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**BANKER
OF THE
YEAR
★2014★**

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YOUR MONEY

Plus a who's who of the banking world

EXCLUSIVE

Unshackle our banks, U Zaw Zaw pleads

Banker of the Year also says he will keep expanding and take AYA Bank to stock market

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF ROSS DUNKLEY

THE *Myanmar Times* "Banker of the Year" U Zaw Zaw of Ayeyarwady Bank has called upon the Central Bank to remove the shackles and create a more dynamic environment for home-grown banks so one day they can compete with the regional heavyweights.

Head of the Max Myanmar Group of companies, which includes AYA Bank, U Zaw Zaw was speaking exclusively to senior editors from *The Myanmar Times* after being named the banking sector's most outstanding player.

Editor-in-chief Ross Dunkley said U Zaw Zaw, 47, deserved to head the list because of his bank's rapid rise over the past four years, growing to 75 branches and 3000 staff.

"His energy and drive mark him out from a conservative field," Mr Dunkley said. "By any definition that is a mightily impressive performance."

"We find him to be an inspirational businessman – and not coincidentally, a man who is open and forthright in sharing his views for the improvement of the industry with his colleagues and the media. That is often a rare quality in Myanmar."

U Zaw Zaw called for unduly restrictive regulations and any rules and laws not appropriate to 21st-century banking practices to be scrapped. He said such rules inhibit and hamper the ability of banks to expand and compete with foreign financial institutions.

INSIDE: Read the full interview with our chief business correspondent Aung Shin in this week's 40-page "Your Money" special feature.

Press Freedom

Shock, anger at 10-yr jail terms

Press freedom 'violated' as *Unity* reporters look to president for answers

WA LONE

walone14@gmail.com

NEARLY 50 journalists awaited President U Thein Sein outside of the Myanmar Peace Center on July 12 to protest the harsh sentencing of fellow reporters and the chief executive of *Unity* journal.

U Thein Sein was visiting the MPC to meet with actors and actresses.

Earlier the Myanmar Journalists Network, the Myanmar Journalist Association and the Myanmar Journalist Union condemned the 10-year sentences handed down on July 10, calling it a "violation of the freedom of the press".

The groups co-signed an open letter to U Thein Sein calling for the immediate release of the four journalists and the chief executive.

Police officers barred journalists from entering the MPC, saying that the T-shirts many were wearing, emblazoned with "Stop Killing Press", were not appropriate.

Some journalists placed black tape over their mouths and stood without speaking, their cameras and recorders on the ground. Ma Shwe Hmone, chief reporter of *Thamaga* news journal, said the demonstration was to show that the government was trying to keep the media from doing its job.

"We want to give a message to the president that the government is restricting the media", said chief reporter at *Eleven Daily*.

FULL COVERAGE ON NEWS 4-5



Photo: Aung Htay Hlaing

Ko Paing Thet Zaw (left) and Ko Yarzar Oo leave court after the *Unity* verdict on July 10.

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Page 2

online editor **Kayleigh Long** |
kayleighlong@gmail.com



THE INSIDER: The local lowdown & best of the web

Minister acknowledges drinking problem

There are plans afoot to establish legislation aimed at containing alcohol consumption, with the government signalling its intention to cooperate with the World Health Organization in statements made to parliament last week.

"Although we have laws related with controlling the consumption of cigarettes and tobacco, no law has been enacted to control alcohol. In other countries, governments enact laws to control the sale of alcohol. Our country has many health problems related with alcohol consumption. We will cooperate with WHO and other respective organisations to find answers for these issues," said Minister for Health Pe Thet Khin on July 8, the *New Light of Myanmar* reported.

That there are laws in place controlling the consumption of cigarettes and tobacco may be news to many. According to government statistics, alcohol consumption has been increasing year on year – not only among men but also with women (!).

Initiatives intended to tackle alcohol-related violence, drink driving and health problems are commendable. Presumably something about education, as well as making a bottle of whiskey cost more than a dollar, might be a good start.

Ooredooing okay

The hearts-and-minds campaign being waged by the two international telecoms companies on social media shows Ooredoo ahead as the number-one brand on Facebook in Myanmar, with over 393,000 "likes" making it the fifth-most-popular page in-country overall.

Telenor, despite having joined Facebook much later and having made a fairly low-key effort with its social media presence by comparison, is just behind with over 340,000 fans.

Ooredoo has punched hard with outreach campaigns like

inviting fans to send "selfies", presumably having to make an extra effort in order to counteract the misguided and ridiculous boycott against it.

If the numbers on social media are anything to go by, those behind the boycott might want to retrain their focus. I'm not sure if they've looked at the results for the on- and offshore block rounds but they might find a couple of international interests they could take similar issue with there.

7 Day news comes in as the number-one page in the country, with over 801,000 likes and counting. *The Myanmar Times*, by comparison, has a fairly dismal showing with 143,000-odd likes.

Antisocial network

With the spotlight now trained firmly on the issue of hate speech on social media, people are suddenly taking notice of what has been a growing problem in Myanmar for at least the last year and a half.

As Page 2 pointed out the other week, a good number of the accounts spreading hate speech are fake profiles – the number of which can't be taken to give a true representation of the weight of support behind certain ideas and movements. Government officials say they are working with Facebook in order to tackle the issue, which is positive if not well overdue given it must have already been

on the company's radar for quite some time. I was told in March last year that it had been flagged as a bit of a problem to employees at the company's San Francisco headquarters.

One interesting article on the subject last week came out of Eleven Media, who looked at the issue of fake profiles and the sort of content they promote.

"We watched the Facebook during the Mandalay conflict. The accounts which write about hate speech and instigation are not the users with true profiles. We think those accounts are created to spread instigations," the article said. However, they went a step further with the chief online editor observing that the same accounts that had instigated the Mandalay riots were seen posting content that would tend to indicate support for certain fairly hefty sentences handed down last week, despite most people being fairly appalled by the outcome.

"There are thousands of such mouthpiece accounts on the Facebook according to my investigation," said Eleven's chief online editor. He observed that such accounts regularly flood media outlets with their messages – which is something I can confirm I've also noticed during my time managing the *Times*' online presence.

Some particularly prolific accounts that had spammed our page necessitating a block'n'report from yours truly

would cut and paste the exact same comment over and over again, as well as posting it verbatim to other local media outlet pages.

Fake profiles of this kind share some common traits. The pictures were invariably of one of a handful of things: a flag, a cartoon character, a flower, a pagoda, a football team logo or a baby. English comments are largely recycled, and the bulk of their activity is in Myanmar. Many of the profiles are relatively new to Facebook. One particularly nasty group that has since been taken down had been growing at a steady rate that I figured at some 300 per day. Nearly all of its members were new to the site.

With that in mind I'd like to remind people they can actively report profiles that are spreading hate speech.

While of course it's the message not the medium, if Facebook and the government are to work together to confront the problem of online hate speech in a meaningful way they're going to need a little help.

So, go forth. Panzagar.

In brief:

Panic reigns at UNFPA headquarters as staff member can't remember if all-important mark on preliminary census figures document was supposed to be a comma or a decimal place

Heavy sentences handed down to journalists do "little" to allay suspicions about nature of activities conducted on DDI-owned site

Embassy staff offered cash reward in search for diplomatic midway point between sanctions and statements voicing "deep concern"

North Korea and Eritrea reportedly worried about Myanmar making a comeback in next year's Press Freedom Index



Khine Thazin Yu War from *NOW!* Magazine.
Photo: Htet Aung Kyaw
(HAK studio)

Style
Statement

NOW!

People's Desire

- We favour peace and stability
- We favour development
- We oppose unrest and violence
- Wipe out those inciting unrest and violence

The New Light of Myanmar, October 2010

Donor interest in Irrawaddy dolphin conservation would be higher if they were cuter, say analysts

Next week:

Myanmar pop star bleached "beyond recognition" on new billboard

Women's groups vow to take on repressive interfaith marriage bill "next time around", when they're men

Consistent inclusion of Jennifer Lopez-related content in New Light entertainment section sparks rumours editor "has a thing for her"; one pundit describes it as "obvious"



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New NLD youth committee to meet

WA LONE
walone14@gmail.com

THE first meeting of the National League for Democracy's new youth committee will take place this week, after the party held its first youth conference. The July 5-6 conference was attended by 150 young people elected by their peers. Fifty-seven were chosen to sit on a policy-making committee, of whom 15 were also selected for a central working committee. The conference was the first held since the party was formed in September 1988, and leaders declared they would work to attract more young people into politics. "Our two main tasks are to help with the party's activities and to persuade the young people who have stayed away from politics to get involved," said U Soe Moe Thu from the Central Youth Working Committee. He said the youth conference had

resulted in work programs on illicit drug use, the environment and unemployment. The central working committee's first meeting will be held on July 14 at the party's Yangon headquarters. In her address on July 5, party leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi reminded youth leaders of their responsibilities to the party and the people. "If you are just seeking opportunities without any responsibility, you should resign from the party - we can only give you duties," she said. Senior party members conceded they need to do more to attract young people to politics. At its central committee meeting in early June, the party agreed to prioritise women and young people when selecting candidates to contest the 2015 general election. "Our party relies on the power of youth," said U Aung Shin, a central executive committee member. "We can't work without them."



National League for Democracy youth members attend the party's youth conference on July 5. Photo: Aung Htay Hlaing

Facebook vows to tackle hate speech

Social media giant meets government to explain policy on inflammatory comments and promises it will "not tolerate" attacks on race, religion

TIM MCLAUGHLIN
timothy.mclaughlin3@gmail.com

OFFICIALS from the social media giant Facebook have spoken to members of government to explain the company's stance against hate speech, as Nay Pyi Taw looks to curb inflammatory comments in the wake of recent violence in Mandalay. An official from the President's Office said last week that the government had been in contact with the US company to discuss handling hate speech on the site following a deadly outbreak of violence in Mandalay in early July. The unnamed official told several media outlets Facebook representatives and government officials held discussions on July 3. Facebook users reported that access to the site was blocked for about seven hours on the nights of July 3 and July 4. The site remained accessible when using a proxy server, however, indicating that it had been made intentionally inaccessible for users inside Myanmar. Officials have not confirmed if the government was behind the outage and a spokesperson from Facebook declined to comment on the issue. Myanmar-language publication The

Voice Daily reported on July 9 that members of government had spoken with officials from Facebook offices in Singapore, Dublin and the US to discuss the company's policy on incendiary material spreading on the site. "We spoke to Facebook about our concerns and the challenges that we face, they said they would assist us in any way they could; they explained to us their own policies and finally we reached a mutual agreement," the President's Office official told Mizzima. An official from Facebook confirmed to The Myanmar Times that representatives from the Menlo Park-based company had been in

'The Burmese government needs to be very careful that it does not revert to censorship.'

Hannah Hindstrom
Minority Rights

contact with Nay Pyi Taw. "We regularly talk to governments around the world to address questions or concerns they have about our policies, just as we have with the government of Myanmar," the spokesperson said, but declined to give further information or comment on if any Myanmar specific plans for cooperation had been laid out. "As we have explained to them, Facebook does not permit hate speech and will not tolerate any content that attacks others based on their race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, disability or medical condition." Facebook's terms and conditions warn users not to "credibly threaten others or organise acts of real-world violence". The explanation of Facebook's policies comes after reports circulated on Facebook that two Muslim men had raped a Buddhist woman in the city of Mandalay were blamed for stoking tensions that eventually turned violent. Two men - one Muslim and one Buddhist - were later killed by unknown attackers, while almost 20 people were injured. Statistics compiled by the Myan-

mar Computer Professional Association showed that Myanmar had just over 1 million Facebook users as of August 2013, although many people are thought to have more than one account. Despite slow connectivity and limited internet penetration, the site has become an increasing popular outlet for both rumours and news, and is a favoured tool for members of the government, including presidential spokesperson U Ye Htut, to distribute information. A prolific Facebook user, U Ye Htut has not posted on the site since July 2. While the rise in inflammatory hate speech represents a worrying trend, experts say it must be tackled with an even-handed and measured approach. "The spread of hate speech on social media presents new challenges for governments around the world. The Burmese government needs to be very careful that it does not revert to censorship in an effort to contain hate speech on social media," said Hanna Hindstrom, Asia information officer at Minority Rights, which recently released a report on hate speech targeted at minorities. "Instead, it should focus on using social media to promote tolerance and

open debate around religious diversity in Burma." Already some are moving to counter the threat posed by hate speech. In April, Nay Phone Latt, an influential blogger and free-speech advocate who serves as the director Myanmar Information Communication Technology for Development Organisation (MIDO), launched an anti-hate speech campaign known as "Panzagar", or flower speech. The campaign urges internet users to counter hate speech online. "Some users post offensive pictures and content with deliberate aggressiveness. I see irresponsible attitudes that are different from bloggers and blog readers," he told The Myanmar Times in a recent interview. "Negative comments on someone's home page can provoke anger quickly, so people make quick responses and users seem incapable of making a rational decision. Their actions are entirely governed by ego and anger." On July 4, he took to Twitter to express his displeasure with the blocking of Facebook, saying it was not the right way to address the issue and questioning if the country was still under a military regime.

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IN PICTURES

PHOTO: WA LONE

Ma Shwe Hmone, chief reporter of weekly journal *Thamaga*, releases a bird at the eastern gate of Shwedagon Pagoda on July 11 for the five *Unity* journal staff jailed the previous day. More than 50 journalists came to the pagoda to pray for their colleagues.

Experts comment on the Unity verdict

U Than Htay, joint secretary 2 of the Myanmar Journalist Network

"The judge should have sentenced them according to the media law. We can say that this is a threat to all journalists; the freedom that the government talked about means nothing. Where is the rule of law? The government is trying to close its ears and eyes to the people's desire. All media organisations should join hands in calling for a review of this heavy sentence."

U Win Myint, Pyithu Hluttaw representative and spokesperson of the National League for Democracy

"I am sorry to hear the verdict; the judgment is very harsh. It is only recently that we gained press freedom and it seems the government already viewed the media as its enemy. There should be fairness between the nature

of the crime and the verdict. The [military factory] is not a prohibited place. The judge needs to consider the case fair and square."

U Thiha Saw, chief editor, Myanmar Freedom Daily

"If the government is really going to transform into a democracy, they must give press freedom and be transparent. The impact of this case is not good for our country's image. [The] international [community] will criticise [the government] about this case. Journalists will report what they have to and if they have not breached the law then it is not fair to have a verdict like this."

U Aye Thar Aung, leader of the Rakhine National Party

"I thought the judge would find them

guilty but I never thought he would sentence them to 10 years in prison. It is unfair ... at this juncture when the country is on the road to democracy. This is just like what happened under the military dictatorship and shows the media are still in the hands of the government."

U Than Zaw Aung, lawyer for the five defendants

It is unacceptable to put journalists behind bars under this section. The court's verdict is based on President's Office directives and the order from the minister for home affairs. The existing laws oppress the public even though the 2008 constitution gives rights to the people. The people will have to bear the brunt as long as these oppressive laws exist.

Shock, anger hands down

Five defendants from weekly journal *Unity* plan to appeal



YE MON

yeemontun2013@gmail.com

FOUR journalists and the chief executive officer of weekly journal *Unity* plan to appeal against their conviction, their lawyer said last week after the Pakokku District Court sentenced them to 10 years with hard labour for breaking the 1923 State Secrets Act.

Lawyer U Than Zaw Aung said the law was undemocratic and designed to "oppress the people".

"My clients are not spies," he told *The Myanmar Times*. "If [the government] wants to give a lesson to reporters, they can take action against them under the Media Law. I argued for this but they ignored it. We will try to lodge an appeal."

The case stems from reports published in late January that alleged the Tatmadaw was operating a chemical weapons factory in Magwe Region at what is officially known as the No 24 Defence Equipment Factory. The group was arrested in early February. The government has denied the existence of chemical weapons but Deputy Minister for Information U Ye Htut, a spokesperson for the president, has insisted that the allegations made in the articles were a national security concern.

Four reporters and editors - Ko Yazar Soe, Ko Sithu Soe, Ko Lu Maw Naing and Ko Paing Thet Kyaw - along with chief executive U Tint San were arrested in February and charged with two offences.

Few were expecting such a harsh sentence, however. When it was read out by District Judge U Maung Maung Htay, sobbing from parents and relatives of the



A relative of reporter Ko Sithu Soe cries

defendants filled the courtroom.

"They didn't do anything. I think the court made that decision because it was forced to by the military," said Daw Khin Mar Cho, the mother of reporter Ko Yar Zar Oo.

Two *Unity* reporters attend court on July 10. Photo: Aung Htay Hlaing

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r as Magwe court 10-year jail terms

deal conviction under State Secrets Act, as government accused of interfering in case



outside Pakokku District Court on July 10. Photo: Aung Htay Hlaing

Ko Yar Zar Oo told reporters as he left the court after hearing the verdict that he was “very surprised” at the decision, which he described as “harsh”.

Earlier, the judge had rejected the argument of the defence team that the accused should be charged under the Media Law, on the grounds the offence was committed on January 25 and the Media Law was not enacted until March 14.

The judge said some lines in the *Unity* investigative report – including allegations that the military had seized more than 3000 acres of farmland for the factory; that the project showed the government had failed to rein in defence spending and this could harm relations with the international community; that anti-poverty efforts would fail because of high defence spending; and that the factory would harm trust with armed ethnic groups – were written with the intention of

harming the state's security and national interests.

Many observers questioned whether the government had interfered in the judiciary's handling of

‘It is clear that the judiciary has no freedom.’

Ma Lwin Lwin Myint

Wife of jailed reporter Ko Lu Maw

the case, particularly as the prosecution had revealed during the early stages of the hearing that charges were filed on the instruction of President's Office director U Hla Tun.

Reporter Ko Lu Maw said the group had been “bullied” by the government.

“I think they sentenced us like that because the executive and the judiciary together want to punish us severely,” he said.

“It is clear that the judiciary has no freedom,” said his wife, Ma Lwin Lwin Myint. “If they sent people to jail like this, then people can't know the truth.”

The government made no announcement after the ruling and state newspapers did not report on the verdict.

After the sentencing, the Myanmar Journalist Network issued a statement objecting to the judge's decision and promising to provide physical and mental assistance to the families of the defendants. The network said it would also support their decision to appeal.

The verdict ended a case that had seen more than 50 witnesses called, mostly for the prosecution.

– Translation by Thiri Min Htun

After sentencing, international condemnation begins

TIM MCLAUGHLIN

timothy.mclaughlin3@gmail.com

IT began within hours, when Amnesty International decried July 10 as a “very dark day for freedom of expression in Myanmar”. Within a day of the sentencing, most major human rights and press freedom groups had come out swinging against the 10-year jail terms handed down to four journalists and the chief executive of local news journal *Unity*. Many described the ruling as marking a major step back for press freedom in Myanmar.

The reporters and editors – Ko Yazar Soe, Ko Sithu Soe, Ko Lu Maw Naing, and Ko Paing Thet Kyaw – along with chief executive U Tint San from the Myanmar-language weekly *Unity* were sentenced on July 10 for violating the 1923 State Secrets Act.

The case stems from reports published in late January that alleged the Tatmadaw was operating a chemical weapons factory in Magwe Region at what is officially known as the No 24 Defence Equipment Factory. The group was arrested in early February. The government has denied the existence of chemical weapons and Deputy Minister for Information U Ye Htut, a spokesperson for the president, has insisted that the allegations made in the articles were a national security concern.

But the sentence prompted a sharp backlash from human rights and media watch groups, which said Myanmar's nascent press freedoms were showing signs of fading.

The Committee to Protect Journalists said it “is alarmed that journalists were tried under a 100-year-old spying statute and slammed with an outrageously harsh sentence”.

“This conviction should shatter any illusions that President Thein Sein's government grasps the role of a free press in a democracy,” said Bob Dietz, the Asia program coordinator at the New York-based CPJ.

Amnesty International described it as a “very dark day for freedom of expression in Myanmar”.

“These five media workers have done nothing but cover a story that is in the public interest,” said Rupert Abbott, Amnesty International's deputy Asia-Pacific director.

“Today's sentences expose the government's promises to improve the human rights situation in the country as hollow ones. They reflect a wider crackdown on free media since the beginning of the year, despite government assurances that such practices would end.”

Reporters Without Borders called the sentencing “the latest in a series of

reverses for media freedom in Burma” and said the prison terms “confirmed that Burma has done a U-turn on freedom of information”.

President U Thein Sein's government has greatly eased restrictions on the press over the past three years, suspending pre-publication print media censorship in August 2012 and abolishing the censorship board in January 2013. Private daily newspapers were allowed to resume publication in April 2013, after a five-decade ban.

Previously banned from the country, international media outlets such as the BBC and Reuters have established bureaus in Myanmar and exile media have returned. Restrictions on accessing news websites have also been lifted.

However, rights groups have pointed to a number of incidents over the past year as evidence of a rolling-back of media freedom.

‘Today's sentences ... reflect a wider crackdown on free media since the beginning of the year.’

Rupert Abbott

Amnesty International

A video journalist for the Democratic Voice of Burma was jailed in Magwe for “trespassing” and “disturbing a civil servant on duty”. Sentenced to a one-year jail term, U Zaw Pe was released on July 4 after serving 3 months.

The length of visas for foreign journalists reporting in Myanmar has also fluctuated greatly in the past year, with many now being issued 28-day multiple-entry visas rather than the three-month visas previously available.

David Mathieson, a Yangon-based researcher at Human Rights Watch, said the reason for the visa changes remains unclear but described the move as a “shell-game of bureaucratic opacity, predicated on generating uncertainty and unease in the media community”.

In the most recent development to raise concerns, police officials from Special Branch visited the offices of a number of news journals in Yangon, including *The Myanmar Times*, to discuss revenues and distribution numbers. The reason for the visits, which took place in late June, remains unknown.

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A monk signs the National League for Democracy petition calling for amendments to section 436 of the constitution in Yangon on July 10. Photo: Zarni Phyo

Constitution committee to consider NLD petition: MPs

SANDAR LWIN
sdlsandar@gmail.com

INFLUENTIAL parliamentarians say a National League for Democracy petition is likely to be taken into account by MPs when they consider constitutional reform. The comments contradict Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann's assertion earlier this month that the committee drafting a constitutional amendment bill will take no notice of the petition campaign.

The campaign to amend section 436 was launched by the NLD and the 88 Generation in May and a petition calling for the removal of the military's veto over the constitutional change had attracted more than 3.3 million signatures by the end of June. Signatures will continue to be accepted until July 19, when the nation will mark Martyrs' Day.

Members of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw's Constitution Amendment Implementation Committee and the Pyithu Hluttaw Legislative, Judicial Affairs and Complaints, Letters and Petitions Scrutinizing Committee said both bodies would accept and discuss the petition when it is submitted.

"We will hold a meeting to discuss it and decide how we should proceed," said Union Solidarity and Development Party member U Myint Tun, who is secretary of the lower house body.

Constitution Amendment Implementation Committee member U Aung Kyi Nyunt, an Amyotha Hluttaw representative from the National League for Democracy, said the committee would not discuss the petition until it has been submitted.

"The committee will discuss [the petition] but only then can a decision be made on it," he said.

"For the moment, the committee does not have any plan to deal with it. But I hope that the committee could possibly convey a message about the petition to the parliament," he added.

The comments contradict those made by Thura U Shwe at a press conference on July 3, when the speaker said, "The NLD is running [the 436 campaign] based on its own desire but its actions will not influence the activities of the Constitutional Amendment Implementation Committee."

While the extent of the petition's impact on the committee's future activities remains unclear, U Aung Kyi Nyunt said he and the other NLD representative on the Constitution

'The committee will discuss [the petition] but only then can a decision be made on it.'

U Aung Kyi Nyunt
NLD and Constitutional Amendment Implementation Committee member

Amendment Implementation Committee have already put forward the party's views on constitutional change.

"Even if the majority of committee members do not agree with [our] suggestions, the committee will still submit these suggestions to parliament," he said.

The 31-member Constitutional Amendment Implementing Committee was formed on February 3 to implement the findings of a 108-member review committee that submitted its final report to parliament on January 31.

On February 18, Thura U Shwe Mann instructed the committee to submit a bill to amend the constitution to parliament no less than six months before elections scheduled for late 2015.

The speaker told MPs that the committee should make chapter 12 of the constitution, which outlines the process for amending the document and includes section 436, its top priority.

The committee comprises 14 USDP representatives, seven military personnel, two NLD members and one representative from eight other parties.

Journalist association patron slams latest arrests

TOE WAI AUNG
linnhthet.lt@gmail.com

A LEADING journalist has criticised the government for arresting journalists without consulting the press council, in violation of the recently enacted Media Law.

The editor of *Bi Mon Te Nay* (Midday Sun) journal and three of his staff were arrested by a special investigations unit last week after a report wrongly claimed that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and ethnic leaders had been appointed to an interim government to serve until after next year's elections.

Police are considering pressing charges under section 5 of the 1950 Emergency Provisions Act, which forbids the "spread [of] false news, knowing, or having reason to believe that it is not true".

The July 7 article was based on a press release from an activist group known as the Movement for Democracy Current Force.

Myanmar Journalists Association patron Phoe Thaut Kyar said the arrests contravened the Media Law enacted in March.

Under the law, complainants are required to attempt mediation through the press council before filing charges against a journalist or publication.

"Security forces did not inform the press council, which President U Thein Sein has officially given responsibility to oversee the print media sector, about the *Bi Mon Te Nay* arrests," he said. "If you didn't respect the press council it is the same as not respecting the president."

The journal has been forced to stop publishing for a week and copies of the issue were taken from newsstands, its chief reporter said.

"They took three computers which they used as well as one printer, internet equipment and documents to investigate. They also took published journals off the market," said chief reporter Ko Thein Min Aung. - *Translation by Khant Lin Oo*

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Ross Dunkley
rsdunkley@gmail.com
Chief Operating Officer – Wendy Madrigal
madrigalmcm@gmail.com
Deputy Chief Operating Officer – Tin Moe Aung
tinmoeaung.mcm@gmail.com

EDITORIAL
Editor MTE – Thomas Kean
tdkean@gmail.com
Editor MTM – Sann Oo
sannoo@gmail.com
Chief of Staff – Zaw Win Than
zawwinthan@gmail.com
Editor Special Publications – Myo Lwin
myolwin286@gmail.com

Features Editor MTE – Douglas Long
dlong125@gmail.com
Business Editor MTE – Jeremy Mullins
jeremymullins7@gmail.com
World Editor MTE – Fiona MacGregor
fionamacgregor@hotmail.co.uk
The Pulse Editor MTE – Whitney Light
light.whitney@gmail.com
Sport Editor MTE – Tim McLaughlin
timothy.mclaughlin3@gmail.com

Chief Sub Editor MTM – Aye Sapay Phyu
Business & Property Editor MTM –
Tin Moe Aung
tinmoeaung.mcm@gmail.com
Timeout Editor MTM – Moh Moh Thaw
mohthaw@gmail.com

MCM BUREAUS
Mandalay Bureau Chief – Stuart Alan Becker
stuart.becker@gmail.com
News Editors (Mandalay) –
Khin Su Wai, Phyo Wai Kyaw
Nay Pyi Taw Bureau Chief – Hsu Hlaing Htun
hsuhlainghtun.mcm@gmail.com

DIGITAL/ONLINE
Online Editors – Kayleigh Long, Thet Hlaing
kayleighelong@gmail.com, thet202@gmail.com

PHOTOGRAPHICS
Director – Kaung Htet
Photographers –
Boothee, Aung Htay Hlaing, Thiri

PRODUCTION
zarnicj@gmail.com
Art Directors – Tin Zaw Htway, Ko Pxyo
Assistant Head of Production – Zarni

MCM PRINTING
uhtaymaung@gmail.com
Printing Manager – Htay Maung
Factory Administrator – Aung Kyaw Oo (3)
Factory Foreman – Tin Win

SALES & MARKETING
ads.myanmarntimes@gmail.com
National Sales Director – Jesse Gage
jesse.m.gage@gmail.com
Deputy National Sales Directors –
Chan Tha Oo, Nay Myo Oo,
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Classifieds Manager – Khin Mon Mon Yi
classified.mcm@gmail.com

ADMIN, FINANCE & SYSTEMS
Chief Financial Officer – Mon Mon Tha Saing
monmonthasaing@gmail.com
Deputy HR Director – Khine Su Yin
khinesu1988@gmail.com
Publisher – Dr Tin Tun Oo, Permit No: 04143

Director of IT/System –
Kyaw Zay Yar Lin
kyawzayyarlin@gmail.com

CIRCULATION & DISTRIBUTION
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Myanmar Consolidated Media Ltd.
www.mmtimes.com

Head Office: 379/383 Bo Aung Kyaw Street,
Kyauktada Township, Yangon, Myanmar.
Telephone: (01) 253 642, 392 928
Facsimile: (01) 254 158

Mandalay Bureau: Bld Sa/1, Man Mandalay
Housing, 35th Street, between 70th and 71st
streets, Yan Myo Lone Quarter, Chan Aye Thar
San Township.
Tel: (02) 65391, 74585. Fax: (02) 24460
Email: mdybranch@myanmarntimes.com.mm

Nay Pyi Taw Bureau: No. 10/72 Bo Tawk
Htein St, Yan Aung (1) Quarter, Nay Pyi Taw-
Pynmana.
Tel: (067) 23064, 23065
Email: capitalbureau@myanmarntimes.com.mm

Ministries launch first early childhood program

AYE NYEIN WIN
ayenyeinwin.mcm@gmail.com

A RECENTLY launched policy on Early Childhood Care and Development will see the government dramatically increase funding for pre-schools and kindergartens, officials say.

The policy, the first of its kind in Myanmar, was launched at a ceremony in Nay Pyi Taw on July 8. Officials say it is the first firm step toward mobilising more resources across ministries for supporting early childhood development, and a crucial measure in tackling child poverty and reducing inequality.

Myanmar currently has a very low level of investment in this sector. The Department of Social Welfare spends only 10 percent of its total budget – about 0.14pc of the total government budget – on ECCD and much less is invested by the Ministry of Education.

“We are hoping to contribute to the good of 8 million children from birth to eight years of age. We can get more benefit from investing [in children than in other areas],” said U Soe Kyi, a director general in the Department of Social Welfare.

The Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement will implement the policy by setting 10 strategies to be implemented in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and others.

“We intend to fulfill the development of children from birth to eight years of age,” said Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Daw Myat Myat Ohn Khin.

“Children who are suffering from development delays, malnutrition, chronic illnesses and disabilities will be among those who benefit.”

Department of Social Welfare deputy director general U Aung Tun Khaing said the policy represented a shift in thinking toward investing in human resources.

“As our country is a developing country, we have been focusing on the development of the economy by getting foreign investment. But we have been weak at investing in human resources. If we don’t do this, development will only be short term,” he said.

By 2020, 28 percent of the annual budget of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement will be devoted to ECCD services, while 12 percent of the Ministry of Education’s budget will be invested in early pre-school and kindergarten education.

The two ministries will also work together to open hundreds of pre-schools across the country. From 2015, these will include a focus on exposing children to ethnic languages.

“In 2015, we will provide full support to pre-schools and we can assign enough teachers because we will get more budget from the government,” U Aung Tun Khaing said.

As international focus on political prisoners fades

The government has shown little interest in following up cases of political prisoners since

BILL O'TOOLE

botoole12@gmail.com

ON July 15, 2013 – one year ago this week – President U Thein Sein stood next to David Cameron in London and told reporters, “By the end of the year there will be no prisoners of conscience in Myanmar.”

He touted his newly formed Remaining Political Prisoner Scrutiny Committee as the mechanism to achieve this aim. The committee, he said, would review the cases of all “prisoners of conscience” and make recommendations for their release.

One year later, dozens of democracy activists sit in jail for non-violent political offences, while hundreds of others have been arrested on spurious criminal charges linked to political activities. Since January, there have been few prisoners released and the review committee appears powerless to resolve the ongoing incarceration of people for political activities.

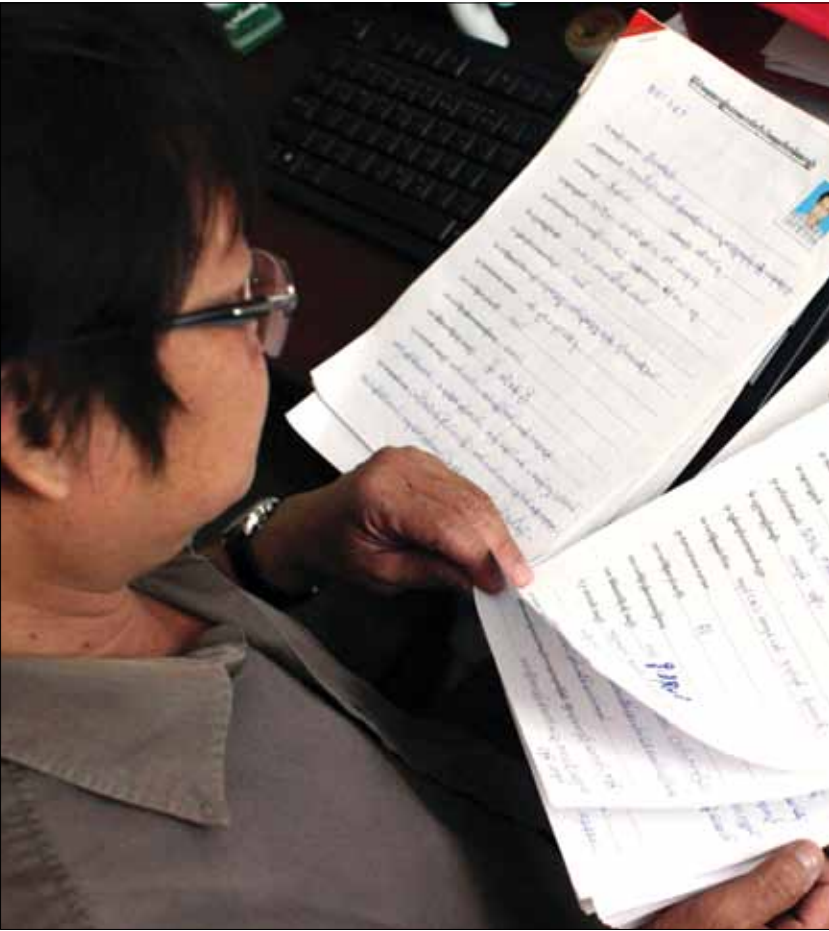
Frustrated by official indifference to the fate of remaining prisoners, civilian members on the committee are now ready to speak out. A number have told *The Myanmar Times* that they are disillusioned with the process and their role; one said they have simply been “wasting time and energy” on the issue.

U Ye Aung, a committee member who is also from the Former Political Prisoner Society (FPPS), told *The Myanmar Times* that when he was invited to join the committee in March of last year, he was “happy to cooperate.”

He and other former political prisoners on the committee felt that high-profile cooperation between the new government and democratic opposition could serve as a model to tackle other contentious issues.

“We participated in this because we hoped by working together we could make trust,” said U Bo Kyi, a member of the committee and head of the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma). “If we got a good result it could be an example for other sectors ... but we did not get a good result.”

The limitations of the committee became apparent within months, they said. Civilian members did not have access to legal documents and were barred from interviewing prisoners. The committee also had no formal role



A member of the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma) looks through

in the release process; it only made recommendations for the President’s Office to consider.

“Our committee doesn’t have a function. We have no mechanism to scrutinise the political prisoners,” U Ye Aung said.

U Bo Kyi expressed similar frustrations. “We should have the right to investigate [to get] more detailed information ... But now we do not have

‘It is now clear that the issue of political prisoners will remain in Burma for years to come.’

Ma Wai Hnin Pwint Thon
Burma Campaign UK

such kind of rights. Right now it’s difficult to work.”

Both activists told *The Myanmar Times* they had raised the issue of unfair detentions in Kachin, Shan and Rakhine states only to be told the conflicts were “too sensitive” for the committee to weigh in.

While they applauded U Thein Sein for ordering several large-scale amnesties in 2013, they, like many observers, argue that they were more about placating the international community.

