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IN PICTURES

PHOTO: THIRI

Ethnic Khumi ring in traditional New Year

Khumi dancers prepare to perform at the Khumi New Year Festival in Paletwa, southern Chin State, on December 1. The festivities included the opening of the Khumi Cultural Museum, showcasing more than 30 traditional items related to the group.

What we have to eat

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THE rice is hard as gravel, making a "tauk tauk" sound as it's poured on the plate. The consistency comes from a special method of filtering and steaming, in which the rice hardens up when the water is drained off. Though the sound – and the serving – ends before the plate is full, the portion will sit heavily in the stomach and help those who eat it to stave off the hunger a little longer.

If they had their way, most of these families would never have to hear the word "bean" again. But this is a meal in an IDP camp – a temporary living space for a so-called internally displaced person, forced to flee from home because of violence or war – and while rice is available any time and shared between everyone, curry comes only once a day. Pounded potato, varieties of thin vegetable soup and beans – these make up most of the diet. To supplement, some mix rice and leftover vegetables in a bottle, making a kind of curry called *mone nyin saw*, and some dry vegetables, storing them away for future use. Others try to forage for wild vegetables growing nearby. Some get food poisoning.

They're vegetarian, but not by choice. They eat what there is. Because that's all there is.

When conflict is long-lasting, hunger becomes a driving force. And the civil war in Kachin State is the world's longest-running civil war. That's a long time for people to go hungry.

FOR THE FULL STORY, SEE OUR "FOOD & DRINK" SPECIAL INSIDE

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Rohingya or Bengali?

The name debate seems intractable, but common ground must be found to solve the crisis in Rakhine State.

BUSINESS 24

Ministry says 'no' to car import changes

The Ministry of Commerce says it has no plans to change the country's car import policy, despite worsening traffic in Yangon.

Controversial religion bills sent to parliament

Presidents U Thein Sein has signed off on four "protection of religion" bills, which are likely to be debated in parliament next January. NEWS 3

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THE INSIDER: The local lowdown & best of the web

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

Royal gaffe
Authorities in Mandalay last week went to astonishing lengths to hide the disturbing and heretofore unreported fact that there are, in fact, poor people in Myanmar, punting shore-dwellers from their shantytowns and plowing in with bulldozers ahead of the visit from the Norwegian royal couple, King Harald and Queen Sonja.

The Norwegian monarchs had requested a private, low-key reception. However, the local authorities had nothing short of a royal welcome in mind, replacing the squatters with children in various ethnic costumes waving flags, in a cleverly calibrated if somewhat misguided attempt at portraying national unity.

"We haven't asked for this at all," King Harald told Norwegian Broadcasting (NRK). "We were supposed to have a private reception here, but this is something they wanted."

The visit was reported on breathlessly by *The Global New Light of Myanmar* (one of the six "official" media outlets permitted to attend their landing at Gawwein Jetty), which recounted their visit to "significant places including Buddha image on Mandalay Hill".

The pair also "donated cash to the fund of the pagoda and looked round world record stone inscriptions and oldest living star flower trees". Deputy Minister for Culture Daw Sanda Khin was said to have "made a clarification on the objects in the museum", although just what the clarification was, the article did not say.

'I haven't been able to see very much. We have been ashore, but we mostly have seen what's along the river here. Otherwise it has been a fantastic visit.'

King Harald
to NRK on whether he had seen any of the poverty-stricken Myanmar during his jaunt

"I think we have to accept that they (the Myanmar authorities) are in a period of democratisation, and that perhaps this is evidence that they still have a long way to go," King Harald told NRK.

Prior to boarding their flight out of Mandalay, the royal couple may have been heartened to see the Telenor-supplied tarpaulins that provide an elegant solution to waterproofing the scores of unsightly lean-tos that blight the bucolic landscape either side of the highway out to the airport.

Seven-year itch
In its unwavering commitment to addressing the nation's most pressing issues, the Union Parliament is set to consider a bill which would criminalise polygamy and infidelity and instate hefty prison sentences and fines for those who take on surplus spouses or get caught attempting to sow their wild paddy out of wedlock.

The details of the bill were outlined in the state-run *Mirror Daily* on December 5. It is scheduled for debate in January 2015 and, if passed, will apply to both citizens and foreign residents married to citizens – something that might give the aspiring philandering sexpat pause.

While there's no doubt Myanmar's outdated legal system is in need of some serious redress, one might wonder if enshrining legislation that could potentially clog up the already-straining system with affairs of the heart and the loins (not to mention politically-charged subjects such as religious conversion, population control and interfaith marriage) is the best use of time and resources at the present juncture.

The bill is one of four draft laws under the controversial "protection of race and religion laws" put forward by Ma Ba Tha.

Human traffic
Figures released by anti-human trafficking squads in Myanmar have revealed a rise on last year's numbers, with 108 cases reported between January and November. *The Global New Light of Myanmar* reported last week that Shan State topped the charts with 49 cases, followed by Yangon with 13 cases, and 10 in Mandalay. "The squads could save 162 trafficking victims out of the 222 this year, most of them women", the report read.

"Most victims were sold as fraudulent marriage partners and forced labour in neighbouring countries, especially in China, but there was only one forced adoption case this year."

Now, this is all well and good, and it's great the authorities are doing their best to keep tabs on the issue – however, there does seem to be a glaring omission from all of this that could blow out the caseload were it to be included in the tally (hint: it starts with an "R" and ends in "akhine State".

US$300

The going price for a dried bear gallbladder in Hkamti, Upper Sagaing

In brief
Film "seemed okay", says moviegoer, but "can't be sure as the dialogue was entirely drowned out by the incessant crunching of sunflower seeds and people talking on their phones"

Tourist sighs in a self-congratulatory fashion at the relief from the midday heat afforded by zipping off bottom third of overpriced adventure cargo pants, declares to no one in particular that they were a "great investment"

Exiled activist posits conspiracy theory that many are describing as "breathtaking in scope" in a near-incoherent online rant involving the CIA, chemtrails, and "wildly unrealistic assumptions about the level of coordination between various levels of Myanmar government"

Next week
Confusion reigns after autocorrect turns group SMS invitation for an "auspicious" occasion into a "suspicious" one

Northern Shan meth cook in line for a raise after exceeding KPIs for final quarter

Smalltime Bangladesh-based criminal syndicate annoyed RSO "getting all the credit" for their work

YCDC mulls issue of public urination in Kandawgyi Park, concludes that yes, one public toilet is sufficient to cater for the area's many bars and restaurants

Once was Burma...

From the Pansodan Gallery archives

***The Hanthawady Daily*, 1960**

President signs off on religious bills

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FOUR controversial "protection of religion" bills were forwarded to parliament at the end of November, the President's Office announced last week.

The decision to draft laws that would restrict religious conversion and interfaith marriage, and enforce monogamy and population-control measures, has been strongly criticised by local and international human rights groups.

The draft text of the religious conversion bill, which was publicised in May, was particularly criticised by rights groups because it would require people who want to change their faith to get approval from a specially-created local authority.

The bills are based on drafts written by the Committee for the Protection of Nationality and Religion, a monk-led organisation better known as Ma Ba Tha.

They are likely to be debated during the next session of parliament, which will begin in early January, according to President's Office director Zaw Htay.

"The president had to draft the bills, but it is [parliament's] responsibility to enact them," he told AFP.

Opponents of the bills say they are discriminatory.

"These bills claim to be to protect women, but they are drafted against women's will," Ma Khin Lay, founder of rights organisation Triangle Women's Group Support, told AFP. "It is discrimination and control."

The campaigner, who along with other women's rights activists has faced threats for her opposition to the bills, said requirements for a host of official permissions would create further opportunities for misuse of power in a state system riddled with corruption.

A draft of the marriage bill was published in state media last week, laying out a web of rules governing marriage between Buddhist women and men of other faiths.

Couples would have to apply to local authorities – and the woman's parents if she is under 20 – and a notice would be displayed publicly announcing the engagement. Only if there were no objections could the nuptials take place.

Any man who violated the law would face up to three years imprisonment and a fine of K50,000. He and his new wife would have to divorce, and he would forfeit his share of their property as well as guardianship of any children they had.

One Ma Ba Tha leaflet has claimed the ills of interfaith marriage range from rape, murder and forced conversion to "not saluting the Myanmar national flag".

Controversial Buddhist monk U Wirathu, who is the main religious figure supporting the four bills, welcomed the president's approval.

'These bills claim to be to protect women, but they are drafted against women's will.'

Ma Khin Lay
Triangle Women's Group Support

"It would be better having better laws than nothing," he told *The Myanmar Times*.

Some MPs are concerned that, should the bills become law, religious tensions will rise.

"We need to pay attention not to have a negative impact on peace and tranquillity of the state," said Daw Dwe Bu, a lower house member from Kachin State.

Some analysts have suggested that the controversial bills are part of a government strategy to deflect attention away from the reform process. The executive director of the NGO Equality Myanmar said he believed the laws are a "weapon" to advance political interests in advance of the 2015 election.

He suggested their passage through parliament will delay other debates, such as on constitutional change, without which Daw Aung San Suu Kyi cannot run for the presidency.

"It's a very important, critical time for our political landscape. We think parliament must pay more attention on how to change the [2008] constitution rather than approving this bill," U Aung Myo Min said.

And he also said tensions would likely rise between Buddhists and followers of other religions.

"If the government wants to protect women's rights, they should take into account not only Buddhists but they also need to think of other religious people."

Ma Ba Tha members say an existing marriage law introduced in 1954 is not strong and the new draft law would protect women from being forced to convert to their husband's religion.

The bills were sent to the government in 2013 and in February President U Thein Sein submitted them to parliament. However, speaker Thura U Shwe Mann said they were not in the right format to be considered by MPs and sent them back to the government to be rewritten.

In March, President U Thein Sein set up a 12-member commission headed by Deputy Attorney General U Tun Tun Oo, to draft two of the laws, while two others were sent directly to government ministries. – *with AFP*

Six-party talks could lead to political deal, Daw Suu Kyi says

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DAW Aung San Suu Kyi says she is hopeful for a "good result" from proposed six-way talks between national political leaders, despite a government spokesperson declaring such a meeting "impractical".

The National League for Democracy leader said the planned talks should focus on constitutional change and removing the military's veto powers, a proposal the Tatmadaw has so far rejected.

She said she was confident the talks, which were proposed by parliament, could lead to a deal being struck between the country's most influential political figures.

"If we discuss [the constitution] openly and bravely with goodwill, I believe there is no reason why we can't achieve a good result," she told *The Myanmar Times*.

"We demanded to hold a meeting like this because we believe there is a chance it can bring about a good result. We wouldn't ask for it we thought it would be a waste of time."

Noting that the USDP is not against amending section 436, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said she wanted to better understand the military's concerns on the issue.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Photo: AFP

"Why are they worried about amending the constitution?" she questioned. "We want to amend it because we are worried that our country won't develop if we do not."

"If section 436 is amended it will be like opening the door to democracy. We want to discuss with those who say it is not necessary to amend [section 436] and ask about their concerns … It is the main point we need to discuss in the meeting. After exchanging our opinions, we will make a deal how to do those concerns will disappear. That's why a meeting is needed."

The proposed meeting would bring together President U Thein Sein, Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann, Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker U Khin Aung Myint, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and Rakhine National Party leader U Aye Maung, who will attend as a representative of ethnic minorities.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has previously called for four-way talks between herself, U Thein Sein, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and Thura U Shwe Mann.

While the November 26 proposal to hold the six-way meeting was put forward by a representative from Thura U Shwe Mann's Union Solidarity and Development Party, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said it reflected her party's demands.

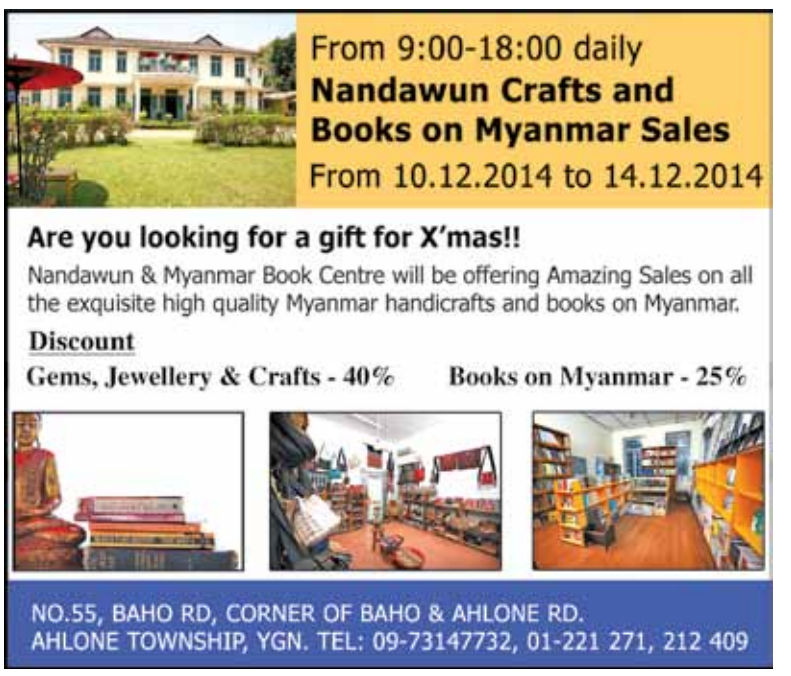
"We believe that a good solution can appear so we [support the] call to hold the six-person meeting," she said.

However, presidential spokesperson U Ye Htut has already been quoted as saying the meeting would be "impractical", although he did not give a reason why.

In a recent interview with Voice of America, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing also ruled out talks with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, saying they would be too "difficult". He also did not elaborate.

In a further sign that the six-way talks are unlikely, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi invited military MPs to a meeting in Nay Pyi Taw on November 28 but they declined, saying they had an unavoidable prior engagement, according to media reports.

– *Translation by Thiri Min Htun*



De-mining delayed until peace agreed

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THE process of clearing landmines from Myanmar has been delayed by the ongoing political crisis between the government and ethnic armed groups, President's Office Minister U Aung Min said on November 30.

"We will implement de-mining, housing, food security and jobs creation for refugees when they return home after the comprehensive ceasefire, but we are still in the initial steps of the ceasefire," U Aung Min said.

He added that de-mining would not be possible prior to the signing of the National Ceasefire Agreement currently under negotiation between the government and a coalition of ethnic armed groups.

U Aung Min was speaking at a joint press conference held at Hantha Garden Hotel in Bago Region with Norwegian Foreign Minister Brorge Brend, who visited Myanmar from November 29 to December 1.

Mr Brend said Norway would continue to collaborate with Myanmar to move forward with de-mining processes.

"[De-mining] is extremely important for children and families living in the affected areas," he said.

According to a report released November 17 by the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, Myanmar Defence Products Industries (Ka Pa Sa), a state enterprise located in Ngyaung Chay Dauk in western Bago Region, has produced fragmentation and blast antipersonnel landmines, including ones with low metal content that are harder to detect.

According to the report, blast and fragmentation landmines have also been manufactured by the Kachin Independence Organisation, the Karen National Liberation Army, the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army, the Karenni Army and the United Wa State Army.

At least 50 townships in Kachin, Kayin, Kayah, Mon, Rakhine, and Shan states, as well as in Bago and Tanintharyi regions, suffer from the presence of antipersonnel mines. The most seriously mine-affected areas are located in Kayin State and eastern Bago Region.

In 2012, six donors contributed US$8.5 million to Myanmar for landmine mitigation activities, an increase from $674,368 in 2011. Of the $8.5 million, nearly $2 million came from Denmark, Norway and the United States for victim assistance.

Despite the high level of funding, a variety of factors has postponed the start of surveys and clearance operations, including the government's failure to approve a landmine law, and the refusal of some armed ethnic groups to allow access to mined areas.

Aksel Steen-Nilsen, the humanitarian disarmament program manager from the Norwegian People's Aid NGO, said neither side welcomes mine-clearance activities in their control areas.

He added that some ethnic areas that enjoy ceasefire agreements with the government, such as some parts of Kayin State, could already be setting up anti-personal landmine clearance programs.

"We can send active members from local communities to de-mining trainings in Cambodia," he said.

According to an update posted October 27 on the Landmine and Cluster Munitions Monitor website, there were 101 landmine casualties in Myanmar in 2013: 64 were civilians and 19 were military personnel, while the civil status of the remaining 18 was unknown.

Farmers tour the controversial plot of land in Myingyan township, Mandalay Region. Photo: Sithu Lwin

Myingyan farmers dispute ownership of alluvial plain

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FARMERS in Myingyan township, Mandalay Region, are complaining that they are being forced to share their fields with landless people. The farmers say they own the 50-acre plot in question, which was formed from a cliff-slide when Myingyan port was dredged in 1997 to make a navigable waterway.

But the village's land-use management committee has designated it as "alluvial plain" and shared out pieces of it to landless people. Farmers say they have been threatened by those who received the land allocations and have also been warned to stop cultivation.

"We paid taxes on the land until 2011-12," said U Aung Kyaw Myint of Hlaing Tat village at a press conference on December 1.

"The land-use committee specified it as alluvial plain this year and shared it with landless people. Some committee members even took plots themselves. Our fields under cultivation are being torn up by tractors. We've sent three letters of complaint to the land-use committee chairman, but we've had no response."

The Lay Eain Tan village tract comprises the villages of Hlaing Tat, Sipin Thar, Kyaung Kone, Kyat Shar, Balone, Lat Pan Pin, Aung Pyae Soe and Lay Eain Tan.

U Aung Kyaw Myint said the police had failed to act on their complaints concerning damage to the fields.

The farmers say they were issued this year with farmland work permit certificates known as Form 7 by the Land Records Department. But the Form 7s show them owning less land than they thought they had.

"We didn't even apply for the Form 7, and now they've shared out the land saying it's alluvial," said Ko Thiha of Hlaing Tat village. "There's lots of vacant lands available if the authorities want to allocate it. We just want to get back what we've lost."

He said that when farmers complained to the union minister for the region, U Kyaw San, he instructed the village's land-use management committee to take another look at the issue.

"But when we asked the committee, they could tell us nothing," he said.

When *The Myanmar Times* contacted U Kyaw Kyaw Htoo, administrator of the Lay Eain Tat village tract, he said, "This has been going on for years. The land was formed from a cliff-slide and we designated it as alluvial plain in accordance with our supervisors' instructions."

When asked about allocations to landless people, U Kyaw Kyaw Htoo hung up the phone.

– Translation by Zar Zar Soe

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Irrawaddy dolphins swim in the Ayeyarwady River. Photo: Supplied

Dolphin tourism sets a new course

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IRRAWADDY dolphin tourism is set for a revival as the Department of Fisheries links up with the Mandalay Tourist Association to offer a three-day course in freshwater dolphin behaviour and conservation, including a one-night field observation trip.

U Myo Aung, a director with the department, said many tourists came to Mandalay to see the elusive Irrawaddy dolphins and their cooperative interaction with fishermen.

The idea behind the course is to stimulate greater knowledge about dolphins by increasing knowledge of their habits.

The idea was discussed in a meeting in September between the Hotels and Tourism Ministry and forestry reserve heads from upper Myanmar to discuss implementation of an ecotourism policy and management strategy.

"Dolphin tourism in Mandalay has better transportation than other ecotourism destinations. But we also need better accommodation, public toilets and souvenirs worth buying," said meeting participant U Mya Than Tun, adding that Inle Lake and Alaungdaw Kathapa National Park were also ready for ecotourism.

Last year the Mandalay Tourist Association organised a trip to watch dolphins in a protected 74-kilometre (45-mile) stretch of the Ayeyarwady River between Mingun and Kyaukmyaung, straddling Mandalay and Sagaing regions. Dolphins can be seen there in February and March, and this year they were also seen in January.

"Our Irrawaddy dolphins are famous for helping local fishermen at Mingyun and Kyaukmyaung," conservationist U Kyaw Hla Thein told *The Myanmar Times* last February.

> **'Dolphin tourism in Mandalay has better transportation than other ecotourism destinations.'**
>
> **U Mya Than Tun**
> Dolphin meeting participant

"They divert the fish toward the boats, and signal the fishermen to show when they should cast their nets. At one time, fishermen could catch up to 30 viss of fish [one viss equals 1.6kg or 3.6 lbs], but those levels have now fallen, so fishermen have less of an interest in conserving the dolphins. That's why we want ecotourism to help."

Malaysia links deaths to unrest in Myanmar

POLICE have detained 15 people from Myanmar over a string of gruesome murders in a popular Malaysian tourist destination, and believe the killings are linked to ethnic unrest in their native country, reports said last week.

Public anxiety has risen in Malaysia's historic state of Penang over the past few months as mutilated corpses or severed body parts have turned up – with at least 18 mysterious and unexplained murders of Myanmar nationals.

Authorities had made little comment until now but the state's police chief was quoted on December 5 saying they now believe the killings are linked to sectarian bloodshed in Myanmar, where there have been violent clashes between Muslims and Buddhists.

"We can tell that these are the work of Myanmar nationals. They bring their hatred here from their country of origin," Abdul Rahim Hanafi was quoted as saying by the *Malay Mail*.

"It was revenge they brought here from their country."

He said police were still investigating. The report provided little further detail and AFP was not immediately able to reach Penang police for comment.

Violent clashes between majority Buddhists and Muslim Rohingya erupted in 2012 in western Myanmar's Rakhine State.

The violence has left about 200 people dead and up to 140,000 displaced.

With its relatively more developed economy, Malaysia is a sought-after destination for Myanmar refugees and illegal migrants – both Buddhists and Muslim – many of whom bring along their sectarian grudges.

Myanmar activists in Malaysia say dozens of Buddhists have been killed in revenge attacks related to the Rakhine violence.

> **'They bring their hatred here from their country of origin.'**
>
> **Abdul Rahim Hanafi**
> Penang State police chief

Myanmar Buddhists complain that authorities in Muslim-majority Malaysia have done little to stop the attacks. The recent string of killings in Penang – popular with tourists for its beaches, historic capital of Georgetown and polyglot cuisine – has fuelled concerns.

Some of those murdered in Penang were found with their throats slit or heads and limbs severed.

The *Malay Mail* and other reports did not specify whether those killed or detained were Buddhist or Muslim. No further information about the victims has been officially released.

Hundreds of thousands of Myanmar asylum-seekers and economic migrants – most of them Buddhists – have made it to Malaysia.

Refugee activists say the flow is accelerating following the Rakhine violence and continued repression of the Rohingya.

Myanmar's government views its roughly 1.3 million Rohingya as foreigners, denying most of them citizenship.

Penang is on Malaysia's northern coast, along the dangerous sea route via southern Thailand that is taken by Rohingya fleeing Myanmar. – *AFP*

Govt pledges closer cooperation along India's troubled border

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EFFORTS to tackle illegal activities – including insurgency and drug trafficking – along Myanmar's border with India will be stepped up, Deputy Minister for Home Affairs Brigadier General Kyaw Zan Myint said last week.

"We will cooperate on a closer basis [to build] mutual understanding and cooperation to promote friendship between the two countries," said Brig Gen Kyaw Zan Myint, whose delegation met officials from India's border administration in Yangon on November 17 and 18.

The 19th national-level meeting on border control between the two sides mainly focused on sharing intelligence on the National Socialist Council of Nagaland, which aims to unite the Naga people living on both sides of the border, and the United Liberation Front of Assam, which is fighting for Assam state's independence from India.

"We all want to solve the [insurgency] problem and have no border tension between the two countries in the future," said a senior foreign affairs officer, who asked not to be named.

At the 18th meeting in 2012 in New Delhi, both sides supported the opening of two more border liaison offices, at the Changlang-Pangsau and Ukhrul-Somra in Sagaing Region. However, neither office has opened yet. The liaison offices are intended to promote cooperation between the countries' law enforcement agencies.

More blocks hit streets as YCDC marks bus lanes

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CONCRETE blocks were laid out at regular intervals on one of Yangon's main roads last week by the Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC) to beef up newly marked bus lanes.

Last week Anawrahta Road between 28th and 50th streets received a bus lane marked out with concrete blocks running down the right-hand side of the road.

In October YCDC had tried marking bus lanes with yellow lines but, perhaps unsurprisingly, found that it was not enough to deter other traffic from using them.

Now YCDC hopes that the drivers of taxis, cars and trucks will find it more difficult to encroach on the lanes, should they be tempted.

"At the start, we used plastic blocks but it was no use. The drivers moved these plastic blocks," said YCDC secretary U Kyaw Soe. "Although we did not want to use concrete blocks, we used them. I think they will be OK day by day."

If the experiment with concrete blocks on Anawrahta Road is successful, the plan will be expanded to include sections of Pyay and Kabar Aye Pagoda roads.

Up until December 1, 32 cars were caught using the bus lanes, said Police Lieutenant Colonel Linn Htut from No 2 Deputy Traffic Police Force.

"We took action but it is not for the money. We want to follow the rules. If the public follows them then public transportation will be easy," U Kyaw Soe said.

Parking on the right-hand side of a one-way road is no longer permitted where there is a bus lane, and YCDC is refunding money to private businesses who paid for parking permits along these routes.

"We stopped collecting parking fees starting from December 1," U Kyaw Soe said, adding that YCDC is now forming a group to conduct a city-wide survey to determine whether more roads should be designated as allowing only one-way traffic.

Anawrahta, Mahabandoola, Bogyoke Aung San and Merchant roads have already been designated as one-way thoroughfares and are heavily used by public transportation.

"Based on the survey," he said, "we will designate more roads as one-way roads if necessary."

These concrete blocks are meant to separate the cars from the buses on Anawrahta Road in Yangon. Photo: Yu Yu

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Commission suggests civil court for journalist's death case

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THE case of Ko Par Gyi, a freelance journalist killed while in the custody of the Myanmar army, should go before a non-military court, the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission (MNHRC) said in a report submitted to President U Thein Sein on December 1.

In recommending that the case be handled transparently by a civilian court, the report references section 347 of the constitution, which guarantees that everyone should enjoy equal rights before the law and be provided with legal protection.

Ko Par Gyi was shot while in the custody of government troops in Mon State in early October.

The journalist's body was exhumed in November for examination, and MNHRC sent an investigation team to the scene of his death to interview 47 witnesses, including military personnel, local residents, a state minister, a monk and reporters.

According to the resulting report, which can be seen on the MNHRC website (www.mnhrc.org.mm) none of the people interviewed testified that Ko Par Gyi had been tortured, but it added that some bones in the journalist's body had been fractured.

"The fractures are due to the bullet penetrations. Signs of bloodspots were not found," investigation team head U Sit Myaing said, quoting a report from a forensic specialist who examined the body.

But U Robert San Aung, a lawyer for Ko Par Gyi's family, said he had trouble believing that the victim was not tortured, based on the bone fractures and wounds observed during the forensic examination.

"It feels to me like something is being hidden," he said. "We are dissatisfied, so a complaint will be submitted to President U Thein Sein. We will ask for a transparent investigation to be conducted by independent groups."

Ko Par Gyi's wife Thandar also criticised the investigation by the state-backed commission.

"I hardly believed that the human rights commission could help because they have not been able to solve other cases involving the army," she was quoted as saying by AFP.

The report says that, although Ko Par Gyi was working as a freelance journalist at the time of his death, he had not registered as a member of the Myanmar Journalists Association (MJA). He had also failed to inform local authorities that he was in the area to cover fighting between the army and armed ethnic soldiers.

But local police and military personnel, upon detaining the journalist, also failed to conduct an adequate inquiry into his identity. The commission also said the army's acknowledgement that the journalist had been shot while in its custody was not "released in a timely and transparent" fashion.

Despite the criticisms of the report, U Sit Myaing said the investigation was conducted without pressure from the President's Office or from other government officials.

"There was no pressure. I assure you that everything was free, and everything was arranged by me," he said. "When officials from the military side were called for interrogation, they had to come. Every piece of work was independent."

Mandalay: Braving 21st ce

LAST week the US-based Rockefeller Foundation added 35 more cities to its list of the world's most "resilient cities", joining the 32 that had been named during the first round in 2013.

Cities are chosen for the 100 Resilient Cities list based on their ability to brave the changes that come with economic growth, natural disaster and other factors that impact urban areas.

Among the cities included in the 2013 list was Mandalay, along with such diverse candidates as Bangkok, Thailand; Christchurch, New Zealand; Dakar, Senegal; Los Angeles, United States; Quito, Ecuador; and Rome, Italy.

The Rockefeller Foundation's relationship manager Katya Sienkiewicz took time last week to answer questions from *The Myanmar Times* Mandalay Bureau Chief **Stuart Alan Becker** about the 100 Resilient Cities list and how Mandalay fits the criteria for inclusion.

Why was Mandalay chosen to be part of 100 Resilient Cities list?
There is an ineluctable energy around Myanmar, and Mandalay in particular. A captivating ancient kingdom city, and the country's second-largest, Mandalay is the economic driver of the country, and growing at a rapid clip. The city sent in a compelling application to the 100 Resilient Cities challenge, combining their geographical vulnerabilities situated near highly active tectonic plates as well as the cyclical flooding they face from their position on the Ayeyarwady River.

Flooding frequency is said to be on the rise and Mandalay's rapid economic development and building expansion into the more flood-prone areas is threatening to increase the impacts of these floods. They have invested in disaster risk reduction, but are looking to prepare more holistically for the natural shocks they are prone to, as well as some of the everyday stresses they are grappling with. From the burgeoning population and increased traffic, and traffic-related accidents, to their increasing need for solid internet/communication infrastructure and upgraded built environment infrastructure, the city has a number of challenges as it continues to burgeon.

With thoughtful, engaged city leadership at the Mandalay City Development Committee, the city is well-poised to think strategically about how to reconcile the sundry new public and private sector initiatives coming into the city. Mandalay is well poised to be the resilience planning champion for the rest of Myanmar and farther afield.

What is the object of this list of cities? Economic growth?
The purpose of 100 Resilient Cities, and our work in cities at large, is to help cities become more resilient to the physical, social and economic challenges that are a growing part of the 21st century. For one city, increasing resilience may be tied to economic growth, while for another, increasing resilience may be tied to fostering social cohesion.

Anything about Mandalay that stands out, making it different from other places?
In many ways Mandalay struggles with the same shocks and stresses as other cities in our network, but the energy and optimism of this exciting point in time for this ancient city makes it stand alone. It is transforming into a booming economic powerhouse at the crossroads of China and India, while maintaining its unique cultural heritage, and that makes it an exciting vanguard space to be involved in. We are thrilled to be partnering with Mandalay and look forward to planning to help solve and learn from their resilience challenges with them.

Can you explain a bit about the Rockefeller Foundation?
From funding Jane Jacobs in the 1960s to the 100 Resilient Cities Challenge today, the Rockefeller Foundation (RF) has viewed cities as more than just places to live and work, but rather as networks of interdependent systems, laboratories of innovation, and centres of opportunity and prosperity.

RF has supported a decade's worth of resilience work, beginning in New Orleans to build a unified community development plan in the years after Hurricane Katrina, and working in

Courtesy of the Rockefeller Foundation

ntury challenges

Mandalay motorcyclists negotiate the streets of one of the world's most resilient cities, according to the US-based Rockefeller Foundation. Photo: Staff

Asian cities to build urban resilience in communities on fragile ecologies along coastlines and rivers.

In New York – before, and now after, Superstorm Sandy – RF supported research on coastal and urban resilience, including the Rising Currents exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art showcasing green infrastructure solutions for New York's waterfront from a group of forward-thinking architects, engineers and landscape designers. After Sandy, New York State Governor Mario Cuomo appointed Judith Rodin to make recommendations on how New York State could improve the resilience of its infrastructure and systems.

In many ways Mandalay struggles with the same shocks and stresses as other cities in our network, but the energy and optimism of this exciting point in time for this ancient city makes it stand alone.

How was the concept of 100 Resilient Cities originally conceived?
It was launched on the foundation's centennial in 2013 as a way to implement many of the innovations that Rockefeller has developed over the last 50 years of their urban planning work.

What were the criteria for the choice of the cities on the list?
While each city is different, we've found that our strongest partners share four characteristics:

• An innovative, engaged and committed chief executive. We believe that resilience building is broader than just city government, but we also know city government is necessary. From Christchurch to Medellin and in between, we've found that having a mayor with these characteristics leads to a stronger, more empowered chief resilience officer; more decisions being made through a resilience lens; and a more comprehensive, cross-siloed and cross-sectored resilience building process. We've also found it important to have some measure of political stability, since the process unfolds over the course of several years.

• A recent catalyst for change. It may seem obvious, but it bears repeating: A city that has a strong catalyst for change – be it a recent shock such as Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, or a truly pressing stress such as rising sea levels in Norfolk – is likely to be more engaged in the resilience building process.

• A demonstrated ability to work with a broad range of invested stakeholders. Shocks and stresses affect everyone in a city, so resilience-building must be done across silos of government and sectors of society. In places like Los Angeles, we are seeing collaboration among everyone from business leaders, to advocates for the homeless, to academic water experts taking part in the planning process. This participation by a range of stakeholders ensures that as many resilience challenges as possible are being surfaced, and that everyone's resilience needs – especially those of the poor and vulnerable – will be addressed.

• A willingness to engage in a partnership. 100 Resilient Cities seeks to work closely with cities over a multi-year process, building a deep and abiding partnership, and a give-and-take. We're looking for cities that are willing to work with us to build resilience, that have an open mind toward the process, and that can incorporate feedback from a wide variety of sources.

Advertorial

Wanbao supports"People Centred Development"

IIn the villages that surround Letpadaung Copper project in central Myanmar, the effects of the social investments made by Myanmar Wanbao Mining Copper Limited ("Myanmar Wanbao") are tangible. Myanmar Wanbao, together with the Myanmar Government and its Myanmar partners ME1 and MEHL, has married its community initiatives with Myanmar's development goals of "Poverty alleviation", "Inclusive growth" and "People-centred development".

Myanmar Wanbao is committed to the community, and the Letpadaung villagers have witnessed this through the company's actions. They have seen that despite the mine not being operational due to stoppages outside its control the mine has been reaching out to them in every way it can.This is why the majority of the people in the area have given their full support to the project.

Land Compensation and Subsidies

Since 2011,the partners of the Letpadaung project have paid three times of land compensation or subsidies to the villagers who had lost land in the project area. The criteria for the land compensation or subsidies was decided by the Myanmar government based on the Myanmar law and local market price for the land. The total amount of compensation and three times of subsidies is between 1,825,000Ks and 3,250,000Ks per acre depending on the type of land. The compensation plus the first subsidy is 100% claimed by the land-lost people. 66% of the total land-lost people have taken up second subsidies,which means the majority of villagers losing land are willing to release their land to the project.

Contribution Payments

Even though Myanmar Wanbao has met its legal requirements and has paid compensation and subsidies, the company has gone further to safeguard the livelihood and well-being of its community in the long term. Since July 2014,the company, together with its Myanmar partners and supervised by the Myanmar government,has created an annual Contribution payment to all the land-lost villagers between USD70 and USD160 per month depending on the number of jobs they are entitled to have because of land loss.Land-lost villagers had originally been promised jobs by Myanmar Wanbao (the number of which were dependent on how much land was given to the project), however due to the stoppages the company was unable to provide jobs through no fault of its own. So the contribution payment are given regularly cash payments every 6 months until a job materialises.This ensures that the land-lost villagers have the peace of mind that their basic livelihoods needs are met whilst they wait for a job at Myanmar Wanbao to materialise. This was done through extensive consultations and with the participation of the villagers. It included unprecedented extensive door-to-door consultations for months. Over 91% of 27 villages consulted through door to door meetings have supported the contribution plan, and over 70% of total land lost villagers in the project area have supported this plan. These numbers are considered by International Best Practice to have exceeded the requirements for majority acceptance of the mine project. We have also set up bank accounts for the villagers through the local bank to receive these payments directly into their personal accounts.

Community and Social Development (CSD) projects

While providing the basic livelihood to the land-lost people, Myanmar Wanbao, under the support and participation of the Myanmar government,attaches great importance to the community and social development in this area. It has done a great variety of CSD projects to improve people's life ranging from electricity supply, drinking water provision, road repairing to school and kindergarten building, scholarships, free medical services, etc. The mining company has connected 12,000 villagers to the national electric grid helping release thousands from "energy poverty". By the end of this year, more than 5,000 local villagers will get clean drinking water thanks to the company's water project. The mobile clinics have already offered over 80,000 free medical treatments in 50 villages around the project and over 1,200 students benefit from the schools we have built. Besides, we offered scholarships to more than 1,000 grade-ten or university students in local area in the past two years with an amount of 82 million Kyats. Critically, this community investment is beginning to take place in consultation with the local community.

Backwards and Forward Linkages: SMEs and Local Procurement

Myanmar Wanbao is promoting the first seeds of industrialisation in its community through the creation of forward and backward linkages from the mine. It is nurturing local small and medium enterprises in the community through its "pro-poor" procurement process. This is helping create new jobs, nurture entrepreneurial talent, and transfer skills and know-how which is benefiting the community and will contribute to the development of the whole region. Myanmar Wanbao's leadership agrees with President U Thein Sein's message to ASEAN, that SME development is the route to poverty alleviation. The company believes that SMEs, when properly nurtured and supported, can be the source of economic security, balanced growth and inclusive development. So it has helped impacted villagers set up SMES in the food (agricultural), transport and construction sectors and these SME are thriving with the company's support – the transportation village contractors already have 26 trucks and they have started working with other clients. Local villagers have also set up a bricks factory, a concrete pipe factory, a pre-cast concrete slab factory and many more. Wanbao is committed to nurturing the SMEs around it through targeted procurement, capacity, building and advice where applicable.

Fiscal Linkages: Long-term benefit for the community and the country

Myanmar Wanbao will continue sharing the benefits of its project with the people of the region and the whole of Myanmar during the lifetime of the project. Once the mine is operational there are many other sources of benefit to the country - the country is estimated to have a direct economic benefit of USD 140 million per year in taxes, royalties, production share, etc and USD 150 million in terms of the local procurement. This will be used to help build this country further. Furthermore, 2% of the project's net profit will go towards community investment.The investment in the people of the region, in their skills and in infrastructure will make Letpadaung, and Sagaing Division an attractive destination for more foreign direct investment. Myanmar Wanbao is eager to continue maximising the developmental results of the project for the people of Letpadaung and Myanmar.

Permanent resident policy takes shape

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FOREIGN professionals, technicians and investors, spouses of Myanmar citizens, and former Myanmar citizens who renounced their nationality after seeking asylum overseas will be eligible to apply for permanent resident status from December 29, the government announced last week.

Former citizens will have to renounce their asylum status in order to apply, said a senior official from the Department of Immigration and National Registration. But people on the government's blacklist, refugees and people with certain medical conditions will not be eligible.

U Maung Maung Thann, director general of the immigration department, said the non-refundable annual fee would be US$500 for former citizens and $1000 for foreigners, in line with other ASEAN countries. A further $300 is payable in respect of children aged between seven and 18. Applicants who fail to register within 30 days of the end of the first year of their PR status will be liable to a $200 fine, rising to $500 in the event of subsequent failure to register.

Foreign nationals whose applications are approved will be allowed to stay in the country for five years initially, and this can be extended by five more years, officials said.

Under the current 1982 Citizenship Law, investors, experts and former citizens are permitted to stay on the basis of social or business visas of only 28 or 70 days' duration. Dual citizenship is not permitted.

Applications will be scrutinised by a board of experts on a case-by-case basis.

Applicants granted PR status are entitled to study in government schools and receive medical treatment in any clinic or hospital, said immigration department director U Ye Tun Oo.

Daw Htwe Htwe Aung, who has been living in Singapore for eight years, said this was good news for her family. "We want to come home, but the visa process is very difficult. The new system is good for everyone," she said.

Applications will be accepted at the former passport office on 37th Street, Kyauktada township, Yangon, from December 29.

Further details are available on the ministry's website.

The Small Claims Court building on Strand Road. Photo: Ko Taik

Lawyers' Network sues to stop building renovation

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THE Lawyers' Network has filed complaints against government officials and investors involved in a US$50 million hotel project on Strand Road, and applied for an injunction to stop renovation work at the site.

Advocates U Than Tin, U Kyee Myint and U Ohn Maung lodged complaints against Yangon Region Chief Minister U Myint Swe, former head of the Myanmar Investment Commission U Zeyar Aung and two private companies, Flying Tiger Engineering Company and Prime Residence.

The complaints were submitted at the Yangon Region High Court on November 28 under section 42 of the Specific Relief Act.

The court will decide next week whether to accept the civil case, which could lead to an order to stop renovation work.

"We have also applied for an injunction because otherwise the company will be able to keep renovating the building while the court case is being heard," U Kyee Myint said last week.

Flying Tiger won a tender in 2012 to turn the Small Claims Court on Strand Road into a five-star hotel. However, in October that year the Lawyers' Network staged a protest against the project, arguing it was not appropriate to repurpose a court into a hotel. A second protest was held in May but work has continued at the site.

Flying Tiger managing director U Thaung Htike Min said renovation work was 40 percent finished and

'We are working to develop our country and we will never stop this hotel project.'

U Thaung Htike Min
Flying Tiger Engineering Company

could be completed as early as 2016.

He defended the tender, saying the process had been "open and transparent" and the project was beneficial for the country.

"I believe the government and public will benefit from this hotel and I consider this renovation to be a good deed," he said, adding that Flying Tiger was a wholly Myanmar-owned company.

"We are working to develop our country and we will never stop this hotel project."

In July Flying Tiger officials told *The Myanmar Times* they had reached an agreement with Swiss chain Kempinski AG under which the building would open in 2017 as the Kempinski Yangon with 239 rooms.

Under the terms of the original agreement between MIC and Flying Tiger, the company has a 70-year lease on the Strand Road site.

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

Under section 20 of Protection and Preservation of Cultural Heritage Regions Law, anyone found to have destroyed or "willfully" altered the original form and structure of a heritage site faces one to seven years in prison.

U Thaung Htike Min said Flying Tiger took its heritage obligations seriously.

"We have already held discussions with Yangon Heritage Trust about renovating this building into a hotel so that we didn't damage any of its original features," he said.

Yangon Heritage Trust (YHT) director Daw Moe Moe Lwin said the non-profit heritage group had recommended that the company submit a conservation management plan when it renovates the building.

The company says it will submit this plan in the coming week, after which YHT will offer recommendations on how to proceed with the renovations.

The lawyers have also previously protested the MIC decision to lease the High Court building to Tun Foundation Bank to run as a museum.

U Thein Tun, who is the majority investor in Myanmar Consolidated Media, publisher of *The Myanmar Times*, said he has decided to postpone the project because of the opposition from the Lawyers' Network. Although Tun Foundation Bank won the tender, no contract was signed for the project, he said.

U Kyee Myint said he hoped Flying Tiger would take a similar approach.

"Because he stopped the renovation plan I think it shows U Thein Tun loves his country. Flying Tiger should also stop their five-star hotel project," he said.

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Women of Faith Network launched

THE Myanmar branch of the Women of Faith Network was launched last week, bringing together Buddhist, Christian, Hindu and Muslim women who want to promote religious cooperation, build peace and end poverty.

The network has begun by working on the White Ribbon campaign to end violence against women, the network's president Daw Yin Yin Maw said.

It also plans to run women's development projects, multi-religious prayer sessions and women's business programs, she added.

Women's League of Burma member Daw Thin Thin Aung said the network needs to see women actively participate from all religions. "Woman need to change their traditional attitude, which is always influenced by society," she stated.

The president of Religions for Peace's Myanmar branch, U Myint Swe, said the formation of the network was the first step in promoting women's participation in every development sector, including the peace process.

"We always said the most vulnerable in conflict are women and children, but we neglected their participation," he said.

The international co-moderator of Religions for Peace, Reverend Kosho Niwano from Japan, said women have important roles and can use them to promote peace through their children.

"Extremists are not to blame because they are born in extremist environments but they have a mother to tame them and a mother can stop all the flames of terrorists," she said.

The Women of Faith Network has branches in 30 countries across five continents. – *Cherry Thein*

Myanmar maintains position on list of world's least developed countries

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A villager sits in his modest home in Ayeyarwady Region. Photo: Thandar Khine

MYANMAR has again been named one of the world's least developed countries in a report from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) – a distinction the government is reportedly working toward shedding.

The country's status as a least developed country (LDC) is nothing new. Myanmar has been on UNCTAD's list since the late 1980s, UNDP Myanmar senior program advisor Igor Bosc said at a press briefing about the report on December 1.

To join the ranks of LDCs – which enjoy "preferential" tariff reduction and access to developed nations' markets – countries with populations lower than 75 million people must meet a list of conditions set by the Committee for Development Policy, which every three years proposes a line-up countries for the UN Economic and Social Council to consider.

As of March of 2012, those touchstones included per capita income exceeding US$992; a "human assets" score based on nutrition, health, school enrolment and literacy indicators; and an "economic vulnerability" mark, also built on a variety of indicators, according to UNCTAD.

Countries can "graduate" from the list if they cross into the black on two of the three benchmarks for two reports, published once every three years, or if their per capita gross national income hits twice that of the required figure to exit.

Mr Bosc noted that four countries have been removed since the list came into being – Botswana, Cape Verde, Samoa and the Maldives – and that Laos is nearing graduation day.

Myanmar has passed the upper boundary on the human assets index but is not yet eligible to graduate on the other two indicators, according to Mr Bosc.

"I don't want to speak on behalf of the government, but I think it is aspiring to graduate in the 2020s at some point. Whether that's feasible or not we will see," he said. "It's important not only to look at the human development side ... but also the economic development and the structural transformation that is necessary of the economy with specific policies."

Without "structural transformation" – a process Mr Bosc said takes particular sectors of the economy such as farming and transforms and broadens them into ecosystems that include initiatives like food processing – LDCs cannot achieve momentous growth in a way that will have real human impact.

"The paradox is that on the human development side and all sorts of social indicators, [the social indicators] haven't followed" major growth from the 1990s until about 2008, Mr Bosc said.

"The report ... argues that many of the LDCs have failed to go through a structural transformation of their economies that would allow them to translate that growth into human outcomes."

To get off the list, which includes nine Asian countries and 48 nations worldwide, Myanmar will have to continue to grow its gross national income and develop its economic resilience.

"It's a good thing that Myanmar actually wants to graduate," Mr Bosc said.

"There's no blueprint, but overall you need to focus on issues such as how to mobilize the necessary amount of resources, how to have the types of industrial policies that are necessary, the right macroeconomic framework, and the overall environment with the official development assistance and the trade access, which is also important."

UNICEF to study education for disabled

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THE United Nations Children's Fund is planning to boost education for children with disabilities, its Myanmar representative announced last week.

A program will be launched in January starting with a situation analysis to determine what types of education disabled children are currently receiving and what their educational needs are.

"The program is aiming to know more about the reality of life for children living with disability and their families," said UNICEF representative Bertrand Bainvel.

He said disabled children in Myanmar can be stigmatised at all levels of society: by their families, by their communities and even by their schools, which are ill-equipped to teach them. They are also more likely to experience violence.

About 2.3 percent of Myanmar's population lives with a disability, and more than 300,000 children under the age of 16 have one, according to a 2010 survey conducted by the Ministry of Social Welfare. The figures are low compared to the global average of 10-15pc.

In Myanmar 60pc of disabled children between six and 15 don't attend school at all. Those who do usually have teachers who lack the special training needed to educate them to the same standards as other children.

The UN agency has discussed a social protection strategy for disabled children with the Ministry of Social Welfare, aiming to "mainstream" their access to healthcare, education and social benefit.

A national plan of action for people with disabilities was launched in 2010 to improve opportunities for them to contribute to the country development. A new law on disabilities is being drafted for consideration in parliament.

2.3%

Segment of Myanmar's population living with a disability

One teacher from Yangon's Kyeemyindaing School for the Blind, U Zaw Htwe Oo, said teachers and former students from the school are concerned that the controversial draft National Education Bill does not contain provisions that would benefit children with disabilities.

An inclusive education system was adopted by Myanmar in 2005 enabling children with disabilities to join normal school activities. The system has been especially beneficial for blind students, who were allowed to join mainstream students starting from grade six. It encouraged them to participate in society and helped build their self-confidence and independence, U Zaw Htwe Oo said.

But last academic year, the Ministry of Social Welfare introduced a new education policy stipulating that blind students were not allowed to join other children in mainstream education.

"Although they are given special education to help cope with their impairment, it is effectively exclusion, and the government should have an appropriate mechanism for inclusive education," U Zaw Htwe Oo said.

Myanmar ratified the UN Convention on the Rights Of Persons With Disabilities in 2011. Article 7.1 says parties shall take all necessary measures to ensure the full enjoyment by children with disabilities of all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with other children.

CRIME IN BRIEF

Six charged after Thaketa fight
Police have charged six men following a fight in Yangon's Thaketa township that broke out at 8:30pm on November 27 because a car blocked a road in Shu Khin Thar ward.

