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Myanmar honours its national hero

Thousands attend ceremonies around the country to mark the 100th anniversary of the birth of Bogyoke Aung San, with daughter Daw Aung San Suu Kyi leading a rally in his hometown of Natmauk.

MORE ON NEWS 4

OPINION

Putting pen to paper – and making history

AUNG NAING OO
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WE live in an age in which history is being written. The 68th Union Day on February 12 ended on a historic note for Myanmar, as President U Thein Sein, along with his two vice presidents and the speakers of both houses of parliament, signed the “Deed of Commitment for Peace and National Reconciliation”.

The deed outlined the government’s commitment to achieve lasting peace in Myanmar.

Other notable signatories included parliamentarians, Tatmadaw representatives, Union ministers, ethnic affairs ministers and political party leaders.

Most significantly, the Karen National Union (KNU), the Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council (KNU/KNLAPC), the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) and the Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS) signed the document in the presence of the nation’s top leaders.

The signing was a milestone for Myanmar. In pledging to strive for lasting peace, signatories confirmed their commitment to “building a union based on democratic and federal principles in the spirit of Panglong and in accordance with the outcomes of political dialogue to ensure freedom, equality, justice and self-determination for all citizens”.

MORE ON NEWS 8

National League for Democracy members pay their respects to Bogyoke Aung San at a statue in Yangon on February 13. Photo: AFP

Deadly week for Tatmadaw

Kokang rebels inflict heavy losses on Myanmar’s armed forces as they join forces with the Ta’ang National Liberation Army and the Arakan Army in an attempt to recapture territory in northern Shan State that was lost in 2009. **NEWS 3**

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THE INSIDER: The local lowdown & best of the web

Once was Burma...

Archival material courtesy of Pansodan Gallery

First floor, 286 Pansodan, upper block, Kyauktada township



"Beware of electric shock. If you are bitten by a snake, there is medicine: if you are electrocuted, there is no medicine." Awareness poster, date unknown

Romance is not dead

Between Union Day celebrations, Aung San's centenary and keeping a lid on those pesky student protestors, last week was a big one for the police force. What many won't realise is that they also had to contend with one of the more vice-heavy occasions in the calendar year: Valentine's Day.

Valentine's Day is a special day, where many hotels around the country will be fully booked (by the hour) by young couples looking to get horizontal somewhere other than the family home. One popular romantic by-the-hour spot outside of Mandalay has drawn complaints from residents of the area, who say the ground is always strewn with dummies after VDay.

According to a story from Eleven, it's around this time of year that aphrodisiacs are in high demand, and police were prepared to carry out a sweep of illegal "stamina drugs". It wasn't just the usual pharmaceutical suspects like Viagra and Cialis in the fuzz's line of sight this year, either.

One of these illegal libido-boosters the police have cracked down on is a chocolate, scintillatingly named "Spain". This reportedly drives women wild, and the health authorities have some concern about the negative effect it might have on one's kidneys. It's imported from Thailand, and has been sold online via an aggressive Facebook advertising campaign that provides a phone number and promises prompt delivery in the Yangon area.

Its lusty packaging aside, the name "Spain" is quite possibly derived from another popular aphrodisiac, "Spanish Fly". Spanish Fly has faded from prominence in recent decades, but was the stuff of 80s movie punchlines about male characters spiking women's drinks in order to get them randy. (Romantic or a bit rape-y? You decide.) The effects of Spanish Fly (unlike, perhaps, the chocolates) actually have some basis in reality, with the active ingredient cantharidin, secreted by meloid beetles, genuinely providing a long-lasting erection - albeit one so long-lasting it can sometimes become rather inconvenient and require medical attention, or result in death. Local media said police were also preparing to crack down on sales of Chinese bootleg Spanish Fly, and the emergency ward at Yangon Hospital was presumably ready to handle what or whoever came their way.

Page 2 Missed Connections: Valentine's Day edition

I saw you at the French Institute. You're a UK public school-educated NGO worker in a longyi with a slightly scruffy beard, who was pounding beers, chain-smoking cigarettes and using the terms 'grassroots initiative' and 'capacity development' a lot, which I guess doesn't really narrow it down.

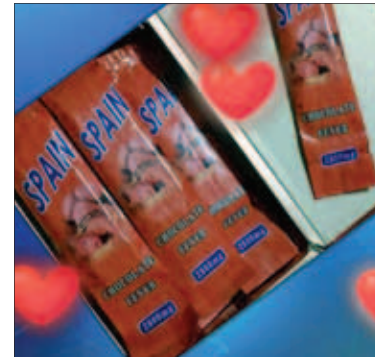
I saw you staring dumbly at a map, just a block from the Secretariat which I think is what you were looking for. I saw you even though your urban safari outfit gave you near-perfect camouflage against that beige wall. I was too shy to point you in the right direction and judging by the *Lonely Planet* you held in your clammy fingers, I guess you're probably only in town for a little while. If you're reading this, I'll be at Bar Boon at sunset.

You: harried 30-something brunette in tracksuit pants with no makeup. I saw you in CityMart buying things that lead me to conclude you're definitely single and probably menstruating. I like chocolate, too. How many cats do you have?

Were you the silver fox I locked eyes with across the dance floor at Jay Jays? You were sitting in a booth, smacking your lips and looking lasciviously at the sea of people on the dance floor. I know you were probably there looking to spend a penny but I really felt we had a moment.

Are you the man who stared at me for a solid two hours while my friends and I enjoyed a meal on 19th Street? This isn't a missed connection, per se: more something to let you know that was straight up creepy.

I met you in the IDP camp, where we had an animated discussion about who you'd vote for this time around. I guess that won't be an issue for you now, but I'd still like to catch up. I'll come to you, obviously.



There's no aphrodisiac like... Spain: Chocolate Fever

"...necessary measures aimed at ensuring security, the rule of law and community peace and tranquility will be taken to prevent undesirable consequences from the entry of the boycott students' columns into Yangon region"
Warning issued to students, Friday 13

In brief

In its last precious seconds of life, before being made into soup, pangolin ponders the bitter irony of being covered in natural armour and yet so vulnerable

Booming demand in the growing expat community leads Northern Shan militia to consider substituting opium crop with quinoa

Next week

Clashes in the Kokang may finally yield answer on the matter of whether or not the Wa helicopter fleet is, indeed, purely decorative

Teambuilding lunch at US embassy made unnecessarily complicated when new employee orders in Tony Roma's and everyone has to wait while it's established whether or not eating the ribs would be a violation of sanctions

The Corrections

Many thanks to the loyal reader who sent a correction last week, when I wrote that the magazine cover in the Pansodan archives section was *Golden Hammer* when it was, in fact, *Oh Wei*. I'm not sure how you got my mobile number, but your keen eye is always appreciated.



Two men engaged in a rousing match of *kaung u yaik bwe* - a traditional Burmese pillow fight usually done on Independence Day and Union Day. It involves two men clinging to a pole with their legs, trying to beat each other off (of the pole) with a pillow.



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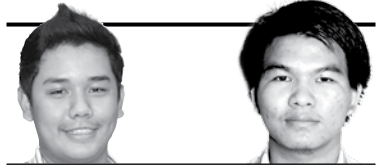
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Ethnic allies join Kokang fight

State media reports that 120 Tatmadaw soldiers were killed or injured in three days of heavy fighting in northern Shan State near China border



YE MON LUN MIN MANG

TWO ethnic armed groups have helped remnant Kokang rebels launch attacks on the Tatmadaw in northern Shan State in an attempt to re-take territory near the Chinese border. Fighting over three days last week resulted in 120 Tatmadaw casualties, the government revealed on February 12.

The Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) and the Arakan Army (AA) fought alongside the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) to win back ground that the Kokang lost to the Tatmadaw in 2009.

Fighting flared on February 9 when the Kokang soldiers attacked Myanmar military positions, state media reported. Calm had returned late on February 11, the government said, after 13 separate clashes.

On February 13, the newspaper reported that the fighting had claimed the lives of 47 Tatmadaw soldiers, with another 73 wounded. In the past the government has rarely acknowledged Tatmadaw losses in its battles against armed ethnic groups.

The fighting raised fresh questions about China's role in ensuring peace in Shan State, as the MNDAA troops appeared to have regrouped in China after their 2009 defeat.

In a pointed message to the Chinese authorities, the state media report highlighted the fact that "the Kokang renegade groups were found to be good at military maneuvering with the use of scores of heavy weapons, including anti-aircrafts machine guns".

The report said the government had informed China of the incidents that occurred on the border, adding that the Shan State government had imposed a curfew in the area.

The Chinese embassy in Yangon did not respond to requests for comment.

TNLA deputy communication officer Ta Pan Hla confirmed the group was helping the MNDAA remnants regain territory near Laukkai



Tatmadaw helicopters are resupplied (left) and officers arrive on an unmarked aircraft (right) at Lashio airport in northern Shan State on February 10. Photo: Supplied



township, in the Kokang Self-administered Zone.

"The area was once held by the Kokang group and we are helping them repossess it," he told *The Myanmar Times*.

In response to the Tatmadaw's allegations that its opponents initiated the fighting, Ta Pan Hla said, "See first, shoot first. It is the rule of fighting in the jungle."

MNDAA secretary U Htun Myat Lin, said that the Tatmadaw used aircraft to bomb Kokang outposts during the fighting. He said airstrikes were continuing near Tar Shwe Htan village.

"On February 10, we were attacked by military aircraft," he said. "[The Tatmadaw] used two helicopters and five MIG-29s."

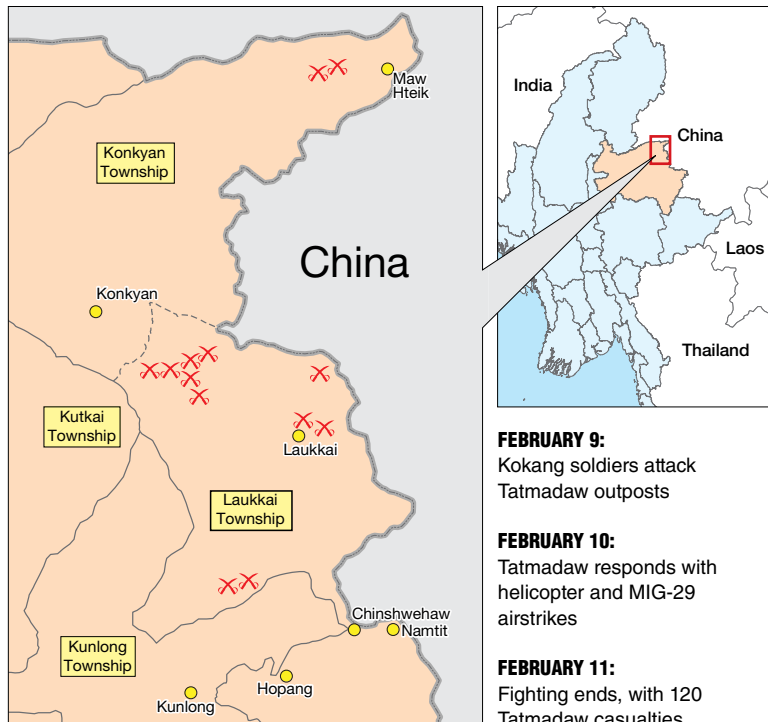
The Tatmadaw has confirmed its use of aircraft to bomb MNDAA positions.

U Htun Myat Lin said he was unsure of the exact number of casualties on the side of the ethnic groups, but at least 10 have been killed and 18 injured.

"There were no Chinese involved in the fighting. We were helped by our allies, the TNLA and Arakan Army," he said.

He also rejected reports that MNDAA soldiers had attacked government buildings in Laukkai and Yan Lone Kyine townships, including

Fighting erupts on border with China



administrative offices, a police station and a prison department office.

A source who travelled from Lashio to Yangon on February 10 confirmed seeing Tatmadaw helicopters being reloaded with ammunition at Lashio

airport in northern Shan State. An unmarked passenger aircraft arrived at the airport and dropped off Tatmadaw officers who then boarded three helicopters.

Civilian passengers on the Yangon

Airways flight were forced to wait in the airport terminal while the rearming took place, delaying the flight by about an hour.

The fighting comes following conflict between the military and ethnic armed groups in other parts of northern Shan and Kachin states. In January the Tatmadaw clashed with the Kachin Independence Army in Hpakant, while in early February the TNLA said the military launched air attacks against its positions.

On February 10, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson, Hua Chunying, told a press conference that some Myanmar citizens had crossed the border into China to escape the fighting. She said the Chinese government considered them refugees and was providing assistance.

"[The] situation in Myanmar's northern region has a direct impact on the stability of China-Myanmar border. We hope that the Myanmar government and MNDAA could cease fire and solve the problem through peaceful talks," Ms Hua said.

Composed of more than 1000 fighters, the MNDAA fled the area in 2009 in the wake of a Tatmadaw offensive prompted by reports of drug trafficking by Kokang leaders. The offensive prompted more than 30,000 people to flee into China, and earned Myanmar a stern rebuke from Beijing.

The return of the MNDAA has caught many by surprise. However, last month *Global Times*, an English-language mouthpiece of the government of China, published an interview with the group's leader, Pheung Kya-shin, on its website, in which he outlined his desire to retake the lost territory.

In the interview, he said he had recruited about 1000 new soldiers since he left Kokang in 2009, and the recruits are attacking the Tatmadaw in alliance with the KIA and TNLA. His troops have killed more than 100 government soldiers, he said.

The interview was deleted soon after publication.

The MNDAA said in a statement on February 9 that it will fight until it gets peace, equality, tranquility, development and autonomy for the Kokang region.

United Nations looks to the past to break Rakhine deadlock

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THE United Nations resident coordinator in Myanmar has appointed a prominent historian to provide advice on UN activities in Rakhine State, in a move some say could backfire due to the way his research has in the past

been used by Rakhine nationalists.

A UN spokesperson said Jacques Leider, an academic from Luxembourg who has been researching Rakhine State for 25 years, had been recently appointed by resident coordinator Renata Lok-Dessallien to improve understanding of the dynamics in Rakhine State.

"For the UN to continue to work

effectively for all the peoples in the Rakhine State, it is necessary to gain a thorough understanding of the context in which it operates," the spokesperson said.

"The United Nations therefore works in consultation with all knowledgeable persons on Rakhine State in informing itself to this end. Mr

Leider's expertise has been sought by the Office of the Resident Coordinator in this regard."

Mr Leider declined to comment when contacted by *The Myanmar Times* last week. One of his first duties in the new role was to hold a briefing for members of the Yangon diplomatic community about the history of the

Rakhine conflict on February 10.

One diplomat who attended the briefing said Mr Leider emphasised the long history of diversity in Rakhine State and described the current state of tensions as a relatively contemporary phenomenon.

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Relocation & Renovation

Daw Suu leads Natmauk rally honouring Bogyoke Aung San

DAW Aung San Suu Kyi addressed a crowd of thousands on February 13 in the biggest celebrations in memory honouring her father, independence hero Bogyoke Aung San.

In scenes reminiscent of her triumphant election campaign three years ago, the National League for Democracy leader addressed a huge crowd in her father's birthplace, with many supporters waving her party flag or portraits of Bogyoke Aung San as an earnest young revolutionary in a military cap.

"If we want to inherit from my father, we have to build a real democratic nation," said an emotional Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, adding that his "sincerity" had ensured his legacy endured.

Known affectionately as "Bogyoke", or General, Aung San is adored in Myanmar and credited with unshackling the country from colonial rule and embracing its ethnic minorities in a vision of unity that unravelled catastrophically in the military-dominated decades that followed his assassination.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was just two at the time of his death in 1947.

The rally marking the centenary of Bogyoke Aung San's birth in Magwe Region's Natmauk - a remote town nestled in the dusty plains of central Myanmar - is the centrepiece of countrywide celebrations that are far more extensive than previous years.

People camped out overnight to see "the Lady", as Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is known, many sleeping on the ground in the local pagoda, on roadsides or in their cars in the farming town.

The celebrations come as Myanmar awaits a breakthrough general election later this year seen as a crucial test of the country's emergence from military rule.

Images of Bogyoke Aung San have been deeply entwined with the political rise of his Nobel laureate daughter since her release from house arrest more than four years ago.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi frequently referenced her family link while campaigning for the 2012 by-election that swept her into parliament for the first time.

"Being the daughter of Bogyoke Aung San is one of the reasons that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has reached the position she is in today. It's not the only reason, but it is one of them," party spokesperson U Nyan Win said.



Daw Aung San Suu Kyi delivers a speech during a ceremony to mark the 100th anniversary of the birth of her father, independence hero Bogyoke Aung San, in Natmauk on February 13. Photo: AFP

U Nyan Win said that with a poll date yet to be announced, the party is not yet in election mode.

"It's logical for politicians to try to draw some kind of support or inspiration from what [Aung San] did," said Trevor Wilson, an academic at Australian National University and former ambassador to Myanmar.

But he said no single party had "exclusive rights" to the former leader, who is also seen as the father of the country's powerful army.

Key figures from the ruling party and government have been keen to show that they share the public adoration of Aung San.

"The general is our general. He is our country's leader ... Because I am a retired soldier, I respect him more,"

Minister for Immigration U Khin Yi said in Nay Pyi Taw on February 12.

Born in 1915 under British colonial rule, Bogyoke Aung San became leader of nationalist fighters in what was then Burma, joining the Japanese in their 1942 invasion of the country during World War II.

'The general is our general ... Because I am a retired soldier, I respect him more.'

U Khin Yi

Minister for Immigration

Unhappy with the new occupying force, he later switched allegiance to the Allies, helping the British to return in 1945.

The 1947 Panglong Agreement - a deal with ethnic groups and the British that paved the way for independence and promised political autonomy for minority groups - is seen as one of Bogyoke Aung San's crowning achievements.

But he was killed a few months later, gunned down in a murky assassination plot, and soon after independence in 1948 the country became entangled in a series of long-running civil wars.

Myanmar's quasi-civilian regime, which took power in 2011 after decades of military rule, has put ending those conflicts at the heart of its reform drive.

But their hopes to sign a comprehensive ceasefire have been undermined by a recent uptick in fighting with a multitude of rebel groups, particularly in the northern Kachin and Shan states. - AFP

CONTINUED FROM NEWS 3

While this could perhaps offer hope for reconciliation between the two communities, the diplomat said that "from a realist point of view it's quite difficult to see it happening because ... things have gone beyond rationality".

"I must give the UN resident coordinator credit for trying a new way to approach the issue but ... the feeling among those who attended seemed to be that it would be difficult for this approach to have much impact."

However, others have been less positive about the appointment, particularly because Mr Leider's work is often used by anti-Rohingya nationalists to justify the denial of citizenship and other rights to Muslims.

Mr Leider argues that Muslims in Rakhine State have only adopted the Rohingya name since the 1950s in order to advance claims that they are a culturally distinct and separate ethnic group.

"Rohingyas conflate the history of all Muslims in Rakhine's past with their own condition in Myanmar today and they hold the belief that 'Rohingyas' have existed in Rakhine for many generations," he wrote in a paper for the Myanmar Peace Center in 2013.

Matt Smith, executive director of Fortify Rights, said Mr Leider's research was "famous in circles that have participated in deadly violence against Rohingya".

"I know this because I've had discussions about his positions with people who perpetrated violence in Sittwe in 2012," he said.

Mr Smith said it was difficult to see the wisdom of hiring such a polarising figure, and questioned the timing so shortly after Rakhine political leaders had declared they would no longer coordinate with the UN. "Advancing a narrative that discounts Rohingya ethnicity claims would not only be unwise, but would further entrench the situation. It doesn't strike me as clever," he said.

However, a number of people spoke highly of Mr Leider's knowledge and understanding of Rakhine State.

"I have formed the highest opinion of his intellectual integrity and historical knowledge," said one regular writer on Rakhine issues, who asked not to be named. "I welcome his appointment, because he knows the facts, so far as they are known."

Chris Lewa of the Arakan Project described Mr Leider as "a well-known, balanced and respected scholar".

"He challenges some of the historical myths propagated by both sides in Arakan," she said. "More academics like him are needed to conduct unbiased and fact-based research."

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LETPADAUNG



Police take cover behind mounds of freshly dug soil at contested land near the Letpadaung mine. Photo: Supplied

Fresh tension, injuries at Letpadaung mine

WALONE

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MORE than 10 villagers have been injured in a confrontation with police near the Letpadaung copper mine on February 11, residents have reported.

U Aung Gyi from Se Tae village said four villagers were injured after being hit by objects fired at them by police using slingshots.

He said the clashes occurred on February 10 and 11 when the villagers obstructed efforts to fence off their lands for a planned US\$1 billion expansion at the Sagaing Region mine. Villagers fired objects back at police with slingshots but these were deflected away with shields.

"The injured people don't dare go to the hospital because they are afraid of the government and police will arrest them," he said.

Ma Mar Shwe, a resident of Se Tae, said "dozens" of bulldozers had been digging up the confiscated fields since February 10. "The police are



This man was allegedly hit by an object fired by a police officer using a slingshot. Photo: Supplied

hiding behind the loose soil piled up near the bulldozers," she said.

Police Major Nay Tun from the Sagaing Region government disputed U Aung Gyi's account, saying there had been "no clashes yet" between police and residents.

"[The company] is finishing fencing the areas that were not finished

due to the previous conflict so we are providing security," he said.

He refused to say how many police had been posted to the area but residents said there were almost 1000.

In December, one woman was killed when police fired on villagers who had been protesting against the fencing of their land by staff from the mine operator, Chinese firm Wanbao. Nine villagers were also injured in the incident, together with a number of police.

Following the clashes, Salingyi township police issued arrest warrants for 17 residents of Mo Gyo Pyin, Se Tae and Tone village for allegedly destroying company property and inciting violence.

Daw Khin San Hlaing, a National League for Democracy representative for nearby Pale and a member of Lapadaung Investigation Commission, said confrontation over the mine was inevitable because the authorities had neglected the residents.

"The Sagaing Region government has a responsibility to resolve these problems but so far there had been no decisive action from them," she said.

EITI civil society board members rap govt over mine death

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CIVIL society members of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative's International Board have slammed the government over the death of a protester at the Letpadaung copper mine in December, as well as subsequent charges filed against civil society leaders.

Daw Khin Win was killed on December 22 when police opened fire on residents protesting against the fencing of land confiscated for an expansion of the China-backed mine. A number of civil society activists have since been arrested for allegedly staging illegal protests and defaming the state.

The 10 civil society members of the International Board said urgent action was needed to "ensure that the opportunity for effective reform is not undermined by the limitations on civil society expression and operation displayed in the Letpadaung case".

They called on Myanmar's Multi-Stakeholder Group - a body comprising representatives of the government, private sector and civil society - to take steps to ensure "that civil society has the freedom to operate and speak freely on transparency and natural resource governance issues, in line with the requirements of the EITI".

"The combination of physical violence at Letpadaung and subsequent legal charges could lead to self-censorship by civil society representatives for fear of possible retribution if they engage in public debate or raise concerns over natural resource sector opacity or mismanagement," they said in the February 11 statement.

They recommended that donors supporting Myanmar's EITI application provide assistance for a review that would lead to an action plan aimed at ensuring the civil society environment is up to EITI standards, while the government review laws that restrict civil society space. The EITI International Board should monitor progress toward these targets, they said.

"Unfortunately, the Letpadaung case is an extreme, but not isolated, example of restrictions on and reprisals against civil society members attempting to express views on issues of natural resource governance."

A representative for the EITI Secretariat did not respond to requests

for comment by deadline.

In December, Myanmar-based civil society groups accused the government of breaching its EITI commitments as a result of the clashes at Letpadaung, which also left nine demonstrators injured.

The Myanmar Alliance for Transparency and Accountability said its members would submit the case to the EITI Board, which is considering the government's applications for membership to the initiative.

In a statement on December 24, MATA said the government had violated its promise to guarantee freedom of speech on natural resource-related issues. Articles in state-run media blaming the protesters for the violence before an investigation had been conducted also breached the EITI code of conduct, said MATA, which was formed earlier this year to coordinate civil society involvement in the EITI process.

'The combination of physical violence at Letpadaung and subsequent legal charges could lead to self-censorship by civil society.'

EITI Board civil society members

For its part, the government has accused civil society activists of stoking violence at Letpadaung.

Following the December clashes, the Letpadaung Report Implementation Committee said in a January 6 report that activists were to blame for inciting violence "behind the curtain".

"We have already charged those who are trying to stimulate the conflict," U Tin Myint, secretary of the implementing committee, told reporters at the President's Office.

Myanmar announced its intention to join EITI in 2012 and was accepted as a candidate country in July 2014. To become EITI compliant, Myanmar must convince the EITI Board that it has met seven criteria by January 2017, including one on civil society participation.



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Muse police reject home affairs minister's comments

Police major says no Khaung Kar residents have fled to KIA territory after death of two Kachin teachers



YE MON

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A SENIOR member of a government team investigating the deaths of two Kachin women in January has disputed comments by the Minister for Home Affairs, in which he said two villagers were suspected of involvement.

Two female volunteer teachers, Maran Lu Ra, 20, and Tangbau Hkwan Nan Tsin, 21, were raped and killed in Khaung Kar village, in northern Shan State's Muse township, on January 19.

"The villagers are not responsible," said the police major, who asked not to be named. "We will release all information after the investigation process is complete."

The naked bodies of the two women were found on January 20 with stab wounds and head injuries after villagers reported hearing screams in the night. Their deaths provoked outrage, particularly among ethnic Kachin, with tens of thousands lining the streets of Myitkyina for a funeral service.

Civil society groups have alleged

that Tatmadaw soldiers from the 503rd Light Infantry Regiment, who just days earlier had set up camp in the village, were responsible.

The government formed a commission shortly after the bodies were found to investigate the deaths. The commission comprises a police officer, a local administrator, a Kachin Baptist Convention official and a representative of the local Mone Paw militia.

But Minister for Home Affairs Lieutenant General Ko Ko told state broadcaster MRTV on February 7 that two Khaung Kar residents were thought to be involved.

He said the two suspects had fled into territory controlled by the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) before they could be interviewed.

However, the police major said this was incorrect, and the investigation commission has finished interviewing all residents and soldiers from the 503rd Light Infantry Regiment.

"I don't understand the minister's answer. We are not yet willing to rule out anyone, whether they are residents or soldiers. I don't know why he said it," the police major said.

The Tatmadaw is conducting its own investigation and is interrogating soldiers from the light infantry



A woman places white ribbons on a wall at a makeshift memorial in Yangon on January 23 for two murdered Kachin teachers. Photo: AFP

regiment. On January 29, the military published a statement in its *Myawady* newspaper saying it was "unlikely" any government troops were involved, without providing any further information.

It also warned that those who accuse its members of being responsible for the killings would face legal action.

Lt Gen Ko Ko also told the state broadcaster that the ministry had

asked "a religious organisation" to help retrieve the two men from KIA territory.

While he did not name the organisation, he appeared to be referring to the Kachin Baptist Convention, for whom the two women were volunteering when they were killed.

KBC secretary Reverend Samson Hkalam said his group had received no such request.

"The two villagers have not run away - they are living in the village and they have been interviewed by the commission," he said, adding that the KBC is the only religious organisation working in Khaung Kar.

As *The Myanmar Times* reported last week, the KBC has formed its own investigation team in an effort to ensure those responsible for the rape and murder of the women are brought to justice. The KBC said the committee, which was formed on February 5, would support the government's own investigation.

The KBC team met the investigation commission in Muse township on February 10, Reverend Samson Hkalam said.

"The commission told us they have evidence concerning the case ... [that they] will release soon. They also said they don't understand what the Union minister is saying."

UEC to meet civil society, parties

POLITICAL parties and electoral NGOs will meet this week with the Union Election Commission to discuss the codes of conduct that will govern their activities during the campaign.

UEC official U Hla Maung Cho said the February 16-17 meeting, at the Parkroyal Hotel in Yangon, would also discuss the current state of voter registration.

The UEC asked civil society organisations involved in electoral preparations to comment on draft codes of conduct and accreditation application rules and forms last December, giving a January 15 deadline.

U Hla Maung Cho said a working group would focus on the draft code of conduct for political parties contesting the general election, which is scheduled for late October or early November.

U Khin Maung Swe, a member of the working group representing the National Democratic Force, said his party had proposed its own draft of code of conduct. "The legal and research committees of our party have drawn up a 30-page code of conduct that we've already submitted to the UEC for consideration," he said.

Daw Zin Mar Oo, general secretary of Myanmar Networks for Free and Fair Election, an electoral civil society organisation, said her group would discuss comments and suggestions sent to the UEC last month. - *Lun Min Mang*

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Ethnic armed groups call for stronger federal system pledge

Ethnic leaders welcome other areas of peace pledge, including right to equality and self-determination

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ETHNIC groups remain unconvinced by the apparent commitment made by the government on Union Day in favour of establishing a federal system. They say this does not constitute a guarantee of the system they seek.

The government's statement, signed on February 12, commits it to "safeguard[ing] sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity on the basis of the peace process, and [building] a Union based on democratic and federal principles in the spirit of Panglong and in accordance with the outcomes of political dialogue to ensure freedom, equality, justice and self-determination for all citizens".

The commitment was signed by all members of the government, including President U Thein Sein and the two vice-presidents, as well as the two speakers of parliament, the head of the Union Election Commission, three representatives of the military, 55 political parties, and 29 regional ministers for national ethnic affairs. While 13 armed ethnic groups attended the ceremony, only four, including the Karen National Union and Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan

State Army-South, signed the document. U Hla Maung Shwe, a senior official from the Myanmar Peace Center, said the other ethnic groups did not reject the document. "They said they will reply as to whether they will sign it after discussing it with their leaders," he said.

While fellow MPC senior official U Min Zaw Oo described the agreement as a first in Myanmar history, some ethnic groups say it is not enough.

Naing Han Thar, deputy leader of the United Nationalities Federal Council, an umbrella organisation for nine ethnic armed groups, said that the promise to build a federal union based on the outcome of the political dialogue was "not a certain guarantee".

Naing Han Thar is also head of the Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team, which is negotiating a ceasefire on behalf of 16 ethnic armed groups.

"We welcomed the government's recognition of ethnic equality, justice and self-determination," he said.

"But we want a guarantee from the government for the outline picture of a federal union. Although we proposed to sign a political commitment for that, we consider the government statement unchanged from its original stance."

In a letter to the president on January 18, the UNFC proposed to sign a political commitment prior to the nationwide ceasefire agreement. The

government's negotiation team and the UNFC exchanged proposals on the commitment at their February 5-6 meeting in Chiang Mai.

"The UNFC was trying to build on the president's speech that said political agreement on a federal union had been reached," said Naing Han Thar.

A UNFC statement of February 11

'We want a guarantee from the government for the outline picture of a federal union.'

Naing Han Thar
Ethnic negotiator

proposed a federal structure based on the country's ethnic groupings. "The two parties agree to establish a genuine federal union based on 'national states' having full guarantees for democracy, national equality and self-determination rights. In accordance with the said agreement, the two parties firmly vow to endeavour and continue to realise the nationwide ceasefire agreement," said the UNFC proposal.

"Some say the existing state structure is already federal. We worry that the political dialogue could approve that structure. We want to avoid that. The state structure should be based on nationalities, and should take into account the multiethnic nature of places such as Ayeyarwady Region. We want a guarantee [before the political dialogue]," Naing Han Thar said.

The 2008 constitution establishes 14 states and regions, of which seven states are based on major ethnic minority groups, plus five self-administrative zones for another five medium-sized ethnic groups. The seven regions are areas dominated by ethnic Bamar, but some also have sizeable minority populations.

While the negotiations for the national ceasefire agreement, which will open the way for a more general political dialogue, and those for a federal structure are closely linked, divisions have appeared among some ethnic groups and their armed forces. But the executive committee members of the UNFC are generally more senior to the members of the NCCT, which is engaged in the ceasefire talks.

General N'Ban La, the chair of the Kachin Independence Organisation, is currently leading the UNFC. The KIO declined to attend the Union Day celebrations.

- Additional reporting by
Ei Ei Toe Lwin

CONTINUED FROM NEWS 1

Putting pen to paper - and making history

While President U Thein Sein has spoken of his commitment to "democratic federalism" in public addresses, he has now put pen to paper in the presence of all stakeholders and the media.

