44937

Training

WEB Development & Design Training Sat & Sun - 5:00 ~ 7:00pm. Contact: 09-4211-44937



We provide the following Training, CISCO, CCNA, CCNP, MICROSOFT, MCSA, MCSE, LAB, EC-COUNCIL CEH, SECURITY ADMIN. www.facebook.com/imcscompany, 09-4500-16040.

Property

Rent/Sale

49TH ST, middle block, 6th Flr, 1500 Sqft, 25 x 60, 1 MBR with Bath Tub, western toilet, 1BR, Teak wood floor, Hot & Cold shower, Bath tub, 4 Air con, Laundry room, Tilling floor Kitchen, Fully finished, Very comfort walk up stair, Nice and Clean excellence location in Yangon. Call us - 09-507-6675, 09-2500-13963, 09-503-9498.

Housing for Rent

DAGON SEIK KAN, Yuzana Garden city, 2 bed rooms, 4th floor, B block, #1 road, 150 lkhs, please contact 09-4480-45381, 09-4210-4486, 09-2500-78808
(1). Near Park Royal hotel, Bo Yar Nyunt St, 800Sqft, 2 flat, 3 SR fully furnish, 1600 USD (2). Near Sakura tower, 1250 Sqft, with lift, 1 MBR, 2 SR, fully furnish, 2100 USD. (3). Pansodan St, near Ruby Mart, 1250 Sqft, 1 SR, part of furnish, 1600 USD. (4). China town, 1500 Sqft, 1 MBR, 2 SR, fully furnish, 3500 USD. (5). Near Union bar, Strand Rd, 1200 sqft, 1 MBR, 2 SR, 2500 USD. (6). Near Indian Embassy, 1300 Sqft, 2 MBR, 1 SR, fully furnish, 2500 USD. 09-4921-4276, 09-4211-77105

(1). Near MICP park, 3000 Sqft, 1 MBR, 2 SR, fully furnish, 4500 USD. (2). 9 Mile Ocean condo, 1800 Sqft, 1 MBR, 2 SR, fully furnish, 2500 USD. (3). Near Hle Tan center, 2000 Sqft, 2 MBR, 2 SR, fully furnish, 2000 USD. (4). Near Taw Win center, 1250 Sqft, 2 Flat, 1 MBR, 2 SR, 2500 USD. (5). Golden Valley, 2 RC, 6500 Sqft, 2 MBR, 2 SR, fully furnish, 5000 USD. (6). Yankin housing, 7500 Sqft, 7 MBR, 2 SR, fully furnish 12000 USD. (7). Parami Rd, 1 RC, 5600 Sqft, near MICP Park, 1 MBR, 2 SR, 6000 USD. (8). 7 Mile, 2 RC, 7500 Sqft, 2 MBR, 2 SR, fully furnish, 6000 USD. (9). Yankin center, 1250 Sqft, 1 MBR, 2 SR, fully furnish, 2500 USD. Ph: 09-4921-4276, 09-4211-77105

KAMAYUT, 25x55 newly condo with fully finished to let in Hledan Centre at Hledan Junction. No need to pay monthly service charges (not including electricity and water) and a free fixed car parking for one. 25lakhs or 2500\$ per month. contact 09-732-05178

CLASSIC STRAND Condo, 3 bed 2 bath, modern design/decor,

wide open layout, 1550 square feet, 8th floor corner unit river view. \$3600/month. Strand Road, 5min walk to Hilton/Center Point offices. jasonwongjp@gmail.com, 09-4211-02223

CLASSIC STRAND Condo, 2200 sqft commercial/residence for sale or rent. 3rd floor, wide open layout, 14 foot ceilings. Gym, cafe, facilities. Prime downtown location, close to strand hotel/union bar. jasonwongjp@gmail.com, 09-4211-02223

CENTRAL CITY Residence minutes from Park Royal, marble/ hardwood premium fittings, modern design. 4 rooms 3 bathroom (2 master w/ attached bath) 1955sqft Starting from \$3800/ month unfurnished. jasonwongjp@gmail.com, 09-4211-02223

PYAE Wa Condo, Kabar Aye Pagoda Road, Bahan Tsp. Room Space - 2200sqft, including 1MBR, 2BR, living room, dining room & kitchen room each. Facilities-Lift, 24hr (security, electricity & water supply), Satellite, Phone, Wi-Fi Furniture - fully decorated & furnished. All Furniture Included. Location-only 3 and 5 min drive to Sedona Hotel and Inya Lake Hotel respectively. (USD-3400 per month). Contact Person: SoeMoe@Steve. Mobile Ph : 09-4200-33959, 09-3128-6535