“The UK, US and rest of the international community made a tactical mistake by treating President Thein Sein’s promise as meaning the problem was solved, and relaxed pressure, rather than applying pressure to make sure he kept his promise,” said Ma Wai Hnin Pwint Thon, a London-based campaigns officer for Burma Campaign UK. “It is now clear that the issue of political prisoners will remain in Burma for years to come.”

Most worryingly, the government

Monsoon ‘break’ on the way: DMH

AYE SAPAY PHYU
ayephyu2006@gmail.com

RESPITE from the rain could soon be on the way, the Department of Meteorology and Hydrology says. While monsoon intensity is expected to be strong through to the end of August, it will likely be punctuated by a monsoon “break” – a period of low rainfall that can run for up to two weeks.

Before the break arrives, however, some parts of the country, including Yangon, will continue to receive heavy rainfall. Department deputy director U Kyaw Lwin Oo said last week that the delta area, Rakhine coastal area, and hilly areas of upper Sagaing Region, and Chin, Kachin and Shan states are likely to receive more rain than other areas until July 16.

While Yangon can expect about average rainfall during the mid-monsoon period, which runs from the start of July to the end of August, the department said last week that upper Sagaing, Bago, Yangon and Tanintharyi regions, and Kachin, Rakhine, Kayin and Mon states are likely to receive above-average rainfall.

Below-average precipitation is expected in lower Sagaing, Mandalay and Magwe regions over the same period, while other areas are likely to receive about average rainfall.

The department also warned of the potential for flooding in towns along the Chindwin River, including Hkamti, Homalin, Mawlaik, Kalewa and Monywa in Sagaing Region, and towns along the Ayeyarwady River, including Katha in Sagaing Region, Mandalay,

Sagaing, Nyaung Oo in Mandalay Region, Pakokku in Magwe Region, and Zalun and Hinthada in Ayeyarwady Region.

Meanwhile, the Kayin State capital Hpa-an could be subject to flooding from the Thanlwin River, and Taungoo and Madauk in Bago Region will face a similar threat from the Sittoung River.

Smaller rivers, such as the Dokhtawaddy, Ngawun, Bago and Shwegyin, may also exceed their danger levels at the towns of Myitnge in Mandalay Region, Ngathaingchaung in Ayeyarwady Region and Bago and Shwegyin in Bago Region respectively.

“Floods and landslides due to heavy rain can occur frequently in the 62-day mid-monsoon period and the public should take note of the weather warnings,” U Kyaw Lwin Oo said.

us shifts, ll by wayside

the end of 2013, particularly those it deems “too sensitive”



prisoner records on July 10. Photo: Yu Yu

has done little to address the policies that put people in prison for political activities in the first place. These include not just unfair or autocratic laws, but reprimanding those who apply them incorrectly.

Ko Aung, the son of a political prisoner in Sittwe Prison, U Kyaw Hla Aung, said there are many powerful factions within both the national and regional governments that want to silence activists like his father.

“There are still many small dictators who are not satisfied with the release of all such prisoners,” he said last week.

Ko Aung said that in recent years police based in Rakhine State have

regularly arrested and detained Muslim activists and community on orders from local nationalist groups. The practice has also been documented by a number of human rights groups studying the region.

Minister for the President’s Office U Soe Thein, who heads the prisoner release committee, did not respond to repeated requests for comment last week. The government has previously stated that the president achieved his promise of releasing all political prisoners by the end of last year. With little international pressure to ensure no more people are jailed for political activities, it appears to have lost interest in the issue completely following a series of very visible amnesties between 2011 and 2013.

While the committee held monthly meetings in 2013, there have been only two meetings so far this year. On both occasions, the meetings only took place after the FPPS and the AAPP made repeated requests to U Soe Thein.

Even then, U Ye Aung and U Bo Kyi said few of the committee’s government representatives, including those from the Ministry of Home Affairs, attended the meetings.

“We think the government has lost interest in this issue,” said U Ye Aung.

U Bo Gyi agreed. “I’m bored of requesting meetings ... We’re wasting time and energy. I am out of patience.”

While the AAPP and the FPPS have slightly different figures on the number of political prisoners in Myanmar’s jails, both say the number has increased since the beginning of the year.

They say the committee will only be relevant if it is granted real authority and made completely independent of the government. But more than anything, the government and parliament must take swift action to change the laws and policies that create political prisoners in the first place.

“It’s not just about the numbers,” said U Bo Kyi. “It’s about freedom of expression in our social and political lives. As long as there are still arbitrary arrests, as long as police use torture [during interrogations], the issue of political prisoners will not be over.”



Soldiers and farmers confront each other over a land dispute in Sagaing’s Kanbalu township on July 4. Photo: Kyaw Ko Ko

Hundreds of farmers, soldiers face off in Kanbalu township

KYAW KO KO
newsroom@mmtimes.com

A PROMINENT local monk has been forced to step in to resolve a potentially deadly stand-off between Tatmadaw soldiers and farmers in Sagaing Region’s Kanbalu township, after the farmers attempted to plough fields confiscated by the military in the 1990s.

Photos seen by *The Myanmar Times* show soldiers pointing automatic weapons at villagers in the middle of a field near the village of Htaut Shar Eian on July 4. About 200 soldiers faced off against 500 farmers from six area villages, eyewitnesses said.

U Wi Thutar, the abbot of the monastery in Htaut Shar Eian, helped to mediate when the situation threatened to get violent. Nobody was injured in the incident

and no shots were fired, but he condemned the military for threatening residents.

“I absolutely object to the way that the military used arms to stop the farmers,” he said.

In 1997, Shwebo No 8 Training Corps of the Supply and Transport Battalion seized more than 3400 acres of farmlands from Htaut Shar Eian and five other villages in Kanbalu. About 500 acres of land is being used, including 300 for a sugarcane plantation.

Farmers, unhappy that the military had started renting the land to tenants rather than return it to its original owners, decided to plough the fields without the military’s permission.

U Wi Thuta said the confiscation had left farmers in the area without any reliable income.

Farmers said they received no

compensation when the land was taken.

“At that time they seized it, our farmland even had crops on it. Now they are stopping us by holding weapons ... This is bullying. The military is supposed to protect the public,” said U Khin Maung Kyi from Htaut Shar Eian village.

However, Colonel U Myo Min Thant, from the military unit that runs the sugarcane plantation, said the military was just defending its interests.

“We stopped them just to protect our assets,” he said. “We will continue to work according to the law.”

He said the land had not been confiscated from the farmers by military. Rather, in 1997-98, the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation had transferred it to the Ministry of Defence.

– Translation by Zar Zar Soe

Bangladesh bans marriages for Rohingya

BANGLADESH said last week it has barred official marriages between its nationals and Muslim Rohingya refugees, whom it claims are attempting to wed to gain citizenship.

Law minister Syed Anisul Haque said he has ordered marriage registrars not to officiate any unions between Bangladeshi nationals and Rohingya, who are known in Myanmar as Bengalis, and also between Rohingya themselves.

He said the group is trying to use the resulting wedding certificate to gain Bangladeshi passports and other documents, while Rohingya who marry Bangladeshis could automatically qualify for citizenship.

“By registering their marriage in Bangladesh they try to prove that they’re Bangladeshi citizens,” he said.

“We’ve told the marriage registrars not to list any marriage of Rohingyas and also between a Rohingya and a

Bangladeshi citizen in Bangladesh.”

Law ministry spokesperson Abdullah Al Shahin said marriage registrars have been warned of punitive action if they officiate any such marriages.

There are about 300,000 Rohingya living in Bangladesh’s southern coastal districts bordering Myanmar who have fled alleged persecution in the Buddhist-majority nation since the 1990s. – AFP



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Muslims in Mandalay avoid mosques after violence, arrests

KHIN SU WAI

jasminekhin@gmail.com

MANY of Mandalay's Muslims are staying away from mosques – and some have even fled the city – as fear grips their community that further sectarian violence could ignite at any time.

"I don't know what the situation is for security of the mosques; I haven't been to the mosque since July 2," one Muslim man, who asked not to be named, told *The Myanmar Times*.

The man said many Muslims feel defenceless against the threat posed by Buddhist mobs, particularly after authorities raided June Mosque and seized makeshift weapons. State media reported that sticks and swords, as well as seemingly innocuous items like marbles, were found inside the building, which occupies a block between 27th, 28th, 81st and 82nd streets in Chan Aye Thar San township.

Five people were subsequently arrested at June Mosque, police said. Police also found similar items inside other mosques, including Ko Yan Taw Mosque, which is also in Chan Aye Thar San township.

The man, who prays at Ko Yan Taw Mosque, insisted that the items had only been gathered in order to defend the lives of Muslims if there was an attack. "We cannot defend ourselves despite the threats to our lives. Now we are afraid of even holding a piece of brick," he said.

The unrest broke out after rumours spread that a Buddhist woman had

been raped by two Muslim men from a local teashop. Clashes on the nights of July 1 and 2 left one Muslim and one Buddhist dead and almost 20 people injured, according to police.

Mandalay Region Minister for Border Affairs and Security Colonel Aung Kyaw Moe said on July 3 that police were patrolling areas near mosques to prevent outbreaks of violence but had not posted security.

'We are really scared to go outside.'

U Khin Mg Aye
Ko Yan Taw Mosque trustee

But the secretary of the board of trustees of Ko Yan Taw Mosque insisted that Muslims should have the means to defend themselves if necessary.

"We are really scared and we dare not go outside," U Khin Mg Aye said. "We have the right to protect our children but the police took sticks from our mosques. As a result, we've posted three men to guard the mosque."

He said Muslim families who were living inside the compound of the mosque had left Mandalay immediately after the violence broke out.

"All 58 households [between 400-500 people] left the mosque and went to Pyin Oo Lwin and Kyaukme. Some

people who can afford it have now gone to Jiegao on the China-Myanmar border," U Khin Mg Aye told *The Myanmar Times* from Pyin Oo Lwin.

On the outskirts of Mandalay, however, mosques remain mostly open and there are even signs of interfaith cooperation.

"There are many Buddhist people in our ward. We all lived together for many years," said U Khin Mg Than, an official from northern Mandalay's Miba Zey Mosque.

"Near our mosque, there is Naga Monastery and Hmankin Monastery. They told me to come and stay in their monasteries if anything happens."

Despite the signs of cooperation, the online rumour-mill is still a powerful force. One Muslim man, Ko Zaw Min Tun from the education centre Tip Top, blamed some extremists for attempting to portray Muslims negatively on social media.

In one case, he said, a person near Tho-chan Mosque, in Chan Mya Tharsi township's Myothit ward shouted that there was a fire while Muslims were inside praying.

"When our Muslims came out from the mosque [after hearing] that shouting, the person then shouted, 'The Muslims are coming out of the mosque with weapons,'" he said.

A photographer took photos that were later posted on Facebook. Ko Zaw Min Tun said area residents "reacted well", seizing the man who had yelled that there was a fire. He said the man later claimed to be working for "Muslim media".



Riot police stand guard near a mosque on Mandalay's 26th Street on July 4. Photo: Si Thu



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Govt to lift curfew 'soon' after hundreds detained

Regional minister says stability more important than curfew's impact on businesses

SI THU LWIN
sithulwin.mmtimes@gmail.com

OFFICIALS in Mandalay say the city is returning to normality and they hope to lift a 9pm-to-5am curfew "as soon as possible".

The curfew, introduced under section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, was imposed in six townships on July 3 and the following day extended to Patheingyi after buildings in the township were damaged following the funeral of a Buddhist man.

As of July 7, 429 people had been arrested for failing to abide by the curfew. Another 16 who have been accused of inciting the violence are being held for questioning but police are still yet to identify those responsible for the killing of a Buddhist man on the night of July 2 and a Muslim man the following morning.

"We're still investigating who the culprits were in the cases of the two men who were killed," Mandalay Region Minister for Border Affairs and Security Colonel Aung Kyaw Moe told *The Myanmar Times* on July 8.

He said that while the government was conscious of the economic impact of the curfew, particularly on low-paid workers, the safety of the city's residents was more important.

"We are prioritising the peace and tranquility of the entire city over the economic situation of a minority," he said.

“The city has returned to normal. We now have the situation completely under control and hope to withdraw [the] section 144 [order] as soon as possible.”

U Kyaw Than Tun, head of the Ministry of Information in Mandalay Region, said not all of those arrested for violating the curfew had been charged.

"Some were released after signing a guarantee [not to re-offend] while some are still being investigated. Now Mandalay is at peace," he said.

While most local businesses were in

favour of introducing the curfew, those who work at night want the restrictions to be lifted as soon as possible.

"We have returned to peace thanks to [the] section 144 [order] but we also want it to be withdrawn quickly," said U Soe, who runs a beans and pulses wholesale business.

Col Aung Kyaw Moe said some of the security forces sent to maintain order in the city at the height of the violence had departed on July 8 but he insisted there was still "adequate" security in the city.

- *Translation by Zar Zar Soe*

'We will save our Mandalay': Civil society forms committee to combat violence

Civil society groups in Mandalay have formed a “Peace Making Committee” to help prevent further outbreaks of violence.

Outbreaks of religious violence in the city between July 1 and 3 left two people dead and almost 20 injured. Civil society groups responded on July 4 by forming the 23-member committee, which includes representatives of more than 10 organisations, said member Ko Thein Aung Myint.

"Our committee will work so that conflict does not grow bigger and endanger the future of Myanmar," he said. "We will save our Mandalay."

The authorities have also imposed a 9pm-to-5am curfew to quell the conflict. No further violence was reported after July 5.

U Tin San from Maha Aung Myay township said he was pleased to see civil society groups working together to combat religious conflict.

"It is good news for everyone that this committee has been formed," he said. "But the most important thing is how the committee responds when violence breaks out. We'll have to wait and see what they can really do."

– Maung Zaw, translation by Thiri Min Htun

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Family, friends pay tribute to man killed while helping others

THAN NAING SOE
KYAY MOHN WIN

newsroom@mmmtimes.com

MA Nwe Ni Hnin slept deeply, accustomed to her husband, Ko Tun Tun, coming back late at night. However, at midnight on July 2 she woke up and noticed that her husband was not there. Then the phone rang.

"At first, I was told my husband was in hospital and had had an operation because of an accident. At 1am on July 3, I could not stay at home calmly anymore. When I called my husband's friend [and told him] that I would come to the hospital, he replied that my husband was dead," she said.

Because her husband was very active among social welfare groups in Mandalay, Ma Nwe Ni Hnin, 38, never entertained the possibility that he could have been caught up in sectarian violence.

Ko Tun Tun ran a welding business on 62nd street, between 27th and 28th streets. He would finish work at 5:30pm and then go to the Shwe Kyee Si Society, a free funeral service charity near Yankin Hill, and work as a volunteer driver until 11pm.

If he had to drive a patient to hospital, he would call his wife to let her know would be home late.

A volunteer driver for seven years, Ko Tun Tun always came back home along the Mandalay-Patheingyi road, which was normally deserted of people



Ma Nwe Ni Hnin holds a photo of her husband, Ko Tun Tun, who was killed while volunteering for a free funeral society on July 2. Photo: Than Naing Soe

at night. Ma Nwe Ni Hnin figured it was not a route to worry about.

Ko Tun Tun's friends agreed that he was good-natured and had no enemies. If anything, he focused more on social welfare than his business – and that was how he died, trying to help people injured during the Buddhist-Muslim clashes that night.

"Four of us from the Shwe Kyee Si Society looked around at different places with two motorbikes on the first day of the riot. When we found an injured man, we phoned for the ambulance. We didn't participate in the riot," said his friend, Ko Htwe.

On the second night, motorbike scouts called Ko Tun Tun and Ko

Htwe to come to the corner of 34th and 84th streets. One block from their destination they crossed paths with a gang.

"When they stopped us, we complied because we thought they were a Buddhist group. We were wrong and they were Muslim. They asked us what we had. We gave them three mobile phones and two wallets. When Ko Tun Tun gave his wallet to one of them holding a sword, he was slashed in his neck," Ko Htwe said.

On July 4, thousands of mourners turned out for Ko Tun Tun's funeral. As his hearse headed to the cemetery, it was trailed by a line of mourners on motorbikes stretching hundreds of metres. Instead of respecting the dead, however, some in the crowd headed for the Muslim section of Kyanikan cemetery and set fire to it.

"In spite of my husband being killed in that way, I wanted his funeral to be peaceful," Ma Nwe Ni Hnin said.

The violence was sparked by a rumour that two Muslim owners of a prominent teashop had raped a Buddhist woman. After two nights of clashes between Buddhists and Muslims, two people were dead and almost 20 injured.

"I don't want other women to be widows like me at a young age because of violence," Ma Nwe Ni Hnin said. "I want everybody to stay peacefully."

CRIME IN BRIEF

Man decapitated in train crash

A man has died after being hit by a train and decapitated in Yangon's Taikkyi township on July 8. The accident was reported to police at about 9:25pm.

Tests later showed that the man, 49, was severely intoxicated when the accident occurred.

Teacher robbed at knifepoint on city circle train

A middle school teacher has filed a complaint with police after being robbed at knifepoint of several items of jewellery valued at more than K1.1 million on Yangon's city circle train line.

The teacher, 31, was taking the train back to her home in Kamaryut township from her school in Hlaing township when three young men boarded the train. They threatened her with a 30-centimetre (1-foot) knife, after which she handed over a jade locket and necklace, a bracelet and three rings, as well as K1500 in cash. The trio then jumped from the moving train before it arrived at Hledan station.

Judge charged with corruption

A judge has been charged with corruption after allegedly accepting a bribe last year.

The Yankin township associate judge has been charged by police for allegedly accepting K300,000 in October 2013 to cancel the power of attorney in a civil case, according to a report filed by the Myanmar Anti-Corruption Commission.

– Toe Wai Aung,
translation by Khant Lin Oo

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Dated: 14 July 2014



IN PICTURES

PHOTO: KAUNG HTET

A man carves a marble Buddha image at a workshop in Mandalay on July 6. The city is home to many of Myanmar's top craftspeople, whose workshops not only supply local and foreign buyers with handicrafts and religious items but are also popular with tourists.

High school to be free in 2015

MAY THINZAR NAING
newsroom@times.com

HIGH school enrolment fees will be abolished in the next academic year, the government has announced. The move follows the introduction of universal free primary and middle school education in recent years.

The change from 2015-16 means high school students will also not have to pay registration fees or buy textbooks, Minister for the President's Office U Soe Thein said.

"In 2015, no students will have to pay any kinds of fees," he said.

The plan was confirmed by U Khin Maung Htwe, deputy director of the Department of Educational Planning and Training.

"We are planning, together with the Ministry of Education and the government, to give a free education system to all education levels in the basic education sector. We plan to provide enough textbooks and notebooks to the secondary school students," he said.

The basic education school system consists of five years of primary, four years of lower secondary and two years of upper secondary education.

"Schools have been instructed not

to ask for any kinds of fee from parents enrolling their children. Parents can report to the ministry if a school asks for the fee," he added.

Primary schools were made free in 2010-2011 and middle schools followed in 2013-14. The government spent K7 billion making middle school free, while the change at high school level is expected to cost K5 billion.

There are seven million students at middle school level and 2.5 million at high school level, according to the Department of Educational Planning and Training.

The decision is likely to reduce the proportion of children who drop out of school for economic reasons.

One of the major UN Millennium Development Goals is to achieve universal primary education by mid-2015, meaning that almost every child in the world, boys and girls alike, goes to primary school.

UNDP reported in 2013 that Myanmar's net enrolment rate in primary schools was 88 percent, but that only 75pc of pupils starting Grade 1 reach their final year of primary schooling.

The decline is attributed to households being unable to pay for the enrolment fees, school uniforms and textbooks.

Minister touts tourism potential of first World Heritage sites

ZAW WIN THAN
zawwinthan@gmail.com

MINISTER for Hotels and Tourism U Htay Aung has urged tour operators to promote three ancient Pyu cities that were recently awarded World Heritage site status by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Sri Ksetra in Bago Region's Pyay township, Hanlin in Sagaing Region's Shwebo township and Beikthano in Magwe Region's Taungdwingyi township were recognised by UNESCO for their unique historical and cultural status at a meeting in Qatar on June 22.

The cities, which date from around 200 BC to 900 AD, are the first sites in Myanmar to be inscribed on the list.

"I would kindly ask the travel agents to add [them] in to their trip plans for the coming season," U Htay Aung told a meeting of operators and hoteliers organised by the Myanmar Tourism Federation.

But some tour operators at the meeting said they will need more detailed information on what tourist-friendly infrastructures exist before they can market the sites.

"At the moment, I don't know what condition the roads to Beikthano and Hanlin are in. We can't just prepare the trip plan without knowing the destinations' situation in detail," said U Hla Aye, the managing director of Shan Yoma Travel and Tours.

He added that it was up to the tourism ministry and industry bodies to assist tour operators. "[We need information on] the transportation situation, the needs, the do's and don'ts in the region before the agents can prepare the trip plan."

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MPs cry poor as bill committee proposes five-fold pay increase

Committees reviewing proposal told to consider public opinion – which is likely to be mixed at best



EI EI TOE
LWIN

eieitoelwin@gmail.com

HOW much should an MP be paid? It's a debate that generates fierce opinions around the world and is soon set to become a major issue in Myanmar, with some MPs pushing for a five-fold salary increase.

On July 7, the Pyithu Hluttaw discussed a bill to amend the salaries of Pyithu Hluttaw, Amyotha Hluttaw, and region and state hluttaw representatives, as well as members of the leading bodies in self-administered areas.

The Amyotha Hluttaw had earlier agreed to raise the salary for national MPs to K600,000 a month from K300,000, and that of state and regional representatives to K400,000 a month from K200,000. However, the Pyithu Hluttaw, or lower house, bill committee recommended a five-fold increase on the current rates, to K1.5 million and K1 million respectively.

In explaining her support for the proposal, the Pyithu Hluttaw representative for Tiddim in Chin State, Daw Zar Talam, pointed to the massive gap between the salaries of MPs and those of the speakers and deputy speakers, who receive K3.5 million and K3 million respectively.

"I don't think there should be such a dramatic difference," Daw Zar Talam told speaker Thura U Shwe Mann.

Daw Zar Talam also said that in Chin State the salary of a primary school teacher or local administrator is now higher than that of a hluttaw representative because the government has raised civil servants' salaries and remote area allowances several times since coming to office.

In response, Thura U Shwe Mann said he was conscious of the wide gap and it made him "feel very insecure." He revealed he had sent a letter to President U Thein Sein asking his opinion on the issue.

"It is not fair that the salary of the speaker is 12 times higher than a hluttaw representative," he said during the discussion on July 7. "I don't like getting a salary much higher than everyone else."

Instead of putting the proposal to a vote, the speaker transferred it to a



Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann (left) attends the opening of the fourth session of parliament on July 4, 2012. Photo: AFP

number of committees, asking them to consider public opinion before making a recommendation.

Public opinion appears likely to be mixed given the wide variance in MP participation in parliamentary sessions. While some regularly engage in parliamentary debates and submit proposals and questions, many MPs have had limited or no participation despite being in office for more than three-and-a-half years.

Earlier this year, civil society group Open Myanmar Initiative released details of a study it conducted on MP participation that revealed almost half of elected MPs had not submitted a single question in the first three years of the parliament, while around two-thirds had not submitted any proposals. Among military representatives, only

two of 166 had submitted a proposal, while 81 had not asked a question.

While the results are only quantitative and do not take into account activities outside the parliament, it reinforces perceptions that many MPs are simply not earning their keep – even at K300,000 a month.

U Soe Min from Bago Region said he does not even know the name of his local Pyithu Hluttaw representative.

"He never came back to our constituency after the [2010] election," he said.

However, he said he would not oppose the five-fold salary increase for MPs if they actually worked hard to represent their constituents.

"If he worked for us, the amount would not be important," he said. "But we elected a representative who we didn't know well and there has been no development here since he entered parliament. If anything, things have got more difficult because the economic situation is not good."

A number of MPs argue, however, that their salary is so low that it makes it hard for them to properly represent their constituents. For some, the current figure of K300,000 is not enough to even cover the cost of transportation back to their constituencies, while many also have to divide their time between parliament and their own businesses in order to supplement their income.

They also use their own money to

cover the running costs of their offices and any expenses that arise from helping constituents, including legal fees for land ownership disputes.

"I live in Myitkyina and if I go to my constituency, Ingyanyan, it will cost about K3 million during rainy season, or K1.8 million at other times," said Pyithu Hluttaw representative Daw Dwe Bu.

Even the K10,000-a-day allowance MPs get while parliament is in session is not enough to cover daily expenses.

"I have to pay K2000 for my room at the municipal guest house, K500 for the bus to the hluttaw and K2000 for a meal," she said.

Most support themselves and their families by running businesses at the same time as attending parliament. However, they say this is a major factor in the high rates of absenteeism, with as many as 40 percent of elected MPs taking leave on some days. On any given day, around 50 are likely to be absent.

Their argument appears to be borne out by international figures that show Myanmar parliamentary salaries are low by international standards, even as a proportion of gross domestic product per capita.

One major argument for higher MP salaries is that it reduces the temptation to engage in corrupt behaviour. However, while this is so in Singapore, it is not necessarily the case elsewhere. In India, MPs were in 2013 receiving a salary and benefits equivalent to 68 times GDP per capita but corruption remained an issue because of an opaque allowances system.

Not all MPs are in favour of a pay rise. Yangon Region Hluttaw representative Daw Nyo Nyo Thin said hluttaw representatives should consider their constituents, many of whom are having trouble making ends meet each day.

She said MPs knew what the salary was when they chose to run for office and should be prepared to make some sacrifices for the country.

"I know they won't like me for saying this but I don't want them to ask for higher salaries," she said. "I also want the president, ministers and hluttaw speakers, who all get a handsome salary, to voluntarily take less than the set amount."

"We shouldn't raise salaries just because they are lower than international rates. Our country is much poorer than other countries."

– Translation by Thiri Min Htun

CRIME IN BRIEF

Drunken monk beaten to death

A monk has been beaten to death by a motorbike taxi driver during a drunken altercation in Hmawbi township.

Ashin Komarya, also known as U Sanny, was pronounced dead at about 2:50am on July 6 at Hmawbi Hospital. He suffered head wounds and multiple broken bones.

A police investigation revealed that the 36-year-old driver of the motorbike taxi, who has since been charged with murder, allegedly beat Ashin Komarya with a fence pole after the monk, who was drunk at the time, verbally abused him.

Brother-in-law stabs man after domestic dispute

A Dawbon township resident was last week stabbed to death by his brother-in-law after a domestic altercation.

The deceased man slapped his wife during a fight shortly after arriving at his home in Dawbon's dockyard ward on the evening of July 5. The wife's brother allegedly stabbed him in the abdomen in retaliation with a kitchen knife. The cause of the initial fight remains unclear.

The brother-in-law has been charged with murder.

Police hunt school thief

Police are investigating a robbery at a school in Innayay village, Taikkyi township.

U Ko Lwin, who lives near the school, reported to police on July 5 that the front door of the school was open. When police investigated they found two computer monitors, a computer, a printer and about K700,000 missing from the school.

U Ko Lwin said that he saw the door ajar on June 18 but it unclear why he did not report the theft until more than two weeks later.

Teashop worker alleges abuse

Teashop owners have been charged with abusing one of their workers after beating her and locking her in a bathroom.

Ma Wah Wah Khine told police on July 7 that the teashop owner and his wife had accused her of stealing a purse from the shop. The two owners then allegedly hit her with various objects, including a broom and shoes, before locking her in a bathroom behind the Hlaing Tharyar teashop on July 5. Ma Wah Wah Khine alleged that she was denied food or water while in captivity.

She was released the following day and reported the incident to police. – Toe Wai Aung, translation by Khant Lin Oo

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Children collect rubbish at a dump in Yangon. Photo: Kaung Htet

NGO program trains villagers in Mon State about child labour

CHERRY THEIN
t.cherry6@gmail.com

A LOCAL organisation that promotes children's rights has been training villagers in Mon State's Chaungzon township in an attempt to reduce child labour exploitation.

Friendly Child's founder Daw Wah Wah Lin Htut said child labour - the employment of those under the age of 18 - was common in the township because most of the area's adults have left to work in Thailand.

"Only the old and the young are left in the villages. In past years, they would go to work at 16 or 17 but nowadays they go at 13 or 14. Children want to help their parents but they are facing abuse," Daw Wah Wah Lin Htut said.

"Children have to work dirty jobs but they earn half the normal daily wages, though they have to work full-time like adults."

In April, her organisation trained residents of Hnyee Mote, Saw Kae and Nat Maw villages about children's

rights. Two more villages in the township, which encompasses Belu Kyun, opposite Mawlamyine, will receive training from July 16-21.

Apart from learning what rights children are supposed to enjoy under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which Myanmar ratified in 1991, she said her training program also teaches adults how to report violations of the CRC to the authorities.

The main problem with child labour in Myanmar is that working children

'Children have to work dirty jobs but they earn half the normal daily wages.'

Daw Wah Wah Lin Htut
Friendly Child founder

are often required to undertake work that is above their physical capacity.

The program includes workshops and debates, and aims to give children a voice on the issue and lobby local authorities to enforce laws related to child labour.

She said many people are confused about child labour and some fear they will be prosecuted if awareness of child labour rules is promoted.

"[Some employers] refuse to give a job to a child who knows about child rights rules because they fear getting in trouble."

While Myanmar is obligated to introduce laws to comply with the convention, its legislative framework, including the 1993 Child Law, is far from complete. What laws do exist on child rights are often poorly enforced.

The United Nations Children's Fund is working with the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement to overhaul Myanmar's Child Law and ensure it meets international standards.

MPs agree to strengthen corruption commission

Amyotha Hluttaw passes amendment bill that will turn now-toothless Anti-Corruption Commission into a union-level body able to take on ministers

HTOO THANT
thanhtoo.npt@gmail.com

AN AMENDMENT to the Anti-Corruption Law that MPs say could give the Anti-Corruption Commission more powers to tackle high-level graft has been passed by parliament's upper house.

The Amyotha Hluttaw approved the amendments on July 4, upgrading the commission to a union-level body - effectively on par with a government ministry.

"If they don't have union-level authority, it will be hard to take action against a corrupt union minister effectively," said U Myat Nyarna Soe from the Amyotha Hluttaw Bill Committee.

Amyotha Hluttaw representative U Hla Swe said the commission needs stronger powers if it is to fulfil its mandate.

"To get rid of bribery and corruption, the commission needs comprehensive power to make arrests and investigations," the Union Solidarity and Development Party MP said.

Both hluttaw representatives said that they had yet to see the commission take action against any government officials.

Even members of the commission concede that they have little power to investigate allegations of corruption. Member U Thinn Maung told *The Myanmar Times* in a recent interview that the group's only task is to handle public complaints and pass them on to the relevant government bodies for further action. He said that the commission is severely understaffed and lacks the capacity to undertake any substantive

anti-corruption activities.

"We [the Anti-Corruption Commission] just check complaint letters and then report them to a higher level," he said. "Our commission hasn't even got an office. We only have a few staff. We investigate complaint letters. We are not responsible for taking charge [of investigations]."


Allegations of corruption have claimed a number of ministerial scalps, however. President U Thein Sein sacked Minister for Religious Affairs U San Sint on June 19, who shortly after was charged with misusing about US\$7000 of government money. However, government spokesperson U Ye Htut said his sacking was related to his handling of the Mahasantisukha Monastery raid and regular defiance of U Thein Sein rather than the corruption allegation.

In January 2013, Minister for Posts and Telecommunications U Thein Tun was sacked for allegedly fixing the price of SIM cards but was never formally charged.

The Anti-Corruption Law was passed by the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw in 2013 in part to meet Myanmar's obligations under the United Nations Convention Against Corruption.

However, its passage was not without controversy. After parliament rejected his proposed changes to the approved version, President U Thein Sein refused to sign the final draft. While it became law automatically seven days after being approved, his office announced in January that he plans to send it to the Constitutional Tribunal. - Translation by Myat Su Mon Win

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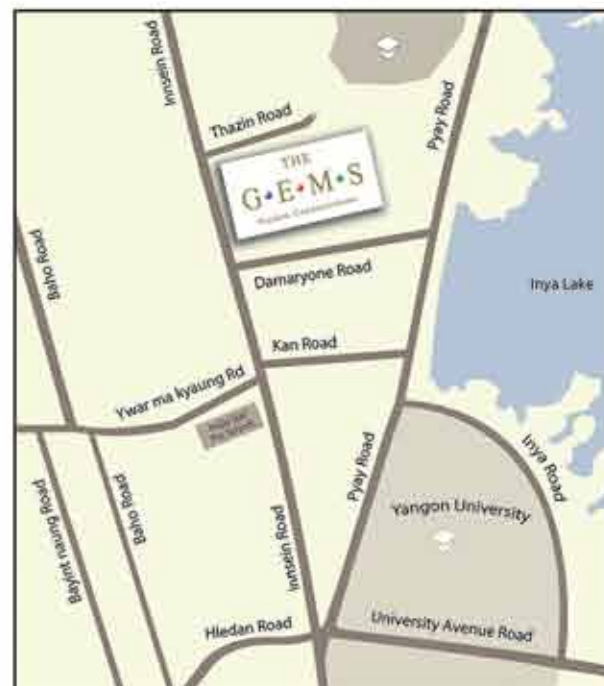
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Learn from mistakes in co-ops, VP tells officials

PYAE THET PHYO
pyaethetphyo87@gmail.com

VICE President U Nyan Tun has urged officials leading the push to reduce poverty through cooperatives to learn from past mistakes.

He said these mistakes meant many people have a low opinion of cooperatives and do not understand their potential to improve society.

These mistakes include forming cooperatives in name only, failing to follow cooperative rules, failing to provide quality service and focusing on production totals rather than quality.

“Those are the main reasons why the public has misunderstood the actual purpose of having cooperatives,” U Nyan Tun said in a speech in Nay Pyi Taw on July 5 to mark International Cooperatives Day.

“It is necessary to learn from those past mistakes and to avoid committing the same mistakes again in the future.”

To overcome this public misunderstanding, U Nyan Tun said the principles and regulations governing cooperatives should be publicised more widely.

“The progressive work that cooperatives are doing depends solely on



Vice President U Nyan Tun makes a speech at a ceremony to mark International Cooperatives Day in Nay Pyi Taw on July 5. Photo: Pyae Thet Phyo

the public's trust. Therefore it is absolutely necessary to regain credibility.”

In 2013, the government announced it planned to use cooperative societies to dramatically expand access to microfinance through a program partly funded by international loans.

In August, MPs approved the government's plan to borrow US\$100 million from China for the program, to be paid back over 10 years at an annual interest rate of 4.5 percent.

– Translation by Mabel Chua

Consumer protection group targets schools

THE quality of school food will be the first item on the agenda for the Mandalay branch of the Consumer Protection Association, leaders say.

“We planned to start examining the snacks of children ... We will start taking tests from school canteens,” said U Hla Soe, who heads the recently formed Mandalay branch.

He said the group would work in collaboration with the police force and other government departments, including the Food and Drug Administration.

The association has more than 1000 members across the country and three branches in Yangon. It soon plans to open branches in Kyaukpadaung, Taungoo, Kanma and Nay Pyi Taw.

U Hla Soe said the group is seeking both donors and volunteers, particularly those with a medical or science background, to help it protect the public from “suspicious” food products.

The association also plans to promote the use of organic food and hold education seminars for farmers. – *Kyay Mohn Win, translation by Khant Lin Oo*

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MPs agree to continue land dispute body

HTOO THANT
thanhtoo.npt@gmail.com

THE Pyidaungsu Hluttaw has extended indefinitely the term of a commission tasked with investigating land confiscations.

Formed in August 2012 with a one-year mandate, the commission has investigated hundreds of land disputes across the country and reported its findings to the government.

The decision was taken after parliamentarian Daw Khin Than Myint, who is a member of the committee, submitted a proposal on July 10 to annul the commission because its term had expired and it had finished investigating and reporting on the disputes.

However, Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann said that he wanted the commission to remain in place because it had not yet finished all its work and people were still asking it to help them resolve disputes.