But the road to the signing was long and arduous. It happened against a backdrop of fierce fighting in northern Shan State in which the Tatmadaw sustained many casualties.

Indeed, there are many uncertainties in Myanmar's peace process. The situation - both the good and the bad - fluctuates regularly, as do the moods and perceptions of the stakeholders.

In a pre-meeting on February 11, all 13 ethnic armed groups who came to attend the official Union Day dinner hosted by the president pledged their support to the Commitment for Peace. However, they were not ready to sign because they needed approval from their respective organisations.

The final draft was worked on until the very end, leaving some groups with very little time to get the requisite mandate. There were also misunderstandings: Some stakeholders thought it was an agreement instead of viewing it as a pledge.

The day before the signing, Minister for the President's Office U Aung Min paid a visit to both houses of the parliament to seek their support, which he happily received. He also met the president to seek his approval. At the same time, he had to seek buy-in from the Tatmadaw.

Despite his calm demeanour and patience, the government's chief negotiator was visibly concerned in the morning of Union Day. He had done all he could and worked tirelessly. Despite this, it was unclear who would sign the commitment. If a significant number of stakeholders did not sign, the hard work would have gone to waste.



President U Thein Sein delivers a speech during a meeting with armed ethnic groups and other peace stakeholders in Nay Pyi Taw on February 12. Photo: AFP

We at the Myanmar Peace Center conferred with the KNU on the possibility of obtaining ethnic armed groups' support before we left for the meeting. I was not optimistic and felt the nervous energy all around me. Despite that, quiet negotiations went on all morning.

But we had good vibes when we saw the president walk into the meeting room followed by the two vice-presidents and two speakers.

The president spoke on the reasons for the commitment; how the idea of a pledge originated from the ethnic armed groups; how the plan to sign the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) on Union Day was not feasible due to unfinished and negotiations; and why it was necessary for leaders on all sides to be bold in order to allay public concerns about the peace process.

Several ethnic armed group leaders spoke. Three ethnic affairs ministers pledged their support on behalf of their brethren. So did several leaders of the political parties.

The most notable remark was made by KNU leader General Mutu Say Poe, who said, "For over 60 years we have fought bravely in battles to annihilate each other but that bravery was meaningless. Now it is time to make peace together and sign the pledge bravely."

Along with the KNU, the RCSS-SSA was the most responsible for making the signing event possible. Without their commitment and tireless shuttle diplomacy among the key ethnic armed groups, the commitment would not have been possible. The KNU in particular has travelled incessantly in recent weeks, speaking to various ethnic armed groups

to convince them of the need to sign the pledge. They also sent a copy of the draft to the Kachin Independence Organisation for its leaders to peruse.

KNU leaders will not end their efforts here. They will continue seek approval of the Commitment for Peace from Kayin people across the nation. This is an example we should all follow, because it can be signed by anyone or any organisation. In the end it should become a clarion call for citizens of Myanmar to build a peaceful nation together.

The good news of the signing went far and wide. On the day, Vijay Nambiar, the UN special adviser to the secretary-general on Myanmar, issued a statement in support of the commitment, in which he said, "President U Thein Sein's declared commitment will further strengthen the reform process in Myanmar and create a conducive environment for the continuing efforts to reach a Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement."

The signing of the Deed of Commitment for Peace and National Reconciliation indicates the unwavering commitment of all key stakeholders in the Myanmar peace process. It has also successfully maintained the momentum. It will contribute enormously to the next round of nationwide ceasefire talks, which are scheduled for later this month.

The road to peace has been long and arduous. But the signing of the Commitment for Peace should ease the process now that the president has inked an unyielding commitment to end armed conflict, and in its place establish peace, democracy and federalism.

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



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Visitors look at pictures of Bogyoke Aung San inside parliament in Nay Pyi Taw on February 11. Photo: AFP

Speaker invokes spirit of Aung San

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BOGYOKE Aung San's democratic goals cannot be achieved without national solidarity and national reconciliation, Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann said at a ceremony last week.

Speaking on February 11, two days before the 100th anniversary of the birth of the independence hero, Thura U Shwe Mann said it was essential all three branches of government focus on reconciliation.

"The main tasks of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw are legislating and ensuring controls or checks and balances among the legislature, executive and

judiciary. Our MPs often debate in parliament focusing on national solidarity and national reconciliation toward peace. Without national solidarity and national reconciliation we can't follow the policy of Bogyoke Aung San and we can't achieve his goal even as we share his spirit," Thura U Shwe Mann said at a ceremony in Nay Pyi Taw's Thabin Hall.

He said the parliament had also embraced Bogyoke Aung San's idea of putting aside political ideology, race and regionalism to work together in the interests of the country.

Some MPs, he said, still believe that bias based on party membership, race or geographical origin was reasonable. "But we have to

cooperate in everything in order to benefit the country and its people," said Thura U Shwe Mann. "If we all work together, we will inevitably reach our goal of a peaceful and modern developed nation."

U Khin Aung Myint, speaker of Amyotha Hluttaw, urged those present to emulate the spirit with which Bogyoke Aung San approached the task of gaining independence.

"Trying to attain independence was our duty in the time of Bogyoke, and he successfully accomplished his duty," U Khin Aung Myint said. "We have to fulfil our duty of progressing toward democracy, in order to be his good children."

- Translation by Zar Zar Soe

Courts to add press officers



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JOURNALISTS have reacted sceptically to the announcement that press officers would be appointed to provide them with information on court proceedings "for ethical use". The announcement was made last week in Nay Pyi Taw by Union Supreme Court Chief Justice U Tun Tun Oo, as reported in state-owned media.

"Information officers are [being] assigned at the Supreme Court of the Union and region and state high courts for the release of information to the media [in accordance with ethics]," the article said.

However, reporters say it is not clear how information will be obtained from these officers.

Ko Thiha Lwin, a senior reporter in Pyay, Bago Region, who works for Myitmakha Media, said it was very difficult to get information from the courts.

"Administrative and municipal offices are easier to access than the courts. Even hospitals give us information if requested. Courts never answer media queries," he said.

U Kyaw Min Swe, secretary of the Myanmar Press Council (Interim), said he had never heard of such a system.

"Some courts can hear cases in public, in the presence of citizens and reporters. Reporters have the right to ask questions of court personnel and judges," he said.

"But judges are not required to answer, and journalists cannot take photos or record the proceedings."

Section 3(b) of the Union Judicial Law calls on judges to operate with an open court unless otherwise prohibited by law.

But reporters following a court case generally rely on participating lawyers, especially defence lawyers. "We write stories about court decisions mostly based on what we are told by the lawyers," Ko Thiha Lwin said.

Last November, the Union Supreme Court released a three-year strategic plan to improve the courts' efficiency. Objectives included training judges and court staff on media relations skills and initiating public information services in courts at different levels.

U Kyaw Min Swe said a space should be set aside in every court for journalists covering proceedings. "Reporters should be allowed to access court information," including records and judgements, he said.

U Thein Nyunt, a member of Pyithu Hluttaw, offered a cautious welcome to the announcement.

"The release of information must be fair and honest. The proper functioning of the courts requires people's trust," he said.



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Govt orders students to stop march ahead of final meeting



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THE government warned on February 13 it would not allow student protesters to enter Yangon over the weekend, as negotiators on both sides prepared for another round of talks.

The government made the announcement through state broadcaster MRTV. It said government negotiators have already reached agreement with student leaders on their demands and as per the agreement protesters should refrain from entering Yangon. Those who try will be stopped by the authorities, it said.

It came as negotiating teams from the government, parliament, civil society and students prepared to meet in Yangon on February 14 for final talks on a draft amendment to the National Education Law.

At a marathon 10.5-hour meeting at the Yangon Region Government Office on February 11, the government agreed to all of the students' demands



Student leaders speak to the media in Mawlamyine on February 10. Photo: Bo Toe

and promised to submit the amendment bill to parliament when it resumes on February 16.

The breakthrough came after Myanmar Peace Center representatives, including Minister for the President's Office U Aung Min, were replaced by other government officials at the talks. Fellow Minister for the President's Office U Hla Tun took his place, while the meeting was moderated by U Kyaw Thu and U Aung Tun Thet.

The student demands include nine

"pre-conditions" - ranging from respect for student and teacher unions to a pledge not to arrest protesting students - and 11 "facts" to be included in the bill.

These include the right to establish teacher and student unions, to reduce central control over educational institutions, to reform the university entrance system, to spend 20 percent of the national budget on education and to enable minorities to use their languages in classrooms.

The budget requirement was among the last of the demands to be agreed to at the meeting.

The agreement marked a major concession from the government, and highlights its concern at the growing unrest over the education law.

While their demands were met, students said last week they would continue marching on Yangon until the law had been amended in parliament.

Student representatives travelled to different cities and met protesters on February 12 and 13 to explain the agreement. They also sought feedback for the February 14 talks.

But the threat of further unrest remains. Student leader Ko Zayar Lwin told *The Myanmar Times* after the February 11 meeting that the trajectory of the protests "depends on whether parliament can approve an amendment bill with our 11 facts".

Union Solidarity and Development Party MP U Thein Swe said he was optimistic the students would accept the outcome.

"Although we had some difficulties" reaching agreement on February 11, he said, "I think that we can implement the bill in parliament."

Daw Suu discusses education

NATIONAL League for Democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi met student leaders at her Nay Pyi Taw house last week to discuss their concerns over the National Education Law, students told *The Myanmar Times* last week. The meeting followed the government's agreement to reengage with the students, who are demanding changes to the National Education Law.

"She asked us what she could do to help," said student representative Ko Paing Ye Thu.

The NLD leader has called for negotiations to resolve the impasse between the two sides.

While the students have previously been vocal in their criticism of the NLD for its perceived lack of support for their cause, they would not give further details about what the two sides discussed last week.

It is unclear whether the talks touched on the dismissal from the NLD Central Executive Committee of U Thein Lwin, who is also a leader of the National Network for Education Reform (NNER). The dismissal caused some disquiet among the students, as he had been assisting their negotiations with the government.

The All Burma Federation of Student Unions was not invited to the meeting. - *Mratt Kyaw Thu*

CRIME IN BRIEF

Jack hits man while changing tyre

A man has been killed after being hit in the head by a flying car jack. U Kyaw Win, 45, was changing a tyre on his wood truck near Tabuehla Dam in Okkan township on February 7 when the jack came off, striking him on the head. He was taken to Taikkyi Hospital but later died from his injuries.

Man commits suicide near Botahtaung Pagoda

A 20-year-old man has died after drinking bleach following a fight with his girlfriend, in what police believe was a suicide. The man was found unconscious in a toilet near Botahtaung Pagoda on February 7. He was sent to Eastern District Hospital but later died.

Police said the man was living at Kyar Taw Ya Monastery in Bahan township. His girlfriend was working in a tailoring shop at Botahtaung Pagoda.

Deadly end to factory prank

Police say a man who presented dead on arrival at Insein Hospital on February 8 was killed in a workplace prank. The man, 25, was shot in the anus by a colleague, 19, with a 0.4-inch air pressure hose while working in a factory at Danyingone. The 19-year-old man has been charged with causing death by negligence.

Men charged after gas leak starts fire

Two men are being treated in Darpane Hospital for burns sustained in a fire started by a gas leak. The pair were allegedly trying to use the gas to run a water pump when the fire started on February 9 in Sartalin village, Hlegu township. It was eventually extinguished by neighbours. The two men have been charged with negligent conduct with respect to fire or combustible matter.

End of the line for taxi driver

A male taxi driver has been charged after colliding with a train in Ahlone township. U Khin Maung Maung Oo, 53, allegedly hit the RBE 30.01 train in his Toyota Caldina on February 9. The train sustained about K50,000 damage, police said. - *Toe Wai Aung, translation by Khant Lin Oo*

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Ministers break ground on new Mawlamyine bridge

MP calls for halt to Nay Pyi Taw spending



NAWSAY PHAWWAA
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Mon State's minister for finance and revenue performs a ceremony at the groundbreaking for the Belu Kyun-Thanlwin Bridge on February 8. Photo: Nawsay Phaw Waa

CONSTRUCTION has begun on a 1500-metre bridge across the Thanlwin River that will link the island of Belu Kyun with mainland Myanmar for the first time.

To be built at an estimated cost of US\$60 million, the bridge is likely to be finished in about 30 months, according to engineers on the project.

A groundbreaking ceremony for the Belugyun-Thanlwin Bridge in Mon State was held at Mupun jetty in Mawlamyine on February 8, with Mon State Chief Minister U Ohn Myint and Union Minister for Construction U Kyaw Lwin in attendance.

When connected the 1586m (5203-foot) bridge will link Mupun jetty in Mawlamyine with Ka-nyaw village on Belu Kyun, which is in Chaungzon township. The jetty is about 3.2 kilometres (2 miles) south of downtown Mawlamyine.

"The frame and materials for the bridge will be constructed under a Japan-Myanmar joint venture," said superintending engineer U Tint Lwin of Public Works.

He added that K4 billion has already been allocated for the bridge

and another K300 million for the approach structure.

While U Kyaw Lwin declined to give the total cost of the project, Deputy Minister for Construction U Win Myint recently told the Pyithu Hluttaw it was likely to be more than K60 billion.

The bridge project has been welcomed by Belu Kyun residents, who currently have to take a boat to reach

the mainland. The journey typically takes 10 minutes in a sampan and costs K200.

Less pleased are the sampan drivers, whose livelihoods are now very much in doubt.

"Our business is currently good but I am sure I will face difficulties after the bridge opens," said U Ba Htwe, who has run a small boat between Mawlamyine and Belu Kyun for more

than 30 years. "I can't do any other work."

According to the 2014 census, there are 78 villages Chaungzon township, which encompasses Belu Kyun, with a population of about 120,000. The township has few cars due to the lack of a road connection to the mainland, and is also not connected to the national electricity grid.

- Translation by Thiri Min Htun

AN Upper House MP has called on the government to stop all projects in Nay Pyi Taw. U Myat Nyarna Soe told the Amyotha Hluttaw on February 10 that money invested in Nay Pyi Taw's "giant road network" and other infrastructure was being wasted.

"It's just uncontrolled urban development. How many people are using these roads? In Nay Pyi Taw, there are roads that often do not have a single car or motorcycle. This aggressive development should stop," he said, adding that it had also fuelled conflict over land.

He said the paltry number of visitors to the capital showed that it was not a tourist destination, while industry was also unviable because it was too far from a major port.

"Nay Pyi Taw is neither a commercial city nor a manufacturing [centre]. It's just an administrative capital."

He made the comments after U Kan Chun, a member of Nay Pyi Taw Council, told parliament that some infrastructure projects in Nay Pyi Taw have not been completed.

Nay Pyi Taw Council has requested a budget of K71 billion for the coming financial year, while Nay Pyi Taw Development Committee has requested K51 billion.

The government has never revealed how much it spent on the development of Nay Pyi Taw, which was officially announced as the capital in 2006.

- Pyae Thet Phyto



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Safety concerns prompt retest of all bus drivers

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THE Road Transport Administration Department plans to retest all bus drivers, an official confirmed last week. The plan has been welcomed by some in the industry, who say many licensed bus drivers should never have been allowed behind the wheel because they lacked experience.

Drivers will now be required to sit both a practical exam and a computerised test of their theoretical knowledge. The system was introduced for bus drivers - who hold what is known as a *nga* licence, after the fifth consonant in the Myanmar alphabet - on February 5, said RTAD official Daw Swe Swe Nyunt.

The resets were introduced in response to widespread concerns that many bus drivers have not received proper training, and are a potential

safety risk for passengers and other road users.

RTAD officials have also been accused of corruption, as drivers have been able to get licences through brokers without ever sitting a test.

RTAD district chief U Kyaw Aye Lwin acknowledged these concerns and insisted the new system would be strictly enforced.

"In the past people criticised us and said we had failed to properly test drivers and were under the influence of brokers," he said. "We do not want this image. That's why we have changed the system so it meets international standards and all drivers are tested carefully. The licensing process will be carried out promptly and according to the rules."

U Myo Win, the head of the supervisory committee for highway buses, said the RTAD had introduced tougher theoretical tests after the Yar Zar

Min crash in May 2014, when 14 people were killed after a bus plunged off a bridge on the Nay Pyi Taw highway.

"Now RTAD is introducing more stringent practical tests and we will apply them soon to all highway express bus drivers," U Myo Win said,

adding that he welcomed the change.

Only those who have held a normal car licence, known as a *kha* licence, for at least five years can apply for a *nga* licence, which enables the holder to drive all vehicle types, including buses and trucks.

The policy is designed to ensure they have years of experience behind the wheel before taking charge of a bus. However, U Hla Aung, chair of the Yangon Region Supervisory Committee for Motor Vehicles, said many bus drivers who held the licence have never had proper training.

"Many bus drivers, when they pass the test, they have only ever driven forwards, backwards and maybe a couple of times to the petrol station. That's all they've done, so we can't say they were qualified," he said.

The computerised theoretical test was introduced by RTAD on January 5 to combat cheating on written tests.

'In the past people criticised us and said we had failed to properly test drivers and were under the influence of brokers.'

U Kyaw Aye Lwin
Road Transport Administration Dept

Parties call for dialogue over education, white-card protests

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TEN allied political parties have called on those protesting against the National Education Law and parliament's decision on white-card holders to resolve their grievances through negotiation and dialogue.

Representatives of the parties said at a press conference in Yangon on February 9 that while they sympathised with protesters on both issues they were concerned that their demonstrations could be used as a pretext for cancelling this year's election and possibly re-establishing military rule.

U Aye Kyaing, head of the Rakhine State National Force Party, said it was important the government and protesting students resumed negotiations to break the deadlock over the education law.

"I am worried about returning to military rule because of these conflicts," he said.

After protesting against the education law in November, students began marching from Mandalay to Yangon to protest on January 20, following the passing of a 60-day deadline to introduce changes to the legislation.

After a brief pause at the end of January, they resumed their march on February 3 after the government postponed planned negotiations.

Meanwhile, the Pyidaungsu Hlutaw's decision the previous day to give holders of temporary IDs, known as white cards, the right to vote in a planned constitutional referendum has sparked a week of protests in



Students hold placards and flags as they protest against the National Education Law in Yangon on February 8. Photo: AFP

Rakhine State.

While parliament had originally agreed not to give white-card holders a vote, the bill was amended at the suggestion of President U Thein Sein. His proposal received overwhelming support from Union Solidarity and Development Party representatives and military MPs.

The 10 parties said in a statement that they disagreed with the decision because the constitution states that

only citizens be allowed to vote.

On the education law, they said the students were too aggressive and had not shown enough respect during negotiations.

"I agree with the student protesters but they have to consider national security and the peace process," said U Thein Kyi, deputy leader of the Union National Political Alliance League. "They must be responsible for each of their actions."

He said that in a democracy everybody has to respect the decision of the majority, whether they like it or not.

"If you don't like the decision," he said, "you should only try to solve your problems according to the law."

Other parties that took part in the press conference include the 88 Generation Student Youths (Union of Myanmar), the Chin Progressive Party, the Kayin People's Party and the Myanmar National Congress.

Ministry processing first batch of PR applicants

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IMMIGRATION officials have begun to process the first batch of applications for permanent residency. While an office set up in downtown Yangon has temporarily stopped answering enquiries or handing out application forms, they insist the process has not been suspended and an online version of the application is still available.

Sixty applications - including 34 from former citizens - were received from January 29 to December 5, officials said last week.

Since December 29, 446 people, including 236 former citizens, have taken a hard-copy of the application form from an office on Yangon's 37th Street that has been set up to assist prospective applicants.

The scheme, which was first announced last November, has been criticised for appearing to impose restrictions on the political activity of those granted PR status. Those who have received refugee status or political asylum are also ineligible for the program.

The program is open to both former Myanmar citizens, who receive a 50 percent discount on the annual fee, as well as other foreigners.

Applicants must pay a US\$500 non-refundable application fee, as well as a \$1000 annual fee. Those accepted are eligible for PR status for five years. After five years former citizens can reapply for citizenship.

"The application process is still open and we are accepting forms in hard copy. Applicants can download online forms free from the ministry's website," said immigration official U Aung Zaw Moe.

An officer from the 37th Street office said staff have stopped providing assistance to prospective applicants while they examine the first batch.

They will resume services at an as-yet-unannounced date, he said.

"We just want to focus on scrutinising the applications we have received. There are no other reasons. It is not because of a shortage of staff," he said.

Eligible applicants will be interviewed by the central PR committee before receiving final approval.



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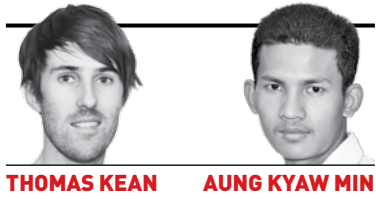
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President backtracks on white cards



THOMAS KEAN AUNG KYAW MIN

IN a major backflip, the government has responded to growing protests against parliament's decision to allow holders of temporary ID cards - better known as white cards - to vote in a planned referendum by cancelling the cards from the end of next month.

The move will mostly affect the Muslim Rohingya, who account for about 600,000 of the 700,000 cards, according to the Ministry of Immigration.

The notification from the President's Office said the cards would expire on March 31. Holders of the documents, which are also known as white cards, will be required to hand them over to the authorities by May 31 and apply for citizenship in accordance with existing laws.

The notification also stated that an advisory commission will be formed to "review laws, rules and regulations and tasks" related to the ID temporary cards.

It came just a day after the president signed a bill giving white-card holders the right to vote in a planned constitutional referendum. Parliament had originally voted against allowing white-card holders to vote but reversed its decision at the request of the president.

The decision sparked widespread protests, particularly in the Rakhine State capital Sittwe, where protests began on February 5. Dozens of people marched through Yangon on February 11, while senior members of the Committee for the Protection of Nationality and Religion - better known as Ma Ba Tha - agreed at a meeting the same day to send a note of protest to the president and Pyidaungsu Hluttaw over the decision to allow white-card holders to vote.

Ma Ba Tha member U Wirathu, who also leads the White-card Campaign Committee, said the group



Monks stage a protest in Yangon on February 11 against allowing white-card holders to vote. Photo: Zarni Phyo

had threatened to stage nationwide protests if it did not get "positive results" from the government. However, it called off the demonstrations after negotiating with Minister for Religious Affairs U Soe Win.

The decision to cancel the cards was announced later that evening.

"While we couldn't foresee this result, U Soe Win gave us the message during our negotiations that the president will give the people satisfying news on the white-card issue," said another senior White-card Campaign Committee member, Magwe Sayadaw U Parmaukha.

"The protests have ended but we will watch how the government handles the withdrawal of the white cards from circulation. We will not

hesitate to point out any things that need to be done," he said.

But Chris Lewa of the Arakan Project said the government backflip

'The protests have ended but we will watch how the government handles the withdrawal of the white cards.'

Magwe Sayadaw U Parmaukha

was "outrageous", particularly how it had effectively overturned the recent parliamentary decision. She called on the government to review the 1982 Citizenship Law and dissociate ethnicity from citizenship.

"It is outrageous how the government empowers extremist nationalists by immediately giving in to demands of a few hundred demonstrators," she said.

She also highlighted the fact that decision would have implications beyond Rakhine State.

While the Rohingya - officially known as Bengalis - are thought to hold most of the white cards, other minorities are also likely to be affected.

During a debate in parliament

over the issue, Wa representative Sai Paung Nap said there were "so many" people in Myanmar's border areas who hold white cards rather than permanent citizenship documents, such as the pink-coloured Citizenship Scrutiny Cards.

"In border areas, many people have no CSC - they are very difficult to get," he said. "If [white-card holders] have no chance to vote, they will lose their rights as citizens."

Yet the decision is widely perceived as an effort to disenfranchise the Rohingya. Matt Smith, executive director of Fortify Rights, said it showed President U Thein Sein was "playing politics in all the wrong ways".

"The sign of a great leader is a willingness to take principled positions on unpopular issues, and we're just not seeing that from Myanmar's political elite," he said.

"But the issue of white cards is really a symptom of the greater problem of deep-seated anti-Muslim discrimination, and unchecked abuses against Rohingya."

In an earlier interview, Pyithu Hluttaw representative for Buthidaung U Shwe Maung, a self-described Rohingya whose constituency has many white-card holders, said many of those who hold the cards would be eligible for citizenship but in the past the government has refused to process their applications.

"White-card holders were given white cards by force. Since independence they have been holding National Registration Cards until 1990," he said.

"All over Myanmar if the applicant and parents held an NRC then they got a Citizenship Scrutiny Card. A lot of Rohingya outside Rakhine received a CSC. But in Buthidaung, Maungdaw and Sittwe [townships] the applications were left pending. In 1994 the government instead issued white cards.

"We know these cards are not valid according to the 1982 citizenship law. It is quite unfair [that applicants were given white cards] - they are the descendants of citizens."

- Additional reporting by Htoo Thant



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Local memorial for national hero



AYE SAPAY PHYU

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A MEMORIAL to one of the country's finest poets and political leaders would be the pride of the nation, say organisers raising funds for the project. U Tun Win Nyein, spokesperson for the Thakin Kodaw Hmaing Peace Network, issued a plea for funding on February 11.

The Thakin Kodaw Hmaing memorial peace building is planned for his home village of Wale, Shwedaung township, Bago Region, said U Tun Win Nyein.

Thakin Kodaw Hmaing (1876-1964) was one of the greatest poets, writers, political leaders and peace builders of our country, he said.

"He always said he wanted to die in his native land. His followers bought land in his daughter's name in Wale. Although he passed away in Yangon, we decided to establish a memorial peace building in Wale. After two years of preparation, we have started collected funds," he said.

U Tun Win Nyein said a literary event, a book-selling festival, and a cartoon and photo show were held in Wale on January 24 and 25 to raise funds. "Once we have a permit, we will start to build," he said, adding that the building and landscaping would cost not more than K50 million.



Thakin Kodaw Hmaing. Photo: Supplied

"Wale village is just beside the Yangon-Pyay road, and can attract visitors who will help improve local people's livelihood. Moreover, the site

will be the pride of Myanmar as the place where the country's historical memories are stored," he said.

Thakin Kodaw Hmaing was the name adopted by Maung Lun, who accompanied King Thibaw and Queen Su Phayal Latt from Mandalay to Ratanagiri in India in 1885. That experience inspired him to become a nationalist and set him on the path toward the recovery of his country's independence.

U Tin Tun, a member of the peace network, said Thakin Kodaw Hmaing had led the way toward independence. "There is much gratitude toward Thakin Kodaw Hmaing. Independence movements became active after the *Do Burma Asi-ayone* [We Burmans Association] was organised in 1930. As the patron, Thakin Kodaw Hmaing took a leading role in its activities and served as mentor to many well-known nationalists and peacemakers," he said.

"National schools and colleges sprang up countrywide after Yangon University was boycotted in 1920. Thakin Kodaw Hmaing helped lay the foundation for our national schools and colleges, paving the way for the emergence of Bogyoke Aung San, U Nu and U Thant."

After independence, Thakin Kodaw Hmaing was a leading light in the world peace movement and in 1952 attended the Peace Conference for the Asia Pacific Region in Beijing. He was elected chair of the World Peace Congress the same year, and won the Stalin Peace Prize in 1954. Those wishing to donate to the project can contact to U Tun Win Nyein on 09-513-7402.

NLD forms campaign committee

DESPITE refusing to commit to contesting the general election later this year, the National League for Democracy has created a campaign group. However, the party was at pains to stress that this should not be taken to mean that it has decided to fight the election, which is scheduled for late October or early November.

The 19-member campaign committee comprises representatives from the states and regions, the youth committee, and the central executive committee.

"It's just a preparation, like we did last year," said CEC member U Tun Tun.

Campaign committee member U Mahn Johnny, who is also Pyithu Hlutaw representative for Myaungmya in Ayeyarwady Region, said the committee would hold its first meeting on February 16.

Questions about the party's participation in the election arose when its leader, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, told a press conference in December that the party would decide only after the election date was announced.

The Union Solidarity and Development Party formed its campaign committee last month. - *Lun Min Mang*

K5000-a-day proposed for minimum wage

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WORKERS should receive at least K5000 for an eight-hour day, say those polled by researchers gathering data for the government's minimum-wage enquiry.

Anything else would cause hardship, respondents said.

But many experienced workers with long service records receive much less, researchers heard - and some labour representatives expect much more.

The government has commissioned a cost-of-living survey that began work last month in order to help the government decide the level at which to set the minimum wage in each state and region.

'I only get ... about K100,000 with bonuses. It's not enough - I spend more than half on basic needs.'

Ma Poe Zarchi

Worker at Yes candy factory

"According to our survey, an inexperienced worker should get K5000 per eight-hour day. If not, it would be definitely hard for their daily life," said U Ko Ko Naing, a workers' representative who participated in data collection in Yedashe township, Bago Region.

The survey will be based on the daily living expense of households in a total of 108 townships throughout the country.

MTUF vice president U Tun Wai said survey results from Yangon's Shwe Pyi Thar township indicated the daily rate should be at least K5000, and as high as K8500, not counting bonuses.

U Soe Win, an employers' representative working on the survey in Shwe Pyi Thar township, Yangon

Region, said average monthly expenses for a middle-class family were about K400,000, and about K200,000 for a working-class family.

"In my opinion, K4000 or K5000 a day is suitable for workers, that is, about K150,000 a month," he added.

Minister for Labour, Employment and Social Security U Aye Myint said the ministry would fix a "reasonable" wage for every worker after analysing the data. "We will find a win-win solution both for workers and employers," he said, adding that working environment and safety would be taken into consideration.

Basic wages in Myanmar factories are extremely low, but take-home pay rises significantly with the addition of overtime, and bonuses for performance and attendance.

In early January, workers from the Yes candy factory in Hlaing Tharyar Industrial Zone 4 demanded a pay rise because their basic wage was less than K30,000, and just K17,500 for an inexperienced worker.

"I have to spend more than K20,000 just for food and basic needs. Though I've been working here seven years, I only get K30,000 basic salary, rising to about K100,000 with bonuses. It's not enough - I spend more than half on basic needs," said worker Ma Poe Zarchi.

Ko Wai Phyo, a member of the labour union at Yes, said workers were hopeful the minimum wage ruling would lead to pay increases not linked to bonuses. "We attended workshops on the minimum wage. It would be great if it was set by law, and if the employers complied," he said.

The Ministry for Labour, Employment and Social Security had previously stated it would set minimum wages by the end of last year, as required under the Minimum Wage Law, which was enacted in April 2012.

The survey was launched to end disagreement between labour and employer representatives over what constituted a fair wage.

While those conducting the survey appear to agree that the minimum wage should be around K5000 a day, ministry director general U Myo Aung warned that if workers and employers did not accept the amount fixed by the ministry the process could be delayed further.

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Dated: 16th February, 2015

LOI TAI LENG, SHAN STATE

Shan State Army-South Tatmadaw still holds a

BASED at Loi Tai Leng in southern Shan State, the Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army (RCSS/SSA-South) was formed by Lieutenant General Yawd Serk in 1996 after the surrender of Khun Sa's Mong Tai Army. In December 2011 it became the fourth group to sign a ceasefire with President U Thein Sein's government, despite having never inked a deal with the previous military regime. It remains outside the main ceasefire negotiating body for ethnic groups, the Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT), and a major umbrella organisation, the United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC). Here, chief political correspondent **Ei Ei Toe Lwin** interviews **Lt Gen Yawd Serk** on his concerns about the nationwide ceasefire, the impact of this year's election and his trust in President U Thein Sein.

The ceasefire you signed in 2011 contained 31 points. How many of those have been fulfilled over the past three years?

While we agreed on 31 points, both the government and its military have not paid attention to all of what we agreed. That's why we have been barely able to implement three or four points in the agreement, mostly opening liaison offices and being able to meet the public. That's all.

So have you seen any noticeable change or progress since the ceasefire agreement was signed? Or is the situation still the same?

For our organisation, there have been no visible changes. In signing the ceasefire we were only hoping for political dialogue and that remains the case. Every time we meet with the government we always emphasise the need to build trust. In terms of trust-building, though, we can barely talk to the Myanmar Peace Centre (MPC) or [chief government negotiator] U Aung Min [because they are not decision-makers]. All of the things we have discussed did not work in practice.