Police allege Ko Nay Phyo Thu, Ko Naing Win Aung and Ko Aung Zaw Zaw, all 19, and 21-year-old Htet Lin Ko Ko threatened both Ko Kyaw Aung and U Soe Than Oo with knives and a stick.

The four have been charged with rioting with deadly weapons and causing public alarm to the public.

Police said they seized a 33-centimetre (13-inch) knife from Ko Nay Phyo Thu and a 40cm (16-inch) knife from Ko Naing Win Aung.

U Soe Than Oo and Ko Kyaw Aung, who is Ko Nay Phyo Thu's uncle, have both been charged with causing a public disturbance, police said. No injuries were reported.

Three drivers caught racing with walkie-talkies
The drivers of a car and one of 13 motorcycles seen racing down Waizayanda Road in South Okkalapa township at about 11.30pm on November 25 were apprehended by police from North Okkalapa township and eastern district office in Mingalardon township.

The driver of the car, Ko Nyi Nyi, 33, was arrested, along with his passenger Ko Myo Min, 38, after police found a walkie-talkie in their possession.

Motorbike rider Ko Chan Myae Kyaw, 35, from Tarmwe township, was also arrested. The three have been charged by police with possessing unlicensed telecommunications equipment under Myanmar's new Telecommunications Law passed in 2012. – *Toe Wai Aung, translation by Khant Lin Oo*

Calls grow louder for repeal of Unlawful Association Act

Colonial-era law is hurting peace process because people are too scared to speak to armed groups, leaders say

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THE Unlawful Association Act is harming public participation in the peace process because people are too scared to interact with ethnic armed groups, say ethnic leaders and activists who are calling for it to be repealed.

The comments come despite new figures from the Kachin Lawyers' Network showing that no arrests for alleged violations of section 17(1) of the act have been made in Kachin State this year.

'People are worried ... They don't want to meet with us even when we invite them to peace talks.'

Ye Baw Myo Win
All Burma Students' Democratic Front

Network leader Mone Seng Htoo said about 50 people have been arrested since the start of the conflict in June 2011. Of these, only four remain in custody, he said.

"This is because of the progress being made in peace talks," he said.

But the threat remains of further arrests. Anyone who comes into contact with an illegal organisation can be jailed for between two and three years under the act, which came into force under the British in 1908. Most armed ethnic groups are considered illegal organisations under the law.

Ye Baw Myo Win, deputy leader of the All Burma Students' Democratic Front (ABSDF), which has been fighting alongside the Kachin Independence Army in Kachin State, said "ordinary" people were afraid to have contact with organisations considered illegal under the law.

"People are worried that they could be arrested after they meet with us. They don't want to meet us even when we invite them to peace talks," he said.

Pyithu Hluttaw representative Daw Dwe Bu, a member of the Ethnic Affairs and Internal Peace Committee, agreed that the act is hindering the talks. "It is difficult to meet to negotiate for peace. The government should annul its announcement on armed groups as unlawful associations," she said.

A woman with a peace sign marches to mark International Day of Peace in Yangon on September 21, 2013. Photo: AFP

A provision in Chapter 6 of the draft national ceasefire agreement would remove all ethnic armed groups that sign the agreement from the list of illegal organisations. This would mean that no one could be prosecuted for communicating with those groups.

That is particularly crucial for civilians currently living in areas under the control of the armed groups who have no choice but to interact with them on a regular basis.

But some want the government to go further and repeal the act.

"The Unlawful Association Act shouldn't exist anymore. It should not be in place while we are holding peace talks because it makes negotiations difficult. It is very important for people [that it is revoked]," said U Sai Nyunt Lwin, general secretary of the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy.

The prospect of this happening appears remote, however. U Min Zaw Oo from the Myanmar Peace Center confirmed that armed groups who sign the nationwide ceasefire would no longer be considered illegal organisations but said the act would remain in effect.

"Both sides have agreed to [remove groups from the list of] unlawful associations after signing the ceasefire agreement," he said. "But the act will still be in place ... Almost all countries have similar legislation."

– *Translation by Thiri Min Htun*

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Govt backs down on highway bus GPS plan

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Officials inspect the wreckage of a bus that crashed on the Yangon-Mandalay Highway in May, killing 14 people. Photo: Supplied

THE government has delayed the introduction of a global positioning satellite (GPS) system on the highway bus network following complaints from bus owners that it will do little to improve safety.

Local firm B Smart Telematics launched the GPS system in July, lobbying the highway police force to mandate its introduction on buses following a string of high-profile accidents on the Yangon-Mandalay Highway.

The company said the system, which requires an internet connection to work, would enable bus lines to get information on their vehicles in real time and review the actions of drivers in the event of an accident.

Two months later, the Ministry of Construction selected B Smart to install GPS products on buses operating between Yangon and Mandalay, after conducting a tender in which six companies submitted proposals.

The tender was launched as a result of several high-profile crashes on the highway, including one in May that left 14 people dead when a bus plunged off a bridge into a ravine.

However, shortly after the tender bus owners began protesting against being forced to install the devices. At a meeting on November 20 the government agreed to put off launching the project until September.

Instead, they will conduct a pilot project over the next six months to test the system, said U Cho from the Shwe Mandalar bus line.

The government has not yet released any details about the pilot.

The meeting was attended by representatives of vehicle supervisory bodies, the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, the Ministry of Transport, the Ministry of Rail Transportation and the Ministry of Construction.

"Most ministry officials said the system should be introduced but the bus owners complained and explained their difficulties," said U Cho. "We don't think the system is particularly useful, particularly given the cost."

U Cho said the official reason cited for the delayed launch was the lack of reliable internet coverage along the highway route.

"The [Myanma Posts and Telecommunications] network will be expanded to cover the highway next year so they decided to suspend the program until then."

Bus owners have also complained of a lack of transparency concerning the tender, the terms of which have not been publicly released.

U Cho said he preferred education programs to improve safety standards rather than GPS devices.

"GPS is a waste of money – it does not improve road safety. If the system was effective we would not fight against it," he said.

B Smart has tried to win over bus owners by installing the system free of charge on the Academy line.

However, Academy owner U Aye Zaw said the company saw few benefits and discontinued the trial after a month.

"We could just know how fast our buses were going. We didn't get any information other than that," he said.

"We are not concerned about the cost. If the system is good for passenger safety we will use it but we don't like this one."

But B Smart Telematics director Ko Aung Nyi Nyi Maw dismissed concerns over the cost, saying it had already fallen from K90,000 to K20,000 a month because the GPS devices can use internet from new private telecom operators Ooredoo and Telenor, which charge customers based on data usage, rather than MPT, which charges based on time.

He said the complaints from the Academy line were related to the poor internet connection, adding that the service would now improve because there was more competition in the telecoms sector.

"We will continue our business even though the highway bus lines do not want it. Now we have reached agreements with four private [bus] companies that want to use the service," he said.

Highway Police Force commander Police Colonel Nay Win said the B Smart GPS system was one of only several strategies officials were using to improve safety on the highway – others include surprise checks and driver education.

He added that data from the GPS units will be monitored by a highway police control centre based in Nay Pyi Taw.

But bus owners question whether officials have too quickly fallen for the idea that the GPS will be a silver bullet to improve safety.

"Some ministry officials said this should be introduced but I don't think they understand the technology," said U Myint Oo from JJ Express. "Most buses already have GPS."

S Korea contributes US$22m to rural development efforts

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SOUTH Korea is supplying Myanmar with US$22 million for the New Village Project, a five-year plan aimed at introducing rural development and poverty reduction schemes in 100 villages throughout the country.

Union Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation U Myint Hlaing said the plan, which ends in 2019, will be implemented by the ministry in cooperation with the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA).

"The New Village Project will last from 2014 to 2019, and will be implemented simultaneously in 100 villages in the Nay Pyi Taw Council Territory; Yangon, Ayeyarwady, Mandalay, Sagaing and Tanintharyi regions; and Shan and Mon States," U Myint Hlaing said at the Korea Flagship Projects Launching Forum in Nay Pyi Taw on December 2.

He said the intention of the plan was to boost living standards through increased income and better management of existing natural resources.

Tasks under the plan will include facilitating access to better transportation, water for agriculture, electrical power and drinking water for health; developing farmland; and establishing healthcare and childcare centres.

"It is important that the villagers themselves are interested in collaborating with us on the project," U Myint Hlaing said, adding that South Korean experts will conduct surveys to decide which villages to include in the project.

President U Thein Sein said the project will support the work already being done by the government.

"The project will help us implement our current work to develop rural area and reduce poverty," he said at the forum

South Korea's ambassador to Myanmar, Mr Lee Baek-soon, said that the project is not only a bilateral partnership between two friendly governments, but also a collaboration between the people of both countries.

Former South Korean Prime Minister Goh Kun, who visited Myanmar last week, said South Korea launched the New Village Project in the 1970s, and beneficiaries have been able to stand as developed countries a few years after the projects started.

Myanmar aims to reduce its poverty rate to 16 percent in 2015 in accordance with the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, with a focus on decreasing the poverty gap between rural and urban areas. – *Translation by Thiri Min Htun*

Norway FM reaffirms peace support

One of the major donors supporting peace activities, Norway vows to continue helping both the government and armed groups end ethnic conflicts

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NORWAY'S foreign minister pledged further support for Myanmar's peace process in a meeting with government and ethnic armed group leaders last week despite recent violence in Kachin State that has threatened to derail ceasefire negotiations.

"The journey toward a prosperous, peaceful and inclusive society will be long," Borge Brende said at the meeting in Bago Region on November 30. "Your work and effort to build peace and prosperity deserves our full support."

The meeting was also attended by Minister for the President's Office U Aung Min – the government's chief peace negotiator – representatives from the Myanmar Peace Center and the Myanmar Peace Support Initiative (MPSI), and leaders of the Karen National Union and several other ethnic armed groups. Mr Brende also met communities in Bago Region to discuss their concerns about the peace process.

The meeting took place just 11 days after the Tatmadaw shelled a Kachin Independence Army military academy near Laiza, on the border with China, killing 23 cadets. The deceased were from armed groups allied with the KIA.

British ambassador Andrew Patrick had said he would raise concerns with government officials over the attack on the academy, and the KIA has rejected Tatmadaw assertions that it had fired a "warning shot" in response to KIA provocation.

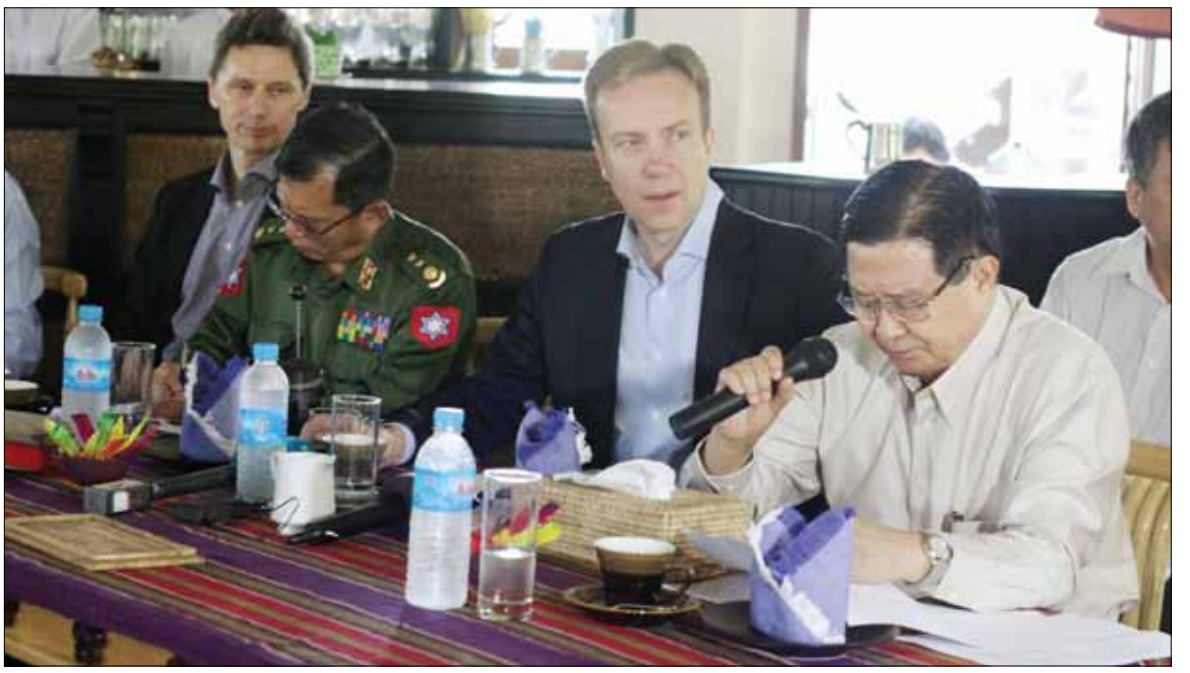
Mr Brende acknowledged that the government was yet to make major progress in its talks with some armed groups, including the KIA, and said even in areas where ceasefires have been reached conditions remain very challenging for civilians.

But participants at the meeting said the signing of ceasefires has brought about progress in some areas. Mi Kun Chan Non, director and deputy leader of the Mon Women's Organization and a senior adviser to the MPSI, said that the lives of Mon State residents had improved since ceasefires were agreed between armed groups and President U Thein Sein's government.

The MPSI is Norway's principal vehicle for engagement with the peace process, and funds a range of initiatives in areas where ceasefires have been signed.

On nationwide ceasefire talks, U Aung Min said the two sides have only eight major sections to resolve out of 103 in the draft text.

The contentious points include the creation of a federal union; which armed groups can participate in the ceasefire; the future structure of the national army; and how ethnic armed forces would fit into that structure. Sections on a military code of conduct, post-ceasefire political dialogue and the creation of ceasefire monitoring teams are also yet to be finalised.



Minister for the President's Office U Aung Min (right) speaks beside Norwegian Foreign Minister Borge Brende (second right) at a meeting with armed groups and civilians in Bago on November 30. Photo: Wa Lone

8

Sections of the draft Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement that are yet to be finalised, out of 103

Rector criticises government dhamma publications

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A SENIOR Buddhist expert has criticised an office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs for issuing unauthorised commentaries on Buddhist doctrine. Rector of the International Theravada Buddha Missionary University, Nan Damala Bhivamsa, said the documents relating to dhamma, or Buddhist teachings, had been issued by the ministry's Kabar Aye office.

The rector said some of the literature issued by the office contained sutras, or verses, that were not authentically Theravada Buddhist.

The criticism has resulted in a prompt admission from the office that it was in the wrong. "Since this comes from the rector, we will review the matter and consult. He is the acknowledged expert in scripture," said U Win Htin Aung, director of the Yangon department concerned.

The offending verses were taken from the Pasri Mitta Jara and Dharana sutras, which do not form part of the accepted canon of Theravada Buddhist literature, but are associated with the Mahayana branch.

From now on, the Kabar Aye publishing department will issue dhamma literature under the supervision of the education subcommittee of the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee (Mahana), which will ensure authenticity.

The three main branches of Buddhism are Theravada, Mahayana and Tibetan. "Theravada Buddhism is based on the original Buddhist scriptural texts, while Mahayana Buddhism is based on amended or modernised texts. Theravada Buddhist monks wear traditional clerical garb, but Mahayana Buddhist monks wear modern-day dress and, in Japan, even suits and ties," said the rector.

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FEATURE

Fresh warnings of looming TB crisis

Health systems in high-burden countries including Myanmar are struggling to cope with rapid growth of drug-resistant forms of the disease

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A HIV patient is tested for multidrug-resistant TB coinfection at a clinic in Shan State run by MSF. Photo: MSF/Eddy McCall

A DANGEROUS form of tuberculosis is spreading in Myanmar as prevention and treatment efforts falter for lack of funds, health officials are warning. The number of people at risk from the drug-resistant form of the airborne bacteria is growing, they say.

The primary threat is from drug-resistant TB (DR-TB), but an estimated 9000 cases of multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB) occur in Myanmar each year, according to the World Health Organization, and an even more extreme form known as extensively drug-resistant TB has been detected. Many drug-resistant cases go undetected, however, enabling the disease to spread further, and funding shortfalls mean patients can die while waiting for treatment, which costs about US$5000 for the two-year course.

While drug resistance developed from misuse of existing treatments, MDR-TB cases are now even being found in people who have never previously had the disease. But the problem is much broader than Myanmar: Globally there are an estimated 450,000 cases of MDR-TB, but only 94,000 have been diagnosed, and cure rates are less than 50 percent.

In their *Out of Step* report released last month international NGO Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) said efforts to control DR-TB in Myanmar and other at-risk countries were falling short, leaving drug-resistant forms of TB to spread unchecked. MSF warned that governments and donors must step up their response to the crisis, or face a further growth in drug -resistant forms of the disease.

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Shortfall in funding for TB control in Myanmar between 2011-15, according to the World Health Organization

In surveying eight countries with high TB burdens, including Myanmar, the report found that while there were some "promising signs" in national responses to DR-TB "there are also alarming gaps in the implementation of these policies – gaps that fuel drug resistance and cost lives".

These gaps include diagnosis, treatment, outmoded models of care, limited access to new and repurposed drugs, and severe underfunding.

"What is clear is that drug-resistant forms of the disease will continue to spread unabated unless a stronger and more concerted effort to scale-up DR-TB services, in step with the implementation of optimal tools, guidelines and policies, is made at the country level," it said. "Cure rates for DR-TB will remain abysmal, drug-resistant strains will continue to emerge and spread, and the death count will grow."

MSF assistant country director for Myanmar Dr Phone Myint said Myanmar has treated just 1500 MDR-TB patients since the first program was launched in 2009, and has no laboratory for detecting XDR-TB.

"MDR-TB is very dangerous because it can be spread through the air. There is a risk that many people will be directly infected by MDR-TB," he said.

More international and government funding is needed to provide treatment to the growing number of patients with drug-resistant TB, he said.

Other issues in Myanmar include the use of outdated methods and medicines, which mean that a course of treatment for MDR-TB patients here takes 20 months instead of as little as nine months in other countries.

According to the WHO, Myanmar needs $186 million for TB control between 2011-15, of which $113 million is expected to be available, predominantly from the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Bridging the $73 million funding gap presents a "significant challenge", the WHO said.

A spokesperson for the WHO office in Yangon declined to comment further, referring questions to the Ministry of Health's TB program.

Out of Step, however, states that the funding shortfall is more acute: It said that Myanmar faced among the most severe funding gaps for its national TB program of the countries surveyed, with less than 50 percent of the required funding available.

But Dr Sithu Aung, a deputy director in the Ministry of Health's national TB program, said he expected all funding needs to be met through to the end of 2016. The Three Millennium Development Goals (3MDG) Fund will cover the additional cost of the response to normal TB cases, he said, while the MDR-TB funding gap will be met by the government, the Global Fund and 3MDG.

'Drug-resistant forms of the disease will continue to spread unabated unless a stronger and more concerted effort ... is made at the country level.'

Out of Step
Médecins Sans Frontières report

He also said efforts were continuing to locate the patients at risk. "We estimated there were more than 200,000 [TB cases], but have so far discovered only 15,000. We have to find the others," he said.

In July, a three-year project to locate TB patients in 75 townships was launched.

"I think the private sector helps to create TB drug resistance because patients don't take their medication regularly. This situation is very difficult to control," said Dr Sithu Aung.

Daw Phyu Phyu Thin, who runs an HIV clinic in Yangon, told *The Myanmar Times* that nine of 10 people who present for HIV treatment at her clinic are found to have TB.

Because of the waiting times to receive TB medicine from the state, her clinic normally provides treatment free-of-charge.

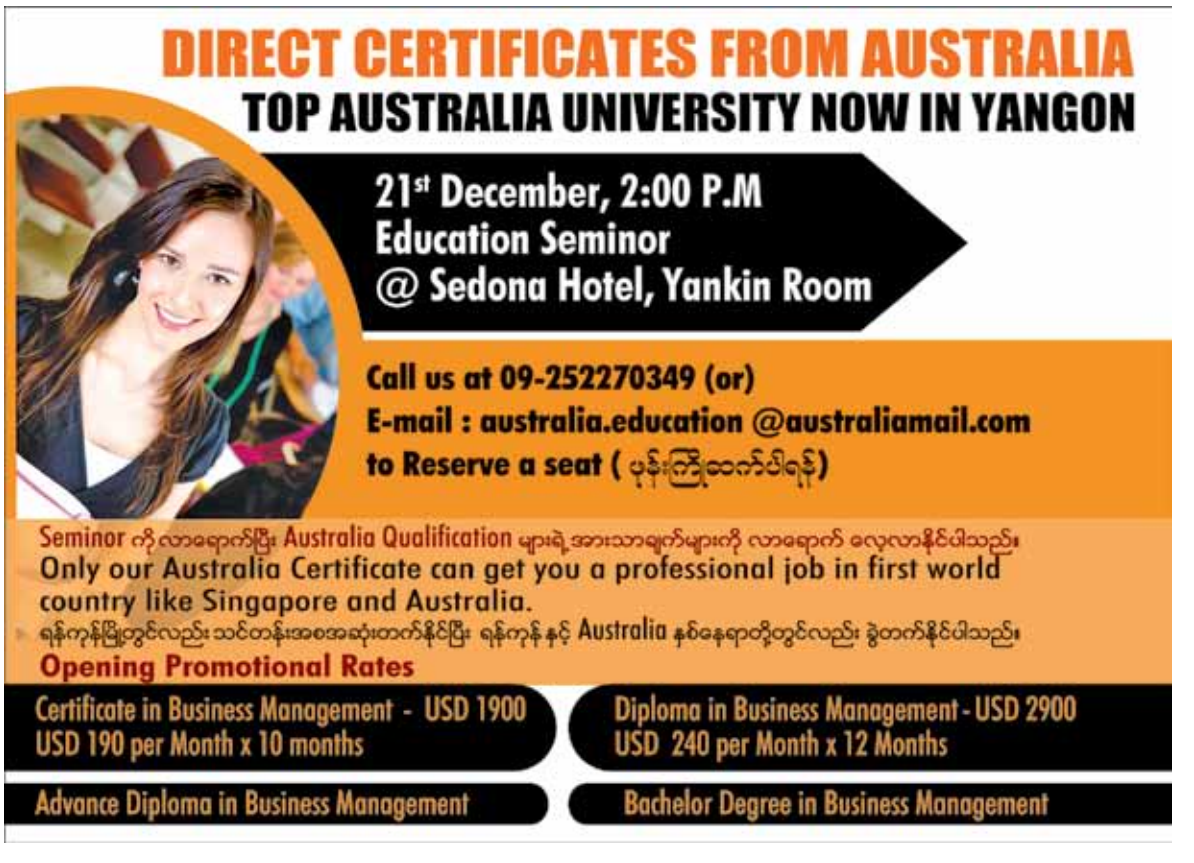
"Government health departments provide free treatment," she said. "But many patients face a wait of at least two weeks for normal TB drugs and a month for treatment for the drug-resistant strain, which causes most deaths."

General Practitioners' Society president Dr Tin Aye, who worked on the Myanmar Medical Association's TB project between 2006 and 2011, said international support for TB in Myanmar has increased dramatically in recent years as a result of the 2009-10 national TB survey. Released in 2011, the results showed Myanmar had a much higher TB burden – 180,000 new cases each year – than previously thought.

In some urban areas, prevalence among adults was found to be almost 1 percent as a result of poor sanitation and overcrowding, while rates were also high in ethnic minority regions due to the lack of health infrastructure.

The increase in international funding in 2012 and 2013 has meant doctors can now actively search for TB cases, introduce new drugs and treat some MDR-TB cases, but other factors have hampered efforts to combat the disease, Dr Tin Aye said.

"Myanmar needs more international funding," he said, "but poverty, poor nutrition, low government funding for health and the lack of research into drug resistance in the region have also made anti-TB efforts more difficult."



‘Ancestral’ lands to be protected under draft policy

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A farmer stands on paddy in Ayeyarwady Region. Photo: Christopher Davy

UNREGISTERED ancestral lands and those under shifting cultivation will be registered and protected from confiscation under a draft land-use policy, a change land rights groups say would be a major step forward for tenure security.

The policy would mean that land could only be confiscated at the market price for public use, such as housing, industrial zones or Special Economic Zones, and not for normal business activities.

However, land rights groups have expressed concern as to whether the government has the capacity or will to implement the protections contained in the National Land Use Policy, which was released to the public on October 18, ahead of national consultations throughout November.

The policy states that traditional methods of agriculture, including *taungya* – shifting cultivation practised in upland areas – will be recognised, while disputes over ethnic lands will be administered by a separate mechanism according to traditional custom. Ethnic residents will hold decision-making positions in the dispute resolution mechanism, it says.

“It is very good to recognise the traditional land-use methods. I would say it is the strongest point in the new policy,” said U Shwe Thein, head of the Land Core Group, a network of more than 50 land-rights groups.

The clause appears aimed at ethnic minorities and it is unclear whether it will also be applied to the Bamar, the country’s main ethnic group. If Bamar are included in the definition of “ethnic races” then significantly more areas of the country will be off-limits to businesses seeking land concessions.

A member of the Land Use Allocation and Scrutiny Committee, which drafted the policy, indicated that Bamar would be considered an “ethnic race” but did not give a definitive answer.

But the policy may create conflict over the respect for traditional ethnic minority customs, as it also clearly states that gender equality will be practiced in all areas of land administration.

“Gender-related problem in land administration are mainly concentrated in ethnic areas, where a woman can lose her land to her parents-in-law if her husband dies,” said Daw Ohnmar Khine, a gender equality activist and coordinator of Food Security Working Group, a network of more than 80 agricultural and farmers rights groups.

She said it was important that women’s rights were given priority.

“If everything in the draft policy is properly implemented then ... [it] will provide women with the necessary rights.”

The draft policy was released the Land Use Allocation Committee led by the Minister for Environmental Conservation and Forestry U Win Tun. It is scheduled to be finalised at a national workshop in December.

As *The Myanmar Times* has previously reported, land-tenure advocates have criticised the short consultation period and called for it to be extended into next year.

They have also expressed concern at the government’s ability to enforce the policy equitably. The policy states that government departments and other stakeholders will be monitored for compliance and “respected locals” will be included in the monitoring mechanism.

“The clauses are good but it is useless if the policy cannot be implemented fully. We have some excellent policies in Myanmar that could not be implemented. So we should focus on the practical use and to solve the problems through practical means,” said U Win Myo Thu, the country director of EcoDev Myanmar, an environmental conservation and land rights group.

U Shwe Thein said he agreed implementation could be problematic.

“Ensuring that policies are enforced properly is still an issue,” he said.

IN BRIEF

Pilot agriculture project targets forest conservation

In an effort to persuade local farmers to change age-old patterns of cultivation that risk depleting forest resources, the Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry has launched a pilot project for hill-forest conservation in Shan State, in cooperation with China and Laos.

Ministry deputy director U Myint Lwin said last week that the aim was to revitalise the hill forests of Southeast Asia. This pilot project will encourage local residents to improve forest conservation management, he added.

The project is being implemented in Nyaung Htaut village and the surrounding area in Kyaukme township, Shan State. – *Htoo Thant, translation by Zar Zar Soe*

Another ballooning company takes off in Bagan

A new ballooning operator has taken to the increasingly crowded skies of Bagan. Golden Eagle Ballooning began hot air balloon flights in the area last week, becoming the third operator after Balloons over Bagan and Oriental Ballooning.

The company, a subsidiary of Golden Express Tours, is offering flights on its three balloons for US$370 a person. The flights last for up to an hour, depending on weather conditions, but only operate in the morning. The balloons can safely carry 24 passengers at a time and will fly until March 31.

Golden Eagle Ballooning has hired pilots and other staff from Switzerland and Spain to oversee the operation, he said, and is using balloons manufactured in Spain. – *Zaw Win Than*

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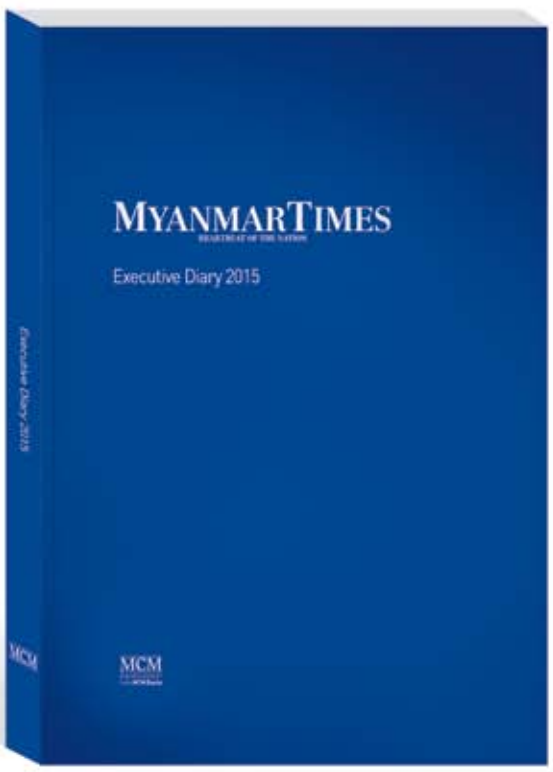

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OPINION

Displaced Muslims wait to receive aid at a camp on the outskirts of Sittwe in Rakhine State in February. Photo: AFP

Rohingya or Bengali?

SITHU AUNG MYINT
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RECENT weeks have been teeming with interesting news about Myanmar, including United States President Barack Obama's visit, the gathering of world leaders in Nay Pyi Taw for ASEAN, the intense debate in parliament over the constitution and Senior General Min Aung Hlaing's interview with Voice of America.

Another item was United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's use of the term "Rohingya" during his visit to Nay Pyi Taw, which prompted a strongly worded rebuke from Rakhine State Chief Minister U Maung Maung Ohn. In some townships in Rakhine State, locals even demonstrated against Mr Ban's comments.

Similarly, Myanmar's representative to the UN objected to the use of "Rohingya" during discussions over the annual resolution on its human rights situation.

The Rohingya versus Bengali debate has often seemed intractable. Is there some way to find common ground on this community of more than 1 million people in Rakhine State?

The UN, European Union and other Western countries have for decades accused Myanmar of breaching the human rights of the Bengali-Rohingya community in Rakhine State. The Myanmar government and local authorities have not done enough to address or resolve these allegations. After the 2012 conflict in Rakhine State, more than 100,000 Bengali-Rohingya were displaced and have been staying in refugee camps. They have not been allowed to return to their homes.

Each country has its own rules and laws and each individual has their own rights. The UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that a person is entitled to reveal or announce or express their own ethnicity. So, a Bengali-Rohingya in Rakhine State has the right to say whether they are Bengali or Rohingya. It is their right and if it is prohibited it could be a breach of human rights.

At the same time, a country is entitled to make its own laws according to its own conditions. We can cite here President U Thein Sein, who said that the Rohingya are not included in Myanmar's list of 135 official ethnic groups and are not an ethnic group of Myanmar. He did not say that there is no Rohingya ethnic group in the world. But while the Bengali-Rohingya can refer to themselves as Rohingya or Bengali, they won't become a recognised Myanmar ethnic group and they won't get the same rights as people from officially recognised ethnic groups. Their right to citizenship depends on the 1982 Citizenship Law.

Problems related to the use of the term "Rohingya" grew bigger earlier this year when the census was conducted. Rakhine people threatened to boycott if enumerators allowed Bengali-Rohingya to list themselves as Rohingya.

It must be recognised that the Bengali-Rohingya in Rakhine State have no power, no rights and no big businesses. They are poor, mostly uneducated and unable to travel.

This put the authorities in a tight corner because they had already made agreements with the international community on how to collect census data. One point of agreement was that a person had the right to freely state whatever ethnicity they like and this would be noted by the enumerator.

The authorities had to decide whether to break their agreement with the international community or give in to Rakhine concerns and avert a boycott. Eventually Myanmar complied with the Rakhine people's request and as a result 1 million Bengali-Rohingya living in Rakhine State were not included in the census.

The Myanmar government is entitled to not recognise those people as Rohingya for its official processes, such as when it is considering citizenship applications.

But that doesn't mean it should deny citizenship, and the rights that come with it, to those who are eligible. In particular, it needs to take steps to end the use of temporary ID documents, known as white cards, which it began issuing to the Bengali-Rohingya community in 1993. There are now around 850,000 in circulation and these should be replaced by permanent documents.

The government should make sure that the human rights of all people in Rakhine State are respected. This means scrutinising whether they are eligible for citizenship and if so granting it, and then allowing them the right to live, marry, travel and do business like a normal citizen.

Some Rakhine people and even government officials have disputed the allegations from the international community, including the UN, about the living conditions of the Bengali-Rohingya community. The problem will most definitely not be resolved by saying things like, "Don't use the term 'Rohingya'," "You are interfering in our country's internal affairs," and "You are breaching our country's sovereignty."

It must be recognised that the Bengali-Rohingya in Rakhine State have no power, no rights and no big businesses. They are poor, mostly uneducated and are not allowed to travel. They are blocked in and they are vulnerable.

On the other hand, the government controls the military, administration and a significant portion of the country's economic resources.

Essentially the strong group is telling the vulnerable group not to refer to themselves as they like and to accept how they have instead been classified by others. This approach only damages the image of the country and increases conflict between the two communities in Rakhine State.

– Translation by Thiri Min Htun

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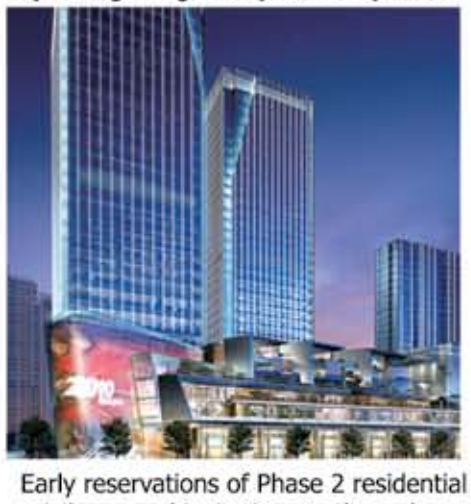

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Views

Building unity, one language at a time

The teaching of ethnic minority languages can help to bring people together – as it has done in other countries

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IN recent years much of the debate over education in our country has focused on budgets, curriculum reform and teaching methods. I absolutely agree that all of these are important. However, spending more money will not necessarily improve our education standards. Similarly, teaching quality will not be determined by the standard of the curriculum alone. There are still many other factors relevant to improving learning experiences and education quality.

One that I would like to highlight is learning ethnic languages at our educational institutions. Since 2011, when the current government assumed power, many ethnic political parties and civil society groups have pushed for ethnic languages to be not only taught but also used as the language of instruction in some state schools together with Myanmar language.

Recently the Australian government even approved the offering of Hakha Chin language studies at high -school level in the state of Victoria.

Under previous governments, this debate would never have happened. There was no question of ethnic languages having any place in the state system. Discussion over the merits of this system has now become possible, and many ethnic leaders are in favour.

The fact is that there are many benefits to introducing ethnic languages in some state schools. First and foremost, being able to learn and speak in one's own language increases children's sense of ethnic identity and makes them proud of their culture.

Second, children are more academically successful studying in their first language as they are more comfortable and confident. Third, some experts have found that this results in children not only being successful in their own language in early years but also better in other languages as young adults. Of course, being bilingual is a major bonus in many ways.

Last year, the government allowed ethnic languages to be taught in state schools in ethnic minority areas. In July, representatives from 18 ethnic groups attended a workshop coordinated by the Ministry of Education's Basic Education Department and the United Nations Children's Fund. At that workshop they discussed issues related to the development of ethnic-language curriculums, teacher training and more.

It is pleasing that we are now recognising the important role of ethnic languages in our education system and society more broadly.

What I would suggest, however, is to go a bit further than what has been proposed by the Ministry of Education and ethnic representatives. I believe there is much to be gained from offering courses in some major ethnic language in state schools beyond ethnic regions, including at university level. These minority language classes should be electives rather than a compulsory subject.

Why do I believe this? Learning and speaking other languages enhances one's sensitivity to other cultures. Some even suggest that learning and speaking another language significantly increases a person's understanding of and appreciation for the culture in which that language is spoken.

A country like Australia has been very proactive in introducing minority languages in their schools and education system. So far there are more than 40 minority languages recognised by its government, including Burmese, Karen and Chin (Hakha Chin - Lai Holh). Recently, the Australian government even approved the offering of Hakha Chin language studies at high-school level in the state of Victoria from next year. This is a great sense of pride for the Chin community and makes them feel that they – and their language – matter to other Australians.

The Myanmar government, civil society and other stakeholders talk a great deal about the need for unity. Unfortunately, attaining it is easier said than done. Learning and teaching ethnic minority languages at our educational institutions and schools could play an important role in achieving this goal. If we are willing, we can certainly start by introducing ethnic language subjects in some of our universities and state schools in the major cities, such as Yangon and Mandalay.

Understanding each other's languages, beliefs, traditions and cultures is essential for restoring respect and trust in Myanmar, which are prerequisites for building unity. Communication and language can be the vessels to connect people and communities. I know some of my friends would like to learn other minority languages if classes were readily available. I have also met ethnic Bamar people ethnicity who can speak minority languages and they are (rightly) very proud of this.

I believe we are being presented with an opportunity. Now is the time to realise that Myanmar and ethnic minority languages are a means of enhancing unity. Using ethnic languages in the classroom can not only improve the learning experiences of ethnic children but also build cohesion and understanding in our still-fractured society.

Lian Kual Sang is a freelance business consultant and entrepreneur from Yangon. He is a full-time doctoral student in Australia.

Decentralise educatio

IN recent weeks, hundreds of students have taken to the streets of Yangon to protest against the National Education Law, which they argue subverts their liberty by establishing a National Education Commission to oversee universities. The students, led by the All Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABFSU), have publicised a number of demands, including the rights to form student unions, learn minority languages and exercise academic freedom. They have also asked for the autonomy of universities from government control.

Advocates of the law counter that it already includes much of what the students' desire, and that the National Education Commission would merely coordinate budgets and policy. Perhaps surprisingly, while the protesters and the government disagree on the specifics of education reform, they agree on the principles - the National Education Law does promise decentralisation and autonomy.

While these principles certainly make sense in a system that has been under tight government control, the protests indicate underlying disagreement about the meaning of autonomy, the process of decentralisation and the nature of public participation in a democracy. Interactions between government officials and their critics also reveal conflicts over the fundamentals of education and politics.

For instance, the Ministry of Education had in October announced plans to provide stipends to teachers of minority languages in ethnic areas, although without funds for training teachers or creating curricula, implementation would be difficult. That student leaders either were not aware of or considered insufficient the government's action on this issue suggests that ministry officials have not yet succeeded in informing stakeholders about their larger efforts at reform, in building consensus around them or in creating trust regarding their aims.

One could argue that the students should have ensured they were better informed about education reform, or made a more specific demand on ethnic languages. But this apparent miscommunication indicates that the protesters and the government have different ideas about political participation: The protesters seem to believe that it is the Ministry of Education's responsibility to convince them of the National Education Law's utility, while the ministry sees its duty as simply making a law that is in the people's best interests.

Recent comments from ministry officials underscore this point. Minister for Education Daw Khin San Yi responded to the protests by inviting the students to discuss the law but also cautioned that "parents cannot always give their children everything they ask for". She may have been trying to convey that she had the students' wellbeing at heart, but her choice of metaphor is unlikely to give the demonstrators' confidence that they will be equal partners in any dialogue with the ministry. This is particularly so given they have already declared the process of drafting the National Education Law not sufficiently inclusive. Indeed, Daw Khin San Yi's comments imply that she considers listening to public comment equal to dialogue, and paternalism to constitute public participation.

Moreover, the two sides seem to have conflicting visions as to how education as a whole should change and how students should behave. Daw Yin Yin Nwe, leader of President U Thein Sein's Education Advisory Group, reacted to protests by saying that decentralisation would proceed but that Myanmar students "cannot be on a par with American citizens from US universities".

Students protest against the National Education Law in downtown Yangon on Novem

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Daw Yin Yin Nwe seems to be referencing the form of decentralisation that exists in the United States, in which the 50 states, rather than the federal government, are responsible for the provision of education. If, as she implies, the students are looking to America either as a model of a functional democracy or as an exemplary school system, they'd do well to look elsewhere. My country's Congress is gridlocked and its educational outcomes are less than stellar when compared with those of other industrialised nations. However, a comparison with the US is useful in that it can unpack some conflicting implications of decentralisation.

Local authorities and university officials may be just as uninterested in the students' preferences as the central government has been in the past.

Specifically, "decentralisation" may not be as comprehensive as the protesters in Myanmar seem to hope. Although the US states make independent decisions regarding education, the central government still finds ways to wield influence. For instance, many people argue that by awarding funding preferentially to states that adopt the controversial "Common Core" state standards, the Obama administration is in the process of creating a de facto national curriculum. A common curriculum can be seen as positive or negative – ironically, even while Myanmar opts for decentralisation, Myanmar migrant worker communities in Thailand are trying to standardise and centralise the independent schools their children attend. Either way, decentralisation does not preclude such initiatives.

Budgetary concerns may also impede the institutional autonomy that the protesters seek. As Mael Raynaud pointed out in a recent op-ed in *The Myanmar Times*, students in France fear that "autonomy" at the university level may lead to harmful privatisation. Similarly, students in the US often see the federal government as a protective force against the prerogatives of individual donors or corporations that seek power over campus life.

These examples illustrate that decentralisation does not necessarily lead to institutional or personal autonomy, much less to democratic decision-making. Decentralisation is essentially a negative demand; the question is what will replace central control. Protesters may assume that if the government relinquishes control, they will have more say in their education. But local authorities and university officials may be just as uninterested in students' preferences as the central government has been in the past, and abstract guarantees of academic freedom might not carry much weight.

Furthermore, people in decentralised systems sometimes make decisions that are not in the interests of the whole populace. For instance, in the US, public schools are funded by municipal income taxes, so students in wealthy areas benefit from higher spending per pupil. This policy reproduces income inequality but is unlikely to change because federal and state governments cannot force municipalities to share their budgetary bounty.

If decentralisation is to lead to democratic decision-making by the people actively involved in the edu-

n – then what?

ber 17. Photo: Thiri

cation system – students, teachers and parents – there would have to be a framework for incorporating their input in the absence of central control. U Thein Lwin, a spokesperson for the National Network for Education Reform (NNER), which is critical of the National Education Law, proposed such a system in a 2012 paper. He suggested that "School Governing Bodies" – made up of heads of schools, local authorities, members of parliament, budgetary authorities, educational experts, and representatives of parents, students, and teachers – should make decisions collaboratively.

Notably, the system that U Thein Lwin proposes is not one in which each stakeholder acts autonomously. But in contrast to the parent-child model for governmen-citizen interactions that the minister of education referenced, U Thein Lwin's plan represents a democratisation of educational planning far more comprehensive than what exists in the US. In the US, students and teachers cannot be elected to local school boards, while most parents don't have much say in the curriculum. If Daw Yin Yin Nwe objected to students' putative aspirations toward American-style democracy, it is clear why she would object to U Thein Lwin's radical proposal as well.

While the government and the opposition's views clearly diverge, it is also true that dilemmas could emerge even within the protesters' platform, as the principles they hold dear come into conflict. What if one university used its autonomy to impede academic freedom or ban student unions? Or what if the School Governing Body of one region made decisions that contradicted national laws? In the US, there are bitter, unresolved conflicts between states and the central government concerning the teaching of evolution, prayer in schools and student dress codes. In the US, I have found that many people favour decentralisation until local authorities start doing things they disagree with; then they demand that the federal government act. I wonder if a similar dynamic might eventually emerge in Myanmar.

I hope that the protesters and the Ministry of Education can help to create an education system that is not just on par with but will one day be better than that of the US. Yet the government and the opposition may not agree on what "better" means. U Thein Lwin has asserted that the "only hurdle is centralisation". I would argue that another hurdle is negotiating the meaning of decentralisation, as well as its impact on individual, institutional and regional autonomy. This process is likely to test the conflicting ideas about the role of citizens in governance.

Rosalie Metro is a teacher, independent researcher and curriculum designer based in the United States. She holds a PhD in Learning, Teaching and Social Policy from Cornell University, and has been researching Myanmar since 2000.

Cult of impunity shields Philippine mass murderers

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JUSTICE delayed is justice denied, but this is ridiculous. More than five years after 58 innocent Filipinos were murdered in cold blood, not one person has been convicted. Not one.

The perpetrators of the crime are well known. They are rich and powerful, and they control vast tracts of land around Ampatuan on the southern Philippine island of Mindanao.

They buy people and they buy votes and they buy influence in the politics of Manila, right up to the Malacañang, the presidential palace. Their cloak of protection appears to have no limits.

They are also able to exterminate witnesses to their horrific Ampatuan massacre and get away with that as well. Please keep in mind that it did not happen in Afghanistan or Somalia, but in the Philippines, a fellow member of ASEAN with an embassy in Yangon that still has the gall to fly its national flag at full mast.

I'm a little upset, you know, not least because 38 of those 58 victims were journalists, and because no one in the region is marching in the streets about this shocking holocaust.

Let me just calm down for a moment and perhaps detour to recall the time when I travelled near to the site of the slaughter of the innocents.

My driver was taking me from Davao City on the southeast coast across to Maguindanao in the west, where I hoped to track down and interview some of the leaders of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

After trundling up over the Mt Apo Sierra and down to the central plain, our route took us about 50 kilometres north of Ampatuan town, the district's administrative centre – and the location of the massacre.

Dusk was falling and there was little other traffic. When the wind got up and rain threatened, my driver stopped at a small village and refused to go further.

It was too dangerous, he said, not only because of the stormy weather and the darkness, but because we'd entered territory contested by the MILF and government-backed warlords, who were brutal and unpredictable.

Failing to appreciate just how right he was, I urged him to keep going, and when a lone bus sped past, I told him to tuck in behind, saying we'd be fine if we followed it all the way to Cotabato City.

Reluctantly, he agreed. The rain pelted down, and as his wipers were defective, so we slowed to a crawl to negotiate the rebels' makeshift road barriers of small boulders that extended into the middle of the road.

We soon lost the bus and my driver moaned nervously as he squinted into the inky tempest, but somehow we finally reached Cotabato, where all the streets bore MILF grafitti demanding "Independence!"

By good fortune, I later managed to meet the Front's leaders at a hideout up-river from Cotabato and got my scoop. Little did I know though that a far more portentous story would subsequently erupt in that spot.

The bloodbath occurred on November 23, 2009, when the 58, seeking to register Esmael Mangudadatu as a candidate for the governorship election, were mown down by gunmen sent by the incumbent governor, Andal Ampatuan.

He was term-limited after running the province for many years and he wanted his son to succeed him without facing a strong challenger. After all, he had got used to controlling Maguindanao after being put in power by former President Corazon Aquino, the mother of current Philippine President Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino. And he'd always been supported, despite numerous high crimes and misdemeanours, by Noynoy's predecessor, President Gloria Magapacal Arroyo. You see what I mean by strong connections.

In a nutshell, the presidential backing was because Ampatuan delivered the votes of his region, and just as importantly, used his private militia to keep the MILF in check.

So the father and son decided to stop Mangudadatu's candidacy in its tracks, which is what they did by killing everyone in his registration team.

Mangudadatu himself only escaped because he was elsewhere at the time. But his wife Genalyn was murdered, and his two sisters, and all the journalists, lawyers, aides and others who were present. It was a wipeout.

Many of the women were raped before being shot in their genitals and beheaded. The bodies were then dumped in a shallow grave.

Even in the Philippines such a monstrous crime could not go unnoticed and the Ampatuans were charged with murder, along with about 200 of their militia men.

The trial began in January 2010, but no one has yet been convicted and it looks as if no one ever will be – not only because of the Ampatuans' ties to the high and mighty, but because the witnesses are being knocked off.

Two weeks ago, Denex Sacal was murdered. He and a fellow witness to the massacre were ambushed and shot by unidentified men. His colleague survived, but is clearly living on borrowed time. Four other witnesses had earlier been killed, including Suwaib Upham in 2010 and Esmail Enog two years later. Both had testified that they were present at the massacre and that the Ampatuans were responsible.

"I see no other reason why they would be ambushed and shot, aside from their desire to become a state witness," said Mangudadatu, who, in the single redeeming feature of this calamity, was later elected governor.

So far, no one has been caught for the assassination of the witnesses. And no one in power seems to care.

"The deed is known, the 58 victims have been identified, the crime scene investigated, the murder weapons impounded, the motive clear to any one with even an iota of logical capability," said Peter Wallace, a veteran business consultant in Manila. "The case is simple, the perpetrators known, it's an open-and-shut case."

But five years on, no one has been convicted.

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Business

Myanmar stalls in corruption rankings march

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INTERNATIONAL perceptions of corruption in Myanmar remain unchanged – and unfavourable, according to the anti-corruption group Transparency International. The group's report, issued last week, puts Myanmar at number 156 out of 175 countries surveyed, the same position as last year.