"There are still some tasks that the commission has to keep doing. I know that people placed great hope in it and have great expectations that it can help their situation and they want it to keep helping them," the speaker said.

"The commission carried out its task with sympathy and goodwill so the people do not have to suffer from having their land confiscated. It could create reasonable understanding and satisfaction between the people and the state," he said.

The hluttaw agreed to Thura U Shwe Mann's proposal and passed a motion to extend the commission's

mandate indefinitely.

Magwe Region representative U Hla Swe said he supported the extension of the commission's term.

"Of all the commissions and committees in parliament, the land confiscation investigation commission is the most hardworking. It is also the commission that the people depend on most. People have got back hundreds of thousands of acres of land [because of it]. If the commission is annulled, what will people rely on?" he said.

In contrast to other committee's that handle legal disputes, the commission actually went to the area of the dispute and investigated the situation so as to help people get back their land, Kayin State representative U Saw Taw Pale said.

"I want the commission to continue. We have not yet settled the issue of confiscated land," he said. "Who will settle those problems if the commission is annulled?"

U Hla Swe said the commission has won public trust because it helped those who lost land but local authorities do not like it.

"When we go to the fields to study the situation, local police ask us why we are there, how many people we have and which party we are from. In Magwe Region, the police interrogate us as if we are the accused," he said, adding that his team went on six field trips to Magwe Region to investigate land disputes.

The commission has to date submitted four reports. Of the first three, 882 cases involving more than 510,000 acres of lands have been resolved.

- Translation by Thiri Min Htun



A migrant worker from Myanmar rests on a construction site in Chiang Mai. Photo: Kaung Htet

Thai work permits too expensive, groups warn

NYAN LYNN AUNG
29.nyanlynnang@gmail.com

A NEW Thai government program aimed at providing work visas and temporary passports to undocumented migrant labourers is too expensive for many foreign workers to access, activists say.

Since seizing power in May, the Thai military has instituted a tightening of restrictions on the nation's estimated 1.5 million undocumented migrant workers, the majority of whom come from Myanmar.

The new regulations have resulted in hundreds of arrests and the threat of a crackdown has prompted tens of thousands of Cambodians to flee the country.

Both human rights groups and Thai businesses that rely on migrant labour have criticised the crackdown, and many instead urged the military to provide a quick, fair and transparent system to document all migrants.

While the new system launched on June 30 nominally provides a pathway to legal employment, migrant rights activists say it is unlikely

to help the majority of undocumented workers.

The military government has opened a one-stop service centre in Samut Sakhon Province at which migrants can apply for a national registration card, state-mandated health insurance card and a work permit for a combined cost of 1305 baht (about US\$32). The government says

are only valid for two months, which makes the cost almost \$200 a year.

"After two months they have to apply for a permit and pay the fees again," said U Sein Htay.

U Moe Gyo, chair of the Mae Sot-based Joint Action Committee of Burmese Affairs, agreed that only a small proportion of illegal workers were likely to register.

"Most of [Myanmar] migrant workers can't afford to pay the fees for a temporary permit," he said.

Those who do are likely to borrow money to cover the costs. As MWRN and other migrant rights groups have highlighted during past registration programs, many migrant workers resort to taking loans from organised crime groups to pay for official documents.

Those who do not register are likely to continue working in Thailand illegally.

Ko Kyaw Thu Htike, who has worked in the fisheries industry for the past six years, said he has no intention of leaving. "I have more job opportunities here [in Thailand] than in Myanmar."

\$32

Cost of a two-month work permit under new registration system in Thailand

it plans to open 22 more across the country.

U Sein Htay, a spokesperson for the Migrant Workers Rights Network, said that while the fees do not appear too expensive, the registration cards and work permits

Young people trained to prepare communities for natural disasters

AYE SAPAY PHYU
ayephyu2006@gmail.com

THE government has launched a youth volunteer program in Ayeyarwady Region villages to ensure communities are better prepared should natural disaster strike.

A senior official from the Relief and Resettlement Department said the program recognises that disaster risk reduction activities are most effective at the community level.

"The existence of government officials who work to develop risk reduction and disaster management in the community level is temporary. Only the local community can do the long-term development [required]," director general U Soe Aung said.

"And it is the young in society, who are energetic and are the future leaders, who play the most important role," he said.

In an effort to move away from having communities simply wait for the authorities to respond after a disaster, five to seven volunteers

from each village will receive training on how to respond before, during and after different types of disasters.

The expectation is that they will pass on this knowledge to their own communities, better preparing them for when disaster strikes.

The project officer for Karuna Myanmar Social Services' disaster risk reduction program said that progress has been made in developing evacuation systems since Cyclone Nargis, which hit the delta in May 2008, killing more than 138,000 people.

"Community awareness about disasters is better today than in the past because they more frequently occur these days and the government and other organisations are doing more public education on disaster risk reduction," Daw Soe Soe said.

She said Karuna has worked on disaster risk reduction in 57 villages in Ayeyarwady, Bago, Mandalay and Sagaing regions and Chin, Rakhine and Shan states since Nargis.

But more money is needed if training is to be comprehensively rolled out across the country and the government has called on development agencies and the private sector to assist.

The head of the disaster risk reduction, environment and energy team at the United Nations Development Programme in Myanmar also called on the private sector to help.

"According to statistics, economic losses [from natural disasters] are rising. Especially Asian countries are a hot spot for investments so we need to bring private sector participation," said Daw Lat Lat Aye.

She added that such measures could form an important part of companies' corporate social responsibility programs.

According to the statement of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, disasters cost more than US\$53.8 billion in Asia last year, which represented almost half the global figure.

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Tourism fuelling illegal trade in elephants

THAILAND'S elephant tourism is fuelling an illegal trade in the animals from Myanmar and putting the country's wild elephant population at risk, according to a recent report.

Wildlife trade monitoring network TRAFFIC found that around 60 wild elephants had been captured and sold in Thailand during monitoring periods from April to November 2011 and from April 2012 to March 2013.

"The capture of wild elephants in Myanmar for Thailand's tourism industry poses a serious threat to the future survival of the country's wild population," the report said.

The elephants are captured in Myanmar using pit traps, which are large ditches dug into the ground. Wild elephants are corralled into the pit using domesticated elephants.

The animals are then transported to areas along the Myanmar-Thailand border where they are prepared for working before being sold in Thailand.

Baby elephants are sold for between US\$21,500 and \$30,500, which represents a threefold increase on what they were being sold for 15 years ago, the report said.

A crackdown launched by Thai authorities in February 2012 has had a major impact in stemming the illegal trade but experts are warning there is a risk of a resurgence unless laws are introduced to tackle the problem.

"Thailand's action have caused the illegal trade in live elephants from Myanmar to halt, but unless urgent changes are made to outdated legislation and better systems are introduced to document the origin of elephants in tourists camps and other locations across Thailand things could quickly revert to their previous unacceptable state," said Chris Shepherd, TRAFFIC's regional director for Southeast Asia.

- Tim McLaughlin

IN DEPTH

Calls grow for review of regional human rights body

ASEAN governments have shown little interest in strengthening rights mechanism established in 2009

NYAN LYNN AUNG

29.nyanlynnnaung@gmail.com

SOUTHEAST Asian human rights experts are urging a regional human rights body to be given a far stronger protection mandate as its work comes under review five years after it was created.

Representatives of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR), however, are reluctant to discuss any strengthening measures, Yuyun Wahyuningrum, a senior adviser for the Indonesian Human Rights Working Group, told *The Myanmar Times*.

In late June, 115 government officials, civil society representatives and other experts from around the region met in Bangkok over two days for a second consultation meeting on possible changes to the commission's terms of reference.

Each government was able to invite one civil society representative and one academic from their country, while ASEAN invited members of other prominent civil society groups.

Ms Yuyun said the consultation was flawed because some member states rejected civil society leaders that had previously criticised their human rights records.

Former ambassador U Kyaw Tint Swe, the current chair of the AICHR and the deputy head of the Myanmar Human Rights Commission, led the government delegation.

Nevertheless, the event featured robust debate on amending the terms of reference and the "overall ambience of the dialogue was good," Ms Yuyun said.

"During the two-day discussion, there were two schools of direction in reviewing and amending the [terms of reference] of the AICHR. [The] first one was making a radical change and the second was using the existing [terms] with creative interpretation," she said.

Officially, at least, the AICHR



A protest leader holds a sign outside the Wanbao company gates on November 28 to protest against the expansion of the Letpadaung copper mine. A day later protesters were forcibly removed from their camp by police. Photo: Christopher Davy

envision that respect for human rights shall be one of the central elements of the ASEAN Community, which is slated to come into effect in 2015.

The AICHR was established in 2009 but most observers agree it has made little progress on human rights, largely because its terms of reference are guided by the regional bloc's policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of its members.

While the terms of reference can be reviewed after five years, giving Myanmar the opportunity, as chair of the bloc, to seek to strengthen the commission, officials say this will not happen.

U Aung Htoo, deputy director general of the ASEAN Affairs Department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said Myanmar would not review the commission's terms of reference this year because it does not want to

focus on human rights issues.

He suggested a review is only likely to take place in 2016, after the ASEAN Community is launched next year.

ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR) has warned that the commission's mandate must be strengthened if it is to have any real impact.

Its president said the body has failed to bring any discernible improvement to or provide any protection for the basic rights of the people in Southeast Asia since its creation in 2009.

"We are still very, very far from a properly functioning regional human rights mechanism, but if AICHR is to bring us any closer to the concept of collective responsibility and collective prosperity, then it has to be given the mandate to act, and be independent from national governmental in-

terference," Eva Kusuma Sundari said in a statement.

Ma Wai Wai Nu, a Myanmar human rights activist, said reforms can be made if there is sustained pressure from civil society and international bodies, such as the United Nations and European Union. Without international pressure, ASEAN leaders have no will to address human rights issues.

One regional analyst said the commission's main problem is that its representatives are nominated by regional governments. As a result, they stack it with people who are unlikely to speak out about rights violations.

"[AICHR's representatives] can't do anything that will harm the interests of their country," said Ko Kyaw Lin Oo. "As a result they are usually quiet on human rights issues."



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Residents of Shied Ein Dan examine eroded land near their village beside the Chindwin River in October 2013. Photo: Wa Lone

Arrests for squatting after village destroyed



WA LONE

walone14@gmail.com

FIVE people who were forced to leave their homes after parts of their village in Magwe Region was swept away by the Chindwin River say they have been charged with squatting by the authorities.

In May, 200 families from Shied Ein Dan village in Yesagyo township watched in disbelief as the final 300 acres of their land was swept away by the river. Sections of land had already disappeared over the previous two rainy seasons.

They then asked to be relocated to 32 acres of land owned by the Ministry of Cooperatives but the authorities allotted them just 9 acres of land.

“It’s not enough space for 200 households to live on,” resident Ko Ni Tot said, adding that the erosion has been plaguing their village since 1997.

The families then decided to temporarily relocate to a road near Tamar Dan Village in Yesagyo township, 5 kilometres (3.1 miles) away.

But not only have the authorities ignored their pleas for more land, the villagers say, the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation has charged five of them with squatting.

Families displaced over the past year have struggled to set up home on rented farmland.

“We don’t have enough money to pay rent because all of our farmland was lost to erosion. We paid K20,000 to K50,000 annual rent last year,” one village famer, Ko Htain Oo, said.

Minister for Livestock, Fisheries and Rural Development U Ohn Myint at first promised to help them relocate to the 32-acre site but later said he has no power to interfere in the decisions of other ministries.

‘We don’t have enough money to pay rent because all of our farmland was lost to erosion.’

Ko Htain Oo
Shied Ein Dan village resident

Because the road deteriorated during the rainy season and the flooded river brought in poisonous snakes, 76 children can’t reach their school.

Whilst the building managed to survive the erosion, only two children who live nearby can now reach it. Despite this the authorities have insisted the teachers still have to turn up to teach them.

The Ministry of Education has also forbidden the teachers from setting up a temporary school in the area where families are living illegally.

U Thoun Tun Yee, the head officer of education in Yesagyo Township, said his department has to follow the law.

“The school has to be legal and in a stable situation and also follow the instruction of the township administration department. So we can’t teach them at their place right now.”

Minister for the President’s Office U Aung Min met residents at the Myanmar Peace Centre on June 28 to discuss their problems.

“U Aung Min didn’t promise to do anything but said he has to work in co-operation with each of the ministries,” Ko Ni Tot said.

Two other villages in the area, Nga Myar Gyi and Nga Myar, have also been threatened by erosion but so far have escaped damage.



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Views

Hun Sen, Cambodia show the way



ROGER MITTON

rogermitton@gmail.com

SOME years ago in Phnom Penh, the resident American ambassador, Joseph Mussomeli, told me what he thought of Cambodia's Prime Minister Hun Sen.

His appraisal caught me off guard. "I like Hun Sen," Mussomeli said. "He's smart. He's down to earth and we get along very well on a personal level."

It was not the expected answer, because many people, particularly Westerners, revile the long-serving, authoritarian Hun Sen.

But not the US ambassador, who continued, "You can talk bluntly with him, as long as you are not obnoxious. We've disagreed quite forcefully on several things, but it's okay."

The latter point is significant, for there are many leaders across this region who react badly when anyone contradicts them, forcefully or not.

It has happened to me with figures as varied as former Thai PM Thaksin Shinawatra, Malaysia's previous PM Abdullah Badawi and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

They have all turned prickly, if not verbally aggressive, when questioned pointedly about issues that are of public concern but which they'd rather not discuss.

They do it not only with pesky

journalists but with ministers and bureaucrats, who then become yes-men to avoid incurring the wrath of their bosses.

That often results in them not receiving timely information about policy cock-ups and social disasters until it is too late to do anything about them.

Hun Sen, for all his faults – and they are legion – largely avoids doing that – as, at least on an empirical reading, does Myanmar's President U Thein Sein.

One might even say that Cambodia is a useful template for Myanmar as it approaches a multiparty general election next year.

And that may well be one of the reasons why, at this juncture in time, there are so many similarities between Cambodia and Myanmar.

Indeed, although it may be a provocative suggestion, one might even say that Cambodia is a useful template for Myanmar as it approaches a multiparty general election next year.

After all, when Cambodia held its first such election in 1993, it was in much the same situation as Myanmar was four years ago, before the landmark reforms of U Thein Sein's government kicked in.

Both nations were essentially

broken: Cambodia first by the devastating impact of the Vietnam War, then the Khmer Rouge monstrosity and finally twelve years of Vietnamese occupation.

Likewise, Myanmar had been rendered a wreck by Ne Win's misguided reign, followed by the equally despotic and inept rule by the mentally deranged Saw Maung and then Than Shwe, under whose leadership corruption soared.

After moving on from these disasters, however, both countries have received such a commitment from other countries that they are now able to begin the process of remoulding and resurrecting themselves.

Of course, there is a long way to go, even for Cambodia, which has now held five multiparty elections. But having weathered their own appalling debacles, both have managed to emerge more open, pluralistic, tolerant and Western-focused than, say, Thailand or Vietnam.

Yes, there are also negative similarities. For starters, both Cambodia and Myanmar do not yet have true rule of law.

Instead, there is a culture of individuals with influence and money, rather than an independent judiciary that understands the statutes and enforces them without fear or favour from the rich and powerful.

That failing partly explains why both countries fare badly on international assessments of human rights and corruption.

Cambodia also has other downsides which no one wants to see emulated in Myanmar; not least the way Hun Sen has retained power for almost 30 years. Singapore's much-admired Lee Kuan Yew did the same but it goes against our democratic instincts and doesn't smell good when a guy hangs around that long.

Still, despite such blemishes, the positive affinities stand, for Myanmar, like Cambodia, is above all else a bifurcated country with two conflicting groups.

In both nations, there are those, mostly older folks, who have endured decades of horrendous hardship and the memory never leaves them; instead, it guides them.

At the same time, there is a new generation coming of age for whom that abominable past is, well, past; their mindset is firmly on a brighter future.

That is the most positive and profoundly encouraging commonality between these two newly emerging democracies.

Of course, as Mussomeli noted, "You don't know if you have a real democracy until you have a peaceful transfer of power."

We have not yet had that in Cambodia, nor for that matter in Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam – or Myanmar.

That is the real test that all these countries have yet to pass.

Is new China and what doe

With no credible third party to mediate between China



CURTIS SCHIN

riverpeakgroup@gmail.com

A JAPANESE wartime propaganda poster from the Philippines now on display at a small but powerful exhibition in New York City marking the 75th anniversary of the outbreak of World War II is striking – at least from a US perspective – given the continued economic and military rise of China and that nation's current relations with a changing Southeast Asia.

Here's a troubling question to keep in mind: Does "New China" equal "Old Japan"? Or more pointedly, does China risk becoming the Japan of some seven decades past, namely a rising nation that sparks conflict and then war under the guise of "Asia for Asians"?

Let's hope not but the thought did occur in viewing the poster, which depicts parts of East and Southeast Asia, and in English, reads, "December 8th. The third anniversary of Greater East Asia War to defend Asia for and by the Asiatics. Japan's victory is the Philippines Triumph."

December 8 being, of course, the date from Asia's side of the dateline of Japan's attack on US forces at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

On display at the Grolier Club, a New York institution dedicated to appreciation of books and prints, the poster is one of many items that can be viewed until August 2 in "The Power of Words and Images in a World at War". Drawn from the collection of the Museum of World War II in Boston, the exhibition focuses on the iconic posters, broadsides, books and periodicals that influenced millions in the course of the "last great worldwide conflict".

Today, trouble is brewing in the East China and South China seas, where an increasingly assertive China is seen, fairly or not, by many of its neighbours as a schoolyard bully, taking by force – one "salami slice" of territory at a time – what it could not through diplomacy.

The stationing of a massive floating deep-water oil rig by China in



China's Vice Premier Wang Yang (left) and State (right) before a working lunch at the US-China

waters also claimed by Vietnam has been the latest flashpoint and tensions continue to escalate. Riots flared in Vietnam against factories and other interests perceived as being linked to China, and video footage of what seems to be a massive Chinese ship ramming and sinking a much smaller Vietnamese fishing boat has hit the internet.

The last few weeks, let alone years, are no model for a way forward when it comes to dispute resolution.

Cases in point: In November of last year, China unilaterally announced an expanded air defence zone encompassing airspace that overlapped with claims by Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. In the past few months, Chinese military planes have come dangerously close to those of the US and Japan. China, Taiwan and Japan also all claim the Senkaku Islands, known as the Diaoyu Islands by the Chinese.

To the south, in an area that China claims is all its own – within a "nine-dash line" skirting the coasts of several Southeast Asian nations – Chinese ships now patrol a reef still claimed by and known by the Philippines as the Scarborough Shoal.

So far, China – in its rhetoric and its efforts to change the status quo – is losing the external public relations war even as its actions no doubt may



Cambodian policemen stand in formation during a training exercise for potential protests in Phnom Penh on September 1, 2013. Photo: AFP

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the old Japan – s it mean for Asia?

and the West, there remains the potential for conflict in East and Southeast Asia



Councillor Yang Jiechi (centre) share a toast with US Secretary of State John Kerry Strategic and Economic Dialogue in Beijing on July 9. Photo: AFP

play well at home amid a slowing economy and growing concerns over pollution and corruption.

Pointedly, at a recent Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) summit in Shanghai, Chinese President Xi Jinping unveiled a new “Asian Security concept”, which in essence called for Asian security to be left to Asians. China has indeed “stood up” and a century of “humiliation” at the hands of western powers is long over. As the second largest economy in the world, China has resumed its “rightful” place in the world order.

Flash back to the 1930s and 1940s, when imperial Japan’s propaganda machine exhorted Asians to control their own destinies and throw aside

the yoke of Western colonial rule. Asia for Asians was the mantra. And better yet, Japan’s leaders argued, come join Japan in a “Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere”, where all would benefit as Japan took its rightful leadership role in the region.

Well, we all know how well that played out, as Japan’s vision of Asia for Asians led that nation and much of the Asia-Pacific region down a path to destruction. From the ashes of World War II and the Korean and Vietnam wars that followed, a new paradigm evolved with the United States helping guarantee a Pacific peace that has allowed Asia to prosper and, ironically, China to rise. It is that defence status quo now being challenged by China even as the US

and Japan seek to reaffirm it.

At the Asia Security Summit held recently in Singapore, also known as the Shangri-La Dialogue, US Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel and Japan Prime Minister Shinzo Abe both raised China’s ire with statements challenging the country’s recent territorial moves.

The US “will not look the other way when fundamental principles of the international order are being challenged,” Hagel said. “We firmly oppose any nation’s use of intimidation, coercion or the threat of force to assert [its] claims.” Abe, in his keynote address, announced Japan’s intention to play a greater role in regional security, in ensuring open skies and sea-lanes, and in supporting Southeast Asian nations in territorial disputes with China.

The potential for continued conflict remains.

Sadly, there is no third party – no respected principal in the school yard – to intervene and, in a face-saving move, make clear that all sides need to let cooler heads prevail. China should pull back its oil rig. ASEAN must work together and a clear code of conduct be established in the South China Sea even as territorial claims remain unresolved. And every nation – Japan, China and the United States included – should treat each other with respect.

With tensions mounting, it is time for all players to take a step back from the brink of even greater conflict and commit to engagement, cooperation and a peaceful resolution to disputes. This will be essential if this century is to be one of shared peace and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region.

.....

Curtis S Chin, a former United States ambassador to the Asian Development Bank under Presidents George W Bush and Barack Obama, is managing director of advisory firm RiverPeak Group, LLC. Follow Curtis on Twitter at #CurtisSChin.

Light fingers plague Yangon’s airport



SITHU AUNG MYINT
newsroom@mmtimes.com

THE first thing most tourists see when they arrive in a country is its international airport. This is the country’s face, its façade, and it is obviously important for a country’s image that travellers do not have a bad experience when they arrive or depart. Essential for this is the behaviour of employees at the airport.

On June 30, a “gang” allegedly responsible for a series of ugly crimes at Yangon International Airport was arrested by Myanmar’s aviation police.

The four-man group has been accused of regularly stealing money and other precious items from the bags of local and foreign travellers after they have checked it in with airlines. When these travellers complained to the airlines that their goods were missing, the airlines failed to properly handle the complaints. Finally the aviation police were called in.

The four men arrested were employed as day labourers at the airport. In April, they allegedly stole nearly K4 million while handling luggage for a Chinese airline. Police say two of them kept a watch out while the other two searched the luggage and found US\$4000 in a phone handset box.

This is but one case. They allegedly committed other thefts and an investigation is being conducted by Mingalardon township police.

So it turns out that travellers have been entrusting their luggage to a gang of thieves. In the case of the Chinese airline, if the victim is not Myanmar then there is a good chance they will not be in the country again to follow up their complaint. The most they can do

is complain to the airline but the airline will not know exactly where the money was lost – whether it was in Yangon or at a previous destination. It is clear though that all is not well at Yangon airport.

Such thefts are not new. In 2009, a girl who was travelling to Bangkok for study suffered an even worse fate. She had to weigh her luggage at the AirAsia check-in counter. As her bag was overweight, she had to reduce the weight by taking out some items. A security guard helped her but after she left her luggage at the counter she realised her wallet was missing. By this time, the security guard had also disappeared. She retraced her steps but couldn’t find it. In the end, she had to leave Myanmar without any money and unable to file a complaint because doing so would mean missing her plane.

In recent months, illegally imported goods have been seized at the airport with the help of staff. However, some critics argue that these same staff have been facilitating and benefiting from illegal trade for decades. I think it’s safe to say that Yangon International Airport is rife with corruption and theft.

In 2012, about 1 million tourists visited Myanmar. Most tourists entered through Yangon International Airport. The number of tourist arrivals in Myanmar hit 2 million in 2013 and the government is aiming for 3 million this year. There are now 28 international airlines and eight domestic airlines operating from Yangon International Airport. Passengers on these airlines are putting their luggage in the hands of potential thieves before it is loaded on to or unloaded from their plane.

Officials need to check, review and manage all processes at the airport to ensure this can no longer happen. When it does, firm action must be taken against those who commit offences. It is vital for officials to take responsibility for the misdemeanours of their staff. If there is a repeat of the most recent problems, Yangon International Airport’s image will be damaged across the world.

– Translation by Thiri Min Htun

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Business

Losses mount at state industry

HTOO THANT
newsroom@mmmtimes.com

THE Thar Paung Paper and Pulp Mill is one of many unsuccessful state-owned factories that might be better off privatised, according to Amyotha Hluttaw member U Khin Shwe.

The company has been forced to suspend operations after the government spent millions of dollars building and operating it, he told a joint session of parliament on July 9.

While the mill appears to have failed commercially, it is not only a revenue loser – it also had a negative effect on the surrounding environment.

“Because of the mill, the bamboo trees in the surrounding areas are almost gone ... and masses of fishes in the Nga Won river have been killed by

the plant’s wastewater,” he said. “It is very disappointing.”

Large Indian firm JK Paper signed an agreement to take an equity stake in Thar Paung mill as well as operate and expand it in May 2012 during a visit of former Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to Myanmar, according to a 2012 report from Indian English-language daily newspaper *The Economic Times*.

JK Paper officials did not return a request for comment on whether they still have a stake in Thar Paung, but according to *The Economic Times* in 2012, Thar Paung previously had a capacity of about 70,000 tonnes of pulp and about 15,000 tonnes of paper.

While U Khin Shwe singled out the Thar Paung mill in parliament, he said there are many state-owned companies

operating at a loss.

The Ministry of Industry, which runs many of the factories, lost more than K190 billion (US\$195 million) in the second half of the 2013-14 fiscal year, he said.

There are thought to be at least 50 state-owned factories, though they range significantly in size. Many of the profit-making factories in areas like cigarette manufacturing and beer and drinking water production have been privatised, leaving behind some unprofitable factories that have often reduced production or have large stockpiles of unsold goods.

U Khin Shwe said attention needs to be given on revitalising these money-losing factories, including looking at possible privatisation if they continue in the red.

Although state-owned industry could provide many jobs if they functioned properly, it is now time for them to switch to public-private partnerships to help them compete, Pyithu Hluttaw representative U Win Myint said.

State-owned industries should be separated into profitable and unprofitable industries, then a private partner should be found, he said.

Besides pulp and paper, there are unprofitable factories making tractors, sewing machines and bicycles.

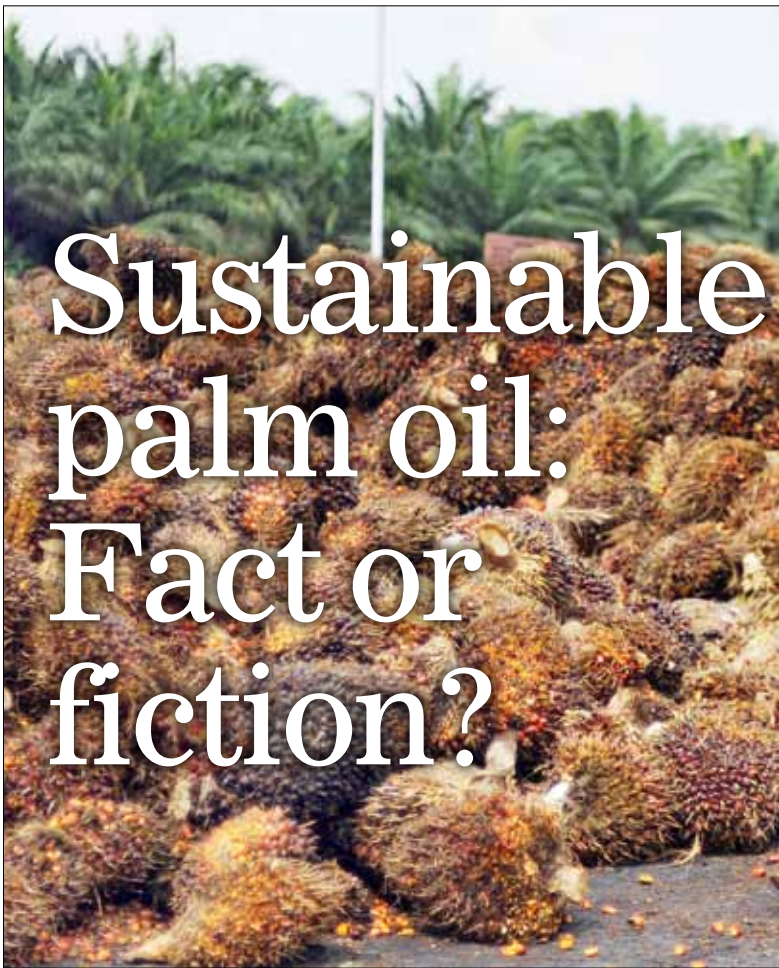
“The state-run bicycle manufacturing plant lost nearly K40 billion,” he said. “It was built, but there are no buyers,” he said.

Likewise, U Win Myint added the cement factory has been out-competed by private industry.

– Translation by Zar Zar Soe



A man takes a tour of Thar Paung Paper and Pulp Mill. Photo: Staff



Sustainable palm oil: Fact or fiction?

A Malaysian worker selects palm oil fruit for sorting. Myanmar has its own palm

BILL O'TOOLE



botoole12@gmail.com

THE palm oil sector may be set for a take-off in southern Myanmar, but experts are divided on whether the controversial crop can be sustainable in the long term.

Palm oil has become one of the world’s most ubiquitous commodities, used to make for everything from shampoo to biodiesel to sugar candies. The World Wildlife Fund says it is the most widely used vegetable oil on the planet, comprising 65 percent of all vegetable oil traded internationally.

Yet there are only a few areas in the world with the right growing conditions for the crop. Some 85pc of international production is in Malaysia and Indonesia, but Myanmar’s Tanintharyi Region also boasts the right growing conditions and is increasingly drawing interest as a place to produce the commodity.

Earlier this month, representatives from the Chamber of Commerce sat down with INGOs and palm oil industry leaders to discuss expanding the sector in line with sustainable, international standards.

It is possible to create a large-scale palm oil sector that “is legal, environmentally appropriate, socially acceptable and profitable”, said Darrell Weber, secretary general of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), an industry group, during his keynote speech at the event.

He recommended the government adopt his organisation’s guidelines as they look to expand their plantations in Tanintharyi region.

However, some environmentalists say that the idea of sustainable palm oil plantations, both socially and ecologically, is “a farce”. Pointing to examples

both in Myanmar and across Southeast Asia, they argue that any profit from the plantations is eventually offset by damage to local communities.

“There’s a lot of talk about a sustainable model, but it’s just a myth,” said U Win Myo Thu, founder of the environmental NGO Ecodev. “In the long run there will always be more harmful effects.”

As U Win Myo Thu and several other experts pointed out, clearing large swaths of tropical forest – even forests degraded by logging – to produce a single crop inevitably causes massive drops in biodiversity, with attendant ecological problems quick to follow.

In Malaysia and Indonesia, palm oil production has been directly linked to record levels of air pollution and destroying the habitats of endangered species like the orangutan.

‘The social and environmental impacts of the plantation sector ... have drawn criticism across Southeast Asia.’

Frank Momberg

Flora and Fauna International

“What’s happening now in Myanmar is that a lot of companies are coming in and they’re basically copying the same system that’s been going around Malaysia and Indonesia,” said Oliver Pye, a professor of Southeast Asian Studies on the University of Bonn.

Under this system, according to Mr Pye, large corporations are

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Yangon's floating hotel aims at the luxury market

PROPERTY 32



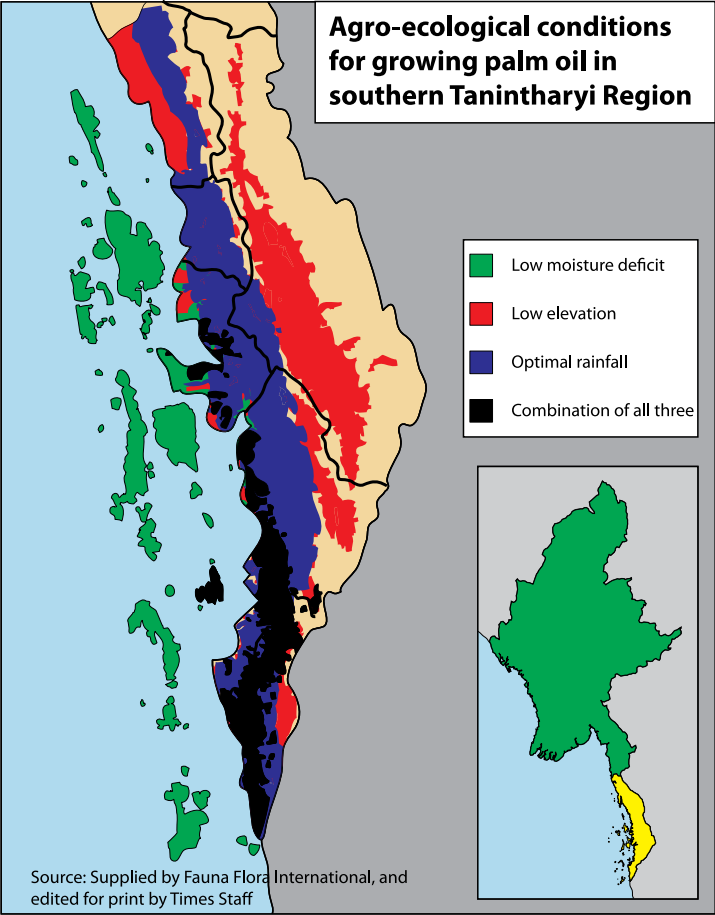
Tech grads turn to foreign firms as local options run thin

BUSINESS 29

Exchange Rates (July 10 close)		
Currency	Buying	Selling
Euro	K1325	K1328
Malaysia Ringitt	K306	K307
Singapore Dollar	K782	K784
Thai Baht	K30	K31
US Dollar	K970	K972



oil plantations in Tanintharyi Region. Photo: AFP



free to expand and “[they] don’t have to pay the environmental costs they incur”. In addition, he claimed that in both nations, the RSPO has stood in the way of stronger regulations from the national government. The RSPO could not be reached for comment last week. Beyond ecology, experts also say that expanding Myanmar’s palm oil sector would likely expand the corruption that has defined the industry for decades. Speaking to *The Myanmar Times* last week, Kevin Woods, a Yangon-based researcher with the INGO Forest Trends, said that much of the land awarded to large corporations for palm

oil plantations in Tanintharyi were in fact taken from civilians during the Tatmadaw’s offensive against the KNU in the 1990s. “This dramatic history clearly indicates that any concept of ‘sustainability’ of oil palm in Tanintharyi is a farce, as the land from which oil palm is being cultivated was stolen by the military and led to thousands being forcibly resettled under duress without any compensation,” he said. However, other environmentalists stand by both the RSPO and the idea of sustainable palm oil. “The social and environmental impacts of the plantation sector,

MORE ON BUSINESS 26

Stock market plans hit by weak corporate governance levels

AYE THIDAR KYAW
ayethidarkyaw@gmail.com

CORPORATE governance could be the largest barrier to setting up a robust capital market centred on a planned 2015 stock exchange, according to experts. Although there are about 200 public companies currently operating in Myanmar, only about five currently have high-enough governance standards to meet the disclosure rules that will come with the exchange, said presidential economic adviser U Aung Htun Thet. Poor corporate governance often stems from management and ownership at many companies being indistinguishable, he said at a finance seminar held by the OECD in Yangon on July 4. Companies with indistinguishable management and ownership are often tempted to not follow best practices in transparency and accountability, areas that are particularly important for meeting a stock exchange’s disclosure rules. “This is the challenges we have: There are public companies without good corporate governance standards,” said U Aung Htun Thet. “We must make sure that all the companies to be listed will have good corporate governance standards before 2015.” The process to register as a public company in Myanmar is not seen as particularly onerous. A public company is required to have a minimum of seven shareholders and report to the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA), though

domestic public companies generally do not have the high reporting and disclosure standards familiar to publically-listed companies on foreign stock exchanges. Rainer Geiger, former OECD deputy director, said Myanmar’s public companies often don’t meet the criteria to be listed on a future Yangon stock exchange, which is planned to be launched in October 2015. The business sector lacks a full legal framework as the country has been closed for many years, while company officials and directors, regulators and government officials all require training, he said. **‘There are public companies without good governance standards.’** U Aung Htun Thet Presidential economic adviser “Companies have had a lack of awareness on the market economy; now their mindset needs to change,” Mr Geiger added. Improved corporate governance standards will assist firms with access to capital by listing on the planned exchange, he added. Insufficient financial capacity is a key problem for many local businesses, but the introduction

of foreign banks should also help, particularly for foreign companies operating in Myanmar. Mr Geiger also said that state-owned enterprises require reform in a range of corporate governance standards, including principles of integrity, transparency, accountability and management. U Aung Htun Thet said that strong corporate governance standards should also be emphasised with the ongoing reforms of state-owned enterprises. “The choice is open to us,” he said, adding it is up to government ministries to ensure public enterprises are professional managed. State-owned enterprises in ministries including industry, transport, energy and construction have been privatised or corporatised as part of the larger reform process. U Win Myint, secretary of parliament’s Bank and Monetary Affairs Development Committee, said state enterprises initially expanded due to the impact of economic sanctions, and many state-owned companies became known for producing low-quality goods and preventing fair competition with private business. The role of state-owned enterprises began diminishing in 2008, with landmarks such as the 2010 privatisation of 200 petrol stations and the 2012 corporatisation of most Ministry of Transport business, he said, adding the government still controls businesses in areas including the extractive industry, broadcast media and defense and security products.