The government's armed forces always want to fight us, like an enemy. Even though we've established liaison offices, they have never made contact and never negotiated with us. They released a statement about the assassination of forestry officials that occurred in Langkho township [in December] without asking for any information from our liaison office. We think this shows they hold a grudge against us. Now they have discovered the truth [that the RCSS/SSA was not responsible] but they haven't given us any explanation yet.

Why hasn't the RCSS/SSA joined the UNFC or the NCCT?

The RCSS/SSA and the UNFC are divided over policy. We support an alliance for Shan State-based groups, but the UNFC includes those from other areas. In my view the NCCT is being manipulated by the UNFC so that's why we don't take part in it.

What do you make of the discussions on the nationwide ceasefire agreement? Is a nationwide ceasefire really essential for genuine peace?

Most ethnic armed groups have already agreed ceasefires with the government. Some of them believe they don't need to sign anything else. For the RCSS/SSA, we won't sign the ceasefire but we may take part in a signing [ceremony] if it will bring a guarantee of political dialogue. In terms of the political dialogue, we want to discuss the framework and the timeline.



Shan State Army-South leader Lieutenant General Yawd Serk gives a thumbs-up to the crowd at Loi Tai Leng for Shan National Day on February 7. Photo: Kaung Htet

The NCCT has always tried to put its political framework into the nationwide ceasefire agreement. This is the reason the negotiations are taking so long. Instead, they should do it after the discussions reach the next phase.

When I met with leaders from the NCCT, I suggested to debate the political framework during the second stage. After that, we can go forward to political dialogue.

In our discussions with ethnic leaders, we have also proposed six points [for inclusion in the nationwide ceasefire].

The NCCT has always tried to put its political framework into the ceasefire. This is the reason the negotiations are taking so long.

The first is about third party [observers]. Foreign countries should be able to participate as observers.

The second is to set a schedule for political dialogue: when it will be held - on which day, which month and which year.

The third is to form a committee for overseeing the budget for [the holding of] political talks.

And then it is also necessary for leaders to have the chance to hold political dialogue abroad.

It is important to recognise all agreements signed by each and every group, whether they are Union-level or state-level agreements, when signing an agreement to continue on to political dialogue.

Finally, in doing political activities, people need to meet with political parties. That's why we need to demand the repeal of the Unlawful Associations Act.

The government has said it now agrees to establish a federal union, as ethnic minorities have been demanding for decades. However, the proposal to form a federal army has divided ethnic armed groups and the. Among ethnic groups, there are various definitions for a federal army. What form of federal army does the RCSS/SSA believe should be pursued?

We believe there are five conditions needed for political change. These are mutual trust among leaders, changes to the political framework and discussions over what kind of federal system should be adopted. Then it is necessary to amend the constitution, and that will require talks on how to amend it. The [future of the] armed forces will be covered in the section on amending the constitution.

Then, we will have to draw a plan for political dialogue. After that, we must make a decision through a referendum in which all people can participate.

But we can't do anything if the leaders, whether government or ethnic, can't build mutual trust, can't participate in discussions and can't discuss future reforms.

Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing recently told a media organisation that the Tatmadaw wants peace - that they have opened the way toward peace and that peace is now in the hands of ethnic armed groups. How do you respond to that?

Just saying you want peace is not enough. You have to show it through actions. Commander-in-Chief Min Aung Hlaing probably does really want peace but perhaps can't control his lower-ranking soldiers. However, we can't say for sure this is true. At the moment, there are a lot of cases where soldiers are violating human rights. Gang rapes have occurred in Kachin State. It shouldn't happen. I don't think it is the policy of the commander-in-chief. But I think it shows that he can't control his lower ranks.

You recently said at a press conference that you believe in President U Thein Sein. What exactly do you

SHAN NATIONAL DAY

h: The grudge

believe in - that his government genuinely wants peace? And do you think he can really control the Tatmadaw? Skirmishes have erupted between government soldiers and some ethnic armed groups even while the government was trying to hold peace talks.

The Kachin Independence Army and the Ta'ang National Liberation Army, which are clashing with the Tatmadaw, have not signed ceasefire agreements so I think it's not unusual for skirmishes to erupt.

Why I believe in U Thein Sein is that he announced political reforms when he took office, and he has done as he said. I believe in him for that. But I am not sure why skirmishes keep on happening between the government and ethnic armed groups. Is the government unable to control the Tatmadaw, or do they share the same ideas? I am not sure.

The election is drawing near. It is clearly important for the future of Myanmar, and both the international community and Myanmar people have high hopes for the outcome. How important is the election for the RCSS/SSA? And are you satisfied with the political parties that currently represent Shan State?

If the election is held before political dialogue can start the situation will not change much here.

I do not have much interest in political parties and we can't focus much of our attention on the election because we are focused on how to hold political dialogue.

For 68 years we have been celebrating the anniversary of the signing of the Panglong Agreement, which is marked as Union Day. Yet many of the commitments from the agreement have never been honoured. What needs to happen for future Union Days to be closer in spirit to the Panglong Agreement?

The first thing to do is just look at the commitments in the agreement. I think we can be successful if we make reforms in line with these commitments.

Myanmar's conflicts will not end if the government and the Tatmadaw continue to hold the upper hand and just tell us to do as we are told.

The Tatmadaw has said to go forward according to the 2008 constitution. If we are simply instructed like this, there will be problems. At the moment, students are protesting. Farmland disputes have yet to be resolved. The constitution is essential. That's why the government needs to be open to amending the constitution. However, in doing so it should not restrict the amendment process to the hlut-taw, because ethnic armed groups are not hlut-taw members. - Translation by Zar Zar Soe and Thiri Min Htun



Shan National Day in Loi Tai Leng
Ethnic Shan and soldiers from the Shan State Army-South take part in Shan National Day celebrations at the SSA-South's headquarters in Loi Tai Leng, southern Shan State, on February 7. All photographs were taken by *The Myanmar Times'* head of photography Kaung Htet.

India and Myanmar at odds on Tamu border immigration office

NYAN LYNN AUNG



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CONFUSION surrounds the status of an apparent agreement between the governments of Myanmar and India over the establishment of a visa-on-arrival system on their common border. While the Indian government appears ready to proceed, the Myanmar side is experiencing delay.

India's consul in Mandalay, N Nandakumar, told *The Myanmar Times* last week that working-level talks had been conducted about setting up a visa-on-arrival office at the Tamu border checkpoint in Sagaing Region.

Mr Nandakumar said his government had been preparing to open the office opposite Tamu at Moreh, 110 kilometres (about 75 miles) from Imphal, the capital of Manipur state. He called on Myanmar to set up similar facilities to facilitate a cross-border bus service envisaged to link Imphal with Mandalay.

India hopes to launch the service before the end of this year, he said. Having visa processing facilities on the border is considered essential for



Cars and pedestrians pass through the border crossing between Myanmar and India at Tamu in Sagaing Region. Photo: Nyein Ei Ei Htwe

the bus service, as passengers would otherwise have to apply for a visa at the embassy in New Delhi.

"We're setting up the office on the Indian side, and we're asking the Myanmar authorities to set up the same facilities on their side," he said.

However, U Myint Oo, deputy director general of the Immigration Department, said there might be some delay in implementing this arrangement.

While Myanmar has introduced electronic visa-on-arrival at Yangon,

Mandalay and Nay Pyi Taw airports, he said that rolling the system out to remote border areas will be much more of a challenge.

"It is impossible to provide a visa-on-arrival service where the check-point is now. Myanmar is not ready to approve this," he said.

U Sein Oo, director general of the visa section of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said no formal proposal had been received from India to establish a visa-on-arrival office even though discussions were proceeding on the cross-border bus service.

"Our department has not yet received such a request, which has implications for immigration. We will consider any such request on a case-by-case basis," he said.

"It will not be possible to approve a visa-on-arrival service because so many steps remain to be implemented. But there could be a border pass system or a scheme for the bus service."

But Mr Nandakumar said that approving the visa-on-arrival scheme was essential for the cross-border bus service.

Both governments have reportedly agreed to issue a 28-day single entry visa for cross-border bus passengers bearing a valid travel document. The precise route of the 880-kilometre (550-mile) bus route also has yet to be settled.

Families complain after jail transfer

SI THU LWIN

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THE families of 100 prisoners held in Mandalay's Ohbo Prison are complaining that the prisoners have been transferred for no apparent reason elsewhere in the country. The detainees were transported on February 10 by Myanmar Railways.

It is not known to which prisons they were sent.

"We don't know exactly where they are being transferred, or why," said the mother of prisoner Ko Myo Zaw Htwe, who is serving 13 years for drugs offences.

"We've heard they are being sent to Insein Prison. [If so] it will be difficult for prisoners' families to visit them."

Corporal Myint Aung, who serves at Ohbo Prison, said on February 10 that the prisoners were transferred due to overcrowding. "Ohbo Prison has a capacity of 4000," he said, declining to reveal how many are now incarcerated there.

But Ko Aye Thein, a political activist, said it was "intentionally done to create problems".

He added that one of the transferred inmates was a political prisoner.

"We'll have to wait and see where they are sent to and what will be done to them," he said.

Ko Myint Zaw, who was serving 35 years' imprisonment for burglary at Ohbo, said he was surprised to be included in the transfer.

"I thought only violent inmates would be transferred," he said. "Those who can afford to bribe prison staff can live quite well in the prison, and they have not been transferred."

- Translation by Zar Zar Soe

EU pledges \$17m for conflict-affected people

EUROPE is to provide a further 15 million euros (US\$17 million) to help people affected by conflict in Rakhine, Kachin and northern Shan states. The donation was announced by the global director of operations for the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO), Jean-Louis De Brouwer.

The funding also includes support for residents of refugee camps in

Thailand, Mr De Brouwer said on February 6 after completing a visit to Sittwe, Yangon and Nay Pyi Taw.

"Our humanitarian partners are providing life-saving aid to the most vulnerable populations in those states. We will of course also follow the situation closely throughout 2015 in order to track potential new unmet needs that might arise," he said.

While Mr De Brouwer was in

Sittwe, he joined the EU ambassador to Myanmar in launching an EU-funded education initiative for the children of Rakhine State. On his visit to the Sittwe IDP camps, he said, "These camps were meant to be temporary, but as we are now facing a protracted displacement, they urgently need to be refurbished."

EU support through ECHO has been funding relief programs in

Myanmar for more than 20 years, providing a total of 191 million euros (\$217 million) worth of humanitarian assistance to victims of man-made and natural disasters, including 12.9 million euros (\$14.6 million) in 2015.

ECHO's operations focus on people displaced by conflict in Kachin State and the inter-communal violence in Rakhine State, according to the announcement. - *Kyaw Phone Kyaw*

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(For. Ella Cheong LLC, Singapore)

Dated: 16 February 2015

IN BRIEF

Youth seek interfaith support

Young people of different faiths wishing to foster peace and reconciliation have decided to raise funds to publicise their cause. At a day-long discussion held last week at Yangon's New Ayeyar Hotel, about 30 participants agreed to put their case to the media.

The discussion, organised by Smile Education, included a group from Malaysia. Participants were members of the Interfaith Youth Tour program, which is open to young people of all religions. They visit different places of worship and talk with religious leaders with a view to peace-building.

"We would like to use radio and television to broadcast knowledge about our interfaith program," said U Myo Win, the founder of Smile Education, adding that state-owned media seemed unwilling to broadcast the group's message, allegedly because it was deemed too sensitive.

"But we could set up our own FM station or buy time from broadcast media like DVB. Funding is very important for us," he said. - *Myat Noe Oo*

Government travel allowance to rise

Travel allowances for government staff on official business are to be raised to keep up with rising prices, parliament heard last week. The current allowance - last raised in 2013 to K1700 a day - means staff have to fund their travel out of their own pockets, members heard.

Deputy Minister for Finance U Lin Aung raised the matter in the Amyotha Hluttaw on February 9.

"The ministry will set the new rate, including accommodation, for financial year 2015-16 so that our staff don't suffer," he said.

He said that the ministry would review departmental expenditure for the past two years and would consult experts in order to come up with a fair allowance.

U Naing Tun Ohn, who represents No 5 constituency in Mon State for the All Mon Regions Democracy Party, said government staff had to spend their own money when they went on official business because the allowance was so low. - *Pyae Thet Phyo, translation by Thiri Min Htun*

Election preparations on track: UEC

Preparations for the general election later this year are on track, Amyotha Hluttaw heard last week. The Union Election Commission is conducting a five-year strategic plan to achieve 12 objectives, UEC member U Myint Naing told members.

Its major tasks include political party registration, supervising the election and developing methods for dealing with disputes over the results.

Nationwide data collection in respect of eligible voters had been proceeding step by step since November, he said.

"We expect to finalise data input to the main server in July," said U Myint Naing. "The UEC will work with political parties, civil society groups and the media to ensure that the elections are free and fair, as well as inviting internal and external observers."

Some observers have questioned the impartiality of the commission, particularly given chair U Tin Aye's close personal relationship with President U Thein Sein and his former role in the Union Solidarity and Development Party.

Most recently, the Mass Movement Acceleration Network (MMAN) launched a petition to bring about change at the commission, which the group said in its current form could not oversee a free and fair election.

U Paul Htan Htaing, representing No 3 constituency of Chin State for the Chin National Party, said it was essential to have an election commission that can be trusted as an impartial umpire. "Its members should have no connection with any political party or political activity," he said. - *Pyae Thet Phyo, translation by Zar Zar Soe*

US criticism on religious freedom 'political': MOFA



PYAE THET PHYO

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THE designation of Myanmar by the United States as a "country of particular concern" for failures to uphold religious freedom was a political act designed to keep the country under control, a leading government official has said.

U Khin Maung Yi, an Amyotha Hluttaw representative for Ayeyarwady Region's No 6 constituency, asked in parliament what the Union government was doing to get Myanmar removed from the State Department list of countries that are believed to violate religious freedom. Other countries listed include China, Iran and North Korea.

In reply, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs U Tin Oo Lwin said Myanmar's inclusion on the list, at the recommendation of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom, was a political decision.

"The United States has been at-

tacking terrorist groups like IS. But it also criticises countries that it disagrees with politically by including them in the CPC list. This is a political act," the deputy minister said.

The list is drawn up annually by the US State Department on the recommendation of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). In 2013, the USCIRF recommended 15 countries, and the State Department added a further eight countries: Myanmar, China, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Uzbekistan. In 2014, Turkmenistan was added to the list. Myanmar has featured since 1999.

The deputy minister told parliament that Myanmar worked hard to uphold religious freedom.

"Myanmar, as a member of the United Nations, has devoted special consideration to human rights. This government has signed key human rights accords," he said, adding that while Myanmar was predominantly Buddhist, nobody was prohibited from practising their own religion.

Buddhist monks were required to follow the discipline laid down by the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee in accordance with the ethi-



Nuns pray in a church near Loikaw, Kayah State, in December 2014.

Photo: AFP

cal code of *vinaya*, and President U Thein Sein had publicly called on all citizens to shun religious hate speech.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs had implemented measures designed to foster mutual friendship among different faiths, he said.

"Religious leaders should call on their faithful not to insult other reli-

gions. Religious freedom is also enshrined in the constitution."

U Tin Oo Lwin added that the government would continue to seek removal from the CPC list, in consultation with the international community.

U Khin Maung Yi, who is also chair of the Amyotha Hluttaw Bill Committee, told *The Myanmar Times* that he agreed with the deputy minister.

"Once the United States applied sanctions to Myanmar, and then lifted them when it wanted to. Now it has placed Myanmar on the CPC list because they want to. These are political acts. I think the US wants to control Myanmar because it doesn't want to let Myanmar become completely independent. They add countries to the list that they want to add. Some countries are not included in the list because the US doesn't want to include them."

But Amyotha Hluttaw representative J Yaw Wu, a Lisu Christian, said that Christians faced discrimination when trying to hold public events.

"For example, it takes about two months to get permission for Christmas celebrations," he said. "Only in our country do we have to ask permission."

- *Translation by Thiri Min Htun*

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01.02.2015 - 19.02.2015

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FARCENT Moisture Absorber 350g Ks.3,150	VIXOL Bathroom Cleaner 900ml Ks.1,350	SHIELDTOX Insect Killer Spray 600ml Ks.1,880	SCOTCH BRITE Sponge General 3in x 4in Ks.630	OK Napthalene Ball 670g Ks.1,900	

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JESSICA Bed Sheet 5's 6x6.5ft Ks.20,500	GOOD SLEEP Mosquito Net 6x6.5ft Ks.7,600			KANGAROO Induction Cooker KG-420 Ks.32,000		

AUNG SAN ☎ 01-253022, 394765 (9:00AM to 9:00PM)	MYAY NI GHONE ☎ 01-510697 (9:00AM to 10:00PM)	THAMINE ☎ 01-654566 (9:00AM to 10:00PM)	19 th STREET (MANDALAY) ☎ 02-61139,61240 (9:00AM to 9:00PM)
47 th STREET ☎ 01-200026, 298746 (9:00AM to 9:00PM)	ZAWANA ☎ 01-564532 (9:00AM to 9:00PM)	JUNCTION SQUARE ☎ 01-527053 (9:00AM to 9:00PM)	☎ 01-246859, 240394 (9:00AM to 9:00PM)
JUNCTION 8 ☎ 01-650778 (9:00AM to 9:00PM)	SHWE MYA YAR ☎ 01-294063 (9:00AM to 9:00PM)	STAR CITY (THANLYIN) ☎ 056-23150/51/52/53 (10:00AM to 9:00PM)	GOLDEN VALLEY ☎ 01-523840-43 (9:00AM to 10:00PM)
FMI CITY ☎ 01-682323 (9:00AM to 9:00PM)	CHINATOWN POINT ☎ 01-215560-63 (9:00AM to 10:00PM)	AKK (SHOPPING MALL) ☎ 01-8500515 (9:00AM to 9:00PM)	PARKSON FMI ☎ 01-246859, 240394 (9:00AM to 9:00PM)
YANKIN CENTRE ☎ 01-400264 (9:00AM to 9:00PM)	JUNCTION MAW TIN ☎ 01-218159 (9:00AM to 9:00PM)	SOUTH DAGON ☎ 01-8100727 (9:00AM to 9:00PM)	



A member of the salvage team balances on a boat rescued from the Ayeyarwady River. Photo: Phyo Wai Kyaw

Ancient boat to go on display in Mingun

AN ancient teak boat nearly 25 metres long (78 feet) has been discovered in Sagaing township. The boat was unearthed by erosion of the bank of the Ayeyarwady River near Mingun village in January, and is thought to be about 200 years old.

The boat will be displayed near two enormous statues of lions in the village, which is also home to the unfinished Mingun Pagoda and the Mingun Bell.

Residents say the boat has not yet been inspected by an archaeologist but they believe it dates to the reign of King Bodawpaya, who initiated construction of Mingun Pagoda in 1790.

Efforts to salvage the boat began on January 29 and were completed on February 4, dig team leader U Thein Win said last week.

"There was no damage to the vessel. This is the first time I've

seen this kind of boat design," said U Thein Win, a diver with 26 years' experience.

The boat was dug out with funding of K120,000 provided by the boards of trustees from four local religious sites and transported to Set-taw Pagoda, at a cost of K150,000. It is 2.5 metres (8.4 feet) wide and about half a metre deep. - *Phyo Wai Kyaw and Hlaing Kyaw Soe, translation by Khant Lin Oo*

Youth forum postponed over security fears



THOMAS KEAN CHERRY THEIN

A MAJOR youth conference scheduled for next week has been postponed due to security concerns. NGO ActionAid announced the postponement on February 11, six days before the event was due to begin.

More than 1000 young people working in development sectors across the country were expected to attend the 6th National Fellows Conference from February 17 to 19 at Franc Hall in Yangon's Ahlone township.

However, ActionAid said in a statement that the event organising committee had decided to postpone the event "after careful analysis of the current political environment".

"This unfortunate decision has been made purely for the security of the fellows and participants. A new

date will be announced soon," it said.

U Saw Lin Htet, a member of the conference management committee, said no decision had been made as to when and where the event now would be held.

"We do not want any more misunderstanding about the conference. We are just working on development," he said

Speaking prior to the postponement, he said the conference would bring together youth leaders and representatives of local and international civil society organisations for discussions on "areas of common interest".

The first conference was held in 2010, and the National Fellows Network was organised in 2014 with youth leaders in a development program for peace and solidarity.

The program was initiated in 2006 through cooperation with ActionAid (Myanmar), Nyein Foundation and Metta Foundation to promote role of young people in addressing challenges to Myanmar's economic and social development.

Mon State voter list overhaul to begin in March

NAW SAY PHAW WAA
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THE third phase of the voter registration process is about to begin in Mon and Kayin states on March 3. U Hein Min Htet, deputy director of the election commission, said the commission was on track to complete registration by July.

The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) has provided computers for the exercise, and the chair and members of the Mon State Election Sub-commission, the chairs of the district election sub-commission and other officials will soon begin training.

U Hein Min Htet said 65 people in 10 townships in Mon State would receive training in tallying three different categories of voter, all of whom must be citizens aged 18 and over.

The first group comprises those whose names are on the household list where they live. The second comprises those who bear a valid identity card but are not on a household list. The third is people not listed and who do not possess a national ID document. In those cases, a testimonial from the village or ward committee is required for their registration.

He said a final category - civil servants - would be compiled later.

The first phase of registration was conducted last year in 10 townships in Yangon Region, and the second in 41 townships in Yangon, Mandalay, Nay Pyi Taw and southern Shan State.

Errors with electoral rolls plagued both the 2010 election and the 2012 by-elections, with many eligible voters being unable to cast a ballot when they turned up at their local polling station.

The Union Election Commission has said this year's election will take place in late October or early November. - *Translation by Thiri Min Htun*

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Views

Can Asians think, and other nonsense



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MOST of Asia's leading figures, in politics, academia, business and the media, are feeble, weak-minded, unsophisticated, and devoid of vision and dynamism. That is an increasingly common view of many supposedly wise commentators in the West.

Curiously, the genesis of this warped opinion can be traced to the analysis of an Asian thought-leader, Singapore's Kishore Mahbubani.

In the late 1990s, he published a book called *Can Asians think?* Naturally, the provocative title, coupled with Kishore's position as a top diplomat, ensured it received plenty of attention.

It also received a lot of brickbats. Many of them, especially those in the West, were perhaps excessively, and unfairly, negative.

Like many treatises with an interrogatory premise, it oscillated between giving the impression that Asians really cannot think and if they can, they don't bother or do it in the wrong way.

As Kishore himself put it, "Can Asians think? Judging from the record of Asian societies over the past few centuries, the answer should be no - or, at best, not very well."

His conundrum has been picked over ever since in countless articles in which much is made of so-called "Asian values": obeisance to authority, both family and government; a strong emphasis on education; and placing community above individual.

Over the years, this subservience to officialdom and elders has occurred most prominently among those living under the region's more authoritarian regimes, such as in Myanmar, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

Other nations, blessed with more democratic governments, have tended to witness their citizenry being less respectful of their elders and being more willing to speak out and think for themselves. While such behaviour happens in places like India and Japan, in this region it has been rare and has only really taken root in the Philippines and until recently Thailand.

Now, however, the whole issue has been explored more provocatively in several articles published recently in the West by the French scholar Jean-Pierre Lehmann. He is an emeritus professor of international political economy at the top-ranked International Institute for Management Development in Switzerland. So, you know, listen up and pay attention.

Lehmann homes in on Kishore's loaded question and decides in the affirmative: Asians cannot think - at least, not as well as his egghead colleagues in Europe.

In *The Myth of Asia: The Absence of an Asian Intellectual Space*, Lehmann asserts that brain-challenged folks in this region need to reduce their intellectual dependence on the West.

For starters, he derides Asian values as being pure myth, largely because Asia is so big and diversified that it is just impossible to generalise about common values across the whole continent.

He is right. There is no such thing as Asian values.

He is also right when he asserts that the emergence of new institutions, like this year's coming ASEAN Economic Community, will strengthen the intensive integration of trade and commerce across the region.

But then he puts in the boot and states, "What does not appear to be emerging, however, in any profound sense, is an Asian intellectual community - a market of ideas as opposed to a market of goods."

Do not be insulted, the guy is French - well, French-Swiss - and allowances must be made for his Gallic sanctimony. So let's hear him out when he claims the lack of Asian brainpower can be seen in the region's press. Or the lack thereof. For he says, "There is nothing that could be called in any meaningful form the Asian media." Ouch.

Lehmann says that the few renowned Asian thought-leaders always publish their stuff in Western organs, like the *Financial Times* or the *Wall Street Journal*, rather than their native publications.

It is palpably incorrect and it gets even worse when Lehmann claims that if, say, an Indian wants to know what is going on in Indonesia, he must rely on Western media.

"There are no permanent correspondents of Indian media based in Jakarta," Lehmann says. "A comparable pattern prevails in Asia generally."

It's bizarre, firstly because there are correspondents from Asian nations like China, Japan, Singapore and others based in Jakarta. And secondly because, except for news agencies like AFP and Reuters, there are few permanent correspondents from the Western media based there - nor are there in most Asian capitals.

Look around. There are no staff reporters from the *New York Times* or the *Guardian* or *Le Monde* permanently based in Yangon or Hanoi or Manila or Kuala Lumpur. It's just too expensive to maintain press bureaux there. There are only stringers - local reporters, who are not on staff and file only when something of interest occurs.

Besides, what does it mean? Frankly, not much. Certainly not enough for the likes of Lehmann to claim that Asians lack a communal intellectual base.

He also asserts that Asian thought-leaders tend to be better known in the West than in Asia, apart from in their own countries.

In apparent anguish, he cries, "Where are the scholars? We should all be reading Asian views on Asians, but the material is not readily available."

It is not? Actually, it is all around and it makes one wonder what reading material his university provides and how often he travels to this region.

There are lots of Asian scholars and thought-leaders, whose trenchant views appear in dozens of daily publications from the *Manila Times* to *Kompas*, from *Malaystakini* to the *Cambodia Daily*.

His fallacious reasoning is not only insulting, but it insidiously influences readers in the West who start to believe this nonsense.

"Berating the West, as a number of Asian thought leaders are prone to do, is fine," he concludes. "However, it is far more important and constructive to create a vibrant trans-Asian intellectual community."

Actually, monsieur, we already have one. So please pipe down - or better yet, start to advocate that Westerners should decrease their intellectual dependence on Asia. That would make more sense.



A demonstrator chants slogans as he carries a banner through Yangon on February 11. Photo: AFP

White card or govt political playing card?



SITHU AUNG MYINT

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DURING the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw session on February 2, MPs voted to allow holders of temporary identity cards, better known as white cards, to vote in a referendum on amending the constitution.

In the original draft, white-card holders were able to vote. However, parliament removed this clause when it approved the bill late last year. The president then sent it back to parliament, recommending MPs revert back to allowing white-card holders to vote.

Of course, ethnic Rakhine were angry at the decision and issued a statement saying they will not accept it. They are submitting the case to the Constitutional Tribunal.

But is the decision of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw right? And how have the white cards become a political issue - in effect, playing cards for the former military dictators and their successors?

A white card is a kind of identity card issued to those who have not yet been verified as a citizen, associate citizen, naturalised citizen or foreigner. It means they may be either a citizen or foreigner.

The hluttaw was debating voting rights in a referendum for amending the constitution. This is very important for the country's future - not something to be taken lightly. So it is clear that those who are not clearly a citizen should not be allowed to vote.

In this sense, the ethnic Rakhine are right, while the hluttaw, mostly Union Solidarity and Development Party MPs and military MPs, is wrong. However, the issue is not so simple.

White-card holders were allowed to vote in the referendum held in 2008 that approved the current constitution. According to the election

law and by-law, they could also vote in the 2010 general election and 2012 by-elections. Not only that, the Political Party Registration Law allowed white-card holders to establish and be members of political parties.

In September, the hluttaw amended the Political Party Registration Law so that white-card holders can no longer establish a political party or be party members. The Rakhine National Party has proposed removing voting rights, too, but it has not yet been discussed.

Prior to the president announcing the cancellation of white cards on February 11, they would have been allowed to vote in the 2015 election if the law was not changed.

But the real root of the problem is why there are so many white-card holders here and why the government has made no attempt to verify their status for decades. Really, whether white-card holders should be allowed to vote is another story.

Formally, white cards were issued from around 1990 by the former

The only solution is for the government to resolve the status of white-card holders.

military regime. At that time, the government replaced what was known as the Union of Myanmar Identity Card with National Registration Cards. Some people who were not from recognised ethnic groups were issued white cards, even though they had previously held a Union of Myanmar Identity Card.

For the Bengali-Rohingya of Rakhine State, white cards were issued to both those who previously held an identity card and those who did not. Many were issued in 2010 to enable holders to participate in the election. It has been reported that there are more than 700,000 white-card holders inside Rakhine State and about 100,000 outside Rakhine State. The

Ministry of Immigration has stated that there are about 600,000 white-card holders who can vote.

The first white cards were issued more than 20 years ago. The former military dictators stalled on verifying whether holders were citizens, associate citizens, naturalised citizens or foreigners, particularly in Rakhine State.

Those holding these cards are banned from travelling without official permission. They also require permission to marry and their family planning has been controlled. That's why the international community has accused Myanmar of violating human rights in Rakhine State for many years.

The new government took office four years ago but citizenship verification of white-card holders has still not been undertaken. Just a handful were examined in Myebon last year.

It appears that the former military dictators and members of the current government are cultivating the white-card problem and intend to use it when convenient, such as around the election.

Perhaps the government decided to allow white-card holders to vote to avoid criticism from the international community that it is breaching human rights.

Also, if white-card holders are allowed to vote, it will stir up discontent among ethnic Rakhine. The conflict between the Rakhine and Bengali-Rohingya will once again gain national attention, averting public interest from other important problems.

The only solution is for the government to resolve the status of white-card holders. It should start verifying whether they are citizens or foreigners as soon as possible and give them the rights they entitled to.

If it is found, through solid evidence, that they are illegal immigrants, the government has already stated it plans to send them back to their country through diplomatic channels. However, the current actions of the president, cabinet, and USDP and military MPs indicate they are happy to use white cards as political playing cards, making use of them as the situation dictates.

- Translation by Thiri Min Htun

Views

Understanding 'engaged Buddhism'

While the Buddha had little to say about politics or social change, engaged Buddhists see ending physical suffering as the path to *Nibbana*



PAUL FULLER

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IN 1963, the Vietnamese Zen Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh coined the term "engaged Buddhism". He did so in order to describe a phenomenon in Buddhism in which one is not simply advised to withdraw from the world in solitary meditation but to combat social and political injustice. Engaged Buddhism is a politically active form of Buddhism.

Some have argued that a Buddhist monk should have no involvement in politics and that Buddhism has no political message. Proponents of engaged Buddhism disagree with this, arguing that to be a Buddhist is to be socially and politically involved. The Buddha had very little to say about politics and society, and the question remains as to whether engaged Buddhism is a modern phenomenon or if it can be found in traditional Buddhist teachings.

Historically, Buddhism addresses the problem of "suffering" (*dukkha*). In the past the origins of suffering are described twofold: "craving", characterised as greed, hatred and delusion; and "ignorance", characterised as lack of knowledge of the way things really are.

There is nothing wrong with the world but with the way we perceive it. The problem, therefore, is with the mind and its propensity for attachment and craving. We perceive the world with greed, hatred and delusion. Social structures are, in a way, part of the problem: They enforce craving and ignorance.

Engaged Buddhism analyses social structures and adopts the view that suffering may originate from them. It identifies certain political, economic and social institutions as manifestations of greed, hatred and delusion. The Buddhist is compelled to strive for social liberation through engaging with these external causes of suffering.

Any Buddhist attempt at social and political engagement is faced with a number of problems. At the root of this problem is that in tackling the



Exiled Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh attends a promotion event for the film *Buddha* at the 59th International Cannes Film Festival in May 2006. He is credited with coining the term "engaged Buddhism" in 1963. Photo: AFP

causes of suffering in social and political structures one is involving oneself in suffering. In so doing one is potentially becoming entangled in those impermanent phenomena that will change and decay without any necessity for the Buddhist to intervene. On these grounds some would therefore argue that Buddhism has no political and social message.