Myanmar is at the same level as Cambodia and Zimbabwe.

Though Myanmar has risen six places since 2012, progress seems to have stalled, at least in terms of international perceptions.

Since its creation last February, the Anti-Corruption Commission set up by President U Thein Sein has received nearly 600 written complaints, but has taken up only three issues.

The commission says it cannot take action without documentary evidence of corruption.

MP U Ye Htun told *The Myanmar Times* that the commission lacked the authority to take effective action. "Cleaning up corruption is going to be a struggle," he said.

Daniel Barrins, in charge of business development for Herbert Smith Freehills legal firm and partner of Asialink, an Australia-based group that fosters business links with Asia, said corruption was denying Myanmar's ordinary people the benefits of foreign investment, identifying the other problems as land ownership and weaknesses in intellectual property rights and the rule of law.

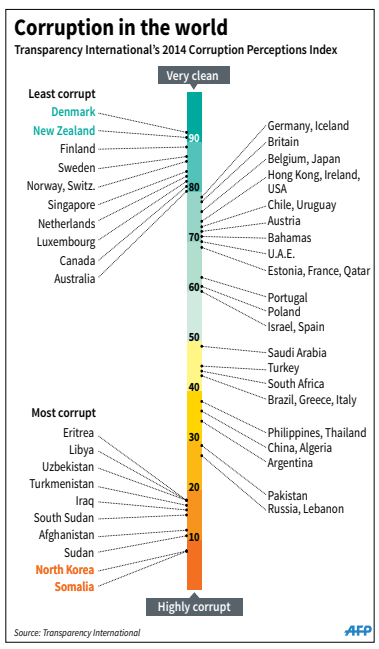
These together created a "dilemma" for would-be investors.

U Naing Ko, a PhD scholar in governance and anti-corruption at the College of Asia and the Pacific, Australian National University, said failures in regulation and enforcement allowed corruption to flourish in every sector of Myanmar.

"The commission is unlikely to take action against the government or its ministries. But that's where most of Myanmar's corruption lies," he said.

U Than Aung, a member of the anti-corruption commission, said, "We do not recognise any further international organisation results because our commission was established only nine months ago."

He added that the commission took action in accordance with the laws as they were. "We will investigate and take action whenever we receive the necessary documentation," he said.



A student walks over the pedestrian bridge outside BEHS 1 Dagon, while cars queue in the background in an area that is sub

No change to car import policy:

AYE NYEIN WIN

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THE Ministry of Commerce has no plans to red-light private car imports, even as traffic congestion in Yangon worsens by the day.

Deputy Commerce Minister U Pwint San said during a meeting with car importers and the Myanmar Automobile Manufacturers and Distributors Association on November 30 that the ministry would not intervene in the market.

"It is true that Yangon is facing heavy traffic jams. But we will not cancel car import permits," he said. "There has been a rumour that we will cancel personal permits and limit sales to car-sale centres. But we will find other ways to improve the import system."

Several car-trading yards, specifically facilitating private trading of used cars, are established in urban areas and create ugly traffic snarls, said Myanmar Automobile Trade Association chair U Aung Than Win.

"Official car-trading yards at the old Thirimingalar and Bartar markets accepted about 2000 units," he said. "In the past, these cars can park the whole day and night. But since the car import policy changed in 2011, these yards have been flooded because businesses parked their fleets at the compounds.

"Many personal car importers complained to the Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC), which responded by ruling that cars cannot be parked at the yards at night," he said.

Instead, traders drive their cars into the yard at 6am and take them out at 6pm – just when the city's peak-hour traffic is at its worst.

U Aung Than Win said the trading centres should be moved outside the urban area to solve the issue.

Chair of the Myanmar Automo-

One year after raids, liquor import reform unchange

BUSINESS 26

Condo law draft to return to Pyidaungsu Hluttaw in January

PROPERTY 34

Exchange Rates (December 5 close)

Currency	Buying	Selling
Euro	K1270	K1280
Malaysia Ringitt	K307	K308
Singapore Dollar	K787	K795
Thai Baht	K31	K32
US Dollar	K1035	K1039

ject to heavy congestion. Photo: Yu Yu

Commerce Ministry

bile Manufacturers and Distributors Association U Soe Htun said the recent increase in the value of the US dollar against the Myanmar kyat, an upswing of about 8 percent, could be partially attributed to demand for dollars to import cars.

He said the Central Bank had considered asking private banks to suspend offering new personal bank accounts in US dollars in November.

Car trader U Aung Kyaw Oo said solving the city's traffic congestion required education, not ministerial interference.

"If the ministry cancels car imports, will it stop the traffic jams? I don't think so, this is not the correct answer," he said. "Much of the problem comes from drivers who only think about driving their cars and don't know the traffic rules."

Since the government initiated changes to the car import policy more than 400,000 new or used vehicles have been imported to Myanmar and registered. Minister for Commerce U Win Myint said the ministry has permitted 186 car sale centres to open, including 14 centres that sell vehicles from globally recognised brands that include Toyota, Ford, Jaguar, Mazda, Nissan and Mercedes.

However, many of the 400,000-plus vehicles have found their way onto Yangon's roads, clogging its limited road network.

MOGE signs four production contracts

MYANMA Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE) signed four production-sharing contracts (PSC) last week for the development of deep-water exploration and drilling sites. The first signings were Oil India Consortium for block M-4 in Mottama offshore and YEB in Tanintharyi on December 4. MOGE signed with London-based Ophir Energy for block AD-3 off Rakhine State on December 4 and with Berlanga Holdings for block M-8, also off Rakhine, on December 5.

Oil India, together with India-based Mercator Petroleum and Oilmax Energy, will invest at least US$120.9 million within seven years for exploration activities for two offshore blocks, said MOGE's statement. Oil Star Management from Myanmar is the local partner for Oil India.

Ophir Energy will partner Parami Energy for deepwater block AD-3. "We are very excited. It's our first time outside our home in Africa. The deepwater exploration opportunities in Myanmar are similar to what we have found in Tanzania," said Bill Higgs, chief operations officer of Ophir, which won a deep-water block in the first bidding round last year.

"One of the challenges in seismic acquisition is the weather window. We will have to wait for six months, but will be looking at first drilling in late 2017," he said.

The companies selected are likely to miss their chance to start exploration activities before next year's monsoon season, as they have to complete environmental and social impact assessments within six months. The Ministry of Energy launched the first offshore bidding round in April 2013. A total of 68 companies showed interest in the 10 shallow-water blocks and 10 deep-water blocks. – *Aung Shin*

Ghosts of 2003 crisis haunt banks

A familiar set of problems continue to plague banking landscape, say experts

AYE THIDAR KYAW
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BANKS need to clean up their operations and subject their boards of directors, as well as their families, to intense scrutiny if they want to earn the trust of consumers, industry experts said last week.

The most recent incident – which followed a familiar pattern where panicked customers attempted to withdraw all their savings from the bank, causing a small run – hit United Amara Bank. The run was spurred by the sanctioning of former Minister for Industry U Aung Thaung, whose son owns United Amara Bank (UAB), by the United States government on October 31.

The US Department of Treasury said in its announcement that financial sanctions had been brought against U Aung Thaung for "intentionally undermining the positive political and economic transition in Burma, Aung Thaung is perpetuating violence, oppression, and corruption", said Adam J Szubin, the director of the Office of Foreign Assets Control.

In the wake of the run UAB officials strenuously denied that U Aung Thaung had any links with the bank and was not a shareholder.

Previously, Asia Green Development Bank (AGD), owned by U Tay Za, who is also sanctioned by the US government, befell the same fate. In previous years Kanbawza Bank (KBZ) and Co-operative Bank (CB) have been afflicted by the same problem, with only the prompt actions of the Central Bank of Myanmar to assure the public and support the banks staving off more widespread problems.

The danger of a run on one bank spreading to the industry as a whole was illustrated in the 2003 banking crisis, when several banks collapsed. Official data provided by bank sources said only one in six Myanmar citizens own bank accounts, showing that the scars inflicted by the 2003 crisis have not healed.

The common thread linking all the runs on Myanmar's banks is rumour of impending collapse or punitive action levelled by either the Myanmar government or the US.

AGD executive director U Soe Thein said many of the most recent runs have apparently concerned the reputations of the banks, their shareholders or directors or their relationships with the government.

United Amara Bank was the latest bank to be hit by mass currency withdrawals. Photo: Thiri Lu

"The backgrounds of the banks or their shareholders are not 100-percent clear, so this probably the main source of rumours," he said. "This is distinct from runs that happen to banks internationally, where people rush to withdraw their funds from a bank based on its poor performance," he said.

U Pe Myint, managing director of CB Bank, said some rumours appear to have been deliberately started to hurt individual banks, adding that the proliferation of social media sites such as Faceboook had significantly increased the pace at which rumour could spread.

MORE ON BUSINESS 26

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Dated: 8th December, 2014

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Dated: 8 December 2014

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Phone: 372416 Dated: 8th December, 2014

A police officer watches over a haul of liquor seized by the Ministry of Commerce in December 2013. Photo: Zarni Phyo

One year on, liquor import policy unchanged

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MORE than one year after customs officers raided drinks importers, the Ministry of Commerce is still mulling over an alcohol importation policy.

In October and December last year, the ministry raided three liquor suppliers, the most high-profile being Quarto Products and Premium Distribution, City Mart's import and distribution subsidiary. Two other raids found liquor hidden in trucks.

Court cases against the companies in question are ongoing.

Negotiations with importers are still continuing, with the restrictions on the issuance of liquor importation licences potentially costing the state millions in lost taxes, industry observers say.

Ministry director U Tin Ye Win, who is responsible for the mobile teams that conducted last year's raids, said liquor imports had been permitted since July, but importers and retailers had yet to put forward their views on the policy. The negotiations also concern taxes to be levied on the sale of existing stocks, as well as what brands each importer may import.

U Tin Ye Win said, "We worry that some traders have imported more than their licence permits, and the new policy would be tighter."

U Aung Naing Myint, an executive member of the Myanmar Retailers' Association, said he understood that officials were planning to attach a security tax tag on bottles of imported liquor, though this has reportedly not been discussed in detail. He said large quantities of liquor entered the country illegally through the border posts of Myawaddy and Muse, some of it under false labels of famous brands.

"Retailers are getting ready to sell officially, but prices would inevitably rise," he said, as importers had to pay increased duty, said U Aung Naing Myint.

Meanwhile, the Myanmar Investment Commission plans to permit at least one foreign-backed brewery to operate in-country, said MIC secretary U Aung Naing Oo.

Three local breweries currently produce 20 million litres, or about 30 percent of local consumption, with the remaining 70pc illegally imported. MIC has already approved permission for Heineken and Carlsberg to build breweries Yangon and Bago respectively.

CONTINUED FROM BUSINESS 25

However, he said Myanmar's banks have been careful to insure themselves against collapse by buying treasury bonds and holding cash with the Central Bank.

U Pe Myint added that CB Bank had been hit by a mini-run in 2011, which was instigated by rumours that the bank was threatened with imminent collapse, which was allegedly the result of government pressure on its chair.

He added that support from the Central Bank and partner banks helped to defuse the crisis.

"We are experienced in how to solve these problems and are no longer afraid to return customer funds as required by the immediate situation requires. But it can be hard to control," he said.

CB is now under the supervision of the Ministry of Co-operatives, which is checking the backgrounds of its shareholders and supervising some activities, to ensure the bank is not blacklisted.

Central Bank guidelines require each bank to have K20 billion (about $20 million) in paid-up capital with a government-owned bank, with an additional K700 million to be added for each branch in a city, and K300 million for smaller towns.

U Than Lwin, a KBZ vice president, said the latest draft of the financial institution law states that banks must disclose the backgrounds of its directors and supervisors, as well as where they have earned their money.

This, he said, would encourage banks to cut ties with directors and major shareholders with shady backgrounds.

However, the boards of many of the country's banks are stacked with members from an individual family, making them easy targets for rumour, said U Than Lwin. He added that many banks would need to significantly reform their boards and shareholdings to be eligible to become public companies, an essential requirement for listing on the upcoming Myanmar stock exchange.

"Becoming a public company will clear up a bank's image and the Central Bank is encouraging banks to take this path," he said. "We are also considering this option."

U Than Lwin, who was a deputy governor of the Central Bank during the crisis in 2003, adding that some of the banks that collapsed at the time lacked the experience to solve their problems.

However, he said the same customer anxiety and fear of losing deposited funds, or at least the interest owed on deposits, remain for customers.

But he said banks are releasing information such as their money circulation, loans and deposit ratios, liquidity ratio and the amount of money invested in treasury bonds through their websites, which helps to encourage consumer confidence.

"Domestic banks are becoming more transparent and mature and there are more financial institutions, which makes it harder for rumours to collapse banks," U Than Lwin said.

Central Bank deputy director general U Win Thaw said the central bank has listed the boards of directors and shareholders of all commercial banks to allow the public to scrutinise them.

"The main thing is that this is our responsibility, to ensure that people lose their money nor their trust in the banks," he said.

"People still lack awareness and they don't know where they can confirm whether something is a rumour or fact. The message I want to pass is to ask the Central Bank or relevant bank first."

MOGE starts new gas pipelines to boost Yangon supply

AUNG SHIN

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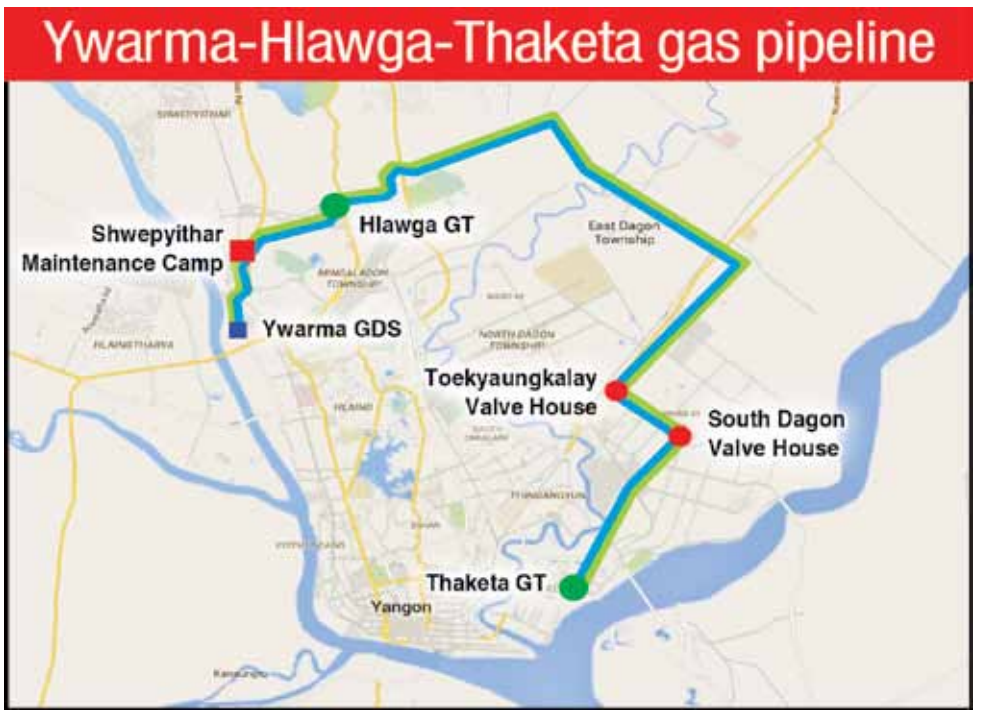

MYANMA Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE) has started building a 56-kilometre (35-mile) natural gas pipeline in Yangon to feed more gas to the city's power plants and gas-fired factories, said officials.

The Ywarma-Hlawga-Thaketa natural gas transmission pipeline will pass through the seven townships of Insein, Shwepyitha, Mingalardon, Hlegu, East Dagon, South Dagon and Dagon Seikkan. Construction of the pipeline began in November and work is scheduled to be finished by the end of March.

"We want the public to know more about the new pipeline projects that we are implementing," said U Wai Oo, a MOGE director, during a press conference at MOGE's office in Yangon on December 2.

"We want to minimise the problems that people face during construction but there will be some ill effects, no matter how careful we are."

The pipeline will start at Ywarma station, where natural gas piped from offshore gas projects is stored, and the pipeline will end at Thaketa, near the Thilawa Special Economic Zone. It will cross roads 32 times and railway lines at least three times.

"This 30-inch gas pipeline is the largest one implemented by MOGE. We only have experience building pipelines that measure 24 inches in diameter," said U Wai Oo.

MOGE will also build a 32km pipeline linking Myochaung to Shwepyitha, which will sit alongside the existing Aphyauk-Shwepyitha pipeline.

A third pipeline project set for completion in this financial year, ending March 31, is the replacement of a gas transmission pipeline to CNG stations in Yangon. A total of 35km of pipeline is set to be replaced.

U Tun Thwe, MOGE general manager, said work on all three projects started in November.

"We are using PE-coated pipes that offer better protection against rust. The pipes are guaranteed for at least 15 years," he said.

The Chinese-made piping will be installed 3 feet (91.4 centimetres) underground in all projects to reduce the risk of accidental breaks, he added. Smart Technical Services, Native Power Technology and KST Construction – all Myanmar companies – were awarded the contracts to build or repair the pipelines.

The three projects will cost K3 billion (about US$3 million) in total to build, with a further $20 million paid to buy the piping from China. A further $1.5 million will be paid as an installation fee.

Currently Yangon Region receives 165 million cubic feet a day (mmcfd) of natural gas from the Yadana offshore project and 92mmcfd from the Zawtika project. Onshore supplies amount to about 20mmcfd, which is then pumped to CNG stations in Yangon and then into passenger vehicles, trucks and buses.

LONDON

Britain launches 'Google tax'

THE British government on December 3 slapped a new tax rate on multinational companies that seek to avoid paying their fair share to Treasury coffers.

The levy – nicknamed the "Google tax" because of the high number of technology firms seeking to avoid tax – will come into force in April, finance minister George Osborne said in a budget update.

"Today I am introducing a 25-percent tax on profits generated by multinationals from economic activity here in the UK which they then artificially shift out of the country," Mr Osborne told lawmakers in his so-called autumn statement.

"That's not fair to other British firms. It's not fair to the British people either. Today we're putting a stop to it."

Mr Osborne had already warned in September that he would launch a crackdown on multinational firms that use complex corporate structures to lower their tax bills in Britain.

The announcement comes amid simmering public anger over the tax affairs of multinationals like US technology giants Amazon, Apple, Facebook and Google and coffee group Starbucks, who seek to shift their profits from higher tax countries to those with lower tax rates.

"We will make sure that big multinational businesses pay their fair share," said Mr Osborne.

"Some of the largest companies in the world, including those in the tech sector, use elaborate structures to avoid paying taxes."

He added, "My message is consistent and clear, low taxes, but taxes that will be paid.

"Britain has led the world on this agenda. And we do so again today."

– AFP

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"Provision of safety deposit box services; deposits of valuables; cash management services; provision of information, advisory and consultancy services for the aforesaid services" in Class 36;

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"Internet portal services; provision of communication facilities for the interchange of data by digital or electronic means; provision of information, advisory and consultancy services for the aforesaid services" in Class 38;

"Courier services [messages or merchandise]; collection and delivery of documents and letters; provision of guarded transport services; delivery of documents by messenger; guarded transport of valuables; physical storage of goods or information; physical storage of electronically-stored data or documents; provision of information, advisory and consultancy services for the aforesaid services" in Class 39;

"Arranging and conducting of workshops [training]; practical training services relating to security and law enforcement; arranging and conducting of conferences and seminars; provision of courses of instruction and training for security personnel; provision of training facilities or security training programmes; provision of information, advisory and consultancy services for the aforesaid services" in Class 41;

"Recovery of computer data; computer programming; computer system design; computer systems analysis; computer software design; installation and maintenance of computer software; data security services [firewalls]; computer virus protection services; computerised communication network security; professional consultancy relating to computer security; installation and maintenance of computer software in relation to security systems; development of computer systems for alarm monitoring; development of computerised security equipment and surveillance equipment for buildings and premises; computerised analysis of data; provision of backup computer disaster recovery services; computerised data storage services; computerised business information storage; provision of information, advisory and consultancy services for the aforesaid services" in Class 42;

"Security services for buildings; personal body guarding; night guards; security consultancy; baggage inspection for security purposes; surveillance services; computerised surveillance services relating to burglary; computerised security services for domestic establishments; consultancy services relating to security; control of access for security purposes; guarding (other than guarded transport); guarding of valuables; house monitoring for absent occupants; premises monitoring for absent occupants; intruder detection; monitoring of burglar and security alarms; monitoring of fire alarms; monitoring of security control apparatus; monitoring services for fire alarms; monitoring of surveillance systems; provision of information relating to the operation of fire detection alarm; provision of information relating to the operation of intruder detection alarms; provision of information relating to the operation of smoke detection alarms; provision of on-site security facilities; provision of emergency response services, namely security services and monitoring of surveillance of security systems for the protection of property and individuals, pursuant to the activation of a panic button; rental of closed-circuit television monitoring apparatus; security assessment of risks relating to the guarding of persons; rental of security surveillance equipment; provision of information, advisory and consultancy services for the aforesaid services" in Class 45.

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MOGE to test China oil pipeline soon

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THE controversial crude oil pipeline linking western Myanmar to the Chinese border could start pumping within weeks, officials disclosed last week. U Wai Oo, a director with Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE), told *The Myanmar Times* that a test run would be conducted within the next two months.

"We have applied for a licence for oil storage on Made Island. The Ministry of Mines will inspect the location soon. The next step will come after we get the licence," said U Wai Oo.

The pipeline, which was scheduled for launching at the end of 2013, runs parallel to the natural-gas line that became operational last year. But neither the Chinese nor the Myanmar authorities were able to explain the delay. Last month a spokesperson for the South East Asia Crude Oil Pipeline Company (SEAOP) said the project could still be operational this year.

The China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) originally launched the project in 2008 to bring oil from the Middle East and Africa. Oil tankers with maximum capacity of 300,000 tonnes of crude oil will dock at Made Island.

"The operational status of the pipeline depends on the shipper party. SEAOP is only responsible for transporting the oil through the pipeline," it said.

SEAOP has built 12 tanks on Made Island to store crude imported from the Middle East. SEAOP is the main operator of the pipeline and MOGE is partially responsible for its construction.

"About 13 different sub-projects are being handled by SEAOP in the entire construction project. I am not sure exactly when the pipeline will become operational," the official said.

The Myanmar government plans to buy 50,000 barrels of crude a day once the pipeline is operating, as the Ministry of Energy runs a new refinery project in central Myanmar.

The estimated cost of building the pipeline is US$2.5 billion. It is designed to carry 2 million tonnes of crude oil a year, according to SEAOP.

CNPC holds a 51 percent stake in the project, while MOGE has 49pc ownership.

Myanmar will directly obtain a road right fee of $13.81 million from pipeline projects every year and a transit fee of $1 per tonne of crude oil.

IN BRIEF

Nissan launches two new models
Nissan has released two new vehicles for sale in Myanmar from late November, the company's distributor, ETCM Myanmar Co announced.

ETCM will retail the Altima mid-size sedan in Myanmar for US$59,000 and the X-Trail small sports utility for $60,500, ETCM president Dato Cheah Sam said at the unveiling.

ETCM is backed by the Tan Chong Group of Malaysia and was established in May 2013. Nissan and Tan Chon announced in August 2013 that the company would build a factory in Myanmar.

"We can support Myanmar's economic growth by hiring local labour for the factory and we believe that Myanmar's economy will grow in the future." – *Aye Nyein Win*

MONTEVIDEO

OPEC's have-nots feel price pain

NOT all oil giants are created equal, as struggling Venezuela, Nigeria, Iran and Russia are painfully aware in the wake of OPEC's divisive decision to maintain production levels.

Last week's decision to keep output at 30 million barrels a day has sent oil prices tumbling to five-year lows and split the 12-country cartel and other major producers between haves and have-nots.

While well-heeled OPEC members are playing a long game to protect their market share in the face of a US shale oil onslaught, their poor cousins are desperate for prices to rise so they can balance their books and salvage their teetering economies.

Unlike the Gulf states that rejected turning down the taps, these countries generally do not have sovereign wealth funds to smooth over price fluctuations and have built their government budgets around a price scenario that is now radically out of sync with reality.

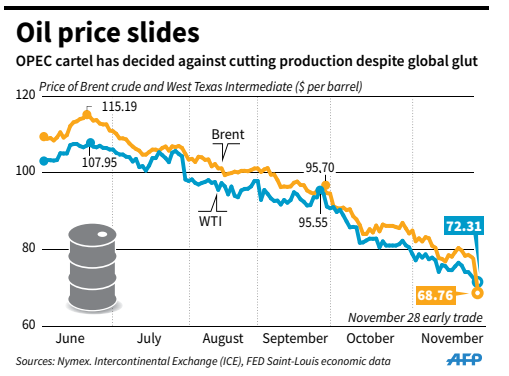
OPEC's decision "increases the chance of unrest in member countries without sufficient financial reserves to weather the price storm", said James Williams, an energy economist at consultancy WRTG Economics.

Many of these countries need prices of more than US$100 a barrel for their national budgets to break even. But crude prices are currently hovering around $70 a barrel in New York and London.

The pain is especially acute for Venezuela.

The South American country holds the world's largest proven crude reserves but is the most fragile of the oil giants.

On December 5, President Nicolas Maduro's government announced painful budget cuts in the aftermath of the OPEC decision.



"This is clearly a disaster for Venezuela with currency reserves too low to weather anything below $90 per barrel for more than a few months," said Mr Williams.

Venezuela relies overwhelmingly on oil revenues, which account for 96 percent of its foreign reserves, and the slide in prices is bad news for a country that was already struggling to balance its books.

"The fall in oil prices pushes Venezuela even closer to default. Given that the government has nothing in the way of savings from the oil price boom of the past decade, the loss of oil revenues will wipe out whatever foreign currency that the government has," said David Rees, an analyst at Capital Economics.

Nigeria, whose oil wealth has made it Africa's largest economy, is also stuck in a predicament.

"The government has taken some panicky measures including massive devaluation of the naira," a tool also used in Venezuela, said Peter Ozo-Eson, secretary general of the Nigeria Labour Congress.

Iran has begun following that advice, increasing non-oil exports, including petrochemical products and natural gas.

"The budget is less and less dependent on oil," said Saeed Leylaz, one of the country's top economists. "The country could even withstand $75 a barrel."

But other analysts say double dependence on oil and petrochemicals will keep the country at the mercy of crude prices.

The Iranian government has announced a tax increase and austerity-driven monetary policy for 2015.

It also appears to have asked for a bailout from China, which recently announced it was doubling investment in Iranian energy.

Venezuela is trying the same strategy.

Officials announced on December 5 that the Chinese economy minister would visit Venezuela to "deepen economic and financial agreements" to compensate for "a lack of earnings due to low oil revenues".

In non-OPEC member Russia, which relies on oil for half its revenues, the ruble has accelerated its decline, losing more than 40pc against the euro this year and more than 60pc against the dollar.

The government wants to slash oil exports by 5 million tons to prop up prices.

"With oil prices dropping and the $60 billion debt of state-controlled oil producer Rosneft, the impact on the Russian economy could be heavy, losing potential to expand globally," said Petra Kuraliova of brokerage house TradeNext. – *AFP*

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Newsroom

2 Translators
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Sales & Marketing

1 Business Development Director
(5+ years in sales, account management, or business development; degree in business or related field; degree from English-taught university a plus)
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(3+ years' experience in sales, account management or in business development; degree or diploma in business or related field)

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1 Editorial intern (2-3 month posting, with potential for long-term hire)
1 Translator (English to Myanmar)
1 Reporter (prior experience necessary)
(For Mandalay Office)

Nay Pyi Taw (Capital Bureau):

Newsroom

2 Reporters
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IN BRIEF

Shanghai

Another 'House Uncle' with 132 homes found in China

A former Chinese village head accumulated 132 Shanghai residential properties, reports said, the latest "House Uncle" – a nickname coined by netizens for male officials with multiple properties – to be identified in a corruption crackdown.

The 60-year-old man, whose surname was given as Li, was previously Communist Party secretary of an unnamed village near Wenzhou who now worked in the steel and construction material industries, the official Xinhua news agency said on December 5.

His holdings came to light when another individual sued him for failing to repay borrowings, said government-backed news portal Zhejiang Online, which first reported the case.

The properties, described as small flats in Shanghai's western suburb of Songjiang, were mortgaged for more than 70 million yuan (US$11.5 million) when they were found and seized by the court, reports said.

The Cangnan county court in Zhejiang province, which heard the case, could not be reached for comment. Reports did not say whether Mr Li would face charges over the properties.

– *AFP*

Frankfurt

ECB prepares to fire anti-deflation gun next year

The European Central Bank on December 4 announced it was ready to act early next year should the euro area show signs of tipping into deflation and kept its key interest rates at record lows unchanged.

At its final policy meeting of the year, the ECB held its main "refinancing" rate steady at 0.05 percent, and its two other rates – the marginal lending and the deposit rates – at 0.30pc and minus 0.20pc respectively.

But the ECB's decision to "substantially" downgrade its latest inflation and growth forecasts for the next three years suggested there is room for additional monetary easing.

ECB president Mario Draghi said the bank had stepped up preparations to undertake additional stimulus measures, such as central banks in Britain, Japan and the United States have done.

According to the ECB's new forecasts, inflation in the single currency area should average 0.5pc this year and pick up only gradually to 1.3pc in 2016, a long way off the central bank's target of around 2pc.

At the same time, area-wide economic growth would amount to a paltry 0.8pc in 2014 and expand to a lacklustre 1.5pc in 2016. – *AFP*

Tehran

Iran plans to tax religious foundations, army-linked firms

Iran's parliament has adopted a law to tax religious foundations and military-linked companies, a first for the Islamic republic that could generate hundreds of millions of dollars in revenues, media reported on December 4.

The government is seeking to tighten spending and raise taxes to offset the negative effect on the state budget of sharply lower oil prices and international sanctions.

The revenue resulting from the new law could amount to 10 billion rials (more than US$377 million at the official rate), said the budget committee's Mousalreza Servati, quoted by the reformist *Shargh* newspaper.

The money raised from the foundations and army-linked businesses that control large parts of the economy would go toward building schools in disadvantaged areas, a lawmaker was cited as saying.

Media outlets said the new legislation refers in particular to the Astan Qods Razavi Foundation, which manages the shrine of Imam Reza, the eighth Shiite imam, in the northeastern city of Mashhad, which draws millions of pilgrims each year. – *AFP*

BERLIN

Corruption worsening in Turkey, China: report shows

CORRUPTION has worsened in China, Turkey and other fast-growing economies, a watchdog warned on December 3, urging the world's banking centres to help combat graft and money-laundering.

Transparency International released its annual Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), which ranked Sudan, North Korea and Somalia as the biggest offenders and Denmark, New Zealand and Finland as the most squeaky clean.

It pointed to multiplying reports of graft in Turkey, which deteriorated the most sharply, and poor results for the big emerging economies known collectively as the BRICs – Brazil, Russia, India and China.

The Berlin-based group's table is the most widely used gauge of corruption by governments, police, court systems, political parties and bureaucracies, highlighting a scourge it says undermines development and deepens poverty.

But this year Transparency International also highlighted the role multinational banks and the world's financial centres play in allowing the dodgy elites of some developing countries to stash away or launder ill-gotten millions.

"Almost every banking scandal that involves money-laundering has gone beyond just small island-state tax havens to really point to illicit funds, corrupt funds, landing in the likes of London, New York, Frankfurt," Transparency International advocacy and research director Robin Hodess told AFP.

She highlighted large fines paid by the bank HSBC to settle claims that it had allowed itself to be used by money launderers in Mexico, and by BNP Paribas for having transferred funds on behalf of Sudan and other countries blacklisted by the US.

It said the EU and US should, like Denmark, move to create public registers for all companies legally based in their countries, listing all beneficial ownership information.

Transparency says that because corruption is illegal and secretive, it cannot be empirically measured. So instead it collates surveys from the World Bank, African Development Bank, Economist Intelligence Unit and other bodies.

It then ranks 175 countries on a scale of 0–100, where zero means very corrupt and 100 signifies very clean. This year the average score was 43, and two-thirds of countries were below 50.

Turkey moved five points deeper into corrupt territory on the list, to a CPI score of 45. China was deemed four points worse, to 36, the same score as Rwanda, Malawi and Angola.

> **'Almost every banking scandal that involves money–laundering has gone beyond just small island–state tax havens.'**
>
> Transparency International advocacy and research director Robin Hodess

Transparency said that Turkey, rocked by anti-government protests last year, has since seen "a crackdown on free speech" with journalists persecuted and arrested.

In China, despite an anti-graft crackdown, "too many corruption cases take place behind closed doors and the manner in which people are prosecuted needs greater transparency", the group said.

China must "outlaw all bribery, provide far greater access to information and create even more robust whistleblower protection", it warned.

Beijing swiftly rejected the criticism, saying its ranking in the index was "seriously inconsistent" with its achievements in fighting corruption.

"It is well known to the world that China is resolute in cracking down on corruption," foreign ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying told reporters. – *AFP*

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Poverty reduction holds back AEC implementation

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AS the year 2015 approaches, economists and other observers are questioning whether Myanmar and its neighbours are doing enough to put in place the ASEAN Economic Community that next year was meant to bring.

During the past year, in which Myanmar has chaired the regional organisation, Nay Pyi Taw has generated agreements on bilateral trade and comprehensive economic partnership. But full implementation still seems a long way off, some observers say.

U Moe Kyaw, managing director of Myanmar Marketing Research Development, said, "Without steps to reduce poverty and narrow the economic development gap among members, AEC implementation might not be achieved."

Nearly one-third of the population of the ASEAN member-countries live in poverty.

Integration also seeks to address problems in food security, climate change and energy needs. Daw Tin Tin Htwe, a senior adviser with Parami Group of Companies, said little had been done in those fields. The Philippines declared six months ago that it could not reach the necessary targets by 2015.

Dr Zaw Oo, executive director of the Centre for Economic and Social Development, said ASEAN faced many challenges on the road to AEC implementation, especially the serious lack of physical infrastructure and the need to increase public income and GDP growth.

"Least-developed countries like Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam still lag in creating job opportunities. That's the main obstacle in increasing public income and the ultimate aim of reducing poverty," he said.

'Least-developed countries like Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam still lag in creating job opportunities.'

U Zaw Oo
Executive director of the Centre of Economic and Social Development

Mr S Intal Ponciano, a senior economist with the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia, told *The Myanmar Times* that AEC implementation would take longer to achieve without regional poverty reduction. "One solution would be for ASEAN to push the agricultural revolution," he said.

Myanmar's National Planning and Economic Development Ministry has reported that the country has already met 60 percent of its targets for climate change, and looks likely to do even better, since it has until 2018 to meet them all, said U Kan Zaw, the planning and economic development minister.

"It's true that we are facing challenges in achieving the AEC targets. But implementation is a process, not an event. We have to look at the longer term," he said.

U Kyaw Lin Oo, an analyst of ASEAN affairs, told *The Myanmar Times* that AEC implementation also faced barriers in the form of trade facilitation practices as well as poverty reduction. "I doubt it can be achieved."

The newly opened Hlaing Tharyar bridge has significantly cut travel times to neighbourhoods on the other side of the Yangon River. Photo: Aung Htay Hlaing

Hlaing Tharyar set to shine after bridge opens

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AFTER several years of painful traffic jams, the owners of properties in Hlaing Tharyar, across the Yangon River to the north-west, could be poised to reap higher returns on their investments, say real estate agents.

The completion of a four-lane bridge across the river in October has slashed travel times to Hlaing Tharyar.

"Hlaing Tharyar has good potential," said U Khin Maung Aye, an estate agent for Asia Myae agency. "In recent years there has been traffic jams and people have not been interested in living or investing in Hlaing Tharyar. But the new bridge, as well as the flyover and overpass at Bayintnaung Junction, means it is easy and quick to reach Hlaing Tharyar."

A spokesperson for Aung Khaing Khant real estate, which focuses on Hlaing Tharyar, said rents on properties in the township at FMI Housing and Pun Hlaing Golf Estate have risen quickly since the bridge was opened.

"We hope that the market here will continue to move quickly," he said. "The market was very slow in recent months because the traffic was terrible – nobody wanted to move to Hlaing Tharyar or live here."

However, U Khin Maung Aye said several factors still hold the area back. He said high land prices might deter potential buyers, adding that a 2400-square-foot plot of land in Hlaing Tharyar costs between K250 million and K380 million (US$250,000-380,000), while larger 10,000-square-foot plots sell for up to K1 billion ($1 million).

He added that large populations of migratory workers and squatters from Ayeyarwady Region were deterring some high-end buyers.

A resident of the township's Shan Chaung ward said Hlaing Tharyar offered good returns, even at the lowest price point because workers from factories in the nearby industrial zones needed housing.

"Many of the people in Shan Chaung ward are from other areas. They come here to work but still need to rent a place to live. Even simple 400-square-foot rooms can rent for K30,000 a month, compared with only K10,000 two years ago," she said.

Agents said that transactions for industrial zone land plots are slow because potential buyers remain wary of government threats to confiscate undeveloped plots.

"Land at the Hlaing Tharyar Industrial Zone is expensive, in part because people have bought a lot of it to speculate on it but have never done anything with it. But now that the government has stated that owners must do something with the land it is far more risky to speculate, which has slowed sales," said U Khin Maung Aye.

Industrial land sells for between K1500 and K2500 million (US$1.5-2.5 million) an acre, he added.

Hlaing Tharyar is a satellite town founded in the late 1980s and the Hlaing Tharyar Industrial Zone is one of the largest industrial parks in the country.

JOB WATCH

CALL FOR CVS: USAID/OTI PROGRAM PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

Background: DAI, an international consulting firm based in the United States, is currently accepting applications from candidates for a Program Development Officer position to support the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Office of Transitions Initiatives (OTI)-funded program. The USAID/OTI program will work with civil society, the Government, and other stakeholders to foster more participatory and inclusive reform and peace processes. This position will require a specific focus and interest in intercommunal relationships and identity issues, and broader issues relating to the democratic transition. Strong candidates will be able to develop and maintain networks amongst local government, civil society organizations, community based organizations, political parties, media, interfaith groups, people involved in peace negotiations and political dialogue, and others. The PDO will also be required to proactivity network with a wide range of local and international civil society organizations (NGOs and CBOs).

Responsibilities: The Program Development Officer will:

- Advise USAID/OTI and the Chief of Party on the evolution of the local political, legal, and economic situation and on how to continuously adapt the program to ensure effectiveness
- Proactively identify grant opportunities and reactively respond to grant ideas from USAID/OTI; once the "yellow light" is given by USAID/OTI, fully develop grant ideas
- With the Grants Managers, Procurement/Logistics Officers, and grantees, develop budgets and activity timelines
- In consultation with the potential partner as well as with the Grants Manager and Monitoring and Evaluation Manager, develops a monitoring and evaluation process for each grant.
- Collects information and data on the programmatic and implementation progress of each grant, draft evaluations of completed grants for input to the activity database.
- Assists visiting USG and DAI staff and other dignitaries as appropriate in scheduling and facilitation of meetings and in providing updates and briefings on the evolving situation in the field.
- Conduct final evaluation in collaboration with the M&E Officer

Qualifications:

- Bachelor's degree or higher in relevant field required.
- Minimum of 4 years of progressively responsible experience in an equivalent position required
- Relevant experience working on donor-funded projects in a related role and with demonstrated supervisory experience
- Strong computer skills (MS Office suite) required.
- Experience with grants or small grants under contract programs highly preferred.
- Excellent verbal and written communication skills required
- English language fluency required.

Interested and qualified candidates should e-mail CV and cover letter to

DAIRecruit@dai.com

Submissions must be received by **December 21, 2014**

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AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY YANGON

JOB VACANCIES

The Australian Embassy in Yangon is a medium sized diplomatic agency representing the Australian Government in Myanmar. It is staffed by employees of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Australian Federal Police, the Department of Immigration and Border Protection, the Australian Trade Commission and the Department of Defence.

The Australian Embassy is seeking applications for the following positions.

SENIOR PROGRAM OFFICER (GOVERNANCE)

SALARY: Negotiable depending on skills and experience

Senior Program Officer (Governance) is responsible for providing help to deliver Australian aid to Myanmar, focusing on support in governance, peace and/or humanitarian sectors. This position reports to the Second Secretary.

Qualifications and Experience:

The appointee should have the following qualifications and experience:

- Excellent oral and written communication skills in English and Burmese.
- Tertiary qualifications in a related development field.
- Experience in delivering, managing and/or monitoring aid programs/activities in governance, peace-building or humanitarian fields.
- Demonstrated skills in communication, negotiation, representation, and managing project plans and budgets.
- Demonstrated ability to respond to client needs in a demanding environment.
- Ability to work effectively in teams with adaptability and responsiveness.
- Good knowledge of modern office procedures, practices, methods and equipment including use of standard personal computer software programs such as Microsoft Word and Excel.

PROGRAM MANAGER – DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE (HEALTH AND PRIVATE SECTOR)

SALARY: Negotiable depending on skills and experience

The Program Manager - Development Assistance (Health and Private Sector) is responsible for providing high level policy and program advice to support the implementation of the Australian Government's aid assistance to the people of Myanmar.

Qualifications and Experience:

The appointee should have the following qualifications and experience:

- Excellent oral and written communication skills in English.
- Demonstrated expertise in international development and achievement in management and review of aid programs/activities.
- Proven ability to think strategically and understand the broader implications of issues for work responsibilities.
- Technical qualifications and/or experience in health or other development-related fields is desirable.
- Well-developed skills in managing change, analytical and problem-solving, people management and sound initiative with practical focus.
- Knowledge of Australian and Myanmar (Burma government policy, with an understanding of related economic, political, social, and cultural issues in development.
- Good knowledge of modern office procedures, practices, methods and equipment including use of standard personal computer software programs such as Microsoft Word and Excel.

The successful applicant will have an excellent opportunity to work with an established organisation offering the opportunity to progress their skills and work experience.

The application form, selection criteria and position description can be obtained from the Australian Embassy, 88 Strand Road, or downloaded from the Embassy website **http://www.myanmar.embassy.gov.au.**

Applications should be lodged at the Embassy or emailed to **austembassy.yangon@dfat.gov.au** together with a statement of claims not exceeding two pages addressing the selection criteria and a copy of your CV. Statements should detail suitability to perform the duties of the position including personal qualities, experience, skills, and knowledge relative to the selection criteria.

The closing date for applications is **4:00 pm on Friday 19 December 2014.**

Note:

1. The Australian Embassy does not discriminate in regards to race, ethnicity, gender and age.
2. Only those candidates whose qualifications and experience are of further interest will be contacted for an interview.

Property

BUSINESS EDITOR: **Jeremy Mullins | jeremymullins7**@gmail.com

Condo law set for more debate in January

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A DRAFT Condominium Law will be re-submitted to the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw in January, a member of the lower house said last week.

Amyotha Hluttaw member U Phone Myint Aung said during parliament last week that there has been disagreement between the upper and lower houses of parliament over the bill.

"When the two houses rewrite drafts it takes some time to reach agreement before it can be submitted to the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw," he said. "If the upper and lower houses still cannot decide, then a decision will be made in the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw."

The draft was rewritten before it was submitted to the Pyithu Hluttaw in June 2014 because some aspects of the bill were not in agreement with the law, said U Saw Hla Htun, the representative of Chaung Oo township, Sagaing Region, in the Pyithu Hluttaw.

"We have discussed and rewritten the law," he said. "So many things have been rewritten because some aspects of it are not related. After we rewrote those components the bill was submitted to the Amyotha Hluttaw," he said.

A key point of criticism from the Amyotha Hluttaw was that the law must state that condominiums must be collectively owned.

"We want more emphasis on collective ownership, which is more important to us than the height that condominiums are built, what size of land plots they are built on or what facilities they must include," said U Phone Myint Aung.

"The definition of 'condominium' in many countries is that they are collectively owned."

He added that collectively owned condominiums would allow the owners to use their properties as collateral and apply for mortgages, which is not allowed at present because apartment owners do not own the land under their buildings.

"When the law is passed, condo ownership will be assured if the development is collectively owned," he said.

Daw Khin Mi Mi Htwe, deputy director of the Department of Law at the Department of Human Settlement and Housing Development, under the Ministry of Construction, said the ministry had been clear what it wanted when it prepared the draft law.

"When the ministry drew up the first draft, we discussed what aspects the law needed to include," she said. "We intended that condo owners would have ownership rights and that foreigners would be allowed to own a percentage of buildings. We wanted this law to meet international standards."

She added that if the two houses of parliament cannot reach agreement, the draft would be sent to the combined houses to be decided by a vote.

U Than Myint, chair of the Committee for Quality Control of High-rise Building Projects (CQHP), said the Condominium Law is of national importance and could bring a new wave of secure and comfortable housing.

"The condominium law is important for the nation but it must be written carefully, so the law will be effective," he said.

He added that when the law is passed, the responsibility for enforcing it would fall to state- and region-level bodies that include the DHSHD, Yangon City Development Committee and others.

"The relevant regional governments need to be decisive. If not, the condominium law won't be beneficial to the public," he said.

U Ko Ko Htwe, chair of Taw Win Family Construction, said a law governing the sale and transfer of apartments is more important than a condominium law.

"The ministry should be drawing up a law concerning apartment sales because many apartments are owned insecurely. Encouraging people to legally transfer apartments and register the sales with the government would bring additional tax revenue and make increase ownership security."

An SPA employee walks in front of condominiums at Pun Hlaing Golf Estate last week. Photo: Naing Win Tun

Pun Hlaing opens sales at 'Lotus' developments

TIN YADANAR TUN
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DEVELOPER Serge Pun & Associates opened sales for its new developments at the Pun Hlaing Golf Estate in Hlaing Tharyar township, a company spokesperson said last week.

Sales of units at the three Lotus-branded developments opened in late November, with the developments due to be completed in two stages in 2015, SPA sales and marketing manager U Thu Rein said.

"Lotus Canal View housing, where each villa faces a canal is under construction and about 40-percent finished," he said. "Lotus Place housing, where each unit has a large garden, is about 50pc complete; both developments will be finished in July next year."

The Lotus Canal View development includes 12 villas, each measuring 4839 square feet of interior space and within an 8665-square-foot compound. There will be an additional 30 Lotus Place villas, which have 4468 square feet of indoor space.

Construction of the 18 Lotus Terrace apartments, which will cover between 2601 and 3068 square feet, will start soon and will be complete by October 2015, U Thu Rein said.

"All the new housing units at Pun Hlaing Golf Estate will be sold at a fair price and only to Myanmar citizens," he said, adding that five villas were sold on the day of launch.

Pun Hlaing Golf Estate housing was started in 1997 by Serge Pun & Associates Limited. The estate includes the 18-hole Pun Hlaing Golf Course, the Pun Hlaing Hospital and the Pun Hlaing School, which will be managed by British Harrow International Management Services, will be opened soon.

HOUSE OF THE WEEK

A slice of nature

Renting this week's house will offer the prospective tenant the expat dream: a big house in a quiet neighbourhood with a pool.

This newly built five-bedroom house sits inside a 10,000-square-foot compound within the bizarrely named Nature Park Valley Housing on Mindhamma Road in Mayangone township.

Four of the five bedrooms come with ensuite bedrooms and there is also a living room, shrine, kitchen and a balcony on the second level.

Frankly, *House of the Week* is are enthused by the green garden and swimming pool – seemingly providing the perfect location to hold a soiree at the weekend or perhaps organising a tiger hunt.

But lest the tropical clime get you down, fear not – the house comes with nine air-conditioners to keep the pesky heat and humidity at bay. The house comes partially furnished and within a short drive of the Ocean shopping centre at 9 mile. – *Tin Yadanar Htun*

Location	:	Nature Park Valley Housing, Mindhamma Rd, Mayangone township
Price	:	US$7000
Contact	:	Estate Myanmar Real Estate Agency
Phone	:	09-43118787, 73114860

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"Least-developed countries like Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam still lag in creating job opportunities."

— U Zaw Oo, executive director of the Centre of Economic and Social Development

Millions evacuated ahead of major typhoon in Philippines
WORLD 45

BEIJING

China to implement property registration

CHINA will implement long-awaited property registration rules from March, a Chinese media outlet said on December 2, in a move that could give the country's anti-corruption investigators extra ammunition and pave the way for new taxes.

Under a draft of the regulations published in August, a national registration system will be established sharing information such as property location, area and origin of ownership among government departments including police, taxation and audit authorities "in real time".

The rules have been approved by the State Council, China's cabinet, and will take effect from March 1 "despite various hindrances", the news portal thepaper.cn reported, citing unidentified sources.

The national registration system could potentially act as an anti-graft tool by preventing officials from hiding their assets. It could also pave the way for nationwide real estate taxes, which are regarded as an effective way to curb speculation, after the country saw years of surging house prices, creating widespread resentment among ordinary Chinese.