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Dated. 16 July 2014

CONTINUED FROM BUSINESS 25

particularly palm oil, have drawn criticism across Southeast Asia,” said Frank Momberg, the program director of Flora and Fauna International's Myanmar office, which helped organise the meeting. “The introduction and promotion of sustainable practices in plantation development can help maximise economic, social and environmental benefits.”

Speaking to *The Myanmar Times* last week, Mr Momberg said that that FFI had identified forests in Tanintharyi that could be converted to palm plantations with minimal damage to the surrounding environment, and that if local communities are properly consulted during construction “the development of sustainable palm oil can contribute to the reduction of social conflicts”.

U Zaw Win, deputy director-general of the Forests Department, said that any expansion of palm plantations would indeed be aligned with sustainable practices outlined by the RSPO, and would only come after a full consultation with local communities and other stakeholders.

On this point at least, U Win Myo Thu agreed with the government's stance. “We must create informed decision-making for local communities, find out the effects and tell the story to the public and let the public make a choice – because every approach may have its advantages and disadvantages.”

Central Bank to ease branch restrictions

AYE THIDAR KYAW

ayethidarkyaw@gmail.com

THE Central Bank of Myanmar is planning to make it easier to open bank branches, according to sources in the industry.

Currently banks need total paid-in capital of K100 billion (US\$102 million) as well as K700 million for each branch to expand, though with the country thought to be underbanked, insiders say they advocate easing the process of opening branches.

The Central Bank is discussing allowing banks to open based on an assessment of their capital adequacy ratio, a formula essentially comparing capital with risk. With possible scores between 0 and 100 percent, banks

will likely be allowed to add branches if their scores are above 10pc, which is near most international standards, said a central bank official requesting anonymity.

“The policy is to save banks and customers in cases of [sudden] cash withdrawal,” he said.

The previous policy had been put in place in the wake of the 2003 banking crisis, he added.

Kanbawza Bank vice president U Than Lwin said removing capital requirements for opening banks will particularly assist smaller banks, which can have trouble meeting the expenses when expanding branch networks, such as the cost of the building.

Expanding branch networks in remote areas will be particularly useful for banks servicing remittances, he said, but added it must not come at the cost of the banks' soundness.

“Reducing the capital requirements is proper, but entirely removing the capital requirements is risky as some smaller banks may simply not have enough capital,” U Than Lwin said.

Kanbawza has the most branches of Myanmar's private banks, boasting about 200, with goals to open about 100 more in a few years, he said.

‘Entirely removing the capital requirements is risky.’

U Than Lwin

Kanbawza Bank vice president

MESSAGE FOR WORLD POPULATION DAY by Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin United Nations Under-Secretary-General and UNFPA Executive Director

11 July 2014



Today's 1.8 billion young people are a powerful force, individually and collectively. They are shaping social and economic realities, challenging norms and values and building the foundation of the world's future.

Governments and the international community are increasingly conscious of the importance of providing resources and opportunities for all young people to reach their full potential as individuals and citizens. They recognize that investing in young people and enabling them to exercise their human rights not only benefits young people themselves, but can also help their countries reap a demographic dividend.

We know that healthy, educated, productive and fully engaged young people can help break the cycle of intergenerational poverty and are more resilient in the face of individual and societal challenges. As skilled and informed citizens, they can contribute more fully to their communities and nations.

For millions of young people around the world, puberty — the biological onset of adolescence — brings not only changes to their bodies, but also new vulnerabilities to human rights abuses, particularly in the areas of sexuality, marriage and childbearing. Millions of girls are coerced into unwanted sex or marriage, increasing the risks of unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, as well as death or disability due to childbirth.

This is why young people, especially adolescent girls, are at the heart of our work at UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund. Working with a multitude of partners, in particular young people themselves, UNFPA is advocating policies and programmes that invest in adolescents and youth and foster a positive environment for them; promoting their access to comprehensive sexuality education as well as quality sexual and reproductive health services, including family planning; and facilitating their leadership and participation. We are doing this with an emphasis on reaching the poorest, most marginalized and underserved adolescent girls.

Through this multipronged effort, we and our partners are seeing how critical early investments in sexual and reproductive health can enhance the lives of young people and the welfare of their societies. A sustainable future depends on having resilient populations, which cannot be achieved without investments in young people. They not only form a large proportion of the world's population and deserve their fair share as a matter of equity, but are also in a critical stage of their lifecycle that will determine their future — and thus those of their families, communities, and societies.

On this World Population Day, I commit UNFPA's full support to all efforts to promote young people's aspirations and to place young people at the very heart of national and global development efforts.

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A woman in Yangon's Kyauktada township tries to guess her lucky numbers for the month. Photo: Yu Yu

Changing fortunes with lottery's smaller prizes

NYAN
LYNN
AUNG

29.nyanlynnaung@gmail.com

THE state lottery will make it easier to win smaller prizes, though its K150 million (US\$153,000) monthly jackpot prize will stay intact, said U Thein Naing, Yangon-based director of the State Lottery Department.

The new prizes will come into effect with the 307th round of the monthly lucky draw, set to begin August 1, he said.

"We're trying to get more prizes to our customers," he said.

U Thein Naing said the state lottery

aims to pay out 60 percent of its revenues in prize money, while sending the rest to government coffers

The new prizes will be called "Badathar", which means "variety" in English. They will be awarded in the same denominations of K100,000 and K50,000 as previously, but will be easier to win, he said.

While previously the winners of K100,000 prize needed to get four numbers and a letter right and K50,000 winners needed three numbers and a letter compared to the draw, the new rules drops the requirements to match the letter.

"We'd like to award even more prizes, if possible," said U Thein Nang. He added he would like the lottery to have grand prizes of between K300 million and K500 million – but

this may require boosting ticket prices to between K300 and K500. They currently sell for K200 a piece.

U Thein Naing said the lottery presently sells about 30 million tickets monthly, and anticipates a total of about 27,800 prizes in August.

The top prize at the Aung Bar Lay lottery was raised to K150 million in 2012, but the lottery itself dates back to the British colonial period.

While the state's monthly lottery is widely played today, it also competes with illegal lotteries that operate more frequently – often as much as daily. Popular illegal lotteries include one based on the last two digits of the Thai stock exchange closing price and one based on three digits revealed from the televised Thai lottery.



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P.O. Box No. 26, Yangon.

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Dated: 14th July, 2014

Tough for firms to meet changed customs rules

ZAW HTIKE

zawhtikemjn1981@gmail.com



CHANGES to the 1878 Sea Customs Act will require import and export business to have accounts available for the previous seven years, drawing criticism from businesspeople who say many firms do not have accurate records dating back so far.

The requirement is one part of draft amendments aimed at making customs duties fairer by assessing duties based on declared values, rather than the current system of levying customs duties based on values from a list maintained by the department, said Customs Department director U Kyaw Win.

Under the new system, a Post Clearance Audit (PCA) will be required to judge the integrity of the statistics provided if the values declared by different firms vary significantly.

The audits - which take place at the audited company's offices rather than the various ports - require companies to have documents showing their import and export accounts dating back seven years, said U Kyaw Win.

"If we call for an audit of the statistics, they may have to show [up to seven years of accounts]," he said.

The amendments including this provision are now at the Attorney

General's office, and also need parliamentary approval before becoming law. Officials say they have been looking to upgrade rules in line with World Trade Organisation (WTO) guidelines. The last time the Sea Customs Act was amended was 1960, and officials say the act - which covers all types of cross-border commerce, not only ocean shipping - is due for an upgrade.

Businesspeople have generally welcomed the move to the new system of assessing customs duties, though some say the requirement for seven years' records is too much.

U Soe Tun, a large-scale rice trader and automobile importer, said too many businesses lie about their shipments because of unrealistic rules.

"I welcome the new rules, especially if they speed up business," he said.

However, U Soe Tun agreed with many when he said most local firms don't have accurate numbers dating back seven years.

"It's going to be tough for Myanmar businesses to show seven years of statistics," he said. "Most businesses don't use international-standard accounting, though maybe they will in the future."

Economist U Hla Maung said the department figures currently used to assess values are often unrealistic, but the new system's requirements for seven years' statistics is unwieldy.

"As far as I know, the US and other modernised countries usually only require two or three years' statistics," he said. "Myanmar customs may have

many worries about the businesses [they audit]."

Customs Department deputy director U Maung Maung Htwe told *The Myanmar Times* that the seven-year timeline is in keeping with WTO practices.

In practice records will usually only be required dating back two or three years, but it could be up to seven years to resolve the most serious cases - meaning businesspeople should have all statistics available, he said.

Businesses found guilty of declaring false values could be put on a blacklist preventing them from future trading.

"For a first offence we'd do a warning or something like that," said U Maung Maung Htwe. "But next, it might go on the blacklist depending on the value of the goods and times the firm has broken the rules."

He added the department was working to stay within the WTO's rules.

U Kyaw Win said Customs Department is working to upgrade their practices and expand staff numbers.

"We may be out of date and not have modernised equipment, but our practices can be the same as the other nine ASEAN countries," he said, adding Japan has provided some \$30.9 million to assist modernise the department.

Although Myanmar's trade hit US\$25 billion last fiscal year - nearly three times volumes in 2005-06 - its ports still only receive about 30,000 containers a month, the same number many countries receive in a day.

Mr. Ban Ki-moon

Secretary-General

MESSAGE ON WORLD POPULATION DAY

11 July 2014



The world today has its largest generation of youth in history - 1.8 billion young people, mostly in developing countries - with enormous potential to help tackle the major challenges facing humanity. But too many are denied their rightful opportunities to get a quality education, find decent work, and participate in the political life of their societies. World Population Day is an opportunity to renew our commitment to help young people unleash progress across society.

Action is urgently needed. Too many young people lack resources they need to lift themselves out of poverty. I am particularly concerned about adolescent girls who may face discrimination, sexual violence, early marriage and unwanted pregnancies. And even among those young people fortunate enough to receive university degrees, many find themselves without employment or stuck in low-wage, dead-end jobs.

The solution lies in investments in health, education, training and employment for young people as they undergo the critical transition to adulthood. This will improve prospects for their lives and our common future.

Young people themselves are speaking out. Earlier this year, more than 1,000 youth organizations endorsed a Global Youth Call, welcomed by 40 countries, which recommends youth-focused goals and targets in the post-2015 development vision.

Next year marks the deadline for reaching the Millennium Development Goals, shaping the successor agenda, and adopting a meaningful legal agreement on climate change. Youth have a major role in all these processes. The year 2015 also marks the 20th anniversary of the World Programme of Action on Youth. Its practical guidelines for national action and international support remain relevant today. In particular, to fully carry out this Programme of Action, governments must respect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all youth and respond effectively to any violations.

On this World Population Day, I call on all with influence to prioritize youth in development plans, strengthen partnerships with youth-led organizations, and involve young people in all decisions that affect them. By empowering today's youth, we will lay the groundwork for a more sustainable future for generations to come.

Got something to say?
The Myanmar Times



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IN BRIEF

Hluttaw to keep a lid on inflation
Inflation should be kept from rising past the 5.72 percent rate it reached at the end of the fiscal year in March, according to representatives of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Planning and Financial Development Joint Committee. The rate at the end of March was nearly double the 2.85pc average in the 2012-13 year, but still in line with previous rates, officials said.
National Planning and Economic Development deputy minister Daw Le Le Thein said the March rate of 5.72pc was almost identical with rates six months earlier, claiming inflation reached 5.73pc in October. – *Htoo Thant, translation by Thiri Min Htun*

British firms sign energy deals
British companies have signed deals with local counterparts to invest in the electricity sector during a trip by Myanmar officials to London, according to an embassy announcement last week. Rolls Royce will provide three 9.2 megawatt gas turbines for Zeya and Associates’ Hlawga power plant in Yangon Region. The second deal between Aggreko and Andaman Power will contribute the development of a temporary gas power plant in Tanintharyi Region. They were signed during the visit of Myanmar’s Minister for Electric Power U Khin Maung Soe to the United Kingdom. – *Aung Shin*

PTTEP to start drilling onshore
Thai state-owned firm PTT Exploration and Production (PTTEP) held a religious blessing ceremony on July 9 ahead of drilling at its onshore block PSC G-1. Drilling at the site in Natmauk township, Magwe Region will begin this month. The well is 3660 metres deep, and a production sharing contract was signed in 2012 with Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise. PTTEP began oil exploration in Myanmar in 1989, and now has seven projects in the country. PTTEP has declared plans to invest about US\$3.3 billion in the next five years in Myanmar. – *Aung Shin*

Bridgestone opens Yangon office
Japan tire manufacturing company Bridgestone official opened doors on its first office in Myanmar on July 8. The office in Yangon’s MICT park will focus on collecting information on the vehicle and tire market, the firm said in a press release. “The easing of foreign investment laws has attracted many automobile companies to set up a presence in fast-growing Myanmar,” said Bridgestone official Kunitoshi Takeda, according to the press release. Bridgestone has already been importing to Myanmar since the 1990s. – *Jeremy Mullins*

MOGE lengthens its tenders
State-owned Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise extended the time period to receive expressions of interest from private companies on joint venture projects, claiming excess interest. Firms with international experience are invited to join MOGE in joint ventures in drilling services, pipeline construction and maintenance, and seismic acquisition in onshore blocks. Expressions of interest will now be due in July, while they were formerly due at the end of June. The tender is seen as part of MOGE’s corporatisation process. MOGE has also invited interest from consultancy services to evaluate the bids. – *Aung Shin*

Panasonic plans service centres
Japanese electronics giant Panasonic plans to open a service centre each in Yangon and Mandalay at the end of the fiscal year, according to its Myanmar chief representative Hisaka Maeda. The showrooms will focus on business to business and business to consumer products, he said. The firm is known for its electronic appliances such as televisions, refrigerators and air conditioners. Panasonic Asia Pacific managing director Junichiro Kitagawa said the move reflects a change in strategy for the company. – *Myat Noe Oo*

Tech grads’ foreign aim

SU PHYO WIN
suphyo1990@gmail.com

THE future may be foreign for Myanmar’s high-tech graduates, as the country’s universities produce far more IT graduates than there are available positions with local firms, according to experts.
Foreign IT companies have been holding job forums in Yangon, seeking to attract tech graduates to work both in and outside of Myanmar.



A job applicant gets the lowdown at a July 5 job fair. Photo: Thiri Lu

Japanese firms in particular have been eyeing Myanmar’s pool of tech graduates from other overseas locations like China and Vietnam, with up to 80 percent of local computer science graduates failing to get a job or changing careers, said Akira Ogasawara, GIC Innovation Consulting managing director.
“Only about 20pc of nearly 6000 students graduating from computers programs are able to find jobs in local IT companies,” he said. One issue is that local firms are reluctant to provide training, and seek to hire only skilled labour. But many foreign companies setting up locally prize local graduates for their

ability to navigate local culture, and are more open to providing future training. About 40 Japanese IT firms alone have opened in Myanmar over the past few years, and they are both providing services overseas and supporting local firms.
Foreign firms’ interest in Myanmar tech graduates is becoming more apparent. One job fair at the Sule Shangri-La on July 5 attracted about 5000 applicants – of which 70 percent were recent graduates – to apply for jobs at nine IT companies, one accounting firm and a real estate business, all from Japan.
However, only about 200 jobs likely came from the fair. Although many people applied, the selection process is rigorous as is follow-on training expected in programming languages and Japanese as well.
Applicants milling around the fair said they were eager to work for a foreign firm, but recognised the selection process can be difficult.
Ma Phyu Phyu Thaw said she had been working for one Japanese IT firm for about two years, but is looking for a position with a higher salary. Although she has programming and Japanese languages in hand, she said selection process can be difficult to pass. Still, she said she hopes her efforts pay off.
“I graduated from the University of Computer Studies, and don’t want to sacrifice my degree,” she said.

Halted jade mines to restart

THE Ministry of Mines will open four jade mines in Kachin State at the end of the monsoon season, according to a ministry announcement on July 7.
The move to reopen the mines comes as the 51st jade emporium in Nay Pyi Taw generated record sales.
The four re-opened sites had been closed in 2012 due to conflict between the government and the Kachin Independence Army, but the fighting has quieted enough to restart mining, the announcement said.
To be re-opened on September 1, the mines at Lone-khin, Pharkent, Mawlu Mawhan and Khantee could add over US\$2 billion to annual GDP.
Meanwhile, the 51st Myanmar Gems Emporium wrapped up in Nay Pyi Taw on July 6.
Some 7454 lots of jade were on display, along with gems and pearls, according to a release from the President’s Office.
About 7000 lots were to be sold from June 28 to July 3 through an open tender system, while 300 lots were to be sold from July 4 to 6 through a competitive system. The sale netted a record US\$3.4 billion for state coffers, according to Reuters news service. The emporium held last year generated about \$2.5 billion, local media reported at the time. – *Sandar Lwin*

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Dated 14 July 2014

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Kyauktada Township, Yangon,

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

Dated 14 July 2014

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**The Fine Print**

Legal & tax insight

How foreigners are barred from trading

SEBASTIAN PAWLITA
sebastian@pwplegal.com
PHYU PHYU MAR
phyu@pwplegal.com

IT is well-known that foreigners are barred from engaging in trading activities: They are not allowed to buy or import goods in order to resell or export them.

The definition of "foreigner" includes companies incorporated in Myanmar where as little as one share is held by a foreigner. It is not possible for a foreigner to set up a company whose business scope includes trading activities, and it is likewise not possible to register as an importer or exporter with the Ministry of Commerce with the objective of engaging in trade.

It does not matter whether it is wholesale or retail – the sector is off limits to foreigners. It is also not possible for, say, a foreign producer of cars to set up a distribution company in Myanmar in order to import and sell cars of its own brand.

There is no explicit legal basis for this prohibition. Rather, it is administrative practice that appears to have set in rather suddenly in 2002. Until then, it seems to have been possible for foreigners to establish trading companies in Myanmar and import goods for

trading purposes.

However, these business permits have long expired.

Foreigners may set up factories in Myanmar, import machines and raw materials, produce goods and sell and/or export these goods. However, they cannot outsource production to a local manufacturer (so-called contract manufacturing), pay him a fee and sell the goods thus produced. This is rather surprising as the creation of value through production takes place in the country in both cases.

Notification 1/2013 of the Myanmar Investment Commission contains several exceptions from the administrative prohibition to engage in trade. For example, "wholesale trading" should be allowed if the investor has a recommendation from the Ministry of Commerce.

The notification also allows "retail trading" – although this is spread over several items which are partly at odds with each other – provided that the investor uses big outlets which are not in the vicinity of shops owned by citizens.

However, these exceptions have not yet been implemented in practice.

This means most foreign goods on the market locally are traded through domestic importers

and distributors. This is often not a bad thing as it can be difficult to penetrate the market without some local help.

Leaving everything to the local distributor is not always the preferred option, though, and there are several other alternatives to retailing goods. Some of them are discussed in the second part of this article, coming next week.

Sebastian and Phyu are with Polastri Wint & Partners Legal and Tax Advisory.



A woman sells beans in Mandalay. Foreigners are banned from retail trading. Photo: Phyo Wai Kyaw

OPINION

Can EITI membership make resource revenues transparent?



AUNG SHIN

koshumgtha@gmail.com

IT can be easy joining groups: The challenge is in seeing the membership through.

Myanmar signed up to the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) on July 2. The agreement promotes openness and accountable management of revenues from natural resources, requiring annual disclosure of taxes and other payments by oil, gas and mining companies to governments. It's a worthwhile group to join, and Myanmar should be proud it's made it this far.

But the tough part is just beginning. Myanmar is the 45th country in the world to become a candidate for EITI, and just the third ASEAN country after Indonesia and the Philippines. Yet neither Indonesia nor Philippines have progressed past the candidate stage to be declared EITI compliant. Indeed, from Nay Pyi Taw one must travel to Mongolia or Kyrgyzstan to land in the nearest EITI-compliant country.

The standards are tough, as they should be. To meet them, Myanmar must change the way it handles resources.

The next meeting of the Multi Stakeholder Group (MSG) – the organisation charged with spear-

heading meeting the EITI reporting requirements – is in Yangon on July 18. Members from civil society, private companies, the union government and local authorities will cloister and begin the tough slog to meeting the disclosure requirements.

Myanmar now has 18 months to submit its first report or risk being suspended from the group. The report requires extensive information on public accounts, resource licence holders, production data, state-owned enterprises and allocation of natural resources, according to civil society organisation MATA. Myanmar will also have to identify the ultimate beneficial owners of resource companies, and disclose details of the 2013-14 oil and gas bidding rounds. All this is due on January 2, 2016.

It also remains to be seen how much grassroots support EITI re-

ally receives. Joining has been a priority of the government leadership, but most resource extraction is smaller-scale and often unregulated. How will the smaller players be brought into the process? As well, how will the larger companies – which have operated so long in the dark – react to the sudden scrutiny? Certainly many will rise with the occasion, but others will likely resist change.

Much of the onus then will inevitably fall to the government. To see the process through, the government will need to respond firmly to any violence or threats to protect the integrity of the process.

"Civil society groups should be protected by the government, and have more freedom, not only for the EITI but any activity," said U Tun Myint Aung, a member of the MSG.

"Also, the representatives of the Multi Stakeholder Group must be united. If not, the process of the EITI report could face difficulties," he said.

Yet the basic principle in joining the EITI is sound. Myanmar's natural resources should be used for the peoples' benefit, and this will take genuine commitment for stakeholders.

Signing up to the EITI has been a centerpiece of Myanmar's reform process. So far, so good, but the real challenge will be overcoming objections and installing a measure of transparency in a notoriously opaque sector. The EITI is one agreement that after joining, should be seen all the way through.

Myanmar will also have to identify the ultimate beneficial owners of resource companies, and disclose details of the 2013-14 oil and gas bidding rounds.



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Business Manager (Consumer) / Location : Yangon

(1) post

Responsibilities : Develop, direct and control the sales business strategies and activities to achieve revenue, sales and profit targets. Time, cost and opportunity management for sales team (country wise).

Requirements : University Graduated and MBA is preferred with at least 5 years related experience as managerial level in reputed Distribution company is preferred.

Regulatory Manager / Location : Yangon

(1) post

Responsibilities : Providing strategic service about all regulatory matters especially on FDA guidelines & requirements in communication with FDA/TMO/MPMEEA for DIAC and internal related departments. Monitors team in regulatory activities and instructing, guiding & training in development.

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(1) post

Responsibilities : Lead and manage of office & Environmental maintenance, office security , fire fighting & prevention , office setting plan arrangement.

Requirements : University Graduated and MBA is preferred with at least 5 years related experience of handling overall administration functions in reputed company as managerial level.

Product Manager (Pharmaceutical) / Location : Yangon

(1) post

Responsibilities : Manage and implement the strategic plan of brand awareness, PR activities , promotion (trade & end user) in align with related principle guideline and preparing budget. Able to train product Knowledge to concerned medical promoters.

Requirements : MBBS/ B.Pharm or B.V.Sc Degree holder with at least 3 years related experience of product management in reputed pharmaceutical company as middle management level.

Medical Marketing supervisor (Pharmaceutical) / Location : Yangon

(3) posts

Responsibilities : Execute monthly marketing plans to achieve quarterly sales target, timely provide the customer feedback and analyze market situation.

Requirements : Any Graduated with at least 2 years related experience of pharma marketing and supervision of junior marketing staff.

Medical Promoter (Pharmaceutical) / Location : Yangon

(10) posts

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Property

BUSINESS EDITOR: Jeremy Mullins | jeremymullins7@gmail.com

First luxury floating hotel sails into Yangon



Vintage Luxury Yacht Hotel sits at its new home at Botahtaung Jetty. Photo: Aung Htay Hlaing



ZAW WIN THAN

zawwinthan@gmail.com

A FIVE-STAR floating hotel at Yangon's Botahtaung Jetty is set to open by early August, according to hotel officials.

Work on the US\$50 million converted ship began in August 2013 at Myanmar Shipyards, with rooms set to cost between \$250 and as much as \$800 a night at the high end when it officially opens.

"This floating hotel is unique and exclusively for luxury services," said Eric Noel, operations manager of Vintage Luxury Yacht Hotel.

The hotel's interior decorations have been completed with a 1920s vintage theme in mind, he said. The lights are all Edison vintage bulbs, and the couches and chairs were chosen to match.

"This reflects our willingness to give high-class service and treatment to our customers," he said.

The 2000-tonne vessel originated in Finland, and now occupies a berth at Botahtaung Jetty without an engine. The ship is about 106 metres (348 feet) long and 18.5 metres wide.

"The renovation process took nearly a year," said Mr Noel. "At the same time we developed two jetties ready to be docked alongside the vessel. It's been here since the end

'This reflects our willingness to give high-class service and treatment to our customers.'

Eric Noel

Vintage Luxury operations manager

of April," he said.

The hotel features 104 rooms, include two top-end executive suites, as well as two restaurants, two bars, a theatre-style meeting room for up to 40 people, and several other amenities including a spa, Jacuzzi and business centre.

Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) has granted a licence for 30 years, while the Myanmar Port Authority has given a five-year extendable contract to develop the hotel, he said.

The hotel has been pre-opened since the end of June, with rooms heavily discounted, and it is gearing up to open its doors soon. It is aiming at a high-end niche, targeting guests from places like Germany, Russia and Netherlands.

Myanmar doesn't really have top-end luxury hotels, he claimed. A survey the firm conducted found about 20 percent of total arrivals to Myanmar would fit into the luxury market. They mostly visit places like Ngapali, Bagan and Inle Lake, often



A man sits at one of Vintage Luxury's two bars. Photo: Aung Htay Hlaing

staying as long as 10 days - but rarely in Yangon.

"So we decided why don't we introduce luxury products in Yangon and give them the real luxury services to stay and to relax," he said.

Rooms will cost between \$250 and \$800 when it opens, though

it has been running a pre-opening special with promotional rates of \$99 plus taxes.

The firm has also proposed to further develop the jetties for public convenience, and is mulling adding a second vessel containing 400 rooms in the future.

Kempinski revealed as manager of controversial Strand Road hotel

EI EITHU
91.eieithu@gmail.com

SWISS hotel chain Kempinski AG will oversee a controversial hotel development in downtown Yangon, its local partner has told *The Myanmar Times*.

The former Small Claims Court building on Strand Road, which is being renovated by Flying Tiger Engineering, will open as the Kempinski Yangon in 2017, said U Thaung Htike Min, the vice chair of JL Family Group, which will jointly manage the hotel with Kempinski.

The project has been the subject of repeated protests by local lawyers, who say the development is inappropriate for an important historical building and have questioned the transparency of the tender that Flying Tiger won.

U Thaung Htike Min said Kempinski Yangon will open in 2017 with 239 rooms, and is expected to create about 500 jobs.

He added that 60 percent of the investment in the project is coming from Thailand. Since 2004, the Thailand

Crown Property Bureau has had a majority holding in Kempinski, according to the company's website.

"We have employed Kempinski [for] hotel management [because they] have much international experience. We can learn [from them] how to give service to customers," U Thaung Htike Min said.

The Kempinski hotel brand, which began in 1897, has 75 hotels in 30 countries across the world. Kempinski Nay Pyi Taw will sit on a 54-acre site and feature four villas.

Under the terms of the original agreement between the Myanmar Investment Commission and Flying Tiger, the company has a 60-year lease on the Strand Road site.

According to a letter that the president sent to parliament in July 2012, annual rent will be 7 percent of hotel revenue, while the company will also pay a fee of US\$14.4 million for land use and agree to invest at least K20 billion.

Kempinski officials confirmed they are in advanced negotiations to manage a property in Yangon, though they did not specify the property, when

contacted by *The Myanmar Times*.

"Kempinski Hotel ... is confident the group would be an excellent match for this exciting property and key destination," the statement said.

Meanwhile, U Thaung Htike Min said the opening of a property in Nay Pyi Taw on which his firm is working with Kempinski is likely to be delayed until August. The 200-room, five-star hotel had originally been scheduled to open in May for that month's ASEAN Summit, he said.

It is being constructed - along with nine other luxury hotels - in the state guesthouse hotel zone, and aims to host world leaders and ministers visiting the capital, including for the November ASEAN Summit and associated meetings. The project will create jobs for about 500 local people, U Thaung Htike Min said.

As *The Myanmar Times* reported in April, Kempinski entered a deal with the Kanbawza Group of Companies to manage the hotel, which is owned by Kanbawza, after US firm Marriott pulled out of the project. - *Additional reporting by Tim McLaughlin*

China's richest person plans massive Chicago mixed-use development

CHINA'S Wanda Group, controlled by the country's richest person Wang Jianlin, says it will invest US\$900 million in a five-star hotel and apartment complex in Chicago, as it acquires more assets in the US.

The project, to be located near the intersection of the Chicago River and Lake Michigan, will be the city's third tallest building with a height of 350 metres (1148 feet), the company said in a statement.

It will be a mixed-use development consisting of a 240-room "super five-star" hotel, residential units and commercial space, and heralds greater expansion into the US, according to the statement posted July 8.

"The Chicago project is just the first step of Wanda's property investment in the United States," Mr Wang said in the statement, adding the company would invest in five-star hotels in major US cities including New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco "within a year".

Wanda made a series of big-ticket

purchases of Western assets in recent years as it spreads internationally.

Last month Spain's biggest bank Santander announced that it had sold a historic skyscraper in Madrid to a Wanda subsidiary for 265 million euros (US\$360 million).

The deal followed the Chinese conglomerate's acquisition last year of British yacht maker Sunseeker for 320 million pounds (now US\$548 million) and its \$2.6 billion takeover in 2012 of US cinema chain AMC Entertainment. It is also spending £700 million on London's tallest residential towers.

Construction on the Chicago property project is expected to start this year and it is scheduled to open in 2018, Wanda said.

Mr Wang, formerly a senior member of the ruling Communist Party, was ranked the richest person in China and 26th wealthiest in the world, business magazine *Forbes* reported in February, with his personal worth estimated at \$14 billion. - *AFP*

“The state-run bicycle manufacturing plant lost nearly K40 billion. It was built, but there are no buyers.”

— Parliamentarian U Win Myint on the costs of state-owned industries

Indonesia braces for expected election fraud

WORLD 38

HOUSE OF THE WEEK

Take a trip stateside with this compound

There are housing compounds that look like Yangon property, and there are housing compounds that look international. This week's house in Bahan township has the feel of a North American home.

It's got a large yard with green grass and a one-car garage for your main vehicle, and lots of room outside for any other cars. It has a large balcony to take advantage of the cool evenings, and large windows in its five master bedrooms that allow a flood of natural light. It also boasts a small maid or guesthouse for stashing in-laws.

Now on the exterior the palm trees and orange tile roofing may end the comparison to most North American homes, but they also serve as a fair reminder that *House of the Week* lives in Myanmar.

The 1350-square-foot house also boasts a living room, a dedicated dining room, a kitchen, two smaller bedrooms in addition to the master bedrooms, and a

maid corner. With all this room there's lots of space for a large family – though this may work to your detriment if you'd like to send your visiting in-laws to the guesthouse.

The amenities are all there. The house has eight air conditioners, a telephone land line and the rooms are nicely furnished to suit modern tastes.

The asking price might be a little high for some at US\$7000 a month, but you can also flex your negotiation muscles. It's also near downtown, making a relatively short commute. – *Tin Yadanar Htun*

Location : Kanbawza St, Bahan tsp
Price : \$7000 per month (negotiable)
Contact : Estate Myanmar Real Estate Agency
Phone : 09-43118787, 09-43031699



YCDC asks for help on illegal developers

MYAT NYEIN AYE

myatnayeinaye11092@gmail.com

YANGON officials are asking for public cooperation in their crackdown on contractors without licences or building permits.

The Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC) launched a well-publicised crackdown on illegal construction in June, but it will be difficult to make the program a success without support from the public as witnesses, said U Than Htay, director of YCDC Engineering Department (Building).

Taking legal action to sue the unlicensed contractors often requires a paper copy of the agreement between landowners and contractors as evidence, he said at a July 7 press conference on the issue.

‘If we don’t get a confession, often we can only go after the landowners.’

U Than Htay
YCDC official

“If we get a copy of the agreement, we can sue no-licence contractors in the courts,” he said. “But if landowners working with no-licence contractors don’t reveal the contractors’ names, we can only sue the landowner.”

However, many land owners enter agreements with unlicensed contractors splitting profits on new developments, so they are often reluctant to give up the information.

“If we don’t get a confession, often we can only go after the landowners who have a building under construction without a BCC [Building Completion Certificate],” he said.

YCDC is calling for those with knowledge of illegal construction, and particularly those with copies of agreements with unlicensed contractors, to step up and assist the campaign.

Unlicensed contractors can be fined K10,000 a day for the first offence.

YCDC provides two types of contractor licences. Senior contractors can build up to 15 buildings larger than six floors, and must pay K50 million in fees. Junior contractors can construct up to 15 buildings that are under six stories, and must pay a K20 million fee.

Builders must also put a deposit of K3 million per building to YCDC to show they intend to build the project, and can collect it after the building is completed.

Yangon has given official licences to 622 senior contractors and 23 junior contractors.

Engineering Department (Building) deputy director U Nay Win said it is easier for unlicensed contractors to run away from enforcement efforts than it is for landowners.

“The first thing we do when we find an unlicensed construction site is to halt construction,” he said. “If they don’t stop we can sue them under YCDC’s rules, and if they don’t follow further instructions we can still sue them.”

These rules were introduced in October 2013 due to the increase prevalence of unlicensed contractors, he said.

Contractors which fail to stop after receiving a YCDC warning can face fines between K10,000 and K500,000, as well as up to a year in prison. Those who don’t follow further rules can be fined between K10,000 and K500,000 every day they disregard the rules.

Still, officials say they would rather see construction done right rather than resorting to the law.

U Than Htay claimed that it is not a common YCDC practice to take payments in return for looking the other way.

“We don’t do that – taking money and allowing building permits,” he said. “Sometimes we allow [unlicensed contractors] to apply for a contractor licence and Building Competition Certificates after finishing the building.”

Builders in Thingangyun township have been said to be particularly likely to operate without building licences or proper contractor permits, though other Yangon city townships see their fair share of illegal construction.

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Silicon Yangon

dispatches from the nation's
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Bringing parliament to the people

AUNG KYAW NYUNT

aungkyawnyunt28@gmail.com

Nay Pyi Taw's halls of power have never been closer, thanks to a new app from the Open Myanmar Initiative.

The Myanmar MPs app, available now on android in Myanmar language, allows citizens to search for the contact details for members of parliament.

While the app's official debut was on June 24, the team behind Myanmar MP say building the app to its full potential will be an ongoing process.

"Currently, we have 12 representative's facebook" and have requested contact information for 50 others, said U Soe Thiha Naung, head of the tech development team at OMI.