Housing for Sale

RUBBER Lands for Sales (1) Between Bago Hantharwaddy Airport and Main Rd. Rubber Lands - 300 Acres (including rubber plants aged 5 years) (2) Near Bago Hantharwaddy Airport Rubber Lands - 60 Acres (including Required Official Documents) Contact-09-2540-88487, 09-4523-36822

CLASSIC STRAND Condo, 2200 sq ft commercial/residence for sale. 3rd floor, wide open layout, 14 foot ceilings. Gym, cafe, facilities. Prime downtown location, close to strand hotel/ union bar. Great value psf jasonwongjp@gmail.com 09-4211-02223

CHAUNG THA (Near Patheingyi), Brick 25' x 50' on 40' x 70' of Land, with well, 300 gallon water tank, Septic tank, Solar power, 200m from beach, 500m from village, 390 Lakhs/ US\$ 39000. Call 09-4250-10128, Email: howwww@gmail.com, akhinmoeato@gmail.com.

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Employment

UN Positions

THE UNITED Nations Office on Drugs & Crime (UNODC) is seeking Myanmar National for Country office (1) **Administrative Associate** (HR) SC-6 - 1 post in Yangon : Secondary Education with specialized certification in HR. University degree in HR, 6 years relevant experience. Experience in UN rules & regulations is an asset. Fluency in Myanmar & English. (2) **Programme Asst** : (Monitoring & Evaluation) SC-5-1 post in Yangon : Secondary Education. University Degree in Business or Public Administration, Economics, Political Sciences & Social Sciences. 5 years relevant administrative or programme experience. Experience in the usage of computers & office experience in handling of web based management systems. Fluency in Myanmar & English. Application must include a cover letter, CV, P11 form, copies of relevant academic qualification certificates & a recent passport photo to 11A, Maylikha Rd, Ward 7, Mayangone, Yangon (or) C/O UNDP, PO Box 650, Yangon. Closing date : 23 May 2014.

THE UNITED Nations World Food Programme, is seeking (1) **Senior Programme Assistant** SC-6 Mawlamyine (2) **Admin Assistant** (Fleet Management) GS-4 Yangon. For more information, pls visit to <http://www.themimu.info/jobs-for-myanmar-nationals>. Pls Email the applications with UN P-11 to wfpmyanmar.vacancy@wfp.org COB 26 May 2014.

(1) **WASH Engineer** 1 post (2) **EOC Officer** 1 post (3) **Project Officer** 1 post (4) **Field Assistant** 1 post Application process: Pls send application letter, CV & related documents to Myanmar Red Cross Society (Head Office) Yazathingaha Rd, Dekkhinathiri, Nay Pyi Taw. Ormrshrrecruitment@gmail.com For more information & application, pls visit to www.myanmarredcrosssociety.org Please mention "Position Title" in subject if you apply.

Ingo Positions

THE Int'l Rescue Committee (IRC) is seeking (1) **Administrative Officer** 1 post in Sittwe, Rakhine State: University degree. 3 years experience in the humanitarian sector preferably for an NGO or the UN. (2) **Livelihood Officer** in Rathedaung, Rakhine State: Degree in rural development, agriculture or related field. 3 years professional experience. (preferably with INGO or UN). 1 year experience in livelihoods or rural development programming (3) **Logistic Assistant** 1 post in Myebon, Rakhine State : Degree or Diploma in related field and/ or related training course. Prior work experience in logistics & procurement. Computer literate. (4) **Senior Supply Chain Officer** - 1 post in Sittwe, Rakhine State: University degree. 5 years experience in the humanitarian sector preferably for an NGO or the UN. (5) **WPE Senior Program Officer** in Sittwe, Rakhine State: Bachelor of Arts or science in Social Science, Public Health, Humanities or other related field. 3 years of professional experience in management in NGOs.

(6) **Finance Officer** - 1 post in Rathetaung Tsp, Rakhine State: University degree in Accounting, Business Administration, Commerce or finance with a recognized professional certificate in accounting (CPA or equivalent certificate would be preferred). 3 years accounting professional experience & 1 year direct supervisory experience. For all posts : Computer literate. Fluency in English & Myanmar. Pls submit a Cover letter & CV to the HR Department not later than May 23, 2014. Applications will be accepted by email at: MaiMyaMyintZu.Tin@rescue.org or by delivery to the IRC office : 33/A, Natmauk Lane Thwe (1), Bocho (2) Quarter, Bahan, Yangon.