But at the same time prices for real estate – a key driver of the economy – have been falling for months, and authorities want to avoid a disorderly plunge in the market.

The scheme was included in a landmark property law in 2007, but Chinese media have said its specific rules have been long delayed due to their sensitivity and complexity.

The Ministry of Land and Resources, which is in charge of the registration, has said it aims to have the system operating by 2016.

Public outrage is intense over corrupt government officials who have sought to hide wealth by illegally amassing homes under false identities.

In one high-profile case last year, Gong Aiai, vice president of a bank in the northern province of Shaanxi and a delegate to the local legislature, was sentenced to three years in prison after she was found to have purchased more than 40 properties under multiple identities. – *AFP*

IN BRIEF

Singapore's GIC to buy US landlord IndCor for $8.1 billion

Singapore sovereign wealth fund GIC will buy IndCor Properties, one of the biggest industrial landlords in the United States, from parent firm Blackstone for a whopping US$8.1 billion, the companies said on December 2.

Blackstone said in a statement posted on its website that the deal is expected to close in the first quarter of next year. It said that as a result of the transaction, Chicago-based IndCor will no longer be pursuing an initial public offering.

"GIC confirms the investment in IndCor," a GIC spokesperso n said.

According to Blackstone, IndCor "owns and operates a portfolio of 117 million square feet (11 million square metres) of high-quality properties in key markets throughout the United States". – *AFP*

Dutch retirement homes offer frat house alternative

NINETY-two-year-old Johanna beams at the 20-year-old stepping into her room – not a visiting grandson, but rather a housemate at her retirement home.

Town planning student Jurrien is one of six who have chosen to live in the yellow-brick home in Deventer in the eastern Netherlands as part of a unique project that benefits everyone.

The university students pay no rent and in exchange spend at least 30 hours a month with some of the 160 elderly who live here, doing the things professional staff cannot always do – such as just hanging out.

"They go see the pensioners for a chat, they play games, go with them to the shopping mall, [and] do shopping for those who can't," says activity coordinator Arjen Meihuizen.

Gea Sijpkes, the head of the Humanitas retirement home, said, "It's important not to isolate the elderly from the outside world."

"When you're 96 years old with a knee problem, well, the knee isn't going to get any better. The doctors can't do much," Sijpkes said.

"But what we can do is create an environment where you forget about the painful knee."

While retirement homes in many European countries lack enough rooms for an ageing population, budget cuts by the Dutch government have made it increasingly difficult to get a subsidised place, leaving some with more rooms than they can fill.

The sharing idea has resonated in a country where many people do volunteer work, and other retirement homes are coming up with their own variations on the theme.

So-called "intergenerational" projects are also springing up elsewhere in Europe, but usually not within retirement homes because of the shortage of rooms.

In some schemes, the elderly rent out a room in their own house or apartment, in others, housing projects are built specifically to house the young with the elderly.

Jurrien, 20, gives Anton Groot Koerkamp, 85, lessons on how to use a computer at the Humanitas retirement home in Deventer, eastern Netherlands. Photo: AFP

In the French city Lyon, a project was set up for students to pay rent to live in a retirement home, but the rules are strict and, unlike in Deventer, friends are not allowed to visit.

In Britain, a commission chaired by a former minister recommended in September that new housing for the elderly and disabled should be incorporated into shopping developments, new apartment blocks and even universities to prevent the elderly from being cut off in "care ghettoes".

"The old model saw care homes as isolated institutions where things were done to you rather than for you and were islands of misery," said former care minister Paul Burstow.

"Care homes that are cut off from their communities aren't real homes."

The students in Deventer prepare simple meals for some of the elderly in the evening and offer them activities according to their interests. Student Jordi, for instance, took a group into the garden and gave them cans of paint to spray on cardboard so they could learn about graffiti.

Jurrien gives weekly computer lessons to Anton Groot Koerkamp, 85.

"Now I can send emails, go on the internet, look up videos and go on Facebook," he said proudly.

There is no obligation for the elderly to take part in activities with the students.

But many, like Jurrien's neighbour Johanna, seem happy with the arrangement.

"I'm old, he's young, but we get along well. We do small things, not much really, but it can help put them in a good mood," said Jurrien.

"Not only do I not pay any rent, but I also like working with the elderly," said journalism student Denise, 22.

"Given that student rooms are too small, too dirty and too expensive, this is a fantastic alternative."

"For 400 euros [US$500] I'd get barely 10 square metres and I'd have to share the kitchen and bathroom," Jurrien said.

"Here I have twice as much space and I have my own kitchen and bathroom."

The students can have friends over for drinks and even have a partner over for the night. There is no curfew or other restriction as long as the students are reasonable.

"One time I came back in the middle of the night and I woke my neighbour [Johanna], she wasn't very happy," said Jurrien.

"So, being a good neighbour I went and apologised and promised not to do it again."

Then again, Jurrien said, smiling: "When she watches [Dutch television game show] *Lingo*, I can hear everything through the wall." – *AFP*

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For **Wyeth LLC**
Dated: 8 December, 2014.

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339 Bogyoke Aung San Road,
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Dated: 8 December 2014

Telenor launched services in Yangon at the end of October. Photo: Yu Yu

Yangon network not complete, says exec

CATHERINE TRAUTWEIN
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TELENOR'S network in Yangon is not complete enough, Telenor Group president and CEO Jon Fredrik Baksaas said at an informal press briefing December 2.

The Norwegian telco's top executive, who tested out Telenor's coverage during a visit to Yangon last week, in part pinned "capacity constraints on the existing number of base stations" on traffic generated by crowds of customers.

He also called rolling out base stations the firm's top priority, followed by providing sites "the necessary energy to fly the capacity". The company anticipates putting up 8000 mobile towers nationally in the next five years, according to Telenor Myanmar representative Ko Soe Thu Tun.

Telenor deployed its network on about 348 base stations in Yangon on October 26, following the telco's debut in Mandalay and Nay Pyi Taw. More than 400 base stations now populate Myanmar's most populous city, but Telenor Myanmar CEO Petter Furberg reaffirmed that approximately 800 would be required in Yangon for "seamless" 2G and 3G coverage.

The company targets deploying 50 to 100 new base stations each month. But getting sites the green light has stalled rapid rollout, according to Mr Baksaas.

"We have our base stations, which we have concentrated in Mandalay, Nay Pyi Taw and Yangon, and we will be building from that, both adding more capacity in these three cities as well as extending to other areas of the country at the speed that we can both manage and are pushing for," Mr Baksaas said. "We are not necessarily the one that wants to go slow."

"From our perspective, we are ready to roll," he said. "The approval processes in order to get base stations into the market, that's the bottleneck."

Mr Baksaas said getting base stations up and running involves cooperating with local government to obtain approvals and to access LAN (local area network).

Infrastructure issues have put Telenor in a predicament, as demand currently exceeds the telco's capacity to offer perfect coverage, according to Mr Furberg.

"When you go to the shops, [people] will scream, 'We want more SIM cards,' and at the same time we have our customers, like even the Group CEO coming in and saying this network isn't good enough," he said. "We're still selling SIM cards, but we're trying to manage where we are selling the SIM cards to ensure that we are not congesting the congested areas more than they already are."

Mr Baksaas acknowledges some customers might regard this practice as "rationing", but said the situation would be resolved with time.

In the meantime, Telenor SIM cards have been seen on the black market selling for more than double their normal price.

Capacity-building will also come down to fibre-line development, already under way. As of now, Telenor is leasing capacity from Myanma Posts and Telecommunications (MPT), Mr Furberg said.

Telenor Group CEO Jon Fredrik Baksaas. Photo: Catherine Trautwein

"We are in the process of completing one more line to Thailand which will increase our capacity tremendously and which we believe will at least suffice for a while," he continued. "But it's also going to be a lot of needs inside Myanmar to build out fibre to be able to handle the data traffic that we expect in the years to come."

Telenor has already sold more than 2 million SIM cards (with almost half that figure sold in Yangon), and people purchase close to 1000 more each day, according to Mr Furberg.

"I hope in five years' time we can say that, 'Yes, our ambition was to serve as many people as we possibly can', that penetration really has grown from below 10 million SIM cards today until maybe 70pc, 80pc of the population," Mr Baksaas said.

– Additional reporting by Thiri Htin Zaw and Aung Kyaw Nyunt. Translation by Zar Zar Soe

Operators scurry to expand network

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STATE-OWNED telecoms provider Myanma Posts and Telecommunications (MPT) will double the extent of its 3G network by the end of March 2015, according to a company official.

MPT, once the sole operator in Myanmar's telecoms industry, now competes in a three-horse race with international providers Ooredoo Myanmar and Telenor Myanmar for mobile customers.

The latter two firms are in the midst of nationwide rollouts that tackled the county's three main cities – Yangon, Mandalay and Nay Pyi Taw – first.

Ooredoo Myanmar aims to extend network coverage to 40 percent of the country's population by the end of December, said Ooredoo Myanmar senior public relations manager Ma Thiri Kyar Nyo.

> **'We target expanding network coverage to 40pc of the population by end of December.'**
>
> **Ma Thiri Kyar Nyo**
> Senior PR manager, Ooredoo

On August 15, Ooredoo's coverage came to 15pc of the population; about three months later, that figure had doubled.

Meanwhile, Ooredoo's foreign competitor, Telenor Myanmar targets covering 90 percent of Myanmar's population in 5 years.

The firm also recently announced it would extend its mobile network to eight regions and states in December: Ayeyarwady, Bago, Magwe, Sagaing, and Mandalay regions and Mon, Kayin and Shan State.

Telenor absorbs commercial top-up tax

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TELENOR has been subsididing a 5 percent commercial tax on telecoms since its launch, according to Telenor Myanmar CEO Petter Furberg.

An update to Myanmar's commercial tax law took telecoms off a list of services exempt from the 5pc tax on April 1, according to Mr Furberg. While Telenor complied with the government's new strictures, other companies didn't – putting the telco at a disadvantage, he continued.

"When we launched our services in September after multiple discussions with the government, we decided that we would collect this tax because the government was very insisting that we had to collect the tax," Mr Furberg said. "At the same time, since our competitors were not collecting the tax, we decided to compensate the customers through a bonus."

The "bonus" gives users the full value of their top-up, for instance subsidising K48 of a K1000 top-up taxed under the new law.

Meanwhile, Telenor pays the 5pc tax out of pocket – a stopgap until the industry catches up to code, according to Mr Furberg.

"In the future, we cannot continue to compensate the customers like this, so this depends on the whole industry following the rules of the government," he said. "It is important for Telenor as a good citizen of Myanmar to actually follow the rules of this country, and the rules are: telecom is no longer exempt from commercial tax."

"That is why we decided that okay, we had to collect it, but not to penalise Telenor customers over other customers, we're giving the tax back as a bonus for now."

In response to questions about the commercial tax, Ooredoo Myanmar's senior manager of public relations Thiri Kyar Nyo said Ooredoo Myanmar was "still discussing amongst us, Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications [MPT], Telenor Myanmar and Ooredoo Myanmar" and "all three operators will be aligned in this case".

MPT did not provide information on its policy with regards to the commercial tax on telecoms.

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Pasteur Institute cements local ties

CATHERINE TRAUTWEIN
newroom@mmtimes.com

FRENCH Minister of State for Development and Francophony Annick Girardin stopped by the National Health Laboratory (NHL) last week to tour the facility and "formalise" a Myanmar Ministry of Health-signed funding agreement for two initiatives with the Pasteur Institute, according to the French embassy.

The Minister, also scheduled to speak at the ASEAN Women's Forum Myanmar in Nay Pyi Taw last week, toured the NHL, gave remarks and posed for photos.

The NHL and the Pasteur Institute have already started to collaborate on two projects in Myanmar addressing infectious diseases and encephalitis.

"Today was the opportunity to celebrate the beginning of a partnership between Institut Pasteur and the National Health Laboratory here in Myanmar," said Dr Marc Jouan, secretary-general of the Pasteur Institute's International Network.

"We are going to work closely on two major health issues ... Starting from that we'll have the possibility to work with the NHL to provide useful information for the Ministry of Health to help the policymakers decide what could be the best therapeutic strategy [and] define the best vaccine prevention recommendation."

The first, called the ECOMORE project, aims to ensure Myanmar facilities are equipped to diagnose, study and analyse severe acute respiratory infections (SARI) instigators, according to the ECOMORE website.

The program has been rolled out in three other countries – Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia – and its 700,000 euro (US $860,000) in backing comes by way of the French Development Agency (AFD).

Through the ECOMORE initiative, the Pasteur Institute has provided equipment and training for NHL employees, and in the past year has researched how respiratory infections impact young children, according to the press release.

Through the ECOMORE project, those administering treatment can "get the correct diagnosis quickly so they can give the correct drug to a particular patient", said Daw Htay Htay Tin, director of the NHL. "This is not only in the research project, it is also affecting through to the public health, through to our young children."

The second health initiative – the Southeast Asia Encephalitis project – seeks to bring down mortality rates associated with infectious encephalitis through better care, the embassy said. Its 175,000 euro (US 215,000) funding comes courtesy of the Total Foundation, part of French energy giant Total.

"We have provided through ... external funds equipment that will help to work on the pathogens in the international standards of hygiene and security which is essential in these conditions," Dr Jouan said. "This type of equipment has been provided to the NHL."

The Pasteur Institute has a long history in Yangon, as it was first set up to combat rabies in 1904. An *Eastern Daily Mail* article dated October 9, 1907, describes a meeting "for the purpose of considering the establishment of a Pasteur Institute in Burma" that drew 800 of the city's citizens.

The Institute, bearing the name of celebrated chemist Louis Pasteur, became the National Health Laboratory in the 1960s and returned to Myanmar last year, the French embassy said.

Daw Htay Htay Tin said Ms Giradin visited in part to "take this opportunity [as] she likes to see how much our people are trying to maintain this building and how laboratory services directly affect the people", she said. "Seeing is believing."

New tech hub debuts downtown

CATHERINE TRAUTWEIN
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ENTREPRENEURIAL incubator and accelerator Ideabox Myanmar and Code for Change Myanmar innovation lab Phandeeyar have raised the curtain on a new technology hub in downtown Yangon, the companies announced December 4.

The centre, SuleTech, will serve as fresh digs for both organisations, which will set up shop in the wings of the 6000-sq-ft space at the top of Mac Tower. Meanwhile, a large middle section will be for the community to claim as its own.

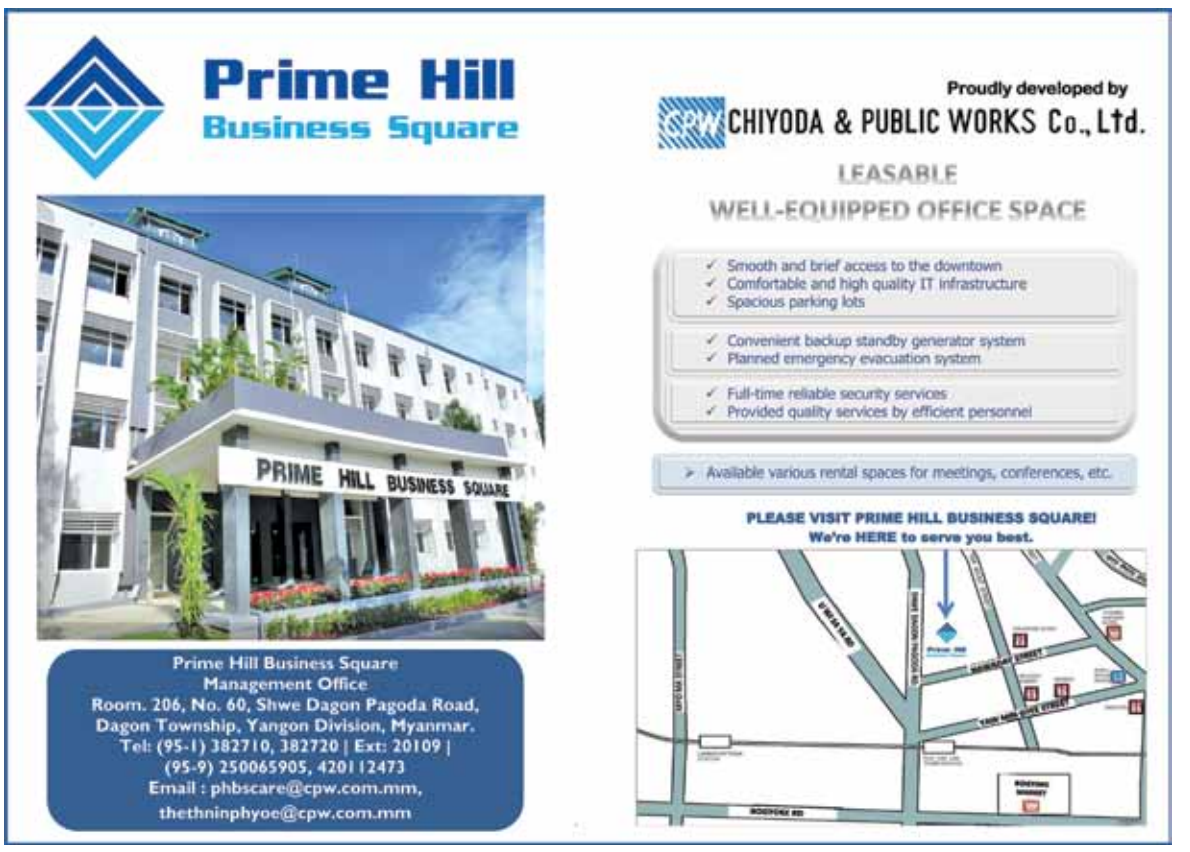
"There's a problem, there's a challenge in this town, and it's the lack of affordable space for the tech community," said Phandeeyar founder David Madden.

To address the issue, Mr Madden and Julian Gorman, Ideabox co-founder and Ooreedoo Myanmar director of digital services, signed up for a new place together. "We got talking, when we create Phandeeyar and Ideabox gets a new office, what if we got an extra big space ... [that has] room for the community?" Mr Madden said.

Tech hubs can be places to connect with people, the wider world, and the World Wide Web. SuleTech will be furnished with co-working desks – monthly rent starts at K30,000 – an HP computer lab, and a cafe that could be stocked by Yangon Bakehouse. Nokia Networks is helping to hook the space up with mobile broadband, according to Mr Madden.

He said SuleTech will also play host to classes and events such as hackathons and app competitions run by Ideabox and Phandeeyar or the community.

"The place is meant to inspire innovation," Mr Gorman said.



World

WORLD EDITOR: **Fiona MacGregor**

SANAA

Hostage's life threatened by al Qaeda in Yemen after failed US rescue bid

AL-QAEDA on December 4 threatened the imminent execution of an American journalist it kidnapped in Yemen, mocking as "foolish" a failed bid by US forces to free him.

Al Qaeda in Yemen released a video dated December 2014 naming the hostage as Luke Somers, 33, saying the photojournalist was kidnapped more than a year ago in Sanaa.

US-based monitoring agency SITE Intelligence Group said Mr Somers was seized in the Yemeni capital in September 2013.

Nasser bin Ali Al-Ansi, of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), threatened in the video to kill Somers in three days if Washington fails to meet unspecified demands.

The Yemeni defence ministry said last week that al-Qaeda had moved hostages, including a US journalist, a Briton and a South African, days before a raid in southeastern Hadramawt province to free the American.

Mr Ansi mentioned a "failed operation" in Hadramawt in which militants died, describing it as the "latest foolish action" by the United States.

The United States said on December 4 that American and Yemeni forces recently tried to rescue Mr Somers.

"Regrettably, Luke was not present, though hostages of other nationalities were present and were rescued," said National Security Council spokesperson Bernadette Meehan.

The White House said President Barack Obama had approved a rescue operation last month.

Details of the operation were classified but Defence Department spokesperson Rear Admiral John Kirby echoed Meehan, saying some hostages had been rescued but that Mr Somers was "not present at the targeted location".

A video grab taken from a propaganda video released by al-Malahem Media on December 4 purportedly shows US hostage Luke Somers. Photo: AFP

The *New York Times* reported that US special operations forces found eight other hostages in the raid.

About two dozen commandos from the US Navy's SEALs, joined by a small number of Yemeni troops, flew by helicopter to a location near the Saudi border, the *Times* reported, citing US and Yemeni officials.The SEALs then walked several hundred metres at night to a mountain cave, taking al-Qaeda militants by surprise, it said.

Mr Kirby said Washington would work relentlessly to "bring people home whenever we can.

"The United States will not tolerate the abduction of our people, and will work tirelessly to secure the safety of our citizens and to hold their captors accountable."

Ms Meehan said the rescue operation "should serve as another signal to those who would do us harm that the United States will not tolerate the abduction of our people, and will spare no effort to secure the safe return of our citizens and to hold their captors accountable."

Hundreds of people have been kidnapped in Yemen during the past 15 years, mostly by tribesmen who use them as bargaining chips in disputes with the government. Nearly all have been freed unharmed.

While AQAP is considered by Washington as the most dangerous affiliate of al-Qaeda, it is not known for frequently executing foreign hostages.

Its threat follows the murder of five Western hostages since August by the Islamic State group that controls parts of Syria and Iraq.

Yemen is a key US ally in the fight against al-Qaeda, allowing Washington to conduct a longstanding drone war against the group on its territory. – *AFP*

IN PICTURES

PHOTO: AFP

Demonstrators in Mexico City burn
demanding justice in the case of 43
hit a new low, opinion polls showed
students last September in Guerrero

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Dated. 8th December, 2014

NEW YORK

Racist police killings sp

THOUSANDS of protesters clogged streets in New York and other major US cities in nights of protests last week to condemn police killings of young black suspects.

The largely peaceful demonstrations came as details emerged of another racially tinged death.

America's largest city of 8.4 million again saw bursts of outrage after a grand jury on December 3 decided not to indict a white officer for the death by chokehold of an unarmed black father-of-six.

Demonstrators blocked roads, tunnels and bridges, with many of them shouting "I can't breathe" –the words that heavy-set asthma sufferer Eric Garner, 43, gasped repeatedly as police wrestled and held him to the ground during his arrest in July for selling un-taxed cigarettes.

Video of the arrest has been aired repeatedly on TV. Mr Garner died of what was described as a heart attack.

Dozens of people were arrested in rallies on December 4, the *New York Times* reported, quoting police.

Demonstrations were also held in Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington DC, where they snarled traffic near the White House as President Barack Obama lit the national Christmas tree.

As helicopters hovered above, thousands of activists massed in New York's Foley Square, near the city police headquarters, shouting "Shut it down" and carrying placards saying "Black Lives Matter" and "Racism Kills".

"We cannot tolerate police impunity. The government has to do something. They have a video showing what happened," said a 40-year-old demonstrator who gave his name only as Jonathan.

An activist holds up a sign during a protest on December 4 in Washington, DC, in Ferguson, Missouri, and Eric Garner in Staten Island, New York. Photo: AFP

Police sealed off the Holland Tunnel, the key road link into New Jersey as US media reported that thousands streamed up the west side of Manhattan, clogging streets in downtown Manhattan and shutting traffic on the Manhattan Bridge heading to Brooklyn.

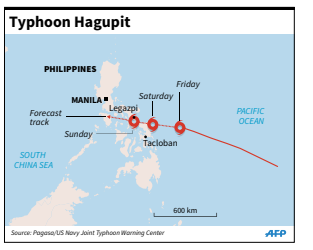
Another group marched across the Brooklyn Bridge, with a black banner that said "this stops today" and 10 black coffins inscribed with names of people killed by police in different city boroughs.

Hong Kong protesters turn to puns for success

WORLD 41

Thai king cancels birthday appearance due to ill health

WORLD 42



Millions evacuated in Philippines ahead of Typhoon

WORLD 45

a banner bearing the image of Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto during a protest
missing students from Ayotzinapa on December 1. The president's approval rating has
last week, amid outrage over his government's handling of the presumed massacre of the
state.

ark New York protests

against the police deaths of Michael Brown

Hundreds then continued the march through Brooklyn, followed by police, but an AFP reporter saw no incidents of unrest.

National controversy over Mr Garner's death and a series of other incidents were fanned further on December 4 by a damning US federal investigation which concluded that police in Cleveland routinely employ "excessive force.".

In Arizona, meanwhile, police said a white officer shot dead a 34-year-old black man during a confrontation outside a convenience store.

Phoenix police said the officer involved shot dead Rumain Brisbon after mistakenly believing he was reaching for a gun inside his jacket. In fact he was unarmed.

The killing is the latest of several cases since the death of Mr Garner which have triggered a national debate about how minorities are treated by police and the American criminal justice system.

Police shot dead a 12-year-old boy in Cleveland last month while another grand jury last week decided not to prosecute a white officer in Ferguson, Missouri, who killed unarmed black teen Michael Brown in August.

Protests in New York have been overwhelmingly peaceful but police arrested 83 people following the December 3 decision not to press charges in Mr Garner's death.

At the Manhattan ferry terminal to Staten Island, the New York borough where Mr Garner died, protesters briefly tried to break apart metal barriers erected by police.

"Here you can beg for your life but the police will not care," said protester Margarita Rosario, whose 18-year-old son Anthony and nephew were killed by New York police in 1995.

"Nothing will change here until people will react like in Ferguson," said Rosario, who lives in the Bronx.

The federal investigation into policing in Cleveland began 18 months ago and was not linked specifically to the killing on November 22 of black 12-year-old Tamir Rice in a city playground by police.

Officers responded to a report that a youth was brandishing a gun, but Rice was later found to be carrying a toy, and a video of the incident showed police opening fire within seconds of their arrival.

"We have determined that there is reasonable cause to believe that the Cleveland Division of Police engages in a pattern or practice of using excessive force," US Attorney General Eric Holder said.

He blamed this on "systemic deficiencies, including insufficient accountability, inadequate training and equipment, ineffective policies and inadequate engagement with the community."

Mr Holder has said federal civil rights investigations were being held both the death of Mr Brown in Ferguson and Mr Garner in New York.

"In recent days, millions of people throughout the nation have come together, bound by grief and anguish, in response to the tragic deaths of Michael Brown ... and Eric Garner," Mr Holder said.

"And as President Obama and I have indicated, the time has come to do even more."

Mr Obama briefly addressed the inherent mistrust many black Americans have of police.

"We recognise this is an American problem and not just a black problem or a brown problem," Mr Obama said. – *AFP*

LONDON

Ghani pledges 'self-reliant' Afghanistan

PRESIDENT Ashraf Ghani outlined his vision for a more self-reliant Afghanistan at a conference in London last week as he welcomed the withdrawal of foreign combat troops after 13 years.

Mr Ghani pledged "results" from peace talks with the Taliban and stressed he would "do things differently" from his predecessor Hamid Karzai, who had troubled ties with Western countries.

After agreeing to form a national unity government with chief executive officer Abdullah Abdullah in September, Mr Ghani has vowed to build up Afghanistan's self-reliance, reducing its dependence on aid by boosting its feeble economy and rooting out corruption.

"The world is not responsible for everything for Afghanistan. It is us who are responsible for everything," Mr Ghani said after the meeting. "We are determined to do business differently."

The conference came with the international combat mission in Afghanistan, which peaked at 130,000 troops in 2010, winding down at the end of this year.

Some 12,500 NATO troops, mainly American, will stay on for several years to train and advise Afghan forces.

Mr Ghani hailed the move away from having foreign combat forces in Afghanistan and the continued partnership with donor countries.

"Your continued support for Afghanistan ... gives us the confidence that you will be standing next to us, though in a non-combat role, he said. "This transition from combat to non-combat is most welcome." . – *AFP*

British Prime Minister David Cameron (centre) shakes hands with Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif (left) and Afghan President Ashraf Ghani (right) outside 10 Downing Street in central London on December 5. Photo: AFP

TRADEMARK CAUTION

Kao Kabushiki Kaisha (also trading as Kao Corporation), a Company incorporated and existing under the laws of Japan, and having its registered office at 14-10, Nihonbashi Kayabacho 1-chome, Chuo-ku, Tokyo, Japan hereby declares that the Company is the Owner and Sole Proprietor of the following Trademark:

ALLIE

Reg. No. IV/ 10914/2014 (14 August 2014)

The above trademark is used in respect of "Soaps; perfumery, essential oils, cosmetics, hair lotions" in **Class 3**: and

"Household or kitchen utensils and containers (not of precious metal or coated therewith); combs and sponges; brushes (except paint brushes), perfume atomizers (containers), cosmetic brushes, eyebrow brushes, hair brushed, nail brushes, shaving brushes, hair combs, power compacts not of precious metals (containers), dispensers for liquid soap, soap holders, sponge holders, powder puffs" in **Class 21**.

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Daw Thit Thit Kyaw, LL.B, MA(Business Law), H.G.P
For **Kao Kabushiki Kaisha(also trading as Kao Corporation)**
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: 8 December 2014

TRADE MARK CAUTION

NOTICE is hereby given that **Sumitomo Chemical Company, Limited** a joint stock company duly organized under the laws of Japan, Manufacturers and Merchants of 27-1, Shinkawa 2-chome, Chuo-ku, Tokyo, Japan is the Owner and Sole Proprietor of the following trademark: -

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(Reg: No. IV/802/2005)

in respect of : - "Chemicals for use in the manufacture of insecticides, fungicides and herbicides; Insecticides, fungicides, herbicides, and preparations for killing weeds and destroying vermin" Int'l Classes: 1 & 5

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U Kyi Win Associates
for **Sumitomo Chemical Company, Limited**
P.O. Box No. 26, Yangon.
Phone: 372416 Dated: 8th December, 2014

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GEBERIT

Reg. No. 11937/2011

in respect of "**Class 11:** Sanitary apparatus and installations, in particular complete systems and installations; water conduit devices, armatures and valves for sanitary installations".

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Win Mu Tin, M.A., H.G.P., D.B.L
for **Geberit Holding AG**
P. O. Box 60, Yangon
E-mail: makhinkyi.law@mptmail.net.mm
Dated: 8 December 2014

TRADE MARK CAUTION

Notice is given that **Laboratoires La Prairie SA,** of Industriestrasse 8, 8604 Volketswil, Switzerland, is the Owner and Sole Proprietor of the following Trade Marks:-

la prairie SWITZERLAND

Reg. No. 15496/2014

LA PRAIRIE

Reg. No. 15497/2014

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Win Mu Tin, M.A., H.G.P., D.B.L
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Dated: 8 December 2014

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BANGKOK

Daw May Thein, mother of U Win Zaw Tun, one of two Myanmar men accused of murder in Thailand, cries during an interview in Yangon on December 4. Photo: AFP

Witnesses 'dare not' back Myanmar accused

A LAWYER for two Myanmar migrants accused of murdering a pair of British holidaymakers said on December 4 that key witnesses are too afraid to come forward, hampering his clients' defence as they prepare to enter a plea.

The men stand accused of murdering David Miller, 24, and raping and murdering Hannah Witheridge, 23, on the Thai diving resort of Koh Tao in September.

U Zaw Lin and U Win Zaw Tun, both migrant workers aged 21, were formally indicted for trial on December 4 and were due to enter a plea on December 8, according to prosecutors on nearby Koh Samui, where the case will be heard.

"The court will ask the defendants whether they confess or deny the charges," chief prosecutor Paiboon Archavanuntakun said.

The pair, who did not appear in court on December 4, are also accused of battery and illegal entry to Thailand, among other charges, he added.

They were arrested in October after police said they had found the men's DNA on Ms Witheridge's body and that they had admitted to the crimes.

But U Zaw Lin and U Win Zaw Tun later retracted their confessions, alleging they were obtained under duress.

Their families and legal team have also protested their innocence, saying the men have been made scapegoats by a police force desperate for a quick conclusion to a crime which raised fears over tourist safety in the kingdom.

One of the two men's lawyers told AFP his clients vulnerable immigrant status meant witnesses were scared of testifying or willing to come to his defence.

"This case is not fair. They were migrant workers so witnesses do not dare to testify [for the defence]," Nakhon Chomphuchat, head of their Thai legal team, said.

"We have many disadvantages. We still have not seen the prosecutors' evidence. We just have to fight as best as we can," he added.

On December 2 the defendants submitted a letter to the court urging witnesses to come forward to help clear their name.

> **'This case is not fair. They were migrant workers so witnesses do not dare testify.'**
>
> **Nakkhon Chomphuchat**
> Defence lawyer

Migrant workers, particularly from neighbouring Myanmar and Cambodia, are often accused of crimes in the kingdom. Rights groups say they lack fair access to Thailand's already murky legal system.

Questions over the police probe prompted British Prime Minister David Cameron to urge his Thai counterpart, Prayut Chan-O-Cha, to allow Scotland Yard detectives to review the Thai case.

A team of British detectives visited Thailand in November but are yet to reveal their findings.

On December 4 U Win Zaw Tun's father repeated his belief in his son's innocence. "Our son is not a murderer, but he has been locked up like a criminal," he told AFP in Yangon.

"I want the Thai government to capture the real criminal. Knowing my son is in jail makes me suffer terribly. If I could swap with him I would," he added.

The grisly murders delivered a fresh blow to the kingdom's image as a tourist haven after months of political protests that ended in May's army coup.

Martial law is still in place across the country, and tourist arrivals have eased off compared to last year. – *AFP*

BEIJING

China to halt execution organs trade

CHINA will stop its controversial practice of using executed prisoners as a source of transplant organs from next month, a Chinese newspaper reported last week, a promise it has made repeatedly in the past.

High demand for organs in China and a chronic shortage of donations mean that death row inmates have been a key source for years, generating heated controversy.

International human rights groups have accused Chinese authorities of harvesting organs from executed prisoners without their consent or that of their families – allegations the government has denied.

The country will "comprehensively terminate" the use of executed prisoners as a source of organs for transplants from January 1, the *Southern Metropolis Daily* quoted Huang Jiefu, head of the China Organ Donation Committee, as saying.

Voluntary donation will become the only source for organ transplants, Mr Huang, a former vice health minister, said at a meeting on December 3.

Beijing has made similar pledges before and Mr Huang in November 2012 said that China would end its reliance on organs from executed prisoners within two years.

China banned trading in human organs in 2007, but demand for transplants far exceeds supply in the country of 1.3 billion people, opening the door to forced donations and illegal sales.

Mr Huang said around 300,000 patients in China are in "urgent need" of organ transplants every year, but only about 10,000 operations are carried out, the paper reported.

Only 0.6 out of every million people in China donate their organs, compared with 37 in Spain, he said.

Organ donations are not widespread as many Chinese believe they will be reincarnated after death and therefore feel the need to keep a complete body.

Apart from traditional thinking, fears over potential corruption are another cause of the low donation rates, he added.

"People's concerns over whether organ donation can be carried out in a fair, just and open manner is also an important reason why it has been so hard for the cause to advance," the paper cited Mr Huang as saying.

But China has introduced a new donation system and he said around 1500 people have donated organs so far in 2014, more than the total for the previous four years.

China put 2400 people to death last year, a fall of 20 percent from 2012 and a fraction of the 12,000 in 2002, US-based rights group the Dui Hua Foundation said in October. – *AFP*

HONG KONG

Puns win war of words in HK protests

IN street tents, on stages and online, Hong Kong's young demonstrators express themselves in an emerging dialect that is evolving so rapidly that protester Helen Fan decided to deploy a new weapon in the democracy fight: a dictionary.

The soft-spoken artist is one of a group of protesters behind Umbrella Terms, an online glossary in English and Cantonese of the hundreds of slogans, phrases and symbols that have emerged since September, when students took to the streets in a defiant call for free elections.

"It is really an explosion," Ms Fan, 29, says. The vibrant patois includes derogatory puns on the name of the vilified city leader to tongue-in-cheek calls for action against Beijing's ruling that leadership candidates must be vetted. "There are new terms appearing every week," she says.

Academics say the so-called Umbrella Movement, named after the symbol of the pro-democracy protests, has given Cantonese new life.

This comes in the face of fears it could suffer the same fate as other regional languages such as Shanghainese, which are in gradual decline after decades of being subjugated to the official mainland language, Mandarin.

The Chinese government dismisses Cantonese, which is spoken by at least 60 million people worldwide, as a "dialect".

"The current protest movement is reversing the negative impact of those [Beijing-imposed] educational policies on Cantonese and thrusting it into a key role in the political lives of the people," says Victor Mair, professor of Chinese language and literature at the University of Pennsylvania.

"There is really no precedent for what is happening in Hong Kong now," he says.

The inventive language of the protesters adds to what is already a barrier of understanding for Beijing, which took control of the former British colony in 1997.

"Mandarin speakers can usually understand next to no spoken Cantonese and have a very difficult time making sense of full-blown written Cantonese," says Mr Mair.

"When you add in all of these new political puns and special idioms, then it becomes all the more difficult for outsiders to understand what Cantonese are saying and writing to each other," he says.

Chinese languages lend themselves to puns and veiled symbolism: The vast number of same-sounding words makes wordplay a gift, while characters with similar tones, or pitch patterns, can be easily switched to effect shifts in meaning.

When Hong Kong protesters talk about "going shopping", that is, "gau wu", they mean "to occupy the streets in protest".

It is a playful corruption of "gou wu", the Mandarin for shopping, that incorporates "gau", a vulgar colloquialism for male genitalia.

The phrase went viral after chief executive Leung Chun-ying advised protesters in the newly cleared Mong Kok district to "go shopping" to help local stores.

Helen Fan, one of the founders of the online glossary Umbrella Terms, stands on a giant chess game at the main Admiralty protest site in Hong Kong on December 4. Photo: AFP

"Cantonese speakers have created the expression 'gau wu' to sardonically mimic the Putonghua [standard Mandarin] expression as a form of political protest," says Professor Robert Bauer of the University of Hong Kong.

At the main Admiralty protest camp, toy wolves point to a play on the leader's surname, which in Cantonese sounds like "long", or "wolf". A sign bears characters pronounced "si wai leung", homophones for CY Leung meaning "Leung's twisted thinking".

Silas Fong, a Hong Kong-born artist living in Germany, designs tote bags bearing slogans in Cantonese, from well-worn slang to internet-age memes, as a form of "soft protest".

"I was a bit worried about the disappearance of Cantonese. But after the Umbrella movement I turned optimistic about it," Mr Fong says.

As well as phrases driven by rapid sharing on social media and chat apps such as Whatsapp, Umbrella Terms includes technical definitions on governance and civil rights.

"I realised I actually didn't know many of the terms. No matter how passionate we are, or how often we share news on Facebook, if we don't know our battlefield then I think we cannot really move forward," Ms Fan says.

With students now discussing retreat from the protest sites and clearance orders being enforced, glossary co-founder Lesley Cheung, 20, hopes her work will preserve the legacy of an extraordinary time.

"For a long time I have been thinking, how can this momentum be infused into everyday life so that people in the future will no longer be so obedient, that they can easily mobilise a lot of people to fight against government policy," she says. – *AFP*

BANGKOK

King cancels birthday events

THAILAND'S ailing but much adored King Bhumibol Adulyadej cancelled plans to hold an annual audience to mark his 87*th* birthday on December 5 on the advice of his doctors, the palace said.

The king, who is the world's longest-serving monarch, has spent most of the last few months in hospital as fears over his health mount in a nation where he is seen as a unifying, father-figure throughout a turbulent six-decade rule.

"A team of royal physicians examined the king ... and agreed that he is not ready to grant a royal audience therefore they have recommended he cancels royal activities," the Royal Household Bureau said in a statement early on December 5.

Plans to hold a grand audience and live broadcast the ceremony were also scrapped, an official at the Royal Household Bureau said.

In October the king underwent an operation to remove his gall bladder after tests revealed it was swollen.

He was last seen in public in early November.

The king's birthday, also known as Father's Day in Thailand, is a public holiday and Thais traditionally wear the royal yellow as a sign of devotion to the monarch, while roads are lined with royal flags.

Thai soldiers in ceremonial uniforms take part in a parade in Bangkok on December 2 ahead of King Bhumibol Adulyadej's 87th birthday. Photo: AFP

'A team of royal physicians examined the king ... and have recommended he cancel royal activities'

Royal Household Statement

Elaborate celebrations were expected at the royal palace in Bangkok, where the king traditionally makes an appearance and gives a brief statement to his subjects.

The king last failed to make an appearance in 2008 for his 81*st* birthday celebrations following ill health.

A large crowd of well-wishers, many dressed in yellow and waving flags, gathered in the grounds of Bangkok's Siriraj Hospital where Thailand's monarch is convalescing, chanting "Long live the King," an AFP reporter on the scene said. Some had camped out overnight.

Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn had been expected to carry out some official ceremonies to mark his father's birthday.

Most Thais have only known King Bhumibol on the throne and anxiety over the future once his six-decade reign ends is seen as an aggravating factor in Thailand's bitter political divide.

His period as a constitutional monarch has been pock-marked by nearly 20 attempted or successful coups, the last in May which saw the army topple the elected government.

Thailand remains under martial law, a condition the arch-royalist army says is necessary to keep the peace as it vows to expunge the kingdom of corruption and reboot Thai democracy.

Critics of the military say it has used its status as the defender of the monarchy as a pretext to grab power from the elected government aligned with Thaksin Shinawatra, the billionaire self-exiled former premier whose emergence as an electoral force in 2001 shook up Thai politics.

Mr Thaksin's sister Ms Yingluck was forced out as prime minister shortly before the military's May takeover.

Thailand's monarchy is protected by one of the world's strictest lese majeste laws and the army have ramped up prosecutions under the controversial legislation.

Both local and international media must heavily self-censor when covering the country's royal family.

Under section 112 of Thailand's criminal code anyone convicted of defaming, insulting or threatening the king, queen, heir or regent faces between three and 15 years in prison on each count.

– AFP

SEOUL

Leader's sister may visit South

NORTH Korea has offered to send leader Kim Jong-Un's increasingly influential sister to a private cultural festival in Seoul next year, the South Korean organiser of the event said last week.

If Kim Yo-Jong were to make the trip, it would be the first visit to the South by an immediate member of the North's ruling family.

Ms Kim's name was on the list of authorised attendees North Korea provided ahead of a joint food and culture festival to be held in the South Korean capital in March, businessperson Dongbang Youngman said.

"It's been confirmed that the Kim Yo-Jong named on the list refers to the leader's sister," Mr Dongbang said, adding that he had submitted the list to the Unification Ministry along with a formal letter of intent from the North Korean side to participate in the event.

However, a senior official in the South's Unification Ministry said it was unconvinced the proposal was genuine.

Any civilian trip from either side of the border requires the ministry's approval.

A senior ministry official said Mr Dongbang had been asked to provide more documentation to support the North's participation in the festival.

"The format of the documents provided so far is unusual," the official said.

Ms Kim believed to be 26, has been in the news recently after North Korea revealed for the first time that she holds the title of a senior party official.

North Korean watchers have speculated that Ms Kim, who has regularly accompanied her brother on his "field guidance" trips, is being groomed to play the same leadership supporting role as her powerful aunt, Kim Kyong-Hui.

– AFP

KUALA LUMPUR

Votes-for-citizenship scam cleared

AN official Malaysian inquiry last week cleared the country's long-ruling regime of involvement in a huge scheme to grant citizenship to illegal aliens in exchange for votes, drawing opposition accusations of a whitewash.

Explosive allegations that aired in 2012 hearings detailed a systematic clandestine campaign begun in the state of Sabah in the 1980s to fast-track citizenship for possibly hundreds of thousands of Muslim illegal migrants from the southern Philippines and Indonesia.

The regime dominated by the Muslim ruling party, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), is accused of seeking to alter the demographics of the politically important, multi-faith state to make it more Muslim and thus more UMNO-friendly.

A Royal Commission of Inquiry's final report into the scandal said vaguely that the scheme probably existed, adding that "nefarious activities ... precipitated and accelerated the influx of illegal immigrants into the state".

But it blamed criminal "syndicates" and unnamed "corrupt officials", and avoided implicating UMNO or former prime minister Mahathir Mohamad, who ruled from 1981-2003 and is suspected of masterminding the scheme.

Mr Mahathir, still an influential political figure in retirement, denies the charge. *– AFP*

SHWE TAUNG AND KEPPEL LAND IN JOINT VENTURE TO DEVELOP

A GRADE A OFFICE TOWER IN YANGON CITY CENTRE

Junction City Perspectives View (Artist Impression)

Shwe Taung Group and its affiliates ("Shwe Taung Goup") and Keppel Land Limited ("Keppel Land"), one of the Singapore's developers, have today entered into a conditional strategic joint venture agreement to jointly develop the Grade A office tower in Junction City, a mega mixed -use project located at the heart of Yangon city.

Subject to the approval of the Myanmar Investment Commission, Keppel Land will acquire a 40% stake in the 23 storey office tower in Junction City from Shwe Taung Group for a total investment consideration of US$47.4 million. When completed in 2017, the office tower offers approximately 33,400 sqm of international quality office space in the heart of Yangon's central business district.

The Junction City development is Yangon's premier mixed-use project, strategically located at the junction of Bogyoke Aung San Road and Shwedagon Pagoda Road opposite the famous Bogyoke Aung San Market. With a total built up area of about 260,000 sqm, Junction City will offer premium serviced apartments, the luxurious 5-star Pan Pacific Hotel, a Grade A office tower and a mega 70,000 sqm state-of-the-art entertainment and shopping complex. It will also house Yangon's largest carparking facility offering more than 1.400 parking lots.

Mr Aung Zaw Naing, Group CEO of Shwe Taung Group, said, "We are pleased to welcome Keppel Land to join us in developing this prestigious project that will change the skyline of Yangon city centre. When completed in 2017, the office tower's Grade A office space will meet the growing demands of discerning international firms operating in Myanmar""Designed and engineered by award winning professional firms from Singapore, we are also proud that Junction City will seek to achieve a Gold standard Green Mark certification from the Building & Construction Authority of Singapore. We believe the sustainable green features that we have pioneered for Junction City will reduce environmental impact and enhance energy conservation, and will set new standards for socially responsible construction and development in Myanmar." In October 2013, the ShweTaung Groupannounced the joint venture with Pan Pacific Hotels Group, one of the leading hotel operators in Asia, to operate and manage the 5-star Pan Pacific Hotel in Junction City. Together with the joint development partnership with Keppel Land, Junction City is expected to set new benchmarks in contemporary design, luxury and international building standards.

ABOUT SHWE TAUNG GROUP

The Shwe Taung Group is one of the leading business conglomerates in Myanmar with a diversified business portfolio. The Group's real estate arm is regarded as one of the best local developers in Myanmar, with more than 20 years of experience in the design, development and construction of real estate projects in Myanmar. The Shwe Taung Group has developed more than 500 hectares of land, with developments ranging from residences, offices, retail developments, hotels and industrial properties. Recent landmark projects undertaken by the Group include Junction Square, Crystal Towers and Crystal Residences, Union Financial Centre and Union Business Centre. The ShweTaung Group's diversified portfolio covers seven business arms including real estate development, construction, construction materials, energy and infrastructure development, trading, asset/retail management and insurance services. The ShweTaung Group has forged strong strategic relationships with reputable partners such as Japan's Tokyu Construction, Korea's CJ Group, Finland's Kone Group, Sweden's Scania, Germany's Liebherr, UK's Fosroc and Singapore's UOL Group, Tiong Seng Company and CNQC.

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One of Asia's premier property companies, Keppel Land is recognised for its sterling portfolio of award-winning residential developments and investment-grade commercial properties as well as high standards of corporate governance and transparency.

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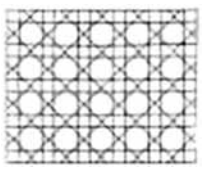
CD |  | DIOR

(Reg: No. IV/5120/2014) (11.4.2014) | **(Reg: No. IV/5121/2014) (11.4.2014)** | **(Reg: No. IV/5123/2014) (11.4.2014)**

Use in respect of:- "Scientific, nautical, surveying, photographic, cinematographic, optical, weighing ,measuring, signalling, checking (supervision), life-saving and teaching apparatus and instruments: apparatus and instruments for conducting, switching, transforming, accumulating, regulating or controlling electricity; apparatus for recording, transmission or reproduction of sound or images; magnetic data carriers, recording discs; compact discs, DVDs and other digital recording media; mechanisms for coin-operated apparatus; cash registers, calculating machines, data processing equipment, computers; computer software; fire-extinguishing apparatus." (International Class 9),
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"Customs fashioning of fur and clothing; dressmaking; textile treating." (International Class 40),
"Organization of fashion shows for promotional purposes." (International Class 41),
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Christian Dior

(Reg: No. IV/5122/2014) (11.4.2014)

The above trademark is used in respect of- "Spectacles; portable telephones." (International Class 9),
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"Fabrics; household linen." (International Class 24),
"All articles of clothing, hats wearing apparels and accessories: sporting articles and accessories; footwears; furs;" (International Class 25),
"Wigs;" (International Class 26),
"Smoking articles and particularly lighters;" (International Class 34) and
"Advertising; business management; business administration; office functions."(International Class 35)

Any unauthorized use, imitation, infringements, or fraudulent intention of the above trademarks will be dealt with according to law.