As U Soe Thiha Naung explained, MPs would only be included in the app's catalogue of Facebook profiles and email addresses if they

volunteered their information. Speaking to *The Myanmar Times* last week, U Soe Thiha Naung said he was optimistic that OMI would eventually have all 664 total members of parliament.

OMI also confirmed that they would be releasing both an English-language version and iOS compatible versions later this year.

Possibly looking towards the elections next year, some MPs are already enthusiastic, "If the public send questions and ideas to me by email, phone and Facebook, I am ready to reply to their questions and ideas immediately," said U Aung Zin, representative of Pazundaung constituency.

The Open Myanmar Initiative, or OMI, is a non-profit organisation dedicated to government transparency and freedom of information. Its members include teachers, activists, and former political prisoners.



The lower house of parliament gathers for a session. Photo: Staff

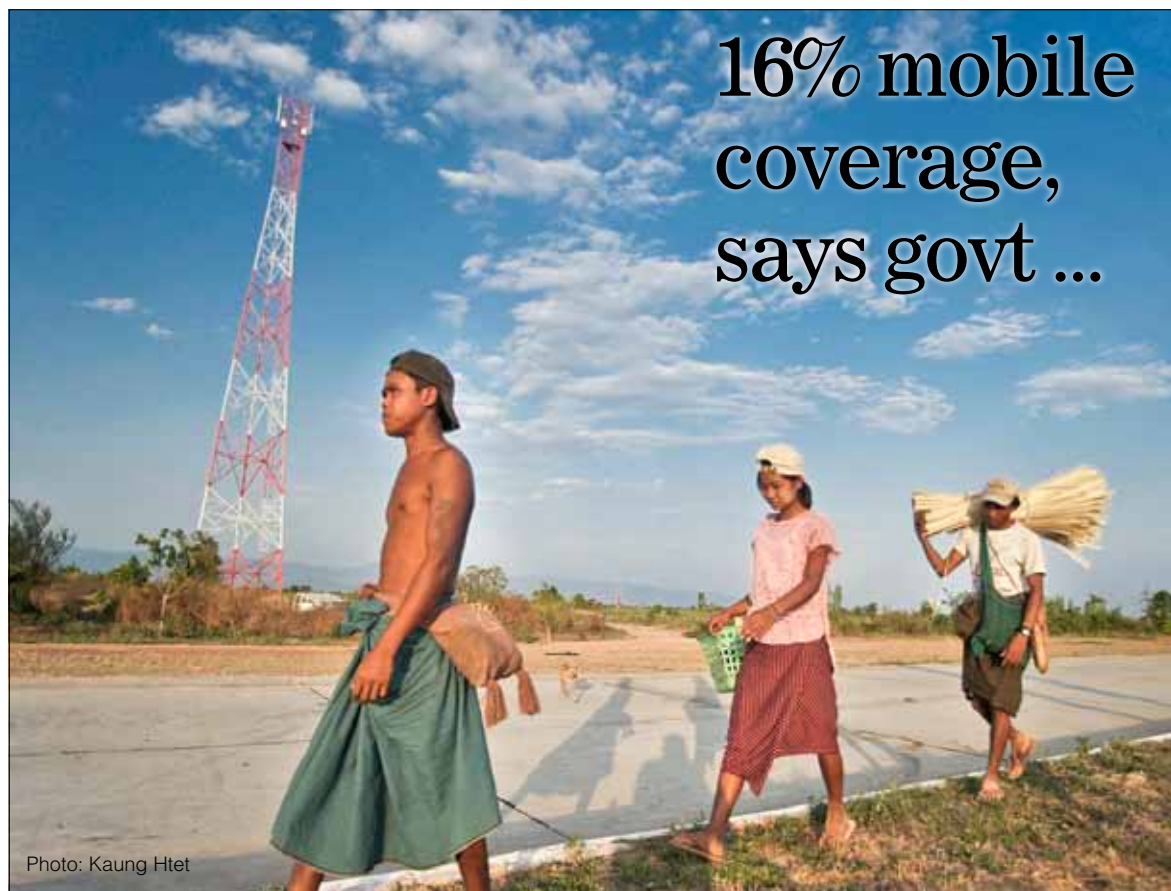


Photo: Kaung Htet

THE number of mobile users nationwide climbed to 9.36 million in June, according to U Thaung Tin, the deputy minister for Telecommunications and Information Technology.

Speaking to the upper house of parliament last week, U Thaung Tin said the number roughly equates 16 percent of the population, up from just 8pc in early 2013.

"We hope to reach 75 percent to 80 percent of tele-density in the 2015-2016 fiscal year," Thaung Tin said.

It took neighbouring countries, such as Thailand and Vietnam, about three to four years to reach 50 percent mobile penetration, starting from under 10 percent, but Myanmar can get there in a year, the deputy minister said.

— Htoo Thant, translation by Thiri Min Htun.

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Dated: 14th July, 2014

LONDON

Facebook faces probe over mood experiment

BRITISH authorities said last week they will investigate Facebook over an experiment which manipulated the feelings of users, as the social network apologised for its poor handling of the row.

Facebook clandestinely altered the emotional content of news feeds of nearly 700,000 users for one week in 2012 without their knowledge, in order to test whether it altered their moods.

News of the "creepy" experiment has caused outrage among users, and on July 9 Britain's independent data watchdog, the Information Commissioner's Office, said it was now looking into the case.

"We're aware of this issue and will be speaking to Facebook, as well as liaising with the Irish data protection authority, to learn more about the circumstances," a spokesperson told AFP.

Facebook, the world's most popular social networking site with 1.2 billion users, has its European headquarters in Dublin.

As the row grew, Facebook's chief operating officer Sheryl Sandberg admitted during a visit to India on July 9 that the company had communicated badly on the experiment.

"This was communicated terribly and for that communication we have apologised," Sandberg told a women's business seminar in New Delhi when asked whether the study was ethical.

"We communicated really badly on this subject," she said, before adding: "We take privacy at Facebook really seriously."

The research, published last month, involved Facebook giving some users sadder news and others happier news in order to better understand "emotional contagion".

Researchers wanted to see if the number of positive or negative words in messages the users read determined whether they then posted positive or negative content in their status updates.

It did not seek explicit consent beforehand, but claims its terms of service contract with users permits blanket "research".

Users, however, questioned the ethics of the study with some calling it "super disturbing", "evil" and "creepy".

Facebook said the company was "happy" to answer the British regulator's questions.

"It's clear that people were upset by this study and we take responsibility for it," a Facebook spokesperson told AFP by email.

"We want to do better in the future and are improving our process based on this feedback."

700,000

The number of facebook users unknowingly experimented on by Facebook

"The study was done with appropriate protections for people's information and we are happy to answer any questions regulators may have."

Ms. Sandberg, who was in India to promote her gender equality book *Lean In*, gave a more general assurance about Facebook's cooperation.

"We work very closely with the regulators all over the world ... we are fully compliant [with regulations]," Ms. Sandberg said.

She declined to speak to reporters asking further questions about the study.

The experiment was conducted by researchers affiliated with Facebook and Cornell University and the University of California at San Francisco in the United States.

The results indicate "emotions expressed by others on Facebook influence our own emotions, constituting experimental evidence for massive-scale contagion via social networks", researchers concluded, and noted emotion was relevant to human health.

The psychological experiment has stoked worries over the mood-altering capacities of the site. Critics say research on people is normally governed by strict ethical regulations.

In a statement earlier in the week, Facebook said the study was consistent with its blanket data use policy, to which all users agree. It said it does research to make its content "as relevant and engaging as possible". — AFP

WASHINGTON

Mozilla begins global ‘digital literacy’ program

THE Mozilla Foundation is expecting more than 100,000 people to participate in a series of events worldwide over the next two months teaching basic internet use and other digital skills.

The “Webmaker” events which run through September 15 aim to boost so-called digital literacy skills, including computer coding, designing Web pages, and creation of apps and videos.

The kickoff begins this weekend in Kampala, Uganda, and includes events in at least 368 locations, from New York and San Francisco to cities in India, Indonesia and several African countries.

“Digital literacy is as important as reading, writing and math in modern society,” Mozilla Foundation executive director Mark Surman told AFP in a telephone interview.

“We set out with these parties to teach the world how the Web works.”

Mr. Surman said the effort is part of a broader goal to help get more people around the world connected to the Internet, and to help them use it in more active ways.

The events tie in with the “maker movement,” which according to Surman “is the idea that technology should be something we all can take control of, not something that is given to us by companies.”

This is the third year of the campaign, Mr. Surman said, and he hopes to double the participation level of last year of around 60,000 people. The maker parties are mostly locally organized with volunteers, with some technical help from Mozilla.

This campaign is bigger and broader than efforts by other organisations to teach children to code. And it is based on the premise that most of the world’s population will be online soon, with traditional computers or mobile devices like smartphones.

“In the end the broad majority of people are going to have a computer in their hands or in their pockets in the next few years, Mr. Surman said.

“We need to make sure those five billion people understand what the Web is now.”

Mr. Surman was on his way to Kampala for “a 500-person teach-in” to launch the program. Mozilla promotes them as parties which help explain the mechanics of making websites and addresses issues such as privacy and data protection.

“Coding is just the tip of the iceberg,” he said.

“This is about full-scale digital literacy. How to build things with code, design and video and photography. And there are a set of creative, social and cognitive skills – participation, design thinking. These are the skills you need to find your way in the digital world.”

Mozilla, with grants from a number of foundations and donations, is spending more than US\$4 million annually on these efforts. – AFP

Gadget Round-up

by Myo Satt



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-Translation by Thiri Min Htun

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World

WORLD EDITOR: Fiona MacGregor

GAZA CITY

Civilian death toll rises as Gaza strikes continue to rain down

ISRAELI warplanes kept up deadly raids on Gaza, but failed to stop Palestinian militants firing rockets across the border, as the United States offered to help negotiate a truce on July 11.

With the violence growing worse, US President Barack Obama in a phone call to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said his government was willing to broker a ceasefire.

Mr Obama said he was concerned the fighting could escalate and "called for all sides to do everything they can to protect the lives of civilians", the White House said.

"The United States remains prepared to facilitate a cessation of hostilities, including a return to the November 2012 ceasefire agreement."

The 2012 deal, brokered by former secretary of state Hillary Clinton and Egypt, ended eight days of Israeli air strikes on Hamas targets in a previous showdown.

Appeals for an immediate truce also came from UN chief Ban Ki-moon at an emergency meeting on July 10 of the Security Council, saying a ceasefire was "more urgent than ever".

Russian President Vladimir Putin issued a similar plea in a phone call to Netanyahu, urging an immediate end to the bloodshed and expressing concern over civilian casualties.

But Israel appeared bent on dealing a fatal blow to the Islamist movement Hamas, which controls Gaza, with Mr Netanyahu reportedly saying talk of a ceasefire was "not even on the agenda".

Israeli air strikes killed more than 30 Palestinians on July 10 alone, many of them women and children.

Hamas, the Palestinian group ruling Gaza, also appeared to have no interest in letting up, striking deep inside Israel over the past 48 hours, with rockets crashing down near Jerusalem and Tel Aviv and even as far away as Hadera, 116 kilometres (72 miles) to the north.

Senior Hamas member and the movement's former Gaza prime minister Ismail Haniya ruled out any backing down by the Islamist movement.

"The enemy [Israel] is the one that

started this aggression and it must stop, because we are [simply] defending ourselves," Mr Haniya said in a statement early on July 11.

Sirens wailed across Jerusalem for the second time running on July 10 and a series of loud explosions echoed across the city as the Iron Dome anti-missile system shot down two rockets fired from Gaza, the army said.

Another two crashed down in open areas in the occupied West Bank, witnesses and security officials told AFP.

Hamas claimed firing four missiles at Jerusalem.

'The enemy is the one that started this aggression and it must stop, because we are simply defending ourselves.'

Ismail Haniya

Former Gaza prime minister

On July 11 six Palestinians were killed in two attacks on Gaza, five of them, including a woman and a seven-year-old child, a strike on the home of an Islamic Jihad militant in Rafah, Gaza's emergency services spokesperson Ashraf al-Qudra said.

Since the start of the Israeli campaign in the early hours of July 8, around 95 Palestinians have been killed and more than 500 injured, according to Mr al-Qudra.

As the number of victims in Gaza rose, Egypt opened the Rafah border crossing, with hospitals in north Sinai placed on standby to receive the wounded, Egyptian state news agency MENA said.

"We are still facing a difficult,

complex and complicated campaign," Mr Netanyahu said after a security cabinet meeting.

Israel has confirmed preparations are under way for a possible ground attack, with tanks seen massing along the border and Mr Netanyahu facing mounting pressure from coalition hardliners to put boots back on the ground in the territory from which Israeli troops and settlers withdrew in 2005.

Since the start of the operation, the Israeli military's biggest offensive on Gaza since November 2012, its forces have hit over 1090 "terror sites".

In the same period, Gaza militants fired 407 mortars and rockets that struck Israel, while another 118 rockets were intercepted, an army spokesperson said on July 11.

Neither side has shown any sign of backing down, and Israel has approved the call-up of 40,000 reservists.

Analysts said Hamas had a clear aim: to drag Israel into a ground war hoping to inflict heavy casualties on its troops who would likely come under fire from anti-tank missiles and explosive devices.

Militants would also be seeking to capture Israeli soldiers to use as leverage.

In a news conference, Hamas's armed wing the Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades issued a veiled threat to kidnap soldiers, saying a "ground war will be a chance to free Palestinian prisoners".

Hamas spokesperson Sami Abu Zuhri said in a separate statement that Israel would "pay the price for its crimes", saying an Israeli ground assault would be a mistake, calling Israeli troops "cowards".

Meanwhile on Israel's northern border witnesses reported two rockets fired from Lebanon hitting near the town of Metula.

"One projectile hit an open space near Kfar Yuval, between [northern Israeli towns] Metula and Kiryat Shmona," a military spokesperson said, adding the army did not yet know whether it was a mortar shell or a rocket. — AFP



IN PICTURES

PHOTO: AFP

A spectator watches a bull fall into the Denia's harbour near Alicante on July 11, the bull runs despite heavy condemnation.

KABUL

US bid to end

The future of Afghanistan hangs in the balance, US recent election results, which has prompted allegations

US Secretary of State John Kerry began a difficult mission to mediate an end to the political crisis in Afghanistan on July 11, warning that a bitter dispute over presidential polls threatened the country's future.

"Obviously we are at a very critical moment for Afghanistan," Mr Kerry said as he met the head of the UN assistance mission in the country, Jan Kubis.

"The election legitimacy hangs in the balance. The future potential of the transition hangs in the balance, so we have a lot of work to do."

The top US diplomat also met outgoing President Hamid Karzai, and then former World Bank economist Ashraf Ghani, who is well ahead in the preliminary results of last month's second round run-off.

In a swift boost for Kerry's diplomacy, Mr Ghani threw his backing behind US calls for a wide audit of the elections, amid accusations by his rival Abdullah Abdullah of massive fraud.

"Our commitment is to ensure that the election process enjoys the integrity and the legitimacy of the people of Afghanistan and the world," Mr Ghani told reporters as he was welcomed to the heavily fortified US embassy in Kabul.

"Therefore we believe in the most intensive and extensive audit possible to restore faith" he said.

Mr Ghani said he and his supporters were committed to "an inclusive government. A government that could represent all of Afghans, and serve every Afghan citizen in the manner that every Afghan deserves according to the constitution".

Mr Kerry, who was due to meet Mr Abdullah later on July 11, stressed "no-one is declaring victory at this time. The results are yet to be finalised."

The stakes could not be higher, as the next president will have to steer the war-torn country as international troops withdraw, leaving Afghan forces to fight a bloody, stubbornly resilient Taliban insurgency.

"Our hopes are that there is a road that can be found that will provide that capacity for the questions to be answered, for people's doubts to be satisfied and hopefully for a

'No one is declaring victory at this time. The results are yet to be finalised.'

John Kerry

US Secretary of State



A ball of fire is seen following an early morning Israeli air strike, on July 11, on Rafah in the southern area of Gaza strip.

Photo: AFP



China’s taste for rare wildlife unabated

WORLD 40

Parents’ long vigil for lost ferry victims

WORLD 41



Japan adapts to meet Halal demands

WORLD 45



port during the traditional running of bulls called “Bous a la mar” (Bull in the sea) on 10. The festival is a symbol of Spanish culture that attracts thousands of tourists to watch tion from animal rights groups.

Afghan election crisis

Secretary of State John Kerry has warned, as he stepped in to a bitter dispute over of massive fraud and thrown the country into political uncertainty



Supporters of Afghan presidential candidate Abdullah Abdullah chain themselves together as they block the gate for vehicles at Kabul International Airport, in Kabul on July 11. Photo: AFP

future to be defined,” Mr Kerry said. But he warned that was not “an automatic at this point”. Preliminary results have put Mr Ghani in the lead, but Mr Abdullah, who has already once lost a presidential bid in controversial circumstances, has declared himself the true winner, saying massive fraud robbed him of victory. The election stand-off has sparked fears that protests could spiral into ethnic violence, and even lead to a return of the fighting between warlords that ravaged Af-

A statement from Mr Karzai’s office said Mr Kubis had presented a UN plan on July 10 to audit some 8000 ballot boxes, representing 43 percent of the total votes or around 3.5 million votes. UN officials have said a full audit of the results could take up to two weeks, but some Afghan officials are pressing to stick by an election calendar that would see the new president inaugurated on August 2. Amid protests and political turmoil, the United States has warned both candidates that any attempted power grab will lead to an immediate cut in billions of dollars of annual aid. After more than 13 years of war following the 2001 US invasion to oust the hardline Taliban regime, Mr Obama has said all American forces will be withdrawn by the end of 2016. The 30,000 US troops on the ground will be whittled down to 9800 next year. The Obama administration is also desperately waiting for Afghan leaders to sign a bilateral pact governing the presence of US forces in the country beyond this year. Mr Karzai walked away from the deal, but both presidential candidates have said that they would sign it. – AFP

BAGHDAD

Kurds denounce Iraqi president as ‘hysterical’

IRAQ’S Kurdish leaders have said that Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki is “hysterical” and not fit to run the country, further dimming the prospect of a new leadership uniting to face jihadist fighters. The worsening political discord came on July 10, three days ahead of a planned parliamentary session meant to revive the process of replacing what has effectively been a caretaker government since April elections. Mr Maliki “has become hysterical and has lost his balance”, a statement from the office of Kurdish regional president Massud Barzani said on July 10, reacting to accusations by the prime minister a day earlier that his administration was harbouring militants. Kurdish troops moved into disputed areas vacated by federal forces that failed to stop a Sunni militant onslaught that began on June 9. The Kurds have since said those swathes of land were theirs to keep, and announced plans to hold a referendum on independence. Mr Maliki has accused Mr Barzani of exploiting the chaos created by the Islamic State (IS) jihadist group’s military offensive, but the Kurdish president said the security collapse was of the premier’s own making. “You must apologise to the Iraqi people and step down. You have destroyed the country and someone who has destroyed the country cannot save the country from crises,” the statement said. Since IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi proclaimed a “caliphate” twice the size of Israel on land straddling Iraq and Syria, militants have not made any further significant advances. But Iraqi forces have also struggled to reclaim lost ground, and the front lines north and west of Baghdad are increasingly looking like the de facto borders of a partitioned Iraq. Despite backing in the shape of hardware, manpower and intelligence from sources as diverse as Iran, Iraqi Shiite militias and the United States, the government has so far failed to recapture Tikrit, the home town of executed former president Saddam Hussein. And it is far from being able to even attempt retaking Mosul, a city of 2 million further north and the setting for a video posted earlier this month purporting to show Mr Baghdadi delivering a Ramadan sermon, a stunt analysts said showed huge confidence on the part of IS. A Sukhoi jet of the kind recently delivered by Moscow, and apparently Tehran, attacked a market on July 9 in the rebel-held city of Fallujah, which lies only 60 kilometres (35 miles) west of the capital. According to doctor Ahmed Shami, eight people were killed and 35 wounded. He said five children were among another 12 wounded in further air strikes on July 10. The escalating war of words between Mr Maliki and the Kurds has already cast a pall over a key parliament session slated for July 13. In a sign of what may be to come in parliament, Kurdish ministers said Mr Maliki’s stance “only served the enemies of Iraq and the terrorists” and announced they were boycotting cabinet sessions.

‘You must apologise to the Iraqi people and step down.’

Massud Barzani
Kurdish regional president

The new Iraqi MPs’ first attempt at selecting a speaker, president and government on July 1 ended in disarray, with deputies trading threats and heckles and some eventually walking out. The next session was announced for August 12 but the timing caused an outcry, with both regular Iraqis and the international community exasperated by the lack of urgency their politicians were displaying with the country was mired in its worst crisis in years. While many of Iraq’s factions, apparently including some within the prime minister’s own bloc, agree that Mr Maliki needs to step aside if deadly sectarianism is to be reined in, the incumbent has insisted his poll victory legitimised his bid for a third term. Some observers argue Mr Maliki is intentionally seeking to scupper the upcoming parliament vote to buy more time and tip political support back in his favour. “He’s trying to play it long because it’s his only chance,” one Western diplomat told AFP on condition of anonymity. – AFP



Iraqi security forces stand guard at a checkpoint located at the entrance of the mainly Shiite southern city of Basra on July 10. Photo: AFP

JAKARTA

Indonesians apprehensive as election fraud claims expected

BOTH presidential candidates have declared victory in Indonesia's knife-edge election fuelling anxiety that fraud and dirty tactics could twist official results due to be announced later this month.

Jakarta governor Joko Widodo and his rival, former general Prabowo Subianto, used different unofficial tallies July 9 to claim victory in the world's third-biggest democracy.

Now more than 130 million ballot papers from the vast archipelago that sprawls the distance of London to New York are being counted and collected, and then sent on to the capital Jakarta. The official result will be announced by July 22.

Both camps have sent hundreds of thousands of monitors to watch the ballots' each and every move in a country where vote-buying and the bribing of government officials is rampant.

"The most vulnerable part of the Indonesian election is the counting process," Jakarta-based independent analyst Paul Rowland said.

Analysts believe that Widodo, known by his nickname Jokowi and seen as a break from the autocratic Suharto era, has the more credible claim to victory, and as such is the most vulnerable to being targeted by such fraud.

At least eight polling agencies said he was leading Prabowo by between two and seven percentage points.

Most of these survey institutes have accurately predicted the results of Indonesian national elections since 2004, including April's parliamentary polls.

Prabowo, a top military figure in Suharto's time who has admitted ordering the abduction of democracy activists before the strongman's downfall, relied on data from four less well-known polling agencies.

Widodo has urged his supporters across the country to closely monitor the vote-counting process and ensure it is "honest and clean without intervention by any parties".

Mr Rowland said that Widodo was "challenging the local election officials to make sure they don't accept money to change the numbers".

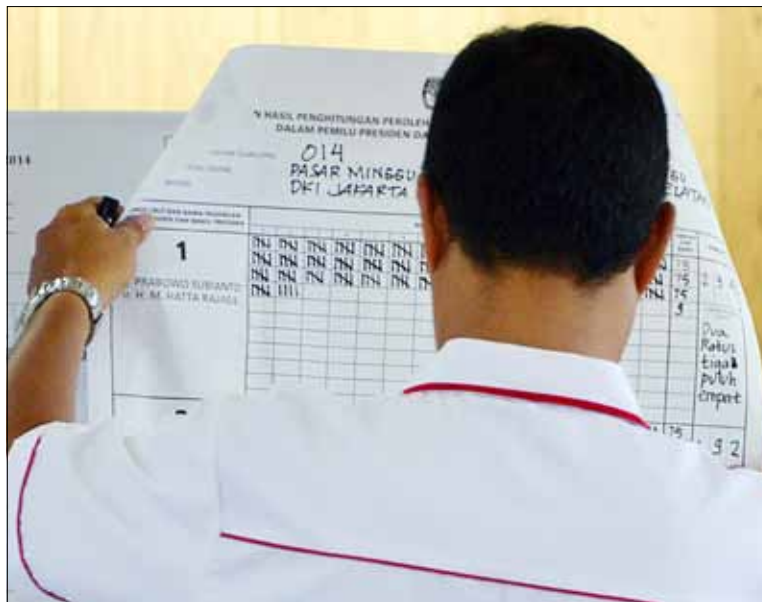
There has been no suggestion that his opponents have tried to carry out any fraud.

Hashim Djojohadikusumo, Prabowo's enormously wealthy brother who has helped bankroll his campaign, insisted that the ex-general also felt his campaign was under threat from Widodo's team.

"Frankly we are quite worried ... our votes are being threatened," he said.

"We are not the only ones with money."

For transparency, votes are counted in public at polling stations, sometimes in front of large crowds and party witnesses.



An Indonesian electoral official rechecks the tabulation of votes at an urban village office two days after Indonesia's presidential elections in Jakarta on July 11. Photo: AFP

The votes are tallied on a form visible to onlookers, then handed to village chiefs before being collected at a higher administrative level and eventually making their way to Jakarta.

Even after the result is announced by the election commission, the loser can challenge it, and analysts say both

candidates will likely do so if they do not emerge the victor.

Any challenge will go to the Constitutional Court, which must declare a winner by August 24, ahead of the inauguration of a new president in October.

The worst-case scenario following a

decision by the commission or court is violence breaking out. The country was plagued by unrest during its transition to democracy in the late 1990s, but has enjoyed more than a decade of peace and stability.

President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono called both candidates to his residence outside the capital on July 9 following their declarations of victory, and urged them to restrain their supporters from staging celebratory parades.

Both camps claim that polling agencies have taken sides.

The four main pollsters used by the Prabowo camp are little known and are coming under increased scrutiny, with the body that oversees pollsters in Indonesia reportedly raising concerns about their results.

But more reputable agencies too have vocally sided with Widodo. Rizal Sukma, executive director of Jakarta-based thinktank the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, has advised his campaign.

However, Aaron Connelly, a research fellow at the Sydney-based Lowy Institute for International Policy, said, "We can say pretty clearly the results used by Prabowo are not from respected polling firms."

"They are not particularly well established and they don't have track records of accuracy like others do."

— AFP

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BANGKOK

Militants kill three police and injure imam

THREE policemen were shot dead in an ambush by suspected Muslim militants in Thailand's insurgency-racked far south, an official said on July 11.

The three Muslim officers were returning from evening prayers when they were attacked on the night of July 10 in Krong Pinang district in Yala province, police said.

"It's the work of militants who want to incite further unrest," Yala deputy police commander Colonel Banlue Chuwet said.

An imam was shot in the leg in the same attack, he added.

More than 6000 people have been killed in near-daily bombings and shootings in the Muslim-majority region near Thailand's southern border with Malaysia since 2004.

Buddhist and Muslims alike fall victim to the shadowy militants, who target security forces, civilians and perceived representatives of state authority.

The rebels want a level of autonomy, accusing Thai authorities of disrespecting their Malay culture and language, and of carrying out human rights abuses.

Peace talks between some rebel factions and the Thai authorities stalled as a political crisis erupted in Bangkok last year, culminating in a military coup in May.



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CONGHUA

Demand for ‘wild flavour’ still strong

The taste for endangered species in China’s restaurants continues as new laws threatening long jail sentences for offenders go unenforced

TOM HANCOCK

PORCUPINES in cages, endangered tortoises in buckets and snakes in cloth bags: Rare wildlife is on open sale at a Chinese market, despite courts being ordered to jail those who eat endangered species.

The diners of southern China have long had a reputation for exotic tastes, with locals sometimes boasting they will “eat anything with four legs except a table”.

China in April raised the maximum sentence for anyone caught selling or consuming endangered species to 10 years in prison, but lax enforcement is still evident in the province of Guangdong.

“I can sell the meat for 500 yuan (US\$80) per half kilo,” a pangolin vendor at the Xingfu, happy and rich, wholesale market in Conghua said. “If you want a living one it will be more than 1000 yuan.”

The market was the subject of a Chinese media expose two years ago, when a local official told the state-run *Beijing Technology Times* that its role as a centre for animal trafficking was an “open secret”.

The seller, who declined to be named, said making a living from his creatures was getting tougher. “Now it’s governed very strictly,” he said.

‘Eating this kind of snake is good for the throat and head. I didn’t know they were endangered.’

Wang
Restuarant customer

But on a recent morning traders were out in force, with hundreds of snakes writhing in white cloth bags and wild boars staring plaintively from wire cages.

Not all the produce is illegal but a huge sign touted giant salamanders, which are classed as critically endangered, one level below “extinct in the wild”, on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature’s Red List of threatened species.

Asian yellow pond turtles were up for sale beside porcupines, most likely from Asia where several species are also critically endangered.

Southern China has long been the centre of a culinary tradition called “wild flavour”, which prizes parts of unusual wild animals including tigers, turtles and snakes as a route to health, despite the lack of orthodox scientific evidence proving such benefits exist.

Pangolins, scaly creatures which in the wild lick up ants with tongues longer than their bodies, are protected by the international wildlife trade treaty CITES, to which Beijing is a signatory.

But in parts of China they are prized by new mothers hoping to produce milk, and have become the focus of a vast smuggling industry stretching across Southeast Asia estimated to traffic tens of thousands of the animals each year.

Beijing first enacted laws in 1989 forbidding trade in scores of creatures including the Chinese pangolin, but has long struggled to enforce the ban as a booming economy has boosted demand.

In April the country’s rubber-stamp parliament approved a new interpretation of the 1980s law which could see jail sentences of up to 10 years for those caught eating endangered animals, as well as for sellers.

Meanwhile, state-run media have publicised huge hauls of smuggled



Vendors, photographed through a car window, unload cages of animals for sale at Xingfu market in Taiping township in Conghua, on August 4, 2012. Photo: AFP

animals with border police in Guangdong province in May shown seizing 956 frozen pangolins, reportedly weighing 4 tonnes.

Jill Robertson, CEO of Hong Kong-based charity Animals Asia, described the enhanced penalties as a “positive step” but added that “enforcement must be strengthened, and public education and awareness greatly enhanced”.

“The illegal wildlife trade in general has become a multi-billion dollar business in China,” she said.

But there are signs the threats and increased penalties are having an effect.

Last year a chef surnamed Wang told AFP that his restaurant sold pangolin for 2000 yuan per half kilo,

adding, “We usually braise them, cook it in a stew or make soup, but braising in soy sauce tastes best.”

But when AFP recently contacted around a dozen restaurants specialising in “wild flavour” none admitted to selling the meat.

But Tian Yangyang, a researcher for Chinese advocacy group Nature University, pointed out that Guangdong eateries do not generally advertise endangered species but offer them to trusted customers on secret menus.

Last year he sneaked into Guangdong restaurants where he found that eagle and swan were widely available.

“I am not optimistic the the rules will be enforced, because the legal system in China is still not very robust,”

he said, adding that the trade in protected animals “is getting worse, because it has been driven underground”.

For other species, trade is unabated, and at a Guangzhou roadside establishment specialising in snake stew, live king cobras in cages were bestsellers.

The animals are classified as “vulnerable” on the Red List due to habitat loss and “over-exploitation for medicinal purposes”.

“Eating this kind of snake is good for the throat and head,” said a 17-year-old customer surnamed Wang, as white-hatted chefs decapitated and sliced the creatures up behind a transparent plastic screen.

“I didn’t know they were endangered,” she added, before tucking in enthusiastically. – AFP

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PHNOM PENH

Pupils sold for foreign donor sex

A CAMBODIAN school director has been arrested for trafficking teenage students to have sex with foreign donors, police said in a case described as a “wake-up call” for the authorities.

Waha Long, the 32-year-old founder of the Underprivileged Children School in the northwestern tourist hub of Siem Reap, could face up to five years in jail if convicted of child sex charges.

“He made teenagers staying at his home give sex to foreigners who donated funds to him,” provincial anti-human trafficking police chief Duong Thavary said on July 10.

The suspect allegedly provided at least four boys, in pairs, to have sex with donors, she said.

Police plan to search for the foreigners involved, Mr Thavary added.

The arrest came after a former volunteer at the school, which offers free English lessons to poor children, filed an allegation of child sex trafficking.

“We have all the evidence against him,” Ms Thavary said.

Visiting schools and orphanages is a tourist attraction in Cambodia but campaigners warn it puts children at risk.

Samleang Seila, of Action Pour Les Enfants, said, “This is a wake-up call for the authorities to be careful about the opening of orphanages.” – AFP

JINDO

The endless ferry vigil

After three months victims’ parents still wait for their childrens’ bodies to be recovered

WHEN steel worker Huh Hong-Hwan heard his teenaged daughter might be trapped in a sinking ferry, he didn’t hesitate.

He jumped in his car and drove, sick with anxiety and panic, for five hours down to the southern island of Jindo where the rescue operation for South Korea’s worst peacetime disaster was gearing up.

Nearly three months later, he’s still there.

“I never thought I would be waiting for her this long,” the 50-year-old said at a gymnasium that has been his home since the 6825-tonne *Sewol* ferry capsized on April 16 with 476 passengers and crew.

“I’m totally exhausted, but parents can’t give up on their children even if the whole world does,” Mr Huh said.

He is one of around 30 relatives who have maintained a bitter, defiant vigil in Jindo, as divers continue the increasingly desperate, dangerous search for the last remaining bodies trapped in the sunken vessel.

Just over 300 people died, the vast majority high school students on an organised outing.

A total of 172 were rescued before the ferry sank and a massive recovery

effort involving hundreds of divers working in near zero visibility has since retrieved 293 bodies.

But 11 victims, including Mr Huh’s daughter, are still unaccounted for.

Any hope of finding survivors inside the upturned vessel vanished within days of the accident, but the families of those missing are refusing to give up the search for a body they can bury and grieve over.

The last body to be recovered was more than two weeks ago on June 24 and there is no guarantee that the 11 missing are even inside the ferry.

Several bodies have been picked up dozens of miles away, suggesting a significant number may have been pulled out to sea by the powerful currents.

The 11 include five high school students and two teachers, one crew member and three other passengers.

In order to maintain a full-time vigil, some family members have quit their jobs and the lonely wait has taken a physical and mental toll.

In the immediate aftermath of the sinking, the Jindo gymnasium had resembled a refugee camp, packed with distraught relatives and a small army of volunteers helping to feed and comfort them.

But now the place is nearly empty and the default setting is of absolute silence, bar the muffled sound from a giant TV screen.

The screen had been brought in months ago to feed live pictures of the recovery effort at the offshore disaster site. Now it is tuned to a news channel showing updates from the World Cup in Brazil.

There is nothing for the exhausted-looking family members to do, beyond sitting or walking aimlessly around the echoing gym.

Some stroll outside to smoke, through glass doors adorned with hundreds of wrenching post-it messages written by families and volunteers.

“My son, today is already May 16. Please come out of the cold water. Let’s go home with mom and dad,” one message read.

The volunteers, who once numbered in their thousands, are now down to around 200, working in shifts to provide what help they can to the remaining families.

“I never imagined the simple act of waiting could be this painful,” said Kwon Oh-Bok, a 59-year-old who lost a younger brother, sister-in-law and six-



Huh Hong-Hwan, whose teenaged daughter was aboard the *Sewol* ferry, walks past messages of condolence outside Jindo gymnasium on July 7. Photo: AFP

year-old nephew in the disaster.

His days revolve around sleeping on a mattress laid out on the floor of the gym, eating meals provided by volunteers, attending daily meetings with rescue authorities, and endless hours of waiting.

“I’m so worried I’ll be the last one left,” he said, echoing a fear shared by many of the remaining relatives.

Mr Kwon bristled at the idea of giving up, and said any move to call time on the recovery effort would feel like a death sentence.

South Korean President Park Geun-Hye had initially promised that search operations would continue as

long as the families wanted.

Ms Park’s previously high ratings have plunged amid intense criticism of her administration’s response to the disaster, and there is little likelihood that she will go back on her vow anytime soon.

Although Mr Huh insists he will never give up, he admits to moments of doubt when he fears his daughter’s remains have been lost for good.

“People say we should move on. But how do we do that?” he asked.