MYANMAR Red Cross Society (MRCS) is seeking (1) **Physiotherapist** - 2 posts in Hpa-An Orthopaedic Rehabilitation Centre Hpa-An, Kayin State: Bachelor degree in physiotherapy. 3 years experiences in a similar field. Effective English language skills & computer knowledge. Pls send application letter, CV & related documents to Myanmar Red Cross Society Head Office, Yazathingaha, Dekkhinathiri, Nay Pyi Taw. Or mrshrrecruitment@gmail.com. Closing date : 23-5-2014.

MYANMAR Red Cross Society is seeking (1) **Emergency Operation Center (EOC) Officer** 1 post in Nay Pyi Taw: 2 years experience in Disaster Management. Background of Early Warning System is desired. Proficiency with Microsoft Office. Good communication & IT Knowledge skill. Effective English language skill & computer knowledge. (2) **Project Officer** - 1 post in Nay Pyi Taw & Yangon, with frequent travel to project sites: University graduate related to health/ social science, management or other relevant subject. 1 year experiences in project management. 2 years experiences in supervisory, management of staff & volunteers within the National Society or any other related NGO. Effective computer knowledge. (3) **WASH Engineer** - 1 post in MRCS Headquarter based in Nay Pyi Taw & frequently travel to program areas: University Degree in 1 of the following areas: Civil Engineering, Geology, Hydrology, or related fields. 2 years of experience. Effective computer knowledge. Knowledge of Auto CAD (2D). Knowledge of PHAST & CLTS approach will be asset. (4) **Field Assistant** - 1 post in Mai Kai Tsp: Myanmar National. High school level. 1 year previous experience at INGOs/ NGOs and MRCS activities. Excellent knowledge of local language such as Shan, Pa Oh is highly desirable. Good knowledge of English. Red Cross Volunteers are preferable. Pls send application letter, CV & related documents to Myanmar Red Cross Society Head Office, Yazathingaha Rd, Dekkhinathiri, Nay Pyi Taw. Or mrshrrecruitment@gmail.com. Closing date: 22-5-2014.

THE Int'l Rescue Committee (IRC) is seeking (1) **Project Officer Aquaculture** 1 post in Myebon/ Minbya, Rakhine State: Bachelor's degree in related field (Aquaculture). 2 years experience & preferably in a humanitarian setting. Ability to work & travel in remote areas. Skilled in Excel, Word software.

Very good command of English & Myanmar. (2) **Project Officer Infrastructure** 1 post in Myebon/ Minbya, Rakhine State: Bachelor's degree in related field. 2 years experience in relevant field and preferably in a humanitarian setting. Ability to work & travel in remote areas. Skilled in Excel, Word software. Very good command of English & Myanmar. (3) **HR/Admin Coordinator** in Yangon: Bachelor's and/or Master's university degree in HR management, Business Administration, Law, or related field. 6 years progressive experience as an HR generalist. 3 years experience managing and mentoring HR staff. Fluent in Myanmar & English. Very strong proficiency in MS Word, Excel, and PowerPoint & exposure to Applicant Tracking systems & global recruitment preferred. (4) **Field Manager** 1 post in Loikaw, Kayah State: University degree in Management, Community Development or equivalent field. 5 years of senior management experience and/or community development. Fluent in English/ Burmese & excellent report writing skills. Strong Computer skill. Pls submit a Cover letter & CV to the HR Department: (IRC), 33/A, Natmauk Lane Thwe (1), Bocho (2) Quarter, Bahan, Yangon. Applications will be accepted by email at: MaiMyaMyintZu.Tin@rescue.org. Closing date : May 23rd 2014.

Local Positions

GLOBAL WAVE Technology is seeking (1) **Admin Staff** - F 2 posts (2) **Data Entry** - M/F 2 posts (3) **Sales Assistant** - F 2 posts (4) **Service Technician** - M 2 posts (5) **Web Designer** - M/F 1 post (6) **Graphic Designer** - M/F 1 post (7) **Driver** - M 2 posts. Pls submit CV to Rm 303, AKK Shopping Mall, 3rd Flr, Thingangyun Market, Laydaukkan Rd, Thingangyun Yangon. Ph: 01 560067, 01 560068.

WE INVITE applications for experienced **English teacher** (Native speaker) to provide English language training to our hotel guest contact staff. Please send email to HR Dept (thandanye.myi@chatrium.com) for more details."