Moe Mynn Thu
Rouse Myanmar Company Limited
for CHRISTIAN DIOR COUTURE
Email: myanmar@rouse.com
Dated: 8th December, 2014

IN PICTURES

Photo: AFP

Malaysian military band members take part in Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's welcoming ceremony at the prime minister's office in Putrajaya on December 3. Mr Hasina is on a three-day official visit to Malaysia.

WASHINGTON

Landmine accidents lowest level in 14 years

GLOBAL efforts to eradicate landmines are bearing fruit, campaigners said last week, but raised concerns over those countries, including Myanmar, still believed to be manufacturing the weapons.

Findings released on December 4, noted that the number of victims injured by the deadly weapons internationally have fallen to the lowest level in 14 years.

Nobel-winners the International Campaign to Ban Landmines said in its annual report that last year 3308 people were injured or killed by landmines or unexploded ordnance left over from different conflicts, 25 percent fewer than in 2012.

But it voiced concern about the situation in Ukraine, saying it remained unclear whether landmines have been laid in the bloody conflict between Kiev and pro-Russian rebels.

In 2013 there was an average of nine victims a day, compared to 25 daily when the Landmine Monitor first started recording casualty rates in 1999. The vast majority, some 79 percent, were civilians.

In another measure of success in the fight against the scourge, nearly all use and production of the deadly weapons has ceased around the world.

"While far too many people are still losing their lives and limbs to landmines, new casualties are at their lowest level ever recorded – possibly the best measure of how successful the Mine Ban Treaty has been," said Megan Burke, casualties and victim assistance editor of *Landmine Monitor*.

"But we can't forget that there are hundreds of thousands of landmine survivors waiting for their needs to be met and their rights to be fulfilled."

While none of the 162 signatories to the Mine Ban Treaty had broken their pledge not to use landmines last year, there are lingering concerns about the crisis in Ukraine.

"Stocks of anti-personnel mines are present in the ongoing conflict in Ukraine between government forces and Russian-backed separatists," the Landmine Monitor noted.

But it stressed "it is not yet possible to determine whether antipersonnel mines have been used. Ukraine is a state party to the treaty."

"Any use in Ukraine must be halted and fully investigated," insisted Mark Hiznay, senior researcher at Human Rights Watch.

Campaigners also called on Yemen to do more to hold accountable those who laid anti-personnel mines in the Gulf country in 2011, the only time a state signatory to the ban has violated the treaty.

Only 35 countries have not signed up to the international treaty, but most are abiding by its key provisions, although India, Myanmar, Pakistan and South Korea are still believed to be manufacturing the weapons.

But the campaign hailed as "a victory for global recognition of the treaty" this year's pledge by the United States to step up the destruction of its stockpile of some 3 million mines and to ban US use of anti-personnel mines except on the Korean peninsula.

More than 48 million stockpiled landmines have been destroyed since 1999, and only six signatory countries have failed to complete the destruction of their stocks.

Ukraine, along with Greece and Belarus, remain in violation of the treaty as they have not got rid of such weapons within four years of signing the pact.

However, in a negative side-effect of the campaign's success, global funding for mine clearance activities is shrinking even as campaigners strive to meet the goal of a mine-free world by 2025, said *Landmine Monitor* editor Jeff Abramson. – *AFP*

SYDNEY

Refugees face further visa restrictions

AUSTRALIA'S conservative government on December 5 further tightened immigration laws by introducing controversial temporary visas for refugees that do not allow them to settle permanently in the country.

The amendments to the Migration Act narrowly passed the lower house after a stormy late-night debate in the upper house the previous evening. The temporary protection visas grant refugees protection for three years, but do not give them the right to settle in Australia for good.

They could also be returned to their home country after a reassessment at the end of that period.

The government re-introduced the visas, used by previous conservative governments, to deal with a backlog of 30,000 asylum-seekers who arrived by boat. However it also pledged to increase the overall refugee intake by 7500 and free hundreds of children held in detention.

"This is a win for Australia," Prime Minister Tony Abbott said.

He confirmed that in a trade-off agreed by the government to get the bill through the Senate, about 470 asylum-seeker children will be among 1500 people released from detention centres and placed in the mainland community.

Australia has come under international pressure over its offshore detention of asylum-seekers on its Indian Ocean territory of Christmas Island, where some children are held, and in Pacific camps as well as for the turning back of asylum boats.

"We always said that three things were necessary to stop the boats – offshore processing, turning boats around and temporary protection visas – and last night the final piece of policy was put in place," Mr Abbott said.

"This will enable the government to deal with the backlog of 30,000 people who came to Australia illegally by boat under Labor," Mr Abbott said referring to the previous government.

"These people, if they're found to be refugees, will receive temporary protection visas which means that no one coming to Australia illegally by boat can expect to get permanent residency."

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison said, in another trade-off, the official quota of refugees allowed into Australia would increase to 18,750 a year.

"We have got stronger borders at sea because of the powers we've given our maritime agency," he told reporters.

"Not only the government has sent another strong message to the people smugglers about our resolve to end their business forever, but it has sent a strong message of resolve from the Australian parliament and that is something that will only further strengthen our country's borders."

New five-year safe-haven enterprise visas will also be brought in to encourage refugees to live in more remote areas with labour shortages.

– AFP

TACLOBAN

Millions evacuated ahead of major typhoon

A POWERFUL typhoon was heading for the Philippines on December 5, forcing millions to seek shelter in churches, schools and other makeshift evacuation centres.

The storm, which was expected to be the strongest to hit the Southeast Asian archipelago this year, was set to affect more than half the nation including communities devastated by Super Typhoon Haiyan last year.

Authorities said more than 500,000 families, or about 2.5 million people, in the eastern Philippines would be evacuated ahead of Hagupit's expected landfall on the night of December 6 or morning of December 7.

"Everyone here is gripped with fear," Rita Villadolid, 39, said as she sat with her family and hundreds of other people inside a sports stadium in Tacloban, one of the cities still yet to recover from Haiyan.

Elsewhere in Tacloban, a coastal city of 220,000 people on the eastern island of Leyte, people began flooding into churches and schools with little more than bags of clothes.

Haiyan, the strongest storm ever recorded on land with winds of 315 kilometres (195 miles) an hour, killed or left missing more than 7350 people as it tore across the central Philippines last year.

Hagupit was generating winds of 215 kilometres (133 miles) an hour on December 5 as it tracked toward the Philippines from the Pacific Ocean.

The US Navy's Joint Typhoon Warning Center that day downgraded Hagupit from the maximum super typhoon category to typhoon status.

But this would still make Hagupit the strongest storm to hit the Philippines this year, and it would also bring storm surges more than one storey high to many coastal areas, according to state weather agency Pagasa.

In the eastern region of Bicol alone, the government was aiming to move 500,000 families, about half the local population, into evacuation centres, regional civil defence director Bernardo Alejandro said.

The Philippines, a developing nation of 100 million people, has in recent years faced unusually strong storms that scientists have warned are linked to climate change. *– AFP*

Typhoon Hagupit

Source: Pagasa/US Navy Joint Typhoon Warning Center

AFP

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Dated: 8 December 2014

IN PICTURES

PHOTO: AFP

A Pakistan mother sits alongside her son, a Thalassaemia patient, as he receives blood at a treatment centre in Peshawar on December 4. Ten Pakistani children, from the cities of Islamabad, Rawalpindi and Lahore, have been infected with HIV after receiving tainted blood transfusions, officials said, in a "shocking" case highlighting the abysmal state of blood screening in the country.

BEIJING

First constitution day marked with protests

CHINA marked its first National Constitution Day on November 4 with readings at schools across the country, activities promoting the rule of law and the blocking of protests at Tiananmen Square.

The National People's Congress, China's rubber-stamp legislature, last month designated December 4 as National Constitution Day to promote the document adopted in its current form on that date in 1982.

On November 3, President Xi Jinping said China's constitution "guarantees the socialist path with Chinese characteristics", according to the state-run *Global Times* newspaper.

Schools across China were to hold readings of the constitution, according to an education ministry directive, and tables were set up on some central Beijing streets with posters and materials promoting the document.

Yet at Tiananmen Square, the vast public space in the heart of the city, citizens seeking to protest were blocked by police from doing so.

A middle-aged man was stopped and got into an altercation with officers at a security checkpoint after he attempted to enter the square with briefcase containing a pile of flyers.

One officer videotaped as another yelled at the man, grabbed him by the front of his coat and thrust him into a chair.

Half-a-dozen people were also seen being bundled by police into a van at the centre of the square on the morning of December 4, although it was unclear whether they were seeking to demonstrate.

Metres away from the square, an electronic billboard adorned with at least three CCTV cameras carried messages promoting the new commemoration, previously known as Legal Day.

"December 4 is National Constitution Day and National Day of Promoting the Legal System," it read. "Promote the spirit of the Constitution, establish constitutional authority."

'Some reformists and legal experts jumped on [Constitution Day] to launch this constitution debate.'

Jean Pierre Cabestan
Hong Kong Baptist University

Article 35 of China's constitution states, "Citizens of the People's Republic of China enjoy freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly, of association, of procession and of demonstration."

Yet the ruling Communist Party maintains a tight grip on expression, with protests regularly quashed and human rights lawyers and activists coming under increasing pressure since Mr Xi took power last year.

Jean-Pierre Cabestan, a specialist in China's political and legal systems at Hong Kong Baptist University, said that the party's renewed promotion of the constitution is in part an effort to address the pressure being exerted by the nascent rights defence movement within China.

In a December 2012 speech Mr Xi emphasised the primacy of the constitution, but Mr Cabestan noted that lawyers and other reformists who viewed his remarks as a call for greater judicial independence misinterpreted the leader's speech.

"Some reformists and legal experts jumped on that occasion to launch this constitutionalism debate and try to push the limits of the system," he said. "They failed, and the result has been the arrests of a number of activists." – *AFP*

NEW DELHI

Modi refuses to sack minister for rally insult to religious minorities

INDIA'S new Hindu nationalist premier Narendra Modi on December 4 rejected angry calls to dismiss a government minister whose derogatory comment about religious minorities has caused uproar in parliament.

India's upper house has been paralysed by opposition protests since Niranjan Jyoti told a crowd at a campaign rally on December 1 to decide whether they wanted a government run by "the children of [Hindu god)] Ram or the children of bastards".

Ms Jyoti, a junior minister in the new Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government, has since apologised for the comment, seen as an attack on religious minorities in the majority-Hindu nation.

But opposition parties have continued to demand her dismissal, and on December 4 Mr Modi sought to stem the political fallout by urging lawmakers to accept her apology.

"This minister is new. She has entered parliament for the first time [at the last election] ... She has apologised," Mr Modi said.

"I request the House to continue with its work in the interests of the country."

The BJP was accused during this year's general election campaign of trying to polarise votes along religious lines.

Hindus make up 80 percent of India's 1.2-billion population while Muslims total 13.4 percent, according to census figures. Christians, Buddhists, Sikhs and other religions account for the rest.

Party president Amit Shah faces charges of inflaming religious tensions with a campaign speech he gave in the northern district of Muzaffarnagar, which was hit last year by deadly Hindu-Muslim riots.

Mr Modi, who led his party to a landslide victory in national elections in May, was himself accused of failing to curb 2002 anti-Muslim riots that claimed at least 1000 lives when he was chief minister of Gujarat state.

He has always rejected the accusations, and India's Supreme Court found no evidence to prosecute him.

Ms Jyoti, minister for food processing industries, made her comment at a rally in New Delhi, where local elections will be held early next year.

A spokesperson for the opposition Congress party, Meem Afzal, described her statements as "an abuse to democracy", according to the Press Trust of India (PTI).

"Though she has apologised, we know that such an apology is nothing. She should feel ashamed and resign," Mr Afzal said. – *AFP*

The BIG DEAL

TRIPLE SENSATION

Arrival of Fiesta, Focus & EcoSport

ALL-NEW Fiesta
"Sporty, versatile and oh-so fun"

ALL-NEW Focus
"Sporty performance and enviable efficiency"

ALL-NEW EcoSport
"An entirely new type of compact SUV"

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GET YOUR FINGERS ON IT

the pulse

Swinhoe's home in Maymyo. Photo: Supplied

STUART ALAN BECKER

AS a historian and anthropologist, Cambridge professor Alan Macfarlane has studied the origins of civilizations across Europe and Asia. While many academics claim to have their chosen discipline in their blood, in Mr Macfarlane's case it's the truth. His ancestors played significant roles in nearly every age and location in the history of the British Empire – especially Burma.

He and his wife Sarah came through Mandalay last week following a trip across China where Mr Macfarlane had received two honorary degrees.

He volunteered to share the story of his ancestors for *The Myanmar Times* thanks to a chance meeting at Daw Than Yin Mar's private family library in Mandalay.

His father served as a Major in the British Army's Assam Rifles, raising regiments of Indians to fight the Japanese in World War II when Alan was born in Shillong, in the Assam state of India in 1941. Two of Macfarlane's uncles fought against the Japanese in Burma as well. Richard Rhodes James served with Wingate's Raiders and wrote a book about it called *Chindit*. The other uncle served with the 6th Gurkhas.

Mr Macfarlane spent until the age of 6 at a tea plantation in Shillong under the care of his grandmother before being sent to England and eventually enrolling in Dragon School at Oxford.

But perhaps the most interesting ancestor is Mr Macfarlane's great-grandfather on his mother's side, Rodway Charles John Swinhoe, the first British lawyer in Upper Burma, he lived in in Maymyo, where he collected orchids, founded the Botanical Gardens, ran a bank and was an accomplished painter.

Swinhoe, Macfarlane's maternal grandmother's father, is the only Briton to merit a depiction on the stained-glass windows of the classic red-brick All Souls Anglican Church in today's Pyin Oo Lwin. His nickname at the Club in Maymyo was "Pig Rake" because of his name "Swinhoe" as "swine" plus "hoe".

"He was a multi-dimensional character, the first serious collector of orchids in Burma, and his collection is in botanical gardens. He was the father of the Burmese bar by the time of his death, an amateur geologist, and expert on flies in amber. He was also a serious archaeologist and he wrote several plays about Burma and a book called *A Humorous History of Burma* which has his rhymes and drawings in it. He was also a photographer."

Macfarlane loves the story of when Swinhoe took the entire Burmese dance troupe to the Colonial Empire Exhibition at Wembley in 1925, and he insisted all the Burmese girls travelled first class.

"He loved Burma so much."

Macfarlane's maternal grandmother, Florence Violet Stirling Swinhoe, was born May 26, 1896 in Mandalay and died 10 Aug 1986, in Cambridge, England.

"She was a formidable lady, the youngest-ever woman to go to Royal Academy Schools and a very good singer, actress and dramatist."

Macfarlane, a professor emeritus of King's College, Cambridge is the author or editor of 20 books. He says Britain is unique in world history for how it always brought its people back home from the colonies for education. His own family tree is almost a quintessential DNA chart of the history of the British Empire.

"This is the great British pattern," he said. "The British empire was different than any other. Those who went out always sent their children home to learn their native British culture at school and university."

His mother, Iris Macfarlane (born July 22 1922 in Quetta, India; died February 12 2007 in Wolverhampton, England) wrote a book on the topic called *Daughters of Empire* which describes four generations of her own family and the cyclical situation of how the British Empire rotated its people back home for education.

"My grandfather helped draw the border between Burma and China in 1919," he said. "He spoke Yunnanese."

"I come from one of those imperial families. The first white child born in Jamaica in 1655 was my 12th generation grandfather, Richard James, on my father's side."

Another of his ancestors designed the modern Russian navy under Peter the Great. Yet another, named Swinhoe, wrote a narrative of the opium wars, named many of the Chinese flora and fauna and was the first Anglican Bishop of the Falkland Islands – which at the time covered the whole of South America.

The story of their whole imperial British family, helped along by many saved letters, is being collected in a history of the empire by his wife Sarah.

Mr Macfarlane himself is currently writing his own autobiography in two volumes, the first of which is *Dorset Days* about childhood around Dorset and *Dragon Days* about his experience at Oxford's Dragon School.

"When I went to boarding schools, they were still designed to train imperial administrators," he said.

"With all this imperial bad blood, I sometimes joke that by the time I had finished my training all I was trained to do was go overseas and run an empire but since it didn't exist I decided to become an anthropologist."

Macfarlane left Mandalay last week by boat for Bagan and will travel back to his home in England after a brief stay in Yangon. *(see his thoughts about China, Japan and the United States in Part 2 next week)*

UK professor connects with his colonial ancestors

Cambridge professor Alan Macfarlane chats with *The Myanmat Times* about his family's exploits in Upper Myanmar

Swinhoe working on a painting.

Swinhoe in his capacity as a bank manager.

Swinhoe in at the Mandalay bazaar with a lady.

What's On

DECEMBER 8 - 14

Got an event?
List it in What's On!
whatsonmt@gmail.com

ART

Nov 22-Dec 13 "Renovation Plan" by artist Kaung Su, TS Gallery, Between Lanthit Jetty and Kaing Dan Jetty No.1, Oo-Pa-Sa St, Seik Kan, 10am-5pm

Dec 2-8 "Images of the famous culture events from Thiland" by Ko Aung Myo, photos of 150 tells about the religion building and culture, Shwedagon Pagoda, Dagon

FILM

Start times at Mingalar (1, 2), Top Royal, Shae Shaung (1,2) and Nay Pyi Taw cinemas are 10 am, noon, 2pm, 4pm, 6pm and 8pm.

Start times at Junction Square and Mawtin 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

The Hunger Games: Mockingjay. Directed by Francis Lawrence. 2014 American science fiction adventure film.

Big Hero 6. Directed by Don Hall and Chris Williams. 2014 American 3D computer-animated superhero-comedy film.

Rise of the Legend. Directed by Chow Hin Yeung Roy. A 2014 Hong Kong-Chinese kung-fu adventure.

Mingalar Cinema 2, at Dagon Center 2, Myae Ni Gone.

Rise of the Legend.

Shae Shaung Cinema, Sule Pagoda Road, Kyauktada

Ouija. Directed by Stiles White. A 2014 American horror film based the tedious board game.

Happy New Year. Directed by Farah Khan. A 2014 Indian action-comedy film about a team of thieves that enters a dance competition as cover for a heist.

Junction Square Cineplex, Kamaryut

Sifu vs Vampire. Directed by Daniel Chan. A 2014 Hong-Kong comedy horror film about vampires.

Junction Mawtin, Lanmadaw

Sifu vs Vampire

Mingalar San Pya Cineplex, Phone Gyi Street and Anawrahta, Lanmadaw

Ouija.

Rise of the Legend.

MUSIC

Sept 5-Dec 31 Live Music. Thiripyitsaya Sky Bistro, 20th Floor, Sakura Tower, 7 – 10 pm

Dec 8 Monday Blues, Mojo Bar, 135 Inya Road, Bahan, 9:30 pm - 11:30 pm

Dec 10 Percussion & Guitar, Thiripyitsaya Sky Bistro, 20th Floor Sakura Tower, 339 Bogyoke Aung San Rd, Kyauktada, 7-10pm

MISC

Dec 9 Gallery conversation and drinks. Pansodan Gallery, 289 Pansodan Street, Kyaukada, 7 pm- late

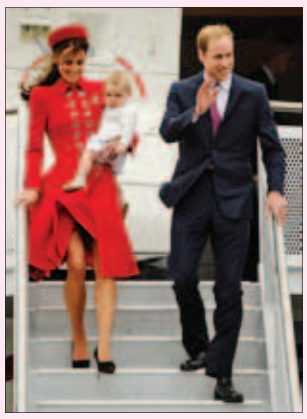
Dec 11 Tipsy Travel Talk Thursdays. Discuss alternative travel in Myanmar over drinks. Off the Beaten Track Café, Kandawgyi Oo Yin Kabar, Kandawgyi Park, Mingalar Taung Nyunt

Dec 13 Jungle Boat Rock! Winter Holiday Boat Party, three-hour sunset cruise including free-flow beer and party punch, exciting dance music, and assorted appetisers from Yangon Bakehouse, Wardan Jetty, Lan Thit Street, tickets are K25000, 4pm

Dec 13 Burmese Language Club, language learners get together to ask each other questions, and practise what they have been learning, share knowledge and resources, Pansodan Scene, 144 Pansodan St, 2nd floor, middle block, Kyauktada ,4pm

The Global Gossip

Richard III DNA study cast doubt on royal lineage



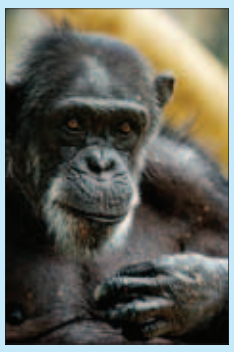
A DNA study confirming that a skeleton found in 2012 was that of Richard III also found evidence of "false paternity" that raises doubts about the royal claims of centuries of British monarchs, researchers said last week.

The study said the remains matched the DNA of two descendants of Richard III's sister, Anne of York, meaning researchers are certain "beyond reasonable doubt" that the skeleton is indeed the king's.

But there was no match through the male line of the family, descended from John of Gaunt, the brother of Richard III's great-grandfather.

That means that at some point there must have been a child whose presumed father according to the official genealogy was not his real father.

Chimps not entitled to rights of people: NY court

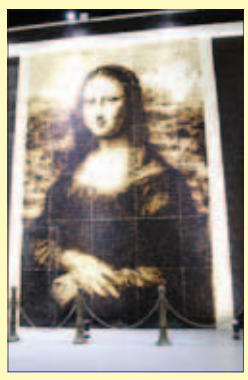


Chimpanzees are not entitled to the same rights as people, a New York state appeals court ruled last week, thwarting an advocacy group's attempt to free the primates.

The Nonhuman Rights Project said it was already pursuing an appeal at New York state's highest court in a bid to move four privately owned chimpanzees to a sanctuary.

"Unlike human beings, chimpanzees cannot bear any legal duties, submit to societal responsibilities or be held legally accountable for their actions," the judges wrote.

Is Mona Lisa Chinese?



An Italian historian's theory that Mona Lisa might be a Chinese slave and Leonardo da Vinci's mother - making the 15th-century polymath half-Chinese - sent online commentators into a frenzy last week.

Angelo Paratico, a Hong Kong-based historian and novelist from Italy, told the *South China Morning Post*: "On the back of Mona Lisa, there is a Chinese landscape and even her face looks Chinese."

Little is known about Caterina, the mother of the artist, writer, mathematician and inventor, and the identity of the sitter for the portrait hanging in Paris' Louvre museum has long been a matter of debate. – *AFP*

WEEKLY PREDICTIONS

DECEMBER 8 - 14, 2014

AUNG MYIN KYAW
4th Floor, 113, Thamain Bayan Road, Tarmwe township, Yangon.
Tel: 09-731-35632, Email: williameaste@gmail.com

AQUARIUS | Jan 20 – Feb 18

Do some introspective work this week. Smile and laugh more. Life is short and the world is small, but you are bigger than the world. You should treat close colleagues with the highest degrees of respect and love. Time is a beautiful part of the hardware of life, so be mindful not to misuse the time you have. Time wasted is time lost, and once it's lost, it can never be regained.

PISCES | Feb 19 – March 20

Wisdom is not to be received, but must be discovered by you alone. Life must be dedicated to doing, learning and enjoying to be meaningful. An unexpected influence will make an impossible matter suddenly seem possible, as long as you are willing to focus your intellectual power and work hard to achieve it.

ARIES | Mar 21 – Apr 19

Humans are well-designed for doing and for taking on new projects that facilitate learning. An inner vision yields energy, and an appropriate vision can enhance your life with meaning and power. Know that the soul that has no established aim loses itself, and that people were born to succeed, not to fail. Clear conception is the first condition of success.

TAURUS | Apr 20 – May 20

Fear of failure is a far more powerful force – and in many cases, a more damaging one – than failure itself. You have to look a step or two beyond the obvious in some cases; this is always a requirement of sound self-management. Don't be afraid to broaden your view. Know that the actual barriers to mobility from industry to industry are purely subjective.

GEMINI | May 21 – June 20

Wealth, power, fame and status are sometimes the social results of success, but they are never the heart of the success. You should come to see your abilities not as better or worse, but as simply different from others. Set up your own standards of conduct based on what you think is appropriate for you.

CANCER | June 21 – July 22

It takes not one drop of sweat to put off doing anything. Eliminate the words "hope", "wish" and "maybe" from your vocabulary, especially when you are involved in great social dealings. Your efforts will improve you social position. Hidden opportunities will become visible at the proper time to help you make decisions. Love should not be made crazy by emotional desires.

LEO | July 23 – Aug 22

True success is not limited in its potential scope; it can be manifested in different ways by different people and during different times during one's life. Attaining clarity about your own heart will help you articulate your self-knowledge and your knowledge of the world. You need not make choices or decisions to please others. Allow yourself to live in harmony.

VIRGO | Aug 23 – Sept 22

Rigidity is the basis of all prejudice, which is based on prejudgment. Being spontaneous means eliminating your prejudgments and allowing yourself to meet and deal with new people and ideas. Remind yourself that the fear of failure is really the fear of someone else's disapproval or ridicule. Begin to view your emotional life as independent from whatever anyone else has done.

LIBRA | Sept 23 – Oct 22

Character means doing the right thing because it's the right thing to do. You need social skills to deal with people; these skills include the ability to listen, to understand and to respond smoothly in different situations involving people. Hold on to a powerful belief about what is possible and what is not possible for you to achieve.

SCORPIO | Oct 23 – Nov 21

Boredom is debilitating and psychologically unhealthy. Positive thinking will open up new vistas of experience and help to eliminate the fear of the unknown that you might have adopted as a lifestyle. Take a close look at your ability to be spontaneous. You can multiply yourself and get more done with help from others. Determine the level of rewards available in social relationships.

SAGITTARIUS | Nov 22 – Dec 21

Everybody wants to be somebody, but not just anybody. Accept people as they are. You can't change the basic emotional set of others. Listen to people's words, tone of voice and body language. Explain the potential you see in people that they don't see in themselves. Upsetting the status quo takes a lot of inner strength.

CAPRICORN | Dec 22 – Jan 19

The barriers blocking you are formidable but surmountable. Try not to concentrate on immediate barriers but begin by raising the level of your thinking beyond the difficult foreground. Envision what may be out there that will make an effort worthwhile. Before you develop all the "why not's", take a longer look at the possibilities. Don't be overzealous in making social challenges.

Royal costumes await overdue restoration

The royal costumes on display at the National Museum. Photo: Aung Htay Hlaing

ZON PANN PWINT
zonpann08@gmail.com

NOBODY raises an eyebrow at the news that it could take years to restore the rambling and dilapidated Secretariat Building in downtown Yangon, an important symbol of the country's colonial history. But it will also take years, and the devotion of foreign experts, to restore two smaller pieces of history – the ceremonial costume of the last king of what was then Burma, Thibaw, and his spouse Queen Supayalat.

The hand-made 19th-century robes, woven with velvet, cane, semi-precious stones and gold and silver embroidery, are displayed in a glass case in the Yadanarbon period hall in the National Museum, Yangon.

"The robes are irreplaceable. There is no other regal display we could substitute if they suffer more damage from the ravages of time," said U Ngwe Tun Myint, the museum's director.

The king's robe, aflame with rubies, is known as the "Du Yin Taw", and the queen's is "Mahalata". The royal couple would wear them three times a year – the first and last day of the Buddhist Lent, and New Year's Day, to pay respects to their royal ancestors.

"We don't have the skills to preserve the fabric, and we don't have a textile conservator, so we haven't been able to look after them properly," said Daw Nu Mra Zan, a museum expert. "If we can't preserve them, we will lose them within 10 to 20 years. If we can save them, we can display them for another century. Unfortunately, we don't have the proper techniques, experience or equipment. Japanese experts have already given up," she said.

To the attentive observer, small patches of mildew are visible amid the glitter of precious stones, the result of years of neglect.

The museum has made several attempts to find a conservator to restore the costumes to their former elegance. One Japanese expert has already told them the garments are beyond saving. But with the help of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), another Japanese conservator, Mitsuei Horisawa, visited last year. During his six-months stay, he moisture-proofed the cabinets, but could not restore the costumes to their former condition.

But there is still a glimmer of hope. Two months ago, on a visit to the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco, Daw Nu Mra Zan saw a group of textile conservators at work.

"It is pretty painstaking, and needs a lot of care, effort and attention to detail. They have good equipment and take the time to collect material very close to the original textures to save the worn-out robe," she said. "I believe they can help us if they want to. But it won't be easy."

Daw Nu Mra Zan has written a technical report about the king's costume and will send it to the authorities in the hope of bringing in a conservator from the West.

The robes were repatriated from Britain in 1964, but the isolation of Myanmar under the former military regime prevented museum officials from keeping up with the latest conservation techniques.

Panasonic Solutions Expo Presents Full Range of Products and Business Solutions for Myanmar

U Myint Swe, Chief Minister of Yangon Region Government, Mr. Tateshi Higuchi, Ambassador of the Embassy of Japan and Panasonic Top Management

On 18-19 November, Panasonic Asia Pacific Myanmar Branch (Panasonic) showcased for the first time the company's full suite of technology, business-to-consumer (B2C) products and business- to-business (B2B) solutions at the Panasonic Solutions Expo. Held at the Sule Shangri-La Hotel, visitors were able to understand and visualise how Panasonic's innovative and high quality products bring about "A Better Life, A Better World" for consumers and business partners in Myanmar through six experiential booths – Corporate Branding, Residential, Energy Solutions, Hotel, Education and Convenience Store.

The Residential Zone, in particular, attracted many visitors, who were interested to furnish their homes with "Made in Japan" appliances and 4K video cameras that utilise cutting-edge technology. High quality products such as refrigerators, microwaves, washing machines and home elevators were introduced. Integrated hotel solutions, for example, the Hybrid IP system and E series, aim to enhance communication and security in offices, hotels, condominiums and service apartments. In the Energy Solutions Zone, energy efficient solutions were showcased. The Education Zone exhibited interactive and collaborative technology to make learning fun. Panasonic's cold chain solutions were exhibited to enhance Myanmar's convenience store experience.

"Panasonic has identified Myanmar as one of Asia Pacific's strategic markets with high growth potential. Having established Panasonic as one of Myanmar's top consumer electronics brand, we will concurrently focus on strengthening our B2B portfolio here," said Junichiro Kitagawa, Managing Director, Panasonic Asia Pacific.

As part of its business expansion in Myanmar, Panasonic will open integrated showrooms and service centres in Yangon and Mandalay by March 2015. There, customers and business partners can experience first-hand the company's whole array of B2C and B2B offerings.The company will focus on strengthening its business-to-business portfolio while maintaining solid business-to-consumer growth in Myanmar.

Panasonic Donated 2,000 Solar Lanterns to 8 Local Social Institutions

Panasonic also donated over 2,000 solar lanterns to nine welfare organisations under the global 100 Thousand Solar Lantern Project. The solar lanterns provide off-grid energy solutions to areas with limited electricity. This is on top of the 5,000 donated to Myanmar last year. To date, solar lanterns have proved effective in aiding volunteer efforts in hospitals, schools and villages.

Mr Junichiro Kitagawa, Managing Director of Panasonic Asia Pacific (left) Explains About Panasonic's Smart City Solutions to Mr. Tateshi Higuchi, Ambassador of the Embassy of Japan (right)

Panasonic Solutions Expo Presents Full Range of its B2C and B2B solution

Panasonic Advanced Home Appliances & Cooking Appliances on Display

Advertorial

Chin women take part in a traditional weaving exhibition. Photo: Staff

Exhibition to show off traditional textiles

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THE excellence of traditional textile techniques will be celebrated in an exhibition from December 13 to 19 at the River Ayeyarwady gallery in Kyauktada township, Yangon.

"Made in Myanmar: The Art of Textile and Crafts" is being organised by Sunflowers Group Social Enterprise, an umbrella organisation of 13 different groups that produce traditional arts, crafts, and textiles.

Sunflowers Group founder Daw Phyu Ei Thein told *The Myanmar Times* that the exhibition was aimed at preserving and promoting traditional methods of making textiles, dyeing and weaving.

"Myanmar products have a reputation of being of cheap and poor-quality. We need to improve quality standards and build trust in Myanmar products," she said.

"I want to display a combination of arts and crafts, like a demonstration of dyeing and weaving styles compared to those of Korea, and making handmade accessories and souvenirs," she said.

Sunflowers Group offers courses on creating handmade products, environmental conservation, and promoting natural materials at Kachin camps for displaced persons, including Man Wan Gyi camp in Mansi township. The products will be on sale at the exhibition.

The group supports 10 students from Taunggyi and Amarapura (Saung Da) weaving schools to improve design and quality. The students will demonstrate their skills at the display.

Sunflowers will also open a weaving studio in Naung Shwe in early December share traditional weaving and dyeing methods.

"Myanmar lotus textile is unique in Asia," said Daw Phyu Ei Thein.

Sunflowers Group first displayed products from the Kachin camps and weaving schools at Myanmar Art Exhibition in Tokyo in October. The event aimed at introducing Myanmar arts and products to Japan, and profits will help fund monastic education in Myanmar.

Chan Aye's artwork shown in Paris

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THIS week, sculptor Chan Aye will become the first Myanmar artist to showcase an installation at the Palaise de Tokyo modern art gallery in Paris.

The instillation, entitled "Aurora," combines paint, wood, bronze, steel and paper for six months starting December 11.

"The art project was set up by the museum and Foundation d'entreprise Total ... I am lucky to have been chosen," he said.

Chan Aye first visited the space in August, where he sketched and concieved of the project that would eventually become "Aurora".

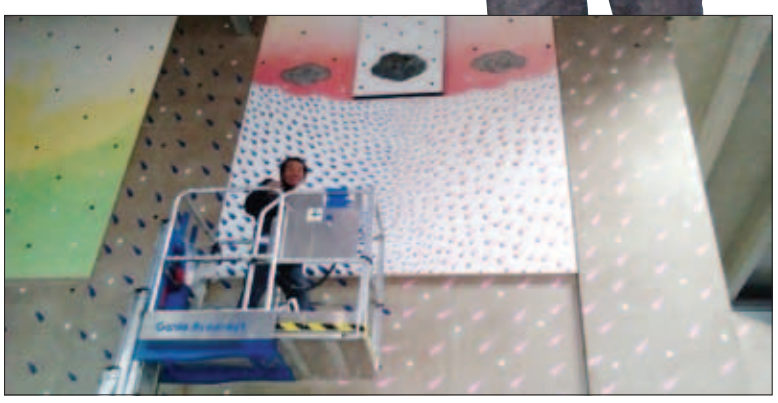
Speaking to *The Myanmar Times,* he has long been interested in doing such a large-scale piece of instillation art, but lacked both the space and the resources before.

According to the artist, the work is meant to showcase the universal themes of peace that can be found in all world religions.

In addition to his multimedia sculptures, Chan Aye draws and writes articles about art for local news journals. He has also developed a following for providing the illustrations for book covers, especially novels by famous writers such as Ludu Daw Amar.

Original sketches of "Aurora" instillation. Photo: supplied

Chan Aye. Photo: supplied



Chan Aye sets up in the Palaise de Tokyo. Photo: Supplied

Shaping young minds in Shwebo

U Than Htun, a popular historian and mentor to hundreds of impoverished youths, chats with *The Myanmar Times* about his life and works

STUART ALAN BECKER
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SHORTLY after the Japanese troops evacuated Shwebo in the waning days of WWII, crossing the Ayeyarawaddy to Kyauk Myaung, the Allied forces arrived – and a young boy called Than Htun started going to school.

"The schools had been closed during the war," he remembered. The slender, soft-spoken U Than Htun is well-known in Shwebo. Local families often come to the Youth Development Center he founded in 1963 to donate meals for the boys in residence.

Not many of them are actual orphans; they just come because circumstances at home are not as prosperous as they could be.

Remembering back to 1945, he said the teachers in those days were more spiritually-oriented and much less money oriented than they are today.

"There has been great progress on the material side with many new things people are able to use, but spiritually and morally, there has been a downgrade," he said.

"The teachers after WWII were very simple, very generous very good to the pupils and they didn't care about making money," he said. "I must say they were real teachers in the true sense of the word. They had great *cetana*, a Pali word which means "direction of mind".

In 1958, U Than Htun matriculated in Shwebo and enrolled in Buddhist Studies at Mandalay University for two years. Later, he became a private teacher at his own school.

"I was a Marxist at the time, but not now. I agree with the basic Marxist concept. The theory is good, but the practice has been very bad," he said.

Born on April 21, 1939, U Than Htun has hoped for better lives for Myanmar people during the postwar years to the present day, but has mixed feelings about what has unfolded in the interim. He was the seventh of eight children with four sons and four daughters. His father was a lawyer.

"Only four are still alive," he said.

Himself a survivor of small pox during the wartime period of his childhood, U Than Htun later lost two of his own sons to disease in 1964. The experience left he and his wife distraught.

With a government allotment of 7.25 acres of land and all the buildings donated by well-wishers, U Than Htun has spent most of the last several decades devoting his efforts to Buddhist teachings for the poor boys from the area.

"This is a Buddhist centre and I'm a Buddhist layman," he said. "The boys are not properly orphans, but just very poor from the hilly regions. By educating them with love and compassion, we give them a feeling of fellowship. We sympathise with them and give them what they want as far as we can and we give them right views."

Many of boys from the Youth Development Center have since graduated and become military officers, engineers and school headmasters. There is a wall of their photographs in the dining hall.

During his life, U Than Htun has published 55 books about history, comparative religion and Buddhism as well as biographies of historic figures including George Washington and Napoleon.

He wrote a Burmese translation of the Felix Salten book *Bambi, A Life in the Woods*.

"This life was the right choice for me. I'm happy and my house is right here," he said.

Still, he says the journey has not been without hardships.

"When you make the right choice you have to take on difficulties. When I founded this orphanage I had to endure many hardships. I started from zero. No land, no building, no funds, no body to help me. That is natural."

"I have given my life to these boys," U Than Htun said. "This is my life mission. There are no regrets for me."

U Than Htun practices pure Theravada Buddhism and feels strongly about protecting the system of learning and morality.

"In Buddhism the main thing is to rely on yourself. There is nobody to rely on; you rely on your own effort. Lord Buddha was a pathfinder and path shower. You follow this path and you will get nirvana; you will get salvation. Lord Buddha found the truth and showed it to mankind. You yourself must follow the path."

U Than Htun. Photo: Stuart Alan Becker

Living well in Myanmar

Ask your doctor not to give you medicine

CHRISTOPH GELSDORF, MD

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THE General Practitioners Society of the Myanmar Medical Association will be hosting its annual scientific conference from December 5 to 7.

The GP Society has been bold in providing continuing medical education for Myanmar's primary-care doctors during the past decades of minimal government investment in health training. The scientific conference is an opportunity for doctors to get together, improve clinical skills, try to avoid too much influence from pharmaceutical sponsors, remember med school stories and cover the classics in evening karaoke sessions.

This year's theme is "Family Practice: A Necessity for Medicine in Myanmar". During the conference, members of the GP Society will discuss the establishment of a college of family physicians in Myanmar. The intent is to improve the training of primary-care doctors, and one of the weekend's presentations will help explain why this matters.

The global medical community struggles with the unnecessary prescription of antibiotics. It can potentially harm a patient to give medicine that isn't needed, and another big fear is that antibiotic-resistant bacteria will be created when medicines are inappropriately used. From a public health and safety perspective, it can be argued that one of the greatest advances in medicine in the past decades has been learning when not to prescribe antibiotics.

Western countries are to be respected for their efforts to stop the dispensing of bacterial antibiotics to patients who most likely have a viral infection, and therefore won't benefit from the pills.

However, from a global health standpoint, the low-hanging fruit for changing the behaviour of physicians to combat antibiotic resistance occurs in countries like Myanmar. Almost all physicians in Yangon are aware that we doctors prescribe antibiotics excessively. Even more ominous is the widespread selling of antibiotics from the thousands of places in Myanmar that offer pharmaceuticals in their shop fronts.

Almost all physicians in Yangon are aware that we doctors prescribe anitbiotics excessively.

This health-system-wide challenge is perhaps best addressed by starting with improved doctor training. At the coming scientific conference, Dr Wut Hmone Hlaing, a junior physician participating in the Journal Club of the GP Society, will present research published earlier this year in the *British Medical Journal* suggesting that delaying the prescribing of antibiotics results in less pill usage without negatively affecting patients' time to recovery. In the study, the doctors asked the patients to wait two to four days before taking antibiotics for their respiratory tract infections. After a few days, most patients started to feel better and therefore never took the medication.

Any Myanmar GP in attendance during this presentation stands a chance of reducing their unnecessary prescribing of antibiotics, thereby assisting the global fight against antibiotic resistance and improving patient care. However, the leap from what a doctor learns in a lecture to what they actually do at the clinic is substantial.

In taking care of people simultaneously in Myanmar and the United States, I have found that my Californian patients are often relieved that they don't need antibiotics, while my patients in Myanmar are confused about why I'm denying them medicines.

Having the skills and confidence to educate patients is one reason why a better way of training primary-care doctors in Myanmar is important. The GP Society's establishment of a college that trains family physicians will create doctors who make better clinical decisions, improve patient health and improve the likelihood that the Myanmar health system can achieve goals with limited financial resources.

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 General Practitioner Society of the Myanmar Medical Association. Reader thoughts and questions are welcomed.

TAPEI

Taiwan: Asia's newest filmmaking hub

FOR years, Taiwan was barely on Hollywood's radar for filming global blockbusters – but acclaimed director Ang Lee's decision to shoot his Oscar-winning 3D adventure 'Life of Pi'; on the island has transformed its fortunes.

Long overshadowed by Japan and Hong Kong, Taiwan with its dramatic scenery and skyscrapers is fast becoming the go-to Asian hub for some of cinema's biggest hitters.

Its rise is thanks to a combination of high praise from industry heavyweights, film subsidies and a concerted effort by local authorities to court international filmmakers.

Lee further raised Taiwan's profile as a potential movie-making hotspot when he acknowledged he could not have made the hit film "without the help of Taiwan" in his acceptance speech after winning the Oscar for best director in 2013.

French director Luc Besson chose capital Taipei over seven other Asian cities when selecting the setting for part of his sci-fi thriller 'Lucy', which starred Scarlett Johansson, while Hollywood grand master Martin Scorcese is scheduled to shoot his eagerly-awaited new production "Silence" on the island in 2015.

"Some cities are very photogenic, some other are not at all. Paris is very photogenic and Taipei is very photogenic too," Besson said in a promotional tour in Taiwan in August.

"Working in Taipei was quite easy ... The city was very welcoming. Luc was happy with [what] we found here. It's nice and easy - as if we were at home," noted Besson's wife, producer Virginie Silla.

Even though Taiwan is home to a number of internationally acclaimed filmmakers such as Lee, Hou Hsiao-Hsien and Tsai Ming-liang, foreign companies had passed over the island as a co-production partner or a shooting location due to the lack of precedent, local industry insiders say.

"For an international collaboration, whether the local partner is reliable is crucial," said producer Aileen Li, who coordinated the shooting in Taipei of 'Lucy' and Hong Kong director John Woo's upcoming epic 'The Crossing'.

She added: "After 'Life of Pi' and 'Lucy' were shot in Taiwan, I think international teams were assured and started to see Taiwan as an option alongside Tokyo, Bangkok, Hong Kong and Seoul when choosing a location in Asia."

The capital Taipei has seen a steady increase in international crews. The city offers a maximum subsidy of US$1 million for a co-production meeting its requirements, such as hiring local crew, which in part can be received during filming, and assists in local marketing and advertisement, authorities said.

As of the end of October, 408 foreign productions, including movies, television series and variety shows, were shot in the city, compared with a total of 477 in 2013, according to the semi-official Taipei Film Commission.

Taipei has attracted productions not only from its Asian neighbours but also from Italy, Britain – with the BBC shooting some of forthcoming film "X+Y" there – and even the Baltic state of Latvia, due to lower costs and a willingness to accommodate, industry watchers say.

"Taipei's consumer prices and personnel costs are cheaper compared with cities like Tokyo or Hong Kong ... and Taiwanese people are very warm and friendly. I think these are the advantages and winning factors for Taipei," said producer Li.

When Besson's crew was harassed by paparazzi while filming 'Lucy' in Taipei, the city's mayor Hau Lung-bin swiftly conducted a press conference to call for restraint.

Japanese director Takashi Miike also came to Taipei to film some scenes in his crime drama 'Shield of Straw,' which competed in last year's Cannes festival, shooting Taiwan's high-speed train system after Japanese rail authorities turned him away.

Taiwan's openness is also a big plus to attract international filmmakers, compared with China where the authorities can censor scripts with subjects deemed politically sensitive or obscene, observers say.

"To film some scenes in China the local authorities will review the script and that could have some pressure on filmmakers so in such situation Taiwan will be an option as it is also a Chinese-speaking society," said producer Li.

For Taiwan, bringing in the international productions means "more income, more experience and more friendship" for the film and tourism industries, said Jennifer Jao, director of the Taipei Film Commission.

"There will be hiring of Taiwanese film crews while foreign stars and crews will live in local hotels, dine in the restaurants and sightsee on their time off. This is win-win for both sides."

Besson was presented a "key of the city" by mayor Hau to thank him for helping promote Taipei with 'Lucy,' which featured nearly an hour of scenes from the capital, from the landmark Taipei 101 skyscraper to popular steamed dumplings.

And Taiwan being a previously lesser-known film location could also be an advantage for movie-makers.

"Many foreigners are not familiar with Taiwan, they may see Taipei from 'Lucy' but they still don't know what other cities look like, so many Taiwanese cities can fit into a script that requires a generic Asian backdrop," Li said.

Jao is optimistic that Taiwan can attract more foreign productions also thanks to the rising clout of Asian and Chinese-language cinema.

"I think Asia's film market is very promising and Asia will be an important base for film-making in the next three to five years," she said.

"Co-productions will be the trend as everybody wants to consolidate funds and spread risks during financial downturns." – *AFP*

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LGBT pageant in YGN

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YANGON'S LGBT community was out in full force last week for the third annual 'Miss Red Ribbon' event, a transgender beauty pageant aimed at raising money and awareness for the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Held on December 4 at the Sedona hotel, the night's overall winner was number Ma Nyo. After receiving her crown, an ecstatic Ma Nyo insisted that winning was not the point of the event.

"If I not won the crown, I would be ready to clap for another winner. This event was in remembrance of World AIDS Days," she said, "I can proud because I can participate in this event ... [even] a small part."

First-runner-up award Chit Khoon Cho won and Honey Thar took Second-runner-up award.

The 29 contestants were competed in several events where they modeled Myanmar traditional clothing, swin wear, and evening gowns. These modeling events were followed by a talent show.

When that group had been whittled down to a final five, the ladies were asked questions from the judges about HIV/AIDS prevention and other health issues facing LGBT communities.

The event was sponsored and organised by Zar and Zar Pharmaceuticals Company while Myanmar Model Management gave free training to the contestants.

Photos: Zarni Phyo

Jay-Z uncorks French champagne's success

LOSE the Cristal. Pop the "Ace of Spades" Armand de Brignac – but have a well-stuffed wallet ready.

Since the champagne's cameo role in a video featuring rapper Jay Z, Armand de Brignac has climbed from its luxurious but obscure niche to become the bubbly of choice for today's star-studded, bling-conscious crowd.

So fond of the fizz is Jay-Z, that he bought the brand with the ace of spades logo in November.

A bottle sells for around 300 euros (US$370) in its principal north American and European markets. Outsize "Midas" bottles, which at 30 litres are said to be the largest champagne bottles in the world, have sold for nearly 190,000 euros ($236,000).

The unabashedly flashy brand has become a favourite at soirees featuring the rich and famous, like David Beckham, Leonardo di Caprio, and Olympic hero Usain Bolt. The brand's bling quotient, it turns out, has been an essential part of its identity since its conception.

"It all began as a kind of joke in early 2000," says Jacques Cattier, 70, who presides over the family champagne business from the 33-hectare farm that his ancestors founded in 1763. "We wanted to make an entirely superlative champagne – the most beautiful, the most expensive, and the best."

The result was a glittery, metallic bottle emblazoned with the ace of spades logo.

Cattier took his fashion statement beverage to market in 2006 with a 20,000-bottle batch.

A large portion of that initial product was shipped off to the effervescent US market. But it took a spritz of controversy to help it take off among trendy American tipplers faithful to what had been the reigning favourite, Cristal.

In mid-2006, Jay-Z, who is also a music business tycoon and fashion mogul, turned against his beloved Cristal.

Angered at what he considered a racist comment by an executive involved with Cristal over its growing association with rap stars, Jay-Z urged peers and fans to join him in boycotting the brand.

"It was then the fairy tale began," says Philippe Bienvenu, business director at Cattier who produce the wine that is then sold under the Armand de Brignac brand. "Jay-Z discovers our bottle in a New York shop, and decides to use it in the 'Show Me What You Got' video being shot in Monte Carlo. A veritable big bang for us."