Enshrined in the Myanmar constitution is the premise that a Buddhist monk cannot vote in elections. But the question remains as to whether a monk should be involved in politics at all. In the Pali Canon, a virtuous monk is described as "an incomparable field of merit for the world" (*anuttaram punnakkhetam lokassa*). By making offerings to the monk, primarily during his daily alms round, one accrues much benefit in this life and the next. The instruction that the monk gives to lay followers would normally be considered religious teaching focusing on the overcoming of suffering. The monk would not usually be expected to give political instruction. I am not suggesting that a monk should not act politically but highlighting some of

the issues involved in monastic political activity.

Indeed, one of the dilemmas faced by the proponent of engaged Buddhism is the seeming reluctance of the Buddha to make pronouncements about social change. However, it goes deeper than this. There is not only reluctance within Buddhism to be engaged in politics, but a very real philosophical necessity to remain distant from strategies of social change and distinct from political involvement.

In traditional forms of Buddhism

Engaged Buddhism identifies certain political, economic and social institutions as manifestations of greed, hatred and delusion.

this dilemma finds part of its articulation with two related ideas. These are the relationship between two aspects of experience: the "mundane" (*lokiya/loki*) ordinary world and the "supramundane" (*lokuttara*) spiritual world. Politics is usually assumed to be part of the mundane world while religion is part of the supramundane world.

The mundane world is the realm of ordinary experience rooted in craving and attachment, of which politics is part. Involvement in this world is not usually directly related to the Buddhist goal of the complete overcoming of suffering. Opposed to this is the supramundane spiritual and religious world, in which a Buddhist strives to overcome suffering and escape from the cycle of rebirths. For the politically motivated engaged Buddhist the disjuncture between these two opposing ideas is rectified and the Buddhist strives for political and religious liberation.

In fact, the two are not seen as distinct in engaged Buddhism. The mundane and supramundane are united and the goal of liberation is often seen as achievable in this life.

Awakening, or *Nibbana*, is no longer a distant aspiration but something achievable in this life. There is a focus on the here and now, and traditional Buddhist cosmological ideas are collapsed with the lessening of a focus on the endless rounds of rebirths. Importantly, the layperson and the monastic are equal in their religious aspirations and their position in the Buddhist community and they can both achieve awakening.




Those who make use of Buddhist teachings in a social and political way should be aware of the complexity and potential philosophical precipices as they strive to use Buddhist ideas to change the world. Buddhist texts often stress the idea that to adhere to the conviction that "only this is true, anything else is wrong" - as one might do with a political doctrine or ideology - leads to dispute, quarrels, trouble and vexation, which the Buddhist path aims to eradicate. In attempting to move the focus from the adaptation and exploration of the mind to the adaptation of the world, the engaged Buddhist should be mindful of the focus of Buddhist thinking in certain key areas. In joining political and religious ideas, Buddhism is often on unfamiliar ground.

For the engaged Buddhist, suffering is not only psychological, to be overcome by such techniques as meditation, but finds its causes in a wide variety of factors. Political struggle, among other things, can then be used as a technique to overcome suffering. Indeed, the same point could be made for a nationalistic sentiment being embraced by a Buddhist society. Political, national and religious endeavour can be legitimated in engaged Buddhism. In this way we might better understand political and nationalist Buddhist movements in modern Asia that do not resemble our romantic notions of Buddhism.

Paul Fuller has taught religious studies at universities in Southeast Asia, Australia and the United Kingdom. His research interests include early Indian Buddhist philosophy, the Buddhist ideas of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and ethnocentric Buddhism in Myanmar and Sri Lanka.



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No country for old phones



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A FORMERLY robust market has taken a nosedive, as interest in second-hand mobile handsets has dissipated.

A range of shops formerly sold old mobiles, as new phones were expensive and beyond the price of many consumers - even if they could afford a SIM, which may cost several hundred dollars.

Cheap handsets, mainly manufactured in China, have changed the calculation, with some knockoffs or "feature phones" with limited data capability costing as little as K20,000. Industry businesspeople said they have come flooding in as SIM cards became more accessible.

U Phoe Htaun formerly purchased old mobiles from markets in townships like Thingangyun and Pabedan, then sold them to lower-end consumers keen to take advantage of mobile technology, but without the money for more expensive phones.

He said the market began to dis-

appear about a year ago, as a rush of mobile phones entered the market at about the same time SIM cards became cheaper with the introduction of Ooredoo and Telenor.

"These new Chinese phones are cheap and the price is basically the same as second-hand models," he said. "People think there is no difference in price, and so buy a new model."

"The second-hand phone market is dying, and businesspeople are changing their career," he said.

Handset manufacturers and larger distributors had formerly focused on selling in the major cities, but have recently begun branching out into the countryside.

Tar Tar phone accessories once ran a thriving business purchasing handsets on a wholesale business in Yangon and then selling them in smaller villages. This business model is no longer viable, said its owner, as many of the middlemen have been cut out.

"If you have K10,000 you can buy a new handset, so people don't want to bother with second-hand anymore," he said.

Where some used to sell handsets, they now sell SIMs. Ko Soe, a resident of Hlaing Tharyar township, said SIMs are

being snapped up, but there is little interest in phone repairpeople anymore.

The owner of Htun mobile shop in Mingalar Market said consumers are able to choose real phones or cheap knockoffs that have the appearance of branded phones. The availability of these sorts of phones have driven off demand of second-hand, branded handsets.

'The second-hand phone market is dying, and businesspeople are changing their career.'

U Phoe Htaun

Former mobile phone dealer

These days there are only a few customers who purchase second-hand handsets, usually because they cannot afford a new phone but want a genuine product.

Parts of phones also used to command high value as they were used to fix up broken handsets, said the owner of TR mobile and accessories wholesale shop. "Last year, men with a bag or basket were always in the street shouting, 'I buy old parts', but now you cannot see these guys," he said. "If electronic products, whether a phone or a rice cooker, is damaged, people simply buy a new one, because the repair fees and price of a new product is the same. That's why the market has been lost," he said.

Some users say they are still in the used-handset business, albeit on a micro scale, such as selling their old handsets to their friends by using social media.



There are fewer mobile repair shops, as new models become cheaper. Photo: Staff



The first direct-from-China vessel pulls into a Yangon port. Photo: Thiri Lu

Direct China shipping

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DIRECT shipping links with China opened last week with the arrival of the Chinese container ship *Asiatic Wave* bearing several tonnes of construction materials at the terminal of Myanmar Industrial Port.

The vessel had initially set sail for the Yangon port from Shanghai on January 26.

Ma Wut Hmone, managing director of China Shipping, said the direct service would be operated by four container ships.

"Generally, the journey time of each shipment used to take between 18 and 25 days. But now it takes only 13 days," she said.

U Ko Ko Htoo, chair of Myanmar Industrial Port, said other Asian and European countries were expressing interest in initiating direct container

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Dated: 16th February, 2015

Trade deficit increases six-fold in first half of 2014-15 year

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THE trade deficit is becoming an increasing cause for concern as it widened to K2.3 trillion (US\$2.2 billion) in the first six months of the 2014-15 financial year, according to a report issued in parliament last week.

Exports totalled K5.632 trillion during the April 1 to September 30 period, far below the K8.018 trillion in goods imported during the period, said the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Planning and Financial Development Joint Committee report.

Committee members said they were concerned the trade deficit is rising too quickly, claiming it is six times higher than the same trade deficit last year. Their figures show the trade deficit for the first half of the 2013-14 fiscal year was K394 billion, compared to K2.386 trillion for the first half of the 2014-15 year.

"In order to avoid a continuous trade deficit, the trading policies should be reviewed, as the trade balance can impact the state's economy," the committee urged in a statement.

It said the state should focus on building up domestic business rather

than relying on imports from foreign countries, as the trade deficit has grown too high.

The International Monetary Fund identified a similar trend following a staff visit earlier this month.

"The trade deficit increased to 5.5 percent of GDP in December 2014, as imports grew by 25 percent year on year for the period April-December 2014 while exports growth remained flat," it said.

While experts have flagged the rising trade deficit, some pointed out that more imports over exports is not entirely negative.

U Win Oo, a parliamentarian from Tanintharyi Region and secretary of the Joint Committee, said much of the imports are foreign machinery and other products that will be used to fuel future economic growth.

"We can't only take a negative view of the trade deficit," he said. Increased foreign investment has brought with it future potential for export growth.

U Win Oo added that with the current methods of compiling statistics, it is not always obvious what portion of imports is to boost production capacity and what portion are for consumption.

The report said the major groups of imports included investment materials, raw materials and products such as food stuffs. Exports consisted largely of agricultural and fishery products, minerals and end products from industry. The joint committee noted that exports may in fact be higher, but not reflected in the statistics due to the prevalence of smuggling.

Another Pyidaungsu Hluttaw joint committee, this one dealing with public accounts, has also waded into the discussion on the trade deficit.

"The trade deficit can lead to a weaker currency, and it can decrease the competitive ability of exports as well as delayed foreign investment," it said. "That's why a significant surge in the trade deficit needs to be controlled, according to a market-oriented economic system."

Part of the strategy to improve on the trade deficit must be to develop more export-oriented business. This will require programs providing them with bank loans, enabling foreign companies into more joint ventures, encouraging more export-oriented agriculture, and controlling illegal exports and imports.

- Translation by Thiri Min Htun

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Exchange Rates (February 13 close)		
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Euro	K1162	K1177
Malaysia Ringitt	K307	K308
Singapore Dollar	K760	K766
Thai Baht	K31	K32
US Dollar	K1033	K1037

Central Bank avoids printing



AYE THIDAR KYAW

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PRINTING money may now be in the hands of an autonomous Central Bank of Myanmar, but there is a way to go until the process is transparent.

Previous governments had directly controlled the Central Bank and its printing presses, and had often printed money to fund projects or patch over deficits. This approach led to frequent inflation, as injecting newly printed money into an economy at a faster rate than production increases would cause prices to rise.

Although prices in some goods, notably fuel and food, have been declining, experts have recently pointed to increased inflationary concerns.

The International Monetary Fund said in a press release last week that inflation was set to increase to 6 percent in 2014-15, from 5.8pc the previous year, stemming from spending pressure in areas such as a large increase in public servants' salaries.

Officials say they are unsure what part money printing plays in inflation at present, adding there are other initiatives underway to fund government expenditures.

U Win Myint, secretary of parliament's Banks and Monetary Affairs Development Committee, said the Central Bank has not been transparent when showing the amount of money it prints.

"The government used to urge more money printing, but now with an autonomous Central Bank, we should wait and see how management of the treasury bill market goes - though it will take time to develop," he said.

The first Central Bank-run government bond auction of the civilian-government era took place on January 28, aiming to fund public expenditures. It attracted little interest from commercial banks, with only about half the K50 billion in short-term bonds, or treasury bills, being sold.

"The Central Bank doesn't encourage

printing money," said one Central Bank employee. "On the other hand, we are trying to solve the budget deficit problem with the bill auction."

The current target is for 50 percent of the government deficit to be financed from bills and bonds. Yet the level of printing taking place is still not public information.

Myanmar kyats are printed at a facility in Wazi city, Magwe Region. With the mid-2013 Central Bank Law, the lender of last resort is officially autonomous, though its governor or a director can still be replaced by the President if he or she is deemed "incapable of discharging his duties".

Economist U Khine Htun said the Central Bank may not be able to veto a command directly from the president, it is able to recommend the pros and cons of printing more money.

alternatives to avoid printing money for deficit financing, and reduce money supply in the economy. Too-rapid increase in the money supply is considered a direct cause of inflation.

Bond issues may reduce the immediate need to print, but represent liabilities that must be paid back, he said.

"To avoid both excessive printing and issuing large amounts of debt, it is better to manage the budget more effectively and efficiently reduce the deficit as much as possible," he said.

Printing has been on the decline since the 1990s, when the government began selling off state-owned buildings and then started natural gas export to Thailand in 1999, said U Hla Maung.

"Huge amounts of money coming from the Wazi factory presses was a famous hallmark of the former government," he said.

State revenues are partly dependent on gas exports. While the Ministry of Energy has forecast gas export volumes to increase this year, prices have also decline considerable, meaning it is hard to tell yet if 2015 revenue from gas will come in above or below 2014.

Another large event on the horizon is government plans to increase civil servant salaries, which may become a burden for balancing the budget.

"So the source of money [to fund the budget] is fairly obvious, as the government doesn't have many ways to make money," said U Hla Maung.

'We are trying to solve the budget deficit with the bill auction.'

Central Bank official

"The president and the government themselves are well aware of the negative effects of high rates of printing money," he said. At some points 20 years ago, inflation had been as high as 20pc, compared year-on-year, and current administrators are well aware of the effects of simply printing more money.

"Printing money is a stable rate, if not a decreasing trend," he said. The government must take care to maintain a budget deficit not exceeding 5pc of GDP, meaning it must look at ways of increasing income and reducing spending.

U Khine Htun said he recommended cutting unnecessary expenses or postponing less-important projects. Government staff can also be pushed to increase productivity, or more tax revenue collected.

Bond and deposit auctions are other



link starts

shipment services to Myanmar now that the country's doors are open to foreign commerce.

Traditionally, most container shipments from China to Myanmar transited via Singapore or other ports.

U Ko Ko Htoo said the direct shipment link could not only speed up both imports and exports, but generate a rapid cash flow for traders and business-people.

"I think the cost of direct shipment will be about 20 to 30 percent cheaper than before," he said.

- Translation by Zar Zar Soe

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List of rice exporters approved for China trade draws industry criticism

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A LIST of nine Myanmar companies legally allowed to export rice to China has come under fire from rivals, who say it has missed out on some of the most capable firms.

The list is an outcome of negotiations between the two countries as part of efforts to legalise the trade. While China is the large destination for rice exports, from Beijing's point of view the trade has not been legal due to a lack of formal agreements.

A first step was taken to legalise the trade in September 2014 with a memorandum of understanding. Over 100 companies have applied to take part in the trade, but Chinese authorities requested less than ten. The Myanmar Rice Federation has now chosen nine companies that will be able to begin legal exports.

Myanmar Rice Federation officials say the nine were chosen because they are not threats to monopolise the market, while the China trade will also prove to be a boon for these smaller companies in the industry.

Rejected firms took issue with the choice of companies, saying the list appears to not cover the companies that could best meet the quality standards and quantity demanded by China.

A leading rice trader requesting anonymity said China would

like to import from the best local companies.

"Some of the chosen companies have not even received company registrations," he said.

Although Myanmar Rice Federation officials had previously hoped to start the trade early in 2015, they now say the earliest date will likely be the end of April. Meanwhile, the chosen companies must register and prove the quality of their products before they can export.

China had generally turned a blind eye to Myanmar rice exports, with the exception of a significant crackdown that took place in September last year.

The chosen companies

- Myanmar Agribusiness Public Company
- Myanmar Rice Mail
- FPR, founded by the Myanmar Rice Traders Association
- Golden Land East Asia
- MRDC, founded by Mandalay Region traders
- A company formed by Bayintnaung commodity market
- Ayer-Pathein Company
- SPRDC, founded by Muse traders
- Rakhine Ethnic Rice Company

London summit aims to demystify investment



JEREMY MULLINS

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UNITED Kingdom companies are keen on opportunities in Myanmar, but can struggle to get accurate information on the local business environment, according to Lisa Weedon, Yangon-based director of United Kingdom Trade and Investments.

A large-scale summit is being organised for London this week, aiming to assist UK firms with identifying opportunities and understanding the situation on the ground, along with receiving practical advice.

"There's an awful lot of interest in what's happening here from the UK business community in terms of the opportunities it might present. And there's an awful lot of people who struggle to get accurate up-to-date information, so the objective of this conference is to take a little bit of Burma to London and showcase what there is in terms of business opportunities," said Ms Weedon in a Yangon interview.

British companies tend to be more risk-averse than some of the other countries in the region, she said.

"I'm trying to demystify a little bit for them what this country is, and what the opportunities are and



Lisa Weedon.
Photo: Supplied

how to do business here," said Ms Weedon. "Make it a little less scary and encourage them to not just dip their toe in the water but jump in and begin doing business here."

Several senior Myanmar government officials and prominent businesspeople from companies such as City Mart and Parami Energy are slated to attend the February 19 conference, which is expected to attract 150 to 200 attendees.

Ms Weedon said British companies have been particularly successful in Myanmar working in financial services and energy, adding there will be sessions directed to those industries.

While these two sectors are increasingly important, she said she is most impressed when British business has a measurable local impact. While admitting UK investment has been somewhat limited, she pointed

to Unilever's second factory as an instance of local job creation by a UK firm.

The UK is listed as the fifth-largest approved investor in Myanmar by the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA), and the largest non-Asian source, representing about 7 percent of the total. However, Ms Weedon said that much of that is investment from the British Virgin Islands, which is investment that does not provide an economic benefit to the UK economy.

"DICA's system at the moment doesn't separate sort-of genuine UK investment and BVI investment, so that's why those figures look a lot more optimistic than I'm afraid they are," she said. "In reality we are in the same place as the French and the Germans. We account for 1 or 2pc of Myanmar's total investment."

Asked whether she thought international interest is waning in Myanmar, Ms Weedon said many companies are consolidating the position they've already developed.

"There was definitely a kind of gold rush in 2012. The world and his wife was on a plane because they heard Myanmar was the new hot spot, the place to go. And I think those people came but they quickly realised there's undoubtedly opportunity but it's not a quick win. And if you want to do business here you've got to be willing to invest, to stick it out," she said.

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IN BRIEF

Renovations completed at oldest hydropower station

The Ministry of Electric Power said the refurbishment of Baluchaung hydropower station is now complete.

The re-installation of turbines and generators and renovation of other parts of the facility aimed to improve generation capacity at the country's oldest hydropower station, which is now 55 years old.

The project was begun last year with financing from a Japanese loan, aiming to safely improve generation capacity for a period of 50 years.

First low-head dam planned for Mandalay Region

The first low-head dam in the country will be built in Pyin Oo Lwin township, Mandalay Region, according to the Ministry of Electric Power.

The Deedote hydropower project will use excess water from the nearby Yeywar hydro dam to generate up to 279.6 million kilowatt hours annually, it said. The project is supported by a loan from the Austrian government.

The Ministry of Electric Power and Austria's Ministry for Transport, Innovation and Technology signed a memorandum of understanding last May to build the project.

Swiss company Stucky Sa will be project consultants for four years.

Two more deals for hydropower inked for Kachin State

The Ministry of Electric Power and Yunnan Baoshin Electric Power inked two memorandums of understanding to build hydropower projects in Kachin State last week.

The Chinese firm, in partnership with a local mining company, will start a feasibility study at Sadone, in Winemaw township, Kachin State.

The two hydroprojects will together have a total installed capacity of 295 megawatts.

Kachin State dams have proven controversial in the past, with the high-profile Mysitone dam frozen by President U Thein Sein.

MIC permitted two more energy investments, though no PSCs yet

Investments from Unocal Myanmar Offshore and Statoil Myanmar Private Limited were approved by the Myanmar Investment Commission last week, though they must still sign agreements governing resource extraction.

Unocal, owned by Chevron, was awarded shallow water block A-5 in the Rakhine Basin last year, in partnership with Myanmar firm Royal Marine Engineering. Norway's Statoil has partnered with ConocoPhillips for deepwater block AD-10, which it won in the 2013 offshore bidding round.

The two companies must still sign production sharing contracts with Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise before exploration and production activities can begin at the sites.

- Aung Shin

IMF lowers GDP forecast as agriculture sector slows

The domestic economy is expected to grow at a slower pace this fiscal year than last year, due to deceleration in the agricultural sector, according to the International Monetary Fund.

It pegged 2013-14 fiscal year real GDP growth at 8.3 percent, a half-percent lower than the 7.8pc GDP growth it expects for 2014-15, a press release said.

"The growth outlook of the Myanmar economy remains favorable over the medium term, but downside risks for the near term have increased," the release said.

It had also projected growth of 8.5pc for 2014-15 in an October press release following consultations inside the country.

An IMF team led by Yongzheng Yang visited from January 28 to February 5, meeting with a number of government representatives.

- Jeremy Mullins

Ministry of Energy to complete joint ventures by October



AUNG SHIN

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THE Ministry of Energy intends to finish the process of forming joint ventures between its state-owned firms and foreign partners by October, according to an announcement.

State-owned enterprises have come under increased government pressure to reform, with a number of experts pointing to them as hobbling the economy due to poor management while draining government resources.

The Ministry of Energy last year announced it was planning to form joint ventures for its prominent state-owned enterprises, including Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE), Myanmar Petrochemical Enterprise and Myanmar Petroleum Products Enterprise.

"A management committee has been formed to handle the tendering process. It is a part of the corporatisation process for state-owned enterprises," said the ministry's announcement in state media, which was to

mark four years' oversight by civilian government for the ministry.

MOGE invited international companies last year for joint venture projects in drilling services, pipeline construction and maintenance, and seismic acquisition services in on-shore projects.

It received 26 official letters expressing interest from companies in joining for the drilling service, 28 letters for pipeline construction and maintenance, and 15 letters for seismic acquisition service.

"The joint venture process for these service projects is going to be completed in October this year," said the announcement.

These are not the only joint ventures the Ministry of Energy is forming. It also began conducting a search for a partner in the Thanlyin Refinery Joint Venture Project last year. It aims to rehabilitate the aging facility, hoping to domestically produce finished products that are currently most imported.

Thai-firm PTT was ultimately selected for the project, with Singapore's Puma Energy declared the runner-up, in a race that ultimately attracted three foreign firms and one local firm. A final agreement to form the joint venture



A guard completes his rounds at a Ministry of Energy compound near Yangon. Photo: Zarni Phyo

is still being worked on. The two top firms, PTT and Puma, switched places for a tender to import and distribute jet fuel, with Puma winning and PTT declared runner-up.

Another Ministry of Energy joint venture project is the Nyaung Don LPG plant in Ayeyarwaddy Region. Some 22 companies showed interest, with a pre-qualification list of 11 companies revealed by the ministry last year.

"The joint venture projects of Thanlyin Refinery and Nyaung Don LPG plant are going to be finalised in October too," the statement said. "The ministry will also go on to do a joint venture for the businesses of the Department of Transporting Petroleum and Petrochemical in November."

The Ministry of Energy played a larger role prior to 2010, when the government broke its monopoly in some areas.



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STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP TAKES MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTING TO GREATER HEIGHTS IN MYANMAR

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DICA promises three-day finish

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GOVERNMENT officials are targeting a three-day turnaround for the paperwork necessary to launch a business.

Permits for company registration, operating licences and permissions will all be obtainable in three days - if the submitted documents are in order, according to National Planning and Economic Development deputy minister Daw Le Le Thein.

Speaking in an Amyotha Hluttaw session held on February 3, she said the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration has been working to decrease procedures that businesses must go through, aiming to make it more convenient in Yangon, Mandalay, Taunggyi and Mawlamyine, as well as Nay Pyi Taw.

She added the website www.dica.gov.com has useful information on permits, while government ministries are attempting to give talks and share information in regional and state cities on business permit approvals.

"Other ministries and departments are also offering statements, talks and information on their agenda, and are trying to spread awareness through the media," she said.

Beginning last year, the National Planning and Economic Development Ministry has opened branches in all regions and states as well as Nay Pyi Taw, specifically aiming to assist small and medium businesses.

The Directorate of Investment and Company Administration was formed in 1993 under the Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development.

It has also begun publishing books to explain to smaller and medium businesses the process of receiving approval.

- Translation by Thiri Min Htun

CB takes its business banking plans digital

CB Bank has taken aim at enterprise customers with business internet banking, the next stage in the bank's rollout of electronic financial services.

The new banking initiative allows customers to transfer funds in Myanmar and across its borders, pay employee salaries, redirect cash across accounts and more, according to the company.

The firm announced the business banking push at a press event on February 11. It has partnered with Temenos, a Switzerland-based software company.

Temenos official Lee Volante said there is a bright digital future ahead for the industry.

"I'm going to talk about 'the future is digital,'" he said. "And for CB Bank, the future is now, but that's not the end."

Online and mobile banking options have gathered more interest recently. - Catherine Trautwein

Kyaukphyu bidders come from China

NYAN LYNN AUNG

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THE ongoing tender to build portions of Kyaukphyu special economic zone has attracted interest almost entirely from Chinese firms.

Of the total 12 companies that have so far entered bids, 11 are from mainland China and the other one is a local company, according to a businessperson close to the situation.

The Bid Evaluation and Awarding Committee (BEAC) plans to award the tender to build three areas - a deep sea port, a residential area and an industrial park - at the end of February. The tender has been delayed, with a winner originally set to be announced in December.

U Tin Cho, an advisor at Parami Energy Group, said the SEZ should be a corridor for domestic trade flows out to external markets, as it will be the main gateway for market access for businesses in

western Myanmar.

"The government should think how the SEZ can profit our country," he said.

"Unless it does, we might lose our resources without receiving benefits, like in previous projects with Chinese companies."

Other experts say they still have high hopes for the project, which can provide important trade linkages.

If the projects is to work, it is essential to enforce law and order efficiently, said Daw Tin Tin Htey, former director from the Foreign Economic Relation Department.

"We have to cooperate with both China and India, but there must also be accountability, transparency and responsible businesspeople [at Kyaukphyu SEZ]," she said.

The SEZ was first announced in September 2013. It aimed to be more of a business collaboration than other zones like Thilawa and Dawei, which have involved significant government support.

An SEZ master plan was unveiled in June 2014, with phase one initially targeted to begin in March this year on 19 square kilometres with an initial investment of US\$227 million.

Several tenders to together build the first phase have been postponed. The process was initially to be wrapped up by last December, though authorities have since pushed it back to the end of February, claiming they are working hard to get it right.

BEAC joint secretary U Aung Kyaw Than said the final step in the process is extremely sensitive and is being judged by the appropriate committee.

"We are careful about the decision-making process. We don't want to make nonsense," he said. U Aung Kyaw Than declined to discuss what firms were being considered at this stage, adding the eventual award winners will be publically displayed.

Parami Energy chief executive Ken Tun said the committee should make sure the project has long-term benefits for Myanmar's economy rather than making any urgent decision.

"We need to think about the situation in the long term," he said.

Environmental Impact Assessment department head U Tin Than said environmental and social impact assessments must be completed.

First test well for deepwater appraisal sunk

The first deepwater appraisal well in Myanmar waters was dug by Chinnery Assets Limited, part of China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), the Ministry of Energy said on February 8.

Chinese rig Hai Yang Shi You 981 dug the Aung Pyay Hein well in deepwater block AG-1, aiming to search for hydrocarbons at a depth of 1731 metres (5679 feet).

The firm has held the rights to explore blocks AD-1, AD-6 and AD-8 since 2008.

"CNPC suspended activities in the prior exploration period in these blocks late in 2008 when there was a border conflict with China," a Ministry of Energy official said. "They resume seismic acquisition activities around 2013, and the Aung Pyay Hein [1] appraisal well is the first deepwater well in Myanmar."

It was mostly Chinese and Thai firms operating in the oil and gas industry during the period of Western sanctions.

A large-scale offshore bidding round was conducted in 2013.

- Aung Shin

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DHAKA

Bangladesh businessmen take part in a protest against an ongoing nationwide strike and blockade. Photo: AFP

Businesspeople protest Bangladesh breakdown

THOUSANDS of business leaders protested in the Bangladesh capital against a month-long campaign of anti-government violence that they say has cost the economy nearly \$10 billion.

Garment factory owners and other business leaders joined hands and waved national flags in Dhaka and other major cities, calling for an end to the opposition-led strikes and nationwide transport blockade.

Protesters told the Dhaka rally the economy suffered 750 billion taka (US\$10 billion) in losses in the 33 days since opposition leader Khaleda Zia called the protests to try to topple the government.

"We've seen with great concern that non-stop blockade and strikes since the beginning of the year have crippled the economy," said Kazi Akram Uddin Ahmed, president of the Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

"This situation can't go on. The businessmen's backs are now on the wall."

The garment sector, the mainstay of the economy, has alone lost nearly \$4 billion as the campaign halts exports to Western retailers who are being forced

to look to other countries to fill orders, he said.

Finance Minister AMA Muhith said the blockade was having a "severe" impact on businesses outside the capital and the economy might not reach 7.2 percent projected growth this year. Ms Zia called the indefinite blockade of roads, railways and waterways after police confined the former two-time premier to her office on January 3 as she tried to mobilise protests.

Some 79 people have been killed in the violence, as opposition activists

'We've seen with great concern that non-stop blockade and strikes ... crippled the economy.'

Kazi Akram Uddin Ahmed
Bangladesh business association

firebomb trucks, buses and cars to try to enforce the blockade.

Ms Zia denies her Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) party is behind the violence, but has vowed to continue the blockade until Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina agrees to new polls.

Ms Zia leads a 20-party opposition alliance which boycotted a general election last year on the grounds it would be rigged. On February 8 one person died in hospital in the northern city of Bogra after the bus on which he was travelling was firebombed. Officers shot dead a protester elsewhere, police said.

Ten people were killed on February 7 when protesters firebombed a bus and a truck in one of the deadliest episodes of the campaign. Authorities have deployed thousands of troops and police to guard vehicles and more than 10,000 protesters have been arrested, but the unrest shows no sign of abating.

Bangladesh is the world's second largest garment exporter after China. The sector provides jobs for four million people, mostly women, and has spurred economic growth to over 6 percent a year in the last decade. - AFP

SINGAPORE

Tourist numbers drop off

SINGAPORE reported its first decline in visitor arrivals since the global financial crisis, as a new Chinese law curbed tourists from the mainland while political turmoil in Thailand and aviation disasters damped travel.

Visitors to the tropical island nation fell 3.1 percent to 15.1 million in 2014, the first drop since 2009, the Singapore Tourism Board said. Tourism receipts totaled S\$23.5 billion (US\$17 billion), unchanged from the previous year.

Weakening tourism adds to risks for Singapore, which unexpectedly eased monetary policy last month as growth slowed amid a faltering global economy. The Southeast Asian island, home to an Asian leg of the Formula One series and two casino resorts, had previously targeted 17 million tourist arrivals for 2015.

"We had somewhat stormy weather," tourism board chief executive Lionel Yeo told reporters in Singapore on February 11. The original target for 2015 was set in 2004, before the global

financial crisis, and the agency will release an updated projection for this year later, he said.

The number of Indonesian visitors, who made up the biggest group of arrivals last year, fell 2pc to 3 million as the rupiah depreciated, while travelers from China dropped 24pc to 1.7 million.

Numbers from Malaysia, Australia, Japan and the Philippines also fell.

Chinese arrivals were hurt by the country's tourism law, regional socio-political issues and the plane disasters, the tourism board said. China's economic growth is slowing, adding to the impact of a new law that clamped down on cut-price shopping tours.

"We do see some headwinds in 2015," Mr Yeo said. "It's a mixed picture because we think that there are also other things working in our favour."

Last year was the worst for the aviation industry globally since 2005, discouraging tourists from traveling in the region.