EXPERIENCED translators wanted (full-time): (1) English, Karen and Burmese 1 post. (2) English, Chin and Burmese 1 post. (3) English, Burmese 1 post. Please submit a cover letter and cv to hr@linguamyanmar.com. For more information on Lingua Myanmar, visit our website: www.linguamyanmar.com.

OKKAR THIRI Co., Ltd. is seeking (1) **Receptionist** : Bachelor Degree, 1-2 years experience in Administration, Good English, Able to use computer, Microsoft application, Hard Working (2) **Sales Representatives** : Bachelor Degree, Strong Customer and service orientation, Good negotiation skill, Reach sales target, Good English, Able to use computer, Microsoft application. Please send your CV with relevant certificates, documents attach to front office. mgr@okkarthiri.com and No.4(A) Payay Rd, Hlaing Township, Yangon.

FUTURE GIFT Int'l Ltd is, a Trading Company representing Europe prominent brands for Myanmar, looking for (1) **Procurement Assistant** (International Trade) M/F (Male is preferable) 1 post : Age around 27

years with Bachelor degree. 2 years relevant working experience is required. Good command of spoken & written English is a must. High level of communication & interpersonal skill. Able to find new suppliers from overseas and communicate well. Experience & knowledge in international trade is a advantage. Proficient in MS office and using Internet. (2) **Procurement Executive** (International Trade) - M/F (Male is preferable) 1 post : Age around 27 years with Bachelor degree. 1 years relevant working experience is required. Good command of spoken & written English. High level of communication and interpersonal skill. Able to find new suppliers from overseas and communicate well. Experience & knowledge in international trade is a advantage. Proficient in MS office and using Internet. Pls send application and Resume with educational and relevant documents to No (2), West Maykha Lane (1), Mayangone, Yangon. Ph: 01-655593, 655594, 664285, Email : fgil.service@gmail.com

WE ARE seeking: (1). **Native English teacher** who is experienced in teaching English to young children for weekend classes. (2). An experienced **Chinese teacher** is required for weekend classes. You will be responsible for lesson planning, outlining your own teaching students and finding the materials. Interested applicants, please call 09-4308-4360. (1) **CAN speak English** (4 skill) M/F 5 posts: Working experience at least 2 year, can communicate with the Embassy. Age 20 ~ 30 years old. Must interest real estate business. (2) **Can speak Chinese** (4 skill) M/F 5 posts. Age 20 ~ 30 years old. (3) **computer** - M/F 3 posts : (word, Excel, photo shop) Phone : 09-4201-14749, 09-4211-77105.

WE, Myanmar Intelligent Effort Co., Ltd. are seeking **Sales Coordinator** - F 1 post a University Degree or Diploma in relevant field. A high level of written and spoken English. 3 years Proven experience. Efficient Skills in MS Office; Email, Internet. Strong Willingness to perform Team work initiative & ability to Determine & achieve objects. Excellent Communication and Analytical Skills. Excellent Interpersonal and Liasion Skills. Interested candidates please submit your resume with recent photo, ID copy, police recommendation, labor card, other qualification documents, last drawn salary, expected salary and available date to M.I.E Office, Bldg# 459, Rm# 203, First Flr, New University Avenue Rd, Bahan, Yangon, Tel: 01-860 5148, 860 5149, 860 5156 within 2 weeks.

RIGHT Myanmar Travels Urgently requires **tour staff** if you have following skills. Female (Under 25). Use internet, email & microsoft word, can speak and write basic English. Pls submit your CV through our email - rightmyanmartravel@gmail.com

WIRED MEDIA Co., Ltd is seeking (1) **Senior Media Buyer** - F 3 posts: 2 years experience in related field, Proficient in Computer (Microsoft Office- Word, Excel, Power Point) & Internet, E-mail (2) **Secretary & Public Relation** (PR) - F 2 posts : Age 25 ~ 35, Can speak English & Thai language. (3) **Driver** - M 5 posts : .Specialist in Car Driving .Serving and Maintaining. Good Interpersonal skill. Good communication

skill, Over 1 year experience. Pls submit to 8, Nguwar (3) St, ward (5), Myakanthar Villa, Hlaing, Yangon. Ph : 01-505724, 538552, 09 4500 53498. Closing Date : 13-6-14 **GO GO UP Co., Ltd** is seeking (1) **Travel Operation Manager** 1 post : Well versed in CRS used in the industry like abacus, Amadeus, Established network of contacts with domestic hotels, airlines, transport and tour operators, Experience with setting up a tour agency preferred, Independent, hands-on and self-motivated team player, Knowledgeable and passionate about travel industry with excellent customer service, Must be able to speak/read/write English fluently, 3 years of experience in established travel agency, managerial experience would have an advantage, Able to work on weekends and holidays when needed. (2) **Reservation Executive** : Good English language skill, Experience in reservation/ tour work, Able to handle group and individual reservation, Highly motivated, resourceful, open minded and trust worthy, Preferable degree or diploma related to the post, 2 years experience with reservation department. Pls submit a detailed updated CV with a recent passport photo via online gogoupmm@gmail.com