“How could any parent do that after their children suffered such a death and their bodies are trapped in dark, cold water?” – AFP

KUALA LUMPUR

MP regrets World Cup Hitler tweet

A MALAYSIAN lawmaker has apologised for a tweet praising Adolf Hitler following Germany’s World Cup win over Brazil, after Prime Minister Najib Razak rebuked him for his “unacceptable” statement.

Bung Mokhtar Radin, a politician with Mr Najib’s ruling United Malays National Organisation, congratulated Germany on July 9 by posting on Twitter, “Well done... Bravo... Long Live Hitler”.

Mr Najib condemned Mr Bung Mokhtar’s comments as “unacceptable and wrong” in a statement issued by his office on July 10 and ordered him to withdraw them.

“He does not speak for Malaysia, or for ordinary Malaysians, who understand Europe’s tragic past, and respect its modern unity,” Mr Najib said.

“This should be a time of celebration for Germany,” he added, wishing Germany “all the best” in the final against Argentina on July 13.

Mr Bung Mokhtar himself also tweeted an apology on July 10 after defending his remarks earlier amid criticism.

“When Germany whacked Brazil, I unintentionally said something that hurt d feeling of d ppl in Germany. MY SINCEREST APOLOGY. LONG LIVE BUNG.” he posted.

Germany thrashed Brazil 7-1, dealing the host nation the worst semifinal defeat in World Cup history.

Germany’s ambassador to Malaysia said on July 9 that the embassy “strongly” rejected “the unacceptable allusion to the fascist regime of Adolf Hitler”.

Mr Bung Mokhtar has drawn condemnation in the past for statements deemed offensive and insensitive.

During a debate over a leaky parliament roof in 2007, he said: “Where is the leak? The Batu Gajah MP also leaks every month,” referring to an opposition lawmaker’s menstrual cycle. – AFP



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BEIJING

Chinese dream turns sour for activists

President Xi Jinping's regime has seen fresh clampdowns on dissidents and civil society in China since he came to power in early 2013

ACTIVISTS, lawyers, journalists, bloggers, professors: China's new leaders have taken aim at civil society in what analysts call an effort to muffle dissent that is proving powerfully effective.

The ruling Communist Party has long maintained tight control, nipping in the bud any public outcries or organised efforts that might snowball into "social unrest" that challenges its hegemony.

But experts see a renewed drive under Xi Jinping, who took over as party chief in late 2012 and as state president in early 2013, and has since consolidated power and advanced an ambitious agenda including restructuring the economy.

In the latest example, seven activists were charged in Henan province last week with the vague offence of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble" after they held a ceremony marking the 25th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square crackdown on pro-democracy protesters, rights groups said.

"It's a general intolerance for dissent, a general intolerance for civil society's development. The whole approach is to concentrate power to promote economic reforms, to emphasise stability," said Joseph Cheng, a China politics expert at City University of Hong Kong.

One tactic was "to generate deterrence through heavy penalties," he said.

"I have to admit these messages tend to be effective."

About a dozen rights activists and lawyers have been jailed on convictions ranging from the less serious, such as disrupting public order, to the grave "inciting subversion of state power", for which 2010 Nobel Peace laureate Liu Xiaobo was sentenced to 11 years in prison.

Chinese journalists, already barred

from publishing stories on sensitive topics, were last month "prohibited from engaging in critical reporting unless they have received the approval of the work unit" by the state media body.

Social networks have become popular alternative information sources to state-controlled news outlets. But users felt the chilling effects last September after the Supreme Court warned of three years' prison for anyone spreading "slandorous" information that was forwarded more than 500 times or viewed on more than 5000 occasions.

Reinforcing that threat, around that time influential Chinese bloggers were paraded on state television pledging to avoid posts that might have a "negative" social influence.

Academics in May last year reportedly received a notice to avoid teaching seven taboo subjects, including universal values, press freedom, civil society and judicial independence.

Since taking power, Mr Xi has pledged to tackle some of China's most urgent problems: reforming economic growth which gives the party legitimacy but has slowed in recent years, and confronting rampant government corruption that infuriates the public.

"The general message is that the leadership feels it has to concentrate power in order to implement economic reforms in order to maintain stability. And therefore there has been a crack-down," said Mr Cheng.

The authorities plan to enact reform on their own terms, as they signaled by jailing nearly a dozen activists who also campaigned against corruption by publicly urging officials to disclose their assets.

They belonged to the loose-knit New Citizens Movement, which was



Writer, blogger and social commentator Li Chengpeng speaks at a promotional event for his book "SmILENCE" on January 26, 2013, in Kunming, China. Photo: AFP

seen as a moderate group that did not seek to topple the party but mainly held small protests and group discussions on issues including education and migrant rights.

Mr Xi "knows there are reforms that should be made to maintain the party's power but at the same time he doesn't want these reforms to be hijacked or seen as being the result of advocacy of civil society," said Human Rights Watch China researcher Maya Wang.

Among the string of arrests, that of Pu Zhiqiang, a celebrated rights lawyer who represented dissident artist Ai

Weiwei, underscored that the party would act against anyone, she said.

The authorities' aggressive approach has prompted activists to back off and social media users to watch what they say, said Ms Wang.

Clamping down on journalists and bloggers has the multiplier effect of sweeping criticism from general public discussion, analysts said.

"This is what Xi Jinping sees as the war, fighting in the ideological and discursive affairs of the country, like what people think, how people discuss the past and the future, how people discuss

the role and legitimacy of the party," said Zhengxu Wang, a China politics professor at the University of Nottingham.

The party has worked for years to control the conversation, building up a vast network of state-run media alongside a huge censorship system that filters online content, even a constantly updated list of search terms and any oblique references to them.

But Mr Xi has pushed the party to act more forcefully, said Mr Wang.

"It cannot control what people think, but it does try to manage how things are being discussed," he said. —AFP

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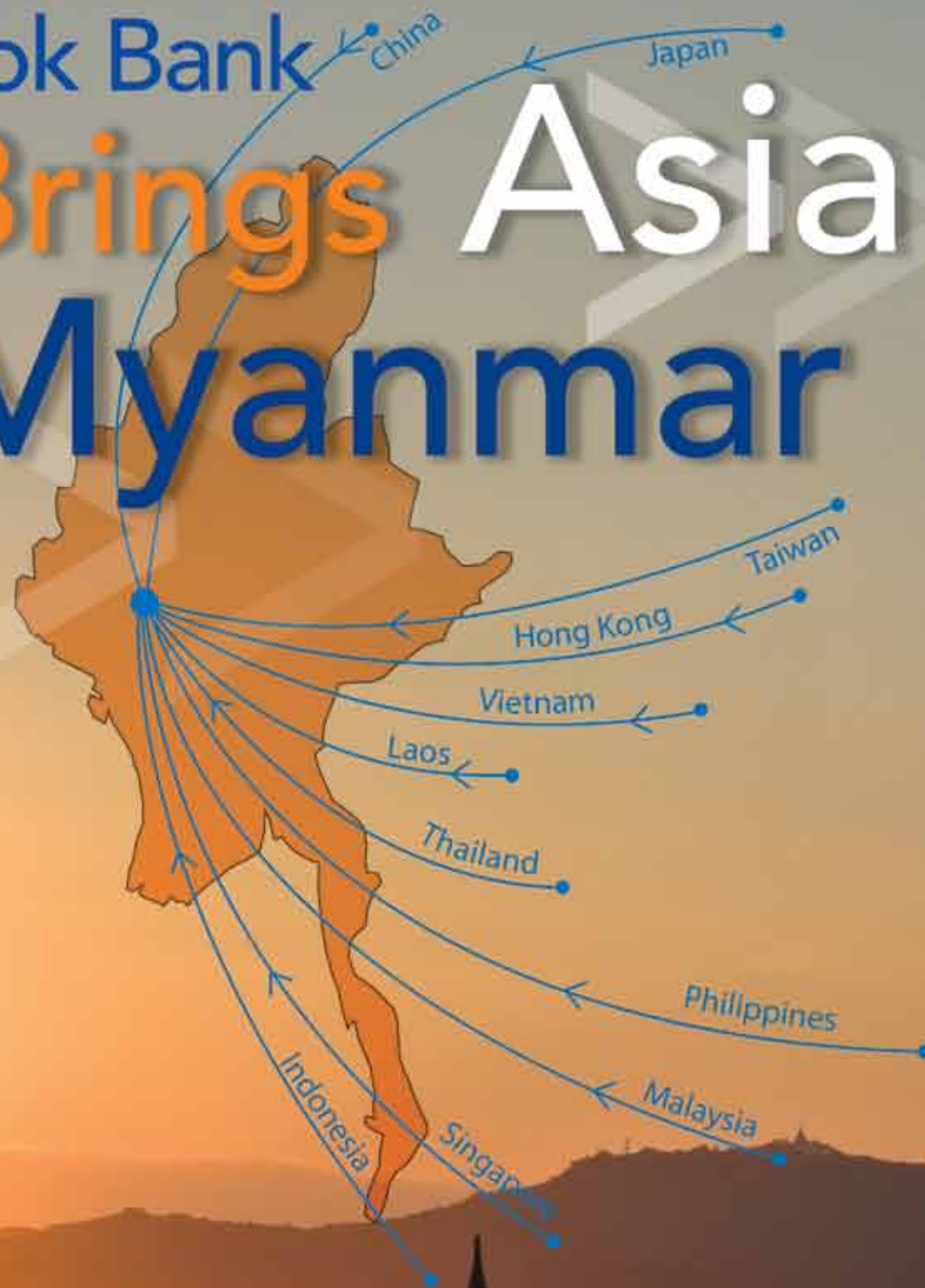
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TOKYO



Thai Muslim tourists enjoy Halal-certified foods at a barbecue restaurant in Tokyo on June 24. Photo: AFP

Rise in Halal tourism

An increasing number of Muslim visitors to Japan from Southeast Asian countries has seen the Tokyo’s hospitality industry adapt to offer more Islam-friendly services

JACQUES LHUILLERY

PRAYER rooms, hijabs made from local silk and even halal-certified whale meat are appearing in Japan as tourism bosses wake up to the demand from Muslim travellers.

For a largely homogeneous country with only around 100,000 practising Muslims, that means groping its way through unfamiliar customs as it looks to tap a growing market to help it double the number of overseas visitors by 2020.

“Muslim travellers still do not feel comfortable here,” Datuk Ibrahim Haji Ahmad Badawi, head of Malaysian food company Brahim’s, said at a recent seminar on halal tourism in Tokyo. “The government seems to have understood this.”

Last year, seminars like this one were held in 20 different regions in Japan, where hoteliers and restaurateurs were invited to learn how to cater to Muslims.

The Osaka Chamber of Commerce handed out 5000 leaflets as a guide to what can and cannot be eaten. The idea of forbidding consumption of consumables such as alcohol or pork is anathema to omnivorous and foodie Japan.

With the Islamic world currently observing the holy month of Ramadan, tourism to Japan is being heavily promoted in Southeast Asia, where visa requirements were relaxed in 2013 for Malaysia and Thailand.

Indonesia, the largest Muslim-majority country in the world, is slated to follow shortly.

According to the Japanese Tourist Office, the number of Indonesians visiting the archipelago in 2013 was up 37 percent on the previous year, while 21 percent more Malaysians came.

Chinese tourist numbers have recovered from their plunge following the 2012 eruption of the spat between Beijing and Tokyo over islands in the East China Sea.

But broadening the appeal of Japan as a destination is key if the industry

is to meet the 20 million visitors target set for 2020 when the Olympic Games come to Tokyo.

The influx of athletes and spectators from all over the world that the sporting jamboree will bring is also playing into the drive to make the country more Muslim-friendly.

“Can you imagine the number of Muslim athletes who will then come to Tokyo? We’ll have to feed them,” said Mr Badawi.

Brahim as a company has already signed a deal with All Nippon Airways (ANA), one of Japan’s biggest carriers, to supply inflight halal meals, MR Badawi said. A number of large hotels have also approached him looking for advice on how they can cater for Muslim guests.

‘It’s hard to do business here without selling alcohol.’

Roger Bernard Diaz
Tokyo restaurant owner

To Mr Badawi, despite Japan’s slow start, the direction of travel is clear: Muslims looking for holiday destinations will come, and in bigger numbers, giving Tokyo an ever-larger slice of a US\$600 billion global pie.

Slowly, various regions across Japan are catching on. Major airports have dedicated prayer rooms, and tourists looking for the perfect present can pick up hijabs made from Japanese silk as they pass through Kansai International Airport, near Osaka, a recent television report showed.

Longer-term visitors are also being catered for, with 19 universities offering halal menus in their cafeterias in

a bid to boost the number of Muslim students.

Customers looking for an authentic but halal Japanese dish already have a choice in Tokyo, including a yakiniku barbecue restaurant run by Roger Bernard Diaz, a Sri Lankan Catholic who converted his business, but not his religion.

He has no qualms about making the change to offering a range of halal meats and says it has helped him garner reservations from customers from southeast Asia, and even the Gulf.

But sourcing produce can be difficult. “It’s hard to find all the ingredients,” he admits while pulling a Brazilian-raised halal chicken from a dedicated freezer.

Muslims who want to sample whale meat are also catered for after Japan’s whaling mothership, which slaughters the animals on their controversial hunt, was certified halal-compliant last year.

The Japan Halal Association, which was founded in 2010, is one of only two bodies that can grant this status in the country.

Its chairpersonHind Hitomi Remon said that business is brisk.

“We are an associate member of the World Halal Council,” she said. “Since 2012, we have issued certificates to 40 companies, and that number is set to rise a lot this year,” a fact she says is directly attributable to Tokyo being awarded the Olympic Games for 2020.

And even if the tourists don’t want to eat in Japan, producers are readying to send produce to them, with exports such as halal-certified soy sauce and even rice, grown in northern Akita prefecture.

But until the numbers swell a little bit more, businesses catering to Muslims still have to keep an eye on what their other customers want.

Yakiniku restaurant owner Mr Diaz says around half of his customers now are Muslims yet he still has to cater for his other patrons.

“It’s hard to do business here without selling alcohol,” he said. – AFP

SEOUL

Latest missile launches ‘endanger stability’

SOUTH Korea on condemned on July 10 a series of missile launches by nuclear-armed North Korea as a “serious provocation” that threatened stability on the peninsula.

The South’s defence ministry expressed particular concern over the launch on July 9 of two short-range ballistic missiles from a front-line base near the heavily guarded border.

“The recent series of North Korean missile launches [is] a serious provocation toward South Korea and the international community as it endangers stability on the Korean peninsula and violates UN resolutions,” ministry spokesperson Kim Min-Seok said.

UN resolutions bar the North from conducting any ballistic missile tests.

The test was “unusual,” the spokes-

person said, because the missiles were fired from a sensitive location close to the demilitarized zone which has bisected the peninsula since the 1950-53 Korean war ended in a fragile armistice.

“It appeared to be aimed at delivering a message ... that South Korea could be the target of surprise attacks by North Korean ballistic missiles anytime and from any place,” Mr Kim said. – AFP

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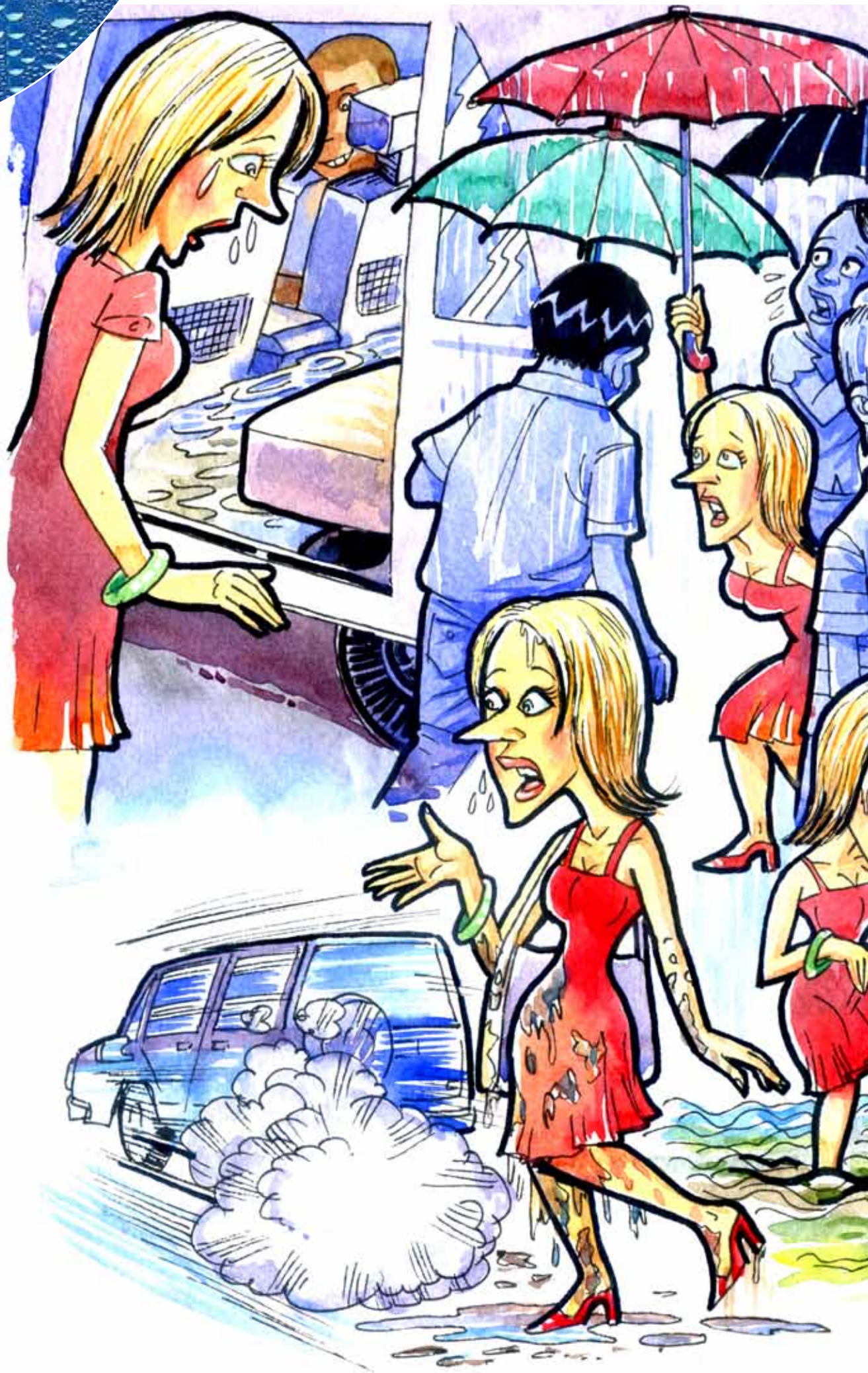
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Monsoon

A survival

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but never fear –
the Times' own
style and etiquette
expert has
traipsed through
all the puddles
and problems
of precipitation
to bring you this
definitive advice
on maintaining
good grace, looks
and humour*



state of mind val guide



FIONA MACGREGOR



With the monsoon's arrival, life just got a little more complicated. But don't despair. *The Myanmar Times* will guide you through the props of rainy season survival.

Umbrella etiquette

These are one's most trusty weapon in the battle against rainy season soakings. Try giving yours a name in the manner of the knights of old: Storm Blaster? Deluge Defender?

Unfortunately you will also have to deal with other people's umbrellas and their careless wielding thereof. Eye Gouger, Nostri Navigator and – when not erect and wielded at lower levels – Posterior Prodder. The bodily parts into which umbrella spokes may be inserted by strangers bumped into on a busy street appear to know no bounds.

Alas we can offer no fool-proof advice on how to avoid such unpleasant personal intrusions other than to caution “beware” and suggest that some entrepreneurial type starts offering lessons in umbrella self-defence.

Do not steal other people's umbrellas if they are in any way distinctive – however wet it is. Yangon can be a remarkably small town.

Keeping ahead of the rain

When it comes to hair, abandon all hope for the next five months. This is the season of unavoidable soakings and humidity-induced bouffancy that no amount of conditioner or hairspray can counteract. Forget the ‘just-stepped-out-of-a-salon’ look and accept that you're going to appear as if you've just walked through a carwash.

In fact, monsoon could be a good time to consider adopting the crew-cut style of those who have recently finished a spell as a nun. It's easy to towel-dry and not without a certain karmic cool.

Alternatively you could just start wearing a head-scarf. You may see a loss of customers if you adopt that look in a business setting, but what's a little prejudice in the pursuit of style?

Taxi traumas

Vacant cabs vanish from the streets during a monsoon downpour with the same speed that paddling cockroaches appear. When one does finally pull over, it's easy to be so grateful that you fail to notice the four inches of grimy flood water sloshing around its floor.

As the stench of damp dog permeates your every garment (for it is curious how many taxis reek of perspiring pooch when one so rarely sees one in a Yangon cab), a considerably greater concern is likely to emerge: sodden seats. These do not usually make themselves felt until at least half an hour into a journey that should only have taken 10 minutes had the rains not brought the roads to a honking standstill.

As you shuffle in frustration, just enough air will flow beneath your derrière for a sudden coolness to make evident that it is now soaked. You are left uncomfortable in the knowledge you will arrive at your destination with a clammy wet patch on your rear end.

It cannot be stressed enough that all clothing prone to translucency should be banished to the back of the wardrobe until dry season returns. In an emergency, find a lavatory with a hot-air hand dryer and adopt downward-dog position in front of it until underwear is no longer visible. If it is one of those hand driers with movement sensors, regular wiggling (or the assistance of a stranger) may be required to ensure it continues to blast out heat. No one said monsoon season was dignified.

Tricky telecommunications

When the rain arrives the internet dies and the mobile phone system barely survives – or so a Yangon saying could run. Save, save and save again. On the upside, it's the perfect excuse for having failed to reply to various messages. And there's always the Shangri-La. Do not assume texts have reached their recipient. More than one break-up has been provoked by monsoon missives gone missing in action. Which brings us to ...

Monsoon dating

Really? You're actually considering this?

Even the most romantic of us have to acknowledge that meeting a potential mate while having just undergone the ravages of a journey through a Yangon deluge is unlikely to give rise to instant passion. (Although there is the chance your would-be beau happens to be an enthusiastic INGO worker who feels heroic when faced by someone who looks as if they've just survived a natural disaster. In which case, unless you fancy a romantic future revolving round Skype dates from crises zones, you might as well save yourself the effort and stay home.)

If you do insist on attempting to find love during monsoon, or at least someone to keep you occupied on yet another rainy night in, then there is just one practical option: Only date people wealthy enough to send a car to your front door and a driver willing and able to carry you over puddles with one hand while holding an umbrella in the other.

What do you mean, “That's demeaning”? Do you think this country got where it is today without a little personal sacrifice in the name of others' glamorous lifestyles?

Formal occasions

Hibernating until dry season might be tempting, but sometimes going out can't be avoided. Insist on a venue that you know has plenty of towels, and get there early. Very early.

In normal circumstances, arriving too early at any engagement suggests an off-putting over-keenness. This concept can be abandoned during monsoon. Wear a skirt short enough to avoid being soaked by street-floods or hitch up your longyi. This is a little more tricky for Western men, as few foreign males can carry off a longyi with any aplomb. Try a kilt.

Carry a change of shoes and enough grooming products to rectify hair and make-up on arrival, and try to pick a place with decent restroom lighting. And don't forget the towels. By the time others arrive you should be looking vaguely respectable.

(Note: The author is admitting no personal liability for the grime-stained hand towels in various up-market locations around Yangon. Those who feel they have legitimate complaints against her should invoice *The Myanmar Times* directly.)

Health and housekeeping

Dust to mud, and ashes to ... mud. The advent of the rain sounds the death-knell for well-kempt houses. Every step a tell-tale black footprint. Splashes you'd never realised hit you sprouting mouldy patterns on dry-clean-only garments. Electrical fittings dewed with life-threatening condensation.

Try to stick your fingers in your ears when medical types mention outbreaks of monsoon-related ringworm – only your hearing is probably already impaired by “swimmers' ear”, a condition where too much moisture does terrible things to one's auricular cavities.

As for mosquitoes? Dengue is in right now, darling.

We're running out of comforting words and helpful solutions here. In short, if possible, take a well-earned break and decamp to less inclement environs.

But don't forget companionship

If you can't escape the rainy season, take heart from the fact you are not alone in your discomfiture. And it's not just Yangon's human residents who recognise your misery. Just glance round the rubbish-strewn waters through which you wade and contemplate for a moment the sorry rats and cockroaches that swim past your calves. Then immediately stop contemplating them (in particular, do not allow your mind to wander to the hideous diseases which they and the waters around them harbour). Focus entirely on getting to your destination without falling into a puddle-hidden hole and drowning, or being sparked too early into the next life courtesy of a water-logged electrical wire.

Monsoon may bring its challenges, but with a roof over our heads and a sense of humour as our metaphorical umbrella, the outlook is good that we won't find ourselves complaining too much.

As the English writer GK Chesterton put it, “And when it rains on your parade, look up rather than down. Without the rain, there would be no rainbow.”

Still, roll on November.

For a strong woman, not even gold wins approval

Bodybuilding champion Aye Aye Soe aims to show Myanmar women's strength to the world – and challenge her critics at home



Photo: Zarni Phyo

NANDAR AUNG
nandaraung.mcm@gmail.com

"THIS is a Myanmar woman? She got first prize by taking off her clothes in another country. Why are we impressed by her?"

The words appeared under a photo of athlete Aye Aye Soe on her Facebook fan page. In it, she is smiling and wearing a black bikini decorated with gold lace, which accentuates her muscles – and the gold medal around her neck.

The 24-year-old recently became the country's first female bodybuilder to win gold in international competition as a participant in the 12th Southeast Asia Bodybuilding Championship held in Singapore last month. And she works to remind herself that is, in fact, an achievement to be proud of.

"I don't care about the naysayers. It doesn't make me stop practising, but it's a big challenge," she said, sporting a short haircut that matches her square jaw, thin eyebrows and soft, feminine brown skin.

As the burst of beauty pageant fanaticism in Myanmar since 2012 shows, many young people appear to be hung up on a slim and ultra-feminine ideal of female beauty. That makes Aye Aye Soe upset.

"People give support with satisfaction to other beauty contestants who have worn bikinis in foreign countries," she said, adding that she doesn't see "Miss" contestants who make sexy poses on the catwalk getting the same flack for their appearance.

The bikini, in a bodybuilding competition serves a purpose, she noted. A contestant must flex on stage for several minutes to show the results of her hard training for strength and musculature.

But most Myanmar people don't think big sporty muscles are a good match for the female physique. It's Aye Aye Soe's challenge to change perceptions.

"I chose this sport because of my strong spirit. I want to show girls this," she said. "But I also want to live as a woman and wear feminine clothes."

Starting from 1971, the government permitted female physical strength contests as long as the women wore traditional costumes – a longyi and sleeveless Myanmar jacket. But in 2012, the costume was switched to skin-tight shorts and an equally skin-tight sport shirt, as per the international standard.

Since the change, Myanmar has competed in three overseas contests, said Daw Ye Ye Win, a former gymnast

and experienced bodybuilding coach who wants to show Myanmar women's talent abroad. She requested to the Ministry of Sport that women be permitted to participate.

Daw Ye Ye Win was also a coach in the June competition, and says that for Aye Aye Soe, the world of competition is just beginning. She hopes more will follow in her wake.

"While other countries brought six or eight athletes to the competition, Myanmar only had three. That's a shame – but all three got prizes and are talented," she said. "As a woman, I'm so proud of them."

As for Aye Aye Soe, who works as a personal trainer at the locally famous Balance Fitness Centre, she said she will keep competing so the Ministry of Sport will select her again to represent the country in international competition.

She may have a chance to compete in the 48th Asia Bodybuilding Championships next month in Macau. As of this writing, however, she was sick and taking time off to heal.

"We will wait and see about her health condition," said Daw Ye Ye Win by phone on July 10.

In 2010, at age 20, she started competing locally, working with a trainer and winning prizes.

When Myanmar started sending competitors overseas in 2012, she won third-, fifth- and sixth-place prizes in various bodybuilding meets.

U Maung Maung Soe, 43, a former bodybuilder, said Aye Aye Soe did not look particularly fit when he met her as a 16-year-old student in his gym, New Image, in Mayangone township.

"She was so skinny. Her shoulder blade was bent. Her hips were small. You couldn't see her as a good-looking girl," he said. "But she was a bit like me. She had amazing spirit. She doesn't give up easily."

When Aye Aye Soe was 18, however, her parents hoped she would enter a normal office job and maintain a conventionally feminine look. She had to work hard to convince them that bodybuilding would be the right path for her. Now her parents help prepare her daily meals and diet supplements.

At the same time, she didn't neglect her education and put herself through school, earning a degree in industrial chemistry from Dagon University.

U Maung Maung Soe trained her as an athlete and persuaded her to enter international competition.

"Now she's shown her ability and got an amazing body as was her

desire," he said. "But I want her to try more."

At 5 feet 4 inches and 116 pounds of muscle, Aye Aye Soe is a role model for young women who want to control their weight through exercise, though she resists being labelled as such.

"I don't want to say I am a role model, but being a woman I am so satisfied that I can do this sport. I got a gold medal, but it's been through trying as hard as I can," she said.

It's taken eight years of practice and controlling her daily meals – low salt, low fat and low sugar but lots of boiled vegetables and chicken. She trains two hours a day regularly, and for one-and-a-half hours three times a day coming up to competitions.

"Those foods make prizes in competition and money to support my parents," she said.

Now her parents don't work except to take care of Aye Aye Soe and her two sisters, both married.

And she's also got a boyfriend, she said bashfully, standing in her Tarmwe township training centre full of old-fashioned exercise machines.

"As an athlete, I don't like skinny men like the Korea-style of most Myanmar boys," she said.

Without a doubt, her boyfriend is a strong, muscular guy.



People stroll in the trendy Bukchon Village area, Seoul, on April 23.



Shoppers and corporate workers walk the passage to Coex Mall, Samseong Dong, Seoul on April 21.

A Korea photo tour

Photos and text by Yu Yu

I took these pictures during a backpacking trip to Seoul, South Korea, in April. The country embraced me with a cold wind on my face as soon as the plane landed. But while the weather is chilly, the people are warm, contrary to what I had expected. Without fail, strangers helped me every time I was lost and needed directions.

There are countless things I love about South Korea – seaweed congee, the artistic design of the city. I was blown away by Seoul's mix of traditional and modern culture, places like Bukchon Village, Gwanghwamun Square, Samcheong Dong and the Namdaemun Market. Being a photographer who loves hip streets, I was captivated by the murals and graffiti, which is part of what makes the city unique.

with May May Pyone

A breast cancer survivor and activist talks about the need to fight depression and improve cancer education



Photo: Aung Htay Hlaing

Q & A

CHIT SU WAI

suwai.chit@gmail.com

IN 2010, May May Pyone was diagnosed with breast cancer. "At the beginning, I was so upset and depressed," she said. But after four years she recovered, and she went on to found a cancer support and awareness group in 2012 called Living Hope.

She is also the executive director of NGO Gender Group, a Yangon-based organisation that advocates for gender equality.

May May Pyone sat down with *The Myanmar Times* recently to discuss the challenges and misunderstandings that often go with being handed a "death sentence".

How did you know you had breast cancer?

I was checking my breasts during a shower and I found a gland. At first I thought it wasn't important, but I went to the doctor. After a test, I knew for sure.

How did you feel when you heard your diagnosis?

I was so upset and afraid. Honestly, I declined an operation as soon as the doctor told me to do it, because I was worried it would make the cancer spread even more. I went to Thailand for treatment and decided there to operate on my gland anyway. At that time, I heard that some Myanmar women were dying because they wouldn't get an operation out of shyness. And, in my experience, some reject treatment continuously because they believe they will die of cancer.

Can you tell me about undergoing treatment?

I had a lot of help from my relatives, and I couldn't have got treatment without them. They did everything I needed. So I had no difficulties. But I don't like that they treat me as a patient even now.

Where did you get your strength and resilience?

I have the feeling that God is there for me even if there is no one around. I prayed again and again. When I am upset, I read the Bible. That's how I got

the strength to resist the cancer. Luckily, I lived in Thailand at a Father's house and he comforted me. I had many thoughts and insomnia when I felt alone.

Looking back, would you do anything different?

Now I think of my future. Everybody will die someday whether because of cancer or not. I can't tell how long I will live. I want to do good for the present and another life. So I think carefully about how I can help others before I die.

Why did you found the group?

I had experience counselling HIV sufferers in a previous job. People are told there's no cure for HIV, so they're depressed. It's similar with cancer - it's like a death sentence. So I think people need counselling. The patients want to say how they feel. They feel better when they have someone to comfort and understand them.

What are the group's activities?

We gather once every two months and we chat about what we feel and what we can't tell our families. We comfort each other. Moreover, we go where the patients within reach are. We help them with finances if they need. We also do cancer-awareness work.

How many people are there in the group?

The hardcore members are about 12 and newbies are more and more. Now we have male members. There are people between age 40 and 80 who have suffered from breast cancer, gastric cancer, uterine cancer, bladder cancer and lung cancer. Not only members partake but also their families.

What advice would you give to women are going through the same thing you did?

As soon as you feel depression, your health goes down 50 percent. I want to tell people to not get upset but try to know the details and how it can be cured. Go to the doctor and get treatment. Don't use folk medicines or quick fixes. Some people won't seek help because they worry about their family. Don't do that. If people need financial help, we make them join the foundation. Know about cancer and face it bravely.

Panasonic's Media Round Table Meeting

The Round Table Meeting which explained about the future plans of Panasonic was held 2nd July 2014 (Wednesday) from 1:00 p.m to 2:00 p.m at Pinya Room in Sule Shangri-La Hotel, Yangon. This event was attended by Mr Kazuhiro Tsuga, President of Panasonic, Mr Junichiro Kitagawa, Managing Director of Panasonic Asia Pacific, Mr Hisakazu Maeda, Chief Representative of Panasonic Asia Pacific Myanmar Branch and the chairmen, the invited members of press, media and TV Channel respectively.

On event Mr Kazuhiro Tsuga, President of Panasonic explained about the activities and purposes of Panasonic and future plans for 2015. Panasonic has identified Myanmar as a strategic market for future growth, with plans to strengthen planning and development of localised products, as well as expanding sales in both business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-consumer (B2C) sectors.

Mr Junichiro Kitagawa, Managing Director of Panasonic Asia Pacific explained about Global Business Strategy and the company plans to host its first exhibition displaying the full range of B2B and B2C solutions in Yangon in October this year. Two new showrooms exhibiting both B2B and B2C solutions with service centres incorporated will also open in Yangon and Mandalay later this year.

Mr Hisakazu Maeda, Chief Representative of Panasonic Asia Pacific Myanmar Branch said "Through the new Panasonic Asia Pacific Myanmar Branch set up last year, we were able to better support the country's development by participating in the 27th SEA Games as the Official Main Sponsor and improve local living conditions through rolling out sales and Solar Lanterns donation programme."

And then, the members of press and medias interviewed what they want to know and the event was wrapped up successfully.



PARIS

Chanel presents spiky, modern, Asian looks



HELEN ROWE

CHANEL designer Karl Lagerfeld on July 8 delighted haute couture's new breed of deep-pocketed customer with a collection just like them – young, modern and, in many cases, Asian.

Boyish, spiky-haired models wore hats perched on the back of their heads, cycling shorts and flat sandals with ribbons tied in a bow around the ankle. Bags with long straps were slung around the body like school satchels.

Asked about the collection's youthful feel, the designer joked that not many customers

were interested in clothes with an "old" feel. If there was a future, he said, "It can be like this."

Lagerfeld drew inspiration for his collection from one of the pioneers of modern architecture, Le Corbusier. In the early 1930s, the architect created a terrace at his apartment overlooking the Champs-Élysées with an outdoor fireplace and a mirror set against a concrete wall.

Cue Lagerfeld's latest fashion extravaganza with a set inside Paris's Grand Palais that was all sharp lines and big white walls. Huge panelled doors at either end of the catwalk slid open to reveal two Le Corbusier-style mirrors above 18th-century mantelpieces.

For autumn/winter 2014-15, Lagerfeld sent out a string of memorable looks featuring playful skirts, pointed shoulders, fur necklines and heavy embroidery that created a rich, baroque effect.