- Bloomberg

Orders for Cambodia garments dry up with minimum wage hike

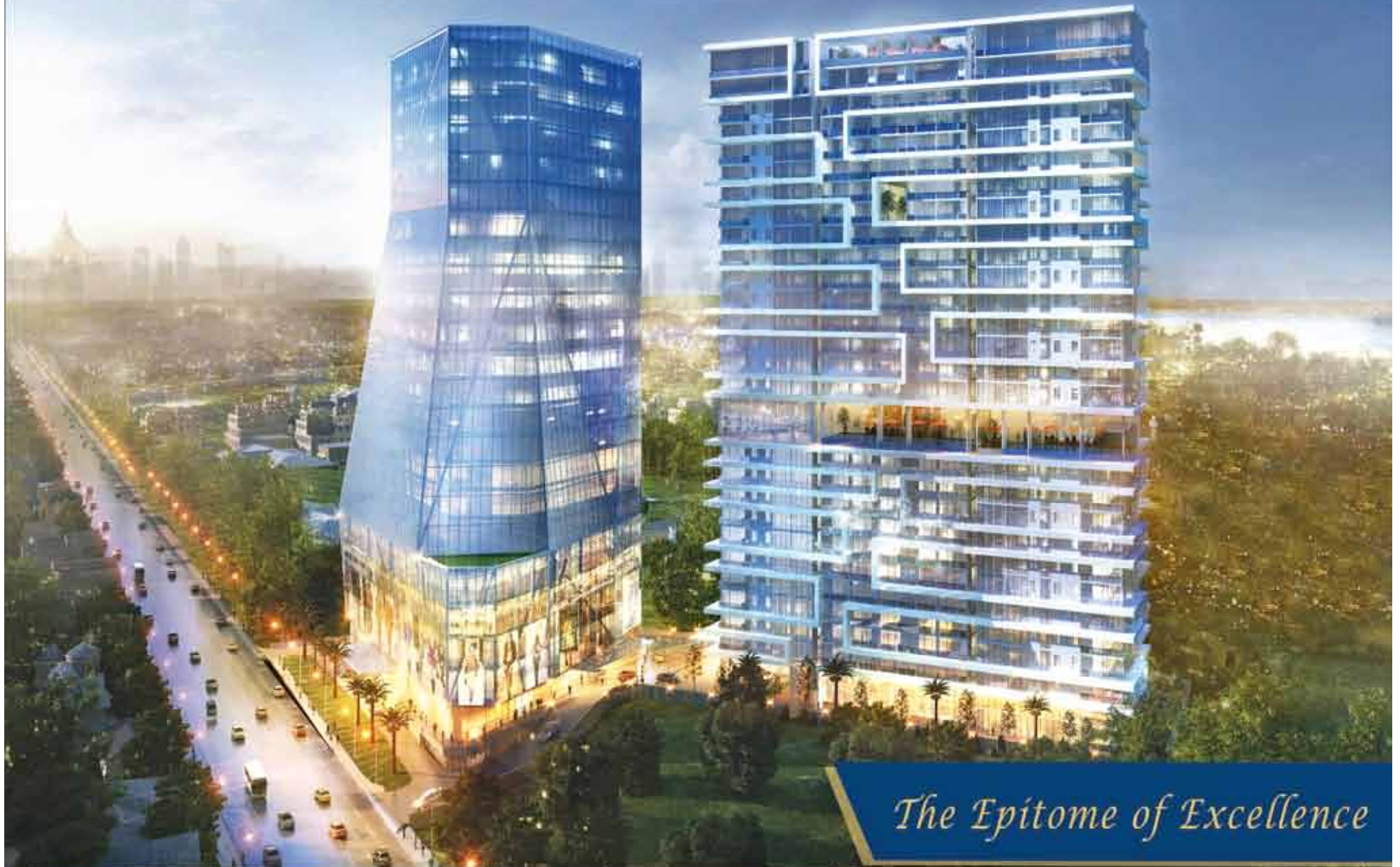
Reports that buyer orders in Cambodia's garment sector slowed to a crawl toward the end of 2014 have triggered mixed reasoning from industry representatives.

Ken Loo, secretary-general at the Garment Manufacturers Association of Cambodia (GMAC) said the slowdown is due to rapid wage hikes, frequent strikes, political instability, and negative media coverage that "damaged the competitiveness of Cambodian factories".

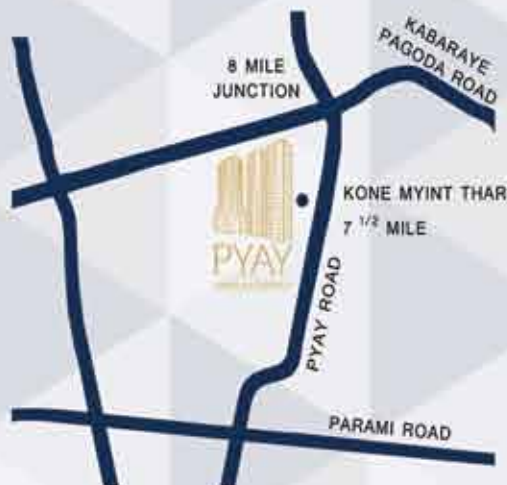
"This should not be to everybody's surprise given what has happened in the past 18 months," GMAC deputy secretary-general Kaing Monika said. "The industry is heading downward definitely."

Cambodia's minimum wage has increased twice, from US\$80 to \$100 a month in February 2014, and again to \$128 a month in January 1, 2015, following nationwide strikes of garment workers in January 2014, resulting in five people being killed. - The Phnom Penh Post

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The economic cost of the child labour crisis



NEELAM BHUSAL

newsroom@mmtimes.com

THE children of Myanmar are an important part of the Myanmar economy. They work as servants, factory workers and farm workers – often to replace adults who migrate to get better jobs in neighboring countries.

The recruitment of children, who are normally paid less and easily controlled, has become a business model for many successful teashops and factories in Myanmar. According to Maplecroft's Child Labour Index, the country ranked a staggering 3rd among 197 countries in child labour prevalence; only Somalia and Eritrea ranked higher. Yes, Myanmar has made it way to the top of the table again, with one-third of its children working in dangerous construction sites, mines, factories and in agriculture.

Although the government has signed with the ILO to ratify the Child Labour Convention, child labour remains a common sight in Myanmar. Many underage males work as waiters at tea shops, while girls from various villages go to cities like Yangon or Mandalay to work as cleaners, house-helpers or even in brothels. But the largest numbers are on farms or in factories.

Amy is a typical example of the problem. She is a young Kayin worker in Yangon, who started working as a servant at the age of 13. She told me that going to Yangon to work has become a trend for Kayin children from rural villages. Stories about wonderful buildings, big cinemas and the money they could earn from working in Yangon instead of going to school have led many young boys and girls to move.

In many cases, these children are not stopped by their parents since they cannot afford the money for school and private tuition, which is normally made compulsory by teachers. Amy explained that her parents take her earnings. Parents from villages come to the houses where their children work to take salaries for three to four years in advance, meaning that the child would never be allowed to leave the job.

She said she was not happy at the



Future earnings potential is stymied through child labour. Photo: Thiri Lu

house: "They don't increase my salary, keep me at home all day, and the maximum holiday I get each year is a week - and there is nothing I can do about it. My dad has taken US\$3000 from them and I cannot leave."

Child helpers can work for up to 16 hours a day, starting their day at 5am in the morning and working until 9pm at night. Weak enforcement of laws about child labour has made life difficult for the millions of underage workers who are underpaid and overworked. Yet it is common and accepted practice in Myanmar. The prevalence of child labour in the country is not only due to poverty, but also due to the poor education system, domestic violence, civil war, and the migration of adult workers to Thailand and elsewhere.

Tackling child labour in a community where child labour is accepted and encouraged is a huge challenge. Families rely on their income; employers want them to keep working; other children want their jobs. Yet the consequences of neglecting the child labour crisis are high..

The economic imperative behind halting child labour

Those who presently employ children will complain - as will their parents. But children have rights, one of which is to access basic education. It is the job of government to enforce the rights of children, which is also in their best in-

terest. Tea shops and factories will just have to pay more for older workers.

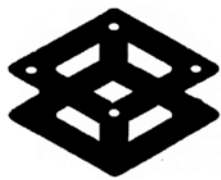
Already there is talk that the country's growth is suffering from a shortage of skilled labour. Myanmar's record of high literacy is under threat. As opportunities for work by children have expanded with recent growth, we are now bringing up a new generation of illiterate youth. They, and Myanmar, will remain trapped in low-productivity employment. Illiteracy also undermines democracy.

Needless to say, child labour should be made illegal and Myanmar should enforce the employment of children, while at the same time providing free, quality primary-school education. But for many still, the long habit of employing children in Myanmar makes enforcement a problem. We need to educate the population and convince them that this a problem and that children working is wrong. Make no mistake: Getting kids out of work and back into schools is not just a nice thing to do, it is an economic development imperative.

Neelam Bhusal is a local economist at Mekong Economics, a development consultancy organisation, specialising in conducting policy research and project evaluations across the Southeast Asia region for donor organisations including the World Bank, ADB, bilateral donors and INGOs.

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Dated. 16 February 2015

LONDON

HSBC shows a pattern with Swiss scandal

EUROPE'S biggest bank HSBC is fighting off claims that it helped rich clients globally dodge taxes through its Swiss arm - the latest in a long line of scandals to hit the group.

With a quarter of a million employees, a market capitalisation of nearly US\$200 billion (176 billion euros) and one of the world's most prominent advertising campaigns, HSBC is hard to miss.

While its brand is splashed across billboards and airports around the world, its reputation has been tarnished in recent years by a string of high-profile controversies.

Allegations emerged February 9 that HSBC's Swiss private bank division helped rich clients avoid millions of dollars in tax after an employee, Herve Falciani, stole secret files in 2007 and turned whistleblower.

In 2012, HSBC agreed to pay out \$1.92 billion to US authorities for oversight failures which meant Mexican drug traffickers could launder money through its accounts and banned transactions took place from Iran.

Last year, it was charged with manipulating a key inter-bank lending rate by the European Commission.

Its foreign currency traders were also implicated in a scheme to make money by rigging markets, uncovered last year.

"There is a deliberate strategy by the bank to appeal to wealthy clients around the world, particularly in Asia, where HSBC has a major presence in Hong Kong and Singapore," said Maxime Mathon, a spokesperson for Paris-based equity research house AlphaValue.

The financial behemoth is headquartered in one of London's tallest buildings, a vast skyscraper in the ultra-modern Canary Wharf office district. But that belies its history, rooted in the British empire of the 19th century. The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited was set up in Hong Kong in 1865 by Thomas Sutherland, a Scotsman who saw a niche catering to local businesses.

It grew quickly across Asia, North America and Europe, becoming one of

the world's major banks by the end of the 20th century.

It now has some 50 million clients in 74 different countries around the world.

Like most globalised banks, HSBC has a whole range of different operations, from high street retail banking to trading on global money markets and private banking, which helps some of the world's richest people make the most out of their money.

Since the 2008 financial crisis, attitudes have changed to what is permissible for banks to do in pursuit of the highest returns for clients, experts say.

"This HSBC story is a legacy of what did exist in private banking before the financial crisis and that the governments around the world don't want to exist any more," said Arun Melmane, an analyst at investment bank Canaccord Genuity.

HSBC's Swiss banking arm insists it has undergone a "radical transformation" since 2008 to stop its services being used to evade taxes or launder money. - AFP



JOB WATCH

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Yangon/Brussels, 5 February 2015

Job Opportunity

Executive Director for "EuroCham Myanmar"

About EuroCham Myanmar

The European Chamber in Myanmar – EuroCham - was formally launched on 12 December 2014 in Yangon, through a grant contract between the European Union (EU) and a Consortium composed of the French Myanmar Chamber and EUROCHAMBRES Brussels.

The EuroCham will serve as the voice of European business in Myanmar, contribute to a better business climate in the country, and promote trade and investment relations with the EU. It will be established as a separate legal entity under Myanmar law, and incorporate bilateral Chambers and European companies in its structure.

The EuroCham will have dedicated staff and premises. For the 5 year duration of the EU grant, EuroCham will work under the legal authority of the French Myanmar Chamber.

In order to kick start the establishment and management of this EuroCham, the Consortium is looking to recruit a very talented:

EuroCham Executive Director (m/f) based in Yangon, Myanmar

The Director will play a critical role in creating, managing and developing the EuroCham Myanmar as the key organization representing EU businesses in Myanmar, in close cooperation with the Consortium and in compliance with the EU grant contract.

More specifically, he/she should:

- Contribute to the governance and legal establishment of the EuroCham, in support of the Consortium
- Maintain and expand membership to deliver strategy and revenue
- Establish and manage a team of up to 10 staff members
- Help identifying and manage office facilities for the EuroCham team
- Develop sustainable business plans and annual work plans, in compliance with the EuroCham objectives and governance structures
- Take responsibility for manage budget and reporting, and to secure income
- Maintain close relations with key partners, including the EU Delegation in Yangon and the Consortium partners, and stakeholders
- Coordinate priority projects and ensure successful delivery of activities, including work on advocacy
- Establish a wide stakeholders' network in Myanmar
- Liaise with government and private sector counterparts, as well as with other EuroChams in the region
- Prepare reports and policy papers based on the thorough analysis of relevant economic and policy issues

The EuroCham Director is a post with high visibility, operating in a complex environment. He/she should therefore have the following minimum requirements:

- Minimum 10 years of international experience in both private and public sectors
- Extensive experience in international economic and trade issues relevant to Myanmar
- International experience working and living in multi-cultural and multi-racial environments
- Proven experience in engaging with government to remove barriers or enhance regulatory environment
- Negotiation experience
- Experience in managing projects and teams, competence in handling financials
- Leadership and management experience in shaping directions and driving performance
- Highly proficient communications skills in English, spoken and written
- Entrepreneurial desire to develop a new organization

Conditions

- The Consortium offers a consultancy contract, linked to the duration of the programme (5 years - renewable), with appropriate remuneration commensurate to the experience and fringe benefits.
- Position to be filled as soon as possible.
- Based in Yangon (Myanmar), with regular travel within ASEAN and occasional travel to Europe.

Applications (CV and motivation letter) should be addressed to Mr. Julien Esch, President of the French Myanmar Chamber, exclusively by e-mail to director@ccifrance-myanmar.org, no later than 23rd February 2015.

Only shortlisted candidates will be notified and invited for interview.



This project is funded by the European Union

Job Watch

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INTERVIEW



Authorities are now examining concern whether five projects will block Shwedagon.
Photo: Aung Htay Hlaing

Temporary suspension for five large projects



MYAT NYEIN AYE

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FIVE large construction projects have been suspended by government authorities due to concerns over proximity to Shwedagon Pagoda.

The five, which sit on former military land in Dagon township, have been put on hiatus while Yangon and Myanmar Investment Commission re-examine the sites.

There has been increasing public opposition to the projects, with social media users and politicians alike questioning their effect on Shwedagon's foundations and views of the famous landmark.

The projects by Thu Kha Yadanar Co, Shwe Taung Hday Development, Marga Landmark, Shwe Taung Development and Adventure Myanmar Tour and Incentives projects have all been suspended, with at least one company expecting a four-week pause (see related article right).

The Myanmar Investment Commission has now asked experts from the Myanmar Engineering Society to inspect the projects and their technical standards.

"We are now inspecting the five projects, looking at the overall technical standards. We will give the results to the Myanmar Investment

Commission, and it will make an official announcement," said a Myanmar Engineering Society official.

Thu Kha Yadanar chair U Thong Htike Min said he expects the halt to be temporary, likely lasting about four or five weeks. He added that although these five projects are near the historical Shwedagon and Alan Pya pagodas, the developers are careful not to disturb them. The projects are all at least a few hundred metres from Shwedagon but some are closer to Alan Pya.

"Now they are studying whether we have disturbed [the pagodas] or not," he said. "Our project already has MIC approval. We don't need to stop the whole project, and if we have some problems, we may need to change our plans a little."

Above 190 feet or about 12 storeys, buildings are considered high-rises and need special approval from Yangon authorities. However, company officials have said they plan to stay within the height restriction.

Marga Landmark said in a February 9 statement the firm has and will comply with all regulations as stipulated by the relevant government bodies. It added it has received YCDC approval for its site preparation, the only activities that have taken place at its site so far.

"Marga Landmark is a conscientious developer and is keen to work for the preservation of the environment and the heritage of Yangon," it said. "We share the wish with the

people of Myanmar to maintain the unique beauty and heritage of Yangon as the country goes through this period of change."

Public concern over the five projects has grown, with some Yangon residents taking to social media to present their views on the issue.

Elected government officials have also waded into the discussion.

Yangon City Development Committee central executive committee member U Khin Hlaing called on projects to stop last week, claiming he was against cutting down trees at the sites.

Some commentators also voiced support for the suspension.

Historian U Thant Myint-U said in a Facebook post that he had visited one project and was "shocked" by how close some of the planned 12-storey buildings were to Shwedagon.

"The city urgently needs billions of dollars in new investment for new housing and office and commercial space. But it's critical that development is well planned and within an overall vision of how Yangon should grow and modernize. We have this one chance to make Yangon a truly liveable as well as modern city. We don't need to make the same mistakes that so many Asian cities have made these past decades."

He called it "a brave and commendable decision and a step forward for proper urban planning".

- Additional reporting by Jeremy Mullins and Kyaw Phone Kyaw

Dagon City 1 developer temporary pause on co

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THE ambitious Dagon City 1 project near U Htaung Bo roundabout is one of five that have been temporarily halted by government notice since January 22.

Experts are re-examining the firm's project site in Dagon township and four other separately owned developments nearby, following public concerns that they may block views of nearby Shwedagon or affect the foundation of Yangon's most famous pagoda.

Dagon City 1 - which is being developed by an international group of investors called Marga Landmark - has already received approvals from government bodies including the Myanmar Investment Commission and Yangon City Development Committee.

So far only government-approved site preparation work has taken place at Dagon City 1, before construction-related activities were put on hold by the government, according to company officials.

Marga chair Stephen Suen said the firm received a notice on January 22 from the Myanmar Investment Commission that temporarily paused the project for four weeks, during which the detailed plan is to be re-examined by experts from the Myanmar Engineering Society and the Committee for Quality Control of High-rise Building Projects Construction (CQHP).

On January 23, a team of experts visited to re-examine the site and company plans in detail. Mr Suen said the Dagon City 1 project is below the 190-foot (58-metre) height restriction for the area, which usually works out to about 12 storeys. He added the company is using the highest-quality techniques to build the foundation, meaning the road in front of the project site will not be disturbed - let alone Shwedagon, which is over half a kilometre away.

"It was a very detailed check and after the meeting, according to my development team, they are very confident we will pass the test because everything was heavily backed up [by evidence]," he said during an exclusive interview at the site on February 10.

Dagon City 1 is an ambitious mixed-use project, slated to include residential and office space as well as a retail walking street, with 50 percent of the project to be public access. Its developers Marga Landmark are a group of international investors from South Korea, Britain and Hong Kong-Australia,

as well as local firm Thu Kha Yadanar.

Marga publicly announced the Dagon City 1 project last year, and had recently begun site clearing when it was hit by the temporary pause on January 22.

Mr Suen said the government has so far conducted itself admirably, as it has listened to and respected public opinion, while still operating inside the boundaries of the law. "I'm confident we will be fairly treated," he said. "That's most important for foreign investors ... So far all the government actions are strictly in accordance with the legal requirements and within the foreign investment law. These are the rules of the game that we based it on when we made our investment decisions."

The pause extends only to construction activities at the Dagon City

'I'm confident we will be fairly treated... That's most important for foreign investors.'

Stephen Suen
Marga Landmark

1 site, with no suspension of any other project-related activities. Indeed, the site has played host to Myanmar International Fashion Week on February 6 through 8, with a separate event on the 12th.

The assessment period has also not delayed Marga's plans, as developers must wait for about four weeks anyway to import specialised equipment needed to build the project's foundations as part of the next step, according to company officials.

Mr Suen, a Hong Kong-Australian who holds several degrees including a doctorate degree in Buddhism from the University of Hong Kong, also runs businesses in different countries. He said through the situation he has learned the importance of social media.

"It's a new era," he said. "I don't even have a Facebook account, but I found out Facebook management is important because some of your competitors will make use of this media to [do] dirty things. That is one thing we have pay attention to."

Mr Suen also said it is suspicious



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“Huge amounts of money coming from the Wazi factory presses was a famous hallmark of the former government.”

- U Hla Maung, economist

Malay politics in turmoil after conviction of opposition leader

WORLD 44

discusses construction

that criticism of the project's design and possible impacts on Shwedagon only ramped up as construction neared. The project plans have been with MIC for a year and a half, while a scale model has been visible in the showroom for eight months.

“Why [did] all this criticism suddenly flood in after we are doing a very successful marketing program?” he said.

Marga Landmark intends to more aggressively pursue sources of defamation, or commentators putting out wrong information with the intent of hurting its reputation, Mr Suen said.

So far no customer has asked for a refund, and the firm will approach the issue in accordance with the law, he said.

Four other projects that have been affected by the temporary suspension. Mr Suen said Dagon City 1 has been highlighted out of the five total developments, despite there being others closer to Shwedagon that are also planning buildings near the 190-foot height limit.

Some of the attention may come due to the international background of the Marga Investors. Mr Suen said many foreign investors are on the cusp of deciding whether to invest in Myanmar and watching how its development is treated.

“We are [the] showpiece for foreign investment who have operations in Hong Kong. Bearing in mind Hong Kong is one of the most important fund raising centres,” he said.

“Every fund manager is watching me [to] see how I handle the problem. I feel my shoulders are so heavy, not because of the money we invest, but because if we fail, we are hurting the country. A lot of people [will be] deterred from coming.”

HOUSE OF THE WEEK

Go jump in the pool



If everything is advertised as being new and improved, does that mean existing stuff is universally old and inferior?

Not necessarily, particularly if you're looking for a pleasant apartment to call home. Shwe Hin Thar condo on at 6 1/2 mile on Pyay Road is one of the best buildings now in Yangon. It was built to international standards and is wonderful for those keen on condo living.

This week's home is a 10th floor unit covering 2200 square feet. It has one master bedroom and two single bedrooms, with separate living and dining rooms, and a kitchen as well.

The 10th floor is an excellent place to take in light and offer fresh air and nice views. The interior is pleasant enough but decorations are admittedly nothing special. It will come fully furnished.

Included are five air conditioners, internet, security and car parking, while the condo also has free-to-use swimming pool and gym. It's located near to Yangon airport and Inya Lake, and is overall a fine choice if the current generation of towers works for you. - Myat Nyein Aye

- Location** : Hlaing Township, Shwe Hin Thar Condominium at 6 1/2 miles, Pyay Road
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- Phone** : 09-43118787
09-43031699

Singapore firm takes stake in HAGL build

JEREMY MULLINS
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SINGAPOREAN firm Rowsley will invest US\$275 million for a 50 percent stake in the large-scale, Vietnam-owned Hong Anh Gia Lai (HAGL) property development in Yangon, with an option to increase its stake in the future.

The HAGL Myanmar Centre, near Inya Lake on Kabar Aye Pagoda Road in Yangon's Bahan township, is a mixed-use development slated to include four office blocks, a five-star hotel, a retail mall and apartments.

The investment values the project at \$550 million, and is still subject to due diligence and regulatory approvals. Rowsley's stake will be funded through a mix of debt, equity and bank borrowings.

HAGL Myanmar Centre sits on 73,000 square metres of land, held on a lease term of 50 years plus two possible 10-year extensions. It is due to be completed in 2018.

The first phase of the project is

to be completed this year, including two office towers covering 81,000 square metres (871,877 square feet), a retail mall and a 400-room five-star hotel.

Construction work on the second phase is expected to start in early 2016.

While domestic demand for real estate has shot up in the last three years, office space in particular has been in short supply.

Colliers International pegged Yangon's total office stock at 107,000 square metres in a report released last week covering the fourth quarter 2014. Office space is set to increase by an average 70,000 square metres annually from 2015 to 2018, the report added.

Rowsley chief executive officer Lock Wai Han said Myanmar has seen rapid development, calling the country “without a doubt Asia's shining star”.

“Yangon currently faces a severe shortage of top-grade office space, hotels and modern malls,” he said in the press release.



Construction work continues at the HAGL site. Photo: Zarni Phyto

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- Translation by Thiri Min Htun

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Myanmar's internet: 'partly free'

No surveillance, but laws on the books could come back to bite users

CATHERINE TRAUTWEIN
newsroom@mmtimes.com

ALTHOUGH Myanmar's internet rated freer this year than ever before, no laws exist around online privacy and those on the books could be twisted to turn against free speech, according to University of Washington-affiliated researcher Dan Arnaudo.

This past December, watchdog organisation Freedom House bumped Myanmar's "Freedom on the Net" ranking up from "not free" to "partly free", highlighting heightened mobile access and legislative reform as key developments. Currently, only a few policies stand in place to regulate online behaviour in the country. This lack helps make Myanmar's internet one of the Southeast Asian region's freest, but could also leave users' privacy unprotected. Meanwhile, legacy legislation could punish people for what they post, according to Mr Arnaudo.

After the government abolished media censorship in 2012, Myanmar internet users have been able to access content online, even of the variety that might be blacked out or bleeped in other countries. From that year on, "political content appeared to be almost universally available, and even social content, such as pornography, was not blocked as of mid-2014", the report said.

Distinct from neighbours like China, whose "Great Firewall" looms over internet users, Myanmar doesn't - or can't - surveil and censor online activity on a grand scale.

"You don't have really a censorship system in place like China or Thailand that censors information, where [if] people post something against the king, or against the military, they arrest bloggers," Mr Arnaudo said at a February 5 event at local innovation lab Phandeeyar. "And at the same time you don't really have a surveillance system, at least that's operating on the internet."

The absence of the technology, people and policies means restrictions haven't gone up like they have elsewhere, he continued.

"This is a really new space and especially for Burmese [people], this is something to think about now because this is a time when these laws could be

changed and when these laws are going to be written," he said. "You're looking at privacy laws in particular and the way those are going to be written is really going to set the stage for your definition of privacy as a legal instrument."

The idea of "privacy" lacks context in Myanmar. Mr Arnaudo said the word had no Myanmar-language equivalent, let alone its own legislative guarantee. No policy might mean no protection in some cases, like those having to do with lawful intercept - the litigious route governments take to access user data.

"I think you are seeing real challenges to addressing those kinds of interception practices because you don't have strong mechanisms to fight back against them," Mr Arnaudo said. Meanwhile, the government retains the right, through vaguely worded legislation, to demand information that impacts Myanmar's security or the rule of law.

"Clause 75 [of the Telecommunications Law] grants unspecified government agents the authority 'to direct the organization concerned as necessary to intercept, irrespective of the means of communication, any information that affects the national security or rule of law,'" the Freedom House report said. "The clause added that the government would do so without affecting the fundamental rights of the citizens, but included no privacy protections."

However, recent telecoms market entrants Telenor and Ooredoo have both said they would safeguard users from government wiretapping, and Telenor requested more information regarding interception protocols and processes, according to the report.

The issue proves a weighty one for the Norwegian telco, whose Thai subsidiary last year complied with commands from the country's military junta to briefly bar users from accessing Facebook.

"In our licence there are clear definitions as to the procedures to be developed over these issues, and these details are about to be developed," Telenor CEO Jon Fredrik Baksaas told *The Myanmar Times* last year. "Our starting point is really that you need an independent court order in order

to move into the information flow in the network ... We are advocating that from the outset of a new telecom law, there should be regulation attached that secures privacy but also allows governments to see activities in the network, either from a criminal perspective, or from a security perspective."

"This needs to be regulated in a transparent set of rules, and so far we are of the understanding that this is developing in that direction," he continued.

While some laws have needed clearing up, others - even some that have been updated - harbour the potential to tamp down on freedom of expression online. Myanmar's 2004 Electronic Transaction Law "penalises political speech", Mr Arnaudo said. "It's not just penalising crimes against corporations or people where you hack into their system or something like that. It criminalises speech, and that's still the law in the country."

While Freedom House notes the Myanmar government amended the Electronic Transaction Law, the measure holds the power to jail journalists and others that have committed acts detrimental to state security, law and order, community peace and tranquility, national solidarity, the national economy, or national culture, the report said. Sentences range from three to seven years.

"These laws get twisted in a lot of different contexts, so it's important to understand that these words have meaning," Mr Arnaudo said.

He also outlined how users could begin to take cybersecurity into their own hands, likening basic measures to locking a car door and proceeding on to high-level encryption. "This kind of privacy tool is the next generation of privacy," he said. "It's something that I think we have to increasingly think about, finding technological solutions to problems like privacy that don't rely necessarily on policy."

"Whether it's in the United States or Myanmar or anywhere else in the world, we have the power to define the rules of the game in a lot of ways because [the government doesn't] know what they are. They haven't defined them."

Hi-tech aria: Local software companies must share the stage

KHIN SU WAI
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NEXT time you're scrolling through the listings in search of just the right power ballad to bring the KTV crowds to their feet, take a moment and give thanks to the technology that makes it possible. Costing between K100,000 and K200,000, the machines require both hardware and software. If you go by the numbers of how many make them, it's barely a cottage industry. But demand has elevated karaoke machines into a reliable segment of a post-2011 home-grown software explosion in Myanmar.

"The market is big because karaoke shops run about three singing rooms and up to 20 rooms," Ko Zaw Thet Maung, a Mandalay-based software developer and distributor, told *The Myanmar Times*. His small company fulfills the needs of 50-60 shops, some as far away as Mohnyin in Kachin State and Taunggyi in Shan State.

Aside from karaoke, sectors in which programs built abroad don't quite meet local needs include non-government lottery and sports gambling machines, as well as more official trades around petrol price and toll-gate software.

"There are foreign toll-gate software programs but they are not appropriate for local toll gates. There are six categories for charges [in other countries] but in our country the tax category depends [on vehicle type] - three wheels, four wheels, family car, high-tonne car, tax-free car, and so on - with 30 categories



Photo: Khin Su Wai

total," Ko Zaw Thet Maung said. The most potentially lucrative product, point-of-sale (POS) software - which enables electronic payments for goods and services - has yet to take off in Myanmar, said Ko Zaw Thet Maung. However, it may grow in future as shops seek to modernise and save time facilitating transactions and tallying accounts. Such software costs about K50,000 but needs to be tailored to

the buyer. A restaurant's software package, for instance, cannot just be copied for the tea-shop owner next door.

Other packages are being copied, however, as inadequate copyright protection is eating away at potential profits. Computer programmers and technicians told *The Myanmar Times* that while more businesses are using software, that interest is not necessarily widening the market

because pirated software is widely available at cheap prices.

Foreign investment is also limiting local programming opportunities, they said. Institutions such as banks that previously relied on local software developers are now switching over to international software for e-commerce compliance.

But U Thein Htut, deputy chair of the Myanmar Computer Industry Association, said this was to be expected.

"We can't expect a big company to use our products, because they are multi-national corporations, very big, and use their international software," he said.

"We don't complain and push them to use our products, individually or through government; they can't legislate someone into using our products."

What local programmers can do, he added, is write interfaces for existing international software that makes foreign-made programs suitable for local use.

"SAT software, Oracle software - we can write the interface for this software," said U Thein Htut, whose business operates in Yangon and Mandalay, and has written programs for everything from shops to banking.

"Their main software may be perfect, but some things are needed because of our country's requirements. This is an opportunity for us."

For some developing countries, notably India, the global tech boom is bringing big profits and Myanmar firms are eager to get a slice of the pie.

"Vietnam gets software contracts from Japan worth millions of dollars," computer technician U Aung Kyaw Zan told *The Myanmar Times*. "The Yangon computer association took a trip to study how they do it, what is needed. The software [required] was data entry; our Myanmar programmers can do it," he said.

The main weakness in Myanmar, he said, was software developers' lack of experience with contracts, including those containing timelines for work completion and penalties for failure to meet those targets.

Meanwhile, there is also a lack of support from the government, which has failed to make progress on its stated e-government aims. He said this was because e-government brings transparency, and officials were reluctant to do anything that could make corruption easier to track.

And there's another problem that comes with opening up the country's borders: More business also means more competition.

Ko Zaw Thet Mg, who sells karaoke and toll-gate software, said he's not worried about losing his share of the local ICT market if it becomes more crowded. But he is concerned about getting swamped by competing products made abroad.

"I worry about products from China," he said. "They can make the products quickly and in large quantity and sell them at cheap prices. You can see Chinese-made DVD players. Brands from other countries sell for K100,000, while [the Chinese-made products] can sell for K18,000, and their products are more reliable."

Ooredoo to grow app for farmers

AUNG KYAW NYUNT
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OOREDOO Myanmar, backed by GSMA (Groupe Speciale Mobile Association), will plant mobile tech in rural farmers' reach with a new app this year.

The telco's fresh application, mAgri, will allow farmers to access agricultural information and also keep agronomists posted on

products' prices, according to the company.

"This app will play a critical role in developing the country as the agricultural sector is very important in Myanmar," said Ooredoo Myanmar senior public relations manager Ma Thiri Kyar Nyo.

A large majority of Myanmar's people living in rural areas turn to agriculture as a way to make their livelihood, according to Ooredoo.

One farmer from Hlaing Tharyar township said the app could help those in his former field.

U Tin Hlaing said that people downtown are closer to opportunities to access the internet, while many farmers live far from access - and that Ooredoo Myanmar should spread agricultural information by an easier route.

"I used to work an agricultural job using my own method," he said.

"If Ooredoo Myanmar will share agricultural methods to farmers through a mobile application, it will benefit farmers."

