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SUPPLEMENT

Mandalay 12-page special

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MYANMAR TIMES

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ISSUE 751 | OCTOBER 20 - 26, 2014



What price for peace?

Chief negotiator U Aung Min draws fire for comments linking funding for the peace process to the speedy signing of a nationwide ceasefire agreement.

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MRTV-4: the ownership dispute with a twist

Billed for almost a decade as a joint venture, the government now insists that MRTV-4 was privately owned from its 2006 launch – but Forever Group doesn't see it that way.

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Shake-up looms in the Ministry of Health

Department of Health likely to be split into two departments and district health offices set up to strengthen administrative structures for anticipated cash influx.



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Yangon zoo's prized pachyderm Mo Mo has won legions of fans with her harmonica playing and dancing – and now they're turning out to celebrate her 61st birthday.

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Telenor Yangon launch pushed back two weeks

Debut now expected around the end of October – one month after network was switched on in Mandalay – as Norwegian firm seeks to "optimise" coverage by adding more towers.

Participants attend peace talks in Shan State in July 2013. Photo: Aung Htay Hlaing

Cracks widen within KNU

Karen National Union leaders call a meeting to discuss growing tension over the decision to suspend membership of the UNFC and a recent proposal to unify four major Kayin armed groups. NEWS 3



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THE INSIDER: The local lowdown & best of the web

Ebola? I barely knew 'er

In news to be filed under "you can't make this sh*t up", word of an Ebola scare in downtown Yangon spread rapidly last week after images of a poster in a hotel lobby went viral on social media and led to the police confirming the whole thing had been a bizarre information-gathering ploy by a junior Special Branch officer.

The poster in question had been placed at City Star Hotel in Kyauktada township, by a man who identified himself to staff members as a police officer from the local constabulary. It listed the names of four people, and appealed for information at the bottom of the page: "If you see people on this list please inform us. These people have EBOLA. They disappeared from the airport." The poster included passport numbers for three of the four listed.

The phone number provided didn't appear to work. The list of names included one Ghanaian citizen, one Japanese, one Costa Rican, and one Myanmar. Page 2 has so far been unable to track down the Ghanaian man, but a quick Google revealed the Japanese woman appears to be in India after being taken in for observation over concerns she was displaying symptoms of the Ebola virus. Media there reported that 27-year-old Kawakubo Yuko had entered Manipur overland from Myanmar and as of October 14, results from the Jawaharlal Nehru Institute of Medical Sciences (JNIMS) in Imphal were still pending.

The Costa Rican man was listed as "Mr Otero Gunter". Gunter Otero was the subject of a recent report in *The Myanmar Times*. A business owner at Ngapali beach, Mr Otero had been charged with disturbing an official on duty (stemming from a misunderstanding about a birth certificate for his son born at Thandwe Hospital) but the case was thrown out of court. Complications arose with immigration and, for a time, he was simultaneously being questioned by local authorities about why he was overstaying his visa while not being allowed to leave the country. This issue has since been resolved, and he recently did a same-day visa run to Bangkok.

Page 2 spoke with Mr Otero, who confirmed he does not have Ebola and is very concerned that his personal details were made publicly available.

Renowned Democratic Voice of Burma satirist Nay Zaw Naing's name on

the poster was followed by (sic) "DBB" in brackets, had the word "reporter" underneath, and identified him as a Myanmar citizen, despite the fact he holds a Norwegian passport. He recently made a visa run to Bangkok and holds a journalist visa.

DVB confirmed to Page 2 that, to the best of their knowledge, he hasn't been to Liberia recently and definitely doesn't have the Ebola virus either.

The rumours prompted the Centre for Disease Control to issue a statement via their Facebook page.

DVB staff went to City Star Hotel on October 17 to investigate, and asked staff to take the poster down – a request that was initially met with some reluctance, given that a figure of authority had put it there in the first place. They then went to Kyauktada Police Station, where they were told the man in question was busy and could not meet with them.

The Myanmar Times managed to confirm with Yangon police on October 18 that the poster poster was not from Kyauktada police department but is a Special Branch officer, and that the issue has "been resolved".

DVB's Toe Zaw Latt says this is "an example of the authorities making a false announcement which is not very helpful at all, and they can lose the public trust. It is easy to blame social media for instabilities or incitement with a rumour but a statement about something as serious as Ebola should be very carefully worded – they should understand the impact of such a statement, it can cause fear within the public..."

'...but this is not about Ebola. This is about Nay Zaw Naing. He has the right visa, and he has done everything right. This is another way of tracking journalists.'

Toe Zaw Latt of DVB on Special Branch's innovative new approach to intelligence-gathering

4187

Deaths in yebet prison labour camps between 1978 and 2004

1119

Deaths between May 2004 and August 2014 in "Agricultural and Livestock Breeding Centres" and "Management Centres", after yebet were rebranded in 2004

120

Deaths between April 2011 and August 2014, as reforms of correctional facilities began to be rolled out

– Deaths in labour camps can be attributed to "weather, diet and lifestyle" factors, the Minister for Home Affairs said last week

In brief:

Aspiring diabetic pleaded international concerns over reform process didn't thwart KFC's plans to enter the market

IDP child appreciates sentiment behind visit from Clowns Without Borders, but says clowns are "terrifying, even with cultural context" and that while it was "a fun afternoon" his community "would have preferred actual aid"

Next week:

Condom vendor on Anawratha realises having his stall next to the six other condom vendors might explain his business's lack of competitive edge

New industry figures show market recovery after pronounced mid-year slump in swastika T-shirt sales

Special Branch rethinks strategy behind appeal for information based on allegations their targets are ISIS-affiliated, after embarrassing Ebola gaffe



IN PICTURES

May I Help You: a statement, not a question. Community outreach poster from the Myanmar Police Force website

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Police escort a van carrying U San Sint to Dekkhinathiri Township Court on October 17. Photo: Pyae Thet Phyto

MPs draft petition after former minister jailed for 13 years

**PYAE THET PHYTO
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FIFTY members of parliament have signed an appeal letter to President U Thein Sein calling for the release of former Minister for Religious Affairs U San Sint, who was last week sentenced to 13 years' imprisonment. U San Sint was sacked and arrested in June and charged with breach of trust and sedition. He was sentenced to 13 years and a K100,000 fine by Dekkhinathiri Township Court in Nay Pyi Taw on October 17. His lawyer, U Tin Tun, said he would lodge an appeal to the Mandalay Region High Court as soon as possible. "We are very dissatisfied [with the decision]," he added. Pyithu Hluttaw representative U Khine Maung Yi said dozens of MPs were supporting the appeal. "I was very sad when I heard this news. Fifty members of parliament have signed an appeal against his sentence and the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw has sent this appeal letter to the

president and chief justice of the Supreme Court," he said. "He did so many things as a Union minister ... I think the judgment was unfair." The charges stem from allegations that U San Sint had misused around K10 million of state funds for a ceremony to consecrate a pagoda near Nay Pyi Taw in December 2013. He later paid back K2.8 million, according to the government. Presidential spokesperson U Ye Htut has publicly stated, however, that the minister's downfall was

'It's kind of like leaving someone behind who doesn't work together with the group.'

U Hla Swe
Amyotha Hluttaw representative

related to his defiance of President U Thein Sein and alleged mishandling of the raid on the Mahasantisukha Monastery in early June. Before being appointed minister for religious affairs, U San Sint was speaker of the Ayeyarwady Region Hluttaw, where he developed a loyal following among some residents for his outspoken criticism of the regional government. Amyotha Hluttaw representative U Hla Swe said U San Sint would not have been charged if he had followed the president's instructions. "U San Sint never did as the president said. It's kind of like leaving someone behind who doesn't work together with the group," he said. But Ma Tin Sann, an activist from Ayeyarwady Region who took part in a protest of support for the former minister, said the government was hypocritical to target U San Sint. "Why did they not take action against any other minister? We know most of the other ministers are misappropriating money too," she said. - Translation by Thiri Min Htun

KNU to meet amid split fears



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BELEAGUED by internal tensions, the Karen National Union has called an urgent meeting of its central committee this week to thrash out basic policies and head off a potential split among the group's leaders, *The Myanmar Times* has learned. The move comes after two senior members publicly disagreed on the decision to suspend the group's membership in the United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC), an umbrella organisation for ethnic armed forces. The meeting, to be held at the group's headquarters in Hlaingbwe township on October 22 or 23, will also discuss the proposed move to form a single fighting force from the four different Kayin armed groups, KNU general secretary Padoh Mahn Mahn told *The Myanmar Times* last week. One of the main issues will be the KNU's position in the UNFC, after leader General Mutu Say Pho walked out of the UNFC annual conference in late August. While he later wrote to the UNFC and said the KNU would suspend

its membership, deputy leader Naw Zipporah Sein has indicated that she wants to stay inside the organisation. The Hlaingbwe meeting, which is expected to run for three days, will discuss whether to re-engage with the ethnic alliance. Leaders last week attempted to play down tensions but there appear to be real fears that if left unaddressed the issues could lead to a split among the leadership. "I don't want to say there are two groups in the KNU, but there are two visions," said Padoh Mahn Mahn. He said the discussion would examine whether it is better to maintain solidarity among ethnic opponents of the government, or whether KNU had the power to shape its future alone. The KNU meeting will also discuss the proposed reunification of Kayin armed groups, including the KNU's armed wing, the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), as well as the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA), the KNU/KNLA Peace Council and the Karen National Defence Organisation (KNDO). In what appeared to be an attempt to unify those organisations, a statement issued on October 13 announced the formation of the Kawthoolei Armed Forces (KAF).

MORE ON NEWS 7

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An ownership dispute with a twist

Rather than fight for ownership of MRTV-4, the government is now insisting that it never had a stake in the broadcaster

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CONFUSION has emerged over the ownership structure of popular free-to-air channel MRTV-4. The network's private investors have failed to clarify comments from a senior Ministry of Information official who insisted it has been wholly private since its establishment in 2006.

The uncertainty over ownership also brings into focus questionable details about the original contract, and whether government property and human resources should have been allocated to what the government now says was a purely private enterprise.

The station was set up by Forever Media Group in 2006, during U Kyaw Hsan's tenure as minister for information, with cabinet approval. It was widely publicised as a joint venture with Myanma Radio and Television (MRTV), although that now appears to be in doubt.

MRTV director general U Tint Swe, the former head of the government censorship board, told *The Myanmar Times* in an interview that the government has never been a partner in the channel and receives only a monthly licensing fee.

The fee enables MRTV-4 to operate despite State Law and Order Restoration Council Law 9/89 - also known as the State-owned Economic Enterprises Law - giving the state "the sole right to carry out ... broadcasting service and television service".

"MRTV-4 is a privately owned channel," said U Tint Swe, who was promoted to director general to run MRTV in 2012.

He said the contract makes no mention of a partnership, and describes Forever Group as "the licensee" and the ministry as "the issuer" of the licence.

"In the contract you can see that it states [the ministry] will give permission to run terrestrial and cable broadcast [operations to Forever Group]. For that, the revenue will be shared between both sides. [The company] has to give 25 to 50 percent of the revenue to the government on a monthly basis."

This revenue, he said, has risen from about K90 million a month to as much as K150 million now. This would put total annual revenue for MRTV-4



A cameraman from MRTV-4 films a football match. Photo: Supplied

at somewhere between K3.6 billion and K7.2 billion.

To clear the confusion over ownership, the ministry plans to sever all ties with MRTV-4 before the broadcast media law is enacted. This is likely to require the broadcaster to change its name, U Tint Swe said.

"We are now working on how [the confusion over ownership of MRTV-4] should be cleared up. It could be approved in near future. We will ... charge them for the [state] infrastructure they use."

"It will also not be possible to continue using the MRTV-4 name."

When asked about U Tint Swe's comments, a Forever Group representative failed to clarify the company's ownership structure.

U Khin Maung Htay, a founding member of Forever Group's board of directors, said initially that MRTV-4 "already is" privately owned. However, he then added it would be a "purely private" channel when the broadcast media law is enacted.

When pressed further, he said it was set up as a joint venture but would change when the law is introduced.

"It is originally a joint venture," he said. "But when the new law is enacted

we will have to follow it. We will change depending on what the government decides."

Asked about the structure of joint venture and if Forever Group simply paid a licence fee to the government, U Khin Maung Htay responded, "I will discuss it if [the government] does. Otherwise I don't have any authority to talk about it."

For many years the operation appeared, at least on face value, to be a joint venture. MRTV-4 is the fourth channel of Myanma Radio and Television - after MRTV, MRTV-2 (now

'Initially MRTV-4 was a joint venture ... How come the channel was transferred to the Forever Group?'

Daw Pa Pa San Kyaw

Former program director, MRTV-4

Myawady) and MRTV-3 (now Myanmar International) - and until April 2013 was run by both civil servants and Forever Group employees.

A significant proportion of the production costs were covered by the government, which also provided most of the original technical expertise.

The government established a News Production Department at MRTV-4 headed by a director, which oversaw the creation - and censorship - of nearly all of the content.

This department quickly grew from 20 to 157 staff before being recalled in January 2013. The cost of news production, as well as the salaries and production expenses incurred by all civil servants at MRTV-4, was covered by the government, U Tint Swe said.

He conceded that the contract never specified that government staff would be allocated to support the network.

"In the contract, there are not any points about who will do what things," he said.

What is clear is that, without support from the ministry, the channel would not be as successful as it is today.

U Myint Aung, a former director of the News Production Department

who now works at the National Races Channel, said MRTV staff had been essential to get the station up and running.

"Initially, [Forever Group staff] didn't really know much about broadcasting. They didn't know anything about how to produce a program ... They got these skills by collaborating [with MRTV staff]," he said.

Meanwhile, the station used - and continues to use - government property on Pyay Road, and also benefits from the use of other government facilities.

Former and current staff at MRTV-4, employed by both the government and Forever Group, told *The Myanmar Times* there was widespread confusion over its ownership.

"Initially, MRTV-4 was a joint venture ... How come the channel was entirely transferred to the Forever Group?" asked Daw Pa Pa San Kyaw, a former program director at MRTV-4 who now works at MRTV.

"[Forever Group staff] are still in our compound and using our offices," she said.

One senior Forever Group staffer, who asked not to be named, said the company now handles all MRTV-4 production. "But we are not still entirely separate from each other. We still use the ministry's facilities."

U Tint Swe insisted that this was reasonable given that half the revenue went to the government.

U Thiha Saw, a member of the Myanmar Press Council (Interim), said the ownership of the channel was "unclear" since the beginning. If it was privately owned, it should not have been set up with the name MRTV-4, he said, as it gives the impression that the government is a participant. He also expressed surprise that the government continued to pay the salaries of its staff who were assigned to work on MRTV-4.

U Thiha Saw, who is also editorial director at *The Myanmar Times*, said he believed Forever Group participated in MRTV-4 in order to get permission to operate, from 2005, the 5-Series satellite network, which had a monopoly on pay television broadcasting until the launch of Skynet in 2010.

He added that the lack of clarity was quite normal in Myanmar and that "clearing up the mess" would be a challenge.

"Myanmar has endured ... not only the wrong policies but also mismanagement. As a result of these, there has been a great deal of un-transparent activities, corruption and cronyism."

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Anger as ministe

Politicians accuse government of trying to pressure armed groups into signing



El Ei Toe Lwin

Pyae Thet Phy

THE government's chief negotiator has generated controversy by warning in a speech to parliament that international funding for the peace process could dry up unless a nationwide ceasefire agreement is signed.

Political and ethnic leaders have criticised his comments, questioning whether they were designed to pressure armed groups into agreeing to the government's ceasefire demands.

They also responded that the ceasefire could be signed quickly and cheaply if the government was willing to give more ground at the negotiating table, and questioned the expenses of the Myanmar Peace Center, which has been facilitating talks.

A costly peace

Speaking to parliament on October 13 in response to questions from MP Thura U Aung Ko, U Aung Min said Myanmar's peace process had been more expensive than in other countries that had undergone similar peacebuilding efforts.

He said K358.6 million had been spent from the government budget in 2012-13 - mostly to set up the

Myanmar Peace Center (MPC) - while other expenses had been covered with support from the European Union, United Nations Peace Building Fund, Japanese government, Nippon Foundation and Myanmar Peace Support Initiative.

Most of this funding has been funnelled into the MPC, which is headed by U Aung Min.

Since 2012, MPC has accepted US\$1.2 million from Japan, \$404,600 from UNPBF, \$6.3 million from Nippon Foundation and \$511,935 from MPSI.

The main donor, however, has been the EU, which pledged 5 million euros (\$6.40 million) from November 2012 to the end of September 2014. However, U Aung Min said MPC had accepted just 1.6 million euros (\$2.05 million) of that figure to March this year.

All funding was in the form of aid or grants rather than loans so did not require approval from parliament. However, U Aung Min said donors have managed spending closely, adding that he felt “inferior” because the government did not have the right to manage the funds itself.

“But if we took these expenses from the state budget, funding for building roads and bridges would decrease. That's why we are accepting [foreign assistance] although it makes us feel inferior,” he said.

He added that not all of the funding pledged had been handed over. “They [donors] have a policy that they will provide full support when we get a nationwide ceasefire accord.”

He added that the peace process would struggle on despite these financial challenges.

“I don't want you getting depressed but I want let you all know the situation.”

Pressure points: a dangerous game

The linking of the nationwide ceasefire and international assistance by U Aung Min has been controversial,



Minister of the President's Office U Aung Min march to mark the International Day of Peace

with some politicians saying that the government is trying to pressure armed ethnic groups to sign the draft ceasefire. Others speculated that the comments indicated the government could use funding as an excuse to stop the peace process.

“It doesn't make sense,” said Daw Dwe Bu, secretary of Pyithu Hluttaw Internal Peace-making Committee.

She said foreign aid should be held over for rehabilitation projects after getting a nationwide ceasefire. “We can't do any rehabilitation

MILLION US\$

11

Approximate amount spent to date by the government on the peace process, the majority from foreign donors

Nagar Pyan
Jasmine Tea

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r links aid to ceasefire

a draft nationwide ceasefire in order to unlock more international funding for the peace process



gestures as he makes a speech during a in Yangon on September 21, 2013. Photo: AFP

projects without a concrete ceasefire.” U Aung Min’s comments come at a sensitive time for the peace process. The Union Peace-making Work Committee (UPWC), led by U Aung Min, and the Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team, which is negotiating on behalf of 16 armed ethnic groups, have been working toward a nationwide ceasefire since November 2013. However, at the most recent talks in September, tensions emerged over security issues and shortly after negotiations concluded clashes broke out between the Tatmadaw and ethnic armies. NCCT leader Naing Han Thar insisted last week that ethnic groups would only sign the ceasefire if the government accepts their demand for a federal union system. “International aid and the nationwide ceasefire are different. If they want to get genuine peace, they don’t need much money. They must be fair,” he said. The controversy comes just weeks after President U Thein Sein linked the 2015 general election to the peace process in a national radio address, and appeared to suggest that if the ceasefire is not signed the elections could be delayed. Political analyst U Yan Myo Thein said it was dangerous for the government put pressure on ethnic groups to sign the ceasefire, particularly if the motivation is

international funding. “It could harm the process ... It is impossible to get genuine peace by using pressure like this,” he said. “[Conflict] is our internal problem. Why did [the government] say they will get more money when we sign a nationwide ceasefire?” “The government has a duty to get a nationwide ceasefire, regardless of whether it receives international assistance.”

‘It is impossible to get genuine peace by using pressure like this.’

U Yan Myo Thein
Political analyst

Money well spent? U Yan Myo Thein questioned the \$11 million spent by MPC over the past two years. “Most money has been used for the development of MPC and only a little on the peace process,” he said, adding that the centre should be more transparent about how the money is used, particularly how much goes toward

salaries, transportation costs and travel allowances. But U Aung Min said in his address to parliament that the more than 100 staff employed at MPC were appointed by a consulting firm, International Management Group, that was assigned by the EU. IMG and other foreign organisations audit all MPC expenses each week, he added. U Aung Min said he and other government officials who take part in peace talks, as well as the centre’s four special advisers, have agreed not to accept “any salary or any assistance from foreign organisations”. One source close to the UPWC, who asked not to be named, said he was not concerned about funding stopping if talks toward a nationwide ceasefire are not soon concluded. “There are many other countries that are interested in the peace process and want to give assistance. We have many options if the EU or others decide to stop our funding,” he said. “For example, we can get funds from China if we request it – China would be very happy to help us. “And even if no one will help us, the government has enough money to cover these expenses because [the peace centre’s activities] are very important for the state’s peace and tranquillity.”

CONTINUED FROM NEWS 3

The statement said the recent clashes between government forces and Kayin armed groups prompted the founding of the KAF. It also cast doubt on the level of agreement reached between the government and the armed groups, saying that the KAF would continue the fight for federalism. However, on October 14, the KNU’s defence department announced that the KNLA and the KNDO were still part of the KNU, suggesting that senior officers of those groups who had signed the agreement to form the KAF had been acting without authorisation. Padoh Kwe Htoo Win, joint secretary general of the KNU, said he did not believe the KNDO and the KNLA want to split. “Reunification is very important for the Kayin. We will continue to discuss reunification, and try to solve political problems through political means,” he said. Leaders will also examine the state of negotiations toward a nationwide ceasefire between the government and armed ethnic groups. At a meeting in September, talks hit a roadblock on the issue of security sector reform. “We are seriously concerned by [recent negotiations] and need to consider whether we should change our stance on the ceasefire deal,” Padoh Mahn Mahn said. He said he feared the government was trying to remove clauses already agreed upon, particularly concerning establishing a federal system through political dialogue. “If [the federal system clause] is not included, how can the peace talks move forward?”

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Labour leaders seek jail for bosses who defy arbitration

Increased fines in amended Settlement of Labour Disputes Law do not go far enough, activists and workers say

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LABOUR activists are campaigning for further amendments to a labour law that they say fails to protect workers. Despite an intervention by President U Thein Sein and others, parliament decided against sending employers to prison for breaking the Settlement of Labour Disputes Law. Instead, they face a maximum fine of K1 million under an amended version of the law passed in September.

Ko Ye Naing Win, a member of the Arbitration Council, the highest authority for resolving labour disputes, said activists plan to launch a petition urging parliament to review the law again.

“If the law doesn’t allow for prison sentences,” he said. “Basically, employers can get away with firing a worker for only K500,000 or K1 million.”

The Settlement of Labour Disputes Law was enacted in March 2012, creating the Arbitration Council to settle disputes between employers and workers.

However, activists and officials said most of its rulings – about 100 to date – had been ignored by employers because the penalties ranged from just K30,000 to K100,000.

Deputy Minister for Labour Daw Win Maw Tun told parliament last month that the light penalties in the law allowed employers to ignore the council’s rulings. Another problem, she said, is that the law does not cover Nay Pyi Taw Council or self-administered zones and regions.

As a result, the Ministry of Labour and the International Labour Organization joined local workers’ groups in arguing for tougher enforcement provisions, and even the president said the protection of workers’ rights would require the option of imprisonment.

However, when the law was debated in parliament, MPs instead opted to increase the punishments to K500,000 and K1 million, depending on which section of the law was violated.

Pyithu Hluttaw representative U Khine Maung Yi defended the decision, saying that enforcement did not depend only on having strict punishments.



Staff from the Home Shin factory protest in Yangon on September 23, 2013. Photo: Aung Htay Hlaing

He said if jail terms are introduced for those who fail to abide by Arbitration Council rulings, workers would also likely end up in prison.

“I don’t want workers to go to jail – that’s why I proposed not to have jail terms,” he said. “I would also like to ask [labour rights’ groups] why they are complaining about the law ... As far as I know, most are just talking about what they have heard, not what they have observed.”

U Maung Maung Win, a lawyer and employer representative on the Arbitration Council, said it was unclear whether the law could be effective without jail time as a potential punishment.

However, he said employers had also called for the law to include imprisonment because they are unhappy that workers are ignoring council rulings.

“We need to consider both sides – the employers and the workers,” he

said. “We as the Arbitration Council are trying to find a middle way to resolve labour disputes.”

‘If the law doesn’t allow for prison sentences, it can’t effectively protect workers.’

Ko Ye Naing Win
Arbitration Council member

But Ma Khine, who was fired from her job at the Tai Ye footwear factory for leading a strike action by workers, said the penalties in the new law would not cause an employer to

hesitate before unlawfully dismissing a worker.

In Ma Khine’s case, her employer abided by the Arbitration Council ruling to increase wages but not to rehire her and other workers who led the strikes.

Former garment worker Ko Thet Hnin Aung said his former employer, Aung Sein Garment Factory, had ignored an instruction to rehire him. “I don’t believe the law can protect our rights” without jail terms, he said.

Ko Tun Tun Naing, a member of the Cooperative Committee for Trade Unions, said 2470 labour disputes had occurred between June 2012 and August 2014. In most cases that the Arbitration Council had been asked to adjudicate its rulings were ignored, he said.

“Working people can’t survive long without a job,” he said. “This law does nothing for workers’ rights.”

New rules for publishing licences to open up sector

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THE issuing of publishing licences has resumed following a six-month halt, after the Ministry of Information enacted by-laws for the Printing and Publishing Enterprise Law on October 10.

The ministry announced that local and foreign investors could apply for licences for all kind of publications, including newspapers, magazines and journals, as of October 15.

The process had been halted in April after the enactment of the Printing and Publishing Enterprise Law the previous month in March, leaving prospective publishers in limbo.

According to the new rules, applicants must provide details about the proposed publication and its editors, while agreeing to follow the code of conduct of the News Media Council.

Approval is to be granted within three weeks and a licence attained within three days of paying the K50,000 (about US\$50) registration fee. Licensees are required to start their publishing business within two years but there appear to be few other restrictions on who can hold a licence.

U Thiha Saw, a member of the Myanmar Press Council (Interim) and editorial director at *The Myanmar Times*, said this would be a significant change from the previous licensing process, when the Ministry of Information had significant discretion over who to grant a licence to.

“Previously getting a licence depended on [the authorities]. It is a positive step if every applicant who is in accord with the law can get a licence,” he said. “Ethnic people can also easily get a licence for publishing in ethnic languages. It is welcome news.”

Licences will be valid for five years – up from one year previously – and can be cancelled for publishing material that damages a religion, encourages terrorism or crime, or is deemed to be pornographic.

Any changes to the shareholding of joint ventures with a publishing licence must be relayed to the ministry.

Foreign investors can apply for a licence for a printing or publishing business with prior approval from the Myanmar Investment Commission.

Under the foreign investment law, foreign firms can only publish in foreign languages, while the draft Broadcast Media Law approved by the Amyotha Hluttaw allow foreign investors to hold up to 30 percent in a broadcast media firm.

While foreign investors are allowed to invest in both print and broadcast with approval from cabinet,

local investors are banned from doing so under the draft broadcast law.

The rules re-open the registration process that was temporarily halted in April following the abolition of the administrative body for printers, publishers and distributors.

The body was abolished following the enactment of the Printing and Publishing Enterprise Law in March. The law replaced the 1962 Printers and Publishers Registration Act.

As of April, the ministry had issued licences to 366 weekly journals, 31 daily newspapers, 290 magazines and more than 8000 other publications. Of these, 11 daily newspapers, 210 weekly journals and 190 magazines are currently being published.

Licences issued under the 1962 act are valid until their expiry date, after which the licence holder will have to apply for a licence under the new law.

‘Bi Mon Te Nay’ staff to appeal

Three editorial members and two publishers sentenced to two years’ imprisonment for incitement



LUN MIN MANG



YE MON

FIVE staff members from the defunct *Bi Mon Te Nay* journal plan to appeal two-year jail terms handed down in Pabedan Township Court, their lawyer said last week.

The three editorial staff – U Win Tin, U Aung Thant and Ko Min Wathan – and publishers U Kyaw Min Khine and U Yin Min Tun were given the jail terms on October 16 for incitement under section 505(b) of the Penal Code.

They may also receive support from the Remaining Political Prisoner Scrutiny Committee, as member U Nyo Tun told *The Myanmar Times* after the sentencing that he believed they were political prisoners.

He said the government regularly used the incitement charge to jail political activists but sentences are normally no more than six months.

“I’m very disappointed that the authorities sentenced journalists in this way ... The punishment is unfair,” said U Nyo Tun, who is also a member of the Former Political Prisoners’ Society.

The *Bi Mon Te Nay* staff were arrested on July 8 after publishing an announcement from an activist group, the Movement for Democracy Current Force (MDCF), that said Daw

Photo: Zarni Phyo



A staff member of Bi Mon Te Nay leaves court after sentencing on October 16.

Aung San Suu Kyi and ethnic political leaders had formed an interim government. MDCF leader Ko Htin Kyaw has since received a six-month jail term for distributing pamphlets with the erroneous information.

They were initially charged under sections 5(d) and 5(j) of the 1950 Emergency Provisions Act for causing public alarm and undermining

security of the state but those charges were dropped in favour of section 505(b) in August.

The arrests were controversial because the government submitted a complaint directly to police, bypassing the Myanmar Press Council (Interim), which was set up in part to handle complaints.

Under the News Media Law

enacted in March, legal action can only be taken after both parties attempt to resolve the dispute through mediation. However, the law is not yet in effect because the government has not enacted by-laws – despite having been required to do so within 90 days.

The defendants’ lawyer, U Kyaw Win, said he had proposed at the final session of the trial that the News Media Law apply in the case but the judge had rejected his argument. He said his clients had asked him to submit an appeal to the Western District Court against the verdict.

“As the district court is higher, a wider scope of legal issues can be considered in the case. Whether the media law is applicable will then become clear,” he said.

Ko Wathan’s girlfriend, Ma Suu Thet Hnin, said it was unclear why the media workers received a harsher sentence than Ko Htin Kyaw.

“I feel it is unfair. Did they give harsher sentences because they are journalists?” she said. “It is also very noticeable that the media law was not followed in this case.”

U Kyaw Min Swe, secretary of the Myanmar Press Council (Interim), told *The Myanmar Times* the sentence was “severe” and ran counter to President U Thein Sein’s promises to uphold press freedom.

“This is not what we expected,” he said. “I do not mean that they were innocent but ... the decision is a bit severe.”

Supreme Court to consider ‘Unity’ case

THE Supreme Court has agreed to hear an appeal on behalf of the four jailed *Unity Journal* reporters who are serving seven-year sentences for breaching the 1923 State Secrets Act, alongside their CEO U Tint San.

Reporters Ko Lu Maw Naing, Ko Sithu Soe, Ko Paing Thet Kyaw and Ko Yazar Oo were also convicted in July on charges of trespassing in a restricted area and taking photos of a Defence Ministry facility without permission.

The charges stemmed from the publication of an article alleging that chemical weapons were being produced at a military facility in Magwe.

“We will wait about 45 days for the court to hear the revision. We believe they can be acquitted,” their lawyer, U Robert Sann Aung, said.

However, U Kyaw Lin, the lawyer for U Tint San, suggested they were unlikely to be acquitted.

“If the judge decides to sentence them to one year’s imprisonment, they don’t need to stay in jail because of the days in detention,” he said, adding that he will submit a separate appeal for his client in the next week or so.

Reporter Ko Lu Maw’s wife Ma Lwin Lwin Myint said she was delighted at the news the court had agreed to hear the appeal.

Last month, Magwe Region court reduced the group’s sentences from 10 years’ imprisonment with hard labour to seven years. – *Ye Mon*

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TSS TOKYO WATER

Hearing begins for Koh Tao island accused

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PRE-TRIAL testimony began on October 14 in the case of two Myanmar migrant workers accused of murdering a vacationing British couple in Koh Tao, as Thai police asked to extend their detention past an October 15 deadline.

The judge, defence team and public prosecutors heard testimony from key witnesses in the case and the two defendants. While the public prosecutor already had access to the statements each witness gave to the police, having the testimonies read in court allows them to be added to the case file.

Andy Hall, a migrant rights expert who helped organise a pro-bono team of lawyers for the accused, said the next step will see the police make "modifications" to the case file based on the requests of the public prosecutor's office.

It remains unclear what "modifications" the prosecutors have asked for. Reports in Thai media have quoted a high ranking police officer from Koh Samui saying that the requested changes have made the case against the two migrant workers "perfect".

"The incomplete parts of the case that the prosecutor wanted the police to add more to are now perfect," Police Major General Paween Pongsirin was quoted as saying on October 16.

Once the file is returned, the prosecutor's office will make the final decision over whether to take the case to trial. While October 15 is technically the last day the two Myanmar nationals can be held according to Thai law, the public prosecutor's office has asked for the detention to be extended another 15 days, Mr Hall said.

Speaking to *The Myanmar Times* via email, Mr Hall said the process of deciding whether to lay charges can often stretch out for years in the Thai legal system "but surely this will be rushed through". Mr Hall said the defence team expects a formal decision from the public prosecutor this week.

If convicted, both men could face the death penalty.

The small island of Koh Tao has been the centre of international media attention since mid-September, when the bodies of David Miller and Hannah Witheridge were discovered.

After two weeks of investigation, Thai authorities identified two Myanmar migrant workers as suspects. Both men were brought in for questioning on October 1, where they eventually confessed after several hours of interrogation, according to Thai media.

The arrests have been controversial because of reports suggesting the men may have been mistreated during their interrogation. Senior police officials in Koh Tao reportedly insisted from the start that the murder could not have been committed by a Thai person and made the Myanmar migrant worker community their focus, creating the perception that they may not have considered all options.

Additionally, the investigation's credibility has been tarnished by reports that the Thai police tortured Myanmar migrant workers in the area in their quest for suspects, and similarly tortured the accused.

On his Facebook account, Mr Hall raised further doubts about the fairness of the legal proceedings. He said the defence team he helped assemble has had very little chance to consult with the defendants. "Appointed defence lawyers had 30 minutes with accused yesterday and arrived late last night. Right to fair trial means adequate prep time," he said on October 14.



Two migrant workers accused of killing two British tourists on the island of Koh Tao kneel on the ground between police and members of the press on October 3. Photo: AFP

Parliamentarians demand a fair trial for migrant workers

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MYANMAR'S national parliament has approved an urgent proposal demanding that two migrant workers arrested on suspicion of murder on Thailand's Koh Tao island be given a fair trial.

The motion, submitted by Amyotha Hluttaw representative U Khin Maung Yi on October 13 and approved the same day, also emphasised that the men should not be treated like criminals unless they have been convicted.

"All Myanmar citizens have been traumatised by this case and are hoping for a fair result," the proposal read.

In submitting the motion, U Khin Maung Yi said the government and parliament had a re-

sponsibility to ensure that the men received a fair hearing.

"It is necessary to be 100 per cent sure that the human rights and legal protections for the two men charged with murder on Koh Tao [have been respected]," he said.