AMD, the leading & prospective company is seeking (1) **Sales Executive / Sales Engineer** (Medical) - M/F 10 posts : Any graduate, Sciences Degree is preferable, Age 22 ~ 30, Able to travel (2) **Engineer** (Water Treatment) - M/F 10 posts : ME/BE/ B.Tech (Mechanical/Electrical/ Mechantronic), Age 25 ~ 35, Able to travel (3) **Receptionist/Office Secretary** - F 3 posts : Any graduate, Age 20 ~ 30. For all posts : Computer knowledge, Microsoft office applications, Good spoken & written English, 1 year experience. Pls bring CV with recent photo, NRC copy & relevant documents to 39/B, Thazin lane, Ahlone (Opposite to Central Women Hospital). Ph: 218437, 218438. Email: amd@yangon.net. mm/amdstaff@optusnet.com.au

HORIZON Int'l School is seeking (1). **Teacher** - For Primary School: Myanmar language, Music, PE. For Secondary School: Myanmar language, Music, PE, ICT. For High School: Mathematics, Economics. For Kinder gardens swimming. Requirements : 4 years experience, Strong Classroom Management skills (2). **Kindergarten Assistant Teachers / Lab Assistant** - F 3 posts : Age 20 ~ 25, University graduate, Proficient in English, Computer & Microsoft Office literacy. (3). **Supervisor** - M 2 posts: Age 25 ~ 40, Passed matriculation examination, Good command of English, Pleasant & helpful skills, Can work under pressure, Must have supervisory skill & and five years experience. Pls submit a cover letter, a resume/CV, a copy of relevant diploma (certificate) & a current photo to the Recruitment team at recruitment@horizonmyanmar.com or to Horizon Po Sein Campus, Po Sein Rd 25, Bahan, Yangon on/before May 30, 2014. Ph: 543-926, 551-795.

EXECUTIVE Personal Assistant to CEO (Manager Level) USD 500- 700 : Must have experience in foreign/JV company, Professional, tactful and discreet, with ability to communicate effectively to all levels within the organization, Ability to handle daily traffic email and to prioritize list of those reply that have to be made by CEO personally, Must have widely knowledge about Engineering based operation, supporting and trading sectors, Must have excellent skills in English & Microsoft Package, Able to work under pressure, Candidate must be over 30. Please send your CV and a cover letter, including your salary expectations, to Email: thelondoner007@gmail.com.

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LOS ANGELES

Magic Johnson says Sterling living 'in the stone ages'

BASKETBALL icon Magic Johnson said on May 13 that disgraced Los Angeles Clippers owner Donald Sterling is "living in the stone ages" and deserves to lose his coveted NBA franchise.

Johnson, who won five NBA titles with the Los Angeles Lakers, told CNN anchor Anderson Cooper that he believed Sterling's attack on him in a prior interview was the result of desperation in the face of the racism row that has engulfed him.

"I just wish he knew the facts when he was talking," Johnson said. "But he is a man who is upset and he is reaching. He is reaching. He is trying to find something he can grab onto to help him save his team, and it is not going to happen."

"It is not going to happen," Johnson said.

"The problem is, he's living in the stone ages," Johnson added. "He can't make those comments about African Americans or Latinos, he just can't do it."

Sterling spoke to Cooper in an interview that aired on May 12, trying to quell the controversy that erupted on April 26 when his comments to a girlfriend

advising her not to associate with black people in public provoked nationwide outrage.

However, Sterling only fuelled the fire when he attacked Johnson, saying the Hall of Famer was a poor role model because he had contracted HIV and suggesting he had not used his fame or fortune to help fellow African Americans.

Johnson addressed both issues, noting that as a businessman he'd worked to create jobs in urban neighborhoods and also worked with other prominent African Americans such as filmmakers Spike Lee and Tyler Perry to pass the skills of success to others in their community.