'This app will play a critical role in developing the country'

Ma Thiri Kyar Nyo
Senior PR manager, Ooredoo Myanmar



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World

WORLD EDITOR: Fiona MacGregor

UN

Yemen 'collapsing before our eyes': Ban

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon appealed to the Security Council last week for action to halt Yemen's slide toward anarchy, warning the country was "collapsing before our eyes."

The UN chief was reporting to the 15-member council following his visit to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates for talks that he said focused on "preventing civil war in Yemen."

"Let me be clear: Yemen is collapsing before our eyes. We cannot stand by and watch," Mr Ban told the council.

He called for President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi and his prime minister to be "granted freedom of movement" following the power grab by the Shiite militia known as the Huthis which has left them under de facto house arrest.

Mr Ban had in the preceding days called for Mr Hadi to be fully restored as president, following talks with King Salman in Saudi Arabia, which described the Huthi power grab as a coup.

Yemen, a key US ally in the fight against al-Qaeda, has been in turmoil since the Huthis seized Sanaa in Sep-

tember and ousted the government at the start of this month.

UN special envoy Jamal Benomar warned that Yemen was "at a cross-road".

"Either the country will descend into civil war and disintegration, or the country will find a way to put the transition back on track," Mr Benomar told the council by video link from Sanaa.

Mr Benomar has been leading UN efforts to broker a deal that would push the Huthis to step back from their power grab and restore some measure of stability in the impoverished Arab country.

The instability is creating conditions for al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) to expand its foothold to other parts of the country after AQAP fighters seized control of a camp on February 12, Mr Benomar said.

Following behind-closed door consultations, Britain said it would be working with Jordan on a resolution that would outline the Security Council's stance on Yemen.

- AFP



Women hold placards during a protest against the Shiite Huthi militia on February 12 in the southern city of Aden in Yemen. Photo: AFP



KIEV

Ukraine peace roadma

THE leaders of Ukraine, Russia, France and Germany last week agreed a roadmap aimed at ending a 10-month war between Kiev and pro-Moscow rebels, but scepticism loomed large as the West warned "much work" still needed to be done.

After a marathon summit in the Belarussian capital Minsk on February 12, Russian President Vladimir Putin said he, Germany Chancellor Angela Merkel, French President Francois Hollande and Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko had reached a ceasefire deal.

Echoing cautious remarks from other leaders, Mr Poroshenko described the 17-hour talks as "very difficult" and said he expected the implementation of the deal would not be easy.

Under the agreement, a ceasefire was to take effect at midnight Kiev time on February 15 and heavy weapons are to be withdrawn from the front lines of the conflict, which has already killed at least 5300 people and driven a million people from their homes.

Mr Hollande described the deal as "a comprehensive political solution", while Ms Merkel spoke only of a "glimmer of hope".

"I have no illusions. We have no illusions," she said, adding that "much work" remained.

The United States, which has said it could supply Ukraine with weapons if the conflict continues, cautiously welcomed the accord.

"The true test of [this] accord will be in its full and unambiguous implementation," the White House said, including "restoration of Ukrainian control over its border with Russia".

Secretary of State John Kerry said there was a "long road ahead before achieving peace".

Kiev and rebel sources said

fighting over the 24 hours prior to the agreement had killed 14 civilians and two Ukrainian soldiers.

The Ukrainian government also accused Russia of deploying another 50 tanks across the border overnight, with fighting expected to continue around disputed railway hub Debaltsevo, which rebels claim to have surrounded.

Mr Hollande, Ms Merkel and Ms Poroshenko flew from Minsk to Brussels for a European Union summit, where the French leader said it was essential to keep up pressure to ensure the accord's success.

Mr Poroshenko, also speaking in the Belgian capital, said, "It was very difficult negotiation and we expect not easy implementation process."

European Council President Donald Tusk said Mr Poroshenko had

'Our trust in the goodwill of Mr Putin is limited, this is why we have to maintain our decisions on sanctions.'

Aaron David Miller
Former Middle East

given EU leaders a "sobering assessment" of the deal.

Mr Tusk said the 28-member bloc was ready "to take the necessary steps" to keep up the pressure on Russia, already hit by EU and US sanctions for its role in the crisis.

"Our trust in the goodwill of President Putin is limited. This is why we have to maintain our decision on sanctions," he told a press conference.

Mr Tusk added that the EU would go ahead with new sanctions against 19 Russian and Ukrainian individuals and nine entities next week, measures that had been suspended earlier to give the Minsk talks a better chance.

The roadmap - meant to ease a crisis that has plunged the West and Russia into their bitterest dispute since the Cold War - was signed by Russian and Ukrainian envoys, separatist leaders and European mediators from the OSCE.

A previous truce signed in Minsk last September quickly collapsed.

The latest talks were seen as a last opportunity for European leaders to save nearly bankrupt Ukraine from ever-widening defeats at the hands of rebels said by Kiev and the West to be armed and trained by Russia.

In rebel-held Donetsk, weary residents expressed little optimism.

"I don't believe in it at all," said Lyubov, 62, who would not give her last name. "Every time they sign an agreement, they say one thing and do another. I no longer trust anyone."

Beset by war and corruption, Ukraine's pro-Western government is struggling to enact legal and economic reforms that would help steer the former Soviet republic out of Russia's sphere of influence and into Western institutions.

The Kiev government got a major boost on February 12 with the announcement by IMF chief Christine Lagarde of a new financial rescue plan worth US\$17.5 billion.

In total, Ukraine will receive \$40 billion in assistance over four years coupled with bilateral loans from other sources, Ms Lagarde said,

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China's tiger park phenomenon threatening species

WORLD 45

Anwar's conviction leaves opposition in chaos

WORLD 44



Thai debt levels leave families in despair

WORLD 48



IN PICTURES

PHOTO: AFP

A diver feeds squid-meat shaped as an envelope with a red heart on it to rays at a feeding session ahead of Valentine's Day at the Sunshine Aquarium in Tokyo on February 10.

Deal reached

helping to stabilise Kiev's finances after 10 months of conflict.

The World Bank for its part announced it was prepared to provide up to \$2 billion in financial assistance to Ukraine this year.

The new Minsk agreement is broadly similar to the first one, except that the new heavy weapons-free zone will be 50-70 kilometres (31-43 miles) wide, depending on the range of the weapon, double the width of the buffer zone agreed in September.

Kiev will also begin retaking control over the approximately 400-kilometre (250-mile) stretch

of Russia's border with rebel-held Ukraine, but only after local elections are held.

The border is entirely under Russian and pro-Russian rebel control and is used, according to Kiev, as a conduit for separatist supplies. The Kremlin denies this but has opposed Ukraine being allowed to regain control of the frontier.

While heavy weapons must be withdrawn, troops and rebels can remain where they are, handing rebels de facto control of the roughly 500 square kilometres of territory they've gained in recent weeks.

- AFP



ONAKRY

Ebola workers attacked in Guinea

THE International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement last week denounced a series of violent attacks on its volunteers battling the deadly Ebola epidemic in Guinea.

The world's largest humanitarian network said the latest case involved two burial workers who were beaten up on February 8 by a mob in the western town of Forecariah.

It "noted with regret the violence against teams of Red Cross volunteers involved in the fight against the Ebola epidemic".

The organisation launched an "urgent appeal" to Guineans to "refrain from attacking the volunteers of the Red Cross, and allow them to do their job and save lives safely".

Guinea and its neighbours Sierra Leone and Liberia have registered more than 9000 deaths since the Ebola epidemic flared up in December 2013.

Mobs have sporadically attacked health workers in all three countries after being taken in by a variety of conspiracy theories, often characterising the outbreak as a plot by the

West to murder Africans and harvest their organs.

Guinea, which has seen the worst of the bloodshed, has put 58 people on trial over an attack in January on Ebola outreach workers by a mob wielding machetes near Forecariah.

The defendants, accused of wounding several government workers and staff from the global medical aid agency Medecins sans Frontieres (MSF), have been in the dock since February 2.

Last September eight members of an outreach team in the southeastern town of Womey were killed by protesters who denied the existence of Ebola and denounced a "white conspiracy".

In a further sign of the hysteria surrounding Ebola, panic spread through schools in the capital Conakry on February 11 over false rumours that a Red Cross team was coming to take away infected students.

Schools in the central Kaloum neighbourhood emptied as parents arrived to collect their children, with

many students crying and calling for help, according to an AFP correspondent at the scene.

"The rumour is that a team of the Red Cross are coming to our school to find an Ebola patient. That's why all the children ran out," a teacher said.

The panic followed similar incidents in other parts of the capital on February 10, witnesses said.

58

People on trial in Guinea this month over a machete attack on Ebola outreach workers in January

An education official told AFP on condition of anonymity that students wanting time off were behind the scare.

He said they had created alarm by "blowing whistles in the vicinity of schools" - common code among students that a disinfection team is on its way to spray the school.

There is a widespread misapprehension among Guinean students and parents that humanitarian workers who spray schools with disinfectant are deliberately spreading the virus.

"We were in class around mid-day. Our parents forced the gates to the playground to come and pick us up because they learned that the Red Cross was coming to spray the schools," said a primary school student.

"Far from being an action that spreads the disease, spraying conducted by teams from the Red Cross destroys the virus," the organisation said. - AFP



Members of Medecins Sans Frontieres take part in a training session on Ebola treatment in Nogent-le-Rotrou, western France, on February 12. Photo: AFP

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#205/5, Thirimingalar Housing, Strand Rd., Yangon.

Dated. February 16, 2015

WASHINGTON

US Secretary of State John Kerry shakes hands with Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera ahead of a bilateral meeting on February 12 at the State Department in Washington, DC. Photo: AFP

UN urged to delay Sri Lanka war crime report

SRI Lanka has urged the UN to delay a report into alleged war crimes during the island's civil war to allow the new government to complete its own probe.

Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera made the appeal in Washington on February 11, on the eve of talks with top US diplomat John Kerry at the State Department.

It is his first visit to the United States since the surprise victory in January's presidential election of Maithripala Sirisena, whose new government has been welcomed as the possible start of a new era for the Indian Ocean island.

Mr Sirisena defeated long-time strongman Mahinda Rajapakse, who fell out with the West over allegations of wartime rights abuses by the military, but had enjoyed huge support among majority Sinhalese voters after overseeing the end of a separatist war by ethnic Tamil rebels in 2009.

But critics said he failed to bring about reconciliation in the years that followed his crushing victory over the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam).

Mr Rajapakse had also refused to cooperate with the UN-mandated

investigation into allegations that government forces killed up to 40,000 Tamil civilians while defeating the separatists in 2009.

The UN estimates at least 100,000 people were killed in the conflict between 1972 and 2009.

The UN High Commissioner of Human Rights is due to publish its findings in March.

But Mr Samaraweera pleaded that "we are in the process of trying to set up this internal domestic mechanism",

'Unlike the previous government we are not in a state of denial, saying that such violations have not happened.'

Mangala Samaraweera
Sri Lankan foreign minister

denying the call for a postponement of the report was merely an attempt to buy time.

"We are hoping they could hold on to it until our mechanism is in place," he told a US think tank, saying the domestic probe would be up and running in about two months.

"Once the report is finalized, we are hoping they can refer it to our domestic mechanism for action," he said.

"Unlike the previous government we are not in a state of denial, saying that such violations have not happened," he insisted at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Earlier this month Mr Sirisena vowed to end Sri Lanka's pariah status by working with the UN and promised national reconciliation, six years after the island's ethnic war ended.

"We are ready to ensure that those who have violated human rights in Sri Lanka will be brought to justice through such a mechanism. But to ensure that it is done in a credible manner we are also looking at technical assistance from the international community," Mr Samaraweera said.

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ANALYSIS

KUALA LUMPUR

Conviction leaves Malaysia's opposition parties in turmoil

THE jailing of Anwar Ibrahim dashes the dreams of millions of Malaysians yearning to oust the country's authoritarian regime, unless his shell-shocked opposition movement can bridge deep differences without his unifying presence, analysts said.

The suddenly leader-less opposition must continue its fight against a government that, despite a worsening reputation at home and abroad, is digging in its heels and looks unlikely to face any serious international repercussions for throwing the opposition leader behind bars.

Since it was formed seven years ago, the Pakatan Rakyat (People's Pact) alliance has had little in common other than a desire to defeat the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), which has ruled with a tight grip since independence in 1957.

Pakatan's ability to seize unprecedented swathes of parliament in recent elections allowed it to push aside questions over its cohesiveness, but no longer, said Ibrahim Suffian, Malaysia's leading political pollster.

"Anwar's jailing forces them to deal with those problems now. The question is whether they can," he said.

Alliance members are at each other's throats over policy and leadership differences.

The main source of discord is the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS), which is calling for harsh sharia law in a state it governs and pressing for more influence in the largely progressive opposition.

Sharia is strongly opposed by PAS's partners: The Democratic Action Party dominated by ethnic Chinese; and Anwar's centrist People's Justice Party.

The internal differences nearly caused Pakatan's collapse last year in a bitter dispute over a key state, and have prevented formulation of a

post-Anwar succession plan.

All eyes are now on whether PAS progressives can wrest control from a conservative leadership in June party polls. Mr Suffian gives them a 50-50 chance.

"It's all up to PAS. If the moderates can't take over, Pakatan will probably break up," he said.

That would be a crushing disappointment to millions of voters.

While living standards have soared under the UMNO over the decades, disgust runs high over corruption, crony capitalism, rights abuses, and the destruction of once-rich rainforests by government-linked logging and agricultural interests.

Laying bare the national mood, Pakatan won 52 percent of votes cast in 2013 elections, though Prime Minister Najib Razak clung to power thanks to a skewed parliamentary system.

Mr Anwar, 67, was jailed for five years, and faces a further five-year politics ban after his release, over a sodomy conviction he calls a government conspiracy.

Speculation has risen that outrage of the affair could finally vault Pakatan to power.

But with their undisputed standard-bearer now eliminated, the coalition must survive a leadership battle expected to be bruising, said Bridget Welsh, a Malaysia politics analyst.

"Who leads Pakatan is a question that will be very difficult to resolve, and has already fueled a lot of division even before the Anwar decision," she said.

Speculation has centred on Mr Anwar's longtime protege Azmin Ali, considered among the only possible consensus candidates.

But he lacks Mr Anwar's charisma on the stump and it remains to be



Malaysian opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim (left) arrives at the Federal Court in Putrajaya, outside Kuala Lumpur on February 10. Photo: AFP

seen whether he will appeal to other Pakatan members.

"I don't deny we have some problems at the top leadership, but I think now is the right time for Pakatan to move forward based on a common framework that we have agreed before," Mr Azmin said on February 10.

"We have to make sure Pakatan remains intact and a formidable force in the coming general

elections. But unseating the UMNO remains a formidable task.

Mr Najib's reputation has plummeted due to issues including his government's treatment of Mr Anwar and for allowing an explosion of dangerous politically motivated racial and religious rhetoric by UMNO-allied forces.

A scathing *New York Times* report last week detailed the profligate jet-setting lifestyle of Mr Najib's retinue, and the murky dealings of a sover-

eign fund launched and chaired by the prime minister in which hundreds of millions of dollars appear unaccounted for.

The United States led international criticism of the Anwar ruling.

But Washington, which seeks bolstered alliances in Southeast Asia amid China's rise, indicated it would go no further, touting its "strong partnership" with Malaysia.

Mr Najib, meanwhile, is secure within the UMNO, and his government is expected to continue digging in as it loses votes.

"At the end of the day, they don't give a damn what the rest of the world has to say as long as they keep getting their money and hold on to power," said John Malott, a former US ambassador to Malaysia.

"They will be tough to push out even if Pakatan resolves all of its troubles." - AFP

PUTRAJAYA

Anger as Anwar jailed

MALAYSIAN opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim said he was the victim of a "political conspiracy" last week as the nation's highest court sent him to jail for five years on a sodomy conviction that will likely end his career.

Mr Anwar had challenged a conviction handed down last year for sodomising a young male former aide, but the Federal Court struck down his appeal, saying there was "overwhelming evidence" of the crime.

The decision was sharply criticised by the United States, Australia and human rights organisations.

And the authorities came in for further criticism after one of the country's best-known political cartoonists was arrested for sedition over a Twitter posting that condemned the conviction.

Sodomy is punishable by up to 20 years in prison in Muslim-majority Malaysia. Mr Anwar was taken from the court in the afternoon to begin his sentence.

Shortly after the decision was announced, Mr Anwar took to the dock to launch a scathing attack on the justices, accusing them of collusion in a "political conspiracy" by Malaysia's authoritarian regime.

"In bowing to the dictates of your political masters, you have become partners to the crime," he said.

"You have chosen to be on the dark side."

"I will not be silenced! I will never surrender!" Mr Anwar shouted at the judges as they abruptly got up to leave.

Government critics call the case part of a long-running campaign to destroy Mr Anwar, a former deputy premier who was ousted from the ruling party in the late 1990s and later helped unite a previously divided and hapless opposition into a formidable force.

The ruling is a heavy blow to both Mr Anwar and the opposition.

Mr Anwar is now 67. Even if freed early, he is barred from politics for five years after his release, making another comeback unlikely.

"This is a struggle. Not only for Anwar but for all Malaysians, against a regime that will stoop to anything for political gain," Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, Mr Anwar's wife and president of his political party, told local media.

Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak has previously admitted meeting Anwar's accuser, Mohamad Saiful Bukhari Azlan, in 2008 just before the charges were filed, but denies orchestrating the case.

A statement by his office insisted the court reached the verdict "only after considering all the evidence in a balanced and objective manner", and called on all parties to respect the decision.

The government has also been condemned for filing a wave of sedition cases against its opponents over the past year, apparently in response to the opposition's growing electoral successes.

The wife of cartoonist Zulkifli Anwar Ulhaque, better known as Zunar, said on February 11 that her husband was arrested the previous evening just hours after Mr Anwar's conviction.

"Of course this is a form of intimidation, with the purpose that society does not question the authorities," Fazlina Rosley said.

"Zunar will not bow down to this intimidation. He will continue to criticise even if he remains in jail."

The cartoonist's lawyer, Melissa Sasidaran, said he was expected to be held for a few days.

Mr Zunar, 52, had suggested in a Twitter post that Malaysia's judiciary had bowed to the country's authoritarian regime.

"Those in the black robes were proud when passing sentence. The rewards from their political masters must be lucrative," the tweet said. - AFP

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HARBIN

Tiger parks wreak deadly toll on big cats

A TIGER snarls as a doomed chicken flaps helplessly in its mouth.

It's a grisly sight, but campaigners say such "entertainment" in China is putting big cats further in the jaws of extinction.

"How ferocious, he doesn't let anyone come near him," said one visitor over the sound of crunching bones, as she recorded the scene on her smartphone.

Buying chickens to feed the exhibits at the Siberian Tiger Park in northeast China's Harbin city costs 60 yuan (US\$10) and the menu has plenty of other choices, even cows are available to serve up.

But wildlife protection campaigners allege such parks, along with the dedicated tiger breeding centres or "farms" dotted around the country, actually make their big money selling on body parts from the big cats when they die: A practice which potentially further threatens the endangered species.

Global tiger numbers have plummeted from 100,000 a century ago to only 3000 in the wild today, according to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, which classes them as endangered, with poaching and habitat loss primary threats to their survival.

China's tiger farm industry says the trade in captive animals helps to relieve the pressure on wild felines, but wildlife groups argue it reduces the stigma around buying the animals or their body parts, and could create new markets for them.

Debbie Banks, head of the London-

based NGO the Environmental Investigation Agency, said that such sales of the body parts of captive tigers was "stimulating demand and sustaining the poaching pressure".

"Raising a tiger to maturity in captivity costs more than poaching a tiger in the wild," she said.

"Wild tigers, leopards and snow leopards are targeted as a cheaper alternative to skins of captive bred tigers."

Figures from TRAFFIC, the wildlife trade monitoring network, show that from the turn of the millennium, at least 1590 tigers were poached around the world up to April 2014: An average of two a week.

Among the 13 countries with native tiger populations, numbers are increasing in India and Nepal, which do not have tiger farms, said Ms Banks. But in Laos, Vietnam, Thailand and China, where tigers can legally be bred for commercial purposes, wild populations are struggling.

At the same time captive tiger numbers are soaring in China, with up to 6000 - twice the global wild population - in about 200 farms across the country.

Used for entertainment when the tigers are alive, what happens to the skins and bones of animals that die in captivity is a murky issue.

Tiger bones have long been an ingredient of traditional Chinese medicine, supposedly for a capacity to strengthen the human body.

China banned trade in tiger bones in 1993, but the law is regularly flouted, campaigners say. Legislation is



A Siberian tiger hunts a chicken released by a gamekeeper to entertain visitors at the Siberian Tiger Park in Harbin, northeast China's Heilongjiang province on January 6. Photo: AFP

also unclear on whether cats bred in captivity are considered endangered in China, and there is little regulation around what needs to be declared when they die.

The animal is considered a symbol of prestige for many in China, with tiger pelt rugs sought-after luxury

items, along with tiger bone wine. Bottles labelled with tiger images sell for nearly 5,000 yuan (\$800) at the park shop in Harbin.

Chinese tiger purchases came under scrutiny at an anti-poaching conference in Nepal earlier this month that was attended by around 100 ex-

perts, government and law officials from tiger habitat nations.

Campaigners say that the mere availability of "farmed" tiger products fuels the demand, which Mike Baltzer, leader of the WWF Tigers Alive Initiative, described as "so huge that it's very difficult to address the issue". - AFP

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Dated: 16 February 2015

SEOUL

'Nut rage' heiress jailed

THE daughter of Korean Air's chair was jailed for one year on February 12 over a now-notorious on-board "nut rage" incident that triggered an uproar over the behaviour of South Korea's elite business families.

Prosecutors had demanded a three-year sentence for Cho Hyun-Ah, who was a Korean Air executive vice president at the time and was charged with violating aviation safety law, obstructing justice and assaulting a member of the cabin crew.

The charges all stemmed from an incident in which Ms Cho forced the chief purser off a December 5 New York-Seoul KAL flight, compelling the taxiing plane to return to the gate so he could disembark.

The 40-year-old had taken exception to being served macadamia nuts she had not asked for, and that they were provided in a bag, not a bowl.

The district court in Seoul ruled that Ms Cho had illegally altered the course of the plane, judging that an aircraft was "in flight" from the moment it begins to move.

Ms Cho had treated the flight "as if it was her own private plane", justice Oh Sung-Woo said. "It is doubtful that the way the nuts were served was so wrong," Mr Oh added.

In passing sentence, the judge indicated that Ms Cho had failed to show enough remorse for her actions, even though she had submitted some letters to the court expressing repentance for her behaviour.

Ms Cho, who has been in custody since her arrest on December 30 and attended the court in a green prison outfit, stood silently throughout the ruling, her head bowed.

She had pleaded not guilty to most of the charges, including physically assaulting the chief steward, Park Chang-Jin, who says she made him kneel and beg for forgiveness while jabbing him with a service manual.

The case triggered a huge public



Cho Hyun-Ah, daughter of Korean Air's chief executive, arrives for questioning at the prosecutors' office in Seoul on December 17, 2014. Photo: AFP

backlash.

Ms Cho was seen as emblematic of a generation of spoilt and arrogant offspring of owners of the giant family-run conglomerates, or *chaebols*, that dominate the South Korean economy.

Like Ms Cho, many are given senior positions in the family business, sometimes after a token period "learning the trade".

In the past, *chaebol* owners have appeared to be above the law. Those

convicted of gross fraud have either received lenient sentences or been granted pardons after just a short time in jail. Mr Cho resigned from all her posts and publicly apologised for her behaviour, which her father and KAL chair Cho Yang-Ho also criticised as a "foolish act".

The story hit international headlines and Mr Oh said in his ruling that it had "damaged the dignity of the country". - AFP

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BANGKOK

Debts dragging down Thai families

SINKING in heavy repayments to loan sharks, Non says payday is nothing more than a cruel reminder of his dire finances.

Household debt has surged to alarming levels in Thailand - just one of a welter of issues dragging on the economy despite a vow by the ruling junta to revive the kingdom's fortunes.

"I have more outgoings than income," Non, a 37-year-old tyre factory worker said from his modest family home on the outskirts of Bangkok.

"Each month, 30 to 40 percent of my salary goes solely toward repaying the interest on my loans," he adds.

Thai households are among the region's biggest borrowers. A credit binge has been stoked by populist policies and low bank interest rates and also by low wages that keep the poor perilously close to the bread-line and make them ready bait for illegal loan sharks.

The debt levels are worrying the generals who seized power last May promising to end a near-decade of political turmoil and restore zip to Thailand's once-dynamic economy.

The country narrowly avoided recession during protests against the ousted administration of Yingluck Shinawatra, which paralysed government spending and frightened off tourists and investors.

Nine months after the military power grab, signs of economic recovery are still few with fourth-

quarter GDP figures, to be released this week, expected to come in at around 0.8 percent for 2014.

There is some good news, with tourism arrivals bouncing back despite martial law, and exports - which account for around 60 percent of the economy - showing a slight improvement.

Yet two key Thai commodities - rice and rubber - are currently at record low prices and the country is flirting with deflation. And with the political outlook still uncertain, consumer confidence remains depressed as Thais hold off from buying flats, cars and durables.

At the heart of that malaise lies Thailand's eye-wateringly high household debt.

"Thailand has seen one of the sharpest surges in household debt in the region, with the debt-GDP ratio rising from 60 percent to 85pc over the past five years," Krystal Tan, an analyst with Capital Economics, said.

Low interest rates and widespread access to credit through banks and illegal loans have led to a deeply ingrained culture of borrowing over the past decade.

But policies by the previous government, including a huge tax rebate scheme for first-time car buyers, have also encouraged millions to take out loans that they are now struggling to repay.

Now the junta, which has pushed back the timeline for a restoration of democracy until 2016 and pegged its legitimacy to steering an economic revival, has voiced its concerns over the debt ratio.

"Please refrain from racking up debts," junta leader Prayut Chan-O-Cha told viewers in a recent edition of his weekly televised address, warning mounting bills "may slow down the country's progress".

Non's family is typical of those living beyond their means.

In 2011, the region was hit by huge floods that destroyed their fridge, television and furniture.

Non borrowed to replace those items, partly from his bank, but



A slum resident walks past shacks and a board advertising luxury apartments in Bangkok, on January 26. Photo: AFP

mostly from illegal loan sharks who charge interest rates of between 10 - 20pc.

He just about managed his debts until the factory cut his hours as the economy slumped.

Now, he needs to find 20,000 baht (US\$610) each month to pay his bills. But his salary brings him just 14,000 baht. So the debts keep mounting.

It is a story all too familiar to Suthila Leenkam from a local non-governmental organisation the Arom Pongpangan Foundation.

"The debt situation is getting worse. It leads to more family problems and to more divorces because

people are in debt," she said.

Analysts tip the government to spend its way out of trouble, despite a vow to tighten the purse strings after what it says were years of profligacy from elected civilian governments.

The military has promised to unleash billions of dollars on much-needed infrastructure projects.

But the money is yet to kick into the economy. As Barclays Capital put it in a note last month, "The main impediment to growth at present is the slow pace of fiscal spending, which is also delaying investment and consumption decisions."

Earlier this month, the finance minister said he had been told by Mr Prayut to aim for at least 4.0 pc GDP growth this year.

But the World Bank says growth will only hit 3.5pc in 2015 and 4.0pc next year.

Already squeezed by months of bad economic news, those at the bottom of the ladder are hoping for an upturn in fortunes.

"Working-class Thais, like vendors and workers, struggle to earn enough money and their incomes are no longer sufficient to cover their expenses," said Narong Petprasert, economics professor at the University of Bangkok. - AFP

'Please refrain from wracking up debts ... [it] may slow down the country's progress.'

Prayut Chan-O-Cha
Junta leader

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Photo: Naing Wynn Htoon



Photo: Staff



Photo: Naing Wynn Htoon



Bring on the lions

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LEAPING and swinging from pole to pole up to 7 feet off the ground, acrobats competing in Yangon's annual lion dancing contest are the highlight of Chinese New Year celebrations set to draw crowds of thousands this week.

Upper Sint Oh Dan street, running through Chinatown, will be closed each evening from February 20 to 24 as teams of dancers, in their elaborate lion costume regalia, usher in the Year of the Sheep with their heart-stopping two-man aerial hopscotch performed across a grid of some 40 poles.

No wonder that the teams, representing various districts of Yangon's ethnic Chinese community, pray at the nearby temple beforehand and are heralded by drums and firecrackers warding off evil spirits. "It's very dangerous and some do get hurt in rehearsals," says Shwe Kyar of the Myanmar Dragon and Lion Dancing Association Group, organisers of the event marking its 10th year.

The first day of the lunar new year - known to the Chinese as the "spring festival" - falls on February 19, and lion and dragon dancers will be busy across Chinatown performing at the paid invitation of businesses and individuals seeking good fortune - and publicity - for the year ahead.

At the lower end of Sint Oh Dan, the Chinese temple of Kheng Hock Kheong is preparing for an onrush of dancers, drummers and worshippers on the evening of February 18. New Year's eve is when families come to pray to Taoist and Buddhist deities after a "reunion" dinner at home, considered the most important meal of the whole year and usually featuring fish and dumplings symbolising surplus and wealth.

First built in 1861, in the period when large numbers of Chinese migrated to then-Rangoon in the early years of British rule, the temple with four dragons on its peaked roof is administered by representatives of 24 clans hailing originally from China's Fujian province.
Elder clan

members like Lin Qingji speak their local Hokkien dialect amongst themselves, as well as Myanmar and standard Chinese but, as one youthful temple cleaner admitted, some of the younger generation speak only Myanmar, a sign of how the ethnic Chinese community is parting with its roots despite the reopening of private schools to keep their language alive.

It is almost noon and the temple elders are ready to hold prayers for spirits of the dead who have no descendants to do so instead. Inside, workers are cleaning and painting. Assembled donations include fish, chicken, roast pork, moss, rice cakes, dumplings, uncut noodles and fruit.

Mr Lin and three other elderly temple trustees talk about ensuring that this year's celebrations are more splendid than ever, believing that their spirits and ancestors will bring them good fortune in the new Year of the Sheep. "We are concerned just for our religion and New Year. We are not interested in politics," says Mr Lin with a laugh.

The narrow sidewalks on Mahabandoola Road are jammed with New Year shoppers stooping beneath hanging red lanterns, buying lucky red clothing as well as gold-coloured paper and fake US dollar bills to be burned in the temples for the spirits of their ancestors. But traders lament that business has fallen since last year or is stable at best. One woman selling knick-knacks ranging from plastic gold-coloured sheep to traditional red envelopes for giving money to youngsters to New Year rice cakes said it was her "worst year ever". She put it down to astrological reasons. Some said it was the worsening traffic.

Others, however, blamed the sense of economic malaise on uncertainty surrounding this year's parliamentary elections. The manager of one cafe also suggested that rising resentment in Myanmar toward certain China-backed corporations over controversial projects was also dampening New Year preparations, causing some members of the Chinese community to advocate more low-key celebrations.

"This year business is not as good as in previous years. Last year we didn't have a chance to sit down," said one storekeeper, speaking in Chinese and Myanmar. "My mother and I and three employees were busy with customers but now I don't need to hire extra help. Business is cold and I think it is the economic situation in the country."

But there is also the worry that the younger generation of Yangon's Chinese community are less interested in their traditions than their parents and grandparents.

All the same, Mr Shwe Kyar, organising the lion dance competition, is confident that this year will be the most successful so far, to be measured in part by the amount of donations they receive for the prize money, which last year totalled US\$5700.



Photo: Staff

Deitta Gallery opens with award-winning Iranian exhibition

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MYANMAR Deitta, a not-for-profit organisation that supports documentary photography, film and multimedia projects related to Myanmar and its people, will open its new exhibition space the Deitta Gallery on February 16.

In collaboration with Yangon Photo Festival the gallery, located on 44th Street in downtown Yangon, will open with Iranian photographer Fatemeh Behboudi's award-winning series "Mothers of Patience", including a projection of "Iranian Fathers and Daughters" by Nafise Motlaq.

Myanmar Deitta's director, Matt Grace, said getting the new gallery - housed on the third floor of a creaking building - ready for the first exhibition had been a "long process" but said he was looking forward to the opening.

"We want to make the gallery more of a community space, where people can hang out and meet each other. We also want to develop a library and working space," he said.