"Koh Tao authorities need to put forward a case to the court with strong evidence ... and the court process should be fair."

After the motion was approved, Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann said he would send a formal message to Thailand's legislative assembly expressing the concerns raised.

Thai police have charged two migrant workers from Myanmar with the murder of David Miller, 24, and the rape and murder of Hannah Witheridge, 23, after their

bodies were found on Koh Tao on September 15.

Reports have emerged that the men subsequently retracted their confession and accused police of obtaining it through torture, an allegation Thailand has denied.

On October 14, meanwhile, Mr Prayut rejected an offer from Britain to help with the investigation that was made the previous day, when the British government summoned Thailand's ambassador. Earlier on October 14, Britain's ambassador to Thailand met both Thai and Myanmar officials in Bangkok to discuss the investigation.

However, Mr Prayut said the case against the suspects was "reliable" and an internal issue for Thailand. - *With AFP, translation by Thiri Min Htun*



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EXCLUSIVE

Health dept to be split under reform plan

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HEALTH officials say a major organisational shakeup is looming within the Ministry of Health, with the key Department of Health likely to be split into two separate departments.

Some sources said the restructure is driven by an attempt to sideline those close to the current minister's predecessor, Dr Pe Thet Khin, including director general Dr Min Than Nyunt.

However, Dr Than Sein, the head of the Public Health Foundation who is advising the government on the restructure, insisted last week that this was not the case.

He said the plan, which is being led by Vice President Dr Sai Mauk Kham, was being developed before Dr Pe Thet Khin was replaced by Dr Than Aung in late July.

The most important change will see the Department of Health, which accounts for about 80 percent of the ministry's budget, split into separate public health and medical care departments, both of which will be headed by a director general.

"I know that the Minister for Health's Office is planning to reorganise the Department [of Health] but it is a closely guarded secret within the ministry. Senior officials are not giving information to outsiders," one senior ministry official said last week on condition of anonymity.

Another change will be the introduction of district-level health offices to improve links between the existing township and region-level bodies.

Some work currently conducted at the regional and national level will be decentralised to the district level, Dr Than Sein said, adding that more young doctors would also be employed to work at township health facilities.

The ministry has already appointed 30 deputy directors to lead the district health offices, while some other deputy director positions will be filled by promoting township health officers, he said.

Dr Than Sein said the measures were aimed at improving service provision at the township level and strengthening capacity throughout the department in anticipation of more funding for the health sector from the national budget and international donors.

Another possible change will see the two medical research departments - one for lower Myanmar and one for upper Myanmar - combined into a single department, as was the case until 1992.

The Ministry of Health is divided into seven departments, each headed by a director general: the Department of Health, the Department of Health

Planning, the Department of Medical Science, the Department of Medical Research (Lower Myanmar), the Department of Medical Research (Upper Myanmar), the Department of Traditional Medicine and the Department of Food and Drug Administration.

When *The Myanmar Times* sought confirmation from the Minister for Health's Office last week about the proposed changes, a spokesperson said a restructure is being planned but the details are not yet confirmed and declined to comment further.

One country director for an international health NGO said the reorganisation is about personal competition rather than improving efficiency in the ministry, which has been widely criticised for its perceived failure to improve public healthcare despite significant budget increases since 2011.

"Every minister wants to appoint their best men to be the senior directors. When there's a new minister, they try to clean out those appointed by their predecessor," he said.

80%

Amount of the Ministry of Health budget used by the Department of Health



Mo Mo practises with a trainer last week ahead of her birthday celebration on October 19. Photo: Yu Yu

Yangon zoo celebrates birthday of Mo Mo, a much-loved resident

ZON PANN PWINT
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YANGON Zoo has put on a party for prized pachyderm Mo Mo, who turned 61 over the weekend.

Born in 1953, Mo Mo was donated to Yangon Zoo by U Khoon Sandah from Loikaw, Kayah State, on June 6, 1961. She has since become a crowd favourite thanks to her talent for playing the harmonica and swaying her elephant hips in time to music.

Celebrations were to run from 9:30 to 4pm on October 19 and include music performances, and animal and magic shows. The highlight, however, was to take place at 10am, when Mo Mo was expected to blow out 61 candles on her birthday cake and do a dance for visitors.

"We are excited to celebrate her birthday and are proud of our elderly elephant," Dr Khin Sane Win, general manager of Htoo Foundation's zoos and gardens business unit, said last week ahead of the party.

In her 53 years at the zoo, Mo Mo has seen her lifelong friends Aung Toe, Ma Toe, Moe Meit and Ma Yang Kot - with whom she danced, walked and stayed together for decades - pass away. Even as her keepers retired, one after another, she

remained healthy and strong.

"It is amazing that she is still healthy for her age. She has only once suffered a serious illness, back in 1997 when she had stomach problems. Apart from that, she has never had any health issues," Dr Khin Sane Win said.

Mo Mo's longevity is particularly remarkable given research has shown

'She is not a working elephant - she lives like an uptown woman in the zoo.'

Dr Tun Myint
Zoo veterinarian

elephants in captivity tend to have much shorter lives than their counterparts in the wild. A study published in *Science* in 2008 that used data collected from elephants employed in Myanmar's logging industry found elephants in zoos have lifespans less than half those in the wild on average.

The median lifespan for Myanmar

Timber Enterprise (MTE) elephants was almost 42 years, while Asian elephants born in captivity lived for just 18.9 years, researchers found.

Of course, Mo Mo still shows some of the usual signs of old age, such as teeth problems. But life in the zoo has allowed Mo Mo to age gracefully, said veterinarian Dr Tun Myint, who has worked at the zoo since 1992.

"She is not a working elephant - she lives like an uptown woman in the zoo and we have never forced her to work," Dr Tun Myint said. "We take pride in her health and longevity."

Daw San San Oo, the head of the Natural History Museum inside the zoo grounds, said last year was a memorable occasion, with Mo Mo given a crown to wear for the day.

Other important occasions in her life came in 1994 and 1996, when she took part in parades held to mark the arrival of a Buddha tooth relic from China. However, one life milestone she has not passed is motherhood: Mo Mo has remained a spinster her whole life. However, she has often helped other elephants look after their calves, Daw San San Oo said.

"Mo Mo is very clever and tame," she added. "She has never troubled her keepers so they love her very much - and I love her too."

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A compressed natural gas taxi parks in downtown Yangon. Photo: Zarni Phyo

Ma Hta Tha hints at halt on taxi registration



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SENIOR public transport officials have hinted at a possible cutback in the issuing of taxi registrations in an effort to curb congestion in Yangon.

The comments come after responsibility for taxi registration was handed to Ma Hta Tha, Yangon Region's public transport regulatory body, from Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC). The bus regulator received the order on September 30 to take over as of October 1, its chair U Hla Aung said at a meeting earlier this month.

Ma Hta Tha was first made responsible for the registration of the region's 55,000 taxis in April last year, but the order was rescinded.

"We are responsible for taxi registration, extension, and setting rules and regulations starting October 1. We received this task from Yangon Regional Government on September 30," said U Hla Aung.

One of the body's first steps will be to analyse the current number of taxis in the city and whether it was adequate for public transport needs.

Ma Hta Tha deputy chair U Hla Thaung Myint said the number of registered taxis has grown from 20,000 to 55,000 in just 18 months, and as a result drivers' income has fallen and traffic has increased.

"If the number of taxis decreases, traffic jams will also decrease. At present taxi drivers cannot earn a lot because there are so many taxis," he said.

Noting that 10 taxis can carry as many passengers as a mini bus, and 20 taxis a city bus, he said Ma Hta Tha believes priority should be given to increasing the number of buses.

"You can say that the number of

taxis is just a quarter of the number of private cars, but private cars are not on the road all day, every day," U Hla Thaung Myint said.

At least initially, however, Ma Hta Tha will continue to register taxis in the same way as YCDC. In the future it will also implement the laws as enacted by parliament.

"The law for private vehicles is being discussed at the Yangon Region Hluttaw. After it comes out, we will enforce the law as it is adopted," U Hla Aung said.

Would-be taxi drivers in Yangon must first register with the Road Transport Administration Department before getting a business licence from the Ministry of Rail Transportation's Transport Department. They are then required to register with Ma Hta Tha - formerly, with YCDC - for a city taxi licence.

Taxi driver U Maung Maung said he agreed that there were too many taxis in Yangon.

"Now our income is lower than before because there are many taxis and traffic jams," he said. "The government should upgrade the public transport system instead of importing or running more taxis."

275%

Increase in registered taxis in Yangon over the past 18 months, from 20,000

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Chinese mining firm drops charges against student activist

Fears for repercussions at Letpadaung mine site likely influenced decision to withdraw complaint, activists say

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IN a stunning reversal, all charges against a student accused of kidnapping two Chinese engineers working for the Letpadaung copper mine have been dropped. Yinmabin District Court, Sagaing Region, has ordered the immediate release of Ma Phyu Hnin Htwe, who was arrested in September.

The 23-year-old had faced life-time imprisonment if the case had gone ahead on the charges of kidnap with intent to murder. An offence of absconding was added after she failed to attend a preliminary court hearing.

Police at Salingyi also charged six local farmers with abduction in order to murder following the May 18 incident, in a case which has since been settled. But since Ma Pyu Hnin Htwe did not respond to a first summons to attend court, she was further charged with absconding.

The Chinese company Wanbao, which is the major investor in Letpadaung and employed the two engineers who were abducted, announced on October 15 that it was dropping the charges against Ma Phyu Hnin Htwe, her lawyer U Thein Than Oo said.

“The company asked the court to drop the charges on four grounds: to maintain good relations between Myanmar and China; because local residents and the Sagaing Region government had already reached agreement on the matter; because she is a student; and because charges against local villagers have already been dealt with. The prosecution and the police accepted this request,” U Thein Than Oo said.

Ma Phyu Hnin Htwe told *The Myanmar Times* by phone on October 17 that she believed the protests against her arrest had persuaded the company to drop the charges.

The second-year distance education student at Mandalay’s Yadanarpon University said she thought Wanbao was concerned that detaining her longer could lead to further unrest in the Letpadaung area.



Ma Phyu Hnin Htwe arrives at Yinmabin District Court on September 30, her third court appearance following her arrest earlier in the month. Photo: Si Thu Lwin

The case had attracted nationwide attention, with regular protests being conducted outside the court whenever she appeared, as well as outside the Wanbao office in Yinmabin by fellow members of the All Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABFSU), the University Students’ Union, and Letpadaung residents.

At her last court hearing, on September 30, Ma Phyu Hnin Htwe was denied bail and remanded in custody.

Ko Ye Yint Kyaw, information official of the Central Working Committee of the ABFSU, said he believed the students’ campaign had been a

factor in Wanbao’s decision. “I think the company has dropped the charges in the face of our demands and the increasing protests,” he said.

Student activists, including Ma Phyu Hnin Htwe and Ko Ye Tint Kyaw, allege that the charges were levelled to curb student activism.

“The charges were unfair since the beginning,” Ko Ye Tint Kyaw. “This was an attempt to divert attention from our campaign against the national education bill.”

The copper mine project at Letpadaung has long been controversial, amid accusations of land-grabs, envi-

ronmental degradation and excessive use of force against local opponents.

The two Chinese workers were abducted along with a Myanmar colleague on May 18 while conducting surveying work for Myanmar Wanbao Mining, one day after a clash between residents and police.

The Myanmar national was released on the night of May 18. The following morning, Wanbao issued a plea for the release of the other two workers, Lu Yuanhao, 23, and Miu Jie, 23. The pair was released and returned to the company’s office at about 7:15pm.

– Translation by Thiri Min Htun

At media forum, judiciary in the spotlight

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CRAMPED courts hidden down back alleys with half-trained staff – that was the picture of the nation’s judiciary that emerged from a frank exchange of views in Nay Pyi Taw recently.

The discussion, involving members of parliament, the executive, lawyers and judges and the media, took place from October 4 to 5 at what was officially a media conference, but for much of the time focused on the plight of the judiciary sector.

Participants, speaking under Chatham House rules to protect anonymity and encourage frankness, differed as to how to rectify the situation by enshrining a qualified and impartial justice system.

The land on which court buildings sit is owned by the Ministry of Home Affairs’ General Administration Department, said one judicial official who took part, adding that this was because the GAD and judiciary were once combined.

“Many courts have to pay rent to

the GAD,” he said. “The judiciary has to handle about a million lawsuits a year, often in chambers that are barely 9 feet by 9 feet [2.75 by 2.75 metres] ... The rooms are sometimes so small there is not enough room for both parties, let alone the media.”

One participating media representative said, “When I had to face a lawsuit, I didn’t know where the court was. In the end I found it at the end of a small lane behind the buildings, hidden behind a teashop.

“Why are the courts so poor, and why can’t staff explain judicial procedures?” he asked, questioning whether the judiciary’s dependence on the executive and parliament for its budget harmed the separation of powers among the three branches of government.

“The other two sectors – the legislature and the executive – just ignore the judiciary,” he concluded, placing the main responsibility on lawmakers.

But a legislator said the problem did not lie in the constitution, but that judges did not exercise their independence due to the lack of experience.

“I think the president should guarantee the independence of judiciary openly so that judges dare to exercise it more,” he said.

However, a senior executive sector representative rejected his suggestion, saying judicial staff themselves should strive harder for independence under the constitution.

“No presidential guarantee is necessary. Both the executive and parliament try to influence the judiciary,” he said, adding that judges have to fight for their independence as the

‘The president should guarantee the independence of the judiciary openly so that judges dare to exercise it more.’

Pyidaungsu Hluttaw MP

media fought for theirs.

Under the 2008 constitution, Supreme Court judges are appointed by the president and approved by parliament. Once appointed, judges can work until 70 years of age and may only be removed by impeachment by two-thirds of the Union parliament.

Under the current budgeting system, the judiciary drafts its own budget and submits it to the Union government for approval. It is then included in the government’s annual national budget request to parliament.

Until last year, however, judicial budgets were approved by the regional governments. Speakers noted that the change this year toward receiving funding from the Union government had helped improve matters. “Since the Union government took over our budget this year, we are moving toward greater independence,” one member of the judiciary said.

However, another member of the judiciary said that without complete budget freedom, Myanmar would lack judicial independence and separation of powers.

IN BRIEF

Speaker calls for monastic teacher pay rise

Monastic school teachers should be paid more, the speaker of parliament says. Thura U Shwe Mann on October 15 invited the Ministry of Labour to consider the issue.

U Thein Htun, the representative for Kyaunggun in Ayeyarwady Region, told parliament that monastic teachers were struggling to get by on K40,000 for a month.

“Monastic schools not only provide poor students with food and clothing, but also provide moral and cultural teaching, which is a heavy responsibility,” he said.

Myanmar has 1575 monastic schools, with 7497 teachers and 289,855 students, according to U Maung Maung Htay, deputy minister for religious affairs.

Last year’s K3 billion budget for monastic education was increased this year to K3.326 billion, but there were no plans for a further increase, he said. – *Htoo Thant, translation by Thae Thae Htwe*

Bartenders band together behind association

More than 40 bartenders have already signed up for a planned national association, which organisers hope will raise standards in the sector – and possibly help bring in a few international awards.

U Khin Aung Htun, vice chairman of the Myanmar Restaurant Association, said last week that the association will provide training to boost bartenders’ skills and knowledge, and help to meet growing demand in the hospitality sector.

“The association will help them learn from each other and take part in international bartending competitions,” U Khin Aung Htun said.

The winner of the 11th ASEAN Bartender Competition, Ko Kyaw Zin Htun – who is better known as Kelvin – said he was pleased that the association would introduce training qualifications for bartenders.

“They are planning to hold bartender classes for members and I will be happy to share my experience with younger generations,” Ko Kyaw Zin Htun said.

The association will be supported by Singapore-based alcohol distributor Interlocal Exim, which will provide the resources for the training programs, business development manager U Tun Tun Aye said.

He said Myanmar’s tourism boom meant restaurants and hotels were crying out for trained bartenders.

“Myanmar bartenders lack proper training,” he said. “They focus on the theory, but don’t have enough practical experience.” – *Ei Ei Thu*

Education ministry considers science language change

Science students in Yangon Region could once again be taught in Myanmar language, a senior education official has said, just a year after classes switched to English.

The change, which is still under discussion, would affect ninth- and 10th-standard physics, chemistry and biology students.

The decision is being considered because failure rates rose dramatically when the language of instruction was changed to English this year.

“This is still at the negotiating stage, so it’s not official yet. We will announce more details once it is confirmed,” said U Tin Phone, deputy education officer for Bahan township.

The switch to English-language tuition in those subjects caused a drop in the number of those passing exams in Yangon Region from 90 percent last year to 50pc this year, he said.

“Ninth-standard students cannot keep up. If they don’t take English tuition most of them fail,” he said.

The ministry plans to set up a high-level curriculum board to carry out the program. – *May Thinzar Naing*

Military appoints media spokesmen

IN a ground-breaking first meeting, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing has met with seven members of the Myanmar Press Council (Interim) to discuss army-media relations. At the same time, he announced the appointment of three spokespeople for the Tatmadaw.

Deputy Minister for Defence Brigadier General Aung Thaw, Vice Chief of Armed Forces Training Brigadier General Soe Naing Oo and Director of Public Relations and Psychological Warfare Major General Aung Ye Win were named as spokespeople.

"We discussed building an open relationship between the Tatmadaw and the media. The press council has to move forward by meeting with the three military officers," said press council member U Thiha Saw, who is also editorial director of *The Myanmar Times*.

He said the senior general responded to a request from reporters to visit the scene of clashes with ethnic armed groups by saying that the government feared it would be accused of pushing propaganda.

Press council member U Zaw Thet Htwe said the senior general also thought the battlefields were not secure enough to grant journalists access.

However, the senior general agreed to let military officials participate in discussions in events hosted by the press council.

U Myint Kyaw, general secretary of Myanmar Journalist Network, said he was pleased that a "new channel" of engagement between the military and media had begun. "It's high time we had the chance to build an open relationship with the Tatmadaw," he said. — *Lun Min Mang, Ye Mon*

Civil society reps discuss challenges of transition



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CIVIL society representatives met last week in Yangon to discuss a range of issues central to the transition to democracy, and to the country's future. These included legal reform, human rights, the voluntary NGO registration law, media law and the national education bill. A common theme in the discussion was the government's failure to listen to the public's views when considering laws meant to advance the transition.

The forum - titled Myanmar's Transition Process: Prospects for 2015 and Beyond - took place October 14-16 at Myanmar Christian Fellowship and the Blind Centre, Kawwechan, Mayangone township.

Legal expert panellist U Kyee Myint, criticising the 2008 constitution, nevertheless said it was important to vote in next year's elections. At the same time, though, it would be better to work through NGOs to advocate for change in parliament. He also called for a wholesale change of mindset in the judiciary, which had yet to emerge, he said, from 60 years of dictatorship. "We need new policies and new leaders - not just people who have changed out of their uniforms," he said.

U Aung Myo Min, executive director of Equality Myanmar, called for the Myanmar Human Rights Commission to be independent. "The commission was established by the president, its members are appointed and its policies are restricted," he said.



A participant speaks during the CSO forum on October 14. Photo: Zarni Phyo

Daw Thin Tin Aung, opposing the controversial bill on inter-faith marriage proposed by nationalist Buddhist monks, said a woman's freedom of choice in marriage should be respected.

U Aung Thein called for greater clarity in the application of the peaceful protest law, which restricts demonstrations.

Daw Nwe Zin Win, chair of the National NGO Network, said the recently adopted law on the voluntary registration of NGOs was unclear because of changes introduced by the

President's Office. "The law and the policy are different," she said, citing NGO registration rights and practices that did not appear in the text of the law. Despite apparent agreement between NGOs and MPs to eliminate the centralised registration process, the law still required centralised registration, she said.

Author Ma Thida (Sanchaung) had criticisms of the media laws, which she believed were too much influenced by the 1962-era legislation they were intended to replace. Specific problems included the financial

support provided by the government to state media, which was unfair to unsubsidised private media publishers, and the status of the Myanmar Press Council. In order to better represent the interests of the general public, council members should be elected, not appointed, she said. The purpose of the council is to improve both public access to information and government-media relations.

U Thein Lwin, of the National Network for Education Reform, also criticised the government for first calling for public comments on the draft education law, and then ignoring the comments they received. "We proposed a revised draft, but hluttaw and the President's Office rejected it. They have no idea how to reform education, and no intention to consider the views of the public," he said, calling for more attention to be paid to views expressed by teachers and students in the interests of providing high-quality education throughout the country.

Paungku Organisation director Kyaw Thu questioned whether the shift toward democratisation was truly being applied in all sectors, including next year's elections. "We should know everyone's perspective on how they feel transition affects them," he said.

The 2013 Ramon Magsaysay prize winner Lahpai Seng Raw said the international community was more interested in using Myanmar's resources to profit their economies than favouring democratisation, human rights, and free and fair elections. "We want peace, security, fairness and equality regardless of race and religion. We should build trust to lessen the gap between citizens and government to prevent the impact of international competition," she said.

CSOs meet to finalise code of conduct for election observers

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CIVIL society groups met last week to discuss a planned code of conduct for election observers ahead of planned talks with the Union Election Commission this week.

The October 17 meeting focused on reviewing and amending codes of conduct that the groups used during an electoral pilot project in July in order to come up with a single draft.

They will then put this draft forward at a meeting with the UEC on October 20, they said.

U Chan Lian, from the civil society group Hornbill, said after last week's meeting that participants had agreed that election monitors must be independent of political parties and the government.

"Our discussion today ended with common agreement on 10 points in the code of conduct. The most important parts are that observers must avoid bias, respect the ballot, write reports covering the whole electoral process and send observers who are properly trained and understand the code of conduct," he said.

About 15 civil society groups attended the October 17 meeting but U Sai Ye Kyaw Swar Myint from the People's Alliance for Credible Elections said he hoped more would

participate in monitoring activities.

"This is just the starting point for those who will actually participate in the electoral process in the future. We hope more and more CSOs will cooperate and observe the elections," he said.

At a meeting with the UEC on October 7, the commission invited the groups to come up with a draft code of conduct that could be considered alongside a code written by the UEC.

At the October 7 meeting, the UEC gave the groups some "suggestions" on what should be included in the code.

"The suggestions recommend to us refer to international standards and what is feasible in our country," said U Chan Lian.

He said they also discussed the registration process for election observers, including the processing period for applications and appeal process if applications are rejected.

U Thauang Hlaing, a director in the commission's Election Department, said it could take some time to come up with a single code.

"The UEC has drafted a code of conduct and the CSOs are also permitted to write a draft," he said. "[Later,] the CSOs and the UEC will meet in Yangon and hold discussions toward a common code of conduct."

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Four men given 10 years' jail over Mandalay conflict killing

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AMID protests and accusations of torture by police, four men were last week sentenced to 10 years in prison with hard labour for a murder committed during Mandalay's inter-communal violence of last July.

Mandalay district court found that Ko Kyaw Zin Htet, Ko Nyan Htay, Ko Poe Zaw and Ko Zin Min Tun had murdered U Soe Min Htwe on July 1.

A lawyer for the accused, who asked not to be named, announced immediately after the verdict that he would launch an appeal. "The evidence against them was their bloodstained shirts and bloodstained sticks. But it was never established in court that the blood belonged to the victim. The real murderer is still at large," he told *The Myanmar Times*.

Police barred family members and journalists from the courtroom on October 14 and posted security officers in the court compound. Daw

Zin Mar Aye, the mother of Ko Kyaw Zin Htet, described the hearing as "absolutely unfair".

"My son was at home the whole night when the clashes occurred," she said. "While they detained my son in custody, they mistreated him during the interrogation. They forced him to kneel after placing a plum stone under his knee. When he still refused to confess, they forced him to sign his name on a plain sheet of paper, and then wrote what they wanted."

Daw Zin Mar Aye waged a 30-minute solo protest against the proceedings on October 10 in Chan Aye Thar San township.

One of the accused, while being led away, yelled to the crowd, "I am praying that in my afterlife, I won't come back as a citizen of a country like Myanmar, where a court can sentence someone to imprisonment without evidence. The judge's order is not fair."

Two people were killed and about 20 people injured in the clashes in Mandalay in early July. The case of the second victim, Ko Tun Tun, a member of the Free Funeral Service Society, is still proceeding against 11 accused.

- Translation by Thiri Min Htun



The mother of Ko Kyaw Zin Htet, one of four men sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment for murdering U Soe Min Htwe in July, stands beside police outside court on October 14. Photo: Si Thu Lwin

CRIME IN BRIEF

Truck hits three cars on Strand
The driver of a 10-wheeled truck has been charged after allegedly running a stop light on Strand Road in Kyeemyindaing township and hitting three cars, including two taxis. One of the taxi passengers, a 40-year-old woman, received head injuries in the accident. The truck driver has been charged with endangering human life, according to police.

Man impersonates police officer
A taekwondo expert who allegedly posed as a traffic policeman and extorted K500,000 from a driver has been charged with impersonating a public servant. Lance Corporal Aung Htet from Patheingyi township in Ayeyarwady Region and his two accomplices allegedly stopped the driver on September 29 near a petrol station in Mel Za Li Kone village in Nyaungdon township and forced him to drive to a nearby restaurant to hand over the money.

Family injured by electric shock
A family is recovering in hospital after being shocked by a wire set up to allegedly steal electricity.

Mg Htun Win Zaw, 4, was shocked when he touched a trishaw that had been electrified by a wire hanging down from a nearby apartment in Thummarlar Street, North Okkalapa township. His parents rushed to his aid but were also injured when they touched the trishaw. The apartment owner has been charged with stealing electricity. - Toe Wai Aung, translation by Khant Lin Oo

SSA-North rejects order to withdraw

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AN ethnic Shan armed group has rejected an army request to withdraw its troops from a strategic location in northern Shan State. The Shan State Progress Party (SSPP), the political wing of the Shan State Army-North, has informed the Union Peacemaking Work Committee (UPWC) of its rejection of the request, said SSPP secretary Sao Khun Sai.

Shan State Minister for Border Affairs and Security Colonel Aung Thu wrote to the SSPP/SSA-North on October 9 to request that troops in the Loilan Namseekyein region, where the group's No 36 brigade is based, be withdrawn and confined to locations designated in the draft ceasefire agreement now under discussion in Yangon. The letter also criticised the armed group for carrying weapons in the area, claiming local residents were afraid.

However, Sao Khun Sai said the withdrawal location designated by the Tatmadaw was deep in the forest, far from residential areas.

The request came after fighting between the Tatmadaw and SSA-North in Kye-thi township left hundreds displaced and several soldiers on each side dead.

One analyst of ethnic military affairs said the Tatmadaw may have requested the SSA-North to retreat because its current location is close to the United Wa State Army and several other armed groups. The high ground occupied by the SSA-North also gives a strategic advantage to heavy weapons, which can fire onto low-lying areas beyond the Thanlwin River, he said.

The SSPP/SSA-North and the government signed a ceasefire agreement in 2012, but have clashed militarily since.

- Translation by Thiri Min Htun

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Student unions vow to continue protests against education law



SI THU LWIN

MAUNG ZAW

THE All Burma Federation of Student Unions - known as Ba Ka Tha - and the University Students Union have announced plans for more protests against the newly enacted national education law.

The ABFSU and USU will also hold a conference next month to debate the act and say they hope parliament will consider amendments to the law, which was approved by MPs on September 26 and enacted on September 30.

"The president signing that draft doesn't mean our battles are ending. The battles will never end," said Ko Aung Mhine San from ABFSU's research committee.

The unions are upset at the lack of consultation government officials had with students, education experts and MPs when it was being drafted. They have also highlighted that ethnic languages, cultures and literatures will not be allowed to feature on any university syllabus. But most importantly, they say, the law means private universities will remain under the control of the education ministry and that both teacher and student unions will remain technically illegal.

The unions have the backing of the National Network for Education Reform, a coalition of civil society groups, which likewise accuses the government of using the new law to maintain tight central government control over universities.

However, MPs say that the law will guarantee universities independence. While President U Thein Sein had recommended that the provision granting autonomy be amended to remove universities under the ministries of defence, home affairs and religious affairs, MPs decided this was unnecessary as the bill made clear in other sections that these institutions - including the elite Defence Services Academy - would remain firmly under government control.

U Khin Maung Yi, secretary of the Joint Bill Committee, said that all other institutions would be independent of the government.



Members of the Mandalay branch of the All Burma Federation of Student Unions protest against the education law outside Yadanarpon University on September 1. Photo: Si Thu Lwin

"They will be able to set their own learning policies," he told reporters on September 26, after the vote on the president's proposed changes to the bill.

He said the protests outside parliament were taking place because student groups had "little understanding" of the contents of the law.

Meanwhile, the student unions are linking their campaigns and protests against the education law to the arrest of a Ba Ka Tha member, Ma Phyu Hnin Htwe, for allegedly kidnapping two Chinese workers from the Letpadaung copper mine.

The 23-year-old distance education student from Mandalay's Yadanarpon University was arrested in September. She was facing charges of kidnapping with intent to murder in Sagaing township's Yinmarbin District Court but was released last week after the Chinese investor in the

project withdrew the charges.

"It seems it was deliberate to arrest this student at a time when the campaign calling for amendments to the National Education Bill was gaining momentum," said Ko Ye Yint Kyaw, a Ba Ka Tha information

'The president signing that draft doesn't mean our battles are ending. The battles will never end.'

Ko Aung Mhine San

All Burma Federation of Student Unions

officer. "We won't stop our movement even though our member was arrested."

He promised that the union would continue protesting against the law, floating the possibility of hunger strikes and "performance art protests".

Ko Wai Moe Naing, a member of the University Students Union, agreed. "We will hold further activities working together with our student forces if the court's decision is not fair to the students," he said.

Student unions, including Ba Ka Tha, have already staged several protests against the education law and Ma Phyu Hnin Htwe's arrest, in Yangon, Mandalay and Monywa.

There are signs that the government is prepared to take legal action against those campaigning for Ma Phyu Hnin Htwe's release. After several women's groups held prayers for her release at Mahamuni Pagoda in Mandalay last week, Ma Tin Yi from the Tamar Yate organisation was charged by police under section 18 of the Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Law. - Translation by Khant Lin Oo and Zar Zar Soe

Ministry gets \$11.5 million to fight TB

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THE Ministry of Health has received a US\$11.5 million boost to fight drug-resistant tuberculosis (TB) in 56 townships in Yangon and Mandalay, with the Three Millennium Development Goal Fund (3MDG) to support the treatment of more than 2000 patients in coming years.

The grant agreement for the project, which will take place over 20 months, was signed by Department of Health director general Dr Min Than Nyunt and 3MDG Fund director Dr Paul Sanda in Nay Pyi Taw on October 9.

Dr Sithu Aung, a deputy director in the Ministry of Health's National TB Programme, said a major element of the program is ensuring patients finish their course of medicine.

"There will be financial support for items such as transportation costs for patients and the health staff who give medicine to the patients at their home each day," said Dr Sithu Aung. "We will also renovate wards and outpatient departments at TB hospitals."

The 3MDG Fund will also support a research program, implemented with guidance from the World Health Organization (WHO), to test the efficacy of a shorter course of treatment - between nine and 10 months - on 200 patients.

The funding is part of a larger \$19 million grant that the 3MDG Fund will provide over the next three years to support the government's National Strategic Plan for combating TB. It makes the 3MDG Fund the second-largest donor in the fight against drug-resistant TB, after the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

Tuberculosis is a bacterial disease which damages the lungs and causes persistent coughing. It is spread by droplets but can be easily and cheaply treated with antibiotics. Drug-resistant TB developed when patients with conventional TB failed to complete their six-month course of antibiotics.

- Translation by Thiri Min Htun

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Rohingya face regional discrimination

Muslims fleeing Rakhine State encounter similar human rights issues in Thailand and Malaysia

BILL O'TOOLE
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A NEW report has accused Thailand and Malaysia of perpetrating similar discrimination against the Muslim Rohingya as that which prompted them to flee Rakhine State.

The accusation was made in the first in a series of reports examining how different Southeast Asian Nations have responded to incoming populations of Rohingya in recent years and is based on interviews with experts, aid workers and those fleeing Rakhine State.

“The human rights challenges that the Rohingya face originate in Myanmar, but are also prevalent in other countries,” said the report, which was released on October 17.

The Rohingya are not recognised as an ethnic group in Myanmar and the term is hotly contested, with the government arguing it is a fictitious ethnicity and instead referring to them as “Bengalis”.

The authors, who included researchers from Equal Rights Trust and Mahidol University in Bangkok, focused particular attention on the refusal of Thailand and Malaysia to designate the Rohingya as refugees. Instead they become “illegal immigrants”, with few legal protections.

Both nations have refused to sign or properly implement international conventions on refugee and migrant rights, a failure the report said is

common across Southeast Asia.

“The statelessness and lack of legal status of the Rohingya in all research countries is a common problem; statelessness and discrimination go hand-in-hand and are mutually reinforced,” it said.

In Southeast Asia, “policies towards the Rohingya and other refugees and asylum seekers are focused more on border control, removal and deterrence, and less on protection”.

The report notes that successive waves of Muslims have fled northern Rakhine State since 1978 and argues that the problems of statelessness only compound with each new generation born abroad.

“With each passing year and each new generation, the disadvantage grows and the impact of malnutrition, illiteracy, lack of access to labor markets and healthcare, vulnerability to arbitrary arrest, violence and abuse, insecurity and forced migration becomes greater.”

This “statelessness” makes the group easy prey for exploitation in any country and the report says the crisis can only be properly managed by a coalition of regional partners.

“There is a danger that any one country which – in isolation – strengthens its protection framework for refugees will be disproportionately burdened as a result,” it said.

The series of reports will also see Rohingya rights examined in Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia and Myanmar.

British woman makes appeal for Anglo-Burmese stem cell donor

STAFF WRITERS
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A BRITISH mother-of-two who urgently needs a bone marrow transplant is appealing to those of Anglo-Burmese descent to register at their nearest bone marrow registry to see if they are a “perfect match” donor who could save her life.

Nikki Braterman from Brighton was diagnosed with acute myeloid leukaemia in December 2013. After undergoing months of treatment, she appeared to be on the road to recovery but has now had a relapse. She is undergoing chemotherapy and radiotherapy to get the leukaemia in the central nervous system under control but will need a bone marrow transplant to cure her in the longer term, according to her family.

Her best hope is to find a “perfect match” to her stem-cell type – and the most likely are those who share her Anglo-Burmese and Irish ethnic background. Many of her forebears on her mother's side of the family lived in Yangon during the colonial period and after independence.