The video features a scene of a seedy poker game, during which Jay -Z demonstratively refuses a bottle of Cristal in favour of one with the ace of spades logo.

For Cattier, it was product placement paradise.

In the wake of the video's airing, US distributor Sovereign Brands was inundated with enquiries and orders. Before long, corks were popping in glitzy celebrity parties and pricey Las Vegas casinos.

Armand de Brignac's rising star – and prices – helped cement the label's reputation as the preferred champagne of the conspicuous consumption crew.

Whether it's taste or trendiness driving growth, surging demand has already led Cattier to increase initial production five fold. It now aims to market up to 300,000 bottles annually within five years.

food

Filipino food

PHYO ARBIDANS
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FILIPINO PAPAYA SALAD
6 servings

- 2 small green papaya (450-500 g)
- ½ cup apple cider vinegar
- ½ cup raw sugar
- 2 tomatoes
- 4 snake beans
- 3 thin slice ginger
- 1 teaspoon lime
- Garnish with coriander

PREPARATIONS

Cut the top of papaya and soak them in water. Then shred them roughly or cut them into fine strips.

Rub with salt well and squeeze the liquid out for few times. Pat dry with kitchen paper. Then cut the ginger into tiny strips and soak them in hot water.

Add vinegar and sugar into sauce pan and heat them with medium heat. Stir the liquid till the sugar completely dissolves.. Then bring the papaya into the pot and simmer for 5 minutes.

Cover the lid during simmer. Turn the heat off and add ginger. Mix well and cool them down.

Slice the tomatoes and discard the seed. Slice the snake beans finely.

Add all the ingredients into a big bowl and mix well. Garnish with coriander.

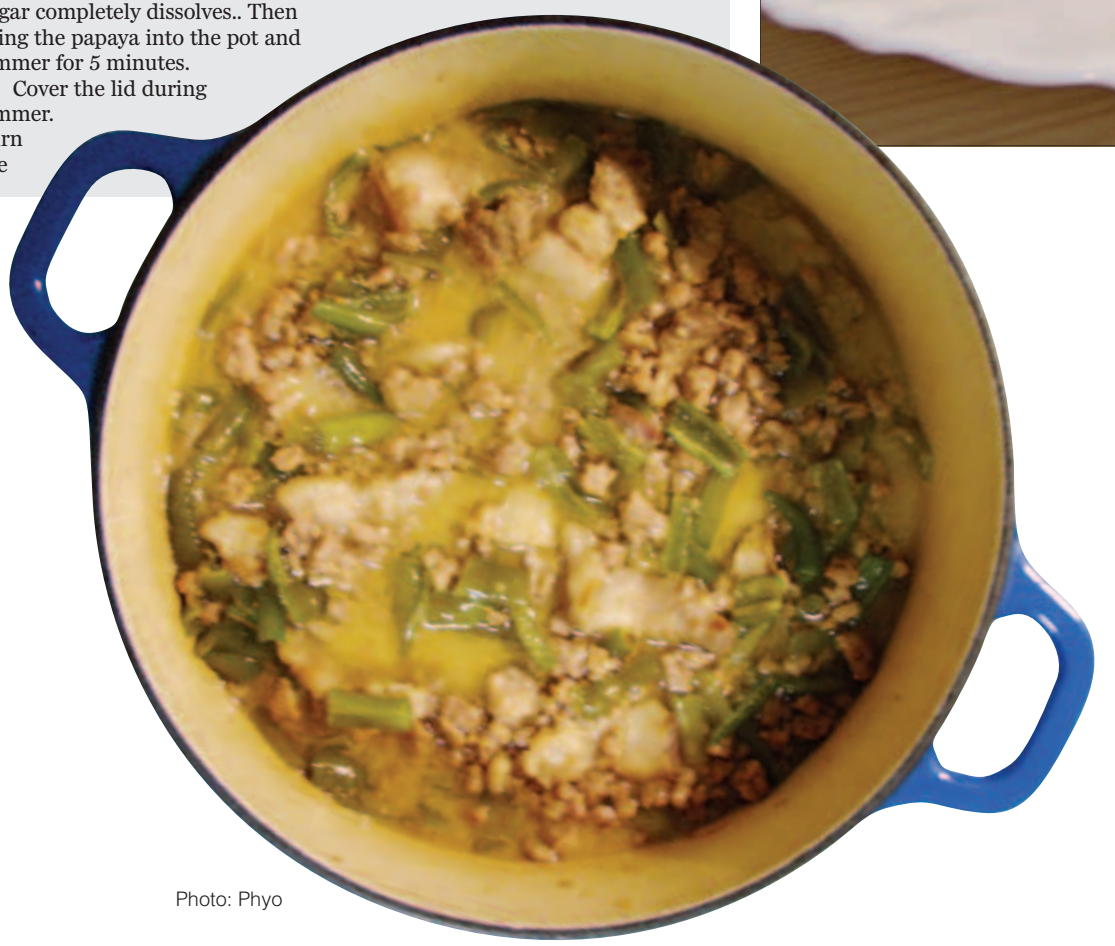


Photo: Phyo

Bicol with rice. Photo: Phyo

THIS week is marks my first attempt at Filipino fusion in the kitchen.

The recipes come to us courtesy of Olive and Amee, longtime readers and new friends who were kind enough to come over to the kitchen and give me a crash course on Fillipino cooking.

BICOL EXPRESS
6 servings

- 500 g pork mince
- 100-150 g of pork belly
- 2 small onions
- 4 cloves garlic
- 1 bunch long chilli
- 250 ml coconut milk
- 2 ½ teaspoon of shrimp paste

PREPARATIONS

Pat dry the mince with kitchen paper. Slice the pork belly thinly. Set aside.

Dice the onions finely. Crush the garlic. Cut the tops off the chilies and halve them. Discard the seeds. Cut them into 2 cm long strips and soak them in salted water.

The longer you soaked them, the less spicy it is.

Heat the heavy bottom pot to medium heat. When the pot is hot enough, add the pork belly and turn the heat down. Then fry the pork till the oil come out. When there is oil and shiny, add the onions and sauté them.

After the onions become translucent, add crushed garlic and shrimp paste. Fry for one minute. Bring the mince into the pot and seal them.

Turn the heat back to medium, add the coconut milk and let them boil. As soon as it is bubbling, turn the heat down again. Simmer for 20-25 min with covering lid. Salt for taste.

Remove the lid after that, and add the chilies. Stir them well and cook for 4-5 minutes.

Serve with steamed rice.

Restaurant Review

La phet yay goes high class

THE Rangoon Tea House on Pansodan Street is a delicious fusion of Yangon's rich street food tradition and the city's more recent trend towards boutique dining. Both tourists and La phet yay connoisseurs should make a point to check out this newest addition to downtown's rapidly expanding restaurant scene.

True to its name, the establishment takes tea very seriously. Every menu comes with a chart that helpfully color-codes the specific ratios of black tea, steamed milk, and condensced milk in the over 30 permutations of La Pey Ye offered by the kitchen.

On the food side, Rangoon Tea House offers many local staples with a gourmet twist. For my own meal, I enjoyed a bowl of organic mohingya with a side of fried chicken cutlets sweetened with lemongrass.

The portions on both were quite generous, and left this critic too stuffed to sample some of the promising dessert options. Other options include samosa, grilled minced kebab, and of course tea leaf salad.

Saying this food is a good value for the money is bound to be controversial. Some may ask why a person should pay K5000 for mohingya or tea-leaf salad when you can get the same for K500 only a few blocks away.

All due respect to the sidewalk chefs who make this city run, but the dishes at Rangoon Tea house are expertly prepared and well-worth the extra cash.

Every individual piece of my mohingya, from the broth to the hard-boiled egg to the pieces of ei kyar kway was top shelf, clearly the work of a kitchen with a deep appreciation for the recipes they're recreating.

The restaurant itself occupies the first floor of one of the old colonial structures along Pansodan Street, and makes excellent use of the space. The ceiling is high and the wide windows flood the room with natural light, which makes exactly the kind of place one would want to while away the afternoon sipping tea.

Photos: Staff

Rangoon Tea House

77 Pansodan Rd, (lower block), first floor, Kyauktada Township Yangon.

Restaurant Rating
★★★★½

Food	8
Beverage	9
Service	9
Value	8
X-Factor	9

Toyota Mingalar new car products

Toyota Mingalar new car products and showroom opening ceremony was held in Hlaing Township on November 26.

Ko Wai Linn and Ko Min Thet Kyaw

Mr Shotaro Honda

Daw Kyi Kyi Than and Thaw Myo Naung

Ye Aung and Ma Too

Lu Min

Pyay Ti Oo foundation

Pyay Ti Oo foundation hosted their fifth anniversary at Sky Star Hotel on November 30.

Attendees

Eaindra Kyaw Zin and Pyay Ti Oo

Thein Sann Tun

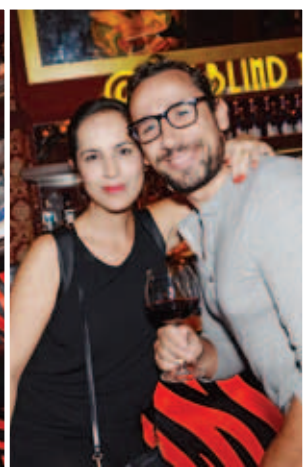
Nay Min, Daw Khin Mar Lar, Ma Khin Cho Cho Oo, Daw Nan Ei Ei Zar and attendees

The press conference of Crown Couple Award 2014

The press conference of Crown Couple Award 2014 was held at Taw Win Garden restaurant on November 25.

Contestants

Hnin Izzali



Jaco and Lara

Suriya

Ye Hein and Linn

Wana Aung, Wah Wah, Sandi and Phone Htet

Blind Tiger Bar launching ceremony

Blind Tiger Bar launching ceremony was held at United Condominium on November 29.

TUBORG မြေပို့ လမ်းစဉ်
FUN GUIDE

Zayyar Htet, Shwe La Aung and Ye Min Phyo

Pann Ei Hnin Si

Luminarc new designs

Luminarc new designs on new products were launched at Junction Square Shopping Center on November 27.

Tin Moe Lwin, Ko Sonny and Ma May Zin

Nissan Group Members

Nissan Twin new cars

Nissan Twin new cars were launched on its car showroom in Hlaing Township on November 26.

Staffs

Ka Laung Thit publishing house's representative

Representatives from Kyauk Sein publishing house

Daw Kyu Kyu

Mr Yoshinori Koide and attendee

Konica Minolta new products

Konica Minolta new products for printing were launch on November 27 at The Strand Hotel

Mr JX Goh

The first anniversary of Chatime Myanmar juice shop

The first anniversary of Chatime Myanmar juice shop was held at Kandawgyi Palace on November 30.

Mr Henery Wand and Ms Teresa

Mr Jacky Teh and Ms Chong

Mr. Taro and Mr Ryuji Maung

Chef Jam Melchor

Phillipine Food Fair

Phillipine Food Fair and promotion was held at Sule Shangrila Hotel on November 26.

Chef and guest

Mr Ramon Policarpio, Ms Ana Abejuela and Ms Jennifer T.Torred

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
FMI A1	6	8:00	9:00
FMI A1	7	15:30	16:30

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
FMI A2	6	10:00	11:00
FMI A2	7	17:00	18:00

YANGON TO MANDALAY

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
YH 909	4,5,7	6:00	7:40
YH 917	1	6:00	7:40
Y5 775	Daily	6:00	7:10
YJ 891	Daily	6:00	8:05
K7 262	Daily	6:00	8:10
YH 917	2,3,4,5,6,7	6:10	8:30
6T 401	2	6:20	8:30
W9 201	Daily	7:00	8:25
YJ 811	3	7:00	8:25
YH 835	1,7	7:00	8:40
YH 826	3	7:00	8:40
YH 831	6,4	7:00	8:40
YH 829	5	7:00	11:05
7Y 131	Daily	7:15	9:20
K7 266	Daily	8:00	10:05
K7 244	1,3,5,6,7	8:15	9:40
8M 6603	4	9:00	10:10
YJ 751	7,5	10:45	12:40
YJ 601	6	11:00	12:25
YJ 211	7,5	11:00	12:25
YJ 601	4	11:00	12:25
YJ 233	6	11:00	12:55
YJ 201	1,2,4	11:00	12:55
YJ 761	1,2,4	11:00	12:55
YH 911	2	11:00	12:40
YH 737	3,5,7	11:15	13:25
YH 729	2,4,6	11:15	14:15
W9 251	2,5	11:30	12:55
YH 727	1	11:30	13:40
7Y 941	1,3,4,6	11:45	13:10
7Y 841	2,5	11:45	13:10
7Y 943	7	11:45	13:10
K7 822	2,4,7	12:30	16:55
K7 622	1,3,5,7	13:00	14:25
K7 226	2,4,6	13:30	14:55
K7 224/7Y 241	Daily	14:30	16:35
6T 501	3,5,7	14:30	16:25
7Y 241	Daily	14:30	16:25
YH 731	1,2,3,4,6,7	15:00	17:10
6T 501	2	15:20	17:15
Y5 234	Daily	15:20	16:30
W9 211	4	15:30	16:55

MANDALAY TO YANGON

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
YH 909	4,5,7	7:40	9:45
Y5 233	1,2,4,5,6	7:50	9:00
K7 262	Daily	8:25	12:25
YH 918	2,3,4,5,6,7	8:30	10:45
W9 201	Daily	8:40	10:35
YJ 811	3	8:40	10:05
6T 402	2	8:45	10:50
YH 918	1	9:10	11:05
7Y 132	Daily	9:35	11:30
K7 244	1,3,5,6,7	9:55	13:00
K7 267	Daily	10:20	12:25
YH 836	1	13:20	14:25
YH 836	7	13:20	14:45
YH 827	3	13:20	14:45
YH 832	4,6	13:20	14:45
YH 738	7	13:25	17:50
YJ 202	1,2,4	15:30	16:55
YH 912	2	15:30	17:25
YJ 602	4	15:40	17:05
YJ 602	6	15:40	17:35
YJ 212	7,5	15:55	17:20
YJ 762	1,2,4	16:35	18:00
7Y 242	Daily	16:40	18:45
6T 502	3,5,7	16:40	18:45
K7 225/7Y 242	Daily	16:50	19:00
YH 728	1	17:00	18:25
Y5 776	Daily	17:10	18:20
W9 211	4	17:10	19:15
K7 823	2,4,7	17:10	18:35
YH 732	1,2,3,4,6,7	17:10	19:15
8M 6604	4	17:20	18:30
K7 227	2,4,6	17:20	18:45
8M 903	1,2,4,5,7	17:20	18:30
YH 738	3,5	17:25	18:50
6T 502	2	17:30	19:35
K7 623	1,3,5,7	17:40	19:05
YJ 234	4	17:45	19:10
YH 730	2,4,6	18:00	19:25
W9 252	2,5	18:15	19:40

YANGON TO NYAUNG U

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
K7 262	Daily	6:00	7:20
YJ 891	Daily	6:00	7:20
YH 909	4,5,7	6:00	8:25
YH 917	1	6:00	8:25
YH 917	2,3,4,5,6,7	6:10	7:45
6T 401	2	6:20	7:40
YJ 881	1,2,4,5,7	6:45	8:15
K7 242	Daily	7:00	8:20
6T 401	6	7:00	8:20
YJ 801	6	7:00	8:20
YH 909	1,2,3,6	7:00	8:35
7Y 131	Daily	7:15	8:35
7Y 121	1	8:20	9:40
Y5 649	Daily	10:30	11:50
K7 224/7Y 241	Daily	14:30	17:25
7Y 241	Daily	14:30	17:10
6T 501	3,5,7	14:30	17:10
YH 731	1,2,3,4,6,7	15:00	17:55
K7 264	Daily	15:00	17:10
6T 501	2	15:20	18:00
W9 129	1,3,6	15:30	17:35
W9 211	4	15:30	17:40

NYAUNG U TO YANGON

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
YJ 891	Daily	7:35	10:15
YH 910	4,5,7	7:40	9:45
YH 918	2,3,4,5,6,7	7:45	10:45
6T 402	2	7:55	10:50
YJ 881	1,2,4,5,7	8:20	10:25
YH 918	1	8:25	11:05
K7 242	Daily	8:35	11:45
6T 401	6	8:35	10:45
YH 910	1,2,3	8:35	10:40
YJ 801	6	8:35	9:55
7Y 131	Daily	8:50	11:30
7Y 121	Daily	9:55	14:10
K7 263	Daily	11:05	12:25
Y5 650	Daily	13:55	15:15
K7 265	Daily	17:25	18:45
6T 502	1,3,4,5,6,7	17:25	18:45
7Y 242	Daily	17:25	18:45
K7 225/7Y 242	Daily	17:40	19:00
W9 129	1,3,6	17:50	19:10
YH 732	1,2,3,4,6,7	17:55	19:15

YANGON TO MYITKYINA

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
YH 835	1,7	7:00	10:05
YH 826	3	7:00	10:05
YH 831	4,6	7:00	10:05
YJ 201	1,2,4	11:00	13:50
YJ 211	7,5	11:00	13:50
YH 829	5	7:00	9:40
YJ 233	6	11:00	16:05
W9 251	2,5	11:30	14:25
7Y 841	5	11:45	14:35
K7 622	1,3,5,7	13:00	15:55

MYITKYINA TO YANGON

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
YJ 202	1,2,4	14:05	16:55
YJ 211	7,5	14:05	17:20
YH 836	1,7	11:55	14:25
YH 832	4,6	11:55	14:45
YH 830	5	12:30	14:55
K7 623	1,3,5,7	16:10	19:05
YJ 234	4	16:20	19:10
YH 827	3	11:55	14:45
W9 252	2,5	16:45	19:40

YANGON TO HEHO

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
YJ 891	Daily	6:00	8:50
K7 262	Daily	6:00	9:55
YH 917	1	6:00	9:55
YH 917	2,3,4,5,6,7	6:10	9:35
6T 401	2	6:20	9:20
YJ 881	1,2,4,5,7	6:45	9:00
K7 242	Daily	7:00	9:15
6T 401	6	7:00	9:15
W9 201	Daily	7:00	9:10
YH 909	1,2,3	7:00	9:30
7Y 131	Daily	7:15	10:05
K7 266	Daily	8:00	9:15
K7 244	1,3,5,6,7	8:15	10:30
7Y 121	Daily	8:20	10:35
Y5 649	Daily	10:30	12:45
YH 505	4,5,6	10:30	11:55
YJ 751	7,5	10:40	11:55
YJ 751	3	11:00	12:10
YJ 233	6	11:00	12:10
YJ 761	1,2,4	11:00	12:10
YH 505	1,2,3	11:00	12:25
YH 727	1	11:30	12:55
YH 737	3,5,7	11:15	12:40
7Y 941	1,2,4,6	11:45	13:55
K7 828	1,3,5	12:30	13:45
K7 822	2,4,7	12:30	13:45
K7 224/7Y 241	Daily	14:30	15:45
7Y 241	Daily	14:30	15:40
6T 501	3,5,7	14:30	15:40
YH 731	1,2,3,4,5,6	15:00	16:25
K7 264	Daily	15:00	16:25
W9 129	1,3,6	15:30	16:40

HEHO TO YANGON

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
YJ 891	Daily	9:05	10:15
YJ 881	1,2,4,5,7	9:15	10:25
W9 201	Daily	9:25	10:35
6T 402	6	9:30	10:45
K7 243	Daily	9:30	11:45
YH 910	1,2,3	9:30	10:40
YH 918	1	9:55	11:05
YH 918	2,3,4,5,6	9:35	10:45
6T 402	2	9:35	10:50
K7 263	Daily	10:10	12:25
7Y 132	Daily	10:20	11:30
K7 245	1,3,5,6,7	10:45	13:00
7Y 121	Daily	10:50	14:10
K7 267	Daily	11:10	12:25
YH 505	4,5,6	11:55	14:00
YH 505	1,2,3	12:25	14:30
Y5 650	Daily	13:00	15:15
6T 501	2	15:20	16:30
YJ 762	1,2,4	15:50	18:00
7Y 241	Daily	15:55	18:45
6T 501	3,5,7	15:55	18:45
K7 224/7Y 241	Daily	16:00	19:00
K7 829	1,3,5	16:10	17:25
YJH 912	2	16:15	17:25
YH 728	1	16:15	18:25
K7 823	2,4,7	16:20	18:35
YH 732	1,2,3,4,6,7	16:25	19:15
K7 264	Daily	16:30	18:45
YH 738	7	16:40	17:50
YH 738	3,5	16:40	18:50
6T 501	2	16:45	19:35
W9 129	1,3,6	16:55	19:10
YJ 752	3	17:15	18:25
YJ 752	7,5	17:40	19:05

YANGON TO MYEIK

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
Y5 325	1,5	6:45	8:15
7Y 531	1,5	7:00	8:38
K7 319	2,4,6	7:00	9:05
Y5 325	2	15:30	17:00

MYEIK TO YANGON

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
Y5 326	1,5	8:35	10:05
7Y 532	1,5	10:45	12:18
K7 320	2,4,6	11:30	13:35
Y5 326	2	17:15	18:45

YANGON TO SITTWE

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
6T 605	6	11:15	13:10
W9 309	1,3,6	11:30	12:55
6T 605	1,2,3,4,5,7	12:30	14:25
K7 422	Daily	13:00	14:55

SITTWE TO YANGON

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
W9 309	1,3,6	13:10	14:55
6T 606	6	13:30	14:50
6T 606	1,2,3,4,5,7	14:45	16:05
K7 423	Daily	15:10	16:30

YANGON TO THANDWE

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
K7 242	Daily	7:00	10:35
K7 244	1,3,5,6,7	8:15	11:50
YH 505	4,5,6	10:30	13:10
YH 505	1,2	11:00	13:40
W9 309	1,3,6	11:30	13:50
7Y 122	Daily	12:15	13:05
6T 605	Daily	12:30	13:25
K7 422	Daily	13:00	13:35
Y5 421	1,3,4,6	15:45	16:40

THANDWE TO YANGON

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
K7 243	Daily	10:50	11:45
K7 245	1,3,5,6,7	12:05	13:00
YH 506	4,5,6	13:10	14:00
7Y 122	Daily	13:20	14:10
YH 506	1,2,3	13:40	14:30
6T 605	Daily	13:40	16:05
W9 309	1,3,6	14:05	14:55
K7 423	3	14:10	16:30
K7 422	1,2,4,5,6,7	14:10	16:30
Y5 422	1,3,4,6	16:55	17:50

YANGON TO DAWEI

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
K7 319	2,4,6	7:00	8:10
7Y 531	1,5	7:00	7:48

DAWEI TO YANGON

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
K7 320	2,4,6	12:25	13:35
7Y 532	1,5	11:30	12:18

YANGON TO LASHIO

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
YJ 751	7,5	10:45	13:40
YJ 891	3	11:00	13:15
YH 729	2,4,6	11:15	13:15
7Y 741	1,5	11:30	13:18
K7 828	1,3,5	12:30	14:50

LASHIO TO YANGON

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
K7 829	1,3,5	15:05	17:25
7Y 742	1,5	16:00	17:48
YJ 752	3	16:10	18:25
YJ 752	7,5	16:35	19:05
YH 730	2,4,6	17:00	19:25

YANGON TO PUTAO

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
YH 826	3	7:00	10:05
YH 835	7	7:00	10:05
YH 835	1	7:00	11:00
YH 831	6	7:00	11:00
W9 251	2,5	11:30	15:25

PUTAO TO YANGON

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
YH 836	1	11:00	14:25
YH 827	3	11:00	14:45
YH 832	6	11:00	14:45
YH 835	7	11:00	14:45
W9 252	2,5	15:45	19:40

YANGON TO CHIANG MAI

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
Y5 251	2,4,6	6:15	8:05
7Y 305	1,5	11:00	12:50
W9 9607	4,7	14:30	16:20

CHIANG MAI TO YANGON

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
Y5 252	2,4,6	9:25	10:15
7Y 306	1,5	13:45	14:35
W9 9608	4,7	17:20	18:10

Domestic Airlines

Air Bagan (W9)
Tel: 513322, 513422, 504888. Fax: 515102

Air KBZ (K7)
Tel: 372977~80, 533030~39 (airport), 373766 (hotline). Fax: 372983

Air Mandalay (6T)
Tel: (office) 501520, 525488, (airport) 533222~3, 09-73152853.
Fax: (office) 525937, 533223 (airport)

Asian Wings (YJ)
Tel: 515261~264, 512140, 512473, 512640
Fax: 532333, 516654

FMI Air Charter
Tel: 240363, 240373, 09421146545

Golden Myanmar Airlines (Y5)
Tel: 09400446999, 09400447999
Fax: 8604051

Mann Yadanarpon Airlines (7Y)
Tel: 656969
Fax: 656998, 651020

Yangon Airways (YH)
Tel: 383100, 383107, 700264
Fax: 652 533

Airline Codes

6T = Air Mandalay

7Y = Mann Yadanarpon Airlines

FMI = FMI Air Charter

K7 = Air KBZ

W9 = Air Bagan

Y5 = Golden Myanmar Airlines

YH = Yangon Airways

YJ = Asian Wings

Subject to change without notice

Day	
1 = Monday	4 = Thursday
2 = Tuesday	5 = Friday
3 = Wednesday	6 = Saturday
	7 = Sunday

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INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT SCHEDULES

YANGON TO BANGKOK

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
PG 706	Daily	6:05	8:20
8M 335	Daily	8:40	10:25
TG 304	Daily	9:50	11:45
PG 702	Daily	10:30	12:25
TG 302	Daily	14:50	16:45
PG 708	Daily	15:20	17:15
8M 331	Daily	16:30	18:15
PG 704	Daily	18:20	20:15
Y5 237	Daily	19:00	20:50
TG 306	Daily	19:50	21:45

BANGKOK TO YANGON

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
TG 303	Daily	8:00	8:45
PG 701	Daily	8:45	9:40
Y5 238	Daily	21:30	22:20
8M 336	Daily	11:55	12:40
TG 301	Daily	13:05	13:50
PG 707	Daily	13:40	14:30
PG 703	Daily	17:05	17:35
TG 305	Daily	18:05	18:50
8M 332	Daily	19:20	20:05
PG 705	Daily	20:10	21:25

YANGON TO DON MUEANG

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
DD 4231	Daily	8:00	9:45
FD 252	Daily	8:30	10:20
FD 256	Daily	12:50	14:40
FD 254	Daily	17:35	19:25
FD 258	Daily	21:30	23:15
DD 4239	Daily	21:00	22:55

DON MUEANG TO YANGON

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
DD 4230	Daily	6:30	7:15
FD 251	Daily	7:15	8:00
FD 255	Daily	11:35	12:20
FD 253	Daily	16:20	17:05
FD 257	Daily	20:15	20:55
DD 4238	Daily	19:25	20:15

YANGON TO SINGAPORE

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
8M 231	Daily	8:00	12:25
Y5 2233	Daily	9:45	14:15
TR 2823	Daily	9:45	14:35
SQ 997	Daily	10:25	15:10
3K 582	Daily	11:20	15:50
MI 533	2,4,6	13:35	20:50
MI 515	1,3	13:50	18:20
MI 519	Daily	16:40	21:15
3K 584	2,3,5	19:30	0:10

SINGAPORE TO YANGON

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
TR 2822	Daily	7:20	8:45
Y5 2234	Daily	7:20	8:50
SQ 998	Daily	7:55	9:20
3K 5	Daily	11:20	15:50
MI 533	2,4,7	11:30	12:45
8M 232	Daily	13:25	14:50
MI 518	Daily	14:20	15:45
MI 516	1,3	11:30	12:55

YANGON TO KUALA LUMPUR

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
AK 505	Daily	8:30	12:45
MH 741	Daily	12:15	16:30
8M 501	1,2,3,5,6	14:00	18:00
MH 743	Daily	16:00	20:15
AK 503	Daily	19:05	23:20

KUALA LUMPUR TO YANGON

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
AK 504	Daily	6:55	8:00
MH 740	Daily	10:05	11:15
8M 502	1,2,3,5,6	12:50	13:50
MH 742	Daily	13:50	15:00
AK 502	Daily	17:20	18:25

YANGON TO BEIJING

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
CA 906	3,5,7	23:50	0550+1

BEIJING TO YANGON

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
CA 905	3,5,7	19:30	22:50

YANGON TO GUANGZHOU

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
8M 711	2,4,7	8:40	13:15
CZ 3056	3,6	11:35	15:55
CZ 3056	1,5	17:40	22:10

GUANGZHOU TO YANGON

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
CZ 3055	3,6	8:35	10:35
CZ 3055	1,5	14:40	16:40
8M 712	2,4,7	14:15	15:50

YANGON TO TAIPEI

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
CI 7916	Daily	10:50	16:10

TAIPEI TO YANGON

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
CI 7915	Daily	7:00	9:50

YANGON TO KUNMING

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
CA 416	Daily	12:30	15:55
MU 2012	3	12:40	18:50
MU 2032	1,2,4,5,6,7	14:50	18:15

KUNMING TO YANGON

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
MU 2011	3	8:25	11:50
CA 905	Daily	11:10	11:30
MU 2031	1,2,4,5,6,7	13:30	14:00

YANGON TO HANOI

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
VN 956	1,3,5,6,7	19:10	21:25

HANOI TO YANGON

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
VN 957	1,3,5,6,7	16:40	18:10

YANGON TO HO CHI MINH CITY

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
VN 942	2,4,7	14:25	17:05

HO CHI MINH CITY TO YANGON

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
VN 943	2,4,7	11:45	13:25

YANGON TO DOHA

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
QR 919	1,4,6	7:55	11:40

DOHA TO YANGON

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
QR 918	3,5,7	19:45	0459+1

YANGON TO SEOUL

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
0Z 770	4,7	0:50	8:50
KE 472	Daily	23:35	7:45

SEOUL TO YANGON

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
KE 471	Daily	18:30	22:40
0Z 769	3,6	19:30	23:40

YANGON TO HONG KONG

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
KA 251	Daily	01:10	05:25

HONG KONG TO YANGON

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
KA 250	Daily	21:45	21:30

YANGON TO TOKYO

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
NH 914	Daily	22:10	6:45

TOKYO TO YANGON

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
NH 913	Daily	11:45	17:15

YANGON TO DHAKA

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
BG 061	2	11:45	13:00
BG 061	5	19:45	21:00

DHAKA TO YANGON

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
BG 060	2	8:30	10:45
BG 060	5	16:30	18:45

YANGON TO INCHEON

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
W9 607	4,7	14:30	16:20
8M 902	1,2,4,5,7	1:35	9:10
8M 7702	Daily	23:55	07:45+1

INCHEON TO YANGON

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
W9 608	4,7	17:20	18:10
8M 7701	Daily	18:30	22:30

YANGON TO GAYA

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
8M 601	3,5,6	10:30	11:50

GAYA TO YANGON

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
8M 602	3,5,6	12:50	16:00

MANDALAY TO BANGKOK

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
PG 710	Daily	14:15	16:40
FD 245	Daily	12:50	15:15

BANGKOK TO MANDALAY

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
PG 709	Daily	12:05	13:25
FD 244	Daily	10:55	12:20

MANDALAY TO SINGAPORE

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
MI 533	2,4,7	15:45	20:50
Y5 2233	1,2,4,5,6	7:50	14:15

SINGAPORE TO MANDALAY

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
Y5 2234	Daily	7:20	16:30
MI 533	2,4,7	11:30	14:50

MANDALAY TO DON MUEANG

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
FD 245	Daily	12:50	15:15

DON MUEANG TO MANDALAY

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
FD 244	Daily	10:55	12:20

MANDALAY TO KUNMING

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
MU 2030	Daily	13:50	16:40

KUNMING TO MANDALAY

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
MU 2029	Daily	12:55	12:50

NAY PYI TAW TO BANGKOK

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
PG 722	1,2,3,4,5	19:45	22:45

BANGKOK TO NAY PYI TAW

Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
PG 721	1,2,3,4,5	17:15	19:15

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

Day
1 = Monday
2 = Tuesday
3 = Wednesday
4 = Thursday
5 = Friday
6 = Saturday
7 = Sunday

France's itinerant distillers good **to the last drop**

IT'S a scene which has been repeated for centuries in the rolling wooded hills of Gascony.

As the autumn chill sets in and trees and vines turn a coppery yellow, itinerant distillers load up their stills and set to work transforming the region's fragrant white wines into Armagnac, France's oldest – and for many – finest brandy.

Marc Saint-Martin has never been as busy, nor has his order book been as full.

Yet he is one of the last of a dying breed, one of only three remaining travelling distillers left in the Armagnac region of southwestern France.

From October to January, Saint-Martin – a winemaker himself – drags his 100-year-old copper still around the region on the back of his tractor, setting up his wood-fired alembic everywhere from humble barns to the keeps and courtyards of its many chateaux.

Then his team work night and day for two or three days to turn the wine from a blend of Ugni blanc, Colombard and Folle blanche (crazy white) grapes into a white spirit that is at least 53 percent alcohol.

The chemistry is simple. The wine is converted into steam, and then cooled to form the brandy.

The reality of the process is altogether more "fiddly", Saint-Martin says in his singing Gascon accent, with the heat coming from a wood fire. "You have to heat it enough, but not too much, and make sure that enough wine is going in, but not too much."

A fourth-generation distiller himself, Saint-Martin says Armagnac's great particularity is "it's continuous distillation. That means wine has to come into the still non-stop, with Armagnac coming out the other side all the time as well. So it needs to be monitored all the time, 24 hours a day" by him and his beret-wearing assistant – Gascony being also one of the last fortresses of the most French of hats.

At Ravignan they keep the fire burning for two-and-a-half days, as they distil 26,000 litres (6,860 gallons) of wine down to 5000 litres of Armagnac.

Although the clear distilled liquid is already Armagnac, it takes at least 10 to 12 years of ageing before it becomes the finished product, with its deep amber colour.

By then connoisseurs claim that is more fragrant and flavoursome than Cognac, the rival brandy to the north, which is double distilled.

The really mysterious alchemy takes place during its storage in 400-litre oak barrels, where the Armagnac takes on its characteristic aromas of quince, prune, hazelnut and orange.

Part of the alcohol also evaporates as it ages (known as "the angels' share"), and more complex flavours also appear with oxidation.

"You can sell Armagnac after only three years but we keep it for 10 to 12 years in our oak barrels," said winemaker Anne-Laurence Boubee de Gramont, whose aristocratic family own the estate. "Unlike a wine Armagnac does not develop in the bottle, but will keep the taste, colour and aroma it had on the day it was bottled."

They may have an aristocratic clientele these days, but once upon a time artisanal distillers or "bouilleurs de cru" had a whiff of sulphur about them. In the grim post-war years, working class Paris was awash with cheap spirits, prompting a short-lived prohibition-style campaign against illegal distilling, mostly of apple and pear brandy in the northern regions of Normandy and Brittany.

Appalled by workers starting their day with a "bonne goutte" of strong liquor in cafes, then-prime minister Pierre Mendes France radically tightened the rules and urged the French to drink milk rather than wine with their meals.

An outcry ensued and Mendes France was bundled from power the following year, with many claiming it was downright unpatriotic not to imbibe.

Once vineyards could not afford to buy their own still, with even secondhand equipment costing between 30,000 and 50,000 euros ($37,000 and $62,000). Now many are prepared to invest 200,000 euros or more in the latest natural gas-fired models.

And the prestige of making their own Armagnac is prompting many winemakers to try their hand at distilling.

Which is why, despite being kept more than busy by his 60 clients, Saint-Martin is one of the last of his kind.

The hours may be long but his dying profession is not without its consolations.

Most of all the "moments of great conviviality" sitting around the fire on nippy nights enjoying local specialities like grilled chesnuts and pigeon, washed down with – what else? – the finest Armagnac.

An employee of Marc Saint-Martin sets up a movable still. Photo: AFP

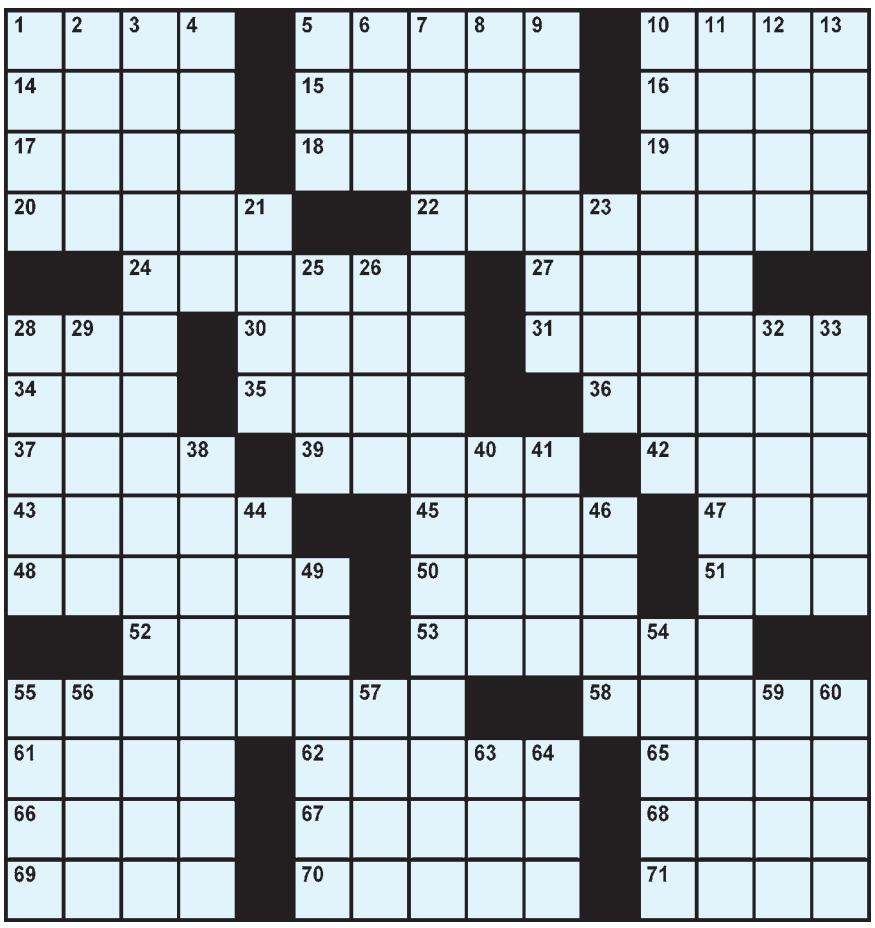
Universal Crossword

Edited by Timothy E. Parker

NOT BACK YET *By Janice K. Klute*

ACROSS
1 "Over the hill" in the military
5 Iron hooks used for fishing
10 Vividly colored aquarium fish
14 "Give that ___ cigar!"
15 Gown part
16 "Clair de ___" (Debussy)
17 Knuckleball catcher
18 BP merger mate
19 Erupter of 1971
20 "None of the above"
22 Affecting human infants
24 Anti-ship missile
27 Indian prince
28 Cutting tool was backward?
30 Sticking place
31 2000 Summer Olympics city
34 The Roaring Twenties, for one
35 Former NYC mayor Ed
36 Musical sign
37 Participate in a democracy
39 "Deal" partner
42 Racer Ricky
43 Touch up, as text
45 And others (Abbr.)
47 Part of EAP
48 Crack investigators?
50 Guitar relative
51 It makes its point
52 Like many samples
53 Become extinct
55 Sebring maker, once
58 Clear plastic wrap
61 Roller-coaster thrill
62 "J'accuse!" author Zola
65 1996 campaign name
66 Has no life
67 Type of war
68 Space-going chimp
69 Teachers' favorites
70 Forest flora
71 "Don't expunge that!"

DOWN
1 Pistol pellets
2 Remain in line
3 1954 Oscar winner
4 Rubber tree sap
5 Federal procurement org.
6 Machine used daily
7 Feature of many automobiles
8 It's behind the mask
9 Animal tracks
10 Poisonous evergreen shrub
11 Hiding one's true feelings
12 "___ Karenina"
13 Make better
21 ___ of Gibraltar
23 Thumbs-down votes
25 Shortest-distance flier?
26 To ___ his own
28 Dice-roller's winner or loser
29 Cooking evidence
32 Fund
33 Swiss song
38 Renders unreadable, as data
40 Fancy holder for needles
41 After the deadline
44 Female rabbits
46 Durocher and the Lion
49 Make a pick
54 Grows dim
55 Movie preview
56 Water-transporting tube
57 Arabian VIP
59 Ingredient in some lotions
60 Bird's abode
63 Utter a fib
64 Chi-town trains



SUDOKU PACIFIC

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains every digit from 1 to 9 inclusively.

					3	7		
4			6		8		5	3
3		8		5				1
	5	9	7					6
				2				
6					9	8	7	
5				8		4		7
1	3		2		7			5
		7	3					

12/11

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★☆☆

DILBERT

BY SCOTT ADAMS

PEANUTS

BY CHARLES SCHULZ

CALVIN AND HOBBES

BY BILL WATTERSON

WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and **CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD.** The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

WHAT DO YOU PUT IN YOUR SAUCES? **Solution: 11 letters**

M O O R H S U M H P F U D G E
E D R E V N C O U L G R N R T
D A E R B H A H A A A I D A A
L C M A E R C P R T S N O V L
O O I D L T P E S S A I T Y O
C V D M E L T U E I I L I H C
A A E K E S C R R F S O R M O
R A S L Y D D B M I A I F A H
A Y I O M R U I I S V A O R C
N E A B T A N N S (H) O I S I N
O K N S E T N D O (O) R A K E H
B S R T E S W G I (T) Y S A R C
R I A E W U I C O O K E E O A
A H E R S M N O T A M O T S E
C W B A R B E C U E O T S E P

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Aioli, Apple, Avocado, Barbecue, Bearnaise, Bread, Carbonara, Chateaubriand, Cheddar, Chili, Chocolate, Cold, Cook, Cream, Custard, Demi, Dressing, Fish, Fudge, Gravy, Hoisin, Hot, Ketchup, Lobster, Mango, Marie, Mint, Miso, Mushroom, Mustard, Oyster, Pan, Peach, Pesto, Ragu, Rose, Savory, Sofrito, Steak, Sweet, Tomato, Verde, Whiskey, Wine

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PUZZLE SOLUTIONS

2	9	1	5	4	3	7	8	9
5	8	9	7	6	2	4	3	1
7	3	4	1	8	9	6	2	5
4	7	8	9	3	5	2	1	6
9	1	5	6	2	8	3	4	7
6	2	3	4	1	7	9	5	8
1	6	9	2	5	4	8	7	3
3	5	2	8	7	6	1	9	4
8	4	7	3	9	1	5	6	2

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, Khabaung Street, Hlaing Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 515115, fax: 515116, email: info@yangon.mfa.gov.il

Italy 3, Inya Myaing Road, Golden Valley, Yangon. Tel: 527100, 527101, fax: 514565, email: ambyang.mail@ esteri.it

Japan 100, Natmauk Rd, Yangon. Tel: 549644-8, 540399, 540400, 540411, 545988, fax: 549643

Kuwait 62-B, Shwe Taung Kyar St, Bahan Tsp. Tel : 01-230-9542, 230-9543. Fax : 01-230-5836.

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@mofat.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,

United States of America 110, University Avenue, Kamayut Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 536509, 535756, Fax: 650306

Vietnam Bldg-72, Thanlwin Rd, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 511305

UNITED NATIONS

ILO Liaison 1-A, Kanbae (Thitsar Rd), Yankin Tsp, Tel : 01-566538, 566539

IOM 318 (A) Ahlone Rd, Dagon Tsp, Yangon.Tel – 01-210588, 09 73236679, 0973236680, Email- iomyangon@iom.int

UNAIDS 137/1, Thaw Wun Rd, Kamayut Tsp. Tel : 534498, 504832

UNDCP 11-A, Malikha St, Mayangone tsp. Tel: 666903, 664539.

UNDP 6, Natmauk Rd, Bahan tel: 542910-19. fax: 292739.

UNFPA 6, Natmauk Rd, Bahan tsp. tel: 546029.

UNHCR 287, Pyay Rd, Sanchaung tsp. Tel: 524022, 524024.

UNIAP Rm: 1202, 12 Fl, Traders Hotel. Tel: 254852, 254853.

UNIC 6, Natmauk St., Bahan, tel: 52910~19

UNICEF 14~15 Flr, Traders Hotel. P.O. Box 1435, Kyauktada. Tel: 375527~32, unicef.yangon@unicef. org,

UNODC 11-A, Malikha Rd., Ward 7, Mayangone. tel: 01-9666903, 9660556, 9660538, 9660398. email: fo.myanmar@unodc.org

UNOPS 120/0, Pyi Thu Lane, 7 Miles, Mayangone Tsp. Tel: 951-657281~7. Fax: 657279.

UNRC 6, Natmauk Rd, P.O. Box 650, TMWE Tel: 542911~19, 292637 (Resident Coordinator),

WFP 5 Kan Baw Za St, Shwe Taung Kyar, (Golden Valley), Bahan Tsp. Tel : 2305971~6

WHO No. 2, Pyay Rd, 7 Mile, Mayangone Tsp, Tel : 650405-6, 650416, 654386-90.

ASEAN Coordinating Of. for the ASEAN Humanitarian Task Force, 79, Taw Win st, Dagon Tsp. Tel: 225258.

FAO Myanma Agriculture Service Insein Rd, Insein. tel: 641672, 641673.

For more information about these listings, Please Contact - **classified.mcm@gmail.com**

Emergency Numbers

Ambulance ☎tel: 295133.
Fire ☎tel: 191, 252011, 252022.
Police emergency ☎tel: 199.
Police headquarters ☎tel: 282541, 284764.
Red Cross ☎tel:682600, 682368
Traffic Control Branch ☎tel:298651
Department of Post & Telecommunication ☎tel: 591384, 591387.
Immigration ☎tel: 286434.
Ministry of Education ☎tel:545500m 562390
Ministry of Sports ☎tel: 370604, 370605
Ministry of Communications ☎tel: 067-407037.
Myanma Post & Telecommunication (MPT) ☎tel: 067-407007.
Myanma Post & Tele-communication (Accountant Dept) ☎tel: 254563, 370768.
Ministry of Foreign Affairs ☎tel: 067-412009, 067-412344.
Ministry of Health ☎tel: 067-411358-9.
Yangon City Development Committee ☎tel: 248112.

HOSPITALS

Central Women's Hospital ☎tel: 221013, 222811.
Children Hospital ☎tel: 221421, 222807
Ear, Nose & Throat Hospital ☎tel: 543888.
Naypyitaw Hospital (emergency) ☎tel: 420096.
Worker's Hospital ☎tel: 554444, 554455, 554811.
Yangon Children Hospital ☎tel: 222807, 222808, 222809.
Yangon General Hospital (East) ☎tel: 292835, 292836, 292837.
Yangon General Hospital (New) ☎tel: 384493, 384494, 384495, 379109.
Yangon General Hospital (West) ☎tel: 222860, 222861, 220416.
Yangon General Hospital (YGH) ☎tel: 256112, 256123, 281443, 256131.

ELECTRICITY

Power Station ☎tel:414235

POST OFFICE

General Post Office
39, Bo Aung Kyaw St. (near British Council Library). ☎tel: 285499.

INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Yangon International Airport ☎tel: 662811.

YANGON PORT

Shipping (Coastal vessels) ☎tel: 382722

RAILWAYS

Railways information
☎tel: 274027, 202175-8.

General Listing

ACCOMMODATION-HOTELS

ASIA PLAZA HOTEL
YANGON
No. 277, Bogyoke Aung San Road, Corner of 38th Street, Kyauktada Township, Yangon, Myanmar.
Tel : (951) 391070, 391071.
Reservation@391070 (Ext) 1910, 106.
Fax : (951) 391375. Email : hotelasiaplaza@gmail.com

Avenue 64 Hotel
No. 64 (G), 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.

Clover hotel
No.7A, Wingabar Road, Bahan Tsp, Yangon.
Tel : (951) 546313, 430245. 09-731-77781~4.
Fax : (01) 546313.
www.cloverhotel.asia.
info@cloverhotel.asia

Clover Hotel City Center
No. 217, 32nd Street (Upper Block), Pabedan Tsp, Yangon, Myanmar.
Tel : 377720, Fax : 377722
www.clovercitycenter.asia

Clover Hotel City Center Plus
No. 229, 32nd Street (Upper Block), Pabedan Tsp, Yangon, Myanmar.
Tel : 377975, Fax : 377974
www.clovercitycenterplus.asia

Confort Inn
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Horizon Int'l School
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Ph: 543926, Fax: 543926,
email: contact@horizonmyanmar.com

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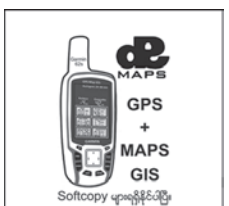

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THE INT'L Rescue Committee (IRC) is seeking **Finance Officer** 4 posts in (Loikaw, Demawsoe, Hprusoe, Hpasaung), Kayah State : Bachelor's degree in Accounting, Business Administration, Commerce or Finance. 3 years of accounting experience. Interested and qualified candidates are to send a Cover letter, CV & all relevant documents to WaiMar.Naing@rescue.org, Closing date: 17-12-2014.