Matt Grace first came to Myanmar in 2010 and says that, while the number of documentary photographers and filmmakers in

Myanmar remains relatively small, the documentary arts have enjoyed a greater degree of freedom since the 2011 reforms.

"People feel more secure in pushing the boundaries now - especially in filmmaking and documentaries. In the past when there were a lot more restrictions in terms of censorship and travel, it was a lot more difficult for people to cover certain issues. The kind of work that we're promoting, people are just a lot more able to do it now," he said.

Documentary filmmaking has played a key role in the struggle for democracy in Myanmar, with films such as the 2008 award-winning Danish film *Burma VJ: Reporting from a closed country* - which follows the 2007 political uprisings against the military regime in Burma - broadcasting around the world. But Grace said that, while photography and filmmaking "are very very strong tools for political activism if people want to do that", he does not think artists should have to make a political statement.

"Documentary filmmaking can be a social tool for empowerment or advocacy, but that doesn't have to have anything to do with politics," he said.

The new gallery will host documentary photography

exhibitions and screenings of documentary films and multimedia. In March, Myanmar Deitta will exhibit work by Myanmar street photographers in collaboration with Yangon Arts and Heritage Festival. The gallery will also host workshops for photographers, filmmakers and multimedia practitioners.

"We're looking at bringing in more photographers from outside of Myanmar to teach here," said Grace.

The new space is an exciting addition to Yangon's burgeoning arts scene, and is already generating a buzz among Yangon's arty crowd. But Grace said he was not able to

say what the future of the project will look like.

"I've never really known what's going to happen next or where it's going to go," he said. "The country is in a transitional phase. Everything is going to change in the next two, three, five years."

.....
Fatemeh Behboudi's "Mothers of Patience" will open on February 16 at 6:30pm. The exhibition will be open to the public Tuesday to Saturday from 10am until 5pm until the end of February at The Deitta Gallery on the 3rd Floor of 49, 44th Street (lower block).



The new Deitta Gallery will open on February 16. Photo: Supplied

Japanese artist brings moving art to Myanmar

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A BEACH, shrouded in mist, transforms before our eyes as the clouds part to reveal waves lapping the shore under a glimmering sun.

This is just one of the "moving" artworks on display at the ArtGrage exhibition being hosted at the Golden Butterfly hotel in Bahan until April. The artwork - patented by Japanese artist Kazuo Nakano - is defined as composite art, which brings together ultraviolet and incandescent lamps, music, and scent to produce the effect of movement.

"We don't know if people here will like this style of art or not, but we want to introduce our moving art to Myanmar as there has never been anything like this in the country before," said Kazuo Nakano.

Nine brush works are on sale for US\$1100 each. In Japan, the works sell for around \$8000, but the artists decided to create a lower priced collection for the Myanmar market which doesn't use the same level of technology as the Japanese paintings, explained exhibition organiser U Hla Win. "ArtGrage is currently adding some new pieces to the collection which will use scent to really bring the scenes to life," he said.

Well-known collectors of Kazuo Nakano's artwork include Micheal Jackson, Queen Elizabeth II, former US president Bill Clinton and Saudi Arabia's King Salman.

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Pictured here, with glasses, is IGT's CSR Manager Tin Tun Zaw with a group of headmasters and staff from various schools in Upper Myanmar at the Myanmar Times new Mandalay Bureau.

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LOS ANGELES

Sam Smith dominates Grammys, but Beck scoops surprise win

SHAUN TANDON

SAM Smith, the British soul singer who was virtually unknown a year ago, dominated the Grammys on January 8 with four awards, although adventurous rocker Beck was the surprise winner of Album of the Year honours.

Superstar Beyonce and "Happy" creator Pharrell Williams also took home top prizes on the music industry's biggest night, which was marked by displays of artist activism against domestic violence and police brutality.

The 22-year-old Smith took home three of the night's most prestigious trophies - Record of the Year, Song of the Year and Best New Artist - as well as Best Pop Vocal Album.

Smith, who until recently was working as a bartender in London, on stage thanked the man he fell in love with last year and who inspired "Stay With Me" - his mega-hit ballad about a one-night stand.

"Thank you so much for breaking my heart because you got me four Grammys," Smith said to applause.

Smith has refrained from on-stage theatrics and has walked a fine line in

his personal life, acknowledging his sexual orientation while striving not to be identified exclusively as a gay artist.

He earned an ovation at the Staples Center in Los Angeles when he performed his signature tune in his rich, soulful tenor voice with Mary J Blige.

"Before I made this record, I was doing everything to try to get my music heard. I tried to lose weight and ... I was making awful music," said Smith.

"It was only until I started to be myself that the music started to flow and people started to listen. So, thank you guys for accepting me to be just me."

Smith was prevented from a clean sweep of the top categories by Beck, whose introspective *Morning Phase* - full of lush orchestration around his acoustic guitar - won the Album of the Year prize.

Beck, who also won Best Rock Album, has for two decades been known for his inventive and often ironic style which has won him critical acclaim and a cult following, if not the mainstream success usually recognised by the Grammys.

Beck's award was presented by the often-elusive Prince who, sporting a futuristic orange suit and carrying a staff, pointedly spoke out against a series of killings of African Americans that has galvanised public opinion.

"Like books and black lives, albums still matter," Prince said.

The theme was echoed throughout the evening. The rapper Common referred to the tensions with police in Ferguson, Missouri, as he joined John Legend in singing "Glory", which is featured in the new historical film *Selma*.

And Williams turned "Happy" - what had been a straightforward ode to joy - into a more political track.

With his back-up dancers wearing hoodies, Williams led them in a "Hands Up, Don't Shoot" gesture - a subtle protest against police shootings of African Americans.



Sam Smith poses in the press room with his four Grammys during the 57th annual Grammy Awards in Los Angeles, California, on February 8. Photo: AFP/Frederic J. Brown

Williams also took the funky pop song in a new direction, with dark classical strings and a piano interlude by Lang Lang - as well as stylistic references to the irony-rich film *The Grand Budapest Hotel*.

US President Barack Obama also appeared unexpectedly on an overhead screen to urge action to stop violence against women.

Saying that more than one in four women has experienced abuse, Obama declared, "It's not okay. It has to stop."

Beyonce won awards for Best R&B Song and Best R&B Performance with "Drunk In Love", her tale of marital bliss sung with her husband Jay-Z, as well as for the more technical Best Surround Sound Album.

With the latest honour, Beyonce has won 20 Grammys - topping Aretha Franklin for the woman with the second biggest all-time haul, although still well behind the country star Alison Krauss at 27.

"This has been such an incredible year. I love you all. I'd like to thank my beloved husband. I love you deep," she said.

The 33-year-old singer offered some of her most personal work on her latest, self-titled album, which she recorded in secret and released with no previous publicity in December 2013.

Williams took home prizes for Best Pop Solo Performance and Best Video for "Happy", as well as Best Urban Contemporary Album honors for *Girl*.

Roseanne Cash - the daughter of folk legend Johnny Cash - took home awards in three Americana categories in her first Grammys since 1985.

Eminem won for *The Marshall Mathers LP 2*. It is the record sixth time that Best Rap Album has gone to Eminem, the top-selling hip-hop artist of all time.

Iggy Azalea, a white Australian who has become a cultural flashpoint for performing in an African American accent, was one of the night's big losers, nominated in four categories and winning none. - AFP



Beyonce performs onstage during the 57th annual Grammy Awards in Los Angeles, California, on February 8. Photo: AFP/Larry Busacca

'Like books and black lives, albums still matter'

Prince

Survivor-turned-activist Brooke Axtell told the audience how she let a seemingly "handsome, charismatic man" abuse her, before Katy Perry sang an unadorned rendition of "By The Grace of God".

Madonna - who was furious last month when songs from her upcoming album leaked - performed her new song "Living for Love" on a Valentine's Day-red themed stage with ram-horned dancers.

HAPPY CHINESE NEW YEAR 2015 春

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Fashion Focus



Local designers turn heads at International Fashion Week

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OH my dears, I couldn't begin to tell you how simply tempestuous these last few days have been. But February 6, 7 and 8 were without doubt the busiest days so far this year for the aficionados of fashion and their dedicated followers.

The scene was, if you need to be told, Dagon City 1, the occasion Myanmar International Fashion Week 2015 and, as for who was there, well, that would be everyone. Everyone, that is, who can be counted as anyone in our hot and frantic world of fashion, gathered to view and critique the threads created by local designers, popular fashion brands and overseas designs.

It was no contest, however. Honours were divided between the Thai menswear brand dVIS and our own Mogok Pauk Pauk, between them the cynosure of all eyes. But I get ahead of myself.

On day one, the Pandora women's lace boutique show shimmied onto the catwalk at 7:30pm, a mere 90 fashionable minutes late. We spent that thumb-twiddling hour and a half slyly checking out each other's togs before the advertised event finally began. Frothy creations in light green, purple,

yellow, pink, white, red and black with lace trimmings got our critical juices flowing. The 40 confections that gladdened our eyes in that 15 or 20 minutes were for floatiness and flounciness unparalleled, not least because the models were so stunning.

Poor May Myat War So's collection, which followed, did not make such a splash. Obviously, everyone was polite. But what was with all those sequins? And if there was a theme to her show, I the mutterings of those around me told me I was not the only one who failed to grasp it.

But on to the main action. Mogok Pauk Pauk revived us with a dazzling display of summer wear. The crowning glory was his use of a chiffon and floral motifs in pastel that, quite literally, turned heads.

"His collection gave me such a feeling of freedom," said Myo Thant, 28. "This is really an amazing design for fashion week."

The models helped him steal the show, almost dancing in their display, like splendidly attired agricultural goddesses against a background of ancient Roman temples.

By now it was after 10pm. The last show of the first day was Phyo Pyae; a simple and unassuming offering, short and long dresses in white, silk and other materials, more sequins. In all, a glass of water after a sumptuous feast.

Day two was big name time, bringing us Lee Cooper, bYSI, Spike, and Yes I Do wedding dresses. And the last day produced one of last year's hottest male fashion week designers, Min Khant, who got the fashion front-row drooling once again with his collection of baggy dresses in black and white silk. It could be the stuff of dreams.

Second up was Iora women's wear for office work, and then Bossini for all ages and genders.

For the crowning finale, John Lwin - owner of Star Event Productions and fashion week organiser - presented dVIS. Local and Western models appeared in stylishly tailored coats and pants, as well as a modern twist on the traditional longyi.

This killer production really hit the spot.

Here's the thing: according to the program, each of these shows was supposed to last an hour, but most lasted about 15 or 20 minutes. Most of the rest of the time was taken up with the tiresome repetition of advertisements for the sponsors.

Let me say that fashion week 2015 was better than last year's, or the year before that. Stage preparation, lighting and sound were all superior. Audience reaction shows we can all stand a great deal more of this kind of thing.



Photos: Thiri Lu

Unicorn colour hits the red carpet

Forget the dresses, it was the hair that got the style set's tongues wagging at last weekend's Grammy Awards in Beverly Hills. With blue, green, violet and silver tresses making their way onto the red carpet, music's A-list were embracing what the fashion world has dubbed the "unicorn hair colour" trend. Any colour goes, as long as it's bright, bright or bright. Proving a purple rinse isn't just for old ladies, Katy Perry and Kelly Osbourne showed off their violet locks, while Chris Rock and Frankie J Grande showed that even men can rock the unicorn trend.



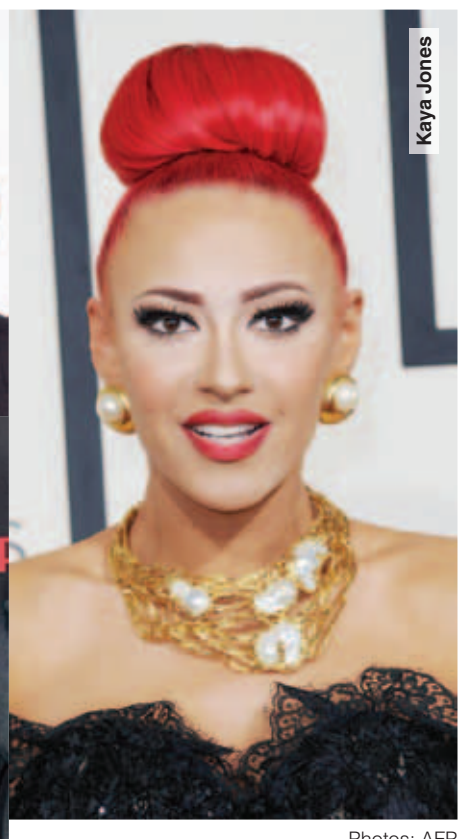
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Frankie J Grande



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AQUARIUS | Jan 20 – Feb 18



Don't turn a temporary advantage into a permanent incompatibility or disappointment. You can't drop a stone in the water without making waves. Get better deals by drawing on who you know rather than what you know. This week is the time to stop procrastinating and make your action plan. See beyond tomorrow and look before you take action.

PISCES | Feb 19 – March 20



Time is the most precious commodity you don't own. Even if you can't keep it, you can use it; but if you waste it, you can never recover it. You should learn more about the value of tacit agreements in friendship, and in your love life. In both of these you need to build a model of harmony and happiness in relationships. The man nearest to you may be your nearest enemy.

ARIES | Mar 21 – Apr 19



Discouragement promotes inaction and inaction guarantees nothing but a life of ignorance. Do not confuse a drop of melancholy with persistent depression. This week, focus on developing self-discipline. It may appear as self-limitation but the wise know it is self-expansion. Limit yourself wisely, and you will see your value reflected in the favour of others.

Music awards give nod to traditional artists

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THE summer instalment of the Myanmar Music Awards 2014 – part of the Three Seasons Music Awards honouring Myanmar musicians – will be held at Myanmar Event Park in Yangon on February 20. This follows last October's Monsoon Music Awards.

The ceremony, organised by composer Shwe Jaw Jaw's Beautiful Noise Art Group, will see the presentation of an award for Myanmar traditional music in addition to 20 other prizes recognising outstanding artists. "I urged the Myanmar Music Award organisers to consider including a traditional music award. There were many traditional albums released in 2014, and if the talent of these artists can be recognised with awards, it will encourage them to continue what they are doing. I don't want traditional music to disappear," said Lei Lei, a well-known traditional music singer and one of the judges of the 2014 awards.

The winner will be chosen by two teams of judges, who will spend a month considering almost 400 songs from a total of 64 albums.

"The judges' final decision will be sent to the awards committee and will be confirmed when the committee agrees," Lei Lei said.

"Pure traditional music is actually very rare: Most artists mix their songs with Western music. But mixed songs will be accepted in the traditional music category," she added.

Six People's Choice awards will be chosen using an online and SMS voting system. The People's Choice categories will include the Myanmar traditional music award, Best Pop Music award, Best Rock award and Best Rap award.

Shwe Jyaw Jyaw, the founder of the awards, said almost 100 judges will select the winning artists.

"We don't just judge songs on quality – we also take note of whether or not they are plagiarised. Credit will be given to artists who produce their own music over those who copy other music," he said.

TAURUS | Apr 20 – May 20



Nothing will improve a person's hearing more than the praise of others. Never underestimate the impact of the law of unintended consequences. Be clear in your communication with others when a challenge arises around the 19th. Don't sacrifice a meaningful life just for the sake of earning a living. Focus your energy this week on developing your romantic relationship.

GEMINI | May 21 – June 20



Turning yourself into an optimist is the touchstone of effective living. Make a habit of asking yourself questions that have never occurred to you before to eliminate all blame and fault-finding in your life. Someone close to you has given cause for mistrust of late, but allow them the benefit of the doubt for now. Six will be a lucky number for you this week.

CANCER | June 21 – July 22



Value self-development, and pursue self-management through self-mastery. Pay conscious attention to feedback and course correction. Great changes are coming your way this week: Overcome them through risk-taking. Realise the potential that you had not even recognised was in you. Expand your thinking and acquire incredible insights.

LEO | July 23 – Aug 22



Your enthusiasm and energy levels are high at present, but you should know the value of calm and quiet to be good at stimulating ideas. Be assertive in expressing your ideas and show your emotions with your open-minded nature. Don't take things too seriously but be flexible. Avoid a disagreement later in the week by putting your brain in gear before your mouth takes off.

VIRGO | Aug 23 – Sept 22



Tension is necessary to all growth. Know that happiness is a by-product and clarity means understanding yourself and your life. Learning how to get along well with someone so different from yourself is a great achievement. Remember that manly men and womanly women come with a price. Don't judge a book by its cover on the 20th.

LIBRA | Sept 23 – Oct 22



A poor man who can make himself satisfied with his portion will be better than a wealthy man who deprecates his portion. Do not allow dissatisfaction to make you unhappy. You may be feeling the pressure at work, but stay positive about your ability and do not allow others' negativity to cloud your thoughts.

SCORPIO | Oct 23 – Nov 21



Consider the mental programming that lies behind your conversations and actions. Learn by listening, looking with your own eyes, discussion and the lessons of history. You ought to live your life in cycles of planning, doing your best and reflecting with emotional power. This week, ensure you give your social relationships the time they deserve. Throw a party.

SAGITTARIUS | Nov 22 – Dec 21



Asking important questions is part and parcel of the logical construction of an exploratory new venture. Sometimes the questions you ask are worth more than the answers you receive. Whether the glass is half-full or half-empty depends on how you allow yourself to analyse your experiences. What may seem like bad luck now will lead to positive changes in the future.

CAPRICORN | Dec 22 – Jan 19



Today is the age of knowledge and the most powerful source of illumination is wisdom. Take up an opportunity to learn something new mid-week, and you will light up not only your physical world, but also the world of the mind and the spirit. Don't lose your grip on organisation and keep your eye on the ball.

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What's on

ART

Feb 7-15 "Watercolour 2015." Featuring over 40 paintings by master watercolour painters Moe Nyo, Khin Maung Zaw, Myint Naing and Aung Sint. Gallery 65, 65 Yaw Min Gyi Road 10am-6pm

Feb 13-20 "Love Umbrellas," by graffiti artist Arkar Kyaw. Junction Square, Kyun Taw Road, 9am-9pm
Feb 13-21 7th Yangon Photo Festival. Exhibitions and events at Institut Francais and other venues across the city. A program of events can be found at www.yangonphoto.com

Feb 16-28 "Mothers of Patience." Photography by award-winning Iranian photographer Fatemeh Behboudi as part of the Yangon Photo Festival (see page 46). The Deitta Gallery, 3rd floor, 49, 44th Street (lower block). Tuesday-Saturday 10am-5pm
Until April Moving art by Japanese artist Kazuo Nakano (see page 49). Golden Butterfly Hotel, Kabar Aye Pagoda Road, Bahan

FILM

Start times at Mingalar (1, 2), Top Royal, Shae Shaung (1, 2) and Nay Pyi Taw cinemas are 10am, 12:30pm, 3:30pm, 6:30pm and 9:30pm.

Start times at Junction Square and Junction Maw Tin are 9:30am, 12:30pm, 3:30pm and 6:30pm daily and 9:30am, 12:30pm, 3:30pm, 6:30pm 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 *Rock Angel*. Directed by Puttipong Pomsaka Na-Sakonakorn. Thai drama.
The Taking of Tiger Mountain. Directed by Tsui Hark. Hong Kong-Chinese 3D epic.
I Fine Thank You Love You. Directed by Mez Tharatorn. Thai comedy drama.
Mingalar Cinema 1, near Theingyi Zay, Latha

FEBRUARY 16 - 22

Got an event? List it in What's On! whatsonmt@gmail.com

The Taking of Tiger Mountain.
Mingalar Cinema 2, at Dagon Center 2, Myaynigone
The Taking of Tiger Mountain.
Shae Shaung Cinema, Sule Pagoda Road, Kyauktada
Unbroken. Directed by Angelina Jolie. American biographical war drama.
Project Almanac. Directed by Dean Israelite. American science-fiction thriller.
Junction Square Cineplex, Kamaryut
Jupiter Ascending. Directed by Lana and Andy Wachowski. Space opera.
Junction Mawtin, Lanmadaw
Jupiter Ascending.
Mingalar San Pya Cineplex, Phone Gyi Street and Anawrahta, Lanmadaw
Rock Angel.

MUSIC

Feb 16 Monday Blues. Mojo Bar, 135 Inya Road, Bahan, 9:30-11:30pm

MISC

Jan 7-Feb 28 Myanmar cultural show. An enchanting evening of Myanmar performing arts, taking you on a journey into the very heart of Myanmar history and culture. Sein Lann So Pyay Garden, Inya Road, Kamaryut 7-9pm. Tickets US\$13-19

Feb 16 Trivia night. Free beer pitcher for round winners and winning team gets a K30,000 bar tab. 50th Bar, 50th Street (lower block).

Feb 17 Gallery conversation and drinks. Pansodan Gallery, 289 Pansodan Street, Kyaukada, 7pm-late

Until Feb 27 Funky Friday Disco Night, dance the night away with Latin expert dancer Gisbrt music by DJ Bay Tar, Free Entrance, Club Rizzoli, Chatrium Hotel, 42, Natmauk Road, Tamwe township, 7pm



Restaurant leftovers is given to animals, used as compost or, in some places, eaten by hungry staff. Photos: Aung Htay Hlaing

Waste not, want not

ZON PANN PWINT
zonpann08@gmail.com

If you don't finish the food on your plate, someone else might do it for you.

What happens to leftovers in restaurants? Some goes to feed the hungry in food banks, soup kitchens and shelters; some to raise animals; some is composted; and some ends up as landfill.

Daw L Bawk Nu, owner of Jing Hpaw Myay Kachin restaurant, usually parcels up leftovers to take home and give to the security guards who guard her apartment block. Or she might leave it in the street for stray dogs.

"My customers usually eat everything we serve, or ask for their leftovers to be bagged up. But sometimes, if the staff don't eat the leftovers, I take them home," she said.

"There are many hungry people in Yangon, but no organisation that will collect leftover food to distribute to them. If there was, I would give it

to them," she added.

Oliver E Soe Thet, president of the Myanmar Chefs' Association, said the top priorities of food recovery are reducing waste, feeding the hungry and raising animals, followed by industrial use, composting and landfill.

"People know that leftovers can go to feed the pigs or the goats. But they don't usually see leftovers as fertiliser," he said.

Waste food also includes used oil, fats and vegetable scraps like stems, pips, rinds and expired food.

"Keep a corner in the garden where you can put this kind of waste, and cover it with sand or soil. It makes excellent fertiliser," he said.

While the best hotels and restaurants provide their staff with a canteen, ensuring they need not eat leftovers, waiters in smaller establishments might well do so. Others give it away as animal feed, and some will even feed the scraps to their own pigs.

And at some places, says Oliver E Soe Thet, hungry waiters will

actually scoff the best part of a guest's meal between kitchen and table. "This is not good etiquette," he observes.

"Today many hotels and restaurants feed their staff well. When Traders [now Sule Shangri-La] and Sedona Yangon opened in 1996 with more than 700 staff, they had a great staff canteen," he said.

Monsoon restaurant strictly forbids staff to eat leftovers.

"It's against international standards. If a waiter thinks he can share a guest's lobster, he might neglect his duty to serve at the table, or even steal away with the plate before the guest has finished," said Daw Phyu Phyu Tin, the restaurant's owner-manager.

But staff are allowed to take home food left over from a buffet.

Otherwise, pig breeders will come to take away stored leftovers. "Many restaurants give leftovers to pig breeders. I was once asked to donate mine to the Yangon Animal Shelter, but they couldn't collect," she said, adding that the set menu was an effective way of reducing waste.

Ma Thinzar Myat Mon, marketing communications manager at Chatrium hotel, said, "At the buffet, we provide less food than normal for the number of guests, but the staff keep a careful watch, so that we can quickly prepare extra food and provide it if necessary, hot and fresh." Uneaten buffet fare can be shared with the staff, but food left on the plate is thrown away.

Ma Thinzar Myat Mon said people were now more accustomed to the buffet system. In the early days, diners would load their plates with too much food, but now they take only what they can eat, she said.

"Wasted food is wasted money," she added.



Staff at Monsoon restaurant are strictly forbidden from eating leftovers, but other restaurants allow staff to take them home.

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Photo: Phyo

PHYO ARBIDANS | phyo.arbidans@gmail.com

It is exciting to see so many restaurants serving cuisines from around the world opening in Yangon recently. I love trying food from different countries, and while I was living in Sydney I enjoyed discovering new cuisines that were not available in Myanmar at the time. When I returned to Myanmar I wanted to share my food adventures with my family and friends, which is why I started writing recipes.

My neighbours are from Lebanon, and swapping recipes with them has given me the chance to try a completely new style of cooking. Lebanese cuisine is heavy in vegetables and whole grains, which makes it perfect for non-meat eaters. The spice mixture in this week's recipe is easy to make and gives this vegetable dish an authentic Lebanese flavour. It's perfect for an easy evening meal, and the leftovers make a great lunch for the next day.

LEBANESE SPICED VEGETABLE CURRY

- 1 large eggplant
- 2 onions
- ½ medium-sized cauliflower
- 100g cabbage
- 2 large carrots
- 7 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 10-12 small okra stalks

For the spice mixture:

- 7 cardamoms
- 1 teaspoon ground allspice

- 1 teaspoon fenugreek
- 1 teaspoon cloves
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon whole black pepper corns
- ½ teaspoon ginger powder or freshly grated ginger

To make the spice mixture, mix all of the spices in a pestle and mortar and grind into a fine powder.

Dice the onion finely. Cut the carrot and eggplant into cubes about 2 centimetres in size. Next, slice the cabbage into thin strips and cut the cauliflower into small florets.

Roll the okra in a heated fry pan for 3-4 minutes. Leave them to cool before slicing them diagonally into pieces about 1 centimetre thick. Add 1 tablespoon of oil to a frying pan and sauté each vegetable separately (cauliflower, cabbage, carrots, eggplant and okra) for 3-4 minutes over a medium heat, adding more oil to the pan when necessary. When all of the vegetables have been fried, transfer them onto a plate and set aside.

Add the remaining oil to a pan and sauté the onion over a medium heat. When the onion becomes translucent, add the spice mixture and sauté for 1 minute. Next, add the cauliflower, cabbage and carrots to the pan and fry for 2 minutes. Add the eggplant and okra and fry for 2 more minutes.

Cover the pot with a lid and simmer for 5 minutes.

Serve with nan bread or chapatti with the yogurt mixture on the side.

TRADITIONAL LEBANESE YOGHURT

- ¼ cup yoghurt
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 tablespoons chopped mint

Add the yoghurt to a bowl, and drizzle the oil over. Sprinkle the mint over the yogurt before serving.

See in the new year with a Yee Sang bang at Tiger Hill

Restaurant Review

NANDAR AUNG

nandaraung.mcm@gmail.com

FEBRUARY is the fullest month, with so many events of consequence packed into its narrow span of 28 days. Begun barely last week, it's already more than half-way through, but with important milestones along the way. Here is Union Day, and here the centenary of our Bogyoke Aung San, with Valentine's Day hard upon its heels. But if you're in business, especially the restaurant business, you will have placed a particularly big red mark on your calendar for Chinese New Year.

What better time, then, to descend upon a Chinese restaurant to see how they plan to greet this festival. Welcome to Tiger Hill at the Chatrium Hotel Royal Lake, Yangon.

You can choose to sit in the main hall to surround yourself with appreciative diners, or seclude your group in a private room that can accommodate six or more.

For an auspicious start, order one of the two varieties of *Yee Sang* (raw fish salad), the good luck dish served for the lunar New Year celebrations to kick off the nine-course "Prosperity" set menu (US\$35 or \$50 per person) and other special dishes.

Our version of *Yee Sang* featured raw sea bass (note the minimum order is for six).

Yee Sang salad, double boiled chicken with Chinese herbs, Peking duck accompanied by sweet sauce, pan-fried chicken with honey sauce and deep-fried king prawns with lemon-grass sauce, steamed sea bass with Thai chilli sauce, stir-fried kailan with garlic sauce, fried rice seafood with Sichuan sauce and seasonal fresh fruit with mango pudding is the full line-up. Some might find it a little heavy toward the sweet end of the spectrum.

Let me dwell on the gateway dish, *Yee Sang*, a blend of slices of raw sea bass, shredded vegetables, herbs, spices and oil. Chinese families or

business people mark the start of a new year with a hearty *loh hei* to symbolise happiness, harmony and prosperity as they toss the salad. We drank ours with jasmine tea, but tastes may differ.

Our party sampled all the available dishes accompanied by fried rice. The chicken curry in honey sauce was just as dulcet and mellifluous as you might expect, and the fish with chilli sauce stood out from the rest thanks to its sour and hot signature notes. Some might find the sauce served with the Peking Duck a little too sugary; if so, there are plenty of other sauces in the set menu that might set it off to more savoury advantage.

The crunchiness of the prawns was not confined to the exterior, where you expect it; the interior was a bit harder than I anticipated. The chicken soup is not only delicious in its own right but, whether so intended or not, a handy dip for the stir-fried

kailan and *Yee Sang*.

And just when I thought I could eat no more, the tasty mango pudding arrived to change my mind.

This is high quality fare. And if, like me, you're a *Yee Sang* fan, you can get an alternative version with

salmon (\$35, while the seabass is \$25) as a main dish.

For the more adventurous there is an à la carte menu offering seafood, chicken, duck, pork and beef dishes at prices ranging from \$4 to \$70, as well as a dim sum buffet lunch for \$24.

So what are you waiting for? *Loh hei*.



Photos: Naing Wyn Htoon



Tiger Hill

40 Natmouk Road, Tarmwe township, Yangon, Ph: 01544400

Restaurant Rating

★★★★★

Food	7
Beverage	6
Service	6
Value	6
X-factor	7



Keekz and Jamie



Jules, Alice and Lewie



Clowning around at the circus

International performance group Serious Fun wowed a jam-packed crowd at 50th Street Bar's "Night at the Circus" on February 6. The night kicked off with an outdoor fire show before moving inside for a spellbinding show of magic, juggling and dance, complete with acrobatics performed by a charming Estonian duo.



Lydia and Judith



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Jules



MA Kyar Nyo Thwe



Jehan and friends

O Ta-Ke restaurant opening

Guests nibbled on Japanese snacks served by staff in traditional kimonos at the opening ceremony of new Japanese restaurant O Ta-Ke at Kandawgyi Palace on February 6.



Su Myat and Kate




Ko Thant Htoo Myat and Ma Su Myat



Myanmar Int'l Fashion Week 2015

Myanmar International Fashion Week 2015 saw fashion lovers flocking to the new Dagon City 1 to view creations by local and international designers.