“We are desperately and urgently seeking a ‘perfect match’ donor for my beautiful wife Nikki. I don’t want to lose her and I don’t want my kids to grow up without their mum,” husband Geoff Braterman said. “The right donor is out there somewhere. We just need to find them quickly.”

Mr Braterman said it would be “close to impossible” for someone in Myanmar to volunteer because of the lack of a bone marrow registry and facilities for harvesting stem cells but that people here could inform relatives abroad who may be better placed to help.

“[W]e would encourage readers



Nikki Braterman poses for a photo with her children. Photo: Supplied

in Myanmar to spread the word to family members living abroad ... [as] Burmese living elsewhere can register with the donor registers where they live. For example, this could

be India, Thailand or Australia,” he said.

Ms Braterman’s grandfather, Archie Marsh, who was of British and Southeast Asian ancestry, was an employee of the Burmah Oil Company and was based in Thanlyin after World War II. His wife Enid was the daughter of Walter D’Castro, a British colonial civil servant descended from the earliest Portuguese traders, and Rosa Boudville, who was of French and Burmese parenthood.

The Marsh’s younger daughter, Barbara, married an Irishman, John Pierce, and Ms Braterman is their second daughter.

‘We are desperately seeking a “perfect match” donor.’

Geoff Braterman
Husband of Nikki Braterman

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Views

Investing in children for the future

MICHAEL HASSETT
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SEVENTEEN fifth graders at the Seik Phoo Ni middle school in the rural township of Kyaung Kone are receiving stipends helping them to stay in school, the first wave of an innovative program to boost Myanmar's schools.

A small boy - one of the lucky 17 - knows the value of studying hard and getting a good education. With the stipend, his mother can pay for the stationery, books and the uniform he needs to stay in school. From a farming family in the village of Yodhaya, he knows that an education can make the difference between working "in the sun" as a casual labourer and a better-paying "job in the shade".

Rural families across Myanmar look to education to improve their prospects for the future - to change their children's lives for the better. Families benefit and Myanmar as a nation benefits as well.

Australia and the World Bank are working closely with the government to expand funding for education in Myanmar. The World Bank is providing US\$80 million in credits and Australia AUS\$20 million (US\$17.7 million) in grants to bolster existing Ministry of Education programs to help all children attend classes.

With the help of this funding, the government provides increased grants for each of Myanmar's 43,000 schools. Approximately 100,000 poor students in grades 5-11 will receive stipends - a big step forward for learning across the country.

Primary and middle school enrolment is free in Myanmar but parents face other significant costs, such as uniforms and transport to and from school. Stipends for the poorest students, decided by school committees and local communities, will help ensure that parents can afford to



Children attend a school in the Ayeyarwady delta. Photo: Christopher Davy

send all of their children to school. Even a modest stipend can help keep a farmer's child learning in school rather than working in fields at a young age.

Myanmar's education funding

also includes cash grants to cover school operating costs. This helps schools purchase locally what they need to make learning come alive in the classroom.

Schools received their first operating grants at the end of June and stipend payments for qualifying students are now being made. In Myanmar most schools are without electricity and many also lack running water. Every contribution and incentive - to parents, children and teachers - can help.

For too long, the people of Myanmar have been held back by poverty and isolation. The recent changes have created the potential for unprecedented fundamental reforms to transform the country. Giving all of Myanmar's children the opportunity of a good education will be essential for Myanmar's reforms to bear fruit and improve the lives of its people.

The government's people-centred approach aims to give people the tools to make key decisions affecting their lives. This program, with the support of the World Bank and Australia, lets principals, teachers and parents decide together on classroom purchases. It allows parents to keep their children in school and gives them a stake in the future of their children, as well as the future of the country.

Australia and the World Bank are privileged and proud to help Myanmar provide a good education for all its children, such as this one fifth grader, and ultimately tackle poverty and build shared prosperity among families across Myanmar.

Abdoulaye Seck is country manager for Myanmar at the World Bank and Michael Hasset is counsellor for development assistance at the Australian embassy in Yangon.

The census: Wh



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EARLY last month, it was revealed that Myanmar's population was 51.4 million, far lower than the semi-official estimate of 60 million that had been accepted for many years.

The news of this national diminution, at least in population terms, made many people feel short-changed, if not deflated and a bit depressed.

Of course, there was rightly a fair amount of scepticism about whether the census had been done properly and had included all the nation's ethnic and religious minorities.

And there was anxiety about whether the diminished figure spelled trouble for budget and development planning, and for Myanmar's influence in the region's corridors of power.

Amid all the handwringing, however, a bigger point seemed to have been missed - namely, that in many countries a lower population level is now seen in a more positive light.

And that as a result, perhaps Myanmar should really be rejoicing, not worrying, about the latest census result.

Among other reports, one released earlier this month in the United States confirmed that a lower population - and indeed a population that registers a steady but modest decline - can improve living standards.

For too long, the fact that couples have fewer babies, while older people live longer, has caused governments to fret about declining tax revenues, increased pensions and healthcare costs, and an overall economic decline.

Not true, it seems, at least not according to that report. Co-authored by the American academics Ronald Lee and Andrew Mason, it indicates that it may pay to have fewer children and a lower population.

Working with teams in 40 countries, they related birth rates with economic data and found that a lower birth rate, slightly below the replacement level of 2.1 children per woman, can boost a country's economic status.

Yet many governments, particularly in this region, continue to extol higher birth rates as necessary to maintain sufficient numbers of taxpayers to fund pensions, healthcare and other public services.

The American-directed survey, however, confirmed that folks with more kids need more money to survive and that they are the ones who bear the costs of raising children, not governments.

It also reinforced another obvious point: A larger working population requires expensive capital costs for factories, office towers, subway systems and homes.

Apart from increasing the number of people needing support from limited resources in countries like Myanmar, high populations with lots of dependent children also leave fewer resources for current consumption or to save and invest for the future.

In this situation, a smaller



A Department of Immigration official reviews

population, such as that revealed by the Myanmar census, can signal a future speed-up in economic growth, a phenomenon called the "first demographic dividend".

Wise utilisation of resources gained from this demographic jump-start can then usher in a "second demographic dividend", providing a base for sustained national economic development.

All of this suggests that the last thing the government in Nay Pyi Taw should do as a result of the census is to try to boost the population to that former fantasy figure of 60 million by asking women to have more kids.

As the report's co-author, Professor Mason, said, "A complete accounting of family costs shows that in only a few countries in East Asia should governments try to encourage people to have more children."

In many countries a lower population is now seen in a more positive light.

In fact, a lower birth rate and a moderately lowered population would do most of a world of good.

Furthermore, within that lower population, an increased number of non-citizens is also no cause for concern - despite the fears of nationalists, such as those among Myanmar's majority Buddhist community.

These misplaced fears lead to the animosity, often violently expressed, against Myanmar's minority Rohingya, who are often alleged to be non-citizens despite long residence in the country.

Actually, the issue of their citizenship is a red herring. It clouds the fact that the presence of non-citizens in a country's lower population is invariably helpful and positive.

The best proof of this is in Singapore, where more than half of the population are non-native-born Singaporeans.

Imagine the noise the nationalists would make if more than half of Myanmar's population were made up of non-citizens. They would go bonkers - and thereby confirm their

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en less is more



a completed census form in Nay Pyi Taw on May 20. Photo: Zarni Phyo

xenophobic stupidity.

Successful Singapore encourages non-citizens to come and stay, though naturally it tries to select the most talented people.

And, unlike the Rohingya, once they are in, they can soon become citizens. This means they can vote and even run for parliament.

Indeed, right now, many of Singapore's largest banks, businesses and other public and private bodies are helmed by foreigners.

It is one of the most admirable aspects of the island republic, although it is nothing new – it's a policy that made America great, as it did Australia, Canada and New Zealand.

As Singapore academic Asad Latif has noted, "In America, they have a strong sense of themselves. Immigration is not seen as a threat to identity. It does not touch the core of their being."

Regrettably, the reverse is true for many in Myanmar, who feel threatened by foreigners and non-citizens, whether they are rich and powerful Western executives or poor and downtrodden Rohingya.

It is partly excusable, or at least understandable, after decades of the racial purity baloney of former dictator Ne Win's "Burmese Way to Socialism", but it is a

dead-end attitude.

And it is one that could well shackle the development of Myanmar, where the notion of a non-Myanmar citizen running a major bank or national airline, let alone becoming a member of parliament, is viewed with horror.

Indeed, as we all know from the example of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, even Myanmar citizens are excluded from high office if they simply marry a non-citizen.

In our globalised world, it is hard to comprehend such nationalistic nonsense and even harder to comprehend how long-resident communities can be deprived of their rights because they are deemed non-citizens.

What is needed is a realisation that the lower population figure is an encouraging sign and that the presence of residents deemed as non-citizens is also good if they are brought into the mainstream and educated.

This is important because Myanmar's problems are not related to the lack of skills of its workforce - whether they be citizens or non-citizens, Buddhist or Muslim or other minority group.

That is the issue that really needs to be tackled.

What do the recent clashes mean for our peace process?



SITHU AUNG MYINT

newsroom@mmtimes.com

A CLEAR consequence of the most recent, and unsuccessful, talks between the Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team and the Union Peace-making Work Committee is armed conflict. In Shan State, fighting broke out between the Tatmadaw and Shan State Army-North, and a Pa-O armed group and the Shan State Army-South fought each other too. There was also conflict between the Tatmadaw and Democratic Karen Benevolent Army in Mon and Kayin states.

Based on these cases, we can't decisively conclude that either the government or the ethnic armed groups do not want peace. But it is worth asking why the government and armed groups are fighting each other at this point in time, and what it means for the peace process.

In northern Shan State, skirmishes between the Tatmadaw and SSA-North broke out in Kye-thi township's Wanwat village tract. According to reports, the ethnic armed group said that the fighting started because thousands of government troops entered SSA-North-held territory without permission. Both sides suffered casualties, including injured and dead. It is said that the numbers of injured Tatmadaw soldiers was so high that they had to be sent to hospital by helicopter.

Regarding the clashes, the United Wa State Army and Mong La group from Shan State Special Region No 4 issued a statement objecting to the government's actions. They also said that thousands of government troops entered SSA-North territory and employed large weapons, such as 120mm artillery, and that this should not happen

during the peace-building period. The two groups said that government troops should leave the areas that they seized after launching the offensive on October 2.

Similarly, the Shan State Army-North, Shan State Army-South, Shan Nationalities Democratic Party and Shan Nationalities League for Democracy issued a statement, which they sent to the president, objecting the clashes. The fighting broke out while Shan armed group and political party leaders were meeting Bangkok.

One strange point is that Minister for the President's Office U Aung Min, vice chair of UPWC, was also attending the talks in Bangkok. During the meeting, Shan leaders told U Aung Min to take ac-

In some cases the government needs to accommodate the ethnic groups and in others ethnic armed groups need to follow the rules.

tion to stop the offensive in Kye-thi township. All that he could respond is that the president had assured him the government does not plan to seize Wan Hai, the headquarters of the SSA-North and its political wing, the Shan State Progress Party. He could not comment on, let alone offer assurance about, the fighting in Wanwat village tract.

The clashes have also been discussed in the hluttaw, where MPs explained how the government's offensive had led to the displacement of local Shan people. While both sides have now stopped fighting, the Tatmadaw troops have not left the Wanwat area.

The government troop should not launch offensives with thousands of troops during the period when talks toward a ceasefire are continuing. Both sides should

negotiate to resolve issues related to the seizing of territory. It is a major problem in northern Shan State.

Similarly, the clash between Pa-O armed group and Shan State Army-South, the armed wing of the Restoration Council of Shan State, broke out because of an argument over territory.

The conflict in Mon and Kayin states is different from the fighting in Shan State, however. It stemmed from the breaking of an earlier ceasefire agreement. Under that deal, the ethnic armed groups agreed not to wear uniforms or carry weapons while entering areas controlled by the government. If they want to wear uniforms or carry weapons, they need to first seek permission from the government. The DKBA entered government territory with weapons and wearing uniforms. In response, the government troops visited the DKBA area to tell the group not to enter its territory wearing uniforms or carrying weapons without permission.

When the government troops and officials entered the DKBA area, soldiers from the DKBA attacked them and then, later, arrested them. They took off the government soldiers' uniforms and seized their weapons.

That's how the clashes started. Later, government forces searched the houses of DKBA members in Myawaddy, Kyaikmayaw and Mudon, which are all under government control, and seized weapons. Then it posted security in Myawaddy and along the motorway. The government troops told the DKBA to return the weapons they had taken and it complied. However, the problem has not been completely settled.

From these clashes we can see that in some cases the government needs to accommodate the ethnic armed groups and in others ethnic armed groups need to follow the rules.

Either way, we can still hope that peace can be reached through negotiation. What we have seen are small conflicts, not a return to the outright war of the past.

- Translation by Thiri Min Htun

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Business

TAMU AND YANGON

Indian trade primed to grow

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WHEN a youth group called the Kuki Students Organisation (KSO) temporarily closed a road through India's Mainpur state in early October, traders barely batted an eye. Border closures – as long as they don't drag on too long – are a fact of life, or commerce, for merchants doing business with India.

Yet obstacles such as frequent border closures need to be overcome if both sides are to follow through on plans to grow bilateral commerce.

In early October, the KSO closed the road, putting a halt to trade through Moreh, a town on the Indian side which connects to Myanmar's Tamu. The KSO demanded better infrastructure and more government jobs, according to an October 8 article from *The Times of India*.

Although only a fraction of the normal amount of goods were trickling through the border during the road closure and few buyers were making the cross-border trip to check out Myanmar's markets, local merchants said they were prepared to shoulder the burden – for the time being.

"No customers come from India when the road is closed," said one local merchant. "Only a few who live in Moreh come to the market when the road is closed. We don't sell many products and just wait for it to re-open."

As far as border closures go, though, the one in early October came at a good time. There is little trade in perishable goods like fruit this time of the year, and most of Myanmar's exports to India are goods like blankets and textiles, often re-exported from China, which have a longer shelf life.

However, some goods were already

in short supply on the Myanmar side when *The Myanmar Times* visited the border on day two of the closure.

Tamu native Ko Bu Hen said supplies of locally important products such as salt and flour were already dropping. "If the closure continues much longer, prices will rise," he said.

The Moreh-Tamu crossing has been one of the main overland connections between the two countries since a friendship bridge was opened in 2001.

Official trade through the crossing hit US\$30.8 million in the 2013-14 fiscal year, about two-thirds of which was Myanmar's exports and one-third imports, according to statistics from the Tamu Border Trade office. However, other trade volumes are thought to take unofficial channels.

The two countries have prioritised strengthened economic ties, recognition of the importance of their geographic proximity, though officials admit there is currently much less trade than there could be.

"As Myanmar develops more, Myanmar will export more products to India and we hope it will import more from India" said Indian ambassador to Myanmar Gautam Mukhopadhyaya.

India has a US\$1.8 trillion annual economy, and has a market size of about 1.2 billion people, while ASEAN has a rapidly growing economy of its own and about 600 million people.

But compared to these large populations and economies, trade is still relatively low, he said.

"This means both sides have not done enough to tap the potential," said Gautam Mukhopadhyaya.

As part of the government of India's Look East policy, it has promoted shipping service – which have the advantage of bypassing the sometimes testy land borders. The inaugural vessel from the India-Myanmar Direct



The trade gate in Tamu is open for business, mostly. Photo: Nyein Ei Ei Htwe

Shipping Service left Chennai Port on October 3, and arrived at Yangon's Bo Aung Kyaw Port on October 8.

The fortnightly direct liner will speed up the transportation of goods while reducing costs, both important concerns for the local business community. It's the third such direct link, though this one is aimed at cutting transportation times from Yangon to Chennai down from 15 days to four days, said Rotan, country manager of Aims Overseas Pte, involved in shipping.

Myanmar is a major exporter of beans and pulses to India as well as other goods such as hair for wig-making, while finished products, pharmaceuticals and machinery are among the goods shipped the other way.

The two countries are also traditional competitors in other goods in third markets, though there are signs this is beginning to change.

S Janakiraman, economic and commerce first secretary with the Indian Embassy, met with Myanmar Rice Federation president U Chit Khaing on October 15 to negotiate a purchase of 20,000 tonnes of rice for people living near India's remote

northeast border.

While India, like Myanmar, is traditionally a rice exporter, some logistics challenges have made shipping rice to the northeast a challenge. For the latest deal, transportation costs and risk are relatively high, though traders will use straight-forward measures.

Such trade links are set to become increasingly common. India has a free trade agreement with ASEAN and has also pushed infrastructural improvements to its remote northeast.

Ambassador Gautam Mukhopadhyaya said at present the area doesn't have a high level of industrialisation, but that could change.

India, Myanmar and Thailand are building a highway linking Moreh in India with Mae Sot in Thailand, with different sections the responsibility of the three countries.

"We are developing roads that increase connectivity in northeast India and simultaneously we are contributing to the development of Myanmar by building roads and transport systems in these parts of Myanmar that connect with India," he said. "The idea is that there will be a trade corridor, an investment corridor and therefore



also an industrial corridor."

Building these stronger connections may boost trade between the two neighbours. For now, though, Tamu's merchants continue with their commerce, hoping another group like the Kuki Students' Organisation doesn't decide to shut down business.

Still, traders have grown resilient to these periodic closures, said U Hla Maung, chair of Tamu Trading at the Border Trade Chambers of Commerce.

"It's not all that shocking that the road from India is closed for a few days and that causes fewer merchants at the markets," he said.

Merchants will do what they can, but they are hoping for a stronger, less obstructed future.

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Telenor to take two more weeks to reach Yangon

BUSINESS 27



Large-scale project to see Mandalay expand north of famous hill

PROPERTY 34

Exchange Rates (October 17 close)		
Currency	Buying	Selling
Euro	K1261	K1279
Malaysia Ringitt	K302	K303
Singapore Dollar	K778	K783
Thai Baht	K30	K31
US Dollar	K993.5	K996.5

KFC targets middle-class future



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KFC plans to position its fare as aspirational products when it opens its doors in Myanmar in 2015, as its owner Yum! Brands announced a deal with Singapore-listed, Myanmar-focused Yoma Strategic Holdings to bring its popular chicken to the country.

The taste and products offered by KFC along with its quality standards make it well suited for emerging markets such as Myanmar, said Yoma Strategic head of business development JR Ching.

“It is definitely the case that there is a difference in the brand positioning in emerging markets versus the brand positioning in developed markets,” he said in a Yangon interview on October 15.

Yum! as an organisation is focused on expanding into new countries, he said. KFC is often positioned in emerging markets as an aspirational product, aiming for customers from the growing middle class – a group which is making up a growing proportion of Myanmar’s population.

“If you think about brands and the way brands have been positioned around the world, as people move up in income scale they start consuming different kinds of prod-

ucts,” Mr Ching said.

KFC will be the first global quick-service restaurant to enter the domestic market, he said. Although competitors like South Korea’s Lotteria and Marrybrown from Malaysia have also opened their own brands of quick-service restaurants in Myanmar, “the segment is relatively undeveloped in the country,” he said.

“I think [KFC] is much more of a good food that is prepared fast than a pure fast food,” he said. “And from that perspective it does focus on quality ingredients, freshness of preparation. One of the key things is that a lot of the product is prepared fresh in the store rather than frozen to fryer.”

With US\$23 billion in annual sales and more than 18,000 restaurants in 118 countries, KFC is the largest fast-food brand to announce plans to enter Myanmar. Although its owner Yum! also has restaurants like Burger King and Taco Bell in its portfolio, the current agreement with Yoma Strategic is for the KFC brand.

Mr Ching said Yoma Strategic will be operating as a franchisee rather than as a joint venture, adding there are currently no plans to sub-franchise. The first outlet is planned to open its doors in mid-2015.

“We initially want to start in Yangon given its opportunity set, its income, its dynamics,” he said. Mr Ching added the firm will then consider possible expansion in the



There is likely some finger-licking going on at this Hong Kong outlet. Photo: Wikimedia Commons

country.

Yoma has extensive property holdings, though interests in a range of other industries such as automotive sales, tourism and agriculture. Mr Ching said the company understands the crossover potential of its different business units, but has approached KFC on its own merits.

“Aside from the fact that there are synergies, our business planning and financial assumptions still assume a standalone entity,” he said. The firm will also try to source lo-

cally as much as possible.

In a press release on October 13 announcing the agreement, Yoma Strategic chair Serge Pun said KFC is well suited for the local market.

“Chicken is a staple protein in Myanmar and our people recognise the KFC brand,” he said.

“The announcement of the first KFC coming to Myanmar reflects our ongoing strategy of global expansion in emerging markets,” KFC chief executive officer Micky Pant.

– Additional reporting by Thomas Kean

Six firms still in hunt for ASEAN prize

SIX Myanmar companies snagged national titles from the ASEAN Business Awards 2014, supported by local business association UMFCFI.

About 120 firms from Myanmar entered the contest, the second-largest number after the Philippines, UMFCFI said in a press release. Ten judges, one from each ASEAN country, began reviewing the contestants in September, with national winners revealed October 13.

Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCFI) said the ASEAN-wide winners will be chosen from among the national winners and presented with their prize during the 11th ASEAN Business and Investment Summit in Nay Pyi Taw on November 11.

Myanmar’s award-winners

- Kanbawza Bank
Cooperative Excellence Award
- FAME Pharmaceutical
Innovation Award
- Myanmar Airways International
ASEAN Centricity Award
- Kelvin Chia Yangon
Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Award
- Blue Ocean Operation Management
Young Entrepreneurs Award
- City Mart Holdings
Women Leaders Award

– Noe Noe Aung

Thanlyin refinery tender narrowed down to last four bidders

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ONLY four companies have responded to an invitation to tender to build a refinery at Thanlyin in Yangon Region, despite about 20 foreign and international firms purchasing bidding documents.

The winner of the large-scale Thanlyin Refinery Joint Venture Project (TRJVP) must have had experience in the industry, including running a large-scale refinery for over three years, according to the invitation to tender released by the Ministry of Energy.

Thanlyin is located southeast of Yangon city near the port facilities at Thilawa.

The Ministry of Energy announced on October 13 that Ite-mitsu Kosan from Japan, PTT from Thailand, Singapore-based Puma Energy and Omni Focus of Myanmar have applied.

Omni Focus, the only local company that submitted the tender documents, belongs to U Aye Ne Win and U Kyaw Ne Win. The grandsons of former military dictator Gen Ne Win said they had bought a 60 percent share of Asia Green Development (AGD) Bank, which had been founded and owned by prominent tycoon U Tay Za.

“The project is to be managed by

a selection committee led by a deputy minister. Only one company will be selected,” said U Kyaw Soe Win, a director of Myanmar Petrochemical Enterprise, which runs the No.1 Thanlyin Refinery.

The refinery currently has a current capacity of 20,000 barrels per day (BPD) and its production rate has declined.

The selected company will be licensed under the Foreign Investment Law to rehabilitate the refinery and to undertake the importation, distribution and storage of petroleum products, said an announcement. The 20 companies that initially signalled interest had to put up K3 million as a non-refundable payment to obtain the tender documentation.

Eligible applicants must have at least three consecutive years of refinery management with a total production of at least 500,000 BPD and three years’ experience of crude oil importation, distribution and storage with the capacity to handle 20 million barrels of petroleum products annually, according to the Ministry of Energy’s initial invitation to tender.

“The selection process will be completed within two or three months. The selected company will be able to start rehabilitation early next year,” said U Kyaw Soe Win.

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A future potential billboard pulls into a railway station in Yangon. Photo: Zarni Phyo

Tidied-up trains to draw ads



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MYANMA Railway is counting on its clean new carriages to draw advertising revenue, though another tender may take some time, according a senior official with the state-owned firm's business department.

The first tenders for advertising in late 2013 attracted a lukewarm response, with advertisers snapping up the rights to only a handful of new carriages and avoiding the more derelict rolling stock.

Officials are planning the second round of advertising, hoping to have learned from the last tender. One issue over the past year has been the state of some of the older carriages, while another was the lack of visibility of the circular train's route around Yangon.

"Sometimes the circular train travels down routes that are full of bushes

and the back-side of houses," he said. "So they don't want to advertise."

Myanma Railway first announced plans to host advertising on the city's commuter trains through state press in mid-October. Four companies have since won rights to advertise.

The highest bid came from Myanmar Distribution Group, who agreed to pay K20 million a year to advertise on an air-conditioned train with five carriages.

Other tenders to advertise on new engines cost K675,000 per engine and were won by three companies. New Life Advertising Group won the right

to advertise on five trains, while Paing & Paing Co and ABC Media Group both won the right to advertise on one train.

However, no bids were received to advertise on the circular route's 14 ordinary, non-air-conditioned trains.

With the contracted period now coming to an end, some companies are reluctant to renew their contracts. U Soe Moe Aung said that while most Yangon advertisers prefer billboards at heavily trafficked junctions, in reality mobile advertising using trains is more effective.

"If famous companies are interested in mobile advertising, it will develop, and at that time we will have another tender," he said.

Media experts said trains are an effective out-of-home platform in Myanmar, particularly as they travel to different parts of the city and as the number of passengers using trains is increasing.

"This platform also allows for further creativity because advertisers are provided with a longer space as their canvas, and they can run ads as a series of stories for example," said Rose Swe, managing director of Mango Media. "Additionally, unlike bus branding, advertisers don't need to worry about accidents. Billboards by comparison tend to be quite cluttered and expensive." — *Additional reporting by Jeremy Mullins*

'Billboards by comparison tend to be quite cluttered and expensive.'

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Traders step toward a futures market for commodities

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BEANS and pulses traders have begun a pilot program selling futures contracts, as business leaders look to develop a futures market for commodities in the country.

Currently most agricultural commodities in Myanmar are sold "on the spot" for immediate delivery, but introducing futures contracts means an agreement to sell a commodity would come on one day, but the actual commodity would be delivered at a specific later date at the price previously agreed on.

While a futures market allows buyers and sellers to lock in a price and reduce the risk of price fluctuations, it also opens the door to speculation and requires strong contract enforcement to prevent disputes.

U Win Aung, chair of UMFCFI, said Myanmar traders have been discussing a futures market for some time — though declined to say when it will become a reality.

"First, Myanmar has to make rules and regulations about the market," he told *The Myanmar Times* on the sidelines of a Ministry of Commerce meeting last month.

"To make [futures] trading systematic, we need infrastructure — specifically rules and regulations," he said. "There are futures markets in other countries, like Singapore, but they have no problem as there are systematic regulations."

Myanmar's trades in agricultural commodities are often opaquely conducted, and scandals and swindles at commodity exchanges have broken out. Officials say they are keen to prevent similar problems in a futures market, which could undermine confidence in trading.

Merchants at Bayinnaung market in Yangon, the country's largest commodities exchange centre, began a one-month trial for futures trades October 9. There are a number of rules in place, such as requirement for buyers to make a 10 percent payment up front and sellers to provide 10pc of the goods on the day the futures contract is sold, with the rest of the payment and goods coming on the delivery day.

U Myat Soe, an executive member of both Bayinnaung market and the Myanmar Pulses, Beans and Sesame Seeds Association, said market officials discussed the idea with lawyers before beginning the trial.

The centre made strict rules to govern trades and is keeping a close eye on the market.

"Regarding both good and bad impacts, we have to wait and see," he said. "However, we're trying to improve the situation."

There have been a few instances over the last year when trades have gone sour, and the market is keen to make sure those problems do not happen with futures trading, he said.

Currently there is de facto futures trading, particular in the green gram type of bean, but it relies on personal relationships and trust. "Quite often, if there is a rapid change in prices in a short time and payments need to happen, things get into a jam and problems break out," he said.

While the commodity exchanges are a way of matching demand with supply, they also see traders keenly speculating on a number of different commodities, such as beans and pulses and gold.

One businessperson in Bayinnaung commodity market said he likened these speculative trades to gambling, claiming that buyers who do not have enough money make informal future agreements with sellers who do not have enough product, both hoping that the commodity price is swayed either down or up at the end of the period.

Many of these de facto futures trades do not have a signed agreement underpinning them and instead rely on oral agreements, meaning it can be harder to solve problems that break out.

Bayinnaung market traders told *The Myanmar Times* that September had seen a few notable instances of disagreements over contracts.

Considerable thought should go into futures trading at the country's commodity markets before it actually begins, said U Hla Maung, a local economist.

Other experts said a futures market is an interesting proposal, but will require some infrastructure improvements to become a reality.

Peter Brimble, principal country specialist at the Asian Development Bank, said most commodity trades are currently done manually, but a modern futures market will require investments in IT infrastructure.

"It's interesting to start thinking about it, but there is a long ways to go," he said. — *Additional reporting by Jeremy Mullins*

Onshore block signing delayed

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AN uncertain situation in Pakistan is delaying the signing of agreements governing the last two oil onshore blocks in Myanmar, according to officials.

Production Sharing Contracts (PSCs) for 16 onshore blocks had been inked by September 17 following repeated delays, leaving only Block J in Mawlamyaing, Mon State, and Block O near Patheingyi, Ayeyarwady Region, to be signed. Both blocks were awarded to Petroleum Exploration (PVT) from Pakistan, Siren Energy from the UK and its local partner Parami Energy.

"The process has been delayed due to political instability in Pakistan. We are rearranging it now, but not sure when it will signed," said a senior Ministry of Energy official, who requested anonymity as he is not allowed to speak to the media.

The Ministry of Energy announced the second bidding round for 18 onshore blocks in January 2013, drawing some 78 international companies to submit expressions of interest.

The winners for 16 blocks were announced in October 2013, though signing of the PSCs — necessary for exploration to begin — have been continuously delayed.

"Actually, the whole process of signing for the 16 blocks was supposed to be finished by the end of August, but it has been delayed until now," said a different official from state-owned Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise.

Agreements have been signed for a total of 14 blocks, with the latest one being inked on September 17.

Ken Tun, CEO of Parami Energy, said the partners were set to hold a meeting shortly to discuss the situation, and more information would be available then.

An official with the Pakistan Em-

bassy in Myanmar said there was no Pakistan government involvement in the enterprise as it is a private company, adding the embassy had no direct information on the project. Reporters were unable to contact Petroleum Exploration directly.

The delay in the last onshore agreements may also signal the offshore blocks will be longer in coming. The winners of 20 offshore blocks were announced in March, and PSCs also need to be signed with the winners before production can begin.

A MOGE official said the offshore contracts are ready to be signed before the end of the year, but confirmed the priority are the onshore contracts.

The winning onshore companies must also complete Environmental Impact Assessments and Social Impact Assessments within six months, along with a number of other responsibilities. — *Additional reporting by Jeremy Mullins*

Telenor pushes back its Yangon launch



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YANGON'S mobile users will have to wait another 6 to 10 days to sign up with Telenor, as the firm needs more time to prepare its coverage in the city, according to Telenor Myanmar CEO Petter Furberg.

The firm had launched coverage in Mandalay on September 27, ahead of its original October 5 launch commitment, but difficulties building in the rainy season and receiving approvals to build towers delayed its launch in Yangon.

On September 25 the telco targeted turning on its Yangon service in the first half of October, but Mr Furberg said on October 15 that though the network has reached critical mass in the city with 305 towers, Telenor still needs more time to "optimise" its coverage.

"To get the seamless, complete 2G coverage for Yangon, and then we would have more 3G on top of it and gradually expand the 3G, we've always said that we would need around 300 towers," he said at a small-scale press briefing on October 15. "We have today 305 towers ... but we still want to use more time to optimise, to make the

performance and the quality of the network better."

Mr Furberg said in the long run, Yangon's tower count must more than double to 800 for "a perfect 3G experience", and until then, users could run into issues with Telenor's 3G service in the city.

"[In the beginning,] 2G will cover you everywhere, indoors, outdoors in Yangon," Mr Furberg said. "3G signal, because it's weaker and goes shorter, will not cover everywhere, but generally everywhere outdoors and maybe not so good indoors in Yangon."

OCTOBER

30

New, self-imposed deadline for Telenor to launch service in Yangon



Telenor Myanmar CEO Petter Furberg on September 25. Photo: Thiri Lu

As its subscriber base grows in the city, the telco seeks to put up around 100 new towers a month in Yangon, he said.

Mr Furberg also claimed Telenor users in Mandalay have been experiencing dips in call quality and internet speed during peak hours, and

that the company had not expected such a high volume of customers to utilise its voice services or such high demand for its SIM cards. To alleviate issues in Myanmar's second city, more investment and towers are required, he said.

The firm faced problems with distribution on the day of its Man-

dalay debut, as about 500 to 600 shops did not get SIMs, out of the 1500 meant to carry them.

It has also taken precautions in order to discourage those that might buy SIMs in the hopes of selling them on the black market. Though Mandalay customers could buy three SIM cards per ID card during Telenor's first day

on the market, the telco reduced that number to two the next day, a policy it extend to Nay Pyi Taw for the rollout there. In Yangon, consumers will be able to buy one SIM per ID card.

On top of SIM sales limits, Telenor is requiring customers to purchase top-ups when they buy their SIMs to vet shoppers' intentions. "We forced people to top up ... We want to have real customers," he said. "If you buy a motorbike or a car, you can't carry the car or the motorbike out of the shop; you have to have some petrol on it to be able to use it."

"The same with a SIM card," he continued. "If you want to buy a SIM card for use, you should also want to top it up, otherwise we suspect that it's only for trading."

About 1 million SIMS have been provided to stores in Mandalay and Nay Pyi Taw, and Mr Furberg said plenty remain, and that no one should ever purchase Telenor SIMs for more than K1500. "The time that a SIM card was the same as gold is over," he said. Six thousand mobile shops will receive around 1 million SIM cards from Telenor in Yangon.

Telenor will roll out services between October 25th and 30th in all but one of Yangon's 44 townships. Its competitor Ooredoo began service in Yangon, Nay Pyi Taw and Mandalay on August 2, though acknowledged some coverage gaps particularly in Yangon at launch.

IN BRIEF

Japan trade volumes could triple

Trade volume with Japan could more than triple in size to US\$2 billion this year, Ministry of Commerce advisor U Maung Aung says.

Already half-way through the current fiscal 2014-2015 trade is over \$1 billion, with exported CMP and agriculture products valued at \$250 million and imported vehicles, construction materials and machinery, especially for Thilawa Special Economic Zone, at \$850 million.

Export contracts for rubber and thousands of tonnes of rice could come soon, says U Maung Aung, pushing up bilateral trade with Japan far above its normal level of \$500 million.

"Japan is also thinking about projects in Dawei, in addition to those already decided for Thilawa," he said. Discussions had taken place on electricity, logistics and land prices, which he said the government had not managed well.