"We have created thousands and thousands of jobs in urban American," Johnson said of himself and his business partners. "My whole life is devoted to urban America."

Johnson also found it disturbing that Sterling used the fact of Johnson's HIV status – at one point mistakenly saying he had AIDS – "like a club to wield against you".

Johnson noted that when he learned he had HIV, he quickly went public, and he has since worked to erase the stigma still attached to HIV and AIDS.

"I understood what I did was wrong,



Donald Sterling attends the NBA playoff game between the Clippers and the Golden State Warriors in Los Angeles, California on April 21. Photo: AFP

OK? So I announced that to the world, and I hope that I was able to help people in doing that," Johnson said.

While he felt compelled to respond to Sterling, Johnson said the attacks on him were misplaced.

He said Sterling's anger would be

better directed at V. Stiviano, the young woman who angered Sterling by posting a photo of herself with Johnson at a sports event on Instagram.

"I don't know the young lady, barely know Donald," Johnson said. "So now I'm caught in the middle of this love af-

fair or whatever they have," he said.

The real issue, Johnson said, remains Sterling's status in the NBA.

NBA Commissioner Adam Silver – who leapt to Johnson's defense on May 12 with a personal apology – has already banned Sterling for life from league activities and fined him US\$2.5 million.

It will take a vote of 75 percent of the remaining 29 owners to force Sterling to relinquish the club, which is expected to fetch upward of \$600 million if sold.

The process of getting to such a vote continues to inch forward, NBA spokesman Mike Bass indicated on May 13 in a statement that showed the league is keeping close tabs on Sterling and his wife Shelly.

"The Advisory/Finance Committee met again this afternoon via conference call," Bass said in a statement.

"The Committee discussed the recent media appearances by Donald Sterling and Shelly Sterling, received updates on the hiring of Dick Parsons as the Los Angeles Clippers interim CEO and on his meeting yesterday with Clippers employees, and reviewed the status of the charge for termination of the Clippers' ownership."

"The Committee will reconvene next week" – AFP

LOS ANGELES

Openly gay player Sam takes first step to NFL

MICHAEL Sam, who made history as the first openly gay player drafted into the NFL, vowed on May 13 to use any negative reaction he encounters as a spur to excellence.

"I'm determined to be great," the 24-year-old defensive end said as the St. Louis Rams held a day of press conferences to introduce their 11 new draftees at Rams Park.

"I'm determined to make this team, and I have every confidence in myself that I will make this team," Sam added, saying it was "pretty cool" that his number 96 jersey is the number-two seller among rookie shirts being sold on NFL.com.

"So when I do make it, and when I put my pads on and if somebody wants to say something, then you will see number 96 running down that field and making good, big plays for this team."

He said he was "honoured" to serve as an inspiration, "but right now, I'm just looking forward to continuing my dream."

Sam, who went public about his sexuality in February after a standout career at the University of Missouri, was drafted on May 10 – television cameras capturing his emotional reaction to the telephone call he received from Rams head coach Jeff Fisher.

Sam was taken with the 249th overall selection in the annual allocation of new talent for America's most popular sport.

Rams officials want him to concentrate on his football, but in a nod to his unique position, Sam was alone among their rookies to have his own press conference on May 13, albeit with Fisher alongside him in a live ESPN broadcast.

Television cameras on May 10 showed him doubled over with emotion, and he then turned to his boy-

'I'm determined to make this team and I have every confidence in myself that I will make this team'

Michael Sam
St Louis Rams' draft pick

friend and kissed him.

The simple gesture sparked instant debate, some condemnation on social media, some praise and a welter of opinion on how the famously traditional NFL will cope with a gay player.

While Sam earned Southeastern Conference Defensive Player of the

year honors with Mizzou last season, at 6-foot-2 and 256 pounds (1.88m, 116kg) he's small for an NFL defensive end.