"I liked the idea of baroque elements and modern touches. His [Le Corbusier's] apartment was a famous place for that," Lagerfeld told AFP after the show.

The architect's terrace was destroyed before World War II but appeared over the years in many architectural books and magazines, he said.

"This is the typical thing of the collection – concrete with baroque elements. Le Corbusier goes to Versailles," Lagerfeld added.

Asian feel

A significant number of guests at the show were from Asia, such as Wen Hsin Tsai Hong from Taiwan, who told AFP the collection had a particularly Asian feel.

The models, she said, were shorter than usual and had a noticeably "Asian shape", she said. Another customer, Yi Mig Shi,

32, from Shanghai, described the collection as "young" and said she planned to buy two of the dresses.

For the finale, Lagerfeld added a dramatic touch taken from Chinese history. Models moved in formation from opposite ends of the set, crossing in the middle, as if the Terracotta Army had been brought to life.

Lagerfeld then took to the catwalk with a pregnant model in a bridal gown, applauded by guests including fashion photographer Mario Testino and US *Vogue* editor-in-chief Anna Wintour.

Haute couture can be worn only by the world's richest women due to its sky-high prices.

Chanel fashion president Bruno Pavlovsky told AFP that after years of an ageing clientele more and more customers were now in their 20s and 30s. They were looking for exclusivity and bought haute couture "for important events or as a present to themselves", he said.

Fashion houses are increasingly looking to the new elites of countries such as China for customers.

Last July, Lagerfeld's haute couture show contrasted a crumbling "old world" symbolised by a dilapidated theatre with a modern, futuristic-looking city.

At the same time, Christian Dior chief Sidney Toledano declared that haute couture was "no longer something for old women".

Haute couture is a legally protected appellation subject to strict criteria, such as the amount of work carried out by hand, the limited number of pieces and the size of a house's workforce.

Around 30 haute couture collections for autumn/winter 2014-15 were shown in Paris last week, before wrapping up on July 11. –AFP



A model presents a creation for Chanel during the 2014-2015 Haute Couture Fall-Winter collection fashion show on July 8, 2014 at the Grand Palais in Paris. Photo: AFP/PATRICK KOVARIK



IN PICTURES

Models present creations by Viktor & Rolf during the 2014-15 Haute Couture Fall-Winter collection fashion show on July 9 in Paris. Photo: AFP/Miguel Medina

The Global Gossip



Pharrell performs at the Auditorium Stravinski during the 48th Montreux Jazz Festival on July 7. Photo: AFP/Jean-Christophe Bott

MONTREUX Pharrell Williams seduces jazz fest audience

"Clap along if you know what happiness is to you," Pharrell Williams sang as the room pulsed with clapping hands and joyous dance moves.

Williams, whose ubiquitous hit "Happy" has taken the world by storm and spawned copycat dance videos around the globe, worked his magic on the audience at the Montreux Jazz Festival in Switzerland late on July 7.

The boyish 41-year-old told AFP before the concert he could never have imagined "Happy", made for the soundtrack of the film *Despicable Me 2*, would be such a hit.

"It was humbling ... I couldn't believe anything that I ever did could get that kind of attention," he said.

Creating the song that has shot him to solo superstardom was no easy task, he acknowledged.

He wrote nine different songs for a key scene in the movie before coming up with the funky, neo-soul song that has got the world dancing.

LONDON Rock legends Pink Floyd to release first album in 20 years

British rock legends Pink Floyd are set to release a new album called *The Endless River* in October, their first in 20 years.

"It is an album of mainly ambient and instrumental music," a statement on the band's website said on July 7.

The album will be based on recording sessions from 1993 and 1994, when the band were working on their album *The Division Bell*.

It will feature guitarist David Gilmour, drummer Nick Mason and keyboardist Richard Wright, a founding member of the band who died in 2008.

Author Polly Samson, who wrote lyrics for the album and is married to Gilmour, described the record as "Rick Wright's swansong and very beautiful" in a tweet on Saturday.



A model presents a creation by Giambattista Valli during the 2014-2015 Haute Couture Fall-Winter collection fashion show on July 7 in Paris. Photo: AFP/Miguel Medina



A model presents a creation by Alexis Mabille during the 2014-2015 Haute Couture Fall-Winter collection fashion show on July 7 in Paris. Photo: AFP/Patrick Kovarik

UNITED NATIONS North Korea takes case against Rogen film to UN

North Korea has lodged a formal protest at the United Nations against a Hollywood comedy about an assassination bid on leader Kim Jong-Un and asked Washington to block the film's release.

The Interview stars Seth Rogen and James Franco as two tabloid television journalists who land an interview with Kim in Pyongyang and are then tasked by the CIA with killing him. The film is due to be released in the United States on October 14.

In a letter addressed to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, North Korea's UN envoy Ja Song-Nam says allowing the film to be made and seen constitutes "the most undisguised sponsoring of terrorism as well as a war action".

North Korea asked that the letter be circulated as an official document to members of the UN General Assembly and Security Council for their consideration.

Last month, North Korea denounced the film as a "wanton act of terror" and warned of a "merciless response" unless it is pulled from distribution.

NEW YORK History museum sells out adult sleepover under blue whale

Ever dreamt of kipping down under a blue whale? For grown-ups equipped with a sleeping bag and toothbrush, the American Museum of Natural History is hosting its first adult-only sleepover.

The August 1 overnight adventure sold out within hours of being advertised.

For 150 guests, paying \$375 a head, the night will kick off with a champagne reception and a little jazz, before adults are invited to roam through the halls of the giant museum.

At bedtime, guests will be invited to unroll their sleeping bags and curl up under the museum's much loved fiberglass model of a 94-foot-long blue whale that was found off the southern tip of South America in 1925.

The evening's fun comes with a three-course dinner and drinks, a snack of cookies and milk, and a light breakfast of fruit, yoghurt, muffins and granola bars.

Visitors have been told to bring a camera, toothbrush and toothpaste, washcloth and ear plugs. Pajamas – oddly – are not allowed. Instead adults are asked to bring "warm, comfortable clothing" to sleep in. –AFP



A model presents a creation by Alexis Mabille during the 2014-2015 Haute Couture Fall-Winter collection fashion show on July 7 in Paris. Photo: AFP/Patrick Kovarik

After alarm campaign, women bus riders still silent on harassment



Photo: Boothe

ZON PANN PWINT
zonpann08@gmail.com

IN the days, not entirely past, when sex was a taboo subject, women kept silent about sexual harassment on city buses. Some kept a safety pin for protection and some just changed buses to escape intolerable touching.

"The culture taught women to be shy. If a woman is harassed by a man on the bus, she is even afraid to shout," said Ma Htar Htar, director of Akhaya Women.

That organisation launched the campaign Whistle for Help in February 2012, seeking to break the taboo on speaking out. The campaign's success was great – but also short-lived.

It had come out of talks between 10 women who wanted to change the way women are regarded in society. All had experienced sexual harassment.

"Everybody who takes the bus or walks on the street encounters sexual harassment. But they never complain about it," Ma Htar Htar said. "Women are taught to value virtue at an early age. They are taught to not talk back to elders. They are taught to tolerate without complaint."

During the campaign, about 366 volunteers distributed whistles and pamphlets and explained the alert system to commuters at bus stops in Yangon. At the time, people wondered whether women would have enough courage to blow the whistle.

"It was not that women are not courageous," Ma Htar Htar said. "If she does blow the whistle for help, there is hardly anybody who is willing to help her out. If someone is caught harassing a woman on the

bus, the law isn't active to punish him."

Following the campaign, the city inaugurated women-only buses to run regularly during rush-hours. It's proved difficult, however, to assess whether sexual harassment has declined.

"We couldn't collect the data," Ma Htar Htar said. In oral responses to interviews, however, women reported that few men dare to approach them if they are wearing a whistle, she said.

Ma Hnin Hay Mar, 26, a commuter who rides buses 48 and 124 between Latha and Hledan, said this was true in her experience, though she's also reluctant to actually blow a whistle.

"It is embarrassing because it attracts everybody's attention. If I encounter the possibility of harassment, I would move to another space on the bus or get out," she said.

In 2013, seven women's rights groups planned to launch a nationwide campaign to reduce sexual harassment, but it was cancelled because the timing coincided with conflict between Muslims and Buddhists.

"They were afraid that the campaign would be used as a tool to spark conflict," Ma Htar Htar said.

In an effort to reduce sexual harassment, Ta Yote Gyi, owner of the 48 bus line, has employed women bus conductors since May of this year. About 30 women bus conductors are currently working that line and the 124.

"Many commuters are upset by the ill-treatment of men conductors," he said. "We employ women conductors to make women commuters feel secure."

It's a start to a problem that's far from over.

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What's on

ART

JULY 11-18 "From Canvas to Concrete" two artist show. River Gallery II, 38th Street (beside Strand Hotel) 5-8pm

JUNE 21-JULY 18 "People of the River" photo exhibition. Witness Yangon Documentary Space, 4A, 3rd Floor, Parami Road, Pyan Hlwar Building, Mayangone 12-5pm

JULY 17-19 "July in Colour" group show. Golden Valley Art Centre, 54D, Golden Valley, Bahan 9-6pm

JULY 14-19 Aung Naing Maung's 10th solo show, Lokanat Galleries, 1st floor, 62 Pansodan Street, Kyauktada 9am-5pm

FILM

JULY 16 Screening of *Shodo Girls!!* Directed by Inomata Ryuichi. Follows the life of students at a Japanese school. Assembly Hall, Embassy of Japan Yangon, 100 Natmauk Road, Bahan 5:30pm

JULY 19 Screening of *Bushido Sixteen*. Directed by Furumaya Tomoyuki. 2pm

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.

Start times at Mingalar San Pya are 10am, 12:30pm, 3:30pm, 6:30pm and 9:30pm.

JULY 14 - 20

Got an event?
List it in What's On!
Email: whatsonmt@gmail.com

Nay Pyi Taw Cinema, near Sule pagoda
Oculus. Directed by Mike Flanagan. American psychological horror film told in the present and through flashbacks.

Mingalar 1 Cinema, near Theingyi Market
Transformers: Age of Extinction. Directed by Michael Bay. A sci-fi action film based on the Transformers franchise.

Mingalar 2 Cinema, at Dagon Center 2, Myae Ni Gone, Sanchaung
Transformers: Age of Extinction

Shae Shaung Cinema 1, Sule Pagoda Road
Transformers: Age of Extinction

Shae Shaung Cinema 2, Sule Pagoda Road
How to Train Your Dragon 2. Directed by Dean DeBlois. An animation for both kids and adults.

Junction Square Cineplex, Kamaryut
In the Dark. Directed by Yeo Joon Han. A Chinese horror film that conveys messages on social issues.
Main Tera Hero. Directed by David Dhawan. A Bollywood action-comedy film.

Mingalar San Pya Cineplex, Phone Gyi Street and Anawrahta
Transformers: Age of Extinction
Oculus

MUSIC

JULY 1-30 Wednesday Hospitality Nights. Enjoy 25 percent savings on selected beverages with performances by the Columbian Sinaloa Band and DJ Blues. Park Royal Hotel, 33 Alan Pya Phaya Road, Dagon 6pm-1am

JULY 14 Live blues. Mojo Bar, 135 Inya Road, Bahan 8:30-11:30pm

JULY 18 Live music. 50th Street Bar, 9-13 50th Street, Botahtaung 3-5pm

JULY 18 Nelson Mandela International Day. Concert and documentary film screening events, free entrance. More info at www.institutfrancais-birmanie.com. Institut Français Birmanie, 340 Pyay Road, Saunghang 6-11pm

MISC

JULY 15 Gallery conversation and drinks. Pansodan Gallery, 289 Pansodan Street, Kyaukada, 7pm-late

JULY 17 Tipsy Travel Talk Thursdays. Discuss alternative travel in Myanmar over drinks. Off the Beaten Track Café, Kandawgyi Oo Yin Kabar, Kandawgyi Park, Mingalar Taung Nyunt

JULY 20 Drawing club. Pansodan Scene, 144 Pansodan Street, Kyauktada 10-11:30am

WEEKLY PREDICTIONS

JULY 14 - 20, 2014

AQUARIUS | Jan 20 - Feb 18



Every living thing has a "creative mechanism" - a built-in guidance system for achieving goals. Know that even the most mundane or

routine activity is the result of your thinking patterns and should not continue unconsciously. Without attention, stress will accumulate although you are unaware of it. Overcome fatigue. Picture yourself as a master of faith.

LEO | July 23 - Aug 22



You are gifted with intuition and yet hardly go deep into any subject, duty or responsibility. Even then, you can influence others with

your knowledge and flash. Your outlook on life is very optimistic, and you can organise almost anyone to go along with you as their leader. Your love of new ideas may be different than that of others, but it's always better.

PISCES | Feb 19 - March 20



Find the grain of truth in what each person is saying, and your intellect will benefit. All of life is in a state of change, and events

are only a matter of when. Training yourself to respond well to the dramas of life is to get good at turning your melodrama into a mellow-drama. Make the right choice when you gear yourself up for tomorrow.

VIRGO | Aug 23 - Sept 22



Doubt rarely assails you because of your over-confidence, but sometimes doubt is a good thing that you should notice. Your

spasmodic actions should not be developed, otherwise you will be unfavourable in social relationships. Social limits are good for a successful person like you. A natural opportunity for emotional favour is coming. You can walk hand-in-hand with someone beautiful or handsome.

ARIES | Mar 21 - Apr 19



Your unorthodox organisational skills usually make strict corporate life a pain for you. You can play the game

and do things their way for a while, but ultimately you need the freedom to handle your duties in your own unique way. Try to be skillful in different levels of communication, and get practice at turning emotions into intellectual understanding.

LIBRA | Sept 23 - Oct 22



Learn to take a few moments or several minutes at key points throughout the day to immediately experience

more vigour, creativity, inner joy and purposeful focus. It is about choosing to turn time into your ally instead of your enemy. Never see time as an absolute over which you have little or no control. Know that time is the psychological enemy sometimes. Love is great.

TAURUS | Apr 20 - May 20



Your mental balance is getting out of control. You should maintain honesty and sincerity according to your management and

communication duties. Your ability to be socially responsible is very important and adds value to you as an employee. Be determined in your sympathy and integrity. An unstable mind cannot love.

SCORPIO | Oct 23 - Nov 21



One cannot discover new lands without consenting to lose sight of the shore. New things are got by new ideas and thoughts. Without a

fresh attitude, you can get nothing new, and you'll lose out. Winning at work should not have to mean losing at life. Know that getting is the result of giving. Love is to give and understand without any doubt.

GEMINI | May 21 - June 20



No one suddenly changes their habits and thoughts. Never be afraid to try something new. Surviving one danger is a step toward

overcoming the next danger. Consider whether you are doing things the way successful people have done. You will have a good chance to take new action, but it's easy to go wrong. Your emotional equation is unbalanced.

SAGITTARIUS | Nov 22 - Dec 21



Reject the ageing brain stereotype. Refresh yourself. Believe that regular practice may help keep your brain sharp and your emotional

control alert and ingenious. Everyone that lives is not alone and lives not for him- or herself but for the creation of something better. Love is not about getting something. It is giving with hope.

CANCER | June 21 - July 22



Success always entails accepting a given responsibility, and loyalty is vital for success. You must develop a sense of timing

for your right actions. Condition yourself for focusing energy, concentration and zeal for the tasks at hand. Reward yourself at every opportunity for any accomplishment, however small. You should have an erect bearing and an impressive posture.

CAPRICORN | Dec 22 - Jan 19



Feel less frustrated and more patient. Stimulate your senses with a cool, fresh breeze and inhale the energising air. The future of

your life depends upon your creative use and development of your senses and knowledge. Know that love and affection is essential to all relationships. To love is to add value all the time, and you can become great by practising it.

LONDON

Harry Potter returns with grey hairs in new JK Rowling story

RHAMANE DALON

FICTIONAL boy wizard Harry Potter made his first appearance in seven years on July 8, featuring as a nearly 34-year-old with grey hairs in a new short story by author JK Rowling.

In an article on the website Pottermore, written in the form of a gossip column, Harry and his friends reunite at a tournament of the broomstick-riding game quidditch.

Harry's red-haired friend Ron Weasley is said to be thinning on top, while the 1500-word story raises questions over the state of Harry's marriage to Ron's sister Ginny Weasley.

Millionaire author Rowling meanwhile gives a teaser when she writes that Harry - played by the actor Daniel Radcliffe in the films spawned by the book - sports a new scar on his cheek to go with the lightning-shaped one on his forehead.

"About to turn 34, there are a couple of threads of silver in the famous Auror's [high-level wizard's] black hair, but he continues to wear the distinctive round glasses that some might say are better suited to a style-deficient 12-year-old," the story says.

There is a further hint of things to come when the story asks whether the "chosen one" might be "embroiled in fresh mysteries

that will one day explode upon us all, plunging us into a new age of terror and mayhem".

Rowling has sold more than 450 million copies of the Harry Potter books, which tell the story of the young wizard and his friends at the Hogwarts school of magic. They have also spawned a string of hit films and the Pottermore website.

Her latest piece is written in the form of a gossip column by Rita Skeeter of the *Daily Prophet*, a character from the Potter books who draws on the author's own vocal criticisms of British tabloid journalism.

In the story, Harry brings his two sons James and Albus - last seen in the epilogue to the seventh and final installment *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* - to see the "2014 Quidditch Cup".

But the narration hints at problems in his marriage to Ginny, now a journalist covering the tournament, asking, "Are cracks beginning to show in a union that the Potters are determined to promote as happy?"

Meanwhile Ron Weasley - played by actor Rupert Grint in the films - has gone to work at the family magic shop but the columnist whispers about "mental illness".

Ron and Hermione Granger - played by actress Emma Watson - also have two children in the new story, son Hugo and daughter Rose.

Hermione has enjoyed a "meteoric rise" to Deputy Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement. But the gossip writer asks, "Does Hermione Granger prove that a witch really can have it all? (No - look at her hair.)"

There is no sign, however, that Rowling has acted on her admission earlier this year that she should have married off Hermione to Harry, and that Ron and Hermione would probably have ended up in marriage counselling.

The new piece is part of a series about the Quidditch Cup - a nod to the football World Cup in Brazil - that are set to appear on Pottermore. The final article was published July 11 and sees Ginny Potter cover the cup final, between Brazil and Bulgaria.

Rowling has been keeping busy since the seventh and final novel in the series was published in 2007.

She published her first adult novel, *The Casual Vacancy*, to mixed reviews in 2012 and has also released two big-selling crime novels under the nom de plume Robert Galbraith.

She announced last year that she will make her screenwriting debut by penning a series of spin-off films set in the Potter world, starting with *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*.

- AFP

AUNG MYIN KYAW

4th Floor, 113, Thamaing Bayan Road, Tarmwe township, Yangon.
Tel: 09-731-35632, Email: williameastel@gmail.com

Masala puts a twist on fishy dishes

food



PHYO ARBIDANS
phyo.arbidans@gmail.com



Photos: Yu Yu

SEAFOOD MASALA SALAD

Serves 6

- 100-120g dried anchovies
- 2 onions
- 3 cloves garlic
- 1/2 tsp seafood masala
- Handful coriander
- Salt to taste
- 3 tbsp vegetable oil

Wash the dried anchovies and soak them. When they are soft, drain.

Slice the onions. Add the vegetable oil to a wok and heat on high. Fry the onions until golden.

Add anchovies and fry for about 2 minutes. Add the masala and keep frying for 1 minute.

If you want the fish to be soft, add 1/4 cup of water and cover with a lid. Then simmer for a few minutes.

For crispy fish, don't add water.

Before removing the wok from the heat, garnish with coriander. Salt to taste.

Note: Seafood masala or fish masala can be bought at supermarkets or at some local wet markets.

I'M cooking with prawns again this week because they're fresh and reasonably priced right now. It's a good time to enjoy them.

I bought freshly made fish masala from a grocery shop in Chan Myay market, near Bo Aung Kyaw Street. The aroma makes my nose tingle. It's wonderful, and makes an excellent match with prawns.

MASALA PRAWN CURRY
Serves 6

- 13-15 prawns
- 3 cloves garlic
- 3 onions

- 6 tomatoes
- ½ tsp ground chilli
- 1½ tsp fish or seafood masala
- ½ or 1 whole red chilli
- Handful coriander
- Salt to taste
- 3 tbsp vegetable oil

Wash the prawns and drain them well. Discard the heads. De-shell the prawns but leave the tail. Discard the dark lines from the back. Sprinkle with salt and set aside.

Slice the onions, chop the tomatoes roughly and crush the garlic.

Heat the oil in a wok on high. Sauté the onions. When they are golden, add the ground chilli, half of the masala and garlic. Sauté for 1 minute.

Bring the chopped tomatoes into the wok and fry. When dry and wilted, add prawns and stir to mix well. Add ¼ cup of water and bring to a boil, then turn the heat down and simmer for 10 minutes. Keep the lid closed.

Add the coriander, chilli and remaining masala to the wok. Salt to taste.

I didn't use fish sauce here as I prefer to keep the aroma of the masala and spices.

Serve with plain or steamed rice.

Restaurant Review



Photos: Supplied

Restaurant Rating
★★★★★

Food	9
Beverage	8
Service	9
X-Factor	10
Value for money	9

9 Moo 9 Café and Gallery

Namphrae, Hang Dong, Thailand
Open Thurs-Sun 10am-5pm
Phone +66 (0) 87 187 4243

Near Chiang Mai, a garden cafe charms with slow food

WHITNEY LIGHT
light.whitney@gmail.com

CHIANG Mai is full of good restaurants appealing to foreign tourists and the expat community. But for something a little special, you might consider driving or hiring a car out to 9 Moo 9 Café and Gallery.

Located about 25 minutes outside the city, the cafe is set in the elegant and homey compound of its owners' residence, which makes an idyllic setting for an unhurried brunch or afternoon tea. There are cushions and low tables for lounging, patio tables for groups and a few bistro tables for two, all open to the surrounding landscaped lawn and garden.

Helped by a small staff, head chef Siripan Kidd and her husband Tony are the gracious and attentive hosts. Siripan, a quilting artist and expert on Southeast Asian textiles, has led textile tours through many parts of the region since 1998. Now her focus is the cafe, though she maintains an attached gallery for displays of her collection, most recently of Miao costumes from southwestern China.

The food is largely continental European, with some British specialties – a reflection of the fact the couple has lived in London for more than two decades. On the blackboard-written menu you'll find, among other things, homemade pork sausages, egg

pie, seared tuna salad and spaghetti bolognese. Most mains range in price from about 160 baht (around US\$5) to 280 baht (\$9).

Nothing we ordered was short of delicious and plentiful. Seared duck breast, a menu staple, was cooked perfectly to order, very slightly pink, and arrived with a mound of golden roasted potatoes and a green salad with vinaigrette on the side.

We also tried to order the seared tuna salad but, having arrived around 2pm, found it already sold out – mildly disappointing, but testament at least to the freshness of the ingredients. A plate of BBQ pork ribs more than made up for it, with a mountain of chunky, creamy potato salad and greens accompanying a robust piece of meat, not too fatty, basted in a tangy homemade sauce.

Though we passed on dessert after all this, the cake and pastry window looked equally impressive, with an array of decadent options from carrot cake and brownies to mousse and crumbles. There's also, necessarily, a coffee bar, and a limited selection of wine and beer by the glass.

Judging by our visit, the cafe is a popular spot with the local expat community, who kept the staff hopping between the kitchen and separate dining areas. Don't expect service to be too quick – it's quite obvious that each plate is assembled with care.

Gusto International School graduation



Tha Zin Soe Aye Thiri Maw Mg Aung Naing Oo Thein Shwe Ei Hnin Phyu Mon Mon Soe

On July 7, students of Gusto school gathered with their parents and teachers at Karaweik Hall for a ceremony to honour their graduation.



Photos: ima/Emmanuel Maillard
imaphotodesign@gmail.com

Myanmar-India handshake concert



Khin Zaw Win



Laetitia and Perrine



Jasmeet Singh Narula, Avinash Tiwari, Sunil Mehta and Surinder Pal Angroola



Mireia, Victoria, Paul, Judy and Gaetano



Lisa and her niece



Phyu Thinn



On July 5, the Embassy of India hosted a Myanmar-India "handshake" concert at the National Theatre. The evening featured Nagaland choir Voices of Hope and renowned slide-guitar player Pandit Vishwa Mohan Bhatt.



Pandit Vishwa Mohan Bhatt



Sanjay Kumai and family



Voices of Hope



Chatrium customer appreciation night



Hnin Ei, Ti Na, Thinza Linn and Aung Khine Lin

On July 4, Chatrium hotel hosted a ceremony and cocktail party honouring their customers. Hotel staff joined the guests for the celebration.

May Myat Mon and guests

Staff



Myanmar-Thailand boxing challenge



On July 6, Yangon hosted the Big Fight: Myanmar-Thailand Letwei Challenge. Ten boxers from both countries met at Theinphyu stadium for a showdown in front of an enthusiastic audience who were invited free of charge. Saw Gaw Mu Doe was the event's big winner.



Saw Gaw Mu Doe



DOMESTIC FLIGHT SCHEDULES

YANGON TO NAY PYI TAW				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YJ 761	1	7:30	8:25	
FMI A1	1,2,3,4,5	7:30	8:30	
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	
FMI C2	1,2,3,4,5	18:05	19:05	

YANGON TO MANDALAY				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
W9 7143/YJ 143	2	6:20	8:25	
YH 917	Daily	6:10	8:30	
Y5 234	Daily	6:15	7:30	
6T 401	Daily	6:20	8:25	
K7 222/7Y 111	Daily	6:30	8:40	
W9 7143/YJ 143	3,5,6,7	6:50	8:55	
YJ 201	2,3,4	7:00	8:25	
YJ 211	5,7	7:00	8:25	
YJ 233	1,6	7:00	8:25	
7Y 701	6	7:05	10:40	
7Y 815	3,4	7:05	11:20	
7Y 771	7	7:05	11:20	
7Y 707	2,5	7:10	11:55	
7Y 815	1	8:00	12:15	
W9 7201/YJ 201	4,7	8:00	9:25	
W9 201	1,2,3,5,6	8:00	9:25	
8M 6603	2,4,7	9:00	10:10	
YH 727	1	11:00	13:10	
YH 729	4,6	11:00	14:00	
YH 737	3,5,7	11:00	13:10	
W9 151/YJ 7151	1	11:00	14:45	
W9 153/YJ 7153	2	11:00	12:55	
W9 153/YJ 7153	7	11:30	12:55	
YH 731	1,3,5,6,7	14:30	16:40	
K7 224/7Y 221	Daily	14:30	16:35	
6T 501	2,3,4,6,7	14:45	16:45	
6T 501	5	15:30	17:30	
W9 211	2,6	16:00	17:25	
W9 7211/YJ 211	3,4,5,6	16:00	17:25	

MANDALAY TO YANGON				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
Y5 233	Daily	8:10	9:25	
YH 918	Daily	8:30	10:25	
6T 402	Daily	8:45	10:45	
W9 7143/YJ 143	2	8:40	10:05	
K7 223/7Y 112	Daily	8:55	11:00	
W9 7143/YJ 143	3,5,6,7	9:10	11:05	
W9 7201/YJ 201	4,7	9:40	11:35	
W9 201	1,2,3,5,6	9:40	11:35	
Y5 132	3,5,6,7	9:30	10:30	
7Y 772	7	11:35	15:20	

7Y 708	2,5	12:10	16:28
7Y 816	1	12:30	16:45
7Y 702	6	13:45	17:20
7Y 815	3,4	14:25	18:40
YJ 203	2	14:55	16:20
YJ 213	7	15:45	17:10
YJ 235	6	16:20	17:45
YH 728	1	16:30	17:55
YH 730	2	16:40	18:05
YH 732	1,3,5,6,7	16:40	18:45
YJ 235	1	16:45	18:10
K7 225/7Y 222	Daily	16:50	19:00
6T 502	2,3,4,6,7	17:05	19:10
YH 738	3,5,7	17:10	18:35
8M 6604	2,4,7	17:20	18:30
W9 7211/YJ 211	3,4,5,6	17:40	19:45
YH 730	4,6	17:45	19:10
6T 502	5	17:50	19:55
YJ 204	4	17:55	19:20
W9 154/YJ 7154	7	18:35	20:00

YANGON TO NYAUNG U				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YH 917	Daily	6:10	7:45	
6T 401	Daily	6:20	7:40	
W9 7143/YJ 143	2	6:20	7:40	
K7 222/7Y 111	Daily	6:30	7:50	
W9 7143/YJ 143	3,5,6,7	6:50	8:10	
K7 224/7Y 221	Daily	14:30	17:25	
YH 731	1,3,5,6,7	14:30	17:25	
6T 501	2,3,4,6,7	14:45	17:35	
6T 501	5	15:30	18:20	
W9 7211/YJ 211	4,5,6	16:00	18:10	

NYAUNG U TO YANGON				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YH 918	Daily	7:45	10:25	
W9 7143/YJ 143	2	7:55	10:05	
6T 401	Daily	7:55	10:45	
K7 222/7Y 111	Daily	8:05	11:00	
W9 7143/YJ 143	3,5,6,7	8:25	11:05	
YH 918	4	8:35	10:40	
YH 732	1,3,5,6,7	17:25	18:45	
6T 502	2,4,6,7	17:50	19:10	
6T 502	3	18:20	19:40	
W9 211/YJ 7211	4,5,6	18:25	19:45	
6T 502	1,5	18:35	19:55	
K7 225/7Y 222	Daily	17:40	19:00	

YANGON TO MYITKYINA				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YH 824	1	7:00	9:40	
YJ 201	2,3	7:00	9:50	
YJ 211	5	7:00	9:50	
YJ 233	1,6	7:00	9:50	
YH 828	2,6	7:00	10:00	
7Y 815	3,4	7:05	12:45	
7Y 701	6	7:05	12:05	
W9 7151/YJ 151	1	11:00	13:15	
W9 7153/YJ 153	2	11:00	13:55	
W9 7153/YJ 153	7	11:30	14:25	
YH 826	4	14:00	16:40	

MYITKYINA TO YANGON				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YH 829	2,6	10:00	12:25	
YH 825	1	11:30	13:55	
7Y 702	6	12:20	17:20	
7Y 815	3,4	13:00	18:40	
W9 7152/YJ 152	1	13:35	16:30	
YJ 213	7	13:50	17:10	
W9 7154/YJ 154	2	16:35	18:50	
YJ 204	4	16:30	19:20	
YH 827	4	16:40	19:05	
W9 7154/YJ 154	7	17:05	20:00	

YANGON TO HEHO				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YH 917	Daily	6:10	9:15	
6T 401	Daily	6:20	9:20	
K7 222/7Y 111	Daily	6:30	9:30	
YJ 201	3	7:00	12:00	
7Y 701	6	7:05	9:58	
7Y 815	3,4	7:05	10:35	
7Y 771	7	7:05	10:35	
7Y 707	2,5	7:10	11:13	
7Y 815	1	8:00	11:30	
W9 7201/YJ 201	4,7	8:00	10:10	
W9 201	1,2,3,5,6	8:00	10:10	
YH 727	1	11:00	12:25	
YH 737	3,5,7	11:00	12:25	
YH 731	1,3,5,6,7	14:30	15:55	
K7 224/7Y 221	Daily	14:30	15:45	
6T 501	2,3,4,6,7	14:45	15:55	
6T 501	5	15:30	16:40	

HEHO TO YANGON				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YH 918	Daily	9:15	10:25	
6T 402	Daily	9:35	10:45	
K7 223/7Y 112	Daily	9:45	11:00	
W9 143/7Y 7143	3,7	9:55	11:05	
W9 201/7Y 7201	4,7	10:25	11:35	
W9 201	1,2,3,5,6	10:25	11:35	
7Y 771	7	10:50	15:20	
7Y 707	2,5	11:25	16:28	
7Y 816	1	13:15	16:45	
YJ 203	2	14:10	16:20	
YJ 203	4	14:20	19:20	
7Y 702	6	14:30	17:20	
7Y 816	3,4	15:10	18:40	
YH 728	1	15:45	17:55	
YJ 213	5	15:50	17:00	
YJ 203	3	15:55	17:05	
YH 732	1,3,5,6,7	15:55	18:45	
YJ 235	1	16:00	18:10	
K7 224/7Y 221	Daily	16:00	19:00	
6T 501	2,4,6,7	16:10	19:10	
YH 738	3,5,7	16:25	18:35	
6T 501	3	16:40	19:40	
6T 501	1,5	16:55	19:55	

YANGON TO SITTWE				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
6T 611	2,4,6,7	11:15	12:40	
6T 605	5	11:15	13:15	

6T 611	3	11:40	13:05
W9 7311/YJ 311	4	11:30	13:20

SITTWE TO YANGON				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
6T 612	2,3,4,6,7	13:00	14:25	
6T 608	1	13:00	15:00	
6T 606	5	13:35	15:00	
W9 7311/YJ 311	4	13:35	15:00	
K7 423	Daily	15:40	17:00	

YANGON TO MYEIK				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YH 633	3,4,5,7	7:00	9:15	
K7 319	Daily	7:00	9:05	

MYEIK TO YANGON				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YH 634	3,4,5,7	11:25	13:25	
K7 320	Daily	11:30	13:35	

YANGON TO THANDWE				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
W9 141	Daily	6:15	9:35	
6T 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	
YH 633	3,4,5,7	7:00	8:25	

DAWEI TO YANGON				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YH 634	3,4,5,7	12:15	13:25	

YANGON TO LASHIO				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YJ 201	3	7:00	13:05	
YJ 211	7	7:00	9:25	
7Y 707	2,5	7:10	8:48	
YH 729	2,4,6	11:00	13:00	

LASHIO TO YANGON				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YJ 202	3	13:20	17:05	
YJ 213	5	14:45	17:00	
7Y 708	2,5	14:50	16:28	
YH 729	2	15:40	18:05	
YH 730	4,6	16:45	19:10	

YANGON TO PUTAO				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YJ 233	1,6	7:00	10:45	
YH 824	1	7:00	10:35	

PUTAO TO YANGON				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YH 825	1	10:35	13:55	

YANGON TO CHIANG MAI				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
W9 9607/YJ 7607	4,7	14:20	16:10	

CHIANG MAI TO YANGON				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
W9 9608/YJ 7608	4,7	17:20	18:10	

Domestic Airlines

Air Bagan Ltd. (W9)
Tel : 513322, 513422, 504888, Fax : 515102

Air KBZ (K7)
Tel: 372977~80, 533030~39 (Airport),
Fax: 372983, Hot Line: 373766

Air Mandalay (6T)
Tel : (Head Office) 501520, 525488,
Fax: 525937. Airport: 533222~3, 09-73152853.
Fax: 533223.

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 252	Daily	8:30	10:15
FD 254	Daily	17:50	19:35
DD 4239	Daily	21:00	22:45

YANGON TO SINGAPORE			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
8M 231	Daily	8:00	12:25
Y5 233	Daily	10:10	14:40
SQ 997	Daily	10:35	15:10
3K 582	Daily	11:20	15:50
MI 533	2,4,6	13:45	20:50
MI 517	Daily	16:40	21:15
TR 2827	Daily	19:05	23:40

YANGON TO KUALA LUMPUR			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
8M 501	1,3,5,6	7:50	11:50
AK 505	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 503	2,4,6	19:30	23:45

YANGON TO BEIJING			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
CA 716	1,3,5,7	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	8:35	11:10

YANGON TO PHNOM PENH			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
8M 403	3	16:50	19:15

YANGON TO SEOUL			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
OZ 770	4,7	0:35	9:10
KE 472	Daily	23:35	8:05+1

YANGON TO HONG KONG			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
KA 251	1,4,6	01:10	05:45

YANGON TO TOKYO			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
NH 914	Daily	21:45	06:50+1

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 245	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

NAY PYI TAW TO BANGKOK			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
PG 722	1,2,3,4,5	20:05	23:05

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	20:15	21:30

DON MUENG TO YANGON			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
DD 4230	Daily	6:30	7:15
FD 251	Daily	7:15	8:00
FD 253	Daily	16:35	17:20
DD 4238	Daily	19:25	20:15

SINGAPORE TO YANGON			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
SQ 998	Daily	7:55	9:20
3K 581	Daily	8:50	10:30
MI 533	2,4,6	11:35	12:55
8M 232	Daily	13:25	14:50
MI 518	Daily	14:20	15:45
TR 2826	Daily	17:05	18:25
Y5 234	Daily	15:35	17:05

BEIJING TO YANGON			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
CA 715	1,3,5,7	19:30	22:50

KUALA LUMPUR TO YANGON			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
AK 504	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	13:30	14:40
AK 502	2,4,6	17:50	19:00

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

TAIPEI TO YANGON			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
CI 7915	1,2,3,5,6	7:00	9:55

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 (QR)
Tel: 379845, 379843, 379831, Fax: 379730

Biman Bangladesh Airlines (BG)
Tel: 371867~68, Fax: 371869.