As of June, investment amounted about \$230 million, not counting the investment of the three Japanese banks that received Central Bank approval to enter the Myanmar market. Each must contribute at least \$75 million in capital, he said.

— Aye Thidar Kyaw

Construction, power, mining forum coming at end of October

The Construction, Power and Mining Myanmar Exhibition 2014 will be held at Yangon's Myanmar Convention Centre (MCC) from October 30 to November 1, said Justin Pau, general manager of by Bangkok Exhibition Services.

"Myanmar is an exciting market. Mines are open, construction is booming and Myanmar needs more power. Businesses can find new products, solutions and new technology and machinery from all over the world," he said.

The 150 exhibitors from 26 countries will take part in the first International Myanmar Mining Conference and company seminars, he said.

U Zaw Min Win, vice president of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI) said, "We can learn from the exhibitors about new products and new technology." — Myat Noe Oo

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Dated. 20th October, 2014

Reform in the works for state-owned banks



AYE THIDAR
KYAW

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PROMINENT state-owned banks must rapidly reform or risk being removed, according to senior government officials.

Although they may control as much as 60 percent of the domestic banking market, Minister of Finance U Win Shein said earlier this month that state-owned Myanma Foreign Trade Bank and Myanma Economic Bank are showing losses. He previously told *The Myanmar Times* the government is re-considering the state banks' budget and considering plans to reduce their role.

The state-owned banks have long played a dominant role in domestic finance, but some are questioning their viability as restrictions are gradually loosened on commercial banks and licences have been awarded to nine foreign banks to set up in the country.

Altogether, state-owned enterprises together contribute 35pc of total state revenue, though there are significant winners and losers, with some generating very little revenue for state coffers and some continually losing money.

U Win Shein and Minister of the President's Office U Soe Thein on October 5 signalled a coming shake-up to state-owned enterprises, with U Soe Thein claiming some state firms are being reformed or possibly abolished.

Myanmar has made extensive use of state-owned firms in the past. Existing commercial banks were nationalised on February 23, 1963, though the 1975 Bank Act redefined the state-owned banking landscape, introducing Myanma Economic Bank and Myanma



A change is going to come to state-owned enterprises like Myanma Foreign Trade Bank. Photo: Naing Win Tun

Foreign Trade Bank among others, according to the book *Fiery Dragons* by Australian economist Sean Turnell.

Commercial banks were gradually allowed to re-enter the market in the early 1990s, though the last three years have seen a rapid expansion of the services they are able to provide.

A Nay Pyi Taw-based manager of Myanma Economic Bank told *The Myanmar Times* they are aware institutional institutions such as the World Bank are urging reform to the state-owned banking sector.

"I haven't heard of concrete government plans to reform state-owned banks, though some parliamentary members and industry experts are urging it," the manager said last week.

The political demands on state-owned banks often drive them to losses. The Central Bank of Myanmar sometimes lends to MEB at 8pc, but then it lends out at 4pc to some priority areas like agriculture. "Where is our

profit there?" the official said.

Still, he claimed non-performing loan rates are less than 2pc at the bank.

It is also difficult to make quick decisions due to bureaucracy, and staff are often overloaded due to a lack of support, the official said.

Banking expert U San Thein, who works with German development agency GIZ, said customer service is a particular weakness of the state-owned banks, adding they could be reconstructed as they have lots of experience.

"Their role is important for the country," he said. "Government should analyse why they are losing [money]."

The World Bank is working on a series of diagnostics on the banking sector, which ought to be complete in the next few months, said Ma May Thet Zin, World Bank country economist.

"The findings of these diagnostics may help the government as it designs its reforms of state-owned banks," she said.



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Got something to say?
The Myanmar Times



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MANILA

ADB eyes boosting local agriculture

SU PHYO WIN

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THE Asian Development Bank is planning a big push to support Myanmar's agricultural sector by investing in efforts like a US\$75 million irrigation project, according to officials.

The bank is supporting policy development, but also planning two or three large investments at the country and regional level, said Pavit Ramachandran, a specialist from the Environment, Natural Resources and Agricultural Division of the ADB.

Irrigation projects in particular are needed in the dry zone to help boost yields, he told *The Myanmar Times* in an interview at the ADB's Manila headquarters.

"There are a lot of irrigation projects ... that can be rehabilitated and improved," he said.

The ADB has planned a \$75 million loan to improve irrigation in the dry zone, including Mandalay, Magwe and parts of Sagaing regions, he said. It is also planning to support projects that assist value chain development, and considering future projects promoting food security and stability through technical assistance rather than loans.

Agriculture has been identified as one of the country's main economic drivers. The ADB released a report in August titled "Myanmar: Unlocking the Potential", which said baseline GDP growth could be as high as 9.5 percent per year by 2030, from its current baseline of about 4.8pc - if full economic potential can be realised.

ADB assistant chief economist Cyn-Young Park said at the report launch in Yangon that Myanmar is at a pivotal moment in its economic, social and political transition.



Pavit Ramachandran. Photo: Supplied

"Modernising an economy is a huge and complex task," she said. "Prioritisation and sequencing of policy actions and investments will be critical to the success of the reform agenda and the long-term development of the country"

Mr Pavit said it is important to look at agriculture across the whole value chain when assessing business opportunities.

Agriculture has the potential not just to be the backbone for the rural economy, but also a building block for food security, affordable food, income generation, employment creation and promoting exports.

"Agriculture can also be a key aspect of inclusive growth," he said. "Agriculture and rural development are very intensively interlinked in Myanmar."

The opening-up of the European Union and other markets to agricultural products are also important opportunities for exports.

Mr Pavit added areas like financing, institutional challenges and technological requirements need to be addressed.

Paddy price plunge hits farms



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PADDY prices have taken a big hit from a recent drop in demand from China, as border officials have strangled the bilateral rice trade by stepping up efforts to prevent illegal imports.

Rice exports to China make up over 50 percent of total rice exports, but while they are legal from Myanmar's perspective the exports are illegal from Beijing's point of view as there is no bilateral agreement on health standards. Yet its border officials had generally allowed the trade until a crackdown on illegal imports began last month.

Chinese buyers had paid higher-than-market rates particularly over the past few months, even as negotiations have begun on the Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary (SPS) health agreement that would allow legal Myanmar rice exports to China to begin.

Closing the border to Myanmar rice has led to significant problems for rice exporters, causing prices to drop ahead of the harvest, said U Thein Aung, chair of the Myanmar

Freedom Farmer League.

"We were expecting quite a good price for exports from this year's harvests. But [if the closure continues], farmers will be stuck with all the rice they have grown, and exports will be terrible," he said.

Rice prices have increased significantly for local farmers over the past two years, driven partly by the surge in Chinese demand. A World Bank report from earlier this year said there was negligible overland rice trade to China in 2010-11, while it constituted 752,000 tonnes by 2012-13.

China has also significantly increased prices for rice, paying about US\$436 a tonne in 2013, compared with \$381 a tonne in 2012 and \$316 a tonne in 2011. Prices for 2014 were understood to be higher still, until the recent border crackdown.

Traders told *The Myanmar Times* in August that exports could increase further this year as Chinese buyers looked to diversify away from Vietnamese imports.

Spurred by the expected increase in demand, farmers have been expanding the areas under cultivation and spending more on inputs such as fertiliser, said U Thein Aung.

"We worry that if paddy prices drop, prices will be below the



Current prices mean tough work for increasingly little reward.
Photo: Kaung Htet

breakeven point," he said.

U Lu Maw Myint Maung, joint secretary of the Myanmar Rice Federation and a leading exporter, said he expects the paddy price to continue falling.

"Exporters have already begun

decreasing the amount of rice they are buying to ship to the Chinese market. If this trend continues, exporters won't buy a lot of rice for the harvest season and it can lead to further losses for farmers," he said. "I don't think paddy will be more than K3000 a basket if this trend continues."

Rice exports to Europe have also decreased slightly since August, though not on the level seen by China.

Overall, U Lu Maw Myint Maung said Myanmar's current level of production is geared toward exporting about 100,000 tonnes a month, and if volumes drop below that, rice prices will also decline.

He added that Myanmar had been exporting up to 3500 tonnes of rice a day to China, but shipments now total less than 20 tonnes a day through the Muse border gate in northern Shan State.

"Myanmar traders are not sending their rice through Muse because they are worried it will be confiscated, and Chinese traders are not coming to Muse to buy Myanmar rice as they were doing before," he said.

"In Myanmar, the local price for rice harvests is already decreasing as a result."

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Shops find out where K1800 will take you

Popularity of K1800 Omoto stores rest on their fixed prices, as well as a way for land owners to monetise under-used retail shop space



MYAT
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BARGAINING may be an accepted part of the traditional shopping experience, but fixed-price stores are increasingly taking hold.

At the front of this trend are the set-price Omoto shops, a local twist on the American dollar stores. At Myanmar's 22 Omoto locations, every item is K1800 – though some customers say not every product at the store is worth the price.

The company claims Japanese corporate roots, selling products from Japan-based Kando and Seira companies – though the goods are manufactured in Japan, China, Philippines and Korea. Its products include a range of household goods, as well as cosmetics and stationary.

"The main problem is that nearly all the product labeling is in Japanese, not English, and the products require some explanation," said Daw Thin Thin New, sales and marketing manager at Omoto. "We explain the products, how to use them, and people like them and then buy them."

She added there is not much difficulty explaining the shop's pricing concept, even if it is a departure from traditional retail norms. The shops are often located near vendors of another product that sells at a fixed

price – lottery tickets.

Costs to rent a retail outlet are increasing in the city, and many lottery ticket sellers are keen to open the Omoto shops to get more use out of one location, said Daw Thin Thin Nwe, sales and marketing manager at Omoto.

"Lottery tickets now do not bring in enough revenue to cover rental prices," she said. "But if ticket sellers also open Omoto shops, they are able to make a profit."

The first Omoto store in Yangon opened in July 2013 in Lanmadaw township, and there are now 22 branches in Yangon as well as smaller towns like Meiktila, Hpa-an and Taungoo. Although lottery ticket sellers were the first to open shops, other businesspeople have become increasingly interested, she said.

Other countries have many shops that sell all its products at the same price, but the concept is new to Myanmar, said U Aung Htay, owner of an Omoto shop in North Okkalapa.

"Our business has been steady," he said. "I sell lottery tickets out front and inside I sell Omoto products, so I can receive more profits. I had to do this because the price of the apartment has climbed every year for the past three years."

"People are interested in the idea of a shop where every product has the same price," he said.

In Yangon the shop is particularly visible through its store fronts, though its products are also sold on a wholesale level particularly to



Omoto stores in Yangon tend to operate in conjunction with lottery ticket sellers Photo: Zarni Phyo

smaller towns.

Customers said they are pleased with the concept of shopping at a set price, though added it is important to choose products that are really worth the K1800.

Ma Zin Mar Htwe, a 20-year-old Omoto customer, said that many of the store's products are good, but

others are small in size and not worth the K1800 cost.

Daw Thin Thin New said often these types of complaints are problems over usage, adding that once use is explained, the value becomes apparent.

Other customers say it took them a while to be sold on the concept.

Ma Thidar, a 25-year-old resident of Yankin township, said she buys some of the K1800 products, though was initially concerned about buying cosmetics of a brand she didn't know. Now she said she has no concerns buying its face cleanser, though is a little concerned about the quality of other beauty products.

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KUALA LUMPUR

Malay banks plan powerhouse venture

TWO of Malaysia's largest financial institutions, CIMB Group and RHB Capital, said they plan to merge along with a property lending firm to create a "financial powerhouse" that will become the country's biggest bank.

The three institutions are seeking central bank approval for the merger, according to documents submitted October 16 with Malaysia's stock exchange, and aim to sign a definitive agreement early next year.

CIMB and RHB Capital – the second- and fourth-largest banks, respectively – and the Malaysia Building Society announced in July they were in early talks on creating an entity with total assets estimated at around 614 billion ringgit (US\$189 billion).

That would top current leader Maybank, which had total assets of about 578 billion ringgit as of July.

The resulting entity would also

be Southeast Asia's fourth-biggest bank. Both banks had independently competed in Myanmar's recent licence contest, though ultimately lost out, while rival Maybank was successful.

The Islamic-lending arms of CIMB and RHB will also link up with the Malaysian Building Society.

"The merged entity will be a major ASEAN financial powerhouse and a mega-Islamic bank," the three organisations said in their joint statement filed with the stock exchange, referring to the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Ratings agency Fitch had warned in July that the plan was fraught with risk, particularly expected difficulties achieving integration.

Malaysia is Southeast Asia's third-largest economy after Indonesia and Thailand, and the central bank is encouraging consolidation in the banking sector as part of plans to become an important gateway into booming regional markets.

It is also determined to position Malaysia as the leading international centre for Islamic finance.

Islamic banking fuses principles of Islamic sharia law and modern banking methods. Islamic funds are banned from investing in companies associated with tobacco, alcohol or gambling.

Sharia-based finance also bans interest, which is seen as usury, and risks are shared between creditor and borrowers. – *AFP*

‘The merged entity will be a major ASEAN financial powerhouse and a mega-Islamic bank.’

Joint statement, CIMB and RHB

SINGAPORE



Chinese tourists desert Lion City

INTERNATIONAL visitor arrivals to Singapore fell 3 percent in the first half of this year, hurt by a 30pc drop in tourists from China, official data showed on October 15.

Singapore's tourism board said overall arrivals totalled 7.5 million in the six months to June, with second quarter numbers dipping by a sharper 6pc.

Travellers from China totalled 871,000 in the first half, almost a third fewer than from the same period last year, the board said.

It said that a tourism law implemented by China in October last year which tightened regulations on overseas travel contributed to the decline.

"In addition, the disappearance of flight MH370, abduction of Chinese visitors in Sabah and political unrest in Thailand have all had a dampening effect on Chinese travel to the region," the board said.

Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 went missing in March while en route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing carrying 239 people aboard, mostly Chinese.

The aircraft has yet to be found, and Chinese families have accused Malaysia of mishandling the tragedy.

In April, a female Chinese tourist was abducted by gunmen at a diving resort in the Malaysian state of Sabah, along with a Filipino resort worker. Both were rescued nearly two months later.

In May, a Chinese fish farm manager was also kidnapped near Lahad Datu in eastern Sabah. He has since been released.

Most Chinese tourists visit Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand at the same time as part of large tour groups.

In June, Singapore mounted a drive in China to market itself as a standalone tourism destination. – *AFP*

NEW DELHI

No time like now to open India's diesel market

THERE hasn't been a better time for Prime Minister Narendra Modi to deregulate diesel prices.

Oil prices are near a four-year low and two major state elections are out of the way. Reserve Bank of India Governor Raghuram Rajan has called on Mr Modi to "seize this moment" while inflation is the lowest in three years and refiners are selling at a profit for the first time in recent memory.

"There's absolutely no reason for the government not to deregulate – it's probably the easiest thing they can do, a low-hanging fruit," Upasna Bhardwaj, an economist at ING Vysya Bank, a unit of the biggest Dutch financial-services company, said by phone from Mumbai. "The markets have been awaiting reforms, and there has been nothing big, so if they fail to do this it will be treated very negatively."

Steps to dismantle India's subsidies would build optimism that Mr Modi will follow through with a pledge to take tough steps to revive Asia's third-biggest economy. Five months since winning India's biggest electoral mandate in 30 years, he's hesitated on major steps to curb one of Asia's widest fiscal deficits while focusing mainly on attracting foreign investment and ensuring that bureaucrats make it easier to do business.

Brent crude has fallen 25 percent this year, and the median forecast of estimates compiled by Bloomberg shows it will linger near US\$100 per barrel through 2018.

The price drop means the government and state-owned explorers including Oil and Natural Gas are no longer subsidising diesel – and deregulation would ensure that the government won't have to pay the subsidy if crude starts to rise again. Mr Modi's

predecessor had already set the process in motion, eliminating controls on petrol prices in 2010 and last year raising diesel prices by 0.5 rupees a litre each month.

The retail price of diesel was last cut across the country in January 2009 to 30.86 rupees (\$0.50) per litre (0.26 gallon), according to data available on Indian Oil's website. It has nearly doubled since then to 58.97 rupees.

Other nations already have acted. Egypt raised fuel prices as much as 78 percent in July, a move the nation's president said was 50 years overdue. Malaysia increased fuel prices for the first time in more than a year at the start of October. Nigeria in January 2012 lifted gasoline prices almost 50 percent. Indonesian President-elect Joko Widodo has pledged to curtail

fuel subsidies in his nation.

India budgeted 634 billion rupees this fiscal year for petroleum subsidies – including diesel, cooking gas and kerosene – down 25pc from the previous 12 months. Falling oil prices may help Mr Modi narrow the deficit in the current fiscal year through March 2015, according to Mizuho Bank Ltd.

While petroleum subsidies are coming down, they only account for a quarter of India's 2.6 trillion rupee subsidy bill. Outlays on food are budgeted to rise 25pc to 1.15 trillion rupees in the year through March.

"This is a sweet spot, a precious window of opportunity that must be used wisely by the government to push through reforms," said Vishnu Varathan, an economist at Mizuho Bank. – *Bloomberg*



Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg (left) fights the inclination for a selfie. Photo: AFP

IN BRIEF

Virgin buys out Tigerair
Virgin took full control of budget carrier Tigerair Australia on October 17, buying the remaining 40 percent it did not already own for AUS\$1 (US\$0.80) from its Singapore-listed parent.

Virgin Australia purchased a 60pc stake in mid-2013 for Aus\$35 million and said Tiger Holdings had agreed to sell the rest of the carrier, which has struggled to reach profitability, for the tiny sum, effectively ending their joint venture.

Tiger will continue to licence its brand to Virgin.

Virgin Australia chief John Borghetti said the acquisition would accelerate Tiger's drive for profitability. – *AFP*

Thailand plans first oil and gas licence round in seven years
Thailand plans to offer new licences to explore for oil and gas this week for the first time in seven years, as the net oil importer seeks to offset declining supply from fields in the Gulf of Thailand.

Securing new supplies is important for energy security because existing reserves in the gulf may last for only seven years, Energy Minister Narongchai Akrasanee said in an interview on October 15. A list of potential investors may be complete by the end of the year, he said.

Thailand's natural gas resources are declining as an expansion of Southeast Asia's second-biggest economy increases demand and state energy subsidies encourage consumption. – *Bloomberg*

Rubber sellers take a stand
Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam were among countries that agreed not to sell natural rubber below current prices, according to the International Rubber Consortium.

Cambodia, the Philippines and Papua New Guinea also pledged to join efforts by producers to improve prices to prevent small holders from suffering further losses, the group said on its website. It follows a move by trade groups from five Southeast Asian nations, which account for at least 70 percent of the global production, on October 10 to halt sales below current rates.

Rubber prices from Tokyo to Thailand and Singapore slumped to their lowest levels in more than five years this month after concerns mounted that demand from China would weaken as the economy in the top consuming nation slowed. – *Bloomberg*

iPhone 6 sales start in China
Apple began selling its latest iPhone in China on October 17, nearly a month after other major territories due to a licence delay by regulators, but it faces a tough battle with rivals led by Samsung in the crucial market. Staff at an Apple Store in downtown Shanghai clapped and congratulated iPhone 6 customers as they left the shop, which opened two hours early for those who had pre-ordered.

Fashion industry worker Wang Xue picked out a gold-coloured iPhone 6 Plus, having been using an iPhone 4 for the past four years. "I like the design and everything about it," she said. "It's worth it to me to pay 6,088 yuan (US\$998)." – *AFP*

Chinese state firm the only one interested in Mexican rail plan
Chinese-led consortium was the only group to enter a bid for a high-speed train project connecting Mexico City and the central city of Queretaro, the transport ministry said. The China Railway Construction Corp. presented on October 15 a US\$4.3 billion plan to build the trains and 210-kilometre (130-mile) railway, the ministry said in a statement.

The project is part of President Enrique Pena Nieto's decision to bring back passenger trains, which mostly disappeared a decade ago. – *AFP*

EXCLUSIVE

Total talking transparency through EITI

JOINING the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) has been a centerpiece of Myanmar's reform of its extractive industry sector. It's a voluntary organisation that declares countries compliant when they meet a set of reporting standards on transparency – a standard so far obtained by 29 countries.

Jean-Francois Lassalle, public affairs director from French petroleum giant Total, visited Myanmar last week for EITI discussions in Nay Pyi Taw. Total is a board member of EITI International, while its local subsidiary Total E&P Myanmar is a member of the Multi Stakeholder Group put together by the government to produce the country's first EITI report.

The Myanmar Times' Aung Shin caught up with him to talk about Myanmar's EITI prospects and processes.

What did you talk about at the EITI International Board Meeting in Nay Pyi Taw [last week]?

There meetings occur about every fourth month, so three a year. We regularly talk about subjects relating to EITI. We receive the achievements of every different country and the prospects for

newcomers, this time especially about [newly] accepted compliant candidates Indonesia and Chad. Great Britain and Colombia are new candidates like Myanmar six months ago.

Is there any particular reason for Myanmar to host this International EITI Board meeting?

Yes, it is recognition of the country's merit. Generally the board goes to the country where we think there is merit to have done something for EITI, like joining or caring they want to join. This is why this time we wanted to honour the country, which is progressing EITI. It is in recognition and an honour for Myanmar to move toward transparency.

Is Myanmar on the right track to become EITI compliant?

I hear there is a lot of enthusiasm here in Myanmar from all the parts. The government, civil societies and private companies are very appreciative. It is good spirit to progress toward delivering the first EITI report in time, which is early 2016. And then [if it successful] the EITI board will certify compliance to Myanmar in 2016. At the mo-



Total's Jean-Francois Lassalle in conversation. Photo: Aung Htay Hlaing

ment, everything is progressing well. Myanmar is going to deliver its First EITI Report in early 2016. Although it is more than a year away, do you think Myanmar can file its report in time?

We are at a very early state at the moment. There is a lot of work to do. But

at least the enthusiasm is here, willing to deliver in time – now it needs to get done.

Will Myanmar's approach to EITI cause pressure to local companies and international companies who have invested here?

The process can be the incentive. If you have companies from the country which is not EITI [compliant] yet, they may be national companies in their country. So, they can report to their government that it is good. In return, these countries may join EITI.

Many local companies, regional companies like Petronas, PTTEP, are less aware of EITI because EITI is not

in their region yet. So we talk about EITI to them and encourage them to join as well. With the system it is not important for the companies to join or not to join. When the country decides to join, all the companies are obliged to follow. So it is better to follow voluntarily.

How is it important for Myanmar to become a part of EITI?

I think it is a sign of good governance and good reputation; it attracts foreign investors to come to the country. Foreign investors, especially the West, they want to invest in places with good reputation, good records and transparency, effectively showing the money they get and where they are using it. ... It is a big chance for Myanmar to develop the economy because [EITI compliance] attracts many investors.

But there are many other countries or companies who do not follow EITI, like China?

China is not interested in EITI at the moment. But Chinese companies are doing business in EITI countries following EITI standards.

What would be the main issues stopping Myanmar from EITI?

For the moment, I don't see any issue. Everything is positive. There is so much enthusiasm. We are very hopeful that Myanmar will do it fast and in time. The civil society here is very well organised. It is more than western countries – Myanmar is changing very rapidly.

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PARIS

World economy in doubt as hopes pinned on US

THE global economy faces its biggest test of confidence since the European sovereign debt crisis as investors fear it is running out of engines.

Japan and the euro area are throwing up fresh signs of weakness by the day and emerging markets such as China are dragging instead of driving growth. The sense of tumult is being exacerbated by war in the Middle East, the standoff in Ukraine, street protests in Hong Kong and the spread of Ebola to Dallas.

The worry is that five years since the world limped out of recession, central banks have virtually exhausted their stimulus arsenals if inflation and activity keeps fading. That leaves the hopes of financial markets riding on the US to resume its historical role as a locomotive robust enough to pull up demand elsewhere.

"The global economy and the markets have a history of traumatic economic events," said Paul Mortimer-Lee, chief economist for North America at BNP Paribas SA in New York. "Psychologically and physically they have not recovered fully and are anxious about a relapse."

The doubts remained evident across financial markets last week. European stocks fell for an eighth day on October 16 in the longest rout since 2003, oil fell toward \$80 a barrel and Treasuries rose. Bonds from Greece to Spain slid while the dollar strengthened.

"Investors have huge questions about the world right now," said David Kotok, chair and chief investment officer at Sarasota, Florida-based Cumberland Advisors.

The latest catalyst for concern was October 15's news that US retail sales dropped 0.3 percent in September and wholesale prices unexpectedly fell for the first time in a year.

That added to the drumbeat of

disappointing data from elsewhere, which this week alone included the weakest German investor confidence in two years and Chinese factory-gate prices dropping for a record-tying 31st month.

The epicentre of the economic worries is the euro area, where European Central Bank President Mario Draghi is trying to tackle the weakest inflation in almost five years as investors bet it will deteriorate further amid signs powerhouse Germany is now faltering.

"Europe has now entered a more dangerous phase in their crisis," said Scott Brown, chief economist at Raymond James & Associates Inc in St Petersburg, Florida. "They've got to do quantitative easing. They don't have any choice because that's the only game in town."

Unlike five years ago when they proved strong enough to lift the world out of its slump, emerging markets are now stumbling, too. A property slump in China is pushing down the nation's annual growth to what analysts project is the slowest pace since 1990, while Brazil is trying to escape the recession it entered in the first half of the year.

The biggest reason for confidence that the storm will prove short-lived are signs the US is again a potential oasis of prosperity even as the foreign weakness and rising dollar draw the concern of Federal Reserve officials.

Grounds for optimism include the lowest unemployment rate in six years, a deleveraging of debt by companies and households and the likelihood cheaper energy and low bond yields will support consumer spending and business investment.

"Things aren't looking bad enough in the rest of the world to drag the US," said Peter Hooper, from Deutsche Bank AG. – Bloomberg



JOB WATCH



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Application process

For more information about these job opportunities and for interested candidates to apply on-line, please visit jobs.irri.org (go to "search the IRRI jobboard" and look for the position titles above, click "apply for job").

Interested candidates may also submit application to No. 21, Baw Ga Street, (9 Mile) Ward 5, Mayagone Township, Yangon, Myanmar. Phone: +95 1 662496.

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JOB OPPORTUNITY

The Project for Capacity Development of Legal, Judicial and Relevant Sectors in Myanmar, one of the technical cooperation projects of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), is seeking a qualified Myanmar national to fill the following position:

Title: Project Assistant
Location: Union Attorney General's Office and the Office of the Supreme Court of the Union, Nay Pyi Taw
Deadline: 7 November 2014
Starting Date: To be discussed
Initial Contract: 1 year (incl. 3 months' probation)
Qualifications:
- Good command of English and Myanmar (Knowledge of Japanese is an asset)
- University Degree (Law, Political Sciences, Public Administration or Economics would be desirable)
- Experience in the usage of computers and office software (MS Word, Excel, etc.)

Interested candidates are required to submit an application letters, CVs, educational certificates and relevant documents to info@jicalegalproject.com. Only short-listed candidates will be contacted for interview.



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Property

MANDALAY

City to expand past Mandalay hill

SITHU LWIN
sithulwin.mmtimes@gmail.com

THE area north of Mandalay Hill will transition from rice paddy to housing development over the next year, as Mandalay city will expand north of the city as a planned project goes ahead.

A large-scale housing project and hotel zone has been proposed to help house the city's growing population, said U Myo Hlaing Oo, a project administrator with the company.

"We are taking a risk with the project as it is located north of the city, away from where most people are," he said. "It will be a peaceful place for people to relax and start a family."

The project will be built by Thadittitsar Construction on 65 acres to the north of Mandalay city and its landmark hill, with a large num-

ber of two-storey housing buildings planned, said U Myo Hlaing Oo. The specific project was planned beginning in 2012, but the area has been eyed for development since 1987.

A Japanese firm has assisted with its planning and will be involved through project engineers, he said. The plan ultimately calls for 27 acres for housing, 10 acres for hotels, with the remaining area de-

voted to roads and green areas such as parks.

It will take up to three years for the housing part to be finished. The firm would like to work on the hotel project concurrently, and is looking to collaborate with hoteliers on its design and branding.

Housing at the site will cost about K100 million for the top-end units, with deposits of 80 percent being required. There is also the option for installment financing, said U Myo Hlaing.

A company engineer added it will come with 24-hour electricity and a quality water supply.

Mandalay officials said they support efforts to build housing for Mandalay's booming population.

U Kyaw San, Mandalay Region transportation minister, said at the launch event that developing civil projects is a government priority.

- Translated by Khant Lin Oo

'We are taking a risk with the project as it is located north of the city.'

U Myo Laing Oo
Project administrator

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IN PICTURES

Photo: Thiri Lu

The Central Fire Station is marked by a 100-foot watchtower, and was the first Myanmar fire station to use petrol and steam-driven fire engines to replace horse-driven engines. It was built in 1911 and completed in 1912, and is also now host to Yangon Heritage Trust's fourth blue plaque marketing its historical importance.

- Noe Noe Aung



Rent hikes send p

Thadingyunt is a traditional time to find a new home, but it's



NOE NOE AUNG

noenoeag@gmail.com

THE traditional property shuffle that comes with Buddhist Lent is seeing more people than ever move to Yangon's suburbs, according to property experts.

Thadingyut, the festival marking the end of Lent that fell on October 7 to 9 this year, is often followed by large numbers of people changing homes. But rental prices in Yangon itself are still quite high, and increasing volumes of renters are headed north to townships like North Dagon and Hlaing Tharyar townships for some respite from the rent price increase, after being unable to secure another year at downtown apartments.

"Many people are moving to the suburban townships this year - we

are hiring out lots of trucks and workers for moving," said U Khin Maung Aye, owner of Shwe Kan Myay house moving and real estate company.

The suburbs have longed faced poor infrastructure, but it has been rapidly improved over the past two years. The suburbs are also much cheaper to live in than the city.

"Some people are moving from South Okkalapa to North Dagon townships to reduce rental fees -

'Particularly in 2014, lots of people have changed their minds and are moving out to the suburbs.'

Ko Min Min Soe
Mya Pan Tha Khin real estate

NEW DELHI

Over \$1 billion wiped o

INDIA'S biggest property developer DLF saw \$1.2 billion wiped off its stock market value after regulators barred the company from selling shares and bonds, alleging it had sought to defraud investors.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), in one of the toughest orders handed down by financial regulators, accused DLF in a October 14 statement of "deliberate suppression of important information" in the 2007 initial public offering (IPO).

DLF's shares slid 29 percent to close

at 104.9 rupees on the Bombay Stock Exchange-slashing 74.38 billion rupees (US\$1.2 billion) off the firm's share market value.

The order would block debt-laden DLF, its billionaire founder-chair Kushal Pal Singh and five other people, from any sale, purchase or other dealings in the security markets for three years. The others barred from trading include his son, Rajiv Singh, who is company vice-chair, and daughter Pia Singh, a DLF director.

It was the latest blow for the New

“For the moment, I don’t see any issue. Everything is positive. There is so much enthusiasm.”

— Total official Jean-Francois Lassalle on Myanmar’s EITI candidacy

Red Shirts start singing out for mass appeal

WORLD 51



HOUSE OF THE WEEK

Not just geckos but Gordon Gekkos



IT’S a dream to live near your office. No running back across town to pick up missing documents, minimal concern about sleeping in at home and missing an important meeting, or, more likely in *House of the Week*’s case, sleeping in at the office and missing the repeat of *Rocky IV* playing on satellite.

But what about living in your office? *House of the Week* was tempted by the thought after visiting this week’s home in Mayangone township. It’s beautifully put together and a welcoming place for business

visitors, after-work friends and your neighbourhood geckos alike.

While *House of the Week* has yet to act on its plans of cashing in its day job and joining the speculation craze, this would be a reasonable headquarters if it does.

At 3800 square feet, there are four large bedrooms, and plenty of smaller rooms, including lots of

space for a large family.

It’s also a bit outside of town, meaning were you not both living and working here, you would be spending significant time in the rush-hour Kabar Aye Pagoda crush.

It has a well-kept garden and pleasant balcony, both fine places to read a book. The home is Western-style with a nod to Myanmar decorating sensibilities.

The price is steep at US\$7500 a month, but we’d suggest giving a stab at negotiating it lower. But if you’ve chosen it as the headquarters of your soon-to-be-successful Gordon Gekko enterprise, maybe it doesn’t matter so much.

– Tin Yadanar Htun

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Mayangone
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- Contact : Estate Myanmar
Real Estate Agency
- Phone : 09-43118787,
09-43031699

people to suburbs
more difficult to afford reasonable downtown lodging

currently North Dagon is the hottest place to live,” he said.

Developments a little further from downtown, such as Nawaday Garden and Pun Hlaing Golf Estate, are becoming more popular, partly because buyers and renters can get large accommodation for the same price.

Ko Min Min Soe of Mya Pan Tha Khin real estate agency, said he has also seen more interest in the suburbs.

“In the past, people refused to live in the suburbs because of incomplete infrastructure and poor transportation. But nowadays, particularly in 2014, lots of people have changed their minds and are moving out to the suburbs,” he said.

It is high property prices in particular that are causing people to move from downtown. Rents have been rising, and the number of reasonably-priced units available have fallen as landlords focus on renting to businesses or foreigners.

Standard rental units in downtown townships cost between K300,000

and K800,000 a month, well beyond the reach of many workers. Higher quality units start at about K1.5 million, agents told *The Myanmar Times*.

Meanwhile, rent can be as low as K100,000 for apartments in the suburbs.

Ma Thawta works at a company and resides in Hlaing township, but will be on the move shortly as she cannot renew her present lease.

“My current flat costs K150,000 a month. It’s on the fourth floor and not that big, just enough for two or three people,” she said. “But by the end of the month I have to move out, so I’m searching for another flat nearby ... but it’s difficult.”

Ma Thawta said she may end up having to move further afield.

Agents say much of the current market actions is in renting rather than selling and buying, as prices have risen high enough to slow trading.

“I’m guessing rental costs will rise again by the end of 2014, but we have to wait and see,” said Ko Min Min Soe.

ut at Indian developer

Delhi-based firm, which pioneered development of the Indian capital’s fast-growing satellite city Gurgaon.




DLF, which builds apartment complexes, malls and office towers, has been hard hit by weak home sales triggered by the country’s sharp economic slowdown. The SEBI ban means it will be unable to tap financial markets to raise funds and reduce its 190 billion rupee (US\$3 billion) debt.

The SEBI order “banning DLF from capital market exercises for three years is a big negative development,” said


Macquarie Capital Securities India in note to clients, adding the company might have to “resort to large asset sales to reduce debt”.

DLF could face a liquidity crisis if real estate sales fail to pick up, Ambit Capital brokerage analyst V Krishnan told the *Economic Times* daily.