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THE INT'L Rescue Committee (IRC) is seeking **Reproductive Health Project Manager** in Paletwa, Chin State: Medical degree with public health background/ Master of public health or post graduate diploma in public health is an asset. 5 years of professional experience in managing primary health care services, sexual & reproductive health care services. Operational skilled on Microsoft Office Package. Fluency in English/ Chin (Khumee). Please submit a Cover letter & CV to the HR Department. Closing date : 16 December 2014.

THE ASSOCIATION of Medical Doctors of Asia is seeking **Project Coordinator** for 'Healthy Village Project' at Western part of Pakokku, Magwe Region: University degree (Health/ Public health/ Social science will be preferable). More than 3 years professional experiences. Strong computer skill. Excellent in English & Myanmar communication. Please enclose a C.V., copies of testimonials (references) & passport photo to Email: sr.afo.amda@gmail.com Closing date: 16th December 2014.

THE INT'L Rescue Committee (IRC) is seeking (1)**Admini stration & Government Liasion Manager** - 1 post in Yangon : University degree, 7 years experience. (2) **Senior Health Officer** (M&E) - 1 post in Paletwa - Chin State: M.B.,B.S/ B.NSc/ B.CommH. 3 years experience. Good command of English & Myanmar. (3) **Reproductive Health Project Manager** in Paletwa, Chin State: Medical degree with public health background/ Master of public health or post graduate diploma in public health is an asset. 5 years of professional experience, sexual & reproductive health care services. Operational skilled on Microsoft Office Package. Fluency in English/ Chin (Khumee) (4)**Resource Officer** - 1 Post in Hpa-an, Kayin State: University degree in Law, Journalism, Education or other relevant sector. 3 years of experience. Fluency in English. (5) **Senior M&E Officer** 1 post in Hpa-an, Kayin State: University degree in data management & analysis, project management, statics or relevant sector. 3 years experience. Fluency in English. Please submit a Cover letter & CV to the HR Department by email at: WaiMar.Naing@rescue.org Closing date for 1 : 11 December, for 2 & 3 : 16 December, for 4 & 5 : 19 December 2014

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TERRE des hommes Italia is seeking **Monitoring & Evaluation Officer** in (Magway & Mandalay Regions) : University degree in related field & preferably in agriculture. Command of English. Please submit application with expected salary incl. CV, photo, references by email or by postal service. TDH Italia Country Office: 48, Shwe Hinn Thar St, Hlaing, Yangon, Tel: 654604. Email: hr.tdhit.mya@gmail.com

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3T care foundation's philanthropy is children and offering them a brighter education. It was established in March 2014, and so far has 10 members. The very first donation was at School of Disabled Children in Yangon in 2012. It donated the teaching aids such as computers, teaching and learning books, new playground set up.

In October 2013, the strong eager lead to its milestone second donation at a poor little pre-school located in the small village called MyaungWaGyi to where few people can go. The village is situated right in the Inle Lake in the region of Shan State. 3T care renovated the school classroom, created three hygienic rest rooms, digging a new well for the clean water supply, modernized teaching aids, nutritious food supply for the kids. Since then, it expected to make more donations from additional proceeds. It maintained the school renovation from time to time such as providing shelters in the rainy seasons, floor carpets renewal. The latest support was one year after, in October 2014, renovating the wooden floor, both in the classroom and playground, "We are incredibly appreciative of this donation and we don't know how to express our thanks," reflect the teachers as there is no proper teaching aids before as well as the school building itself.

The foundation plans the next project to help the students who are outstanding but poor in financial in their education.

Contact
No. 65,Center Point Towers,
6-Floor,Room-7, Sule Pagoda Road , Yangon,Myanmar.
Ph-09 492 88002
Email : 3tcare@3tgoc.com
Website : www.3tgoc.com

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Got something to say?

The Myanmar Times

newsroom@mmtimes.com

MOSCOW

The former 'expendable' just after the match. Photo: AFP

Mickey Rourke returns to ring at 62

HOLLYWOOD actor Mickey Rourke picked up his boxing career last week in Moscow at 62 years old – and beat his far younger opponent in the second round.

Rourke, wearing red trunks with a Russian flag, unleashed a barrage of blows against 29-year-old Elliot Seymour, an American professional boxer, and the bout was halted.

It had been set to go five rounds of two-and-a-half minutes each but in the end lasted about four minutes.

Prior to the match, wearing only a cowboy hat and turquoise boxer shorts, the actor had showed off his tanned, tattooed and muscly physique to a cheering crowd as he weighed in at 81.3 kilograms (179.2 pounds), the same as his rival.

"I'm very happy to be back to the boxing ring. Thank God for letting me do this," Rourke told AFP ahead of the fight.

The organisers said the boxers were receiving "large amounts of money" in fees, declining to give details but saying "everyone is happy".

Rourke was an amateur boxer before his Hollywood career took off and he became a sex symbol star in films such as '9 1/2 Weeks'.

He returned to boxing as a professional for eight matches in the 1990s, causing damage to his face that necessitated surgery and changed his appearance.

In 2008 he starred in 'The Wrestler' about a washed-up professional wrestler making a comeback, winning a Golden Globe for best actor.

Rourke said he was "terrible" when he made his own comeback in the ring.

"Before, when I fought 18 years ago, I smoked, I didn't run, I got by on my natural ability," he told journalists in Moscow.

He said a boxing match between Russian Ruslan Provodnikov and American Tim Bradley inspired him to take on the challenge of returning to the ring.

"I went to the gym and I was terrible: smoking, you know, drinking," Rourke said.

His conditioning coach, Jordan Feramisco, "broke my ass every day".

"And then one day I said, 'Fuck this. If I'm gonna do it. I think I'm strong enough, I can do it.'"

The actor is a frequent visitor to Russia and has been romantically linked to a Russian-born model, Anastassija Makarenko. He also played a Russian villain in the film 'Iron Man 2'.

On a visit to central Moscow in August, he bought and wore a T-shirt sporting a picture of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"I met Putin ... and he seems to be a very good guy," he said at the time, according to popular Russian daily *Komsomolskaïa Pravda*.

Rourke says he always dreamed of fighting in Russia. He hopes to do four more fights, all in Russia.

"I think I'm strong enough," the actor said ahead of last week's bout.

"We train hard as we can, but in the end it's in God's hands."

IN PICTURES

Photo: AFP

Goki Maruyama of Japan throws Kim Jae-Bum of South Korea (right) during their men's under 81kg repechage match at the Judo Grand Slam Tokyo 2014 in Tokyo on December 6.

North Korea makes plea for Messi visit

A TOP North Korean football official said she wants megastar Lionel Messi to visit a new football academy in the communist state, where the Barcelona wonder is a huge hit with kids.

Han Un-Gyong, a member of the Asian Football Confederation's (AFC) executive committee, said children at the Pyongyang International Football School were avid fans of the Argentine.

"I want to invite him, because our children love him," Han said during an AFC gathering in the Philippine capital Manila.

"When I go to the Pyongyang international school, I ask them who do you think is the best player. They say: 'Ah, we love Messi!' Even the girls," she added.

"They read books about Messi and watch his games through the internet. They can see all the games, China, Europe and everything at our Pyongyang International School. They can watch any football.

"They love football, that's why they know all the players' names and everything."

Football's biggest stars frequently make trips to fast-growing Asia, but a visit by Messi, nominated for a fifth world player of the year award, to secretive North Korea would cause a stir.

"Lots of students love Messi, because Messi's a very honest man. He loves children," said Han.

She said the academy is the brainchild of sports-mad supreme leader Kim Jong-Un, who also likes basketball and has previously hosted ex-NBA player Dennis Rodman in Pyongyang. About 200 boys and girls aged nine, 10 and 11 train at the new facility, which opened this year and gathers North Korea's most promising football talent.

"They're selected from all over the country. Our FA [football association] goes to all the provinces and chooses them," said Han.

"We have a lot of matches at weekends, we see them and choose the best. But if we see they're not developing, we send them back and choose another one."

Photo: AFP

Han said it may be five years before North Korea's senior sides start reaping the benefits of the academy. North Korea's men reached the 2010 World Cup and they will contest the Asian Cup in January.

North Korea are banned from next year's Women's World Cup after five players failed drugs tests at the 2011 edition – a result they said came from taking traditional medicine, containing musk deer glands, to treat lightning strikes.

But Han is expecting that North Korea's women, three-time champions of Asia, will burst back on the scene when they are next eligible for the World Cup in 2019.

"They're so good. It's a great generation. Also the under-17s are very good," she said.

North Korea, without a professional league and with no club teams competing in regional contests, are currently ranked 135th in the world ahead of their Asian Cup opener against Uzbekistan on January 10.

Forays onto the big stage include the 1966 World Cup, when they stunned Italy to reach the quarter-finals, and an infamous World Cup qualifier in 2005 against Iran in Pyongyang, which ended in a riot.

But North Korea will be buoyed by their feat in reaching the Asian Games final in October, where they narrowly lost 1-0 to cross-border rivals South Korea – with whom they are technically still at war. – *AFP*

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MACKSVILLE

Oz bids farewell to Hughes

CRICKETING luminaries bid an emotional farewell to Phillip Hughes at a funeral service held in his home town Wednesday, as Australia stopped to remember the popular batsman whose death from a freak injury sent shockwaves through the sport.

A lone cricket bat rested against the coffin at a packed service in his former high school hall in Macksville on the New South Wales coast in front of his heartbroken parents and friends and a shattered Australian Test team.

"Taken from the game, his family and loved ones at the age of just 25, [He] left a mark on our game that needs no embellishment," tearful captain Michael Clarke told the funeral. "I don't know about you but I keep looking for him."

Hughes, who had played 26 Tests and was on the cusp of a recall, died from bleeding on the brain last Thursday after being hit on the base of the skull by a rising ball at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

His tragic death stunned Australia, where cricket is considered the national game, and prompted a rescheduling of the upcoming India Test series, while fans around the world placed cricket bats outside their front doors as a mark of respect.

Clarke said he walked to the middle of the SCG on Thursday night: "Those same blades of grass beneath my feet [are] where he and I and so many of his mates here today have built partnerships, taken chances and lived out the dreams we painted in our heads as boys.

"I stood there at the wicket, I knelt down and touched the grass, I swear he was with me ... Telling me we just needed to dig in and get through to tea," he added.

Clarke said the tributes offered from sports stars and fans across the globe had sustained him, from a little girl holding a candle in tribute, to masters of the game such as Sachin Tendulkar, Shane Warne and Brian Lara expressing sorrow.

"This is what makes our game the greatest game in the world. We must dig in and get through to tea. And we must play on," he added.

"So rest in peace my little brother. I will see you out in the middle."

In Hughes' small hometown of Macksville, on Australia's east coast, tributes to the opener who scored three centuries in 26 Tests hung in shop windows, while ribbons in the green and gold colours of the Australian Test team adorned telephone poles.

Macksville itself, with a population of just 2500, welcomed greats such as Warne, Glenn McGrath, Brett Lee and Hughes' first Test skipper Ricky Ponting as well as Prime Minister Tony Abbott for the funeral.

Brian Lara, who had been in Australia, was representing the West Indies Cricket Board which noted that "the entire cricket world is in shock and a state of grief".

Cricket Australia chief executive James Sutherland said over the past week the nation and the sporting world had reeled in shock and grief.

"Yet even within that profound sense of loss the spirit of cricket has shone through the darkness," he told the gathering.

The famous cricketer's coffin being carried during the funeral. Photo: AFP

Hughes' parents Greg and Virginia and siblings had invited the whole town to the service at Macksville High School, where about 1,000 crammed into the hall and hundreds more watched on screens in overflow areas.

The funeral is a huge event in Macksville, with shops closing and residents in mourning. Just outside town, one business created a huge tribute using three cherry pickers as cricket stumps and putting Hughes' Test number 408 across them.

At Hughes's old primary school, St Patrick's, dozens of bats lined the front fence, many bearing messages remembering the hugely popular opener who was not out on 63 when he was struck.

Hughes died after his vertebral artery split when hit by the ball, leading to massive bleeding in his brain.

As she walked the main street looking at the tributes, local resident Zan Moc said she wished the Hughes family well.

"They gave us their son – I just hope that we can all support them," she said. – *AFP*

ASHGABAT

Turkmenistan spends billions in search of sporting glory

THE Turkmenistan capital of Ashgabat is the world's biggest user of marble with huge expanses of the luxuriant rock adorning a US$5 billion Olympic complex being built to boost the isolated Central Asian state's international ambitions.

President Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov's government wants all new construction to be white and Ashgabat has more marble buildings than any other city in the world, according to the *Guinness Book of Records*.

The white stone, imported from Italy, Spain, China and Vietnam, clads more than 540 office blocks and palace-style banks, hotels and ministries built along city-centre boulevards in the past 15 years.

The oil and gas rich state's autocratic leader has also taken the lead in preparing for the Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games in September 2017.

There is some 217,000 square metres of marble, enough to cover 28 football pitches, in the Olympic complex, according to project coordinator Osman Karakus.

Turkmenistan is not yet a sporting power.

But for $5 billion dollars, the 5 million population are getting a 45,000-capacity main stadium, the world's biggest indoor velodrome with a capacity of 6,000 spectators, a basketball stadium, indoor athletic track certified by the International Association of Athletic Federations, tennis courts and a host of other world class facilities and hotels – much of them covered in a marble exterior. All will be linked by a monorail.

Up to 30 sport disciplines could be on the schedule in 2030. On top of mainstream sports, the games will also feature line dancing and wrestling where Central Asian states hope to win medals.

President Berdymukhamedov has personally taken charge of preparations for the 2017 Games, that will for the first time feature competitors from Australia, New Zealand and other Pacific states among the 6,000 athletes.

He hopes the Games will launch Turkmenistan onto bigger competitions and is already considering bidding for other events, according to officials.

> **'Turkmenistan is one of the world's best kept secrets, and we look forward to finally sharing.'**
>
> **Dayanch Gulgeldiyev**
> Chair of olympic organizing committee

Berdymukhamedov has personally chosen many of the fittings and materials used in the Olympic complex, according to officials in Ashgabat.

The single-party state is accused by Western human rights groups and some governments of using repression against opponents. But some international figures see sport as a way to open up Turkmenistan to outside influence.

Sheikh Ahmad al-Fahad al-Sabah, head of the Olympic Council of Asia, and one of the most influential figures in world sport, strongly backed Turkmenistan's hosting of the 2017 Games. He has said the country could host a future Asian Games, the continent's full 30 sport extravaganza held every four years with nearly 10,000 athletes.

At the signing of a Games accord in Ashgabat last week, the Sheikh said Berdymukhamedov has agreed to use the event to improve health and education.

Ashgabat, which has tentatively started to open up to foreign tourists, will also get a new international airport in 2016.

"You don't build a new airport unless you want strong international relations," the sheikh said.

Sebastian Coe, the British running great and organiser of the 2012 London Olympics whose company CSM Sport has advised Turkmenistan on planning the 2017 Games, praised "the great vision" of the president in bringing the Asian event to Ashgabat.

"I am greatly looking forward to seeing the athlete-focused state-of-the-art facilities that have been created under your leadership," he told the ceremony.

Hinting at his country's hopes, Dayanch Gulgeldiyev, nominal chair of the Games organising committee, said, "Turkmenistan is one of the world's best kept secrets, and we look forward to finally sharing this secret with the world in 2017." – *AFP*

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Sport

North Korea wants Messi to visit new football school

SPORT 69

Controversy won't slow down Qatar

CORRUPTION claims and alleged abuse of migrants building facilities for the 2022 World Cup have not dampened Qatar's appetite to become the "world capital" of prestigious sport events.

Cleared last week by FIFA of wrongdoing in gaining the right to host the World Cup, the Gulf emirate on December 2 won the right to organise the 2019 Athletics World Championships.

The International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) announced Doha had beaten off Barcelona and Eugene, Oregon, to the dismay of international human rights campaigners.

The Gulf state, which sits on the world's third-largest gas reserves, has also offered help - ultimately rejected - organising the Africa Cup of Nations in 2015 after Morocco refused to host the tournament over fears of the spread of the deadly Ebola virus.

"Doha will become the world's capital of sports," sports minister Salah bin Ghanem al-Ali told AFP.

The energy-rich country has employed its wealth to lead Arab countries in hosting global sports events.

It is reaping the benefits of a policy launched in the 1990s under which it invested tens of billions of dollars in sports, both at home and overseas.

As a sign of the importance of sports, Nasser al-Khelaifi, the president of French champions Paris Saint-Germain, is also a state minister in Qatar.

Qatar also owns the BeIN Sports television channel, which has an increasingly large audience spread beyond the Middle East.

The country will organise the world short-course swimming championships in December, the handball

Photo Caption. Photo: AFP

World Cup in early 2015 and the world cycling road championships in 2016, Ali noted.

The busy agenda reflects the "confidence of the international sports community in Qatar's ability to organise international sporting events," he said.

Qatar's 2022 World Cup Organising Committee unveiled in Riyadh on December 1 a model of the renovated design for Khalifa Stadium with a seating capacity of 40,000 and equipped with a cooling system to overcome the desert country's temperatures that exceed 45 degrees celsius in summer.

Meanwhile, the Al Attiya Arena, built in only 18 months to host the men's handball world championship between January 15 and February 1, boasts digital maps and high-tech screens to display results.

It can be converted into an ice hockey rink within 48 hours.

Qatari officials say it is inevitable that the country's success has courted controversy.

"Despite FIFA's decision to clear Qatar in corruption suspicions, the bashing will continue," said Hassan al-Thawadi, secretary general of the 2022 World Cup organising committee.

"We will respond by continuing to work and win," he said.

FIFA has not yet closed the file of suspected corruption in the process of obtaining the right to host the football showcase.

Football's world governing body lodged a criminal complaint with the Swiss attorney general over "possible misconduct" by individuals, including "international transfers of assets with connections to Switzerland".

Moreover, a former member of the Qatar-bid team for the World Cup, who testified in the investigation over alleged corruption, said last week that the FBI had offered her protection following threats to her and her children.

Qatar is also facing repeated criticism by human rights organisations over the conditions of the mostly Asian migrant workers building the infrastructure.

Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch last week condemned the IAAF's decision to grant Qatar the right to hold the 2019 athletics tournament.

Authorities in Qatar have been also criticised for being slow in introducing promised reforms to their labour rules, including the Kafala sponsorship law, which subjects foreign workers to the mercy of their employers.

Earlier this month, the labour ministry said it would introduce new legislation by early 2015 to improve migrant conditions.

Qatar has 1.6 million foreign workers out of a total population of 2.2 million people.

Qatar's interest in sports goes beyond organising events to even include buying football clubs, like Paris Saint-Germain, and sponsoring others, like Barcelona.

And Qatar's sponsorship of the prestigious $5 million Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe has made it the world's second-richest horse race after the Dubai World Cup.

Richard Attias, the French organiser of Doha Goals, which was held in Doha recently, said it is normal that the investment portfolio of the country includes sports.

"This is simply because it is also a marvellous way to achieve economic progress and development. Entire cities have been transformed thanks to hosting large events, or big sports tournaments," he told AFP.

Frederic Giqueaux, a French businessman who came to Doha to offer his services in events security, described Qatar as a "very promising land".

"It is a very dynamic country which has a capacity to achieve its ambition," he said. – *AFP*

Local fights suit up for all-age Taekwondo championship

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ON November 29-30, over 214 Taekwondo athletes from 18 state and regional clubs competed in the 2014 Korean Ambassador's Cup Taekwondo Championship.

Over the course of the two day event, which was organized by the Korean Embassy in Yangon and the Myanmar Taekwondoe Federation, martial artists competed in traditional Kyorugi events, in which two fighters spar, and Poomsae events where teams of three complete a synchronised series of poses in rapid succession.

In the under-14 events, Shwe Kainaye team won first place with 9 gold medals, 5 silver medals and 2 bronze medals.

In the under-18 competition, team Gold Camp walked away with 9 gold medals, 2 silver medals and 4 bronze medals.

Finally, in the over-18 events, team YTC won 5 gold medals, 5 silver medals and 5 bronze.

The best male player award went to Ko Phyo Thu Hlaing from Aung San club, while the best female player award went Ma Pone Pone Lin from club Gold Camp.

A Poomsae team competes in Yangon.
Photo: Aung Htay Hlaing

MYANMAR TIMES
HEARTBEAT OF THE NATION

FOOD & DRINK

DECEMBER 2014

Have you eaten yet? စားပြီးပြီလား။

What we have to eat

Photos: Supplied/White Hands

Displaced from home, IDP camp residents get by on rations – no meat, thin soup, hard rice

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THE rice is hard as gravel, making a "tauk tauk" sound as it's poured on the plate. The consistency comes from a special method of filtering and steaming, in which the rice hardens up when the water is drained off. Though the sound – and the serving – ends before the plate is full, the portion will sit more heavily in the stomach and help those who eat it to stave off the hunger a little longer.

If they had their way, most of these families would never have to hear the word "bean" again. But this is an IDP camp – a temporary living space for a so-called "internally displaced person", one forced to flee home because of violence or war – and while rice is available any time and shared between everyone, curry comes only once a day. Pounded potato, varieties of thin vegetable soup and beans – these make up most of the diet. To supplement, some mix rice and leftover vegetables in a bottle, making a kind of curry called *mone nyin saw*, and some dry vegetables, storing them away for future use. Some try to forage for wild vegetables growing nearby. Some get food poisoning.

They're vegetarian, but not by choice. They eat what there is.

Because that's all there is.

When conflict becomes long-lasting, hunger becomes a driving force. And the civil war in Kachin State is the world's longest-running civil war, raging since 1961. That's a long time for people to go hungry.

The latest round of fighting between government forces the Tatmadaw and local fighters the Kachin Independence Army broke out in June 2011. Up to 50,000 residents fled for their lives, leaving their homes, their belongings and in some cases the bodies of their loved ones behind. Some settled into makeshift in-state refugee camps like Man Waing Gyi camp in Mansi township, and Maw Chan and Tet Kone in Myitkyina township, and some have been displaced repeatedly since, fleeing from camp to camp as the battle-lines are drawn and redrawn.

Families who spoke to *The Myanmar Times* said circumstances have turned their lives into "survival of the fittest".

"We are agrarians," contacted families said, "hard-working in the fields and enjoying the juice of our produce for our nutrients. But now the situation is bombs flying overhead, and we are anxious about tomorrow. We want to stop this nightmare."

After 2011's outbreak, camps in government-controlled areas, including Myitkyina, received assistance and medical aid. But help started to decrease in 2012 and completely stopped in late 2013, said Daw Htu Nan, camp management committee member from Maw Chan in Myitkyina township, where more than 300 people and 65 households live.

"In the first years, the World Food Programme provided oil in tins and it was frozen. Later we asked for it again and it was a light colour in a bottle. We had no idea whether it is palm oil or cooking oil, but we had no choice of refusing it," Daw Htu Nan said.

The WFP used to provide each person with a monthly ration of 6 kilograms of rice, a bottle of oil, a pack of salt and 2kg of beans. That stopped in December 2013. The elderly and children under one year of age used to receive nutrient powder, but that has stopped as well. Now, donors from across the country give money and supplies, but it's not close to meeting the need, all day every day.

Daw Htu Nan said cooking used to happen communally but now happens by each family, meaning each is responsible for ingredients.

The camp is close enough to Myitkyina city that some travel to the city to work during the daytime, as housemaids, cleaners, or at a shop or market, and come back to the camp at night. Those in more remote camps work on plantations, often crossing the border to China each day where they earn meager, slave-labour wages, often working directly with heavy pesticides.

From this income, Daw Htu Nan said most families don't have room in the budget for extras.

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"Most families are thrifty for the meal, putting their earnings to support their children's education," she said.

Despite a Ministry of Education pledge to provide free education up to middle-school level in Kachin State, it is not yet been made clear how this will happen. In the meantime residents must pay to send their children to lessons. That means dinner is mostly thin vegetable soup with crushed chilli.

Mealtime happens twice a day, at around 8am and 5 or 6pm. Children fill their hungry bellies in the morning and run off to school, whether at a space set up near the camp or in the open air. As they attend in two or sometimes three shifts, due to the lack of facilities to accommodate everyone at once the older children sometimes have to leave school and run back to eat when meals are being served.

A child rushing to get back to class – and also hungry after a long day – hurries to shove down a morsel of rice which is bigger than his small hand and chases it with thin *son tan* sour vegetable soup. He also eats his share of a dried seasoned bean called *pae pot*, a crushed bean rich in protein. If his mother has managed to earn some money, he may be lucky to have a small crushed chilli to lend some flavour.

Some packaged products come back into the camps from China. They are mostly chemical-laden, however, and full of empty calories. While children release their hunger with junk food snacks, it's not enough for a growing body to get by on.

Despite such unsettled circumstances, which see families of five or more in shared open quarters, divided from the next family only by thatch, the birth rate in camps is increasing. But the bedroom and the kitchen are the same place: Sleeping in the lingering cooking smoke bothers many, raising fears of respiratory disease from smoke inhalation. Those who work on plantations also worry about the chemicals they may be ingesting.

Residents told *The Myanmar Times* that their people normally pride themselves on living longer than those in cities do, because of their healthy, vigorous outdoor lifestyles. But they say their elders, suffering bad physical health and depression, are now dying at a faster rate since entering the camps.

They also said that, among the mostly Christian Kachin, it is now a common belief that their people have been "cursed by Satan".

> Among the mostly Christian Kachin, it is now a common belief that their people have been 'cursed by Satan'.

Across the country, in Rakhine State, more IDPs languish. Muslims and Buddhist, segregated following racial conflict since 2012, live in camps which are less remote than those in Kachin. But restrictions on mobility mean many are unable to leave, so they are effectively trapped.

One camp, in Sittwe township's Akwar Tike quarter, contains 249 households – more than 1000 people – who have been confined here for a year and a half. The WFP provides provisions – rice, oil, salt – but the rations are not enough for the daily meal.

One camp resident, U Maung Oo Tha, told *The Myanmar Times* that the government should have specific instructions or plans for the rehabilitation for IDPs in Rakhine.

"We have been living with fear for a long time. The situation should be stable and fully secure," he said.

"We all wish to cook more elaborate meals. We do not want to eat while fearing what will happen next."

National peace talks bringing armed ethnic groups and government representatives around the same bargaining bring hope that the people of Kachin may be able to return to their old way of life soon. But on November 21-22, 2014, heavy mortars fired by the Tatmadaw dropped close to Bum Kahtawng and Manhtang, near Nhkawng Pa camp in Mai Ja Yang area, and Ja Htu Kawng, in Laiza area, where Je Yang camp shelters 8000 IDPs, heightening tensions in the area once again.

Families reported being anxious and terrified by these incidents. Many fear another displacement is imminent.

Meanwhile, IDPs in the Laiza area – more than 17,000, housed in four camps – are facing food shortages, having expected deliveries from the UN cross-line mission in November. That has yet to arrive, having been delayed because of the November shelling.

The Joint Strategy Team for Humanitarian Response in Kachin and Northern Shan State released a statement on November 27 voicing concerns over the recent increase of clashes near Laiza. They demanded urgent action and support for the safety and protection of the IDPs, and unhindered and continuing humanitarian assistance for the IDPs in the KIO-controlled area.

Daw Phyu Ei Thein, a member of civil society organisation White Hands, told *The Myanmar Times* that the needs of the IDPs should be central to peace-talk discussions.

"I asked both sides how long will their 'interim period' will take. They answered vaguely. Apparently they have no ideas for carrying out projects specifically for IDPs," she said.

Daw Phyu Ei Thein said the government should have specific plans to provide humanitarian aids for IDPs if the conflict is to be prolonged any longer.

"The recent action [of shelling] is a kind of sabotage of the peace process and far from [the goals of] ceasefire negotiation. But if they decide to continue conflict, all authority figures should consider IDPs first," she said.

Whether by war in Kachin or violence in Rakhine, those displaced from their homes are left stranded, unable to improve their diet, their living standards or their future.

"Sometimes I feel curious," Daw Phyu Ei Thein said, "when both sides hold negotiations or workshops with good food while IDPs survive with poor fare. Aren't they concerned about humanitarian practices?" ■

Photo: Supplied/Ko Nyi Htwe

Dream, Feel, Taste

The inside story of Myanmar's most successful group of restaurants

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IT has been said that the most difficult thing to give away is kindness, for it is usually returned.

This is true for U Soe Nyi Nyi, whose rise from humble origins to immense wealth as owner of Feel Restaurant can be traced to a kindness given – and, later, repaid many-fold.

For 13 years, U Soe Nyi Nyi made his living breeding and selling fish. At other times he got by selling tickets for football matches, or selling roses his family sowed at pagodas. When at last he had saved up enough for an old wartime-era car, he bought it and drove it as a taxi.

"My family was poor," U Soe Nyi Nyi said. "We drank coffee with palm sugar when we couldn't buy sugar. The rice we ate was rough."

His father was a lieutenant-colonel, but back then families of government officials barely earned enough to get by.

"I wore my father's uniform after removing badge when I attended university. But I tried to save money by working hard," he said.

In spite of his own suffering, one day he pulled K20,000 – at that time, close to US700, with K30 equal to about $1 – out of his piggy bank and gave it to a poorer colleague who wanted to be a sailor.

It was an act of kindness without expectation of self-benefit. But four years later, his friend – by then a sailor – returned home with K1,300,000, and lent K600,000 to U Soe Nyi Nyi, whose hobby was cooking, to start a food shop.

"At that time, my elder brother had just returned home from Australia where he learned hamburger-making. He made hamburgers for us and my friends, and his hamburgers were very delicious. My friends always appreciated his hamburgers."

His brother was also good at making satay, and family and friends urged U Soe Nyi Nyi to learn hamburger and satay-making from his brother and to open a hamburger shop. With his friend's money, U Soe Nyi Nyi decided to risk it.

His first business was Dream hamburger shop, which opened in 1992. With his brother's help, U Soe Nyi Nyi made mayonnaise by himself at a time when it was difficult to buy in Yangon. He made the hamburgers larger for customers and used locally made bread and butter. Word spread quickly.

"I went into the food business after the success of Dream burger shop," U Soe Nyi Nyi said.

Secrets to success

Soon after he opened Dream, he crossed swords with his business partner who persuaded his staff to open a different shop.

"Dream was discontinued. I tried to open another shop on my own. At that time, the word 'feeling' was very common so I named my new restaurant Feel," he said.

The first Feel restaurant opened in 1994 between Inya Road and U Wisara Road in Kamaryut township. There are now 16 locations in Myanmar, under the name of Feel or – for the more recently opened – Taste.

Each restaurant also takes the name from its location. Feel Meiktila, Lakefront Feel in Pyin Oo Lwin, Feel Garden in Nay Pyi Taw – in all, the business employs 2000 staff.

"At Feel and Taste restaurants, the menu is arranged to fulfill every order," he said.

From dim sum to Thailand papaya salad, kyay-o (hot pot) to chicken biriani, mohinga to hamburgers and pork-on-a-stick, the first priority at Feel, across the expansive menu, is to cook healthy food.

The fresh and chemical-free ingredients are costly, and the restaurant avoids monosodium glutamate (MSG) and vegetables that are chemically treated. When U Soe Nyi Nyi visits the kitchen, he always checks the hands of the chefs and reminds them to keep their hands clean.

"I want people to eat clean and healthy food. In the late 1990s, saturated oil was cheaper than peanut oil. I thought if I used peanut oil, I wouldn't get much profit, but I used only peanut oil for the health of the customers," said U Soe Nyi Nyi, sitting at the dining table in Taste restaurant, next door to Feel, on Pyidaungsu Avenue Road, Dagon township.

The sacrifice paid off: Today, Feel restaurants celebrate 20 years, and have made a name for themselves through cleanliness, availability of a wide variety of foods and safety.

"When many restaurants suffer shortages in salmon often, they carry stocks of them, but I don't because if the meat is kept refrigerated for too long, the flesh won't be delicate. So customers to my restaurant appreciate the freshness of salmon."

"Now we earn the customers' trust. They always feel they can eat healthy food at Feel restaurants. I regard it as a success," he said.

The chain has also become known for bringing a measure of refined dining to that most unrefined of locations: highway rest-stops.

U Soe Nyi Nyi said he doesn't remember when he opened the Feel restaurant at the 115-mile mark of the Yangon-Nay Pyi Taw highway, but he is proud of doing so.

"In the past, there was only one restaurant at 115 mile but the toilet at the restaurant was dirty and was disappointing to travellers like us. So I decided to open a new branch there with a clean toilet," he said.

He said that the quality of a restaurant is measured by the cleanliness of the toilet, so he always tries to keep the toilets at his restaurants clean.

"The customers at Feel on the Yangon-Nay Pyi Taw highway are very satisfied with the toilet," he said.

Room and board

Over the years, well-trained staff have often been poached away by other restaurant owners.

"At every Feel restaurant, I experienced it. They sat at the dining tables the whole day, ate and tried to approach our chefs by giving pocket money," he said.

"I don't respond though I know what they are doing. I let my staff go if they want. It is very common in my restaurants."

Instead of restricting the careers of its employers, the business tries to advance them. "Restaurant workers are often badly paid. Only owners are rich. I don't let it happen. In other countries, workers go back home in their own car after work. But it is totally different in Myanmar," he said.

Workers who come from different towns are given an air-conditioned boarding house. The basic salary for a starter at his restaurant is K50,000 and managers with long service get more than K1,000,000.

They also get fed. "The chefs prepare the same food for my staff as for the customers," he said.

Last week, U Soe Nyi Nyi marked his 58th birthday. He celebrated by announcing that staff members with long periods of service will be given shares of the company itself, which they can cash in whenever they leave.

"I am no longer an owner," U Soe Nyi Nyi said. "My staff own my restaurants." ■

Think national, eat local

Ethnic food in Yangon

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Ha Tai Wa restaurant. Photo: Thiri Lu

BAMAR food is common everywhere, with mohinga (rice noodles with fish soup) especially popular. Depending on the state and region, though, the cooking styles can bring out local variants, with soup, curries and side dishes matched with cooked rice and attractive desserts.
Try some at: **Feel**
124 Pyidaungsu Yeik Thar Road, Dagon
09-402585322

CHIN people live in the hilly northwest, where it's very cold in winter. In all, 53 minorities are gathered under the Chin umbrella. Their food has a distinct taste, with no oil, no sweetener powder and different techniques. There are not many Chin restaurants in Yangon but Chin people in Yangon always gather at them for a taste of home. Try the *sabuti* (meat and rice soup).
Try some at: **The Rih Lake**
67(B) Dhammayone Street, near U Wisara Road and Myaynigone junction, Sanchaung
01-502761

KACHIN people come from the northernmost part of Myanmar, in the valleys of snow-peaked mountains. Most of their traditional dishes are based on herbs and the cooking is very healthy. Many Kachin restaurants have appeared in Yangon in the last few years.
Try some at: **Jane Phaw Myay**
2(B) Kyun Taw Road, Sanchaung

KAYIN, also called Karen, live in the eastern part of Myanmar, along the border area with Thailand, as well as in the Ayeyarwady delta. They are known for special soups, made without oil or sugar and using fresh leaves and roots. We haven't found a wholly Kayin traditional restaurant in Yangon yet, but in the meantime you can find Kayin food at Padonmar restaurant.
Try some at: **Padonmar**
105-107 Kha-Yae-Bin Road, Dagon
01-220616, 09-73029973

MYEIK food involves plenty of delicious seafood – understandable, given that it comes from the long stretch of coast in the country's southernmost tip, spread along the Andaman Sea. Fried vermicelli is a popular choice, but don't stop there – there's much, much more to explore.
Try some at: **Myeik Maung Taik**
135 Dhammazedi Road, Bahan

RAKHINE people live in the western part of the country, close to the Bay of Bengal. Their traditional curries are based on seafood, and most are spicy. There are many Rakhine restaurants in Yangon but Minn Lan is arguably the most famous.
Try some at: **Minn Lan**
16 Parami Road, Mayangone
09-5502459

SHAN people come from the hills of northeast Myanmar. Their cuisine is known for sticky rice, noodles, tofu and sour vegetables, and many street-food vendors sell it, though to delve beyond the standards you'll want somewhere with a fuller menu.
Try some at: **Shan Yoe Yar**
169 War Tan Street, Lanmadaw
01-22154

WA people live in northern Shan State, in a self-governed area. They have their own style of cuisine, and in Yangon there's only one restaurant to sample it.
Try some at: **Ha Tai Wa**
10 Aung Thukha Street, 5 Quarter, 9 mile, Mayangone
01-660376

A Primo experience

Could Nay Pyi Taw become a food capital? One new destination is leading the charge

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EVEN by the standards of Nay Pyi Taw – land of sprawling developments and gargantuan hotels – the scale of Primo restaurant is impressive.

Entering the dining room, located in the middle of the 80-acre Lake Garden Hotel property, is like walking into a well-lit, tastefully appointed Viking food hall.

The walls and ceiling are made of dark teak wood, and the custom-made seats look and feel like thrones made entirely of cushions.

The royal atmosphere is likely intentional. As David Daguise, general manager of the Lake Garden Hotel, explained, the goal is to make Primo the go-to option for Nay Pyi Taw's rapidly growing international business class.

To that end, Mr Daguise has spent the past 18 months assembling a kitchen made to serve a selection of what he describes as "Italian-Mediterranean" fusion.

Chefs were flown in from overseas, and the local wait staff were given a crash course on how to speak English, serve tapas and pour wine in the tradition of high-society restaurants across the world.

Over a sumptuous five-course meal – which included gourmet ravioli, bruschetta, and feta-cheese pizza – he explained how his company came to be bringing southern Europe to central Myanmar.

> 'There are some items I can find in Nay Pyi Taw that I can't find in Rangoon.'

While they prefer to make all ingredients from scratch in-house, Mr Daguise said the rush of money into the capital has brought an accompanying influx of specialty foods and ingredients.

"You'd be surprised, there are some items I can find in Nay Pyi Taw that I can't find in Rangoon," he said.

Mr Daguise explained that Accor is excited to re-enter Myanmar at a time of great political, social and economic changes. As the country's technology and infrastructures are improving by leaps and bounds, Accor finally decided it was time to return back and chose Max Myanmar as their local partner to introduce The Lake Garden Nay Pyi Taw, a luxury hotel with an attached five-star restaurant that matches Accor's standards.

Since opening on August 1, Mr Daguise has said that the turn-out has been more than he or anyone else expected. He claimed that during the recent East Asian Summit, Primo was full up, every night of the week.

And while he alluded to some very famous diners sitting in the thrones, Mr Daguise declined to name names – the consummate host. ■

Photos: Bill O'Toole

Customers expand their knowledge of Scotch at Cask 81 in Yangon. Photo: Fiona MacGregor

Show Myanmar the way to the next whisky bar...

FIONA MACGREGOR

JOHNNIE Walker" – it's frequently the first, delighted response one hears when telling someone in Myanmar you come from Scotland.

Scotch whisky seems almost as popular here as in its homeland, and the legendary brand's famous coloured labels can be seen brightening tables and animating conversations in bars and restaurants around the country.

The blended Scotch – which is made from a mix of grains, rather than solely malted barley as used in single malts – is still probably still the best-known Scotch whisky name here, but recently there's been a notable rise in the number of malts hitting the shelves of Myanmar bars and restaurants.

According to the Scotch Whisky Association, sales to Myanmar topped £2 million (US$3.1 million) last year, a 138 percent rise on the previous year. Like all imported alcohol in Myanmar, Scotch faces tight restrictions and can only be legally sold in certain outlets, but the clampdown that saw most imported wine vanish from city shelves does not seem to have had the same impact on foreign whiskies, which remain widely available.

Rosemary Gallagher, Scotch Whisky Association spokesperson, said, "Myanmar is a market with great potential for Scotch whisky.

"Despite the current ban on imported alcohol, unless to the [hotel and restaurant sector], and the high import tariff and level of taxation, Scotch exports to Myanmar reached £2.1 million in 2013. As the economy grows, we expect demand for Scotch to increase.'

According to Ms Gallagher, the move from blends to experimenting with malts is a natural one.

"Consumers tend to get to know the major blended Scotch whisky brands first and then broaden their portfolio as they become more knowledgeable, to include smaller brands, both blends and single malts. That has happened in Japan, Taiwan, China, Malaysia and Vietnam, for example, so you would expect the same thing to happen over time in Myanmar," she said.

Of course Myanmar has it's own flourishing whisky industry. Launched in 1995, IBTC's Grand Royal Whisky claims to be the country's "number-one selling whisky". A 2012 sponsorship deal with English Premier's Chelsea Football Club – the first European soccer team to set up a branding presence in Myanmar – went a good way to helping secure a premier position in the whisky league in terms of marketing and promotion.

And Japanese whisky, having taken Scotch whisky production techniques and polished them to an award-winning finish, continues to go from strength to strength internationally. Last month Yamazaki Single Malt Sherry Cask 2013 was named "best in the world" in the Whisky Bible's annual listings.

With Japanese businesses making rapid inroads into Myanmar, it's perhaps not surprising that exclusive brands such as Yamazaki and Suntory are also appearing in Myanmar restaurants and bars.

Gekko bar in downtown Yangon specialises in a range of Japanese-whisky based cocktails, including some sweet and fruity concoctions capable of convincing those who think they will find the taste of whisky "too strong" that it's a drink they can enjoy.

Nico Elliott, managing director of Gekko, said he has also noticed a growing demand for malts among his customers.

"There is a lot of interest in Scotch in Yangon, especially the higher-end single malts. There is certainly more interest in single malts than any other spirit and growing interest in Japanese single malt," he said.

"Interestingly enough, it is the more expensive malts that people are most interested in," he added.

But Scotch remains the world leader when it comes to whisky sales and brand recognition, and Japanese brands account for a tiny fraction of the global whisky market.

So connected are Scotch and whisky in public perception that many home-produced blends across the world have appropriated the title in a bid to boost sales and credibility. True Scotch, however, must meet a range of stringent production and ageing standards, and the Scotch Whisky Association has gone to considerable lengths to protect the name abroad.

Earlier this year, collective trademark status for Scotch whisky was secured in Myanmar, a system which allows a private rights-holder to pursue action in cases of infringement, rather than having to rely on authorities to take action.

The Scotch Whisky Association says it is used to coming before courts around the world to protect against fake products, and "will not hesitate in taking proceedings before the courts in Myanmar to prevent the sale of any products pretending to be Scotch".

According to Ms Gallagher, "Obtaining the collective trademark for Scotch in Myanmar makes it easier to take effective action against fakes to help protect both consumer and the industry, and benefit the economy." ■

No taste like home

Move over, Pegu Club – there's a new cocktail in town

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YOU can ask a good bartender anything, they say. But can you ask him to invent a new cocktail for you, one that represents the tastes of this great country?

If the bartender is AHRA champion bartender Ko Kyaw Zin Htun, aka Kelvin – and if you're from *The Myanmar Times*, which has been pleased as punch to document his progress to stardom one drink at a time – well, it turns out you can.

And the results are sweet as can be.

Kelvin took the ASEAN Hotel and Restaurant Association crown for cocktail-mixing title in front of a home crowd in Yangon on June 20, after mixing a standard drink and one of his own inventions for some of Southeast Asia's most refined palates.

He named his winning creation "three seasons of paradise" – because it was inspired by the pomelo, which you can get during all three of Myanmar's seasons.

Because we liked the cut of his lime, we thought we'd ask him to go one further and invent a signature Myanmar cocktail – one that brings together more tastes of the country.

Well, first he showed us a foreign cocktail that already works well here – the Flying Kangaroo. Mixing white rum, vodka, orange and pineapple, which are most common at this time of year, he then adds a small amount of coconut cream, lending a whole new taste to the concoction.

The smell and taste of coconut cream are already popular among Myanmar people, and adding that flavour to a cocktail attracts guests. The fruit-juice appearance makes it especially popular among ladies, but they're also a hit with anyone, including foreigners, who want a natural refreshing taste.

It was enough to keep us busy, at least, while he got down to some more advanced mixology behind the bar. We thought it best to leave him to it and have another Flying Kangaroo while we waited.

Meanwhile, it seemed a good time to chat to Kelvin's boss, the manager of Union Bar, U Tun Tun Myin, who has eight years of experience in the bar industry. He said that, like Kelvin, he's often advocating the merits of domestic fresh fruits, which are seasonable and abundant here. But he said great drinks – and drink mixers – need more industry support.

"If shops appear which can support those beverages and cocktail accessories, I think more bars will emerge," U Tun Tun Myin said, calling the existing training and equipment in the sector "weak".

Kelvin agreed – he had the recipe licked by then – saying, "We especially want to have a school just for cocktails here for adults who are interested in bartending. It has been so difficult to answer when people asked me where I learned bartending skills because I attended no cocktail classes. Amateur bartenders have to start observing from the bottom of the restaurant ladder."

Then the conversation turned to the matter before us.

"It is winter and guavas are abundant, so I had an idea and tried a cocktail which I'm calling the Guava Cooler," he said. "Guava Cooler has a good taste and smell when mixed with fruit and it goes down easily, so I think people will love it."

The active ingredients are white rum and guava, which is something that you can get every season. Lime and pineapple were also added to give a more complex character to the taste. Kelvin said he thinks it might just be the first cocktail made with guava in Myanmar.

He also said it should be easy to make at home. Hint hint. ■

Translation by Khant Lin Oo

Guava Cooler
White rum - 45ml
Redberry liquer - 20ml
Guava juice - 60ml
Lemon juice - 10ml
Pineapple juice - 10ml

Ko Thar Htwe for Best Premier teashop. Photo: Yu Yu

Sweet spot

Nothing says tradition like the teashop – but even these bastions of inertia have been getting with the times lately

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CONSIDER this: Until the 1990s, most elders discouraged girls from sitting in teashops.

And back then, most teashops offered a limited menu: just the staples (tea, coffee, cigarettes), as well as snacks that go with them such as bread, *ei kyar kway* (deep-fried twisted dough sticks) and samosas. There were no morning foods like mohinga, or noodle salads: If you wanted to eat those, they would have to be ordered from shops nearby.

Today, times have changed. Most accept that teashops don't need to be an all-male domain – after all, women have as much right to a snack and a chat as anyone.

Menus have expanded also, with everything from rice to noodles to salads and Chinese dishes.

"I open 5am to 8pm daily," said Ko Nay Lin Htun, owner of The Best Premier, on Bogyoke Aung San Road between 39th and 40th streets. It's a popular location with heavy foot traffic and a steady stream of regulars. In a packed downtown area, that means making room for everyone is tricky.

"Our teashop is a little narrow," Ko Nay Lin Htun said. "We have a little difficulty in that municipal authorities allow us to lay out our chairs on the platform only after 3pm. But it's not too much of a problem."

He said he's also seen a rise in the number of foreigners at the shop – with one group in particular dropping by daily from a nearby office after their former haunt closed down last year.

"Some foreigners sit in teashops after 2013. They order coffee and cold juice and then the most common order is Shan noodles."

Serving breakfast, lunch, dinner and everything in between means teashops go through a lot of supplies.

"We use up about 48 condensed milk tins and 48 evaporated milk tins daily," said the owner of a Mahar Yangon teashop, on the corner of 51st Street.

With 43 tables and four seats per table, they use up about 5 pounds (2.27kg) of dried tea leaves a day.

Some Mahar Yangon teashops, she said, on the outskirts of the city even stay open all night long. The 51st Street location doesn't close until 10pm, though the owner added there is a bit of a rest period in the afternoon when there are fewer customers.

Workers come and go, but most come in from out of town, particularly from Ayeyarwady Region. "They have a monthly salary of K40,000-K80,000. We pay them in advance for six months sometimes."

So how do most customers take their tea?

Normal and *pop seint*, says U Tin Ko, who opened a tea shop three years ago and lives in Meiktila township.

"One condensed milk tin makes about 18 cups of tea, which sell for K200 or K250 or K300. But that is *cho seint* [more sweet]. For *pop kya* [slightly sweet and bitter] and *cho kya* [sweet and bitter], maybe 20 cups come out from one condensed milk.

"At one time, customers recognised the taste they loved. If it was a little off, the customer made us rectify it. But currently customers don't do that."

Another sign of the times. ■

Laphet yay **101:** Sweet, sweeter, sweetest

Tea is a many-splendoured thing – and as much as we admire fresh leaves direct from Shan, we're not talking here about the green stuff. Here's your guide to ordering the perfect dose of condensed-milk-in-a-cup. We've tried arranging them from most to least sweetness added, though with three relevant factors (condensed milk, sugar and creamer) that's difficult to do.

cho kya	(sweet and bitter)
normal	(regular sweetness and bitterness)
pop kya	(less bitter)
cho pop	(less sweet)
pop seint	(less sugar, less bitter, more creamer)
kya seint	(more bitter taste, with creamer)
cho seint	(less sugar, more creamer)
plain	(instant mix from sachet)

Confused? Don't worry – most customers stick with normal or plain.