Nok Airline (DD)
Tel: 255050, 255021, Fax: 255051

Tiger Airline (TR)
Tel: 371383, 370836~39 Ext: 303

GUANGRAO COUNTY, CHINA



A statue of Sun Wu in a Shandong Province historical museum in China. At about age 30, he wrote *The Art of War*. He was made a general by King Helu of Wu and gained fame by defeating enemies, including the Chu Kingdom. Photo: Yomiuri Shimbun/Kazuhiko Makita

Hometown of ‘Art of War’ author aims to become attraction

KAZUHIKO MAKITA

ABOUT 2500 years ago in war-torn China, Sun Wu (also known as Sun Tzu) wrote what would become the world’s most well-known military text.

Born during China’s Chunqiu period, the famed tactician who wrote *The Art of War* is called a “military saint” in China and is considered one of its greatest ancient philosophers. Studied by generals during the Sengoku period (Warring States period in the late 15th century to late 16th century) in Japan and by US presidents, Sun Wu’s ideas have influenced people of the East and West, and from ancient to modern times, and continue to fascinate many.

Drive northeast for about two hours on the highway from Jinan, the capital of Shandong Province, and you arrive at Guangrao County.

Take a look around and you will find Sun Wu Road and Bingsheng (the Saint of War) Road. Go into a restaurant, and you can try a local liquor with a name that translates roughly as “military saint king alcohol”.

The county claims Sun Wu was born nearby and has dubbed itself “Sun Wu’s hometown”.

On the outskirts of Guangrao County is a memorial temple dedicated to Sun Wu. In the 1990s, the county rebuilt the mausoleum, which was originally constructed in the 12th century. Inside, panel exhibits and miniature models introduce Sun Wu’s life and *The Art of War*. Just inside the entrance stands an imposing 10.5-foot statue of Sun Wu.

“If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles.”

This quote from *The Art of War* is displayed prominently in the exhibition room. It may be the most well-known quote in China and was frequently referenced by Mao Zedong when he led the Communist Party.

Zhao Chengfeng, 70, chair of the

Shandong Sun Zi Research Association, has long been entranced by Sun Wu’s philosophy.

Zhao, 70, said he was taught “Sun Tzu” when he was in the military and decided to devote himself to researching the famous warrior after he retired. He formed the association in 2008 to promote exchanges between domestic and overseas researchers.

“Sun Wu’s *The Art of War* is not constrained by time or national boundaries,” Zhao said. “It has a universality that can be accepted by a wide range of academic fields. Along with Confucius, Sun Wu is one of the great philosophers born in Shandong.”

Although Guangrao County is little known outside of Sun Wu researchers, it could be on the verge of a major transformation. In March 2012, it established the Sun Tzu Cultural Tourist Area Management Committee and is pushing ahead with tourism developments aimed at selling itself as Sun Wu’s hometown.

The man-made Sun Wu Lake is surrounded by a huge, 42-square-kilometre (26-square-mile) tourism district that is to include a theme park, research institute, hot spring hotel and other facilities.

“It will be a base for transmitting Sun Wu’s philosophy to the world,” said Wang Tingwen, director of the Center for Sun Tzu Cultural Studies of Guangrao.

Though expectations are great, the theme park will require 1.6 billion yuan (about US \$257 million) in investments and more than 3 billion yuan (\$483 million) for the entire district.

With China’s economy slowing down, development projects led by local municipalities have failed one after another.

“Engaging in unreasonable battles with smaller forces will only make you the prey of an enemy with a larger force.”

Amid the sounds of hammering, I seemed to hear the words of a wise man warning against imprudence.

—The Yomiuri Shimbun

Universal Crossword

Edited by Timothy E. Parker

WATER'S EDGE By Bill Bobb

ACROSS

- 1 Dust specks
- 6 Opposite of "Yay!"
- 10 Lad's date
- 14 San Antonio mission
- 15 Tarantino's "___ Fiction"
- 16 Small notions case
- 17 Where to find Pismo Beach
- 20 Tennis great Chris and namesakes
- 21 English noble
- 22 Trumped-up tale
- 23 Jiffies
- 25 Paper clip alternatives
- 27 Leather-punching tool
- 30 Devoid of feeling
- 32 Org. for a dr.
- 33 Big ratite bird
- 35 Meadowlands
- 37 Half of the forearm bones
- 41 Method of long-distance delivery
- 44 Hindu holy man
- 45 Big cat
- 46 Trudge through mud
- 47 Stopping point
- 49 Drillmaster's word
- 51 They're around noon?
- 52 Cad
- 56 Cake maker Lee
- 58 Pretense
- 59 Julia of "The Addams Family"
- 61 "Big ___ House" (Martin Lawrence film)
- 65 Part of old San Francisco
- 68 Zeus' wife
- 69 1814 exile site
- 70 Well-built, in slang
- 71 Oscar role for Julia
- 72 Lie down on the job?
- 73 Demagnetize, as a tape

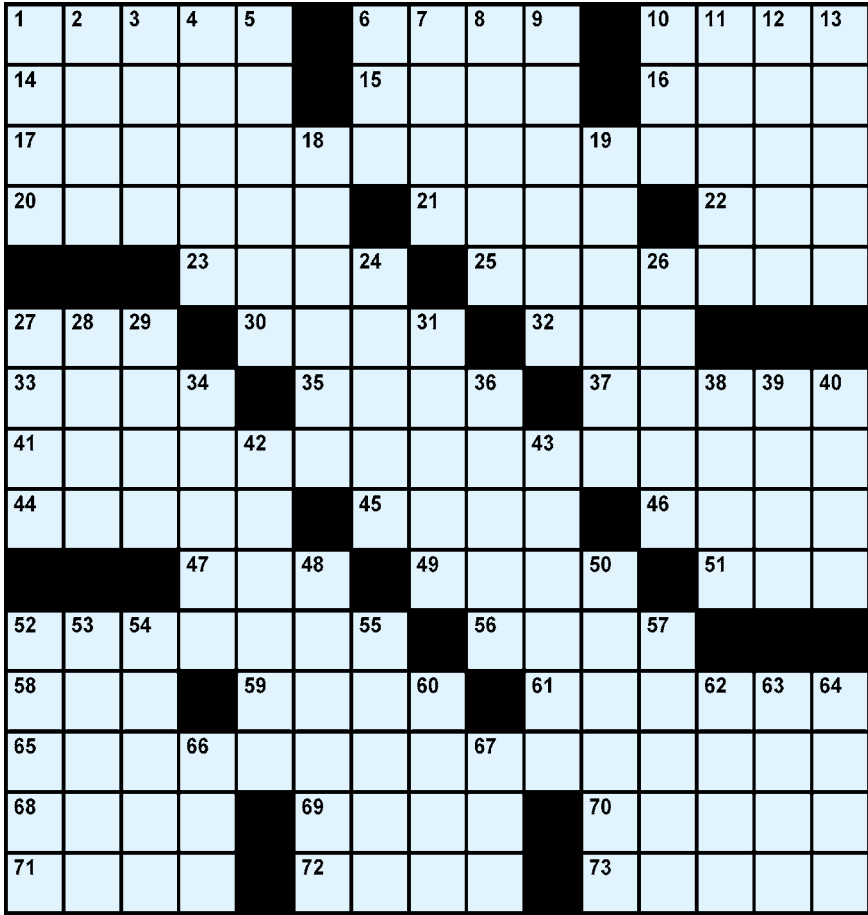
DOWN

- 1 Pepper spray alternative
- 2 Norwegian royal name

- 3 Fish story
- 4 Some Islamic rulers
- 5 Use an emollient on
- 6 Truth-in-lending abbr.
- 7 "Clair de ___" (Debussy)
- 8 Fake name
- 9 Peloponnesian War city-state
- 10 Night sky feline
- 11 Words before "costs"
- 12 The Everly Brothers' girl
- 13 Locations
- 18 Apertures in a sponge

- 19 Stop talking
- 24 Catch a whiff
- 26 Insects' feelers
- 27 Paths of baseball bombs
- 28 Command to Tonalist
- 29 Take charge
- 31 Pesto herb
- 34 Pale-looking
- 36 Closet staples
- 38 "Cleopatra" backdrop
- 39 Unknown author
- 40 Grocery list items
- 42 Treeless region
- 43 Negative notoriety

- 48 Closer, as to one's heart
- 50 Cough drop
- 52 Cleanse the entire body
- 53 Autumn color
- 54 Gestation stations
- 55 Coin of Moscow
- 57 Love in Lyon
- 60 Test sites
- 62 "Give that ___ cigar!"
- 63 Reveals one's ignorance
- 64 Eyelid swelling
- 66 Place on a blacklist
- 67 It has a long tail



DILBERT

BY SCOTT ADAMS



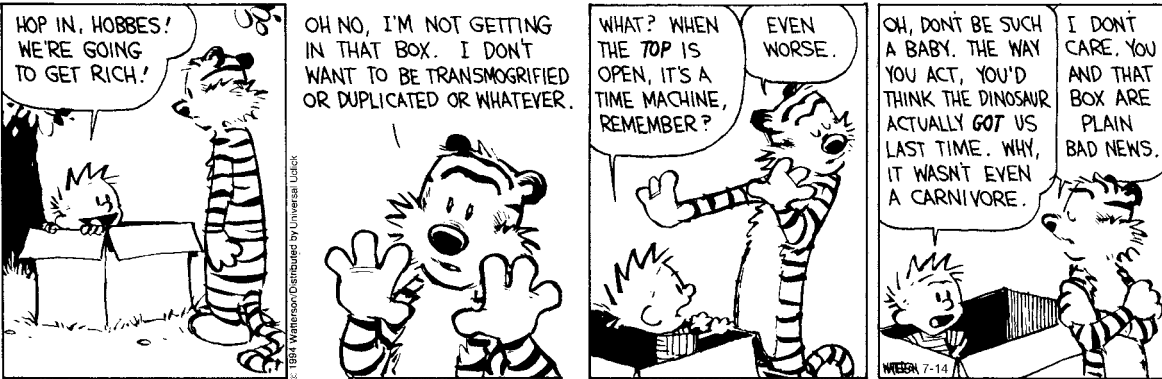
PEANUTS

BY CHARLES SCHULZ



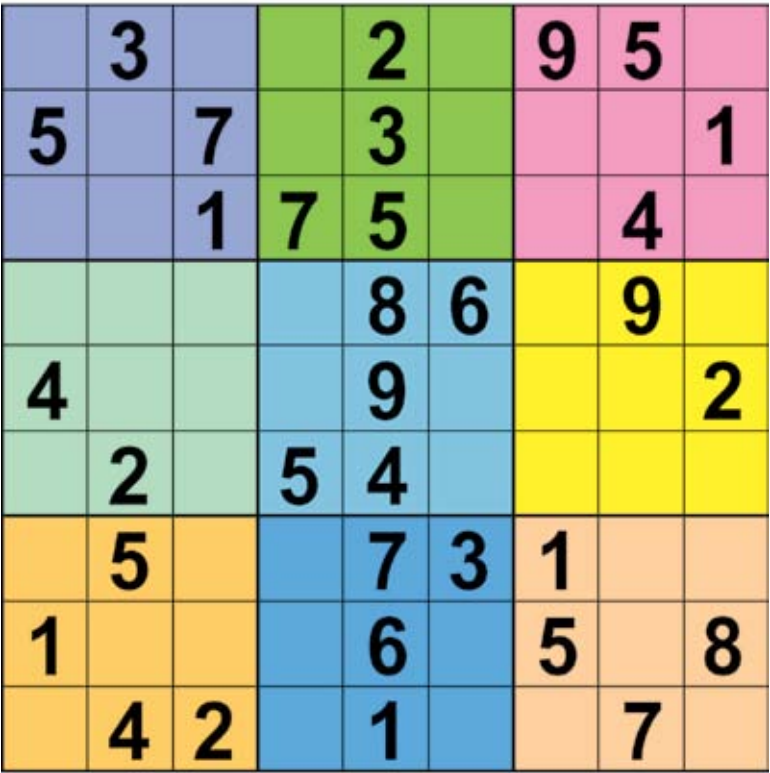
CALVIN AND HOBBS

BY BILL WATTERSON



SUDOKU PACIFIC

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains every digit from 1 to 9 inclusively.



7/17

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.

THE WORLD OF MARIO BROS.

Solution: 8 letters



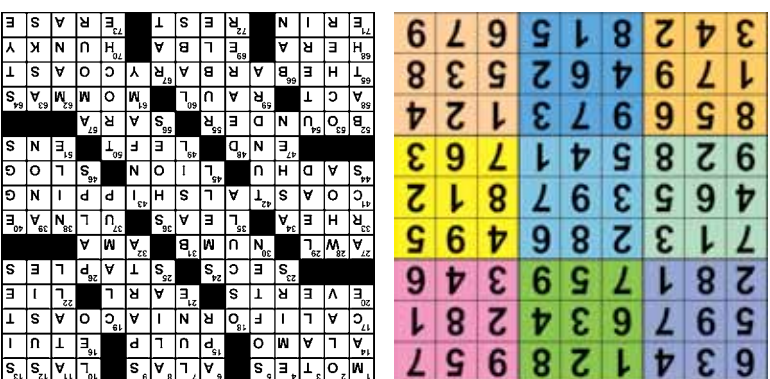
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7/14

All-Stars, Arcades, Atari, Battle, Bill, Blooper, Bowser, Bullet, Cannons, Coins, Collect, Daisy, Defeat, Dinosaur, Donkey Kong, Enemies, Fun, Galaxy, Game, Golf, Italian, Land, Level, Lives, Luigi, Mario, Party, Phase, Pipes, Plumbers, Points, Power, Punch Ball, Rounds, Rules, Sales, Save, Series, Squash, Suits, Super, Swim, Toad, Video, Virtual, Wii, Yoshi

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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
Candian Embassy 9th Floor, Centerpoint Towers, 65 Sule Pagoda Road, Yangon. Tel : 01-384805 , Fax :01-384806, Email : yngon@international.gc.ca
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, Bogoyoke 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: Laoembcabid@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@mfat.go.kr
Sri Lanka 34 Taw Win Rd, Yangon. Tel: 222812,
Switzerland No 11, Kabaung Lane, 5 ½ mile, Pyay Rd, Hlaing Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 534754, 507089.
Thailand 94 Pyay Rd, Dagon Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 226721, 226728, 226824
Turkish Embassy 19AB, Kan Yeik Thar St, Mayangone Tsp, Yangon. Tel : 662992, Fax : 661365
United Kingdom 80 Strand Rd, Yangon. Tel: 370867, 380322, 371852, 371853, 256438,
United States of America 110, University Avenue, Kamayut Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 536509, 535756, Fax: 650306
Vietnam Bldg-72, Thanlwin Rd, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 511305

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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.

General Listing

ACCOMMODATION-HOTELS

Asia Plaza Hotel
YANGON
No. 277, Bogoyoke 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.

BEST WESTERN Green Hill Hotel
No. 12, Pho Sein Road, Tamwe Township, Yangon Tel : (95-1) 209299, 209300, 209343 Fax : (95-1) 209344 bestwestern.com/greenhillhotelyangon.com

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

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@mynanarpandahotel.com http://www.mynanarpandahotel.com

PARKROYAL Yangon, Myanmar
33, Alan Pya Pagoda Rd, Dagon tsp. tel: 250388. fax: 252478. email: enquiry.prygn@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, Bogoyoke Aung San Rd, Pabedan Tsp. tel 951-256355 (25 lines).

Sule Shangrila Hotel
223 Sule Pagoda Rd. tel: 242828. fax: 242838.

VINTAGE LUXURY
YACHT HOTEL
No.6, Botahtaung Jetty, Botahtaung Township, Yangon. Tel: (951)9010555, 9010535 Fax : (951) 9010536 info@vintageluxuryhotel.com www.vintageluxuryhotel.com

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

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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 : micprmd@myanmar.com.mmwww.myanmar.micasahotel.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)
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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

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THE International Rescue Committee (IRC) is seeking **Driver** 1 post in Yangon: Basic High School Education. Valid driving license; 2 years work as a professional driver. No road safety-related fines or convictions. Thorough knowledge of road rules and regulations. Skills in minor vehicle repair. Competent in spoken & written English. Pls submit a Cover letter & CV to the HR Department, 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.

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Local Positions

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AMDA is seeking **Administrative/ Financial Officer** for Yangon Office: University degree in accounting/ Financing with 2 years experiences (INGO experience would be an asset). Strong analytic and accounting skills. Strong computer skill (Excel, Word, etc.). Good written and oral

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WIRED MEDIA Co., Ltd is seeking (1) **Assistant Manager** (Sales & Marketing) - Female 2 posts : Can use computer, internet & email, Must have 2 years experience in Medical Field. Pls submit CV with necessary documents to No. (8), Nguwar (3) St, ward (5), Myakanthar Villa, Hlaing, Yangon. Ph: 01-505724, 538552, 09450053498. Opening Date : 19-05-14. Closing Date: 18-06-14

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gmail.com ASIAN ACRE Advisors, a Singapore real estate advisory firm based in Yangon, is looking for a **Research Assistant/Manager**. His/Her primary job scope is to collect data and information on real estate markets in Myanmar and the region. At least 5-years working experience in research and analysis, with real estate experience. Effective communication in English, Myanmar and/ or Mandarin language is required. Interested applicants, please send CV to corporate@asianacre.com

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posts (7) **Accountant** - 2 post : B.Com(CPA), 3 ~ 5 years experience, (8) **Cashier** - 4 posts. Please submit CV, Photo with necessary documents to Rm 404, 4 Flr, Royal Yaw Min Gyi Condo., No 52, Yaw Min Gyi St, Dagon. Ph: 01-255571, 255580 ext 404 Email : project.inlelakeview@gmail.com

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PASIR PUTEH

Centuries-old tradition still spinning in Malaysia

Sport of whirling tops lives on in Southeast Asian nation

IN one fluid motion, Amri Aziz flings his oversized spinning top into the air and with a whip-like crack of rope sends it whirling for the next two hours.

That's when the tea is poured.

In a time-worn tradition, contestants and spectators settle down in Malaysia's Kelantan state to see whose meticulously hand-crafted top spins the longest in the centuries-old, slow-burn contest of "gasing uri".

Locals in the conservative Muslim heartland of the country's rural east coast cheekily call the decades-old inter-state contest, held monthly with neighbouring Terengganu, their "World Cup".

"In the olden days, this kind of game was very, very popular - like playing football is today," said Nazife Ismail, secretary of the Kelantan Gasing Uri Association.



A local contestant holds his gasing before competing in a contest in Pasir Puteh on July 7. Photo: AFP

'Scooping is the most difficult job. It's like football; the goalie is the most important.'

Hussain Mohamad
Participant

But though many here still live in wooden huts, modern distractions like the internet, video games and satellite broadcasts of European football games have penetrated.

That makes gasing uri a difficult sell for an impatient new generation whose interest is vital to keeping the unique tradition alive.

Today few take up the sport, which requires at least five years' training before one is considered ready for contests, in which local pride is the only reward.

"I got into it because my father and uncle taught me, but I keep on playing because when there are fewer players like today, you have a better chance to shine," said Amri.

The 22-year-old, whose disc of wood and tin weighs four kilograms, boasts bulging muscles developed by

years of training with the ponderous tops, which typically measure 20 centimetres [8 inches] across.

Despite its uneventful nature, the contest begins with an amazing feat of dexterity.

After the spinner launches his gasing [top], a "scooper" catches the plate-shaped object on a small wooden paddle just centimetres wide.

"Scooping is the most difficult job. It's like football; the goalie is the most important," said Hussain Mohamad, who has been spinning for over four decades.

Top-spinning - which developed in cultures worldwide -- took hold in Malay society centuries ago as a way for men to pass the suddenly ample time available after the rice harvest.

Under age-old, pre-Islamic Malay animist beliefs, individual gasing were said to inherit the nature of trees they were made from.

Other forms of gasing contests exist - including "gasing pangkah" where contestants smash their bulky, spinning tops against others, trying to topple them.

"If I can't play, I will lose my zest for life. Never mind work, we have to do this for one day a month from 10am to 6pm," said Hussain.

About 30 contestants per side took part in the latest instalment of the inter-state gasing uri rivalry, watched by around 100 mostly older

male spectators, some in skullcaps and Muslim robes, who sipped tea on a patch of grass in the tropical heat.

In the past, local shamans would first call upon spirits to guide the gasing.

But amid deepening Islamic conservatism in rural Malaysia over the past three decades, that is now frowned upon.

Today, flowers are first placed atop the gasing by an Islamic teacher, who then offers a prayer of blessing, "not to invoke the spirits, but to give us a kind of confidence that our

top will be the winner", said Nazife.

Craftsmanship is a point of pride, and considered key to ensuring a lengthy spin.

Today, most gasing start with a carved wooden centre. A heavy rim is added by pouring molten tin into a mould around the wood, as the extra weight prolongs spin.

They are then spun on a foot-propelled wheel and chiselled down to an immaculate smoothness, a process that takes at least two days.

Tops have gotten smaller to reduce surface area and thus air friction. Decoration - which increases friction - is eschewed.

After two hours, a Kelantan top was the last one standing. Subdued back-slapping and handshaking marked the victory.

A century ago, every village had a gasing uri team, but they are rare now.

The Kelantan Gasing Uri Association is now looking beyond the state's borders to try to ensure the longevity of the sport.

In the past couple of years it has held demonstrations, complete with full Kelantanese traditional costumes, elsewhere in Malaysia and abroad, including Dubai, England and Scotland.

"It will not go extinct as there is a continuity to the new generation. It will make a return to its heyday," said Che Kasim Mahmud, state director of the national cultural and art department. - AFP



Amri Aziz watches his gasing during a local contest in Pasir Puteh on July 7. Photo: AFP

PRETORIA

Date set for final arguments in Pistorious case

LAWYERS defending Oscar Pistorius on charges of murdering his girlfriend Reeva Steenkamp rested their case on July 8, allowing the court to set a date of August 7-8 for closing arguments.

Advocate Barry Roux said the sprinter's defence team had called its last witness, heralding the final stages of a high-profile trial that is now in its fifth month.

"This matter, then, is postponed until the 7th of August 2014 at 9:30," said Judge Thokozile Masipa.

Legal teams from both sides will submit their written arguments to Masipa before that date - the prosecution on July 30 and the defence on August 4.

The veteran judge warned that these documents must not be made public before oral arguments begin.

A leak would be a "disservice to justice, and that person who does it is a thief", said Judge Masipa.

The trial, which began on March 3, has garnered worldwide public attention, including a dedicated 24 hour trial channel and countless newspaper column inches.

Such was the intensity of the public gaze that some witnesses, including Pistorius refused to testify on camera, while according to Roux some refused to testify at all.

During 39 days of court proceedings the world looked on as Pistorius - who rose to international fame at the 2012 London Olympics - appeared in the dock, at times weeping, vomiting and completely unable to compose himself as he tried to explain how Steenkamp's death was a tragic accident.

But state lawyers showed no mercy, with pitbull prosecutor Gerrie Nel tearing apart his witnesses bit by bit as he tried to prove Pistorius knowingly killed Steenkamp after an argument.

Nel cross-examined Pistorius for five gruelling days, beginning his questioning in shocking fashion by forcing the weeping and disconsolate athlete to look at gruesome images of 29-year-old Steenkamp's blood-mottled head, which, the prosecutor claimed, "exploded like a watermelon".

If found guilty of premeditated murder, he faces up to 25 years in jail and an abrupt end to his glittering sports career.

After the ruling, Pistorius's brother Carl broke into a huge smile.

Pistorius, carrying a colourful card in his hand from a well-wisher, immediately left the courtroom. - AFP

PHILADELPHIA

NFL head injury deal to be revised

THOUSANDS of ex-National Football League players are to be compensated for head-injury claims, after a US judge gave a green light to a revised settlement.

The revised deal means that more than 20,000 retired players can now vote on the settlement. Last month, the NFL agreed to pay an unlimited amount in damages to players with severe concussion-related claims after removing a US\$675 million cap on awards.

Lawyers for the more-than-4,500 retired players who sued the league are accusing the NFL of a cover-up regarding dangers of concussions and violent hits to the head.

Lawyers Sol Weiss and Christopher Seeger said in a statement that the

July 7 decision represents "an extraordinary settlement" for the plaintiffs.

"We have received overwhelming support from the retired player community as they learn more about the guaranteed benefits and long-term security this settlement provides, and we look forward to soon finalizing this agreement," Weiss and Seeger wrote.

US District Court Judge Anita Brody wrote in her decision on July 7 that her concerns over an earlier settlement were "satisfied" and that the revised deal "is a significant improvement" over the first.

In January, Brody rejected an agreement struck last August in which the NFL agreed to pay \$765 million to provide medical benefits and injury compensation to retired players and

their families.

The new "uncapped" settlement, Brody wrote, "ensures that there are sufficient funds available to pay all claims through the 65-year term of the settlement and improves the manner in which diagnoses are made to protect against fraud."

The settlement also sets up a \$10 million fund for education programs geared to concussion prevention.

NFL senior vice president Anastasia Danias called Brody's decision comprehensive and said the league would work with the plaintiffs to implement the terms.

The court will hold a fairness hearing later this year at which plaintiffs can air objections to the settlement.

- AFP

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ARRAS

Brit cycling hits low after Froome crash

CHRIS Froome's abandonment from the Tour de France sent British cycling to a new low following two years of unbridled success.

Froome became the second high-profile Briton to crash out of this year's Tour, after sprint ace and former world champion Mark Cavendish.

Cavendish had been hotly tipped to win the opening stage, which finished in his mother's home town.

It was also hoped he would get back to his previous all-conquering ways after winning just two stages on last year's Tour.

But he caused a spill in the sprint finish in Harrogate and separated his shoulder, pulling out before the start of the second stage on July 6.

His OPQS team later revealed he would need an operation and will be out for six weeks.

If that wasn't bad enough, Tour favourite Froome crashed on the July 8 stage and had to start the following day with a splint on his injured wrist.

Yet he crashed twice more and cut a pained and sorry figure as he climbed into a team car and meekly left the defence of the crown he won so dominantly last year.

Already there had been questions asked when only four Britons lined up at the start of the 101st edition of the Grand Boucle, and second to start in Britain.

That leaves only Geraint Thomas of Sky and Orica GreenEDGE's Simon Yates still in the race.

Thomas will play a vital role in helping Sky's new leader Richie Porte's attempt to win the Tour title for the team for a third straight year, but Yates has so far been anonymous.



Chris Froome rides in the pack after a fall during the fourth stage of the Tour de France on July 8 in northern France. Photo: AFP

Sky team manager Dave Brailsford said humbly after the July 9 stage:

"Sometimes you win and sometimes you lose, and I think you've got to lose in a good way and win in a good way."

But it's all a far cry from the last two years in which Bradley Wiggins made history by becoming the first Briton to win the Tour de France in 2012.

What's more, he did it in a British team and then went on to lead Britain to a hugely successful Olympic Games in cycling as he won time-trial gold.

Britain won eight gold medals on the track and road combined while no other country managed more than one.

A year later Froome made it a British and Sky double at the Tour as he succeeded the injured Wiggins as champion.

With this year's Tour starting in Britain it had led many to suggest the country had become the new centre of the cycling world.

Brailsford himself said before the

Tour that Britain had become "a cycling nation".

Yet that was to paper over the cracks. Britain won only two gold medals at this year's World track championships.

The Sky team has also been much criticised for their policy of focussing almost entirely on the Tour de France and ignoring to a large races such as the Spring Classics.

They went some way to correcting that this year as Thomas had top eight finishes at both the Tour of Flanders and Paris-Roubaix, where Wiggins also came in ninth.

Yet Sky didn't help themselves either by leaving national icon Wiggins out of their Tour team.

It may have been the right decision as the charismatic and temperamental Wiggins could have distracted attention from Froome.

But with Froome now out, Sky and Britain are lacking a natural and confident leader. — AFP

YANGON

Boxing tournament brings cheers, controversy

KYAW ZIN HLAING

kyawzinhlaing.mcm@gmail.com

BOXERS from Myanmar and neighbouring Thailand battled it out last week at the One Big Fight tournament in Yangon, with spectators and TV viewers treated to one of the country's most professional events in recent years.

Held in collaboration with the Myanmar Letwhay Association and Royal Zarmani Creation & Innovation at Yangon's Thein Phyu Gymnasium on July 6, 10 matches pitted Myanmar and Thai boxers against each other.

Myanmar came out on top, winning four matches. Thailand took just one, with the other five ending in draws.

The tournament got off to a slow start. Myanmar boxers Ye Myat Aung

Soe Lin Oo appeared to poke Par Wi in the eye. Par Wi then punched Soe Lin Oo shortly after the bell. Soe Lin Oo retaliated by kneeling Par Wi in the groin. The lack of action from the referee caused outrage on the Thai side of the ring.

"Soe Lin Oo hit Par Wi after the bell had been rung. He attack Par Wi in his groin with his knee. The referee didn't take any action. The decision of the referee is not fair," said Char Rar Wut, manager of the Thai boxers.

Char Rar Wut was also critical of the referee during a match between Saw Gaw Mudo and Phar Gaw. Char Rar Wut said that he attempted to call for time for his boxer, Phar Gaw, but that the referee did not see him and called the match in favour of Saw Gaw Mudo.



Boxers Two Two and Khunt fight on July 6. Photo: Supplied

and Yan Taing Kyaw fought early, but fans were unimpressed with the youngsters who looked outclassed by their more seasoned Thai opponents.

"It is good that young boxers are allowed to compete in international matches but the organisers should arrange for them to fight opponents who are in the same league," said U Kyaw Soe, the coach of the Nagarmarn Myanmar traditional boxing team.

"Because of this experience, they may feel demoralised."

The scene picked up when Thatti Aung of Myanmar who stopped his opponent cold with a devastating head butt in the fourth round after fighting through a flurry of vicious strikes.

The event, though, was not without its share of controversy. During the much-anticipated fight between Soe Lin Oo of Myanmar and Thailand's Par Wi,

"We are told that we could ask for rest time during a pre-fight meeting with officials. But they didn't see my request to give my boxer additional rest time. The ring referee should look at both managers. Some decisions are not fair. We objected his decision, but the referee decided that the Myanmar boxer was a winner," Char Rar Wut said, adding that the regulations should have been more clearly laid out in the pre-fight meeting.

But U Kyaw Soe dismissed these complaints.

"There are a lot of fighters who compete in Myanmar very often and who familiar with the regulations of Myanmar boxing. It is impossible that they don't know our regulations. I think that they are just saying this to excuse their losses."

— Translation By Thiri Min Htun

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RIO DE JANEIRO

Neymar backs Messi in World Cup final

Injured Brazilian star Neymar declared on July 10 he wants Lionel Messi to lead fierce rivals Argentina to victory over Germany as the countdown to the World Cup final began.

Neymar, who missed Brazil's 7-1 humiliation against Germany due to a back injury, told a press conference he wanted Messi and Argentina to win the title.

"Messi's history in the sport is so important, he has won a lot of trophies and I will be cheering for him," said Neymar, a team-mate of Messi's at Barcelona.

"He is a friend, he is my team-mate and I wish him luck."

Neymar's support of Messi, and by extension Argentina, is unlikely to be shared by many of his compatriots.

Brazilians are dreading the prospect of Argentina claiming their third world title in the Maracana Stadium in Rio de Janeiro on July 13.

The South American nations are sworn footballing enemies, and Argentina's advance to the final rubbed salt into Brazilian wounds still fresh from the July 8 record defeat to Germany.

"The nightmare continues," *O Dia* newspaper commented glumly after Argentina booked their place in the final by beating the Netherlands on July 9.

As many as 100,000 Argentine fans are expected to descend on Rio for the final, the climax of a month-long footballing fiesta.

Germany meanwhile said they had quickly wiped away the euphoria felt from their thrashing of Brazil.

Germany's veteran striker Miroslav Klose, who became the World Cup's all-time leading scorer with the second goal against Brazil, said his



Brazil's forward Neymar speaks at a press conference in Teresopolis on July 10. Photo: AFP

team had quickly forgotten the momentous win.

"We enjoyed the game against Brazil, but we ticked it off after 24 hours," Klose said. "In the next game, we have to again play to the best of our abilities."

Germany assistant coach Hansi Flick said his team had studied the way the Netherlands managed to successfully contain Messi.

"We saw how the Dutch managed to keep Messi out, but we too have a special plan for him - although I won't give that away," said Flick.

Argentina's players began plotting Germany's downfall as they returned to Belo Horizonte.

Striker Sergio Aguero said his teammates were comfortable in the

marginal underdog role, insisting all the pressure would be on Germany.

"Germany were always the favourites, along with Brazil, to win the World Cup," the Manchester City man said.

"They continue to be so now. We need to play our own game and it suits us that all the pressure is on them."

Elsewhere on July 10, FIFA dismissed appeals by Uruguay and Luis Suarez over the striker's four-month ban for biting.

Suarez was thrown out of the World Cup and banned from all football activity for four months after being found guilty of biting Italy's Giorgio Chiellini in a Group D game on June 24.

It was the third time Suarez has been found guilty of biting an opponent in his career.

The 27-year-old initially denied any wrongdoing. He later issued an apology admitting Chiellini had "suffered the physical result of a bite".

If FIFA's ban is upheld, Suarez will not play football again until late October.

A nine-match international ban also means he will miss all or most of Uruguay's campaign in the 2015 Copa America.

Suarez has been strongly linked with a move to Barcelona, a deal that seemed to edge closer after the Spanish giants completed the sale of Chile's World Cup star Alexis Sanchez to Arsenal. - AFP

LAS VEGAS

Mayweather sets Maidana rematch

UNDEFEATED world welterweight champion Floyd Mayweather will fight Argentina's Marcos Maidana September 13 in Las Vegas in a rematch of a narrow May triumph, the US fighter announced on July 10.

Mayweather, 46-0 with 26 knockouts, will defend the World Boxing Council and World Boxing Association titles against Maidana, 35-4 with 31 knockouts, as he did on May 3 by majority decision.

Two judges scored Mayweather the winner by 116-112 and 117-111, while the other saw the fight a 114-114 draw.

"Marcos Maidana is a tough customer and he gave me a fight that had me work for the victory," Mayweather said in a statement.

The fight will be the fourth in a record six-bout deal with Showtime that has made Mayweather the highest-paid athlete in the world as he threatens the iconic 49-0 career mark of former heavyweight champion Rocky Marciano.

Mayweather confirmed Las Vegas would be the venue despite his having earlier gotten a license to fight in the state of New York, sparking talk the bout might be staged in New York.

Mayweather will fight on a Mexican holiday weekend as he usually does.

Mayweather had kept Amir Khan hanging for months regarding the May bout, only to give Maidana the prized chance and provide Khan only an undercard spot.

"I'm not one to give second chances in the ring, but I want to give the fans what they want to see," Mayweather said.

"I will be as prepared as I always am when I step in the ring on September 13."

Maidana, 30, lost his WBA crown to Mayweather, 37, after taking it from Adrien Broner last December in an impressive showing that pushed him to the top of Mayweather's hit list.

"I've already proved that I don't care if the man I have in front of me is the best pound-for-pound champion. I was close to ending his reign last time. On September 13 he will not get away undefeated."

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