The real-estate company, India’s biggest listed property developer with annual turnover of 100 billion rupees, told investors it had not contravened “the law either during its initial public offer or otherwise.” – *AFP*



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Women crucial to change, says advisor

CATHERINE TRAUTWEIN
newsroom@mmtimes.com

RURAL poverty has an outsize effect on Myanmar's women – an issue that their “empowerment” can help address, according to U Aung Htun Thet, economic advisor to the president.

“We have to recognize the feminisation of poverty,” he said at Ooredoo's Connected Women's Conference 2014. “Women's empowerment is the key toward poverty reduction and rural development.”

The government has prioritised these two issues in Myanmar, where 70 percent of the population lives in rural areas.

U Aung Htun Thet also recognised the need for an “action plan” to close the digital gap between men and women. According to a 2010 GSMA study, women in low-income countries such as Myanmar are 21 percent less likely to own a mobile phone than men, a presenter at the event said.

“I hope through this conference we can enhance the economic power of the woman in Myanmar, we can raise the political voice of the woman in Myanmar, and we can further enhance the legal rights of the woman in Myanmar,” he said.

He also said connectivity and technology will help women lead and learn. “We envisage an economically vibrant country, a socially inclusive country and a democratically anchored nation,” he said.

App to cast a critical eye

CATHERINE TRAUTWEIN
newsroom@mmtimes.com

A NEW app debuting in Myanmar can make everyone a critic.

Let's Hush, a location-based reviewing application from Nex Co Ltd, will allow users to air their secrets, deliver feedback on proximate items and “speak ... their mind freely”, according to the company's founder and managing director Ko Ye Myat Min.

Nex can then potentially leverage what people review, selling info to companies that want to know their standing with the public.

“Our strategy is to slowly transform the platform from a fun confession app into a useful review app,” he said.

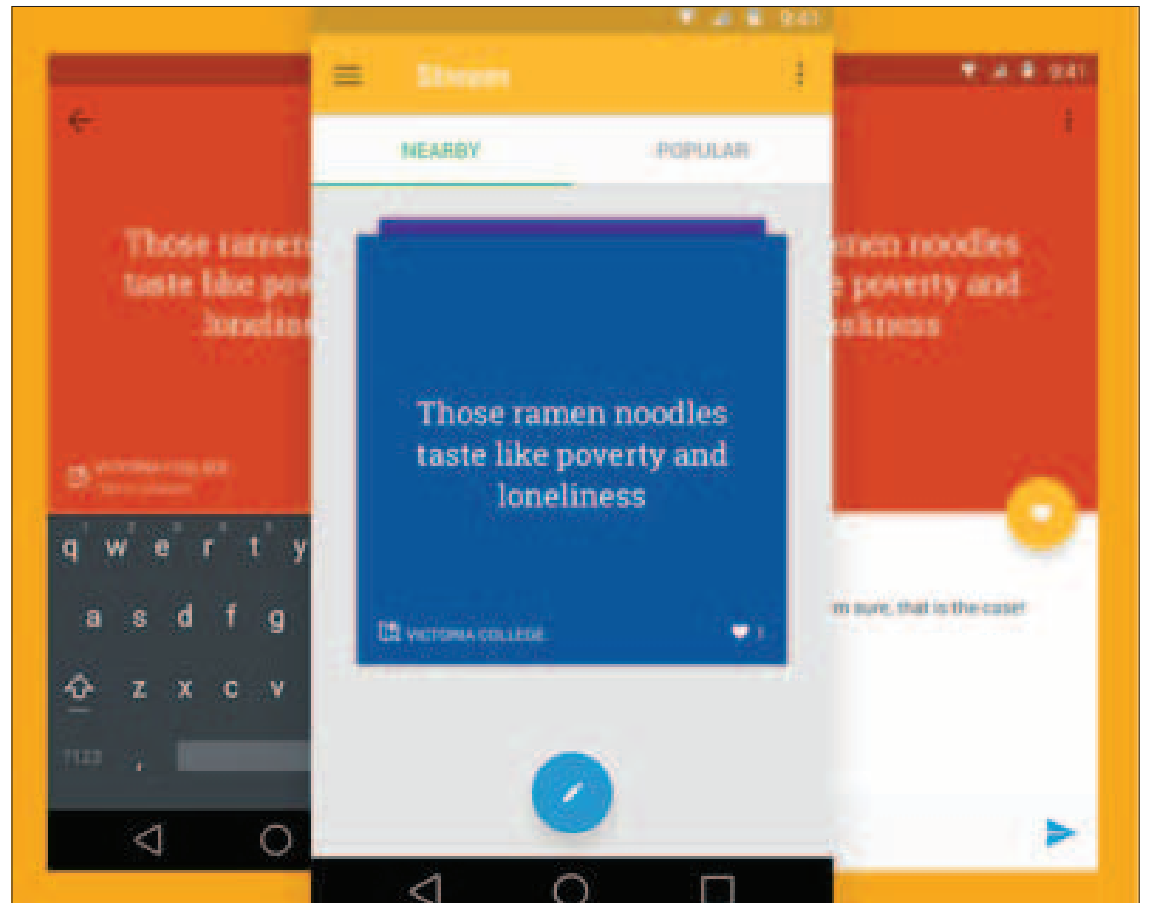
The app came out of another social network-slash-soapbox where users can air opinions: Facebook.

Ko Ye Myat Min said that Myanmar people – who “tend to be very conservative” – were already posting feedback on the social network.

“We thought to ourselves, ‘Why don't we just give them a platform where they could criticise freely without having to worry about their identity being exposed?’” he said.

Along with masks for users, however, comes the risk that they'll post inappropriate content such as hate speech – something Ko Ye Myat Min said Nex is working to prevent.

“We are trying to build mechanisms which will automatically crawl the data and build up a reporting system so that we can



A look at Nex Co Ltd's new app, Let's Hush, where users can tell secrets and spread stories without anyone knowing their name. Photo: Supplied

detect hate speech before it gets written,” he said.

Ko Ye Myat Min, who dropped out of college to concentrate on his business, going straight from being a student to CEO of his own company, calls schools prime testing grounds for Let's Hush –

which can also provide a platform for confessions.

He said he wants to roll the app out to all students by the end of this year, starting with a small group of teens.

“Schools are a great place because there are urban legends and

school legends,” he said. “I think those are the stories that we can start with, without spreading hate speech. Because if we release it to the general public at once, I'm sure there will be hate speech.”

The company is working toward beta testing this week.

TRADE MARK CAUTION

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Reg. No. 12115/2014

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GLUCOMEGA

Reg. No. 12116/2014

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OCEAN GOLD

Reg. No. 12118/2014

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Dated: 20 October 2014

IN BRIEF

Tomy the toy boy

Japanese toymaker Tomy on October 15 unveiled a multi-talented humanoid robot, named “Robi jr.,” which can converse using some 1000 phrases and belt out about 50 songs, as well as move its limbs and head.

The firm said it will put the Japanese-speaking humanoid, designed by well-known roboticist Tomotaka Takahashi, on the market in 2015 at 15,000 yen (\$140) apiece in Japan.

The googly-eyed, 20-centimetre (7.9-inch) high robot was designed to resemble a six-year-old, according to the firm, which says it is equipped with voice recognition and calendar functions so it can respond when owners ask it for the time.

When asked to sing a song, the robot will answer, “Okay. Then let's sing along together” or “No. Ask me later because I am busy”, depending on “its mood”. Tomy plans to sell 50,000 units a year in its home market.

Mars: the final trip of a lifetime

Space enthusiasts planning a move to Mars may have to wait to relocate: Conditions on the Red Planet are such that humans would likely begin dying within 68 days, a new study says.

Oxygen levels would start to deplete after about two months and scientists said new technologies are required before humans can permanently settle on Mars, according to the study by researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

The five-person team used data from Mars One, a Dutch-based non-profit group behind an audacious project to permanently colonise the Red Planet starting in 2024.

The Red Planet lies at least 34 million miles from Earth and it would take a minimum of seven months to get there. – AFP



More than 60 people gathered in Singapore’s startup central to get news on Myanmar’s tech scene. Photo: Supplied

So long, Singapore

Tech talent heading back home



newrooms@mmmtimes.com

THE stage is set for Myanmar’s tech-savvy native sons and daughters to return from overseas and develop the local industry.

“Myanmar is hot right now, people,” Code for Change Myanmar founder David Madden told about 60 attendees at Myanmar Startup Day in Singapore, an event hosted by Ooredoo’s entrepreneurship-focused offshoot Ideabox Myanmar on October 11. “Come home.”

Singapore has long been a draw for Myanmar. Some estimates put the number of Myanmar living in Singapore at 100,000, nearly 2 percent of the city-state’s total 5.5 million people, often driven to the city for economic reasons.

According to the IMF, Singapore’s unadjusted GDP per capita for 2013 came in at \$55,182, while Myanmar’s per capita GDP, by contrast, stood at \$1113.

“Historically, there’s been a pretty strong flow of people out of Myanmar into other parts of the region, especially Singapore,” Mr Madden said. “I think for many people Singapore was the default place to go and get a university degree, to get further education. It was the place to get a good job, a well-paying job with an internationally known company.”

But that stream of people is changing course, especially for those interested in technology. “What we’re seeing now is that there’s so much interesting and exciting stuff happening in Myanmar that there’s a real case for people to come back, to come home,” Mr Madden said.

Improved infrastructure helps

‘Myanmar is hot right now, people. Come home.’

David Madden
Founder, Code for Change Myanmar

boost that case, as Myanmar is heading online. “Four telcos [are] now falling over themselves to get people connected, and that’s a sea-change,” Mr Madden said. Both Ooredoo and Telenor, two private telecoms providers whose services the government greenlit for rollout last year, seek to cover more than 90pc of the country in five years, according to the companies.

And tech talents are hoping to work for themselves and other Myanmar companies, rather than ship out. Mr Madden reported that, of surveyed Code for Change Myanmar hackathon participants, less than 5pc wanted to work overseas. Fully two-thirds said they planned to create their own tech company, while 17.1pc sought a career at a tech startup in Myanmar.

“For a long time, there was concern from technology companies in Myanmar about training people up and then seeing them disappear as soon as they had any sort of saleable level of skill, and that seems to be much less of a problem now,” Mr Madden said. “And at the same time, we have all these other examples of people coming home and starting their own companies or joining other companies.

Many don’t need much convincing to return to Myanmar. “They do feel strongly about home,” said Ooredoo Myanmar director of digital services Julian Gorman, director of digital services. “Part of it is family, part of it is food ... It’s just the culture.”

Startup founder Ko Thar Htet, who returned to Myanmar in 2012, also highlighted how ties that bind can motivate a move, even in the face of instability. “I understood that conditions will never be right,” he said. “But the change in Myanmar has started, and we have opportunity to shape and direct where it goes.”

“There is no better reason for anyone [than] to make a better home,” he added. “It’s their home.”

He sees more entrepreneurs than tech workers returning to Myanmar, where the former gets opportunities 10 times larger than elsewhere, he said.

Major issues, such as a complete lack of mobile payments infrastructure, still hamper the development of Myanmar’s tech ecosystem. But the crowd gathered at Silicon Straits in the small, thumping heart of Singapore’s startup scene seemed hopeful.

“The word that kept coming up today was inspired,” Mr Madden said.

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– Translation by Thiri Min Htun

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World

WORLD EDITOR: Fiona MacGregor

MURSIPTINAR

Kurds hold out in Kobane as assault enters second month

KURDISH fighters backed by a flurry of US-led air strikes were still holding out last week against jihadists in Kobane, as an Islamic State offensive on the Syrian border town entered its second month.

IS militants were also beaten back from Amriyat al-Fallujah, a key city just west of Baghdad, as the US military denied the Iraqi capital was in "imminent" danger.

The Americans said they held direct talks in Paris with the main Syrian Kurdish group whose forces have been battling IS, adding they had yet to discuss arming the fighters.

The Kurds claimed to have pushed IS back in parts of Kobane, but the Pentagon warned that the multinational strikes may not prevent the town's fall even though hundreds of jihadists are thought to have been killed.

Mortar and heavy machine-gun fire rang out on October 16 as IS appeared to have relaunched its bid to cut the town off from the Turkish border, said an AFP correspondent across the frontier.

Despite intensified strikes on Kobane last week by the United States and its Arab allies, the Kurds were calling for increased firepower in the battle for the strategic town.

"We need more air strikes, as well as weaponry and ammunition to fight them on the ground," said Idris Nasen, an official in Kobane.

An estimated 200,000 mainly Kurdish Syrians have fled the IS onslaught for the relative safety of Turkey.

A grocer who had escaped offered insight into those fighting for IS, saying that one they had captured, an Azerbaijani in his 20s, had even asked to be killed.

"He begged us to kill him so he could go to paradise and be rewarded," said Cuneyt Hemo, adding that the jihadist was held for a day and then shot dead.

Islamic State is also battling to control other parts of Syria, including Hasakeh province, where Kurdish fighters killed 20 jihadists on October 16, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

Kurdish forces have suffered heavy losses since IS launched its offensive on the Kobane area in mid-September, but so too have the jihadists.

As of October 15, ground clashes alone had killed 662 people since September 16, including 20 civilians, the Observatory said.

IS lost 374 of its militants, while 268 people have been killed fighting on the Kurdish side, according to the Britain-based monitor, which has a network of sources inside Syria.

US Central Command said American warplanes struck 14 times near Kobane on October 15 and 16, including "successful" raids on 19 IS-held buildings.

Coalition forces have now carried out more than 100 air strikes near Kobane since September 27.

The Pentagon said the raids had killed "several hundred" jihadist fighters.

The US military says Kobane may eventually fall but insists the town is not a "strategic" location and that other areas carry more importance, particularly in western Iraq and the suburbs of Baghdad.

Bombings in and around Baghdad killed at least 26 people and wounded dozens on October 16, including a double car-bombing in the Dolai neighbourhood that was claimed by IS.

Despite such attacks, US military spokesperson Rear Admiral John Kirby said, "we don't believe that Baghdad is under imminent threat" from the jihadists.

"It's not the first time in recent weeks or even months that there's been IED [improvised explosive device] attacks inside Baghdad."

Mr Kirby added "terrible" weather and sandstorms in recent days had hampered the US-led air strikes Iraq.

President Barack Obama told military chiefs from more than 20 allies this week they are facing a "long-term campaign" against the Islamic State group.

Mr Obama has expressed special concern for Kobane and about halting the IS advance in Iraq's western Anbar province.

In June, IS declared a "caliphate" straddling areas it seized in Iraq and Syria, and has committed widespread atrocities, including mass executions, the beheading of Westerners and forcing women and girls into slavery.

The new UN human rights chief told his first press briefing on October 16 that IS was the "antithesis of human rights".

"It kills, it tortures, it rapes," said Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein.

"It is a diabolical, potentially genocidal movement, and the way it has spread its tentacles into other countries, employing social media and the internet to brainwash and recruit people from across the globe, reveals it to be the product of a perverse and lethal marriage of a new form of nihilism with the digital age."

Mr Hussein also promised an updated UN assessment of the death toll in the more than three-year-old conflict in Syria, saying it would certainly be well over 200,000. — AFP



GENEVA

West steps up Ebola action

WESTERN countries were scrambling last week to review safety measures at airports and borders amid a mounting wave of fear that West Africa's Ebola outbreak will spread worldwide.

As US lawmakers grilled officials over how an infected nurse was allowed to board a crowded flight, European officials promised a review of how passengers from Ebola-hit countries are screened.

US President Barack Obama authorised the Pentagon to send reservists to take part in a US mission to combat the Ebola epidemic.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) vowed to ramp up its efforts to help 15 African countries defend themselves against the virus, which has already killed around 4500 people.

France and Spain placed several potential victims under observation and in Liberia, the worst hit country so far, the minister of transport placed herself in quarantine after her driver died.

EU health commissioner Tonio Borg said the bloc would review exit screening of travellers from Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone, in coordination with the WHO.

And EU health ministers, meeting in Brussels, agreed to coordinate measures at entry points to the 28-member Union, although any decision on screening for Ebola rests with individual European countries.

A string of health workers have been evacuated back to Europe from Africa with Ebola, but the only confirmed case of transmission on the

continent so far is a Spanish nurse in Madrid.

Doctors in Spain have identified six more cases of possible infection, including a missionary priest who recently returned from Liberia and has shown signs of fever.

And in France, a nurse who had earlier helped treat a returning Ebola patient was taken to a military hospital with what an official called a "suspect fever", though initial tests for the virus came back negative.

In the United States, two nurses who treated a Liberian traveller have now fallen ill, to the embarrassment of health authorities, who faced questioning about how the disease had spread.

Nurse Nina Pham was transferred from Texas to the National Institutes of Health outside of Washington on

October 16. She wore a white protective suit as she stepped off a plane en route to one of the top US medical facilities.

In a brief video taken earlier while she was in Texas, Ms Pham looked lucid and smiling as she spoke to her doctor.

"I love you guys," an emotional Ms Pham says, as she wipes away tears.

Ms Pham and the second infected US nurse were involved in the care of a Liberian man, Thomas Eric Duncan, who was the first Ebola case diagnosed in the United States.

He died on October 8 at the Texas hospital.

Nursing unions claim the Texas hospital where the caregivers work had been ill-prepared, and lawmakers are angry that one of the patients was allowed to take a domestic flight de-



A Kurdish man sits at the border area close to the southeastern village of Mursitpinar, in the Sanliurfa province, opposite the Syrian town of Kobane, on October 16. Photo: AFP



Health workers take a break at the Medecins Sans Frontieres (Doctors Without Borders) Ebola treatment center in Monrovia on October 15. Photo: AFP



Transgender murder sparks Manila protests

WORLD 42

Khmer Rouge trial enters second phase

WORLD 43



China's walnut growers crack open a fortune

WORLD 44



IN PICTURES

Photo: AFP

A police officer threatens to pepper spray a pro-democracy protester as demonstrators tried to occupy a main road in Hong Kong on October 15. Hong Kong has been plunged into the worst political crisis since its 1997 handover as pro-democracy activists take over the streets following China's refusal to grant citizens full universal suffrage.

n as fears mount

spite mild fever symptoms.

As of October 12, 4493 people had died out of a total of 8997 cases in the outbreak, according to the WHO, which has warned that the infection rate could reach 10,000 a week by early December.

The vast majority of the cases have been in Liberia and its neighbours Sierra Leone and Guinea, which are also at the centre of WHO efforts to contain the disease.

Eleven other African countries had also been singled out for special assistance.

"We need to make sure it doesn't spread to other countries," Isabelle Nuttall, head of the WHO's alert and response arm, said in Geneva.

Former UN secretary general Kofi Annan delivered stinging criticism of the world's response, charging that wealthy countries were slow to tackle the crisis because it began in Africa.

"If the crisis had hit some other region it probably would have been handled very differently," the Ghanaian diplomat told the flagship BBC program *Newsnight*.

"In fact when you look at the evolution of the crisis, the international community really woke up when the disease got to America and Europe."

Airports in Britain, Canada and the United States have already introduced stepped-up screening of travellers arriving from West Africa.

Senior US lawmakers overseeing homeland security also joined calls on October 15 for a temporary ban on all travel from West Africa.

After convening the second Ebola

crisis meeting in as many days at the White House, President Barack Obama said he had "no philosophical objection" to a ban, but added he did not think it would be that effective.

While WHO recommends exit screening of passengers from the badly affected countries, it does not recommend entry screening, although the organisation does not oppose it, Ms Nuttall said.

She cautioned that such screening does not detect infected passengers who have not yet developed symptoms, warning they could "give a sense of false security".

But as the world scrambles to rein in the raging virus, UN rights chief Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein warned that respect for the rights of survivors and affected communities risked being sacrificed.

The Red Cross also urged the international community to focus less on dramatic actions like shutting airports and more on educating populations to use proper hygiene and avoid unsafe burials.

Ms Nuttall also insisted the main focus needed to be on halting the epidemic where it was raging out of control.

"The problem of Ebola is in three countries in Africa," she said.

Since Ebola does not spread until symptoms appear, the WHO does not recommend isolating asymptomatic health workers who have had contact with Ebola patients, Ms Nuttall said.

But they should monitor their temperatures and immediately isolate themselves if they spot symptoms. – AFP

MILAN

Gas threats heat up Russia talks

RUSSIAN President Vladimir Putin met his Ukrainian counterpart Petro Poroshenko in Milan on October 17 in the latest attempt to ease tensions over the simmering conflict in eastern Ukraine.

EU leaders also attended the breakfast meeting at the Milan prefecture building, held amid very sharp differences with Moscow over implementation of a ceasefire and peace accord agreed last month between Kiev and pro-Russian rebels.

Talks between Mr Putin and German Chancellor Angela Merkel that had continued into the early hours of that morning were said by the Kremlin to have exposed major differences over the roots of the conflict.

"There are still serious differences concerning the origin of Ukraine's internal conflict, as well as the root causes of what is currently happening," Russian news agencies quoted Mr Putin's spokesperson Dmitry Peskov as saying.

A ceasefire, reached on September 5 in Minsk, has repeatedly been violated by both sides.

EU leaders were also expected on October 17 to confront Mr Putin over his warnings that gas supplies to western Europe could be disrupted this winter if Russia cuts deliveries to Ukraine, as it has threatened to do if there is no agreement with Kiev over payment.

Speaking before the event, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko said he hoped the breakfast meeting with the Russian leader would help shore up a patchy ceasefire between his government forces and pro-Moscow rebels in the east of Ukraine.

"Peace and stability in Ukraine, it is the only thing we expect," Mr Poroshenko told reporters late on October 16 after talks with Ms Merkel.

The diplomatic shuttling over Ukraine is taking place on the sidelines of an Asia-Europe (ASEM) summit that has been completely overshadowed by the crisis, which deepened as the week went on.

NATO said it had seen no sign of any major Russian pullback from the Ukrainian border despite Putin saying earlier this week nearly 18,000 troops had been withdrawn from the frontier.

US and European Union leaders had welcomed that announcement as a positive gesture ahead of the Poroshenko talks but also reminded Mr Putin that sanctions would remain in place until he stopped meddling in Ukraine completely.

With the financial markets in turmoil, partly due to the uncertainties over Ukraine, Ms Merkel had earlier tried to put the ball firmly in Mr Putin's court.

Ms Merkel said it was "first and foremost" Russia's responsibility to make sure a ceasefire and peace plan agreed last month with the rebels "really will be implemented".

Ms Merkel, French President Francois Hollande, British Premier David Cameron and Italian leader Matteo Renzi are all due to sit in on the Putin-Poroshenko meeting.

"It will be an opportunity to deliver a collective message that Putin has to start real peace negotiations," said an aide to Mr Hollande.

Mr Putin last week accused US President Barack Obama of outright hostility toward Russia and insisted he would not be blackmailed by the West.

The Russian president has also played his gas trump card, effectively reminding Europe that it gets about a third of its supplies from Russia.

Mr Putin insisted he did not want to see a repeat of 2006 and 2009 when interruptions of supplies to Ukraine disrupted onward deliveries to Europe.

"I am very much hoping that it will not come to that," Mr Putin said.

The ASEM summit brings together more than 50 member states who share one of the world's largest trading relationships at a time of growing uncertainty over the global economic outlook. – AFP



German Chancellor Angela Merkel (left), Russia's President Vladimir Putin (right), Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi (centre) and French President Francois Hollande (background) arrive for a meeting in Milan on October 17. Photo: AFP

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MANILA

Transgender killing sparks street protests

RELATIVES of a transgender Filipino allegedly murdered by a US Marine demanded last week that the accused be thrown in a Philippine prison.

The family and protesters who took to the streets on October 15 accused the Manila government of dragging its heels over the killing that threatens to test the longstanding defence ties between Manila and Washington.

"This is not an ordinary murder case. This is a hate crime," Harry Roque, lawyer for the family of the victim told a news conference in the northern port of Olongapo, where Jeffrey Laude, 26, was found dead.

Mr Roque said police concluded the victim suffocated to death after after his head was dunked into a toilet bowl at a hotel where he and the suspect had checked in late on October 11.

The victim's mother wept as she spoke alongside Mr Roque before television cameras to demand the suspect's transfer to a Philippine jail.

"We the poor have a right to seek justice too. The government should

not ignore us," Julita Laude said.

Philippine police on October 15 referred the case to state prosecutors, who will decide whether to file a murder charge against Private First Class Joseph Scott Pemberton.

The American could face life in prison if convicted in a Filipino court.

He remains in US custody on an American warship anchored off Olongapo.

The Marine and the vessel had taken part in joint military exercises involving thousands of Filipino and US forces that ended last week.

Police blocked about 70 protesters marching on the US embassy in Manila on October 16.

The protesters carried placards demanding that the mission "Surrender Pemberton" and for Manila to cut US military ties.

Foreign department spokesperson Charles Jose rejected the criticisms.

"We will formally request custody once an arrest warrant is issued by the court," Mr Jose told reporters on October 16.

However, prosecutors have yet to decide whether to bring charges in court after the initial evidence hearings that could take weeks.

Mr Jose said the government is sticking to provisions of a 1998 treaty governing the legal liability of US troops in the Philippines, a mutual defence partner of Washington.

Under the accord, the US government retains custody of American troops accused of a crime in the Philippines although the Philippines



A Filipino student holds a candle as she participates in a candlelight vigil for a murdered local transgender person in front of a university campus in Manila on October 14. Photo: AFP

'This is not an ordinary murder case. This is a hate crime.'

Harry Roque

Lawyer for the victim's family

can ask Washington to waive custody.

Asked if the United States would turn over the suspect, the US embassy

issued a statement saying: "Any offences covered by US service members would be handled in accordance with

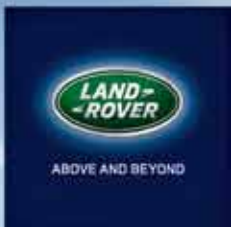
the applicable provisions" of the 1998 visiting forces treaty.

— AFP



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PHNOM PENH

Khmer Rouge trial restarts

THE genocide trial of two former Khmer Rouge leaders resumed last week at a UN-backed court in Cambodia, where they face charges over the mass murder of Vietnamese people and ethnic Muslims, forced marriage and rape.

Nuon Chea, 88, known as “Brother Number Two”, and ex-head of state Khieu Samphan, 83, have already been given life sentences after a separate trial at the same court in August for crimes against humanity.

That ruling saw them become the first top figures to be jailed from a regime responsible for the deaths of up to two million Cambodians from 1975 to 1979.

The second trial, which opened in July, got under way on October 17 with judge Nil Nonn reading out the charges against both suspects of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Nuon Chea, wearing his trademark sunglasses, and Khieu Samphan sat in court alongside their defence teams as around 300 survivors of the regime protested outside, demanding monetary compensation for their suffering.

The complex case against the pair was split into a series of smaller trials in 2011 to get a faster verdict given the vast number of accusations and their advanced age.

Both men have appealed their August convictions, which followed a two-year trial focused on the forced

evacuation of around two million Cambodians from Phnom Penh into rural labour camps and murders at one execution site.

The second trial, broader in scope than the first, is viewed as an opportunity for many other victims of the regime to seek redress.

“The accused will now face trial for the biggest crimes for which they have been indicted,” said prosecutor Chea Leang in an opening statement. “This court cannot be closed until justice is done for the victims of these crimes.”

Khieu Samphan told the court he would make a brief statement, while Nuon Chea said he would not answer any questions.

The testimony by the prosecution’s first witness, originally scheduled for October 20, has been postponed until October 27.

‘The way in which the Khmer Rouge treated us is too heinous to describe in words.’

Seth Maly
Cham labour camp survivor



Cambodian Bou Meng (left), a prominent survivor of the notorious Tuol Sleng prison (S-21), protests to demand individual reparation during the genocide trial of two former Khmer Rouge leaders in Phnom Penh on October 17. Photo: AFP

The mass killings of an estimated 100,000 to 500,000 ethnic Cham Muslims and 20,000 Vietnamese form the basis of the genocide charges against the pair.

Before these charges were filed, the treatment of the minority Muslim group and Vietnamese community was rarely discussed.

“The ways in which the Khmer Rouge mistreated us is too heinous to describe in words. Their goal was to exterminate our race,” said Seth Maly, a 64-year-old Cham labour camp survivor who lost 100 of her relatives, mostly through execution, during the regime – including her two daughters, parents

and five siblings.

Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan also face charges of crimes against humanity and war crimes in the second trial, for the deaths of up to 2 million people through starvation, overwork or execution during the communist regime.

Most of these deaths do not fall under the charge of genocide, which is defined by the United Nations as “acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group”.

“Without a second trial, there would be an enormous gap in the legal record about crimes that defined the experience of, and still traumatise, regime

survivors,” said Anne Heindel, a legal adviser to the Documentation Center of Cambodia which researches the country’s bloody history.

Led by “Brother Number One” Pol Pot, who died in 1998, the Khmer Rouge dismantled Cambodian society in a bid to create an agrarian utopia.

The hearings will also provide the first forum for justice for tens of thousands of husbands and wives forced to marry, often in mass ceremonies, as part of a Khmer Rouge plan to boost the population. The rape charges refer to rape within the forced marriages.

A court spokesperson has estimated the trial may go on until 2016. – AFP



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LAISHUI

Walnut farmers crack open a fortune

A growing demand for perfect nuts to use in hand massage treatments has brought unexpected riches to farmers in rural China

GRINNING with pride, a Chinese farmer held out two precious walnuts. They are so precisely symmetrical that consumers in search of hand massages value them more highly than gold.

“Prices have skyrocketed,” said Li Zhanhua, standing in the shade of the leafy green walnut trees which have made him a small fortune. “Years ago, we could never have imagined this.”

Rolling a pair of walnuts between palm and fingers, believed to improve circulation, has been a Chinese pastime for hundreds of years.

“Mainly the walnuts are good for the body. That’s why people play with them,” Mr Li said, plucking a deep brown pair out of a display case.

Walnuts were used as toys in China’s imperial courts as early as 220 AD, but were championed by officials during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912) and have been a status symbol exchanged among the country’s elite ever since.

Demand has grown alongside China’s economic boom, and vendors say they are especially popular among the newly wealthy and gangsters profiting from Beijing’s grey economy.

Years of rising prices have transformed the lives of farmers in Laishui county, a few hours from the capital.

Just a decade ago, Mr Li and his neighbours ploughed a hard existence growing wheat and corn, but now take regular holidays from their mountainside village and own imported cars as well as apartments in

a nearby city.

Mr Li once sold a prized pair for 160,000 yuan (just over US\$26,000) but added, “Even a relatively ordinary pair of walnuts can be more expensive than gold, in terms of weight.”

“We are all grateful for the huge changes the walnuts have brought us. All of our development depends on them,” said Mr Li, who says he harvests up to 2 million yuan (\$325,000) a year from his nuts.

“Before, just building a house or getting married would be a big expense for us. We didn’t imagine buying houses in the city.”

Images of the humble walnut are everywhere in Laishui, shining down from shop fronts, huge banners lining the streets, and naturally, printed on business cards.

Collectors are not interested in the edible kernel, but instead value its ridged brown shell, which grows concealed beneath a green husk.

Farmers root through truckloads of produce to find pairs with the most symmetrical pits and ridges, which bring the highest prices.

Size, the bigger the better, and colour also play a role, with deeper browns more valuable.

“Each one is unique, and becomes red as you play with it,” said Li’s neighbour Zhang Guifu, gripping a high-pressure hose while spraying a box of freshly husked nuts. “It’s valuable as a collector’s item and for boosting brain fitness.”

Different varieties’ names are as colourful as the nuts themselves. There is the “government official’s hat”, with a pitted surface and form that recall the tasselled headwear of Qing dynasty courtiers, as well as the “chicken’s heart” and “lantern”, named for their shapes.

At an open-air market, dozens of salespeople sat behind walnuts placed in rows or perched on revolving plastic podiums.



Li Zhanhua shows off walnuts at his home in Laishui town, in China’s Hebei province, on September 11. Photo: AFP

‘Each one is unique, and becomes red as you play with it.’

Zhang Guifu
Walnut farmer

“At the high point of the season this whole area is packed with cars and people like a sea. You can’t even move,” said vendor Lin Changzhu, whose namecard shows two deep red nuts.

But local fortunes have encouraged another growth industry – walnut theft. To prevent pilfering, farmers like Mr Li and Mr Dong have fortified their fields with barbed-wire fences, grizzly guard dogs and security cameras.

With prices appreciating long-term, investors facing low interest rates on bank deposits have turned to walnuts as a store of value, according

to Chinese reports, and speculating on unpeeled walnut fruit has become a form of gambling, which is generally banned in mainland China.

In a practice called “betting on skin” buyers pay a fixed price for the nuts before their green outer covering has been removed, hoping that what is inside will be worth more than they shelled out.

Walnuts have been sold for generations in Beijing’s Shilihe market, where stalls also offer specialised walnut oil and brushes.

Dozens of mostly middle-aged men crouched smoking and commenting on lines of fruit set out on black cloth.

After prodding and measuring a series of specimens, and a prolonged debate, Beijinger Miao Yaoge rolled out 2000 yuan (\$325) in crisp red notes, before watching as the vendor cut open his chosen pair with a kitchen knife.

“Look, the husk is thin,” the seller exclaimed, suggesting a larger nut and prompting a flicker of a smile from Mr Miao, 45, an imposing figure with a shaved head and a white tracksuit.

As they were given a final buffing, Mr Miao, who reckoned they were worth around 2,500 yuan, giving him a profit on the deal, said: “This is Chinese culture. I’m happy with my walnuts.” – AFP

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BEIJING

Trans-Siberian picks up speed

CHINA and Russia are considering building a high-speed rail line thousands of kilometres from Moscow to Beijing that would cut the journey time from six days on the celebrated Trans-Siberian to two, Chinese media have reported.

The project would cost more than US\$230 billion and be over 7000 kilometres (4350 miles) long, the *Beijing Times* reported – more than three times the world’s current longest high-speed line, from the Chinese capital to the southern city of Guangzhou.

The railway would be a powerful physical symbol of the ties that bind Moscow and Beijing, whose political relationship has roots dating from the Soviet era and who often vote together on the UN Security Council.

They have strengthened their relationship as Western criticism of Russian President Vladimir Putin mounts.

The two signed a memorandum of understanding last week during Premier Li Keqiang’s visit to Moscow in which Beijing expressed interest in building a fast rail link between the Russian capital and Kazan in the oil-rich Tatarstan region, state broadcaster China Central Television reported on October 17.