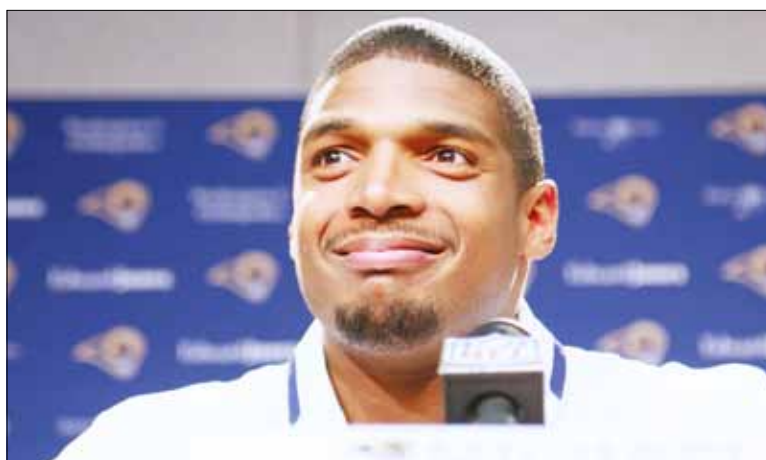
He will still have to earn a place on the Rams roster if he's to become the first openly gay player to compete in the NFL, but his fellow rookies said they would welcome him as a teammate.

Second-round pick Lamarca Jordan said, "He's a courageous young man. He's a brave young man that we need in this organisation."

Fisher said that the Rams weren't really in the market for a defensive end in the draft, but they couldn't pass up a chance to take a player of Sam's talent when he was available so late.

Sam's value as a football player was "off the charts" compared to others left on the board by that late stage, said Fisher.

"So we drafted Michael as a football player and he has an opportunity now to come in and compete to try to make our team." – AFP



St Louis Rams draft pick Michael Sam addresses the media during a press conference at Rams Park on May 13 in Earth City, Missouri. Photo: AFP

LONDON

Hodgson acts as England's steady-handed pragmatist

A STUDIOUS and well-travelled coach, Roy Hodgson is the man charged with the responsibility of restoring faith in the England national team after decades of underachievement.

Since succeeding Fabio Capello in May 2012, when he was handed the role despite popular support for the then Tottenham Hotspur manager, Harry Redknapp, the 66-year-old has steered England on a steady path that has led to this year's World Cup in Brazil.

Hodgson had only a matter of weeks to prepare for the 2012 European Championship, but despite low expectations he guided England to a creditable quarter-final showing that saw them beaten on penalties by eventual finalists Italy.

England proved similarly durable in World Cup qualifying, avoiding defeat to top Group H in the UEFA zone but attracting criticism for a pair of insipid draws with Ukraine and a 1-1 stalemate away to Montenegro.

Hodgson is above all a pragmatist and everywhere that he has enjoyed success – from Malmö, to Switzerland, to Fulham – his buzzwords have been discipline, hard work, and organisation.

"Every day in training is geared toward team shape," said former Wales midfielder Simon Davies during his time playing under Hodgson at Fulham.

"I've been working with the manager three seasons now. Every day is team shape, and it shows."

Hodgson's experience at Fulham showcased his best qualities in microcosm.

The west London club were in 18th place in the Premier League when he arrived in December 2007, but they

stayed up that season, finished seventh in 2009, and reached the final of the Europa League in 2010, losing 2-1 to Atletico Madrid in Hamburg.

His success at Craven Cottage earned him a crack at the Liverpool job, but although he lasted only half a season at Anfield, an encouraging subsequent stint at West Bromwich Albion restored his reputation sufficiently for the Football Association to come calling in 2012.

After an unremarkable playing career, which included a spell in South Africa, Hodgson went into management with Swedish club Halmstad in 1976, winning two league titles.

He later return to Sweden with Malmö, winning five league titles, and his meandering career has also included jobs with teams as varied as Inter Milan, Blackburn Rovers, and FC Copenhagen, as well as the national sides of Switzerland, the United Arab Emirates and Finland.

He took the Swiss to the World Cup in 1994, where they reached the last 16, and warm memories of the experience returned to him after England beat Poland last October to secure their place at this year's World Cup.

While he conceded that leading England out in Brazil will probably be the highlight of his managerial career, he added, "I don't want to denigrate other achievements, or for people in Switzerland to think I wasn't very proud of that achievement and that team."

On England's chances of World Cup success, he has exercised typical caution.

"First of all, you've always got a chance," he says. "It is the old thing about if you want to win the lottery, you have to buy a lottery ticket." – AFP

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Sport

Openly gay Sam 'determined' to make St Louis Rams

SPORT 62

TOKYO

Sky's the limit for Nishikori

YOU won't catch Kei Nishikori snarling, scowling at opponents or yelling at umpires, but the unassuming 24-year-old has a fire in his belly every bit as strong as the game's fiercest gladiators.

Having just become the first Japanese to crack the world's top 10 in men's tennis, the sky could be the limit for the record-breaking Nishikori - if his fragile body holds up.

Where Rafael Nadal stares daggers across the net at rivals, Nishikori shuffles almost apologetically along the baseline, a toothy grin belying his swashbuckling style.