What we've been eating: fruit or poison?

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A SUBSTANCE in widespread use to hasten the ripening of fruit may be harmful to health, consumer safety experts have warned. Used by market traders to make green fruit look more appealing, the liquid known in Myanmar as *a-thee-hmate-say* (chemical used to ripen fruits) can make bananas, papaya and pineapples ripen to order, in a matter of hours.

Photos: Staff

"We grow the bananas and then just send them to Bargayar port," said fruit farmer Daw Thidar, of Bogale township, Ayeyarwady Region. She says that, left to themselves, the fruit on a hand of bananas will ripen at different rates. "If the banana is naturally ripe, it doesn't ripen the rest. One or two bananas will ripen on the first day, then two or three more the next."

Customers eager to eat the green bananas they'd bought used to have to wrap them in cloth and put them on the stove to speed their ripening. But now it can be done with a few drops of chemical fluid in a bucket of water.

A small bottle of the substance can be bought for K2500 at Bargayar port. "You have to mix a very small amount in two buckets of water. It's a cheap way to make bananas ripen, and a bottle lasts a long time," said a retailer at Arthawka bazaar who wished to remain anonymous.

A nun approached his stall to buy a banana, telling the seller she wanted to eat it the next day. He then dropped the fruit into the bucket of water. Later the nun told *The Myanmar Times*, "By the next day, it had changed from green to yellow."

A director with the Food and Drug Administration, U Tun Zaw, said the chemical used to ripen the fruit was not a pesticide. "It's a plant growth generator made mostly of ethylene. Ethephon is the most widely used plant growth regulator. Although it has low toxicity, it can have harmful effects if people overuse it," he said.

The substance is often used on wheat, coffee, tobacco, cotton, pineapples and rice to hasten ripeness and promote marketing. However, it is thought to have some detrimental effects on fruit quality, and toxicity may be cause for concern.

U Tun Zaw said preservatives should be used with care. "Although some brands of chemicals are registered under the Department of Agriculture, some illegally imported chemicals and pesticides can be seen on the market," he said.

Consumer Protection Association president U Ba Oak Khaing said that if the food was not organic or naturally ripe, the use of a pesticide or growth generator could have harmful effects. "A chemical could cause infertility, or lead to abortion or miscarriage, organ abnormalities in newborns, preterm delivery and nerve damage. And if the chemical is also used on apples or grapes, the side-effects could be more serious," he said.

U Ba Oak Khaing said harmful chemicals were common in foodstuffs. Urea can be found in fish-paste, and formalin in condensed milk could affect bone marrow. Copper sulphate had been found in seasoned eggs and bean cakes in more than 30 factories in China, he said. ■

Trishaw gastronomy

Eat your way across Mandalay with the Teashop Foodies Tour

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BEFORE embarking on the half-day Mandalay Teashop Foodies Tour offered by Grasshopper Adventures, my wife and I pondered whether to eat a bit of breakfast at our hotel.

Despite the insistent grumbling in our bellies, we opted against the idea. That decision gave us enough extra time to walk to the tour company's office on Mya Sandar Lane, where the trip was scheduled to start at 8am.

While most excursions offered by Grasshopper Adventures require clients to utilise their own energy to pedal a bicycle, the foodies tour is conducted via hired trishaw, allowing travellers to relax and enjoy the scenery while someone else supplies the locomotive labour.

As it turned out, skipping breakfast was a smart idea. Nestled in the cosy passenger seats of our respective three-wheeled chariots, we were soon trundling along the shady byways and busy thoroughfares of eastern Mandalay, gobbling our way through an entire day's worth of food in just a few hours.

Under the direction of our ethnic Kachin guide Zaw La, our first stop was a streetside fried-food stall – the kind of place where locals pause on their way to work to pick up plastic bags filled with fried chickpea, lentil and tofu snacks, along with small baggies of tamarind, garlic and chilli dipping sauce. We ate a few samples to quell the early-morning emptiness in our stomachs, and then continued along a quiet, leafy backstreet where pink-clad nuns walked in long processions collecting alms.

Farther down the street we checked out Nan Oo, a family-run enterprise where noodles are made fresh every day and sold to teashops and individual homes. The products are manufactured in several tasty denominations, including Shan, *meeshay*, coconut and *monti* varieties.

From Nan Oo we followed the noodle-distribution trail by swinging onto busy 19th Street for breakfast at Shwe Latyar mohinga shop, where the locally made noodles are counted among the fresh ingredients. We ordered Mandalay-style mohinga – which has thinner broth, fewer noodles and less oil than the Yangon variety – plus chickpea tempura and green tea.

As we ate, Zaw La filled us in on the history of the Royal Palace, the layout of Mandalay and some important Burmese social customs. He also pointed to a public hall across the street and explained that whenever a marriage ceremony takes place there during one of his tours, he drags his clients along to crash the party and to enjoy the glories of a traditional Myanmar wedding.

Unfortunately, all was quiet on the matrimonial front on the day we joined the tour, so we plunged straight into the nearby Nan Shae Market, where the first floor is dedicated to clothing and the second floor houses vendors selling fly-magnet meat and a cornucopia of fresh fruits and vegetables transported daily from Pyin Oo Lwin.

Of course there were also snack vendors galore in the market, and Zaw La urged us to cram some *mount sikyaw* (sticky rice dough mixed with jaggery) into our already half-full bellies. Crickets were also available for consumption but we decided to skip them, if only because it was too early in the day to indulge in nature's own beer-matching munchies.

On our way out of the market we passed a stall selling bananas and coconuts – not for eating, but for making offerings to nat (spirit) shrines. Zaw La was inspired to tell the tale of the mighty blacksmith Maung Tint De, who was murdered by the king of Tagaung and later became the nat Min Mahagiri (Lord of the Great Mountain).

Off we rolled on our trishaws to another teashop, this one famous for its hearty *pauksi* (chicken and pork dumplings) and *ei kyar kway* (Chinese fried donut sticks). We indulged in both, along with cups of Myanmar's ubiquitous black tea with condensed milk, a tradition that Zaw La explained came to this country from Portugal via India.

The atmosphere at the shop was noisy, with the under-aged waiters sounding like agitated gremlins as they shouted orders at ear-splitting volume. Zaw La said visits to this shop elicited the one question most frequently asked by clients on his tours: Why are these kids working instead of attending school? His ready response provides instructive insight into the debilitating effects of poverty in Myanmar, as well as the dire state of the country's educational system.

The next stop was the legendary Ah Yee Taung *laphet thoke* shop on 26th Street, where different varieties of pickled tealeaf salad can be sampled from a lacquerware dish before ordering a full serving – we chose the tongue-searing "special spicy green tea snap", which also supplied our umpteenth caffeine kick of the day.

With the morning advancing and the temperature rising, we welcomed the ensuing respite at a thirst-slaking roadside juice stand, which boasted a wide range of fresh produce from which to choose. Zaw La urged us to mix the fruit as we desired, but my puritanical upbringing has conditioned me to tend toward the conservative in beverage-related matters so I stuck with pure pineapple juice.

We sat on plastic chairs in the shade of an almond tree and sipped our drinks while chatting and mulling the implications of the words "Zeus, the dope god" – a cryptic message that some enterprising graffiti tagger had painted on the wall of the water purification factory across the street.

From there it was just a couple of blocks to Shwe Pyi Moe Café on 66th Street. Famous for its Indian chapatti and *poori* platters, it also serves a menu of Shan favourites.

The café was meant to be the tour-concluding lunch stop, but by this point my wife and I could barely eat another bite. I managed to stuff a bit of chapatti and mutton curry into the last square centimetre of space left in my stomach, and then I waved the white flag of gastronomic capitulation.

And with that, Mandalay Teashop Foodies Tour came to a successful conclusion. But pity the poor trishaw drivers tasked with pedalling our bloated bodies those last few blocks back to where, four hours earlier and several kilos lighter, we had started our culinary journey. ■

Photos: Thandar Khine, Douglas Long

We indulged in both, along with cups of Myanmar's ubiquitous black tea with condensed milk, a tradition that Zaw La explained came to this country from Portugal via India.

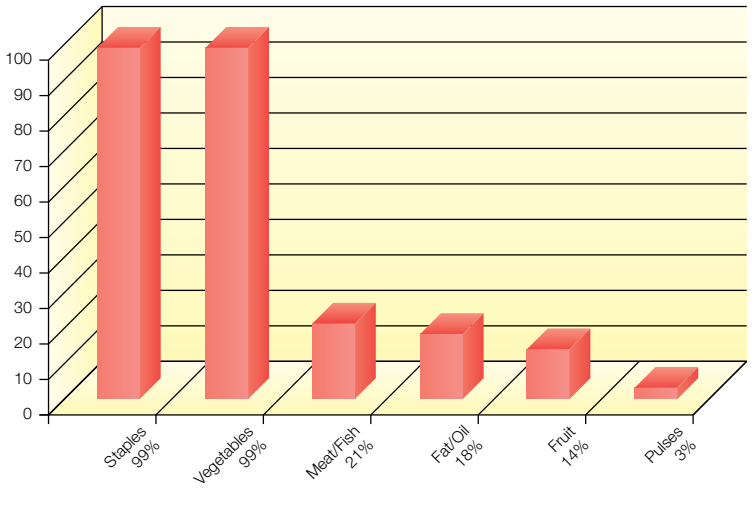
Travel Information

The Mandalay Teashop Foodies Tour costs US$33 per person and can be booked through Grasshopper Adventures, 4/3 Mya Sandar Lane (between 24th and 25th streets, and 62nd and 63rd streets), Aung Myay Thar San township, Mandalay. Telephone: (95) 09-40265-9886; website: www.grasshopperadventures.com.

What did you eat yesterday?

If you're a chilli grower in Shan State, the answer may be "not much"

WADE GUYITT



IN a June 2012 World Food Programme survey of food-insecure chilli growers in Southern Shan State, showing what foods respondents ate the day before, 91 percent were found to be consuming inadequate diets (three food groups or less), with many obtaining food in ways that showed distress (exchanging food for work, 38pc; trading items for food, 31pc; receiving rice as a gift, 21pc). Of the households, 60pc reported moderate or severe hunger according to the FANTA Household Hunger Scale. Fever in children was reported in two-thirds of households, acute respiratory infections of children by almost half of households and diarrhoea by more than one-third. About 16pc were also using unsafe drinking water, while 15pc of respondents had no access to a latrine. ■

For more see:

http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/ena/wfp251289.pdf

Supporting local produce

The LIFT Fund champions smallholder farmer businesses

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HOW can smallholder farmers have the opportunity to supply the food on your table and the beverage in your hand? The multi-donor Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund (LIFT) involves smallholders and the rural landless poor in Myanmar's economic growth, helping them to raise their incomes, improve their nutrition and live better lives. Here are three innovative LIFT-funded projects that are helping smallholder agribusinesses to thrive.

Photos: Supplied

Dehydrated onions in the Dry Zone

LIFT partner and NGO Ecodev has spent the last few years working with smallholders in Magwe township, identifying and developing a niche product to help them raise their incomes. By May this year, when LIFT's funding for the three-year Scaling Up Rural Enterprises project drew to a close, over 400 people from 10 villages had set up household-based dehydrated onion enterprises. They mainly sell the high-quality produce to the Association of Restaurants in Myanmar.

Ecodev's role was to provide a business model, train the farmers and processors to focus on quality produce, and link them to markets. "Before the project I kept fresh onions at home, but there was withering and much wastage," says onion processor Daw Mya Win of Taegikone village. "The technical training has made the process much more solid and efficient."

The path has not been easy, however, with local processors having to cope with fluctuating onion prices and the rainy season dearth of local produce. But they proved to be remarkable problem-solvers and the results are sound – in the project area, 25 percent of low-income households have become entrepreneurs, surpassing the project's modest 3pc goal.

In an area where there is little dry season employment, the project is particularly popular among women. "I can stay at home with my family year-round now," says entrepreneur Daw Thein Nwet. "I don't have to leave to find work in the town, and I can now afford to send the children to school."

EcoDev is now looking to introduce the product to international markets. It was featured at the ASEAN Food Conference in Singapore in 2013 and awarded an ASEAN Food Products Recognition certificate. This success has given the farmers confidence to look at developing other products, such as dried hibiscus, for the overseas Myanmar market.

Growing tea in Kokang Special Administrative Region

On the China border, where the ex-opium poppy farmers are fiercely independent, LIFT partner CARE has had its work cut out to encourage collective, community-led tea production.

Tea production in these hills predates the narcotics trade, but by 2003, when a government ban was placed on poppy cultivation, farmers had lost their forefathers' tea-growing knowledge. CARE's project provides training and resources along the tea value chain, and has been particularly successful in introducing improved tea-drying facilities. After three years of project implementation, farmers have formed the Tar Shwe Tan Tea Association, and their tea is recognised for its high quality. CARE reports that the project's 723 farming families now generate around US$680,000 in sales income per year, with most sales being made to China.

Plan Bee: gathering honey in southern Shan State

In the picturesque hills above Inle Lake, LIFT funds a project encouraging beekeeping activities, implemented by the NGO Tag.

The project started last year, with the aim to upgrade the technical skills and marketing know-how of some 560 beekeepers, who can sell honey and apiculture-related products. Around 68,000 farms also benefit since they are in the catchment for bee pollination, which can lead to higher crop yields.

"Farmers don't understand how important honeybee pollination is to their crops," says Tag country manager U Saw Aung Myint. "Bees are also important for making forests sustainable. So far, the project has conducted awareness-raising training in 28 villages in the area."

"Bees do much more than produce honey," says Shaike Stern, Tag's agronomist and expert beekeeper. "Bees produce a range of highly valuable products such as pollen and wax. They also serve as a bellwether for environmental problems."

Beekeeping has several advantages: It requires no land, it is not time-consuming, and the start-up and management costs are low. Honey products are nutritious and do not require refrigeration. Tag's innovations include the introduction of lighter and cheaper beehives, with equipment to measure the honey moisture level, and training in techniques for queen bee breeding. They also promote the use of European honeybees that pose no threat to wild bee varieties.

The project is to establish a dynamic Beekeeping Centre, with the twin functions of providing supplies and knowledge to beekeepers whilst also serving as a visitor and learning centre. ■

LIFT Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund

LIFT is a multi-donor Trust Fund supported by Australia, Denmark, the European Union, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. To date it has funded 91 projects across Myanmar, operating in 170 out of the country's 330 townships. So far, 2.5 million people – or roughly 5 percent of the country's population – have benefited from LIFT support.

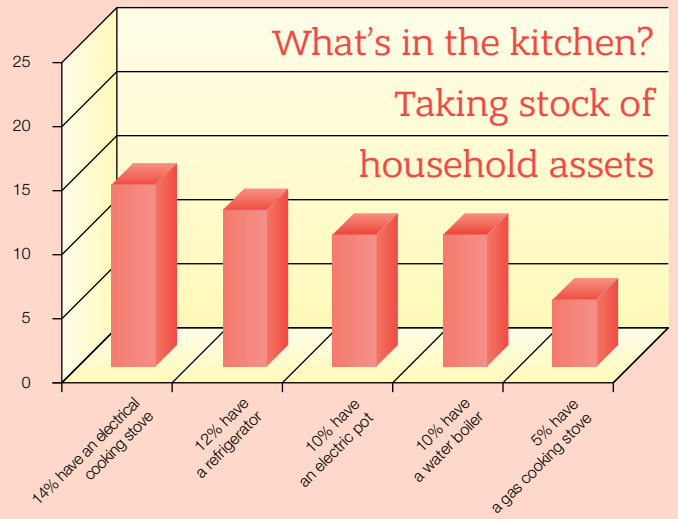
Letizia Diamante is a Communications Analyst intern with the LIFT Fund.

By the numbers

All figures courtesy Finscope Myanmar Survey 2013 unless otherwise noted

60-65%

Portion of household spending in Myanmar that goes to food and drinks, with one-third of that being spent on animal and vegetable protein, according to **Myanmar Food and Beverage 2018: Strategic Directions and Scenarios for Myanmar's Markets and Industry**, by Stanton Emms Strategy Consultants

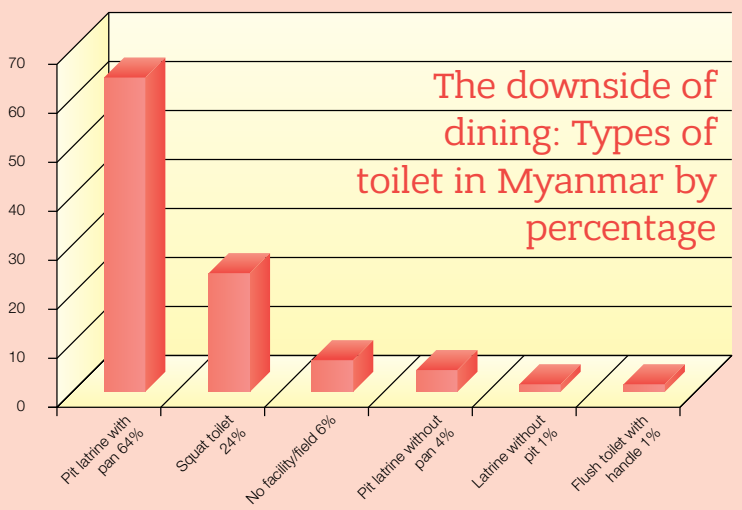


94%

of people in Myanmar have no tap water

57%

of the population earns money directly or indirectly from farming



grams

800

Average quantity of MSG consumed per person per year in Myanmar, according to comments made to **The Nation** by Piya Sosothikul, executive director of Thai footwear and MSG manufacturer Seacon Group

US billion $

1.6

Value of imports of food, drink, agrifood commodities and feed material imports in 2011, up from US$415 million in 2005 and doubling since 2009. In 2011 over 50pc of food imports were processed

Life in the time of cholera

Unclean water kills our children, our neighbours, ourselves

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THE man was dead, a suicide by drowning, and the body had been in the water for several hours. It was discovered on the morning of November 24, floating in the lake in Kyaiklat township, Ayeyarwady Region. As they pulled the body out, residents worked out that the man had drowned himself the previous night. While friends and family grieved, the others did their best to get on with the struggles of ordinary life. For them, this meant drawing water for cleaning, washing, drinking – and drawing it straight from the very same lake the body had been lying in, without any purification before use.

In a country with massive hydroelectric potential, no one in Myanmar has access to clean, treated running water from a municipal tap. Water comes from whatever source is available, regardless of the health risks involved. Only a small minority can afford – or have access to – purified bottled water, and some experts even question whether bottled water itself is being purified at all.

As a result, Myanmar's dirty water situation is precarious, endemic and – especially for more vulnerable members of society – sometimes deadly.

According to Myanmar's Ministry of Health and the World Health Organisation (WHO), 20 percent of all children under the age of five who die in this country are being killed by diarrhoea – a rate twice global levels and on par with sub-Saharan Africa, where water is often scarce.

Unsafe drinking water may carry any number of waterborne diseases, including bacterial and protozoa diarrhoea, hepatitis A and typhoid fever. Cholera and diarrhea diseases spread especially easily through dirty water, according to Dr Ba Shwe, retired medical superintendant. He says no one can avoid illness, and it's simply the luck of the draw whether you get sick now or later, a little or a lot.

"If people drink unsafe water they will be affected by these diseases at some point in their lives and have trouble," Dr Ba Shwe said.

Most villagers fetch water for cooking and drinking from rivers, the only nearby water source, though it has often caused health problems. Chemical waste, faeces from people and animals, and bacteria from dead animals or other sources can all be part of the water system and can all be ingested on a regular basis. Storing rainwater helps, but without even basic water filters, water pots can be ground zero for spreading disease.

Vice President U Nyan Tun has called difficulty accessing potable water, improper sewage and lack of household running water a threat which remains unsolved in Myanmar.

Environmental health expert Dr Moe Swe of the Ministry of Health said the government is working toward cleaner water and that a well-managed water system would contribute to the country's development. And moves are in the works: They are just coming too slowly.

In 1990 the Environmental Sanitation Division under the Department of Health began to develop a National Drinking Water Quality Standard with help from local and international agencies. Twenty-four years later, the final draft was presented to stakeholders in July 2014 and a report of standards issued in September. It now waits to be passed into law. But the question remains how substandard water will be cleaned up.

"We are studying the toxic effects of arsenic-contaminated water in the delta region and fluoride-contaminated water in Wailatt township in middle Myanmar and Nyang Shwe in Shan State. But for the distribution of drinking water, township authorities are responsible," Dr Moe Swe said.

So far, the job appears bigger than townships can handle. The same month the report on standards was issued, 234 people tested positive for cholera in Yangon's South Okkalapa township, with 41 requiring hospitalisation. Epidemiologist Dr Tin Thit Sa with the Yangon Region health department said National Health Laboratory testing found coliform and Vibrio cholerae bacteria in the township's water supply, which was responsible for the outbreak.

Municipal authorities say no deaths were reported. Residents interviewed by *The Myanmar Times*, however, said one man did die from the outbreak.

Across town, Ma San lives in Dain Su quarter in Hlaing Tharyar industrial zone. She told *The Myanmar Times* that some in her neighbourhood buy purified bottled water from private companies, but others use water from the *gyo phyu* municipal pipeline. Anyone can go to the shared tap and haul water back from the pipeline, but because of the weight and effort involved, they prefer to pay K200 a drum to a man who does this for them.

Residents of Kyaiklat township, Ayeyarwady Region, draw untreated water straight from a nearby lake.
Photo: Shwe Yee Saw Myint

"I buy *gyo phyu* pipeline bottle water," Ma San said, "K1000 for a week."

She's not used to boiling water, she said, even though boiling is the safest way to eliminate bacteria. She also says she takes the risk of using *gyo phyu* water instead of bottled water because it's cheaper.

Dr Ba Shwe said, however, that some domestic bottlers may not be selling a clean product. He alleges that he has seen some selling their water without filtration.

"I sent a bottled water sample to the National Health Laboratory because we could see algae in the bottle," he said.

"But the result has not come back yet." ■

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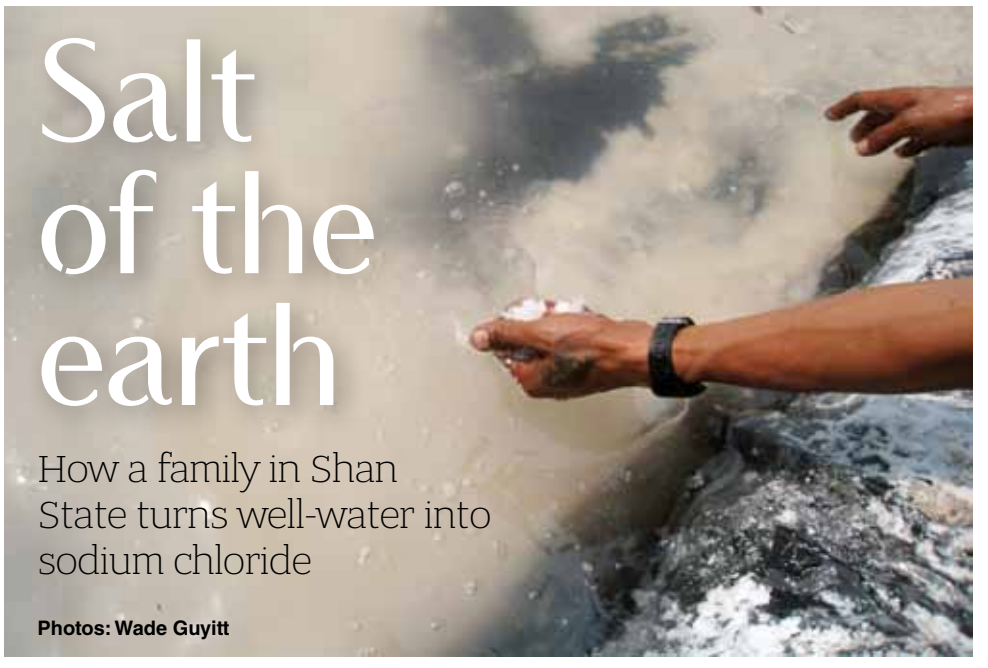
Salt of the earth

How a family in Shan State turns well-water into sodium chloride



Photos: Wade Guyitt

OF the 81 homes in Sar Dwin, U Myo Nyunt's was the last to be counted in the recent census, which is how he knows how many households there are. His family arrived here comparatively recently, resettling from Lashio in 2002, and are among the few who have stuck with the government-backed initiative that brought him here – turning the area's saltwater wells into profits.

Together, he, his wife and their family raise water from the earth and guide it through the process of turning it from inedible brine to valuable commodity. The water is pumped slowly through a series of level pools, spending about a week in each being cleaned and skimmed and settled, and when it has reached the end the crystals of hard salt are scooped out and packed into buckets to drain.

All this happens not in a sterile factory setting but a backyard, with the whole set-up open to the air and whatever else blows through. Nonetheless, they strive diligently to improve the purity of their product. The scores they get from the salt and water samples they send regularly to Yangon for testing have seen a steady rise. While they are shooting for 98.19 percent pure, which is considered ideal according to the feedback documents, right now their sodium chloride – the stuff people eat, which will be eventually packaged into table salt – comes out around 92pc pure.

There's still a ways to go. But their first feedback – from the Myanmar Salt and Marine Chemical Enterprise, on November 24, 2003 – gave a grade of 73.35pc. That interval, between where they started and where they are now, represents twelve years of hard work and care.

While improving their salt composition, they've also seen an unexpected ingredient introduced to their environment over the past five years. Enticed by the closeness of the farm to Bawgyo Pagoda, which can be seen from the yard, tourists, including foreigners, are stopping by the enterprise in growing numbers as part of their local sightseeing.

Hsipaw, a short bicycle-ride of 8 kilometres (5 miles) to the east, is developing a reputation as something of a haven for backpackers looking to witness the rural lifestyle lived by nearly everyone in Myanmar outside its few major cities. And if you're coming out to look at the pagoda anyway, well, the little salt-making community next door makes an easy, enticing detour.

In the off-season – usually Thingyan through October – if U Myo Nyunt and his family find guests tromping down their lane they will bid them welcome and, if there is interest, lead them out along the white-streaked walkways between the black-tarp wading-pools, lean down, and dip a cupped palm into the cloudy mixture, bringing up a handful of white solidified salt mass to show.

If that whets the appetite, they will patiently explain the process of how it all works on the porch of their thatch home-office, bringing out the original set of instructions – pockmarked, with one corner eaten away, but otherwise intact – and sharing packets of salt and even refreshments. A dog sleeps under a chair. A small handsaw hangs on the wall, its blade slid between the weave of the slats to hold it in place. A sign says "Myanma Salt Industry, Salt and Mineral Salt Manufacturer, Baw Kyo, Hsipaw township". A map of Myanmar is pinned by the door.

There used to be inland salt makers in Sagaing, Myitkyina and Shwe Nyaung also, the family says, though they're not sure if those are still operating. Everyone used to be working under the Union government, but for the past couple of years jurisdiction has changed to the states and regions. Some coastal salt making operations, they said, have been privatised and sold off to companies.

The Sar Dwin residents themselves were approached, they said, by a Chinese company looking to buy up their operation, but refused. It would have meant more money, but they wouldn't have been able to hire their own family members any longer. U Myo Nyunt's son, Ko Aung Myo Oo, now draws a regular government salary and budget, then hires the rest of the family. It's enough income for all of them, and they can even take on four seasonal workers during dry season when they are busiest.

Salt was being made here before the government stepped in – or at least, before the Union government stepped in. In 1957, the wife of the local sawbwa – one of the Shan hereditary princes, whose line was forcibly discontinued under General Ne Win's socialist coup – gave permission for local people to set up a new village near the pagoda. In exchange for a tax to help keep up the pagoda – which dates to the 12th century, and today is an important example of Shan architecture in spite of some recent renovations which have allegedly eroded some of its more distinctive features – the residents were allowed to harvest the well-water, which has an extremely high salt content. Thus, Sar Dwin was founded – *sar*, meaning salt, and *dwin*, meaning well, ditch or opening in the ground.

Inland salt separated from water comes out in two forms. One is sodium sulphite, large cylinders which aren't suitable for eating but which dissolve when put in the ground and are used instead of urea to encourage growth of large crops like corn. Farming with sodium sulphite results in bigger plants and bigger fruits with less fertiliser. In winter sodium sulphite clumps together, due to the way the crystal formation happens at cooler temperatures, so an extra step is required to skim off the surface that's not necessary in the summer. The ponds look like they've frozen over, even though winter temperatures here don't often dip down quite that low.

The second form is small sodium chloride, the salt we can eat – though without iodine, which is sometimes added to commercial salt to promote proper levels in the diet.

The family spreads the two crops out on an old newspaper, burying the football results in two heaps of white.

At one time over half the community of Sar Dwin made a living in salt, digging wells 60 feet (18 metres) into the earth, then hauling up the water in buckets and boiling it on great ovens. The process resulted in mound and mounds of salt just like this, which was then sold onward across the country.

Boiling yields 40 viss of salt from 60 gallons of water. It takes about four hours – less if it's more salty – and you have to keep stirring regularly. But 40 viss sells for about K4800, and since the necessary firewood costs K3000, the rate is fast but the profit is small.

It's also environmentally unsustainable. To halt deforestation, a government initiative began promoting an alternate method, involving separating the solid from the liquid over time. The method takes longer and requires more equipment, but it can result in a purer salt than boiling, and also does not require wood.

A viss of sodium chloride sells for about K120 today. But in 2008, after Cyclone Nargis wiped out livelihoods all along the coast, the price of salt skyrocketed to K2000 per viss. The government told everyone in the village to boil once more to help the market. Otherwise, however, the slow method is encouraged.

The need to invest in new tarps after each season meant so-called inland salt making methods were not as popular as expected, but U Myo Nyunt's family has stuck with it. Now, only two or three houses in the area use firewood to boil the water. The rest just get their salt from him.

Next door is one of the houses that still boils with wood, and visiting you find a waist-high pile of salt shovelled into place like a snowbank. Except this snow doesn't melt, in spite of the oppressive heat from the flames heating the enormous bubbling cauldron. There are walls of sacks piled four high and five wide, and everything is bleached with rivulets of white.

Then, looking across the fence, you see U Myo Nyunt's property again – the landscape dotted everywhere by baskets, each filled with 50 viss of salt, slowly draining and drying, and the pools of water like the world's slowest artificial river, the surface cloudy under blue skies.

The contrast, in this heat, feels elemental: fire and water, urgency and patience, boiling and still. ■

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The roots of Mount Popa

Lush forests along its slopes allow herbs, fruits and vegetables to thrive, while in the dry lowlands nearby, locals

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THE word "popa" is widely believed to be derived from the Pali word for flower, and even the folklore surrounding the fabled mountain acknowledges its fame as a place where many blossoms grow. One story that continues to resonate with spirit worshippers to this day involved a servant who was sent each day by King Anawrahta of Bagan to collect flowers from the forests growing on the volcanic slopes.

Today, these forests with their above-average rainfall also support an incredible array of plants that are believed to have medicinal properties. Local villagers collect some of them for direct use, while others are harvested to be made into pills and tablets for commercial sale. Some medicinal roots are even sold by vendors at the base of the stairway leading to the top of nearby Taung Kalat. In any case, officials at Popa Mountain Park distribute only a limited number of permits for plant collection, and 30 rangers patrol the park to keep an eye out for poachers, not only of medicinal plants but also of orchids and firewood.

Salves and sandalwood

The best way to understand the sheer diversity is to visit the Popa Mountain Park Forest Department's Environmental Education Centre, which opened in 1993 and is located only 2.5 kilometres (1.5 miles) from Popa Mountain Resort.

Inside the centre are displays of dried, pressed and framed plants, as well as many of the butterflies and birds that populate the park. Outside, the Forest Department maintains a sizable Medicinal Plantation with demonstration plots that are signed for easy identification. Knowledgeable park officials – such as the impressively erudite Daw Khin Myo Htwe, who has participated in exchange programs with botany specialists in Japan and South Korea – clue visitors in to the properties of each species of plant, and how to prepare it for maximum effect.

Suffering from lucomederma (white spots on the epidermis)? Pluck a *Plumba ginaceae* plant from the ground, grind its roots into powder, mix it with the water used to wash rice, and apply the paste to the skin. Flatulence and hypertension got you down? Crush some *Tinospora cordifolia* into powder and mix it with honey. *Gentiana kurroo* root for toothaches; powdered *Withania somnifera* bark mixed with alcohol for menstrual cramps; sap from *Tradescentia spathacea* leaves for burns and scalds; lime-scented *Glycosmic pentaphylla* for soothing muscle pain – the list goes on and on.

Teak doesn't grow in any of the mountain's five forestry ecosystems, but just 3 kilometres (2 miles) away from the resort, reachable on foot or horseback down a narrow dirt road, is an unusual sandalwood forest. According to Daw Khin Myo Htwe, sandalwood trees are not native to Myanmar, but in 1957 a retired forester brought seeds from India and planted them in the Popa region.

> 'During low season we even sell some of our produce to the village.'

"The trees require 20 years to mature, and unfortunately as soon as the grove reached the two-decade mark, poachers moved in and cut down all the trees," she explained.

The trees were targeted for harvesting and sale because of their many applications: The pith is use for medicine for runny noses and itchy skin, while the large roots systems (which penetrate 50 feet into the ground) are carved into Buddha images for homes and pagodas. Women also use sandalwood as a skin conditioner and perfume, and wood is also quite well known as a form of incense.

Miraculously, the poaching incident did not mean the end of sandalwood in Myanmar. Birds carried leftover seeds from the decimated trees to a nearby area, and around 20 years later another sandalwood grove took root on the slopes of Mount Popa. This is the forest seen today, and its 60 acres are protected inside a walled compound, which is also home to two sambar deer and four golden deer that are allowed to roam free. The golden deer had to be reintroduced from other regions; native to Popa, they had previously been hunted into extinction in the area.

Daw Khin Myo Htwe said that according to a December 2010 census, there are 574 sandalwood trees in the compound. She added, "Because sandalwood is not native to Myanmar, but because the seeds that created this particular grove were carried here by birds, it's sort of an 'unnaturally' natural forest."

From snakes to salads

Popa Mountain Resort has also taken advantage of the local climate by establishing its own garden in 2009. Hotel operations manager Myint Lwin explained where the garden is was once thick undergrowth, later cleared to keep away snakes.

"But the soil and weather at Popa are particularly good for plant growth, so we had the idea to make a garden in the cleared area," he said. "In the past we bought our fruits and vegetables from Popa village at the foot of the mountain, but with our garden we now grow most of what we need for the restaurant. We still buy some produce we don't grow, and we also need to buy extra produce when there are many people visiting the restaurant. But during the low season when we don't have as many guests, we even sell some of our produce to the village."

Photos: Douglas Long

The list of fruits and vegetables grown at the resort is impressive: cauliflower, capsicum, celery leaf, chili, coriander, citron, eggplant, kalian, lemongrass, lime, lemon, mint, green mustard, pennywort, radish, roselle, tomato, jackfruit, papaya, strawberry, banana, lettuce, broccoli and Thai ginger.

The staff also grow both white and red dragonfruit (the latter variety is tastier and more expensive), with each plant bearing fruit five to nine times a year. When the dragonfruit nears ripeness, it must be covered with plastic to protect it from thieving squirrels (guava gets the same treatment).

Rainy season, according to Myint Lwin, is best for growing fruit, while the dry, cool season favours vegetables and flowers.

"We strive to grow our produce as organically as possible. The soil is so rich that we don't need to add chemical fertiliser unless absolutely necessary, and even then we use only a very minimal amount," he said.

Indeed, the nutrient-rich dirt literally clings to the shoes of anyone who walks around the garden, and when it's damp, more than a little scraping is required to remove it from the treads of footwear. Because of this, Myint Lwin said the resort plans to establish paved footpaths between the planted plots for the convenience of guests who want to see where the restaurant's fruits and vegetables are grown.

Sky beer and sweets

It's fascinating to compare the growth of fruits and vegetables on the mountain to the farming traditions on the plains below. Between Popa and Bagan, in Kyaukpadaung township, many locals earn their living farming crops that are more suitable to dry soil, including maize, peanuts, sesame and other beans. Many of these same farms also have their own palm trees, from which sap, or toddy, is harvested by brave individuals who scale rickety bamboo ladders to collect sap-filled ceramic pots. The sweet toddy can be consumed directly, or it can be converted into a bitter juice popular with locals. It is also made into sweet jaggery candy, and some is set aside for fermentation to brew alcoholic toddy wine.

One farm located about halfway between Mount Popa and Bagan has about 80 palm trees, which are harvested twice a day by U Pho Thein. For him, this means an incredible 160 death-defying trips up and down the ladders every day.

While U Pho Thein demonstrated his work by effortlessly scrambling to the top of an 18-metre (60-foot) palm tree, another farmer, U Chit Oo Maung, explained the process: "The sap is collected twice a day, from 5am to 10am, and again from 2:30pm to 7pm. The harvesting season is from January until the end of September."

The climber ascends the tree carrying minimal equipment: a knife in a wooden scabbard tucked into his

work up a powerful thirst harvesting toddy

waistband, and two or three small, empty ceramic pots dangling from rope also tied around his waist. When he reaches the top he removes the toddy-filled pots that had been put in place during the previous ascent, and replaces them with the empty pots.

He then uses the knife to slice about one inch from a part of the male trees called the *htan-nou* (toddy udder), a stem enclosing the palm tree's flower cluster from which the sap drips when freshly cut. Each stem can produce toddy for about three months before being depleted, with the daily yield decreasing over time. A new stem will fill one pot in about 10 hours, while older stems will only partly fill the pot during that time.

The sap is sweet when initially collected and can be consumed in that state. Popular with locals is bitter toddy, which is made by mixing sticky rice power with the sweet sap and then allowing it to sit for one day. Although this drink is non-alcoholic, it is sometimes amusingly referred to as "sky beer". The truly alcoholic variety is brewed by boiling jaggery candy and water in a pot, mixing in sticky rice powder, allowing the concoction to ferment for two days, and then dripping the liquid into glass bottles.

To make jaggery candy, fresh sweet juice is boiled in a large pan over an open wood fire until it becomes a thick paste. After it cools it is rolled into balls and allowed to dry in the sun. According to U Chit Oo Maung, a farm with 80 trees can produce about 25 kilograms (54 pounds) of jaggery each day, and this is usually purchased by brokers who then resell it to hotels, restaurants and other shops.

"But we don't made much money from jaggery, even though it requires a lot of work to collect the sap and produce the candy," he said. "That's why a lot of palm tree climbers would rather find work doing other jobs in cities or even overseas, where they can earn more money."

The palm trees of the Kyaukpadaung region can be used for much more than collecting toddy, and in fact no part of the tree goes to waste. The fruit of the female tree can be eaten directly, and the juice can be mixed with rice to make a custard-like snack called *htan thee moun*. The husks of the ripe fruit are usually fed to cows and oxen. The large fronds from the trees are used as roofing material for houses, and the tough frond stalks can be made into everything from baskets and hats, to furniture and yokes for oxen.

The tree trunks, meanwhile, are made into posts for houses, as well as tables and chairs, and the lower portions are even carved out to create big flower pots. The roots are used for firewood, and some portions of the root can even be roasted and eaten. The tree's seeds are pressed to produce an oil that is used to make soap.

The list goes on, and as long as the diverse plants of Mount Popa and the Bagan region continue to thrive, the locals will be able to benefit from their bounty. ■

The F&B journey

MT editor Myo Lwin talks to Christopher Lao, director of Ikon Food Solution, about how better training can improve the industry one employee at the time

What basic training programs are needed for the restaurant staff?
Training programs which focus on food and beverage knowledge, excellent customer service and hands-on practical skills are essential for restaurant staff.

How many types of training are offered by Ikon Mart?
Food & Beverage Operations exposes the trainees to F&B knowledge and essential skills needed to commence their F&B journey. After the basics, they will proceed with Food & Beverage Management, where they learn about the business aspects of the F&B industry as well as personnel skills. In addition, there are many specialisation courses such as bartender training, sommelier training where they learn about wine, and barista training, where they master the art of making coffee. In terms of soft skills, they should also attend training focusing on customer service, teamwork and leadership.

Ikon Mart is currently providing the following training programs for the industrial customers: barista training; wine and wine glass knowledge training; kitchen equipment knowledge training (combi oven, speed oven, etc); gelato making training; pastry/bakery training; and food hygiene and total cleanliness of the operation area.

Why is training important for restaurant staff?
As the saying goes, "a building without a strong foundation will never stand still." It is essential for staff to have strong foundations in F&B knowledge and skills before moving up the corporate ladder.

What separates those who get professional training and those who do not?
Professional training will equip staff with knowledge and competent skills to perform their duties. In addition, the professional certification will also allow them to get attractive jobs and recognition.

Photos: Supplied

What are the basic criteria for recruiting waiters and waitresses?
Among other things, a charismatic and service-oriented personality; pleasant physical appearance and grooming standards; language competency; multitasking and initiative; team-player characteristics.

How important is service in this industry?
The art of providing service is the most essential for the food and beverage industry. The operators in the business are distinguished by the level of service they provide. Service is acquired through experience, making it intangible as well as perishable. Service outcomes rely on human service providers as well as human customers who experience the service, allowing many factors to interfere with results.

Good service generally means meeting and exceeding expectations. Complexity comes when different customers having different levels of expectation. Thus, service providers must offer the highest level of standards to meet the majority of the expectations. ■

The sounds of selling

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"Here is the hot boiled maize... Shall be sweet... and... fragrant..."

If you live in a residential area you will be familiar with a voice like this one, the melodic call of a roving street vendor selling boiled corn from a basket she carries on her head.

Whether it's snacks or household products or flowers or vegetables, when you're at home you can follow such vendors by their distinctive calls as they pass by.

Many of them have come to Yangon from rural areas in search of a better living. Lured by their siren songs, *The Myanmar Times* decided to talk to two of their favourites, to find out their stories.

Photos: Nandar Aung

The prince of Dagon

Most say the calls of a roving vendor are just for business, to draw attention to their products. Not so for Dagon Min Thar Gyi (Dagon Prince), who gave himself his unique name when he started selling traditional snacks with that name 10 years ago.

Now he is 50, with sunburned skin, and under the sweat of noontime he looks tired. But he also looks strong and healthy, wearing a tidy cotton shirt and longyi, and even an old watch.

The secret to his fitness, he says, is that he used to sell his snacks by cycling around at least two or three townships each day – not only for a day or a week or a few months but for almost a decade. He sold the sweet and tasty traditional snack *kauk-nyin-moke-phat-htoke* (sticky rice with pork or chicken which is wrapped with banana leaf).

He now lives in South Dagon, 104 quarter, and he and his loyal partner – an old bicycle – used to travel to neighbouring townships and even further, such as North Dagon, Dagon Seikkan, Thaketa, South Okkalapa, Thingangyun, Sanchaung and so on.

Because his snacks were very sweet, he never sold in one place, but travelled around to make sure his customers never tired of what he had to offer.

Dagon Min Thar Gyi said he started singing not to boost sales but just because he enjoyed it.

"I used to sing while selling my products. Singing is my real hobby and I like to sing while I am tired. Also, my customers like my singing. I am really happy with that."

Inspired by favourite vocalists Hlwan Moe and Sai Hti Sai, he then began taking the melody of songs he liked and changing the tunes to – literally – sing the praises of his snacks.

Now, though he can no longer sign aloud, he gets help from a recording device posted on the handle of his bicycle, which plays his call whenever he pushes the button.

The son of Bago

Ye Aung, 24, a roving street vendor in cotton clothes and a mat hat, has been selling the traditional dessert *shwe-yin-aye* (a cool sweet drink which is prepared with sago, gelatine, sugar, bread, sticky rice and coconut milk) since he was 18.

He moved from his native land of Bago, 50 miles (80 kilometres) northeast of Yangon, when he was 15, because he was no longer in school and earned only K1500 a day doing manual labour.

"While I moved here, I don't know what to do. I became a waiter at the tea shop with the salary of K30,000 a month. But it was not okay for me," Ye Aung said. "I prefer to make my own business rather than be staff."

His hope was fulfilled when his aunt in South Dagon said she used to sell traditional snacks in the market of her town. From her he learned how to make snacks, desserts and salads, and in 2008 he started to sell dessert on the streets, pushing a handcart and singing to let the customers know he was coming.

"At first, when I was 18, I preferred yelling instead of singing because I was so shy to sing in front of the public, especially girls," he said. But after a week he got over the stage-fright jitters. "Now I like to sing in front of the people and don't feel shame at all."

At least one of the girls he was shy in front of seems to have liked the sound of his voice: Three years ago Ye Aung married one of his customers, a 19-year-old girl who lived near his house, and they now have a two-year-old boy.

Perhaps because he's now off the market himself, he uses a recording as well.

Together he and his wife sell *shwe-yin-aye* in winter and summer season, and during rainy season they sell salads such as lemon salad, tomato salad, ginger salad, papaya salad and bean curd salad with soup. All the ingredients are homemade, Ye Aung said, and he added he likes to prepare his food in a healthy way. They start making dessert at 4am, and earn about K15,000 selling their products from 11am to 4pm every day in Dagon Seikkan, not far from home.

"I don't want to sell with a shop. I think it would mean fewer customers compared to going around from one place to another," he said.

"I feel tired sometimes but I am really satisfied with my simple life."

He still thinks about those back home, though. His origins are in the nickname he gave himself – A-Nyar Thar Lay, because of his background from outside of the city (A-Nyar Region means Upper Myanmar). Reflecting on his new life, he said people back home can't afford to support his business the way his current customers do.

"In my region, most of the people can't afford to buy snacks priced at K500," he said. "We got less income and we can't afford much for the dessert or snacks."

Here, he said, people don't need to think about the price – just what they want. ■

> 'I was so shy to sing in front of the public, especially girls.'

Focus on: Food not **bombs**

WORDS AND PHOTOS: ZARNI PHYO

Food Not Bombs is an international group founded in Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA, in 1980, which now counts hundreds of chapters worldwide. The group consists of volunteers who distribute free vegetarian food to needy or homeless people. In Yangon the movement is organised by a group of young friends who share a love of punk music and style and also want to help those in need. Anyone who wants to participate – locals or foreigners, punk or otherwise – gathers on a Monday evening at Kyaw Kyaw's punk fashion shop under Sule Bridge. They pool money, buy food and donate it to street people in need. They also plan to fundraise by playing guitar or singing songs in the street.

To learn how you can get involved, see
https://www.facebook.com/fnbmyanmar
and get in touch with the group.

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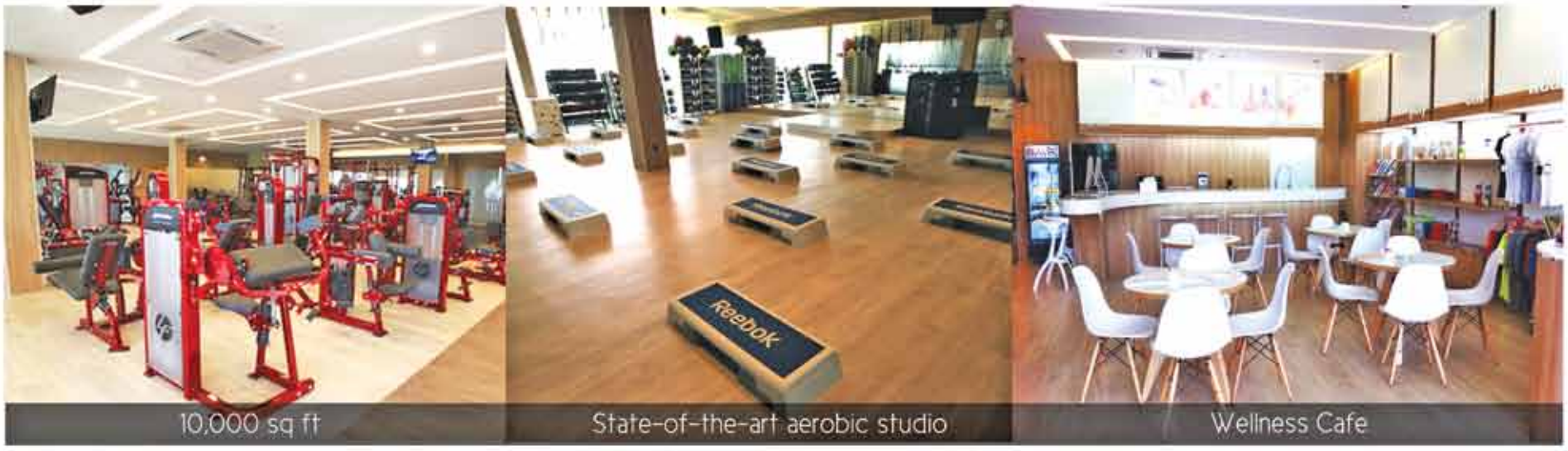

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