The 803-kilometre line would be the first stage of the route to Beijing, CCTV said. “If the funds are raised smoothly ... the line can be completed in five years at the quickest,” said Wang Mengshu, a tunnel and railway expert at the Chinese Academy of Engineering. – AFP

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Dated: 20 October 2014

SYDNEY

Numbats, quokkas and bilbies to take on cats

Australia to support rare animals in their fight for survival against feral feline foes

ENVIRONMENT Minister Greg Hunt has pledged to end the extinction of Australia's native mammal species by 2020, with a focus on culprits including feral cats.

Mr Hunt said Australia had the worst rate of mammal loss in the world and the nation's "greatest failure" in environmental policy was protecting threatened species.

"Our flora and fauna are part of what makes us Australian," he said in a speech on October 15.

"I don't want the extinction of species, such as the numbat, the quokka, the bilby, on our collective consciences," he said, referring to mammals that are little-known outside Australia.

Hunt said the government had been putting in place a "different approach" to halting the extinction of native wildlife, including the appointment of a Threatened Species Commissioner to spearhead the efforts.

Australia has some 749 species of plants, mammals, birds, frogs, fish,

reptiles and other animals listed as threatened under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. Over the past two decades, 53 land-based species moved to a higher threat category, but only 15 moved lower.

A study released earlier this year showed Australia's mammal extinction rate was the highest in the world, with more than 10 percent of species wiped out since Europeans settled the country two centuries ago.

Feral cats were identified as the main culprit, although feral foxes were also responsible. Other factors contributing to the extinctions include climate change, fire and habitat destruction.

Australian states and territories have separate threatened species lists and are "struggling with similar problems", Mr Hunt said.

"I have set a goal of ending the loss of mammal species by 2020. What's more, I want to see improvements in at least 20 of those species between now and then," he said.



A bilby is held by a keeper at Sydney Wildlife World on September 11 2009.
Photo: AFP

The measures would focus on major threats such as those posed by feral cats, which number between 10 to 20 million across Australia and kill countless native animals every night. One measure under consideration is the development of a new, humane bait. — AFP

LONDON

Burma story wins Man Booker Prize

AUSTRALIAN novelist Richard Flanagan won the Man Booker Prize last week for his book "The Narrow Road to the Deep North", inspired by his father's experience as a prisoner of war.

The book tells the story of Dorrigo Evans, a surgeon imprisoned in

a Japanese work camp on the Thailand-Burma railway.

"The two great themes from the origin of literature are love and war: This is a magnificent novel of love and war," said AC Grayling, who presented the award at London's Guildhall.

Mr Flanagan said the idea of the so-called "Death Railway" had influenced the way he thought about life.

The prize, which includes an award of £50,000 (US\$80,000), guarantees a huge upsurge in book sales and a worldwide readership. — AFP

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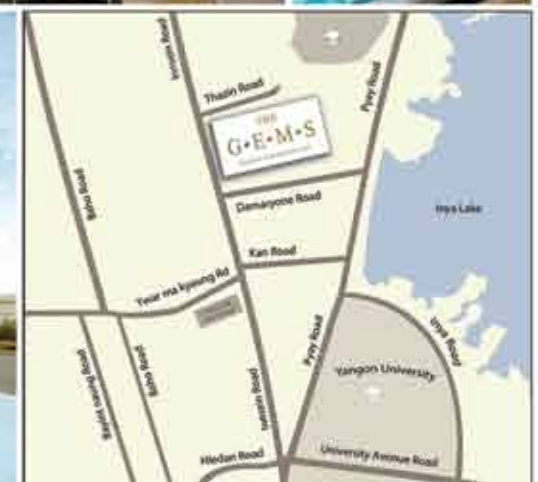
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KATHMANDU

An injured survivor of a snow storm is assisted by Nepal Army personnel in Manang District, along the Annapurna Circuit Trek on October 10. Photo: Nepal Army/AFP

Search continues for avalanche survivors

NEPALESE rescuers were last week scouring Himalayan hiking routes for more than 100 trekkers missing since a snowstorm and avalanche that killed around 32 people, including foreign tourists and guides.

Local officials said on October 16 that 24 bodies had been found on the popular Annapurna circuit, while five climbers who were staying at a mountain base camp when it was hit by an avalanche could not be found and were presumed dead.

Three Nepalese yak herders were also killed when severe weather triggered by the tail end of Cyclone Hudhud hit the Himalayan region in central Nepal.

Ganesh Rai, the police official in charge of the effort, said emergency workers had rescued 43 stranded trekkers, but more than 100 others remained out of contact.

Rescuers were searching for two Slovakian mountaineers and three Nepalese guides who went missing after an avalanche struck teams stationed at the base camp of 8167-metre (26,795 foot) Mount Dhaulagiri.

"We are running helicopter missions to try and find them, but we can find no sign of them. We presume they are dead," said Mr Rai.

"So far we have located 16 bodies in Mustang district in the Annapurna

region, but we don't have a clear picture yet of how many are foreigners since we still need to identify them," added Mr Rai, who was heading the rescue effort.

The bodies of four Canadians, two Israelis, one Pole, one Vietnamese, one Indian, one German and 11 Nepalese have been found. The nationality of three others found was unknown, he said.

Among them were at least eight hikers who lost their lives in an avalanche in neighbouring Manang district, according to a local official.

'We can find no sign of them. We presume they are dead.'

Ganesh Rai
Police official

"We have located the bodies of eight people including four Canadians, an Indian, and three Nepalis killed in an avalanche," district official Devendra Lamichanne said.

Some 168 foreign tourists were registered to hike in the districts and authorities were trying to track the rest of them

down, with efforts hampered by poor telecommunications.

"Many people are unaccounted for - we only register foreign nationals, but several Nepalese could also be caught up in the snowstorm," Mr Rai said.

Victims with minor injuries were given first aid at local hospitals while at least 14 trekkers from Hong Kong and Israel were airlifted to Kathmandu suffering from frostbite.

While hundreds of mountaineers train to scale Nepal's peaks, the trekking industry attracts many more people, with thousands arriving in the Annapurna region every October, when weather conditions are usually favourable for hiking.

However, the region has seen unusually heavy snowfall this week sparked by Cyclone Hudhud, which slammed into India's east coast on October 12.

The cyclone also brought downpours to parts of central and western Nepal, including the hilly Gorkha district, where rescuers are searching for a 67-year-old Frenchman who fell into a river on the morning of October 14 while trekking. The hiker was part of a team of 10 tourists heading up the scenic Manaslu route, named after Mount Manaslu, the world's eighth-highest peak. It has been developed as an alternative to the crowded Annapurna circuit. - AFP

KUALA LUMPUR

'Key players' arrested over IS recruitment

A GOVERNMENT engineer and two others who used Facebook to recruit fighters for Islamic State were among 14 people arrested in Malaysia last week over activities connected with the extremist group in Syria.

"Three of them are key players of a cell whose role was to recruit, finance and arrange trips for Malaysians to join terror groups in Syria," national police chief Khalid Abu Bakar said in a statement on October 15.

Those arrested ranged in age from 14 to 48 years old and include two women, the statement said. According to local media the arrests were made on October 11 in a Kuala Lumpur suburb.

Authorities in the Muslim-majority country, as well as some of its Southeast Asian neighbours, have expressed mounting alarm over the extremist group's efforts to lure recruits from Malaysia, which has historically practised moderate Islam.

Police have arrested a total of three dozen people this year for suspected IS-related activities, and say that at least 40 Malaysians have left for Syria.

Mr Khalid's statement said last week's arrests include a 37-year-old recruiter who is a senior government engineer with the Ministry of Energy, Green Technology and Water.

He is believed to have funded recruits' travel to Syria, Mr Khalid said.

Another suspect is a 34-year-old man who fought for the IS group in Syria for four months beginning in December 2013. After he returned to Malaysia, his role was to guide and motivate new recruits.

A 37-year-old man also arrested had used Facebook to disseminate IS propaganda materials to lure new recruits, according to Mr Khalid.

A family of five, including a 14-year-old child, was among those arrested this week, and books on jihad were

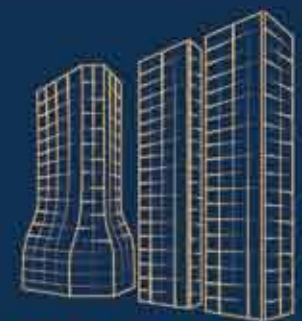
seized from their home, Mr Khalid said, adding that the family had plans to travel to Syria.

Malaysia's authoritarian government has long kept a lid on Islamic extremists, but conservative views have gained increasing traction in recent years as the regime's controls have loosened.

A range of Muslim groups that espouse divisive religious rhetoric have been allowed to flourish under current leader Najib Razak, prime minister since 2009, worrying the multi-racial nation's sizeable religious minorities.

Local media reported earlier this year that 26-year-old Malaysian factory worker Ahmad Tarmimi Maliki killed 25 elite Iraqi soldiers in a suicide car-bomb attack there in May.

Police also said in August that 19 people arrested earlier this year had planned a series of bombings in the country. - AFP



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BANGKOK

Red Shirt turns to love song to reach masses

The leader of Thailand’s pro-Thaksin protest movement has been allowed to return to the television screen after the junta lifted a ban on political broadcasters, but the firebrand leader has been forced to soften his style and his ‘Peace TV’ channel focuses on uplifting music instead

HIS trademark televised diatribes have given way to misty-eyed songs, but in Thailand’s stifling post-coup climate, the firebrand leader of the “Red Shirts” welcomes any chance to reach his supporters.

Jatuporn Prompan, chairman of the Red Shirt street movement which backed the toppled government of Yingluck Shinawatra, is back on the small screen after the ruling junta lifted a ban on Thailand’s sharply polarised political channels.

For years his rabble-rousing rhetoric on television was staple viewing in the Red heartlands of northern Thailand where Ms Yingluck and her billionaire brother Thaksin Shinawatra are adored for their pro-poor policies.

Rebranded as ‘Peace TV’, Mr Jatuporn now espouses the virtues of love and Buddhism in melancholic verses, a far cry from the tirades against the ammart, or Bangkok-based elite, and its

‘The road is not strewn with roses, but we must continue to dream.’

Jatuporn Prompan
Red Shirt leader

supporters who loathe the Shinawatra clan.

“The road is not strewn with roses,” 49-year-old Mr Jatuporn croons in a pre-recorded song between program. “But we must continue to dream, no matter how difficult it is.”

Tucked inside a multi-storey shopping centre in north Bangkok, the channel is one of the few public outlets available to opponents of the coup.

Anti-coup voices, including lawmakers from the former ruling Puea Thai party, academics and students’ groups, have been silenced after the army summoned dissenters, outlawed political gatherings and censored the media.

For those attuned to the political realities of a kingdom under military rule, Mr Jatuporn’s return to television is symbolic, suggesting anti-coup forces are dormant but not dead.

But even Mr Jatuporn concedes these days he can only meet fellow Red leaders at “funerals or weddings”.

Since grabbing power in May, coup leader Prayut Chan-O-Cha has vowed to heal Thailand’s caustic divide and has muted all political discussions.

Mr Prayut retired as army chief last month, but remains head of the junta and is also prime minister heading a hand-picked military dominated government.

The Red Shirts, known officially as the United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship (UDD), have seen their leaders either renounce the cause, flee

into self-exile or, like Mr Jatuporn, agree to abandon politics.

Even Red Shirt funerals, including one taking place this week of core leader Apiwan Wiriyachai, are tightly monitored in case they morph into a political meeting, banned under strict martial laws.

Red Shirt leaders fear a repeat of 2010 when an army crackdown on rallies in the heart of Bangkok left more than 90 people dead and hundreds wounded.

“We are moving cautiously,” said Mr Jatuporn, who is permitted to broadcast despite facing a terrorism charge linked to those protests.

Even ex-premier Ms Yingluck has mostly stayed out of the public eye, though she surfaced recently to sign a book of get-well wishes for the hospitalised king.

Yet discontent with the coup lingers.

While any hint of dissent is swiftly stamped down, including raids on university seminars on democracy, an overseas collection of Red Shirts, ex-Puea Thai officials and academics have formed the “Free Thai” exile group.

Some analysts predict an eventual revival of the Red cause in a nation where parties led-by or aligned-to the Shinawatras have won every poll since 2001.

A “greater opposition will emerge that combines Red Shirts, student groups, independent academic groups, and other pro-democracy” activists,



The chair of the Red Shirts movement, Jatuporn Prompan, prepares for his live show on Peace TV at a Bangkok studio on October 10. Photo: AFP

according to analyst David Streckfuss.

The junta has other ideas.

To his enemies Mr Thaksin, who was toppled as premier in another coup in 2006, has warped Thai society with massive corruption and populist policies.

A junta-appointed reform council bulging with anti-Thaksin members is due to begin work this week on remoulding Thai politics.

The military’s reach into Thai politics is being driven by anxiety over what happens once the six-decade reign of the revered 86-year-old king Bhumibol Adulyadej ends, say observers.

The king remains in a Bangkok hospital after being admitted on October 4 for a gall bladder operation. Discussion of succession matters is restricted under a royal defamation law.

Mr Prayut is on an extensive public relations campaign to extol the junta’s work and prep the nation for major reforms ahead.

Every Friday he delivers a televised address to the nation that opens with a “returning happiness to Thailand” song, penned by the leader.

In contrast, even after his Peace TV broadcasts, Mr Jatuporn remains coy over the Red Shirts’ future. “We accepted these restrictions. It was the only way to communicate with our supporters.” – AFP

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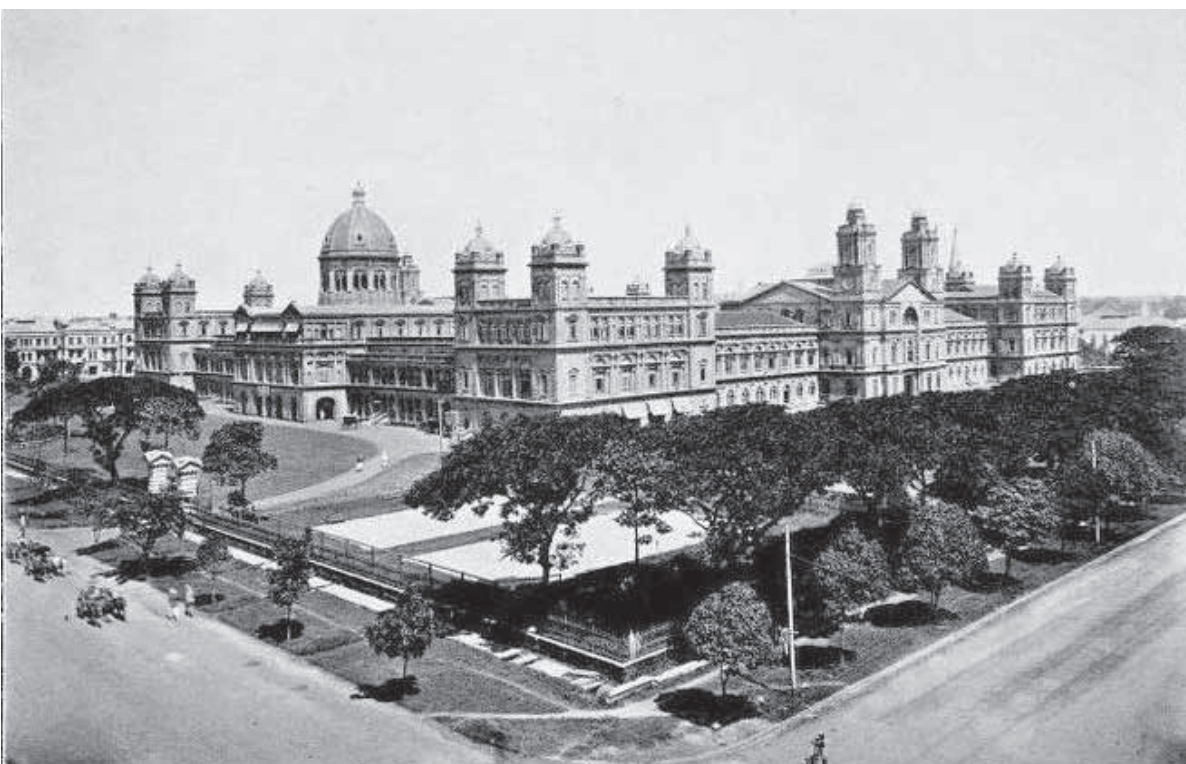
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In downtown Yangon, the derelict and supposedly haunted Secretariat Building embodies some of the most traumatic events in Myanmar's history. What might be the future of this dilapidated structure?

Fit for an empire

AMAURY LORIN



An archival photo shows the Secretariat in its prime. Photo: Wikimedia Commons



The shrine to Aung San marks where he was shot. Photo: Kaung Htet



The Secretariat’s neoclassical facade, now showing neglect, was intended to show Britain’s mighty rule; at right, a double-spiral iron staircase welcomes visitors in the main entrance hall. Photos: Amaury Lorin

WATER spills into the building as though it were an old, sinking boat. Moss, mildew and vegetation have covered the roofs. Stray dogs, rats and pigeons have long since settled in the vast red-brick complex. Fans and electric wires hang from the ceilings, as if the occupants left in a hurry.

Visitors to Yangon can’t miss the massive crumbling facade and imposing Gothic towers of the Secretariat – known as the Ministers’ Office after independence in 1948 – looming in the heart of the city.

Owned by the Union government, which moved to Nay Pyi Taw in 2005, the Secretariat is today empty and abandoned. A source of both mystery and pride for nearby residents, the palace is protected at 300 Theinbyu Road by a simple barbed-wire fence. Yet the site is strictly forbidden to the public, though that looks set to change in the months and years ahead. A well-connected friend offered me an unexpected last-minute opportunity to get inside the building while the monsoons were at their height in July.

The 400,000-square-foot (37,161-square-metre) building was built in different phases. The first began on the southern section in 1889, three years after Burma became part of the British Raj following the third and last Anglo-Burmese war in 1885. However, the U-shaped construction – on a 16-acre compound bounded by Anawrahta Road to the north, Theinbyu Road to the east, Mahabandoola Road to the south and Bo Aung Kyaw Street to the west – was not finished until 1905, four years after Edward VII became King of the United Kingdom, Emperor of India and King of the British Dominions.

The administrative centre of British Burma until 1948, the Secretariat was overbuilt so as to be forever durable. Today the grand colonial architecture appears heavy and brutal. But for Britain, then known as the empire on which the sun would never set, its Burma headquarters had to be a physical symbol of its power and influence over Burmese people and culture. The building’s size far exceeded the needs of the administration.

The massive scale was also a response to the sharp rivalry between European colonial powers in Southeast Asia in the 19th century (see MTE 732, June 9-15, 2014). The Secretariat had to proclaim Britain’s regional dominance as well as the solidity of its rule of Burma. To accomplish this, the Raj tried to combine architectural styles in a hybrid, more or less with success. Scottish-born James Ransome (1865-1944), consulting architect to the Government of India from 1902, was told “not to put up any Mongrel buildings” and instructed in the architectural style of “Calcutta Classic, Bombay Gothic, Madras Saracenic and Rangoon Renaissance”, some of these being themselves hybrids.

The importation of both European high Renaissance pastiches and Indian patterns – especially black wooden staircases and

white walls – make the Secretariat a very interesting case of architectural syncretism, built with a mix of imported and local materials. Indeed, many foreigners from around the world flocked to Rangoon, a strategic harbour that joined the British Raj for more than 50 years (1886-1937), the third-busiest port in the British Empire and, at its peak, one of the most cosmopolitan trading cities in the world. These many foreigners brought architectural ideas, techniques and materials with them. The cast-iron pillars were imported from Glasgow, Scotland. And all the inner courtyards were covered by glass ceilings, a design feature that was employed to bring light inside houses and factories in 19th-century Victorian England before spreading through all Europe. Arches and columns, intricately wrought balconies and elaborate balustrades completed the very elegant whole, conceived in large, balanced proportions.

Walking through the former ministers’ offices – a maze of deserted hallways, cavernous chambers and offices separated from long corridors by saloon-style swinging doors – is a gripping experience. Hundreds of civil officers and bureaucrats were once busy ruling the country here. Two rooms in particular stand out, one from an aesthetic point of view, another in terms of historical significance.

The first is the main hall which is covered by a glass atrium. A spectacular green and white double-spiral iron staircase leads from the south-gate entrance to the third floor. Visitors coming in here were likely flabbergasted by the luminous space, as I was after my first steps inside. With four-faced caryatids all along the bannisters, the whole – light and heavy at the same time – creates a great impression. The atmosphere of romantically faded glory cannot be overstated.

The second is the first-floor meeting room where Bogyoke Aung San, the national hero and father of National League for Democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, and six of his cabinet were assassinated on July 19, 1947. In 1952, the room was transformed into a prayer hall with a Buddhist shrine, which the Secretariat’s Buddhist Association takes care of still. Wood panelling hides bullet holes from the spray of the gunfire. History saturates these walls, where it’s easy to imagine the shadows of ghosts.

Now, buried among overgrowth in the main inner courtyard along the northern wing, a red-and-white circular concrete Martyrs’ Mausoleum commemorates the “seven heroes of the nation”. Their names are simply engraved on seven white marble plaques. A national flag flies overhead.

But the historical importance of the Secretariat to Myanmar’s history didn’t end with this bloody event. The Secretariat was also where the British announced Burma’s independence on January 4, 1948, and where the administration lowered the British flag for the last time. It was, at last, the seat of the nation’s first parliament from 1948-1962 before Ne Win’s military coup.

Miraculously, the Secretariat survived bombing by Japanese war planes during the Second World War and all the earthquakes and cyclones that have since touched Yangon. It suffered serious flood damage during Cyclone Nargis in 2008. Will it survive the modern era?

The Secretariat has regularly come under threat of demolition. At the same time, the potential of the building, according to its size, history and location in Yangon, has aroused appetites of private-sector international developers and investors. In 2011, tentative plans to convert the Secretariat into a museum failed. In 2012, a consortium formed by seven Myanmar and three foreign companies proposed to turn it into a museum, a 500-room hotel and a cultural centre. The public decried the idea of a hotel as inappropriate, however, so that this project failed as well.

In 2013, a private arts organisation, Anawmar Group, was awarded the right from the Myanmar Investment Commission to restore the building and preserve it as a historical museum and cultural centre, with plans to later create offices, seminar and exhibition halls. A Conservation Management Plan, written by the Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC), stated what could and couldn’t be done with the building before it was leased, though funding remains unclear. But an exhibition project, still confidential at this stage, could soon open within the Secretariat’s walls. This would be a great opportunity for Yangon citizens to see the place for themselves, which is impossible for the moment for safety reasons, as some of the wooden floors on the second level have wide-open holes.

It is easy to imagine the repurposing of the building into a centre of art, culture and commerce such as the Louvre Museum in Paris and other similar complexes around the world. Any project faces a long road as it will have to gain the assent of consultants like the Yangon Heritage Trust and, of course, the approval of YCDC.

Restoring the Secretariat will be a huge technical and financial challenge. International experts recently estimated that at least US\$100 million would be needed to restore it properly. Far more than being the city’s most iconic heritage building only, the grande dame is today a first-ranking piece of Myanmar national history. Though its construction was imposed from Europe in the colonial times, its legacy is now integrated in Yangon citizens’ daily lives. It certainly deserves, for this reason, more care than any other historic building in the country.

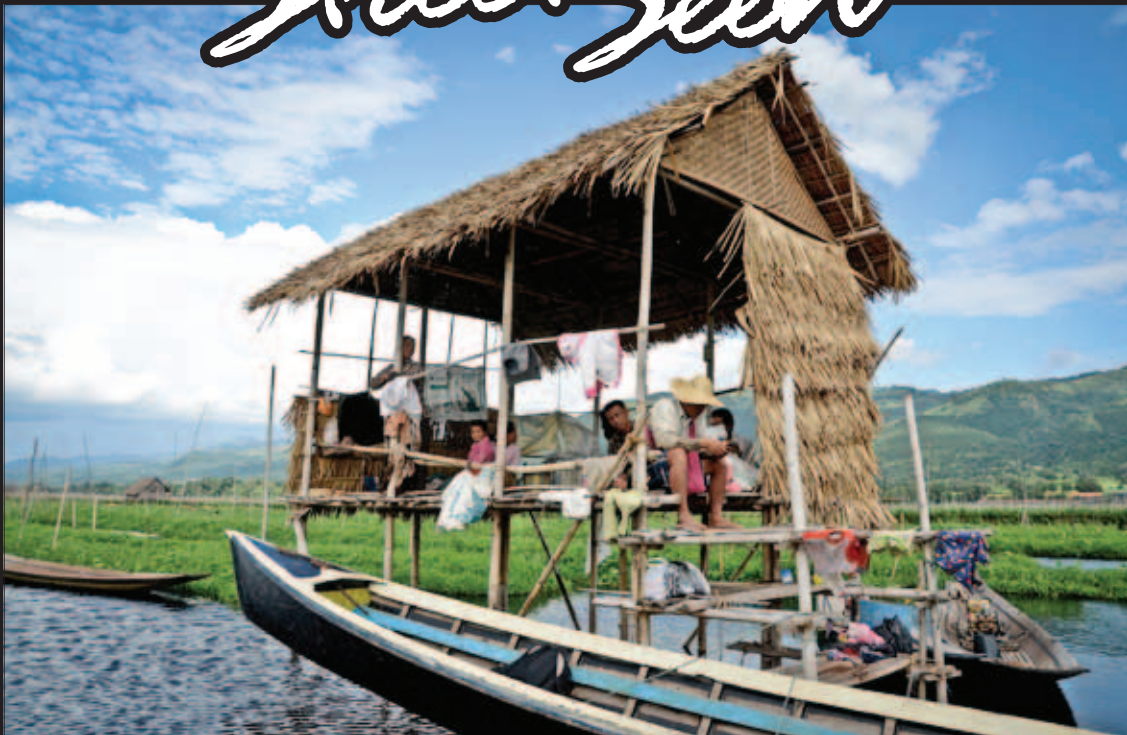
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Amaury Lorin is a French Yangon-based historian, journalist and consultant. He is the author of *Nouvelle histoire des colonisations européennes: XIXe-XXe siècles* (France University Press, 2013) and the founder of Myanmar Challenge.

Shan women get ready to perform a traditional dance to mark the opening of Novotel at Inle Lake on October 6. Photo: Thiri Lu



Street Seen



An Intha family lives on a tomato plantation on Inle Lake. Photo: Thiri Lu

BEIJING

Debate after Xi demands 'no more weird architecture'

CHINESE internet users were divided October 16 after leader Xi Jinping reportedly called for an end to "weird architecture" in a country that has seen a huge construction boom.

Much of China's older building stock is made up of Soviet-style concrete blocks, but in recent years property development has played a huge economic role.

The phenomenon has drawn architects from around the world, from big names such as Zaha Hadid to younger unknowns who see opportunities to design towers long before their careers could reach such heights in the West.

But some unconventional and costly buildings, often owned by state-controlled institutions, have been controversial, sparking criticisms of wasted public funds.

The futuristic new Beijing headquarters of state broadcaster China Central Television, designed by renowned Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas, was popularly nicknamed "The Big Underpants".

There have meanwhile been complaints that a pair of bridges over the Yangtze and Jialing rivers in the southwestern metropolis of Chongqing are remarkably reminiscent of female genitalia.

Xi, who took over as Communist leader nearly two years ago, told a group of artists on October 15 that China should build "no more weird architecture", reported the website of the *People's Daily*, the ruling party's mouthpiece.

The newspaper's own new home – an unmistakably phallic tower – was so widely mocked by internet users last year that China's censors blocked the discussions.



Edgy or eyesore? A luxury hotel, office and shopping mall goes up in Suzhou, Jiangsu province. Photo: AFP/China Out

Many web users welcomed Xi's call. "My understanding is that 'no weird architecture' targets the property owners rather than the architects. Some unscrupulous owners should indeed be reined in now," said one user on China's Twitter-like Sina Weibo.

"China is not foreigners' test field," added another.

Xi is not the first senior figure to express doubts over modern design. Britain's Prince Charles once described a proposed extension to the National Gallery in London as a "monstrous carbuncle on the face of a much-loved and elegant friend".

But some Weibo users questioned whether Xi's comments were appropriate, voicing concerns over their potential impact on creative freedom.

"The 'weird architecture' is voluntarily chosen by the owners and the designers," said one. "Do you want to replace millions of others' aesthetic sense with your own?" – *AFP*

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Interview

In the Spotlight...

with famed
British film producer
David Puttnam



DOUGLAS LONG
dlong125@gmail.com

HOUSE of Lords member David Puttnam visited Yangon on October 9 and 10 in his capacity as trade envoy for the United Kingdom. He is most well known to the public as the independent producer of numerous award-winning films, including *Midnight Express* (1978), *Chariots of Fire* (1981) and *The Killing Fields* (1984). *The Myanmar Times* spoke with Puttnam following his visit to the Yangon Film School (YFS), where he talked with the students about the ways in which he came up with ideas for his various film projects.

Many of the films you made were based on historical events. How did you choose the stories you produced?
It may sound corny, but the stories pick you. The idea that you sit holding the bridge of your nose and pondering what story to produce, it doesn't quite work that way. What happens is you're going through material and something just jumps off the page at you, and what I'm saying there is absolutely accurate. It isn't just one idea, it's that something comes off the page and you think, ah, that reminds me of that, which reminds me of that. It is the elision

of three or four ideas, images or whatever they may be. It's when you suddenly get them into shape, into focus, and then you know you've got something special.

Do you think there are aspects of history and the human condition that are better explored through dramatic films than through documentaries?
A good example would be the wonderful Cambodian documentary film *The Missing Picture* (2013) about the whole Pol Pot experience. It's a really fine film, but at the end of it ... Normally when I ran *The Killing Fields* for audiences – and this was true all over the world – I would see a lot of the audience crying. That didn't happen with *The Missing Picture*. The movie is shocking and appalling, but it doesn't make you cry. I've seen many, many Holocaust documentaries. They appall me and shock me, and you have other emotions, but they don't make me cry. You don't get wrapped up in the

individual pain of somebody. And that's what movies are about: identity. You find somebody in that story, you closely identify with them, you go on their journey with them, and as the story resolves itself, you share that resolution. That's almost impossible in a documentary.

Some filmmakers here are working on a biopic about the life of independence hero Bogoyoke Aung San. They asked several foreign producers for help but ultimately rejected them because the local crew wants the film to exactly depict historical fact, while the foreigners advised that making a good film would require making some creative changes to the "true" story. What do you think about the idea of changing some of the facts to improve the narrative?
As a filmmaker, you have to justify to yourself why you're doing what you're doing. In the case of *Chariots of Fire*, I needed a protagonist for [the main character] Eric Liddell. The more I



Photo: Zarni Phyo

researched this guy, all I got from people was that he was a completely wonderful man. Everyone just adored him. But I needed someone to argue with him about what he was doing. So I visited his sister Jenny and said, "I know you've always backed your brother to the hilt, but in this movie I need you to argue with him. I need someone with emotional investment in the film to argue." She said, "Sure, I don't mind." I showed her the script and she said, "Yes, I'll do that." So we have three scenes in the film where she clearly disapproves of him running because he has more important things to do with the Christian mission. When the film premiered, a journalist asked Jenny whether she disapproved of what Eric did. She said, "Oh no, not at all. I loved Eric. I would never have argued with anything he wanted to do." So our cover was blown the next day, but it didn't matter because within the narrative of the movie, she played a very important role and it didn't damage anything. Jenny would be the first person to say this.
Here's another example from the same movie, and this is where I think the guys who are defending "the truth" may be wrong. When I showed the film to Eric Liddell's widow, she said she really liked it and said two

really important things: First, she said Eric was a very poor speaker who never could capture an audience. She said, "Your man in the film says all the things Eric wanted to say, but now he's saying them to millions of people." The second thing she said was that we got one thing wrong in the movie: Eric ran like a god. "Your man in the film, he's waving his arms about," she said. The only thing we knew about Eric, because we had the documentary film footage, was the way he ran. And poor Ian Charleston [the actor who depicted Liddell in the film] had to work for ages to learn to run in that very awkward style. So the only thing we knew about Liddell for sure was the only thing she said we got wrong. That's fact. Would the film have been a more accurate portrayal if we had shown an inarticulate man never able to say what he really felt? I don't think so. I think the domestic filmmakers in Myanmar, with their obsession with exactly the truth, are being a little naïve. What's important is "the truth" they are trying to get to with the movie – the big truth, not the little truth. And sometimes in order to enhance the big truth, you may have to cut corners and change things.

MORE ON PULSE 54

THE AVENUE

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The Global Gossip



Figure skater Michelle Kwan attends the Women's Sports Foundation's 35th Annual Salute to Women in Sports at Cipriani Wall Street in New York City on October 15. Photo: Michael Loccisano/AFP

LOS ANGELES Three new JK Rowling wizard movies due from 2016

Harry Potter author JK Rowling is working on three new wizard-based movies to be released starting in 2016, studio giant Warner Bros announced October 15.

The first, *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*, will be directed by David Yates, who directed the last four Harry Potter movies, and reunite the same filmmaking team.

It is described as "set in an extension of her familiar wizarding world, featuring magical creatures and characters inspired by Harry Potter's Hogwarts textbook and its fictitious author".

A second movie is set for release in 2018 and a third in 2020, the studio said.

Warner Bros did not announce who will direct or star in any of the three new scheduled films.

WASHINGTON Bono apologises for free U2 album on iTunes accounts

There were grumbles last month when the Irish rock band's new album *Song of Innocence* was automatically downloaded onto Apple's more than half-billion iTunes accounts around the world.

Among other things, some iTunes users griped that the record took up valuable iPhone storage space.

In a video interview hosted on Facebook October 14, Bono and the other members of the band took written questions from fans.

Please, no more automatic freebies on iTunes, one said.

"It's really rude," that person, identified as Harriet Madeline Jobson, wrote. "I'm sorry about that," said Bono, in trademark dark glasses.

"I had this beautiful idea. Might have gotten carried away with ourselves. Artists are prone to that thing. A drop of megalomania, a touch of generosity, a dash of self-promotion, and deep fear that these songs that we poured our life into over the last few years might not be heard."

Thanks to Apple, people can now remove the album from their iTunes accounts with the click of an on-screen icon.



Contrary to Bono's presumption, apparently not everyone wants to listen to U2. Photo: AFP/Andreas Solaro



How will this man fare as host of the Academy Awards? Photo: AFP/Robyn Beck

LOS ANGELES Neil Patrick Harris to host 2015 Oscars

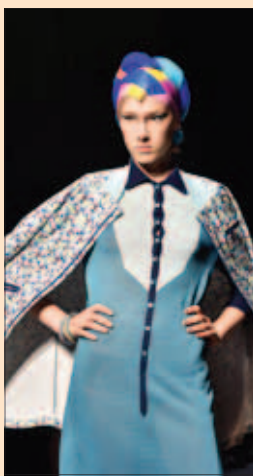
Award-winning US stage and screen actor Neil Patrick Harris will host the next Oscars show, organisers announced October 15.