Nishikori, who has risen to nine in the world rankings, came agonisingly close to beating Nadal for the first time in seven meetings in last weekend's Madrid Open final before injury struck again.

In control at 6-2, 4-3, he felt a twinge in his hip and went on to lose the second set 6-4 before retiring at 0-3 in the third.

But after wins in Memphis and Barcelona already this year, the Florida-based Nishikori has demonstrated he has the weapons to topple the giants of tennis.

Shuzo Matsuoka, the first Japanese player to win an ATP title in 1992, believes Nishikori could even



Japan's Kei Nishikori acknowledges the crowd after his victory against Donald Young at the 2014 Australian Open in Melbourne on January 18. Photo: AFP

produce a shock Grand Slam triumph this year, which would give Asian tennis a further boost following the success of China's Li Na in the women's game.

"There's a new generation of players coming through to challenge the big four," he told AFP, referring to Nadal, Roger Federer, Novak Djokovic and Andy Murray.

"He has the ability. I've been

watching Kei since he was 11. He has the touch of a genius, great imagination.

"He has shots in his locker you just can't teach," added Matsuoka. "Breaking into the top 10 is just the start."

Nishikori burst onto the scene as an 18-year-old by winning in Delray Beach as a 244th-ranked qualifier in 2008, and is a huge celebrity in Japan.

Despite winning five ATP titles to date, Nishikori's career has been blighted by injuries, most notably in 2009 when he needed elbow surgery and feared he might not play again. But Matsuoka tipped him to join the Grand Slam winners' club.

"You saw in the Nadal match, his creativity and speed," said Matsuoka, whose run to the 1995 Wimbledon quarter-final sparked a tennis boom in Japan.

"I don't think anyone doubts he can win Grand Slams."

Given his first racquet when he was five, Nishikori has come a long way since leaving his family home in mountainous Shimane prefecture, western Japan, as a bashful 13-year-old and arriving at Nick Bollettieri's academy in Bradenton, Florida, unable to speak a word of English.

Earmarked for success at an early age by the Japan Tennis Association, Nishikori has repaid them in gold, proving a cash cow for the domestic game and this year propelling his country to the Davis Cup quarter-finals.

Meanwhile, the decision to hire former French Open winner Michael Chang as coach late last year looks an inspired one.

"Chang is exactly what Kei needed," said Matsuoka of the 1989 French Open champion. "It's not just about how much game you have, but also tactics and resilience."

Nishikori's best Grand Slam performance to date was the quarter-finals in Melbourne two years ago.

But if he continues on his upward curve, favourable draws await at the four majors, and Stanislas Wawrinka's Australian Open victory in January suggests the field is more open than previous years.

"Kei has the potential," said Japan's former Davis Cup captain Eiji Takeuchi, who also feels the high-flying Nishikori has a Grand Slam crown in him.

"He was always a shy kid but once he stepped on court, a switch flicked on inside him. He is so tough. He could be aiming for the top five already." - AFP

Sports writers honour top athletes

KYAW ZIN HLAING

kyawzinhlaing91@gmail.com

MARTIAL artist Wai Phyto Aung and traditional rower May Thin Thin Aung were crowned Myanmar's top athletes for 2013 on May 10 for their performances at last year's Southeast Asian Games.

Wai Phyto Aung collected three gold medals in wushu at the December Games. May Thin Thin Aung won 10 golds and one bronze in traditional rowing events.

May Thin Thin Aung's efforts helped the Myanmar Rowing Federation to win its second consecutive "Most Successful" award at the ceremony. Rowers took home a total of 20 gold medals, eight silver medals and six bronze medals over the course of the SEA Games.

10

Gold medals won by traditional rower May Thin Thin Aung at the 2013 Southeast Asian Games

The Myanmar Olympic Committee and Myanmar Sports Writers Federation also honoured athletes who showed the greatest improvement in their respective sport.

"I'm so happy that I won the 'Most Improved Player' award. I felt that my talent was acknowledged," said traditional rower Aye Aye Thein.

"Although the SEA Games was my first international competition I did my best and we won many gold medals."

The Myanmar Sports Writers Federation has recognised Myanmar's top athletes annually since 2003.

IN PICTURES



Jinxed: Benfica supporters react as they watch the UEFA Europa League final against Sevilla in Lisbon on May 14. Benfica lost a dramatic penalty shoot-out. The Portuguese side has lost seven European finals since winning in 1962.

Photo: AFP

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