The star, who has hosted both Broadway's Tony and TV's Emmy awards shows in the past, will front the 87th Academy Awards on February 22, said the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

The high-profile hosting job is a prime gig in Hollywood, at the climax of its annual awards season. Harris will follow Ellen DeGeneres last year and a who's who of showbiz over the decades.

"It is truly an honor and a thrill to be asked to host this year's Academy Awards," said the star of 2005-14's *How I Met Your Mother*, in an Academy statement.

"I grew up watching the Oscars and was always in such awe of some of the greats who hosted the show," added Harris, whose latest film, *Gone Girl*, came out this month in the United States.



A model displays a creation of Japanese designer Yuma Koshino during her 2015 spring/summer collection in Tokyo on October 15. Photo: AFP/Yoshikazu Tsuno

CANCUN Camel kills American in Mexico

A camel bit, trampled and sat on the 60-year-old American owner of an animal park in an eastern Mexico resort town, killing him, authorities said October 14.

Richard Michael Mileski was attacked on October 13 as he passed in front of the camel, said Tulum civil protection director Armando Angulo Castilla.

A Tulum Monkey Sanctuary employee told prosecutors that he was in another part of the park when he heard screams for help, and then beat the camel with a stick to try to get him off Mileski.

"We had to tie a rope around the animal's neck and pull him with a pick-up truck to remove him," the employee said, according to an affidavit.

A message on the sanctuary's Facebook page said Mileski "lost his life caring for one of the animals that he has dedicated the last 15 years of his life to saving".

Mileski founded the sanctuary on his ranch to save the spider monkey from extinction but also had dogs, ducks and horses.

City to host first LGBT

NYEIN EI EI HTWE
nyeineiehtwe23@gmail.com

THE first LGBT film festival in Myanmar, called &Proud, will be held November 14 to 16 in Yangon to coincide with the international Transgender Day of Remembrance and World Human Rights Day.

"There are a lot of prejudices against LGBTs still. That's one thing we hope to change with the film festival. We are not just showing the films for LGBT people. We welcome everyone to the festival to get a better understanding of what it means to be LGBT," said Mr Jan Willem van Rooij, a member of the festival organising committee.

While more and more countries are changing laws to ensure equal rights and treatment for LGBTs, including the right to marry and adopt children, ASEAN countries so far are lagging behind.

"In many ASEAN countries, the fight for equal rights and an accepted place in society is still at a much earlier stage [than in the West], and LGBTs face much more difficulty in being openly gay



Still from Talking with My Best Friend. Photo: Supplied

in their family or workplace," van Rooij said.

The majority of the 27 films selected to screen come from ASEAN countries, with a few from China and India. The films look at stories across the spectrum of LGBT people and issues. The organising committee also says it chose films that portrayed life among these minorities from a positive, pride-affirming angle and subjects that Myanmar people could relate to.

Several filmmakers and

producers from the region will attend the festival to discuss their documentaries and narrative features.

Myanmar-made films that will screen include *Burmese Butterfly* and *My Positive Life*, both produced by the Yangon Film School, as well as *Rainbow Dream* by Tun Tun Aye and *Kings'n'Queens* by Khun Minn Ohn.

The festival committee has also organised a filmmaking workshop called Rainbow Reels.

"In the run-up to the festival, ten young LGBTs from Myanmar will produce three short movies that will premiere during the opening night of the festival," said Ko Hla Myat Htun, a member of the committee. He said the workshop participants were coming from all over Myanmar and invited through the Colors Rainbow LGBT Network.

Local LGBT organisations Colors Rainbow and YG made their call for films and documentaries in July through ASEAN organisations and websites related to LGBT issues. They received about 50 films by their September 4 deadline for entries.

"When we organised an LGBT photo contest and exhibition earlier

WEEKLY PREDICTIONS

OCTOBER 20 - 26, 2014

AUNG MYIN KYAW

4th floor, 113, Thamaing Bayan Road, Tarmwe township, Yangon.
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AQUARIUS | Jan 20 - Feb 18



Greater focus on your primary objective will produce increased effectiveness and allow you to maintain integrity in

whatever you do. Know that trust is the foundation of all good relationships. Being passionate will attract others. Look upon your relationship with your life partner as sacred. You can rise above emotional problems.

GEMINI | May 21 - June 20



The moment you lay blame, you depreciate your reputation. The moment you accept responsibility, you increase your reputation.

The best time to ask for a raise is when you are given additional responsibilities. Look beyond your personal and business resources to reveal a strategic alliance that can strengthen your negotiating position. Love depends on your persistence.

LIBRA | Sept 23 - Oct 22



Do what you can to encourage those around you to gain humility, forgiveness and direct problem-solving. Make sure to know how your words

of advice will sound to the minds of others. Commit yourself to being as clear as possible and building social power as reasonably and as consistently as you can. Accept new ideas for happiness.

PISCES | Feb 19 - March 20



The more you are willing to accept responsibility for your actions, the more credibility you have. Make your emotions subordinate to

your commitments. Know that most assumptions are inaccurate. A happy engagement will result from your gift of love and fulfill your emotional dreams.

CANCER | June 21 - July 22



Secrets are imprisoning, but a big person has no secrets or hidden challenges. Become more aware of who you are, and don't think that

you already know how people really feel about you. You should open yourself up to the possibility of change and question your reality. Emotional challenges shouldn't be present in the construction of love.

SCORPIO | Oct 23 - Nov 21



Charity brings followers. Know that rudeness should be conquered by gentleness. Success should be a continuous journey rather

than an arrival at any specific destination. You can develop your own style and method of dealing with your problems. Don't waste time on negative responses, and tell yourself good things in no uncertain terms. Keep a motto.

ARIES | March 21 - April 19



Challenge yourself with care. Put your faith in yourself to change your life, and stop waiting for change to come from somewhere

else. Confrontation is a good thing when it is at the core of honesty and can help you ascertain the truth of a situation. You should be adaptable in social relations. Reconciliation will follow a lover's tiff.

LEO | July 23 - Aug 22



Decisions fuel the drama of life. Learn the rules of whatever game you're playing. Know that your success becomes dependent

on things and not on yourself. Try to keep your perspective when you monitor your investing progress. Investments are a means to an end of good, not an end in themselves. You can't buy love but you can invest in it simply by taking responsibility.

SAGITTARIUS | Nov 22 - Dec 21



The courageous do not take on meaningless challenges, and cheerfulness is a small matter that makes a big difference. Know that

willingness to learn and devotion are different in quality but both help you to lead effectively. Every day should be a new fresh start toward making your right challenges. Allow nothing to burn your emotional serenity and perspective.

TAURUS | April 20 - May 20



Good fortune will befall you. Your hard work will soon pay off but your financial reward will be slow in coming. You have to step into a brighter

future but may have to battle for what you want. The position and authority in your hand do not belong to you. The more you reciprocate, the more advantage you will create.

VIRGO | Aug 23 - Sept 22



Despondency and delays come before success. You will have to view life differently, and a critical defeat will evolve into a victory with the arrival of

another opportunity. Your single-minded determination can help you overcome obstacles and even turn misfortune into good fortune. You will need to redouble your efforts. Life will look brighter if you are optimistic.

CAPRICORN | Dec 22 - Jan 19



Have a good word for every day. Your instinct and intuition are to beautify yourself and others. Don't always judge a person on what you see, hear

or watch them do. Appearances can be so very deceptive and difficult to understand. Energise yourself to be ready to seize an unexpected opportunity to try something different. Humanity is more valuable than personal feeling.

film festival

this year, we didn't have the idea to hold a film festival, but many people were interested in our photo contest. So we decided to make the film festival in order to show LGBT life with emotion," said Ko Hla Myat Htun, who is also coordinator of Colors Rainbow LGBT Network.

After the festival is over, they are planning to re-screen the films

through LGBT organisations to enhance their impact on public awareness, he said.

The &Proud film festival takes place November 14, 15 and 16 at Institut Français, 340 Pyay Road. Entrance is free. The full program will be released this week on www.andproud.net as well as www.facebook.com/andPROUD.



Still from *A Beautiful Boxer*, to screen at &Proud festival. Photo: Supplied

What's on

OCTOBER 20 - 26

Got an event?
List it in What's On!
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ART

Sept 26-Nov 1 "The Mirror: Reflecting Society" Painting, sculpture, installation and photography by four Myanmar contemporary artists. TS1 Gallery, between Lanthit Jetty and Kaing Dan No 1 Jetty, Seikkan 10am-6:30pm

Oct 18-22 Win Myint Moe's solo exhibition. Gallery 65, 65 Yaw Min Gyi Road, Dagon 10am-6pm

Oct 17-25 "Land of Jade", photographs by Minzayar, Witness Yangon Documentary Arts Space, 4A 3rd floor, Pyan Hlwar Building, Parami Road, Mayangone 12-5pm

FILM

Oct 28-Nov 2 Memory! International Film Heritage Festival, screening nine classics from Japan, UK, France, Mongolia and USA. Free admission. Full program at www.memoryfilmfestival.org/yanon. Nay Pyi Taw Cinema, near Sule Pagoda.

Oct 23 *Transsexual Teen Beauty Queen*. Directed by Dan Murdoch, British Council Library, 78 Strand Road, Kyauktada 6pm

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.

Nay Pyi Taw Cinema, near Sule Pagoda *Black and White: The Dawn of Justice*. Directed by Tsai Yueh-hsun. An unrelenting police officer battles a villain mastermind. *The Box Trolls*. Directed by Anthony Stacchi and Graham Annable. A fantasy-comedy in 3D stop-motion animation. *Sming: The Hunt Begins*. Directed by Pan Visitsak. A Thai horror film about a supernatural legend. **Mingalar Cinema 2**, at Dagon Center 2, Myaynigone *The Box Trolls*. **Shae Shaung Cinema**, Sule Pagoda Road, Kyauktada *Dracula Untold*. Directed by Gary Shore. The true story of Vlad the Impaler is combined with the myth of Dracula. *The Maze Runner*. Directed by Wes Ball. A group of boys trapped in a maze must find an escape. **Junction Square Cineplex**, Kamaryut *Annabelle*. Directed by Kevin Carraway. A demon-possessed toy doll terrorises a young family. *Reclaim*. Directed by Alan White. Americans abroad stumble into a high-

stakes underground scheme and must save their daughter. **Mingalar San Pya Cineplex**, Phone Gyi Street and Anawrahta, Lanmadaw *Black and White: The Dawn of Justice*. *The Box Trolls*.

MUSIC

Sept 5-Dec 31 Live music. Thiripyitsaya Sky Bistro, 20th Floor, Sakura Tower 7-10pm

Oct 21 Standup Yangon international comedy showcase. Free entry. 50th Street Bar, 9/13 50th street, Botahtaung 8pm

Oct 22 Live music. 50th Street Bar, 9/13 50th street, Botahtaung 8pm

MISC

Oct 21 Gallery conversation and drinks. Pansodan Gallery, 289 Pansodan Street, Kyauktada 7pm-late

Oct 23 Topsy Travel Talk Thursdays. Discuss alternative travel in Myanmar over drinks. Off the Beaten Track Café, Kandawgyi Oo Yin Kabar, Kandawgyi Park, Mingalar Taung Nyunt

Oct 24 French Love Fridays, with a new DJ, food, drinks and goodies. Entry K5000 per person. Garden of Institut Francais, 340 Pyay Road, Sanchaung 7pm



Samsung
GALAXY Note 4

စတင်ရောင်းချခြင်း **အထူးအစီအစဉ်**

အထူးဈေးနှုန်းဖြင့် ရောင်းချပေးမည့် အပြင်

• Original S View Cover (၁)ခု

• Note 4 အတွက် Discount (၁၀၀၀၀)ကျပ်

• MAB Visa Card (၁) ကတ် တို့ကို

မေတ္တာတုန့်ပြန်မှုအနေဖြင့် ပေးအပ်သွားမည် ဖြစ်ပါသည်

တစ်ပြိုင်တည်း ရောင်းချပေးမည့် အစီအစဉ်

ရန်ကုန်မြို့ မင်းရဲကျော်စွာလမ်း (UMFCCI) ခန်းမ၊

နံနက် (၉)နာရီမှ ညနေ (၅)နာရီထိ။

မန္တလေးမြို့ SkyWalk Shopping Centre

(Promotion Area) နံနက် (၉)နာရီမှ ညနေ (၅)နာရီထိ။

SAMSUNG

အောက်တိုဘာ

၂၆

တစ်ရက်

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CONTINUED FROM PULSE 51

You spoke during your visit to Yangon about the potential for films to influence public policy. Can you give any examples of where this has occurred with your own films?

Within two months of the opening of *Midnight Express*, the American and Turkish governments came to an agreement they had been negotiating for three years, whereby American prisoners on anything other than murder charges could serve their sentences in the United States. But the best example is from American movies. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, American movies completely ignored the racial situation in America. It was a subject you didn't want to go too near. And then starting later in the 1950s, you had a whole spate of movies starting with *The Defiant Ones* (1958), which began to deal quite seriously with race. Those movies, I would argue, softened public opinion up for [the Civil Rights Act of 1964] that Lyndon Johnson was able to get through. If you read about Jack and Bobby Kennedy, you find that their attitudes were definitely being influenced by the tone of the movies that were coming out. Race was not a subject that you could put a cap on anymore. The role that movies can play by dealing in attitudes and softening up public opinion can eventually influence things. Politicians always try to get in step with public opinion. Very few politicians ever get ahead of public opinion, but they try to remain in step with public opinion. And if they sense the mood of the country is drifting, the politicians will go along with it. So cinema can definitely soften up and adjust public opinion so the politicians follow.

You also spoke in Yangon about the negative aspects of culture. Earlier this year a film promoting tolerance between Buddhists and Muslims was kept out of the Human Rights Human Dignity Film Festival in Yangon because the filmmakers started receiving death threats from extremists who had not even seen the film. How can you deal with a situation where some people try to suppress or censor films

that they believe pose some sort of threat to their world view?

My understanding of that particular instance is that when the film was eventually seen, the extremists who had threatened these things that the film was about were proved not to have been accurate, that in fact the film was very reasonable. So the short answer is to try to make sure that the criticisms you're dealing with are based on the actual film, as opposed to some lunatic's extreme version of what they think you've made. My film *Stardust* (1974) had some quite tough scenes in it that certainly were stronger than anything that had been seen before. It was about rock-and-roll, and about a rock-and-roller who eventually dies of drug addiction. In those days there was a woman named Mary Whitehouse who ran a campaign to clean up screens. She heard about the film and we suddenly got attacked by her and her organisation for making this "disgusting" movie. And it began to affect the certificate [rating] the film was going to be given. I got hold of the censor and said, "You may be right being frightened about this movie. Why don't we actually find out what the public think?" I talked him into having a screening, and we had it run by a university so the assessment was completely neutral. We asked the audience several questions at the end, including how would they feel about their 16-year-old child seeing this film. I'm not exaggerating - I think the figure was 97 percent of the audience said it was absolutely fine and they didn't know what the fuss was about. I remember one of my critics who was using Whitehouse's argument came out with a wonderful line because I thought it was very honest of him: He said, "I've got to admit, Mary Whitehouse is a queen without a country." His point was this woman with a group of devoted admirers were a tiny coterie of people who were trying to stop the world and get off. When the film was exposed to a real audience, her concerns were evident nonsense. So the key is to make sure the criticisms you're dealing with are about the actual product, be it a film or a book or whatever it might be, and not about someone's fantasy about what it might be.

Living well in Myanmar



Photos: Dana Payne (bottom left)/Jon Sullivan (bottom right)/Wikimedia Commons

Look to lifestyle to protect your heart

A DISCUSSION with your doctor about heart health will typically focus on medical issues such as high blood-pressure and cholesterol. Patients and doctors often choose to start medications in order to reduce the risk of heart attack. But although pharmacological therapies are a well-established way to improve coronary health, they are not the best approach to protecting your heart.

Repeated research studies have taught us that a healthy lifestyle is the optimal way to prevent a heart attack. Making good choices about the food you eat and how much you move your body can be literally lifesaving. Furthermore, using lifestyle as preventative therapy comes without negative side effects. Of course the same can't be said for medications.

The five healthy behaviours that appear to matter most are:

- eating a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, beans, nuts, low-fat dairy and whole grains
- exercising multiple times per week
- maintaining a good weight and waist circumference
- not smoking
- drinking alcohol in moderation

CHRISTOPH GELSDORF, MD

livingwellmyanmar@gmail.com



A new study released last month in the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology* further boosts support for lifestyle interventions. The authors observed 20,000 Swedish men from 1997 to 2009, asked them questions about their lifestyle, and then noted how many heart attacks occurred. While only a small percentage of the study participants said they faithfully adhered to all five healthy behaviours, those who did were rewarded with a 79 percent lower risk of having a heart attack. This result echoes previous studies with similar findings conducted in men and women in Asia and North America.

The public-health implications of the possibility of preventing the onset of heart attacks to this extent are massive. The challenge is translating what we know to be beneficial into practical interventions that result in individual behaviour change. Programs designed to increase the proportion of adults

adhering to these risk-reduction behaviours would drastically reduce the global burden of heart disease.

From a statistical standpoint, a doctor can do a better job of helping patients by focusing on lifestyle rather than lab tests. However, making this shift in how people talk to their physicians is proving difficult. For example, it's far easier to discuss lowering a specific blood pressure or cholesterol number than it is to quantify how well someone has eaten over the last month.

Going forward administrators and care providers need to creatively think about how to reorganise the health system such that it sets dietary, exercise, smoking and obesity targets that are consistently measured and pursued. Patients should walk into their doctor's office and ask not only, "How is my blood pressure today?" but also, "How well am I meeting goals for food habits and activity level?"

Christoph Gelsdorf is an American Board of Family Medicine physician who sees patients in Yangon and California (www.gelsdorfMD.com). He is a member of the Myanmar Medical Association. Reader thoughts and questions are welcomed.

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Kids will love this **crispy chicken**



JAPANESE RICE SALAD
Serves 6

- 1 ½ cup rice
- 2 tsp black sesame seeds
- 1 tbsp fried garlic
- 2 tbsp chopped coriander
- 1/8 tsp salt
- 2 tsp sesame oil
- 2 tbsp bonito flakes or dried shrimp powder

Wash the rice and cook with 2 ¾ cups of water in a rice cooker. Chop the coriander and crush the garlic. Roast the black sesame seeds in a frying pan for few minutes on medium heat. When the rice is ready, add it to a big bowl to cool down. When the rice is cool enough to touch, add all the ingredients on top. Toss well to combine. Salt to taste. Serve warm. Good with the fried chicken.



PHYO ARBIDANS
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I AM planning to write more recipes this month for the whole family, including little ones. I hope last week’s crêpe recipe made some kids happy. These recipes are also good for toddlers who are trying to develop their taste buds. Just spoil them with mummy’s healthy food. This week I made Japanese-style fried chicken, a recipe my daughter Thirisu loves. It’s got no MSG and no chicken powder, just simple soy sauce and rice wine. And the crunch comes from panko bread crumbs, also known as tempura flakes. The original recipe called for sake (Japanese rice wine), but sake is quite expensive to use for

food



Photo: Phyo

cooking here. So I have substituted Chinese rice wine, which is available at some supermarkets. It works. To accompany, I made rice salad. You can buy the ready-to-make packets, but they’re costly. You can achieve the flavour mixture at home with fresh herbs. If you feel like it, you can shape and decorate the salad. But I love simple presentation in a bowl for the whole family to dip into. Enjoy.

JAPANESE FRIED CHICKEN
Serves 6

- 500g or 2 skinless chicken breasts
- 3 tbsp Kikkoman soy sauce
- 1 ½ tsp brown sugar

- 1 clove of garlic
- 2 tbsp Chinese rice wine or sake
- 1 cup panko bread crumbs
- 1 tsp plain flour
- 1 ½ to 2 cups of vegetable oil (to fry)

Trim the fat from the chicken as much as you can. Then cut it on the grain into diagonal slices 1cm (0.5 inches) thick. Mix the soy sauce, sugar, rice wine and crushed garlic in a bowl. Marinate the chicken in there for at least 30-45 minutes. Drain the chicken. Mix the bread crumbs and flour on a plate and roll the chicken in the mixture. Let the bread crumbs stick on the chicken evenly. Prepare for frying. Add 1 cup

of oil into a non-stick frying pan and heat on high. When the oil is hot, turn the heat down to medium. Don’t let the oil get too hot. Add several pieces of chicken and shallow fry. Make sure you have drained off the soy-sauce mixture well before rolling the chicken in the bread crumbs. Excess sauce will cause spitting during the frying. When the chicken becomes golden on one side, flip it. When both sides are golden and the chicken cooked through, transfer to a plate lined with kitchen paper to drain. Continue in the same manner frying all the chicken. Add more oil to the pan if necessary. Serve with sweet chilli sauce.

For a quick and quality meal, Thai cafe chain offers well-priced and tasty options

NANDAR AUNG
nandaraung.mcm@gmail.com

AMONG the six branches of Pan Swel Taw Thai Express Café, we chose the location on the third floor of Junction Square Shopping Centre. There are around 10 restaurants in the centre’s food court, but none was as busy as Pan Swel Taw. It’s a small shop and clearly not large enough for its clientele, even on a weekday. But it’s clean and tidy, with teak tables and enticing posters of curries and drinks on the walls. The five-page menu features pictures and brief descriptions of each of its offerings. There are pork, chicken and seafood curries, as well as sushi. My dining companion and I chose the fish-paste sauce and vegetables (*ngapiyay*, K1800), which is labelled a house specialty. This is actually a Myanmar-style dish made with *ngapi* (fish paste), green and red chillies, lemon and dried shrimp. We also ordered pork dishes – hot-and-sour soup (K3800), red curry (K3300) and fried pork-rind salad (K3800) – and the spicy minced squid (K4100), which turned out to be too much for us. Service was prompt and courteous, the waiter wearing a white shirt and grey trousers. We waited only

15 minutes for our food when I’d expected it might take 30 due to the crowd. We’d both heard from friends that the Thai coconut-based curries here are delicious, and they were. Each dish was mildly spicy but will probably not offend the taste buds even of those who are afraid of heat. The soup, which contained mushrooms, meat on the bone and lemon leaf, was a

favourite. We also enjoyed the pork-rind and squid salads. The squid was tender and went well with rice and *ngapiyay*. Pan Swel Taw serves over 50 dishes including Thai and Chinese food and *kyay-oh*, all priced reasonably between K1500-K6500. There are also burgers and sandwiches for K2000 each, but seeing as we were in a Thai restaurant, we didn’t bother to try them. The drink menu offers soda, cocktails, coffee, milk, mojitos and fruit frosts. Unfortunately, for some reason, you can’t get beer. Overall, Pan Swel Taw gets full marks as a good place to hang out with friends or family when you’re tired of shopping – if you’re okay with the noise and strong smells coming from the kitchen.



Restaurant Review



Ngapiyay. Photos: Yu Yu

Pan Swel Taw Thai Express Cafe
Third floor, Kyun Daw Street , near Hanthawaddy Circle , Kamaryut township Ph 01-527242 Ext 3010

Restaurant Rating	
★★★★★	
Food	9
Beverage	8
Atmosphere	7
X-factor	7
Service	8
Value for money	8



Karma, Christian and Alex



Julien and Beanie



Caitlin, Claire and Clara



Lauren, Erin, Jess and Jameson



Micheal, Mimi and Mario



Yachtoberfest!

The witty lads who brought the city Mayham! (a pig roast party on a boat) and Shamrock the Boat! (a St Patrick's Day party on a boat) were back October 11 with Yachtoberfest! (in case you didn't get it, Oktoberfest on a boat). The cruise departed from Warden Jetty and revellers enjoyed dancing, free-flow (but probably not German) beer and "heavy hors d'oeuvres".



Margaret and Jessica



Alex



Jake, My, Josh and Maria



Fiona and Jo



Rafael and Clemence



Saya, My, Erin, Jessica and Krystal



Wutti and Phong Phong



Mehdi and Alex



Robert, Claire and Catherine





Ye Mon and Saikyaw Htetoo



Phyu Phyu, August and Raimund Garber

The real Oktoberfest
Sausages, sauerkraut, pretzels, lebkuchen, oompah, imported German beer and a dancing prince... The Embassy of Germany went all out to bring Yangonites a robust and authentic taste of a Bavarian tradition on October 10 and 11 at Inlay Lake Hotel. Guests' only complaint: If only the men in lederhosen could have poured the beer faster.



Sai Yu, Myint Nge, Ma Yu, Myo Myo, Kthi and Thandar Soe

The Gaudiblos Band

Nemu, May Myat Mon Win and Steven Naing Tun



Hnin Si, Phyo Pyae Sone Win, Honey, Mi Mi, Thwe Phyo Aung, Lay Mon



U Aung Naing Oo and U Myo Lwin



Phyo Pyae Sone Win, Honey, Hnin Si, Winnie, Zinmar



Aye Mra Tha (Mie Mie)



Nela Blahoutova



Mi Mi Soe



Honey, Mi Mi and Thwe Phyo Aung

Myanmar Tourism reception

Members of the tourism marketing industry gathered at a reception hosted by Myanmar Tourism at Taw Win Garden Hotel on October 10.



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FUN GUIDE

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DOMESTIC FLIGHT SCHEDULES

YANGON TO NAY PYI TAW				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
FMI A1	1,2,3,4,5	7:15	8:15	
FMI B1	1,2,3,4,5	10:45	11:45	
FMI C1	1,2,3,4,5	17:00	18:00	

YANGON TO MANDALAY				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YH 909	1,2,3,4,6	6:00	7:40	
K7 282	Daily	6:00	8:10	
YJ 891	2,4,5,6,7	6:00	8:05	
YH 917	5,7	6:00	7:40	
YH 917	1,2,3,4,6	6:10	8:30	
Y5 775	Daily	6:15	7:25	
6T 401	Daily	6:20	8:30	
YJ 891	1,3	6:30	8:35	
YH 831	4,6	7:00	8:40	
YH 835	1	7:00	12:55	
YH 651	2,5	8:00	12:48	
K7 266	Daily	8:00	10:05	
7Y 131	Daily	8:10	10:15	
YJ 211	5	11:00	12:25	
YJ 761	4	11:00	12:25	
YJ 201	2	11:00	12:55	
YJ 201	1	11:15	12:40	
YH 727	1	11:15	13:25	
YH 729	2,4,6	11:15	14:15	
YH 737	3	11:15	13:25	
YH 737	5,7	11:30	13:40	
YH 835	7	11:30	13:10	
YH 911	2	12:30	14:10	
YH 829	5	12:30	14:10	
K7 822	2,4,7	12:30	16:55	
K7 622	1,3,5,7	13:00	14:25	
7Y 652	2,5	13:00	17:45	
K7 226	2,4,6	13:30	14:55	
7Y 241	Daily	14:00	15:55	
7Y 662	1,3,4,6,7	14:10	18:25	
K7 224/7Y 241	Daily	14:30	16:35	
YH 731	Daily	15:00	17:10	
Y5 234	Daily	17:45	18:55	

YANGON TO NYAUNG U				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YJ 891	2,4,5,6,7	6:00	7:20	
K7 282	Daily	6:00	7:20	
YH 917	5,7	6:00	8:25	
YH 909	1,2,3,4,6	6:00	8:25	
YH 917	1,2,3,4,6	6:10	7:45	
YH 909	7	6:15	7:50	
6T 401	Daily	6:20	7:40	
YH 909	5	6:30	8:05	
YJ 891	1,3	6:30	7:50	
K7 242	Daily	7:00	8:20	
7Y 131	Daily	8:10	9:30	
7Y 241	Daily	14:00	16:40	
K7 224/7Y 241	Daily	14:30	17:25	
YH 731	Daily	15:00	17:55	

YANGON TO MYITKYINA				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YH 835	1	7:00	9:40	
YH 831	4,6	7:00	10:35	
YJ 211	5	11:00	13:50	
YJ 201	2	11:00	14:20	
YJ 201	1	11:15	14:05	
YH 835	7	11:30	14:35	
YH 829	5	12:30	15:35	
K7 622	1,3,5,7	13:00	15:55	
YH 826	3	14:00	16:40	

NAY PYI TAW TO YANGON				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
FMI A2	1,2,3,4,5	8:35	9:35	
FMI B2	1,2,3,4,5	13:30	14:30	
FMI C2	1,2,3,4,5	18:20	19:20	

MANDALAY TO YANGON				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YH 910	1,2,3,4,6	7:40	9:45	
Y5 233	Daily	8:05	9:15	
YJ 891	2,4,5,6,7	8:20	10:15	
K7 282	Daily	8:25	11:30	
YH 918	1,2,3,4,6	8:30	10:45	
6T 402	Daily	8:45	10:50	
YJ 891	1,3	8:50	10:45	
YH 918	5,7	9:10	11:05	
7Y 661	1,3,4,6,7	9:50	13:55	
K7 267	Daily	10:20	12:25	
7Y 132	Daily	10:30	12:25	
YJ 201	2	13:10	17:25	
YH 832	6	13:50	15:15	
YH 832	4	14:50	16:25	
YJ 202	1	15:45	17:10	
YH 836	1	15:45	17:10	
YJ 212	5	16:00	17:25	
7Y 241	Daily	16:10	18:15	
YJ 762	4	16:40	18:05	
YH 728	1	16:45	18:10	
K7 225/7Y 242	Daily	16:50	19:00	
YH 912	2	17:00	18:55	
YH 830	5	17:00	18:25	
YH 738	5,7	17:05	19:00	
K7 823	2,4,7	17:10	18:35	
YH 732	Daily	17:10	19:15	
K7 227	2,4,6	17:20	18:45	
YH 738	3	17:25	18:50	
K7 623	1,3,5,7	17:40	19:05	
YH 836	7	17:50	19:15	
YH 738	7	17:55	19:20	
YH 730	2,4,6	18:00	19:25	
Y5 776	Daily	19:35	20:45	

NYAUNG U TO YANGON				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YJ 891	2,4,5,6,7	7:35	10:15	
YH 918	1,2,3,4,6	7:45	10:45	
6T 401	Daily	7:55	10:50	
YJ 891	1,3	8:05	10:45	
YH 910	5	8:05	10:10	
YH 910	1,2,3,4,6	8:25	9:45	
YH 918	5,7	8:25	11:05	
K7 242	Daily	8:35	11:45	
YH 910	7	9:40	11:00	
7Y 132	Daily	9:45	12:25	
K7 283	Daily	10:10	11:30	
7Y 242	Daily	16:55	18:15	
K7 225/7Y 242	Daily	17:40	19:00	
YH 732	Daily	17:55	19:15	

MYITKYINA TO YANGON				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
7Y 661	1,3,4,6,7	8:25	13:55	
YH 832	6	12:25	15:15	
YH 832	4	13:25	16:25	
YJ 212	5	14:05	17:25	
YH 836	1	14:20	17:10	
YJ 202	1	14:20	17:10	
YJ 202	2	14:35	17:25	
YH 830	5	15:35	18:25	
K7 623	1,3,5,7	16:10	19:05	
YH 836	7	16:25	19:15	
YH 827	3	16:40	19:05	

YANGON TO HEHO				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YJ 891	2,4,5,6,7	6:00	8:50	
K7 282	Daily	6:00	9:00	
YH 917	5,7	6:00	9:55	
YH 917	1,2,3,4,6	6:10	9:35	
6T 401	Daily	6:20	9:20	
YH 909	5	6:30	9:00	
YJ 891	1,3	6:30	9:20	
K7 242	Daily	7:00	9:15	
K7 266	Daily	8:00	9:15	
7Y 131	Daily	8:10	11:00	
YH 505	1,2,3,4,5,6	10:30	11:55	
YJ 201	2	11:00	12:10	
YJ 761	4	11:00	13:10	
YJ 751	3	11:15	12:25	
YH 727	1	11:15	12:40	
YH 737	3	11:15	12:40	
YH 737	5,7	11:30	12:55	
YH 911	2	12:30	17:45	
K7 828	1,3,5	12:30	13:45	
K7 822	2,4,7	12:30	13:45	
7Y 652	2,5	13:00	17:03	
7Y 241	Daily	14:00	15:10	
7Y 662	1,3,4,6,7	14:10	17:40	
K7 224/7Y 241	Daily	14:30	15:45	
YH 731	Daily	15:00	16:25	

YANGON TO MYEIK				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YH 633	3,7	7:00	9:15	
K7 319/7Y 531	1,3,5,7	7:00	9:05	
K7 319/7Y 531	2,4,6	11:45	13:50	

YANGON TO SITTWE				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
6T 605	Daily	11:15	13:10	
K7 422	Daily	13:00	14:55	

YANGON TO THANDWE				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
K7 242	Daily	7:00	10:35	
YH 505	1,2,3,4,5,6	10:30	13:10	
6T 605	Daily	11:15	12:10	
K7 422	Daily	13:00	13:35	

YANGON TO DAWEI				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YH 633	2,5	6:30	7:55	
YH 633	3,7	7:00	8:25	
K7 319/7Y 531	1,3,5,7	7:00	8:10	
K7 319/7Y 531	2,4,6	11:45	12:50	

YANGON TO LASHIO				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YJ 751	3	11:15	13:30	
YH 729	2,4,6	11:15	13:15	
K7 828	1,3,5	12:30	14:50	
7Y 652	2,5	13:00	14:38	

YANGON TO PUTAO				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YH 831	6	7:00	11:30	
YH 835	1	7:00	10:35	
YH 835	7	11:30	15:30	

YANGON TO CHIANG MAI				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
WV9 9607/YJ 7607	4,7	14:20	16:10	

HEHO TO YANGON				
Flight		Days	Dep	Arr
7Y 651		2,5	8:45	12:48
YH 910		5	9:00	10:10
YJ 891		2,4,5,6,7	9:05	10:15
K7 283		Daily	9:15	11:30
K7 243		Daily	9:30	11:45
YH 918		1,2,3,4,6	9:35	10:45
6T 402		Daily	9:35	10:50
YJ 891		1,3	9:35	10:45
YH 918		5,7	9:55	11:05
7Y 132		1,3,4,6,7	10:35	13:55
K7 267		Daily	11:10	12:25
7Y 661		Daily	11:15	12:25
YH 506		1,2,3,4,5,6	11:55	14:00
YJ 201		2	12:25	17:25
7Y 241		Daily	15:25	18:15
YJ 762		4	15:55	18:05
YH 728		1	16:00	18:10
K7 224/7Y 241		Daily	16:00	19:00
K7 829		1,3,5	16:10	17:25
K7 823		2,4,7	16:20	18:35
YH 732		Daily	16:25	19:15
YH 738		3	16:40	18:50
YJ 752		3	17:30	18:40
YH 912		2	17:45	18:55
YH 738		5,7	17:50	19:00
MYEIK TO YANGON				
Flight		Days	Dep	Arr
YH 634		3,7	11:25	13:25
K7 320/7Y 532		1,3,5,7	11:30	13:35
K7 320/7Y 531		2,4,6	16:05	18:10
SITTWE TO YANGON				
Flight		Days	Dep	Arr
6T 606		Daily	13:30	14:50
K7 423		Daily	15:10	16:30
THANDWE TO YANGON				
Flight		Days	Dep	Arr
K7 243		Daily	10:50	11:45
6T 605		Daily	12:25	14:50
YH 506		1,2,3,4,5,6	13:10	14:00
K7 423		Daily	14:10	16:30
DAWEI TO YANGON				
Flight		Days	Dep	Arr
YH 634		2,5	10:45	11:55
YH 634		3,7	12:15	13:25
K7 320/7Y 532		1,3,5,7	12:25	13:35
K7 320/7Y 531		2,4,6	17:05	18:10
LASHIO TO YANGON				
Flight		Days	Dep	Arr
7Y 651		2,5	11:10	12:48
K7 829		1,3,5	15:05	17:25
YJ 752		3	16:25	18:40
YH 730		2,4,6	17:00	19:25
PUTAO TO YANGON				
Flight		Days	Dep	Arr
YH 836		1	10:35	17:10
YH 832		6	11:30	15:15
YH 836		7	15:30	19:15
CHIANG MAI TO YANGON				
Flight		Days	Dep	Arr
W9 9608/ YJ 7608		4,7	17:20	18:10

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	16:50
PG 708	Daily	15:20	17:15
8M 331	Daily	16:30	18:15
PG 704	Daily	18:20	20:15
TG 306	Daily	19:45	21:45

YANGON TO DON MUEANG			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
DD 4231	Daily	8:00	9:50
FD 252	Daily	8:30	10:15
FD 254	Daily	17:30	19:10
DD 4239	Daily	21:00	22:45

YANGON TO SINGAPORE			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
Y5 233	Daily	10:10	14:40
SQ 997	Daily	10:35	15:10
3K 582	Daily	11:20	15:50
8M 231	Daily	12:45	17:10
MI 533	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	1,5	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	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 GUANGZHOU			
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	Daily	10:50	16:15

YANGON TO KUNMING			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
CA 906	Daily	12:15	15:55
MU 2012	3	12:20	18:25
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	8:00	11:10

YANGON TO PHNOM PENH			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr

YANGON TO SEOUL			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
OZ 770	4,7	0:35	9:10
KE 472	Daily	23:35	7:50

YANGON TO HONG KONG			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
KA 251	Daily	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	4	19:45	21:00
BG 061	1	21:45	23:00

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
M 533	4,6	15:55	20:50
Y5 233	Daily	8:05	14:40

MANDALAY TO DON MUEANG			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
FD 245	1,2,4,6	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	19:30	22:30

BANGKOK TO YANGON			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
TG 303	Daily	7:55	8:50
PG 701	Daily	8:50	9:40
8M 336	Daily	10:40	11:25
TG 301	Daily	13:00	13:55
PG 707	Daily	13:40	14:30
PG 703	Daily	16:45	17:35
TG 305	Daily	17:50	18:45
8M 332	Daily	19:15	20:00
PG 705	Daily	20:15	21:30

DON MUEANG TO YANGON			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
DD 4230	Daily	6:20	7:05
FD 251	Daily	7:15	8:00
FD 253	Daily	16:20	17:00
DD 4238	Daily	19:30	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	4,6	11:35	12:55
MI 518	Daily	14:20	15:45
TR 2826	Daily	17:05	18:25
Y5 234	Daily	15:35	17:05
8M 232	Daily	18:15	19:40

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	1,5	12:50	13:50
8M 9507	Daily	13:30	14:40
MH 742	Daily	13:30	14:40
AK 502	Daily	17:50	19:00

BEIJING TO YANGON			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
CA 715	1,3,5,7	19:30	22:50

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	Daily	7:00	9:55

KUNMING TO YANGON			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
MU 2011	3	8:25	11:40
CA 905	Daily	10:45	11:15
MU 2031	1,2,4,5,6,7	13:30	14:00

HANOI TO YANGON			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
VN 957	1,3,5,6,7	16:50	18:10

HO CHI MINH CITY TO YANGON			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
VN 943	2,4,7	11:50	13:25

DOHA TO YANGON			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
QR 918	3,5,7	20:20	6:25+1

PHNOM PENH TO YANGON			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
8M 9006	1,3,6	16:00	17:30

SEOUL TO YANGON			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
KE 471	Daily	18:45	22:35
OZ 769	3,6	19:50	23:25

HONG KONG TO YANGON			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
KA 250	Daily	21:45	23:30

TOKYO TO YANGON			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
NH 913	Daily	11:00	15:40

GAYA TO YANGON			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
8M 602	3,5,6	9:20	12:30

DHAKA TO YANGON			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
BG 060	4	16:30	18:45
BG 060	1	18:30	20:45

INCHEON TO YANGON			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
8M 7701	Daily	18:45	22:35
8M 7501	3,6	19:50	23:25

BANGKOK TO MANDALAY			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
PG 709	Daily	12:00	13:20

SINGAPORE TO MANDALAY			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
MI 533	4,6	11:35	15:00
Y5 234	Daily	15:35	18:55

DON MUEANG TO MANDALAY			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
FD 244	1,2,4,6	10:50	12:15

KUNMING TO MANDALAY			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
MU 2029	Daily	13:55	13:50
MU 7524	1,3,5	18:20	21:00

GAYA TO MANDALAY			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
8M 604	4	13:15	16:20

BANGKOK TO NAY PYI TAW			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
PG 721	1,2,3,4,5	17:00	19:00

International Airlines	
Air Asia (FD) Tel: 09254049991-3	
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, 255265. Fax: 255119	
Biman Bangladesh Airlines (BG) Tel: 371867-68. Fax: 371869	
Condor (DE) Tel: 370836-39 [ext: 303]	
Dragonair (KA) Tel: 255320, 255321. Fax: 255329	
Golden Myanmar Airlines (Y5) Tel: 09400446999, 09400447999 Fax: 8604051	
Malaysia Airlines (MH) Tel: 387648, 241007 [ext: 120, 121, 122] Fax: 241124	
Myanmar Airways International (8M) Tel: 255260. Fax: 255305	
Nok Airline (DD) Tel: 255050, 255021. Fax: 255051	
Qatar Airways (QR) Tel: 379845, 379843, 379831. Fax: 379730	
Singapore Airlines (SQ) / Silk Air (MI) Tel: 255287-9. Fax: 255290	
Thai Airways (TG) Tel: 255491-6. Fax: 255223	
Tiger Airline (TR) Tel: 371383, 370836-39 [ext: 303]	
Vietnam Airlines (VN) Tel: 255066, 255088, 255068. Fax: 255086	

Airline Codes	
3K = Jet Star	
8M = Myanmar Airways International	
AK = Air Asia	
BG = Biman Bangladesh Airlines	
CA = Air China	
CI = China Airlines	
CZ = China Southern	
DD = Nok Airline	
FD = Air Asia	
KA = Dragonair	
KE = Korea Airlines	
MH = Malaysia Airlines	
MI = Silk Air	
MU = China Eastern Airlines	
NH = All Nippon Airways	
PG = Bangkok Airways	
QR = Qatar Airways	
SQ = Singapore Airways	
TG = Thai Airways	
TR = Tiger Airline	
VN = Vietnam Airline	
Y5 = Golden Myanmar Airlines	
Subject to change without notice	

Universal Crossword

Edited by Timothy E. Parker

WELL REPRESENTED By Henry Quarters

ACROSS

- 1 Sugar bowl marchers
- 5 Data is displayed on it
- 10 Canyon edges
- 14 Plane reservation
- 15 ___ only (sans pictures)
- 16 Correct copy
- 17 One way to send stuff
- 20 Dazed and confused
- 21 Air raid alert
- 22 Driver's license datum
- 23 Fluorescent-lamp filler
- 25 Stars and Stripes land
- 27 Certain grad
- 30 Seance visitor
- 33 Snake in the grass, metaphorically
- 34 Letters on some police jackets
- 37 Music selections
- 39 "Understood"
- 43 Nest with a view
- 44 Use some sense?
- 45 Tire-pressure letters
- 46 Emulate Spielberg
- 48 Marching together perfectly
- 51 Tokyo, once
- 52 Dote on too much
- 54 Paranormal ability
- 57 Cause of many yawns
- 59 Birth-related
- 63 Build things to last
- 66 Fishing need
- 67 Enjoyed enthusiastically
- 68 Annoying smell
- 69 Harvard rival
- 70 Reveals, as one's soul
- 71 Enthusiastic volunteer's cry

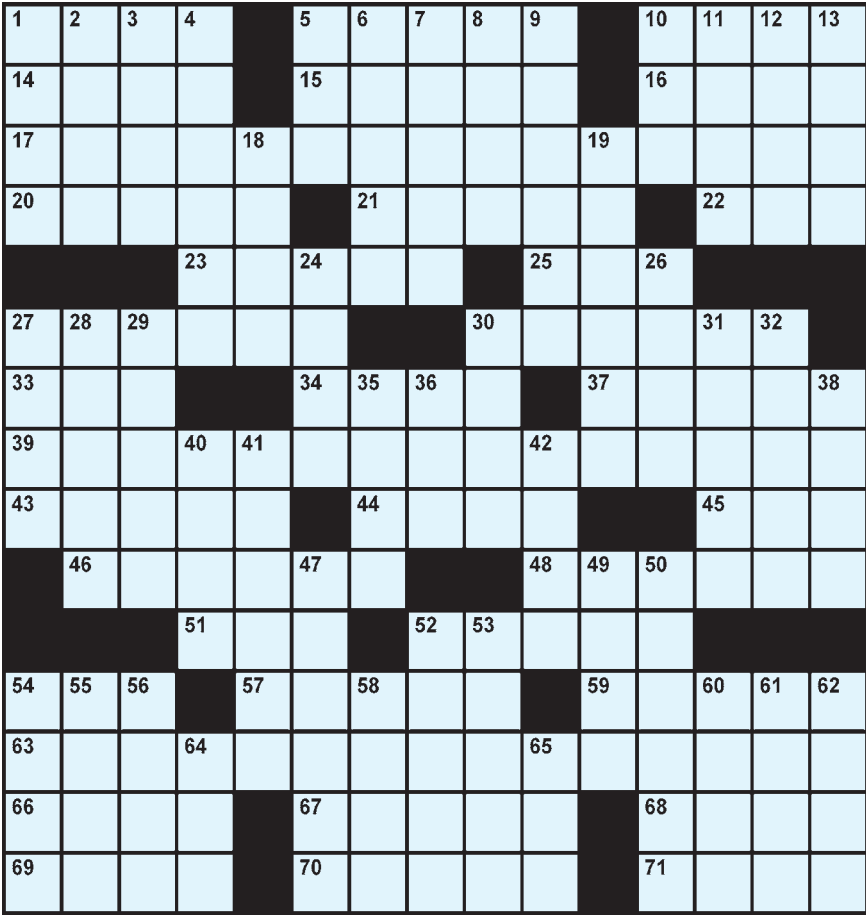
DOWN

- 1 On the ocean
- 2 Bank-teller's call
- 3 "Lights out" music

- 4 Place for waders
- 5 Interstate sign
- 6 Rene of Hollywood
- 7 Introduce to the mix
- 8 Waterfront walk
- 9 Hide out indefinitely
- 10 Run the engine
- 11 April 13, e.g.
- 12 Boggy area
- 13 Mythological river
- 18 Make, as money
- 19 As originally placed
- 24 Long, deep cut
- 26 Jack-in-the-pulpit's family
- 27 Coloratura's piece

- 28 Removed, as a tattoo
- 29 Early development sites?
- 30 Eyelid irritation
- 31 Lacking skill
- 32 Poke fun at
- 35 Float through the air
- 36 Was a consumer?
- 38 Cut with small strokes
- 40 Green land
- 41 Pulled dandelions
- 42 Bit of this and a bit of that
- 47 Discussion, briefly

- 49 1492 ship of note
- 50 A way to ski
- 52 Not as iffy
- 53 Arouse, as interest
- 54 Cable sports award
- 55 Colonnade for Zeno
- 56 Gloomy atmosphere
- 58 "___ creature was stirring ..."
- 60 Rip or neap
- 61 Physics class topic
- 62 Apollo played it
- 64 Word between an old and new name
- 65 ___ and downs



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.



10/23

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.

MUSCLE CRAMPS

Solution: 9 letters



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10/20

Able, Activity, Adults, Arms, Back, Bands, Biceps, Build, Bulge, Calcium, Cast, Cold, Discomfort, Dystonic, Fiber, Firm, Flex, Game, Hands, Head, Heat, Knotted, Labor, Larynx, Legs, Limbs, Massage, Medicine, Motion, Moves, Neck, Nerves, Pain, Pulls, Relax, Repetitive, Rest, Severe, Skeletal, Soak, Spasm, Sports, Strain, Stretch, Tender, Tense, Tetany, Treat, Write

To purchase WONDERWORD books for the holidays, visit www.WonderWordBooks.com, or call 1-800-642-6480.

PUZZLE SOLUTIONS



QUICK GUIDE

FAX : 951-254158
EMAIL : CLASSIFIED.MCM@GMAIL.COM
WWW.MMTIMES.COM



The Essentials

EMBASSIES

Australia 88, Strand Road, Yangon. Tel : 251810, 251797, 251798.

Bangladesh 11-B, Than Lwin Road, Yangon. Tel: 515275, 526144, email: bdootygn@mptmail.net.mm

Brazil 56, Pyay Road, 6th mile, Hlaing Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 507225, 507251. email: Administ. yangon@itamaraty.gov.br.

Brunei 17, Kanbawza Avenue, Golden Velly (1), Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 566985, 503978. email: bruneiemb@bruneiemb.com.mm

Cambodia 25 (3B/4B), New University Avenue Road, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 549609, 540964. email: RECYANGON @mptmail.net.mm

Canada 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.

Denmark, No.7, Pyi Thu St, Pyay Rd, 7 Miles, Mayangone Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 01 – 9669520 – 17.

Egypt 81, Pyidaungsu Yeiktha Road, Yangon. Tel: 222886, 222887, Egyptembassy86@gmail.com

France 102, Pyidaungsu Yeiktha Road, Yangon. Tel: 212178, 212520, email: ambaf rance. rangoun@diplomatie.fr

Germany 9, Bogyoke Aung San Museum Road, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 548951, 548952, email: info@rangun. diplo.de

India 545-547, Merchant St, Yangon. Tel: 391219, 388412, email:indiaembassy @mptmail.net.mm

Indonesia 100, Pyidaungsu Yeiktha Rd, Yangon. Tel: 254465, 254469, email: kukygn @indonesia.com. mm

Israel 15, Khabauing 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.

Laos A-1, Diplomatic Quarters, Tawwin Road, Dagon Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 222482, Fax: 227446, email: Laoembcab@mptmail.net.mm

Malaysia 82, Pyidaungsu Yeiktha Road, Yangon. Tel: 220248, 220249, email: mwkyangon@mptmail.net.mm

Nepal 16, Natmauk Yeiktha, Yangon. Tel: 545880, 557168, fax: 549803, email: nepemb @mptmail.net.mm

Norway, No.7, Pyi Thu St, Pyay Rd, 7 Miles, Mayangone Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 01 – 9669520 – 17 Fax – 01- 9669516

New Zealand No. 43/C, Inya Myaing Rd, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel : 01-2306046-9 Fax : 01-2305805

Netherlands 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

Saudi Arabia No.6/S, Inya Yeiktha St, 10th Qtr, Mayangone Tsp, Yangon, Tel: (951) 652-344, 652-344, Fax: (951) 657-983

Russia 38, Sagawa Rd, Yangon. Tel: 241955, 254161,

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@dmofat.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

Turkey 19AB, Kan Yeik Thar St, Mayangone Tsp, Yangon. Tel : 662992, Fax : 661365

United Kingdom 80 Strand Rd, Yangon. Tel: 370867, 380322, 371852, 371853, 256438, Tel : 662992, Fax : 661365

United States of America 110, University Avenue, Kamayut Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 536509, 535756, Fax: 650306

Vietnam Bldg-72, Thanlwin Rd, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 511305

UNITED NATIONS

ILO Liaison 1-A, Kanbae (Thitsar Rd), Yankin Tsp, Tel : 01-566538, 566539

IOM 318 (A) Ahlone Rd, Dagon Tsp, Yangon. Tel – 01-210588, 09 73236679, 0973236680, Email- iomyangon@iom.int

UNAIDS 137/1, Thaw Wun Rd, Kamayut Tsp. Tel : 534498, 504832

UNDCP 11-A, Malikha St, Mayangone tsp. Tel: 666903, 664539.

UNDP 6, Natmauk Rd, Bahan tel: 542910-19. fax: 292739.

UNFPA 6, Natmauk Rd, Bahan tsp. tel: 546029.

UNHCR 287, Pyay Rd, Sanchaung tsp. Tel: 524022, 524024.

UNIAP Rm: 1202, 12 Fl, Traders Hotel. Tel: 254852, 254853.

UNIC 6, Natmauk St., Bahan, tel: 52910-19

UNICEF 14-15 Flr, Traders Hotel. P.O. Box 1435, Kyauktada. Tel: 375527-32, unicef.yangon@unicef.org.

UNODC 11-A, Malikha Rd., Ward 7, Mayangone. tel: 01-9666903, 9660556, 9660538, 9660398. email: fo.myanmar@unodc.org

UNOPS 120/0, Pyi Thu Lane, 7 Miles, Mayangone Tsp. Tel: 951-657281-7. Fax: 657279.

UNRC 6, Natmauk Rd, P.O. Box 650, TMWE Tel: 542911-19, 292637 (Resident Coordinator),

WFP 5 Kan Baw Za St, Shwe Taung Kyar, (Golden Valley), Bahan Tsp. Tel : 2305971-6

WHO No. 2, Pyay Rd, 7 Mile, Mayangone Tsp, Tel : 650405-6, 650416, 654386-90.

ASEAN Coordinating Of. for the ASEAN Humanitarian Task Force, 79, Taw Win st, Dagon Tsp. Tel: 225258.

FAO Myanma Agriculture Service Insein Rd, Insein. tel: 641672, 641673.

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ASIA PLAZA HOTEL YANGON

No. 277, Bogyoke Aung San Road, Corner of 38th Street, Kyauktada Township, Yangon, Myanmar. Tel : (951) 391070, 391071. Reservation@391070 (Ext) 1910, 106. Fax : (951) 391375. Email : hotelasiaplaza@gmail.com

Avenue 64 Hotel

No. 64 (G), Kyitewine Pagoda Rd, Mayangone Tsp, Yangon. Tel : 09-8631392, 01 656913-9



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

Chatrium Hotel

40 Natmauk Rd, Tarmwe. tel: 544500. fax: 544400.



No.7A, Wingabar Road, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel : (951) 546313, 430245. 09-731-77781-4. Fax : (01) 546313. www.cloverhotel.asia. info@cloverhotel.asia

Clover Hotel City Center

No. 217, 32nd Street (Upper Block), Pabedan Tsp, Yangon, Myanmar. Tel : 377720, Fax : 377722 www.clovercitycenter.asia

Clover Hotel City Center Plus

No. 229, 32nd Street (Upper Block), Pabedan Tsp, Yangon, Myanmar. Tel : 377975, Fax : 377974 www.clovercitycenterplus.asia

Confort Inn

4, Shweli Rd, Bet: Inya Rd & U Wisara Rd, Kamaryut, tel: 525781, 526872



No. (356/366), Kyaikkasan Rd, Tamwe Township, Yangon, Myanmar. Ph: 542826, Fax: 545650 Email: reservation@ edenpalacehotel.com



M-22, Shwe Htee Housing, Thamine Station St., Near the Bayint Naung Point, Mayangone Tsp., Yangon Tel : 522763, 522744, 667557. Fax : (95-1) 652174 E-mail : grandpalace@ myanmar.com.mm

Hotel Grand United (Chinatown) 621, Maharbandoola Rd, Latha Tsp, Yangon. Tel: (95-1) 372256-58

(21st Downtown) 66-70, 21st Street (Enter from Strand Rd), Latha Tsp, Yangon. Tel: (95-1) 378201

(Ahlone Branch) 35, Min Ye Kyaw Swar Rd, Ahlone Tsp, Yangon. Tel: (95-1) 218061-64; Email: grandunited. head@gmail.com, www. hotelgrandunited.com

Hotel Yangon

91/93, 8th Mile Junction, Tel : 01-667708, 667688.



186, Lu Nge Thitsar Street, on Thitsar Road, Yankin Township, Yangon, Myanmar. Ph: +951-8550 283, +951-8550 284, +959-2540 63632, E-mail: enquiry@hotelyankin.com, www.hotelyankin.com

Inya Lake Resort Hotel

37 Kabar Aye Pagoda Rd. tel: 662866. fax: 665537.

KH Hotel, Yangon

28-A, 7 Miles, Pyay Rd, Mayangone Tsp, Yangon. Ph: 95-1-652532, 652533



No.1, Wut Kyaung St, Yay Kyaw, Pazundaung Tsp, Yangon, Myanmar. Ph: 01-8610640, 01-202187, www.mkhotelyangon.com

MGM Hotel No (160), Warden Street, Lanmadaw Tsp, Yangon, Myanmar. +95-1-212454-9. www. hotel-mgm.com



No. 205, Corner of Wadan Street & Min Ye Kyaw Swa Road, Lanmadaw Tsp, Yangon, Myanmar. Tel: (95-1) 212850 ~ 3, 229358 ~ 61, Fax: (95-1) 212854. info@myanmarpandahotel.com http://www. myanmarpandahotel.com

PARKROYAL Yangon, Myanmar

33, Alan Pya Pagoda Rd, Dagon tsp. tel: 250388. fax: 252478. email: enquiry.prygn@ parkroyalhotels.com.



Royal White Elephant Hotel No-11, Kan Street, Hlaing Tsp. Yangon, Myanmar. (+95-1) 500822, 503986. www.rwehotel.com

Savoy Hotel 129, Damazedi Rd, Kamayut tsp. tel: 526289, 526298,

Sedona Hotel

Kabar Aye Pagoda Rd, Yankin. tel: 666900.

Strand Hotel

92 Strand Rd. tel: 243377. fax: 289880.

Summit Parkview Hotel 350, Ahlone Rd, Dagon Tsp. tel: 211888, 211966.

Sule Shangri-La Hotel 223 Sule Pagoda Rd. tel: 242828. fax: 242838.

Windsor Hotel No.31, Shin Saw Pu Street, Sanchaung, Yangon, Myanmar. Ph: 95-1-511216-8, www. hotelwindsoryangon.com

Winner Inn

42, Than Lwin Rd, Bahan Tsp. Tel: 503734, 524387. email: reservation@winner innmyanmar.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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No.6, Botahtaung Jetty, Botahtaung Township, Yangon. Tel: (951)9010555, 9010535 Fax : (951) 9010536 info@vintageluxuryhotel.com www.vintageluxuryhotel.com

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Sakura Residence 9, Inya Rd, Kamaryut Tsp. tel: 525001. fax: 525002.

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Emergency Numbers

Ambulance ☎tel: 295133.
 Fire ☎tel: 191, 252011, 252022.
 Police emergency ☎tel: 199.
 Police headquarters ☎tel: 282541, 284764.
 Red Cross ☎tel:682600, 682368
Traffic Control Branch ☎tel:298651
Department of Post & Telecommunication ☎tel: 591384, 591387.
Immigration ☎tel: 286434.
Ministry of Education ☎tel:545500m 562390
Ministry of Sports ☎tel: 370604, 370605
Ministry of Communications ☎tel: 067-407037.
Myanma Post & Telecommunication (MPT) ☎tel: 067-407007.
Myanma Post & Tele-communication (Accountant Dept) ☎tel: 254563, 370768.
Ministry of Foreign Affairs ☎tel: 067-412009, 067-412344.
Ministry of Health ☎tel: 067-411358-9.
Yangon City Development Committee ☎tel: 248112.

HOSPITALS

Central Women's Hospital ☎tel: 221013, 222811.
Children Hospital ☎tel: 221421, 222807
Ear, Nose & Throat Hospital ☎tel: 543888.
Naypyitaw Hospital (emergency) ☎tel: 420096.
Worker's Hospital ☎tel: 554444, 554455, 554811.

Yangon Children Hospital ☎tel: 222807, 222808, 222809.
Yangon General Hospital (East) ☎tel: 292835, 292836, 292837.
Yangon General Hospital (New) ☎tel: 384493, 384494, 384495, 379109.
Yangon General Hospital (West) ☎tel: 222860, 222861, 220416.
Yangon General Hospital (YGH) ☎tel: 256112, 256123, 281443, 256131.

ELECTRICITY

Power Station ☎tel:414235

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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



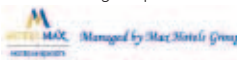
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Railways information
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THE INT'L Rescue Committee (IRC) is seeking (1) **Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) Officer** 1 post in Myebon. (2) **Supply Chain Assistant** - 1 post in Yangon: University Degree or Diploma in related field and/ or related training course. Prior work experience in logistics & procurement. Computer literate with strong MS office. Good communication in both Burmese and English. Please submit a Cover letter & CV to the HR Department by email at: WaiMar.Naing@rescue.org or by delivery to: 33/A, Natmauk Lane Thwe (1), Bocho (2) Quarter, Bahan, Yangon. Closing date for (1) 24th October, for (2) 28th October, 2014.

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CLINTON Health Access Initiative is seeking **Junior Office Assistant**, who will be based in Nay Pyi Taw: Fluency in Burmese both written & oral. Familiarity with the set up of offices in DoH and MoH. Can reside in Nay Pyi Taw with own arrangement. Can drive in Nay Pyi Taw. Interested candidates are invited to submit CV with a cover letter (in English) by the 31st of October 2014. Please address your application to: xchan@clintonhealthaccess.org

Headquarters: 16, West Shwe Gone Dine 4th St, Bahan, Yangon. Ph: 01-375 854, 01- 375 855, 01- 375 856, Email: hr@psimyanmar.org. Closing date : 20th October 2014.

MYANMAR Red Cross Society is seeking **Program Officer** 1 post in Nay Pyi Taw: Myanmar National. University graduate. Effective computer knowledge. Effective English language skill. Red Cross Volunteers are preferable. Please send application letter, CV & related documents to Myanmar Red Cross Society Head Office, Yazathingaha Rd, Dekkhinathiri, NayPyiTaw. Or mrcshrrecruitment@gmail.com, Closing date: 20-10-2014.

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Quarter, Bahan, Yangon. Tel: +95-18603244/45, 0949297848. Email: info@goldenclover.com.mm

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For **Lancome Parfums Et Beaute & Cie**
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c/o BM Myanmar Legal Services Limited (Baker & McKenzie)
1203, 12th Floor, Sakura Tower,
339 Bogyoke Aung San Road,
Kyauktada Township, Yangon,
The Republic of the Union of Myanmar.
Dated: 20 October 2014

PHILADELPHIA

Fighting for Philly's boxing legacy

THEY are buried in unmarked graves, unloved and unknown.

Philadelphia may be the setting of the 'Rocky' films, but the fighters who made it once one of the most famous cities in the boxing world are in many cases dead and in danger of being forgotten.

In a different era and with a less tragic ending, Tyrone Everett could have been a global superstar. In modern-day boxing, with the riches sloshing around at the top echelons of the sport, he would have been a millionaire many times over.

Instead, in May 1977, six months after the southpaw from south Philly lost a world title showdown in what is widely considered one of the worst decisions in boxing history, Everett was shot and killed by his girlfriend. He was 24, cut down in his prime.

"He was super popular. A lot of friends, a lot of girlfriends. He was super stylish, super cool, super handsome, everyone loved him. He was a star," John DiSanto, who runs the comprehensive phillyboxinghistory.com website, told AFP.

DiSanto, 52, never met Everett, but says he was struck by the outpouring of public emotion that greeted the brilliant super featherweight's untimely death.

"At the funeral service, his brother Mike, who was also a prominent fighter and now a friend of mine, insisted that they open up the casket so people could see that Tyrone was still this beautiful guy because his face was unmarked," said DiSanto, recalling media reports at the time.

"So I was swimming in all this detail: There's this popular guy, all these people came out to his service. And - maybe it's the Catholic in me - but I thought: I need to go out to this graveyard and pay my respects."

But when DiSanto, one of the leading experts on boxing in Philadelphia, got to the graveyard, he was in for a shock.



Bronze statue of boxer Joey Giardello. Photo: AFP

"It was just a patch of grass. He had been dead 30 years. And I was immediately struck by the thought: Maybe I could get him a headstone."

DiSanto, using his extensive boxing connections in Philadelphia, tracked down Everett's mother to tell her his idea and ask her permission.

"She was super happy, moved, surprised that anyone cared or remembered her son. He was like the apple of her eye and she just started crying because she was right back with her son, her baby boy, that was murdered," DiSanto said.

Thanks to the Gravestone Fund Program - DiSanto's initiative to honor the boxing legends of Philadelphia's past and financed by a combination of donations, the families and his own money - Everett now has a headstone.

As do the slick Garnet 'Sugar' Hart, the fearless Eddie Cool - dead from drink at just 35 - and 'Gypsy' Joe Harris, whose boxing licence was revoked when officials discovered he was hiding

his blindness in one eye. He became a heroin addict and was dead at 44, his body dumped in a communal grave.

"When they stopped me, I was broken," he said a year before his death in 1990. "It was like taking a brick and throwing it at a mirror. To me, it was the deepest hurt. It was like a piece of me had died. They killed me."

Nobody knows how many more of Philadelphia's forgotten fighters are lying in unmarked graves dotted around the city, their legacies - and with it Philadelphia's reputation as a boxing city - fading gradually year by year.

"I've no idea what the real number is," said DiSanto. "But it's a surprise - and I say, 'oh good, he's got a stone' - when they have one."

DiSanto has 10 more fighters from Philadelphia's boxing heyday that he would like to honor with gravestones, but it is not always straightforward.

Funding is a problem; the boxer's families are occasionally suspicious; and delving into the past can drag up unresolved issues that sometimes relatives would rather leave with the dead.

"On the good side, people remember these guys. So it brings their names up, names that haven't been talked about. That's one of my goals," he said.

"But on the bad side, it's always the same guys. Why does this guy not have a gravestone? It's such an outrage."

DiSanto is keen not to point the finger at the families and says it is the "boxing establishment" that has let down many of Philadelphia's finest.

"These people are going on barebones burials. They don't have the money. In many cases it's a miracle they can scrape together the money to do the minimum - a funeral service and bury them," he said.

"It is an indictment on boxing because these guys gave their lives and were not the same physical specimens as when they started."

"And for all that, they have nothing." - AFP



IN PICTURES

Photo: Supplied

Myanmar's national rowing team won eight gold medals at the 2014 Southeast Asian Canoe Spirit Championship last week in Singapore, coming in second for total medals after the Singaporean team.



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Sport

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Pressure mounts in FIFA bidding scandal

Sports body declines to release investigation findings



The Qatari and Australian national teams play a friendly match on October 14.
Photo: AFP

FIFA's top judge said October 17 that football's governing body cannot release in full a controversial report into the bidding for the 2018 and 2022 World Cups for legal reasons.

FIFA has faced mounting calls, including from Michael Garcia, the former US federal prosecutor who led the investigation into the bid, for all of the report to be made public.

"Publishing the report in full would actually put the FIFA ethics committee and FIFA itself in a very difficult situation legally," Hans-Joachim Eckert, chair of the governing body's adjudicatory chamber, said.

"What is more, we have to respect the personal rights of the people mentioned in the report, which in the case of full publication of the report would in all likelihood not be possible," he added in an interview released by the FIFA.com website.

Eckert said he is preparing a statement which should be released "by mid-November at the latest".

The statement will contain "a summary of the main findings, conclusions and recommendations of the report, as well as a brief evaluation", the official added.

An intense spotlight has been put on the report following allegations that a former Qatari soccer chief paid national federation chiefs millions of dollars to back Qatar, which won the right to host the 2022 World Cup in a

controversial 2010 vote by the FIFA executive committee.

Qatar, which also faces pressure over the dates of the tournament because of the searing summer temperatures in the Gulf state, has strongly denied any wrongdoing.

Garcia has called on FIFA to be more transparent and urged it "to authorise the appropriate publication" of his report. UEFA president Michel Platini and FIFA vice president Prince Ali bin Al-Hussein of Jordan have also called for full disclosure of the report.

FIFA's vice president, Michel Platini, has publically backed a fresh vote on the 2022 World Cup if proof ever emerged of corruption in the awarding of Qatar as the venue.

"As for Qatar 2022, I wasn't influenced," the UEFA president and FIFA vice-president who voted for the Gulf state told TF1 television on October 15.

"As far as I'm concerned, the vote was held in all transparency and we've always said that in the event of the slightest hint of corruption there'll be a new vote.

"But for now, we don't know."

Platini, who is also the head of the Union of European Football Associations, has never disguised the fact that he voted for Qatar in a move to help develop football in parts of the world where the World Cup has never been staged.

Since the vote he has campaigned for a switch to hold the sport's showcase in the winter rather than summer months to avoid the stifling temperatures. - AFP

Myanmar going to U-20 World Cup in 2015

KYAW ZIN HLAING

kyawzinhlaing.mcm@gmail.com

IN a historic first, Myanmar has qualified for a spot in the FIFA Under-20 World Cup.

The team clinched their birth on October 17 in Yangon's Thuwana Stadium, where they defeated the favored United Arab Emirates team 1-0.

Prior to the match, Myanmar coach Gerd Zeise described the match as "Myanmar's biggest game for the next 20 years, maybe for a century," according to the Asian Football Cup's news website.

After Myanmar striker Than Paing scored in the match's first 52 minutes, key players such as Aung Thu, Than Paing, Nyein Chan Aung and Myo Min Latt played precision defence and prevented the UAE from closing the gap.

"I'm honoured by my players ... Myanmar is going to be a World Cup contender" coach Gerd Zeise said after the match.

The 20th Under-20 World Cup will be held next year in New Zealand, starting May 30.



Than Paing and Nyein Chan Aung
post-match. Photo: Aung Htay Hlaing

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