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DOMESTIC FLIGHT SCHEDULES

YANGON TO NAY PYI TAW				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
FMI A1	1,2,3,4,5	7:15	8:15	
FMI B1	1,2,3,4,5	10:45	11:45	
FMI C1	1,2,3,4,5	17:00	18:00	
FMI A1	6	8:00	9:00	
FMI A1	7	15:30	16:30	

YANGON TO MANDALAY				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
Y5 775	Daily	6:00	7:10	
YH 909	1,2,5,6	6:00	7:40	
YH 917	3	6:10	7:40	
YJ 891	Daily	6:00	8:05	
K7 282	Daily	6:00	8:10	
YH 917	1,2,4,5,6,7	6:10	8:30	
YJ 811	3	6:45	8:10	
W9 201	Daily	7:00	8:25	
YH 835	1,7	7:00	8:40	
YH 826	3	7:00	8:40	
YH 831	4,6	7:00	8:40	
7Y 131	Daily	7:15	9:20	
K7 266	Daily	8:00	10:05	
8M 6603	4	9:00	10:10	
YJ 211	5,7	11:00	12:25	
YJ 601	6	11:00	12:25	
YJ 201	1,2,3,4	11:00	12:25	
YH 911	2	11:00	15:30	
YJ 761	1,2,4	11:00	12:55	
YJ 233	6	11:00	12:55	
YH 729	2,4,6	11:00	14:00	
YH 829	5	11:00	15:05	
YH 737	5	11:15	13:25	
YH 727	1	11:15	13:25	
W9 251	2,5	11:30	12:55	
YH 737	3	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	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	
7Y 241	Daily	14:30	16:25	
YH 731	1	15:00	17:10	
Y5 234	Daily	15:20	16:30	
W9 211	4	15:30	16:55	

YANGON TO NYAUNG U				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
K7 282	Daily	6:00	7:20	
YJ 891	Daily	6:00	7:20	
YH 909	1,2,5,7	6:00	8:25	
YH 917	3	6:00	8:25	
YH 909	3	6:10	7:45	
YH 917	1,2,4,5,6,7	6:10	7:45	
YH 881	7	6:30	7:50	
YH 909	4,6	6:30	8:05	
YJ 881	1,2,4,5	6:45	8:05	
YJ 801	6	7:00	8:20	
K7 242	Daily	7:00	8:20	
7Y 131	Daily	7:15	8:35	
7Y 121	1	8:20	9:40	
Y5 649	Daily	10:30	11:50	
K7 264	Daily	14:30	16:40	
7Y 241	Daily	14:30	17:10	
YH 731	2,3,4,6,7	15:00	17:55	
YH 731	3	15:15	18:10	
W9 129	1,3,6	15:30	17:35	
W9 211	4	15:30	17:40	

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	
YH 829	5	11:00	13:40	
YJ 201	1,2,3,4	11:00	13:50	

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	

MANDALAY TO YANGON				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YH 910	1,2,3,5,7	7:40	9:45	
Y5 233	Daily	7:50	9:00	
YJ 891	Daily	8:20	10:15	
YJ 811	3	8:25	10:20	
K7 283	Daily	8:25	11:30	
YH 918	1,2,4,5,6	8:30	10:45	
W9 201	Daily	8:40	10:35	
YH 918	3	9:10	11:05	
7Y 132	Daily	9:35	11:30	
K7 267	Daily	10:20	12:25	
YJ 761	4	13:10	17:00	
YH 836	1,7	13:20	14:45	
YH 832	4,6	13:20	14:45	
YH 827	3	13:20	14:45	
YH 738	3	13:40	18:05	
YJ 212	7	15:00	16:25	
YJ 212	5	15:00	17:05	
YH 830	5	15:05	18:55	
YH 912	2	15:30	17:25	
YJ 202	2,4	15:30	16:55	
YJ 202	1,3	15:30	17:35	
YJ 602	6	15:40	17:35	
YJ 762	1,2	16:35	18:00	
7Y 242	Daily	16:40	18:45	
YH 728	1	16:45	18:10	
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	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	5	17:25	18:50	
K7 623	1,3,5,7	17:40	19:05	
YH 730	2,4,6	17:45	19:10	
YJ 234	6	17:45	19:10	
W9 252	2,5	18:15	19:40	

NYAUNG U TO YANGON				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YJ 891	Daily	7:35	10:15	
YH 918	1,2,4,5,6,7	7:45	10:45	
YH 910	6	8:05	9:25	
YH 910	4	8:05	10:10	
YJ 881	7	8:05	10:10	
YJ 881	1,2,4,5	8:20	10:25	
YH 910	1,2,5,7	8:25	9:45	
YH 918	3	8:25	11:05	
YH 801	6	8:35	9:55	
K7 242	Daily	8:35	11:45	
7Y 131	Daily	8:50	11:30	
YH 910	3	9:35	10:55	
7Y 121	Daily	9:55	14:10	
K7 283	Daily	10:10	11:30	
Y5 650	Daily	13:55	15:15	
K7 265	Daily	16:55	18:15	
7Y 242	Daily	17:25	18:45	
W9 129	1,3,6	17:50	19:10	
YH 732	1,2,4,6,7	17:55	19:15	
YH 732	3	18:10	19:30	

MYITKYINA TO YANGON				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YJ 202	2,4	14:05	16:55	
YJ 202	1,3	14:05	17:35	
YH 836	1,7	11:55	14:45	
YH 832	6	11:55	14:45	
YH 827	3	11:55	14:45	

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

YANGON TO HEHO				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YJ 891	Daily	6:00	8:50	
K7 282	Daily	6:00	9:00	
YH 909	3	6:10	8:40	
YH 917	1,2,4,5,6,7	6:10	9:35	
YH 917	3	6:10	9:55	
YH 909	4	6:30	9:00	
YH 633	5	6:30	9:05	
YJ 881	7	6:30	8:45	
YJ 811	3	6:45	8:55	
YJ 881	1,2,4,5	6:45	9:00	
K7 242	Daily	7:00	9:15	
7Y 131	Daily	7:15	10:05	
K7 266	Daily	8:00	9:15	
7Y 121	Daily	8:20	10:35	
Y5 649	Daily	10:30	12:45	
YH 505	1,2,4,5,6	10:30	11:55	
YJ 751	3,7	10:30	11:40	
YJ 761	1,2,4	11:00	12:10	
YJ 751	5	11:00	12:10	
YJ 233	6	11:00	12:10	
YH 505	3	11:15	12:40	
YH 727	1	11:15	12:40	
YH 737	5,7	11:15	12:40	
YH 737	3	11:30	12:55	
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 264	Daily	14:30	15:45	
7Y 241	Daily	14:30	15:40	
YH 731	1,2,4,5,6,7	15:00	16:25	
YH 731	3	15:15	16:40	
W9 129	1,3,6	15:30	16:40	

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	

YANGON TO SITTWE				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
W9 309	1,3,6	11:30	12:55	
K7 422	Daily	13:00	14:55	

YANGON TO THANDWE				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
K7 242	Daily	7:00	10:35	
YH 505	1,2,4,5,6	10:30	13:10	
YH 505	3	11:15	14:05	
W9 309	1,3,6	11:30	13:50	
7Y 122	Daily	12:15	13:05	
K7 422	Daily	13:00	13:35	
Y5 421	1,3,4,6	15:45	16:40	

YANGON TO DAWEI				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
K7 319	2,4,6	7:00	8:10	
7Y 531	1,5	7:00	7:48	

YANGON TO LASHIO				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YJ 751	3	10:30	12:45	
YJ 751	5	11:00	13:15	
YH 729	2,4,6	11:00	13:00	
7Y 741	1,5	11:30	13:18	
K7 828	1,3,5	12:30	14:50	

YANGON TO PUTAO				
Flight	Days	Dep	Arr	
YH 835	1,7	7:00	11:00	
YH 831	4,6	7:00	11:00	
YH 826	3	7:00	11:00	
W9 251	2,5	11:30	15:25	

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	1,2,3,4,5,6	18:20	20:15	
PG 704	7	19:30	21:45	
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	1,2,3,4,5,6	16:45	17:35	
PG 703	7	17:55	18:45	
TG 305	Daily	18:05	18:50	
8M 332	Daily	19:20	20:05	
PG 705	Daily	20:15	21:30	

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	2:35	
SO 997	Daily	10:25	15:10	
3K 582	Daily	11:45	16:20	
MI 533	2,4,6	13:35	20:50	
MI 519	Daily	16:40	21:15	
3K 584	2,3,5	19:30	0:10+1	

SINGAPORE TO YANGON				
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr	
TR 2822	Daily	7:20	8:45	
Y5 2234	Daily	7:20	8:50	
SO 998	Daily	7:55	9:20	
3K 581	Daily	9:10	10:40	
MI 533	2,4,6	11:30	12:45	
8M 232	Daily	13:25	14:50	
MI 518	Daily	14:20	15:45	
3K 583	2,3,5	17:20	10:40	

YANGON TO KUALA LUMPUR				
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr	
8M 501	1,2,3,5,6	14:00	18:00	
AK 505	Daily	8:30	12:45	
MH 741	Daily	12:15	16:30	
8M 9506	Daily	12:15	16:30	
MH 743	Daily	16:00	20:15	
8M 9508	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 9505	Daily	10:05	11:15	
8M 502	1,2,3,5,6	19:10	20:10	
8M 9507	Daily	13:55	15:05	
MH 742	Daily	13:55	15:05	
AK 502	Daily	17:20	18:25	

YANGON TO BEIJING				
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr	
CA 906	3,5,7	23:50	05:50+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 415	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	04:59+1	

YANGON TO SEOUL				
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr	
OZ 770	4,7	0:50	8:50	
KE 472	Daily	23:55	07:45+1	

SEOUL TO YANGON				
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr	
KE 471	Daily	18:30	22:30	
OZ 769	3,6	19:30	23:40	

YANGON TO HONG KONG				
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr	
KA 251	Daily	1:10	05:25	

HONG KONG TO YANGON				
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr	
KA 252	2,4,6	22:20	00:15+1	
KA 250	1,3,5,7	21:50	23:45	

YANGON TO TOKYO				
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr	
NH 914	Daily	22:10	06:45+1	

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	
PG 724	1,3,5,6	12:50	14:45	
8M 7702	Daily	23:55	07:45+1	

INCHEON TO YANGON				
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr	
PG 723	1,3,5,6	11:00	11:55	
8M 7701	Daily	18:30	22:30	

YANGON TO CHIANG MAI				
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr	
Y5 251	2,4,6	6:15	8:05	
7Y 305	1,5	11:00	12:50	
W9 607	4,7	14:30	16:20	

CHIANG MAI TO YANGON				
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr	
Y5 252	2,4,6	9:25	10:15	
7Y 306	1,5	13:45	14:35	
W9 608	4,7	17:20	18:10	

YANGON TO GAYA				
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr	
8M 601	1,3,5,6	10:30	11:50	

GAYA TO YANGON				
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr	
8M 602	1,3,5,6	12:50	16:00	

MANDALAY TO BANGKOK				
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr	
PG 710	Daily	14:15	16:40	

BANGKOK TO MANDALAY				
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr	
PG 709	Daily	12:05	13:25	

MANDALAY TO SINGAPORE				
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr	
MI 533	2,4,6	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	2,4,6	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 =

Universal Crossword

Edited by Timothy E. Parker

THREE CCs By Kimberly Grant

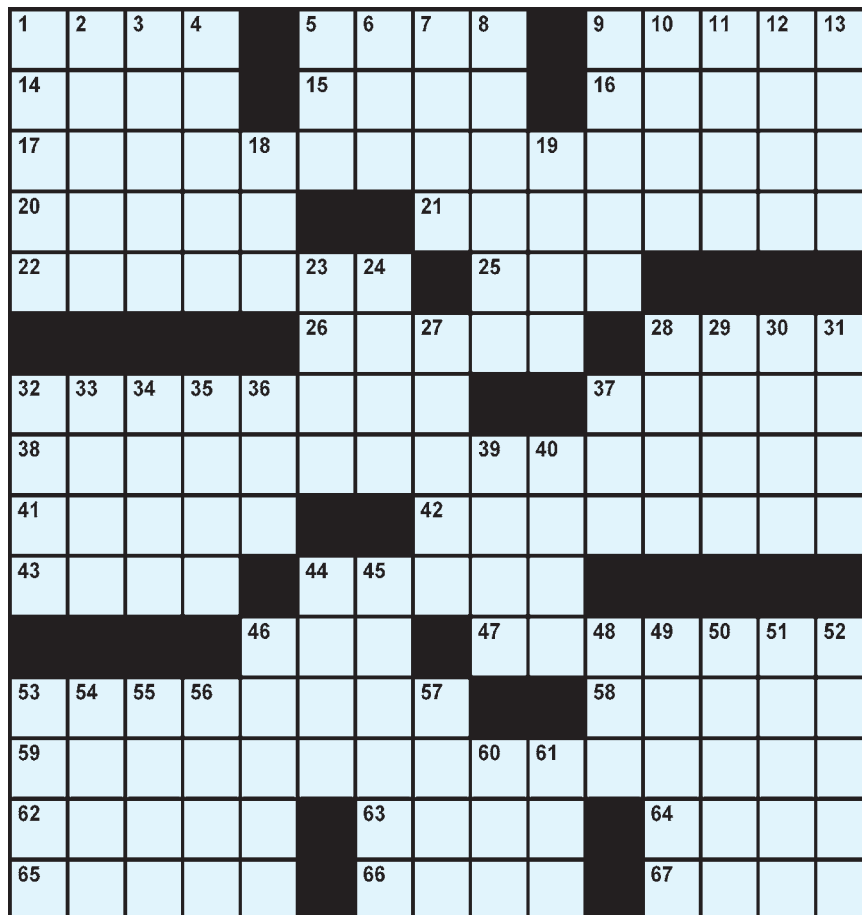
ACROSS

- 1 Minute components, briefly
- 5 Wasn't up to date?
- 9 Turn on the ignition
- 14 Crowning
- 15 Competitor
- 16 Prohibited
- 17 Small quahog
- 20 Where to see some chaps
- 21 Symbols of power
- 22 Accedes
- 25 "___ a Rebel" (1962 Crystals hit)
- 26 ___ down (watered)
- 28 Metrical foot in poetry
- 32 Persuade with flattery
- 37 Low-budget film, often
- 38 Well-being contributor
- 41 Illegal lending practice
- 42 Calms
- 43 Extinct birdbrain?
- 44 Very small serving
- 46 Comrade
- 47 Last in a series
- 53 Strong shore embankments
- 58 Flight seating option
- 59 Metric measurement
- 62 Face the day
- 63 Cheap trinket
- 64 Barely beats
- 65 They're drawn to the flame
- 66 Ham's companions
- 67 Overfeed

- 10 Negotiator's skill
- 11 Up for the job
- 12 Mufasa's response
- 13 Male turkeys
- 18 "Anchorman" title character
- 19 Financial aid basis
- 23 One grand, for short
- 24 Glide like a hawk
- 27 Eyeglasses, in slang
- 28 Press release contents
- 29 Ruckuses

- 30 Deep, soft mud
- 31 "All ___ are off!"
- 32 Type of missile
- 33 About
- 34 Bitter quarrel
- 35 Tropical edible root
- 36 Where slop is served
- 37 Troublesome sprite
- 39 Dove's shelter
- 40 1976 horror hit (with "The")
- 44 After-bath powder
- 45 Make a claim
- 46 Takes measured steps

- 48 Aswan, for one
- 49 Dignified manners
- 50 Ancient Roman port
- 51 "George Washington ___ here"
- 52 Monosyllabic, perhaps
- 53 Act of deception
- 54 100 cents, abroad
- 55 Not much
- 56 Penny-in-the-well accompanier
- 57 Hidden catch
- 60 Pull lightly
- 61 Bartender's requests, sometimes



DOWN

- 1 Pelvic bones
- 2 Moral character
- 3 Certain college students
- 4 Buying binge, e.g.
- 5 Leafy climber
- 6 Certain sibling, for short
- 7 Cross-court items?
- 8 Throat lozenge
- 9 Instructional units

DILBERT

BY SCOTT ADAMS



PEANUTS

BY CHARLES SCHULZ



CALVIN AND HOBBS

BY BILL WATTERSON

SUDOKU PACIFIC

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains every digit from 1 to 9 inclusively.



2/19

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

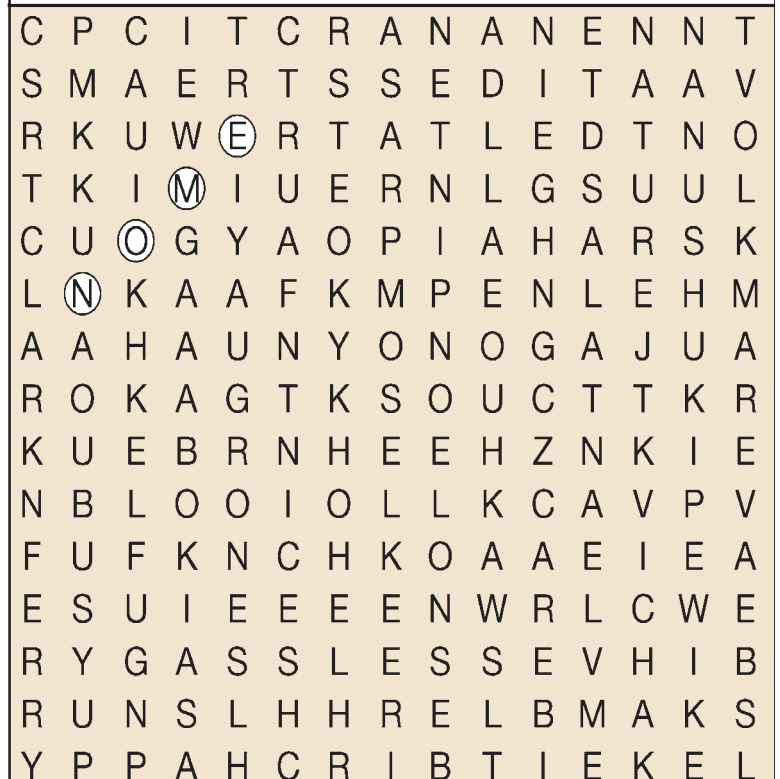
WONDERWORD

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD. The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

ALASKAN WATERWAYS

Solution: 7 letters



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2/16

Alatna, Aleknagik, Alsek, Ambler, Arctic, Azun, Beaufort, Beaver, Birch, Blue, Chena, Clark, Copper, Delta, Eagle, Echooka, Ferry, Fish, Fortymile, Happy, Hess, Ipewik, Jago, Kongakut, Kuna, Kvichak, Lakes, Lowe, Nanushuk, Nature, Nenana, Nigu, Nome, Nuka, Ocean, Paw, Rivers, Streams, Stuyahok, Tanana, Tatshenshini, Tides, Tiel, Vessels, Volkmar, Yukon

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PUZZLE SOLUTIONS



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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@drangun. 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 7, Gandamar St, Yankin 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 1/2 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, Fax: 650306

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, Malikka 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, kyauktada. Tel: 375527-32, kyauktada@unicef.org.

UNODC 11-A, Malikka 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 Myanmar Agriculture Service Insein Rd, Insein. tel: 641672, 641673.

General Listing

ACCOMMODATION-HOTELS



Asia Plaza Hotel YANGON

No. 277, Bogyoke Aung San Road, Corner of 38th Street, Kyauktada Township, Yangon, Myanmar. Tel : (951) 391070, 391071. Reservation@391070 (Ext) 1910, 106. Fax : (951) 391375. Email : hotelasiplaza@gmail.com



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society.org (1)**NATIONAL Mine Risk Education Coordinator** (Yangon) 1 Post (2) **Mine Risk Education Coordinator** (Myitkyina) 1 Post (3)**Supporting Officer** (Lashio) 1 Post. Please send application letter, CV & related documents to Myanmar Red Cross Society (Head Office) Yazatingaha Rd, Dekkhinathiri, Nay Pyi Taw. Ormrshrrecruitment@gmail.com, myanmarredcrosssociety.org

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(1) **MARKETING Manager** - F 5 posts Must be interesting in real estate business, age between 25 to 35, good looking (2) **Computer** - F 3 posts word, Excel, page maker, photo shop (3) **Driver** - M 3 posts 5 years license, Age between 30 to 45 years old. contact phone : 09-4201-14749, 09-4211- 77105.

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 - Flexible, pleasant personality & good interpersonal skill. Hospitality industry background is preferable.
 - Fair knowledge of spoken & written English.
 - Able to work overtime upon work requirement.
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 - Hospitality industry background is preferable.
 - Positive attitude & minimum (1) year experience in reception.
 - Computer literate & age (20-30) years.
 - Good appearance shall be preferred.

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Dated. 16th February, 2015

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ANALYSIS

Golfer Tiger Woods (left) and skier Lindsey Vonn of the US talk after her second run during the 2015 World Alpine Ski Championships women's giant slalom in Beaver Creek, Colorado, on February 12. Photo: AFP

Woods can turn around his golf game, but how much does he want to?

SALLY JENKINS

TIGER Woods is not taking a break from the PGA Tour to fix a hitch in his golf swing. He's taking a break to fix the hitch in his head. The issue is not so much how to hit the golf ball, but whether he wants to hit it at all. When a guy who famously hates public life gives formal media interviews about his "deactivated glutes", you get the feeling he's looking for an out. Translation: "I think I'd like to go home and sit for awhile."

What's really wrong with Woods is that he hasn't been practising. No skilled professional's short game goes this far wrong if he's been working at it. When you start skulling the ball across the green, that's less a mechanical issue than a result of spending more time in places like Cortina d'Ampezzo than on the golf course. There is nothing wrong with that, either. Woods is 39, and he's earned some time in the Alps.

Apparently one of the things Woods is attempting to figure out is whether, for the first time in his life, he can play world-class tournament golf without being a raging narcissist. There was an oddly conflicted and revealing clause in his statement announcing a leave of absence from the PGA Tour on February 11. "Right now, I need a lot of work on my game, and to still spend time with the people that are important to me," he said.

Woods used to practise so obsessively that he would play 54 holes in a single day. At his peak in 2005 he played 26 tournaments worldwide. But in the decade since, he has played in 20 tournaments just three times. Some of those absences were results of injuries to his knee and back, of course. But it's also a fact that he's in a love affair with globe-travelling skier Lindsey Vonn, and is a father to two soccer-playing children.

"I would say I practise much less now," Woods acknowledged a couple of weeks ago. "One, I've been hurt, and two, I want to spend as much time as I can with my kids."

Woods appeared in just 11 tournaments worldwide in the past year. Of those, he withdrew from three, and missed the cut in three. He has fin-

ished 72 holes in a tournament just four times.

Part of his struggle is undoubtedly about adapting to swing changes, but he also appears to be struggling with a sheer lack of enthusiasm. It's never clear anymore when Woods's grimaces on the golf course are from pain or frustration. He walks a course almost glumly, clad in grays and browns, as opposed to his old triumphantist weekend uniform of red shirt and black trousers. His recovery shots, the stingers and lashed woods out of the rough are just bright glancing moments amid a grind.

When a player of his calibre shoots a career-worst 82 to miss the Phoenix Open cut by 12 strokes, and then cites a tight butt in withdrawing on one of his favorite courses, Torrey Pines, the

When a player of his calibre ... cites a tight butt in withdrawing on one of his favorite courses, Torrey Pines, the issue is not wholly physical.

issue is not wholly physical. The issue is loss of conviction. Woods's vulnerability is an about-face from the days when people wondered whether his playing partners shot three shots worse just because they were intimidated. Behind any kind of athletic conviction is conditioning: the knowledge that you've done the work. For the first time in his career, Woods hasn't done the work. And it's not just because he has been unable to, but also because he has been unwilling to.

Oh, he has fiddled with his swing. He has broken it down and built it back up again with Sean Foley and now Chris Como. He has revamped himself so completely that the Golf Channel's Brandel Chamblee believes he has compromised his natural swing

with over-analysis, and that's certainly a factor. Woods has uttered a lot of confusing illogic in trying to explain why he has struggled to break 80. He says he's "caught right between patterns, just old pattern, new pattern". About those ghastly wedge shots: "Because of my old pattern, I was so steep on it, that I have a new grind on my wedge and sometimes it's hard to trust. This is a similar grind I used to use back in the early 2000s, but it's a different grind."

But the truth is, if Woods decided to just get comfortable and hit it, his swing would be fixed.

Woods said in his statement on February 11, "I am committed to getting back to the pinnacle of my game." But the next sentence he left open ended. "I won't be there unless my game is tournament-ready. That's not fair to anyone."

He is going back home to Jupiter, Florida, to practise and prepare for the rest of the season, he said. But isn't that what he was supposedly doing these past few months? It's difficult to see how chipping in his backyard and doing laps around his 3.5-acre private practice area, which includes four greens, a wedge range and his own hitting bay, is going to get him tournament-ready. As Woods himself said a few days ago, "You've got to get out there and do it. Hitting golf balls is one thing and playing golf at home is another. Playing tournament golf is entirely another."

Woods is not caught in between swing patterns so much as he's caught in between his reluctance to spend hours on the golf course these days and his old competitive instincts and acute embarrassment at playing poorly. He wants to play well but is no longer sure he wants to do the obsessive work it takes.

Woods certainly has earned the right to be less committed to golf. He's a buttoned-up man who has been competing on a bad knee for several years. Prodigydom is a lifelong struggle for physical health and mental balance. In addition to a broken-down body, Woods apparently is now dealing with a somewhat weary mind. The question is not whether he can fix his swing. It's whether, if he can't play at the level to which he's accustomed, he wants to play at all. - *The Washington Post*

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IN PICTURES

Players warm up ahead of a football match in Tedim, northern Chin State, on February 10. The town, at an altitude of 1662 metres (5452 feet), hosted teams from nearby villages last week for a tournament in honour of the centenary of Bogoyoke Aung San's birth.

Photos: Wade Guyitt

Chelsea and Everton charged after Bridge battle

CHELSEA and Everton have been charged by the Football Association with failing to control their players, but Branislav Ivanovic won't face punishment over his clash with James McCarthy.

Blues defender Ivanovic tangled with Everton midfielder McCarthy during a mass brawl after Toffees star Gareth Barry was sent off in the 86th minute at Stamford Bridge on February 11.

A panel of former referees studied the incident, in which Ivanovic was accused of butting McCarthy on the back of his head, but decided it was

not worthy of a red card.

The FA also investigated claims made on social media that Ivanovic had bitten McCarthy. The organisation studied all video footage and contacted Everton, and found conclusively he had not done so.

However, both clubs face disciplinary action for "failing to ensure their players conducted themselves in an orderly fashion and/or refrained from provocative behaviour".

The two clubs have until February 17 to respond to the charge.

Regarding Ivanovic, an FA statement read, "Chelsea's Branislav Ivanovic will

not face any further action in relation to an incident involving Everton's James McCarthy in the 86th minute.

"In Premier League matches, if an incident has not been seen by the match officials, a three-man panel of former elite referees will be asked by the FA to review it and advise what, if any, action they believe the match referee should have taken had it been witnessed at the time.

Chelsea boss Jose Mourinho had threatened to walk out of his post-match media conference when asked about the possible head-butt by Ivanovic. - AFP

RIO DE JANEIRO

Brazil proposes Manaus for Olympic football

BRAZIL World Cup stadium Manaus will, subject to FIFA approval, host matches at next year's Rio de Janeiro Olympic Games, the 2016 organising committee announced on February 12.

The inclusion of the Amazon jungle venue follows the example of London 2012 where the football competition held games in provincial cities including Glasgow, Cardiff and Newcastle.

"Nothing is more emblematic than Amazonia," said organising committee chair Carlos Nuzman, who added the Olympics must be the "Games of Brazil" and not just Rio as the tournament comes to South America for the first time.

Manaus' Amazonia Arena was the scene of England's first-round loss to Italy, one of four World Cup games staged in the city.

Last month, Nuzman said FIFA had voiced concern over whether pitches in Rio and fellow World Cup venues Brasilia, Belo Horizonte, Sao Paulo and Salvador would stand up to multiple use in early Olympic rounds.

That prompted the host nation to propose using more cities, and on February 12 Manaus was officially put forward as a sixth venue.

Nuzman said the matter had been discussed at length but that to date FIFA had given "no indication, either in favour or against" the proposal. A definitive decision is due by August.

There have been fears in Brazil that the Amazonia Arena, built at a cost of US\$270 million, would end up as a "white elephant" as the northern state boasts no top-flight football club to fill the swanky, basket-shaped ground holding 41,000.

"We shall now work with FIFA to ensure these cities are approved,"

said Jose Maria Marin, president of the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF).

Rio state governor Luis Fernando Pezao expressed confidence that the tournament will leave "a great legacy".

Pezao also alluded to public worries about the cost of hosting sports events, which prompted nationwide demonstrations going into last year's World Cup, insisting that infrastructural investments for the World Cup and the Olympics "are for the benefit of the population".

The overall infrastructure budget for the Games will be \$10.76 billion with private funding due to cover an operating budget of \$2.45 billion.

'We shall now work with FIFA to ensure these cities are approved.'

Jose Maria Marin

Brazilian Football Confederation

With 16 men's teams and 12 women's team due to contest the Olympics, the current four-city structure could mean some stadiums hosting more than one match a day during the August 3 to 19 football event.

The women's qualifiers kickoff on August 3, with men's action starting a day later as Brazil's men target a crown still to elude the five-time world champions after their 2012 final defeat by Mexico at Wembley.

Rio's legendary Maracana, which hosted Germany's World Cup final win over Argentina in July, is scheduled to host semi-final and final matches. - AFP



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New Zealand abuzz over Cricket World Cup

Rugby takes a rare backseat as nation prepares for tournament

ORGANISERS say New Zealand was buzzing with excitement ahead of the Cricket World Cup, the largest sporting event held in the South Pacific nation since rugby union's showcase tournament in 2011.

New Zealand is co-hosting the event with Australia and will stage 23 games in seven cities, including two quarter-finals and a semi.

"Interest is building really rapidly," said Sports Minister Jonathan Coleman.

"The Black Caps have had a great summer. We've sold more than 300,000 tickets of the 400,000 available in New Zealand. It's all go. People are really excited about the tournament, about the visitors coming here, and we're quietly optimistic about the Black Caps chances."

The tournament is a rare moment in the spotlight for cricket, a sport that comes a distant second to rugby union in the popularity stakes of a land obsessed with the mighty All Blacks.

Instead, last weekend's launch of the Super 15 rugby season was overshadowed as pundits and talkback radio callers debated the composition of the New Zealand pace attack in the tournament's opening game against Sri Lanka on February 14.

"You go around the beaches and the parks and there's kids and families playing cricket," New Zealand Cricket chief executive David White said.

"We've worked really hard on engaging with the public. It's really gotten momentum in the country and there's a real buzz in New Zealand at the moment."

ICC CRICKET WORLD CUP 2015			
Calendar			
Date	Teams		Venue
February 14	Sri Lanka v New Zealand		Christchurch, NZL
14	England v Australia		Melbourne, AUS
15	South Africa v Zimbabwe		Hamilton, NZL
15	India v Pakistan		Adelaide, AUS
16	West Indies v Ireland		Nelson, NZL
17	New Zealand v Scotland		Dunedin, NZL
18	Bangladesh v Afghanistan		Canberra, AUS
19	Zimbabwe v UAE		Nelson, NZL
20	England v New Zealand		Wellington, NZL
21	Pakistan v West Indies		Christchurch, NZL
21	Australia v Bangladesh		Brisbane, AUS
22	Sri Lanka v Afghanistan		Dunedin, NZL
22	South Africa v India		Melbourne, AUS
23	England v Scotland		Christchurch, NZL
24	West Indies v Zimbabwe		Canberra, AUS
25	Ireland v UAE		Brisbane, AUS
26	Afghanistan v Scotland		Dunedin, NZL
26	Sri Lanka v Bangladesh		Melbourne, AUS
27	South Africa v West Indies		Sydney, AUS
28	Australia v NZealand		Auckland, NZL
28	India v UAE		Perth, AUS

Source: ICC Cricket World Cup 2015



The 2011 Rugby World Cup remains the largest event ever staged in New Zealand, generating 1.35 million ticket sales and attracting 133,000 international visitors.

The New Zealand leg of the cricket tournament has 400,000 tickets and is expected to bring in more than 30,000 visitors, mostly from England and India.

Tourism Industry Association of

New Zealand chief executive Chris Roberts said it was similar in scale to a British and Irish Lions rugby union tour.

"But then you've got New Zealand appearing every night in news bulletins in India and all these other countries. You can't buy that type of exposure," he said.

Former New Zealand batsman Mark Greatbatch said holding

events in Christchurch was particularly pleasing as the city was unable to host matches for the Rugby World Cup in the wake of a devastating earthquake that killed 185 people.

"It's amazing to have games in Christchurch because back in 2011 they lost the World Cup rugby," he said. "They've also had a really tough time, so to have the opening game there is going to be special."

Adding to the excitement this year is the fact that New Zealand are viewed as genuine contenders to lift the trophy, rather than their normal status as plucky underdogs.

Cricketing legend Ian Botham is among those tipping New Zealand to go all the way for the first time after falling six times at past tournaments in the semi-finals.

While for most Kiwis the 2011 Rugby World Cup is the most fondly remembered sporting event the nation has hosted, Black Caps captain Brendon McCullum is looking back to 1992 for inspiration.

That was the last time New Zealand co-hosted the Cricket World Cup, when Martin Crowe's unfancied team caught the nation's imagination with a giant-killing run to the semi-finals, toppling Australia, India, South Africa and England on the way.

"We've got fond memories of that campaign and how it captivated New Zealand," said McCullum, who was a 10-year-old at the time.

"The manner in which that team played, the innovation and sheer passion, resonates throughout this squad. It'd be great if we could get on some sort of roll as well and try to captivate the nation like they did." - AFP

U-20 World Cup draws announced

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MYANMAR has secured a draw in Group A of the FIFA Under-20 World Cup, placing them in the same group as host nation New Zealand for the tournament that will be held from May 30 to June 20.

The group also includes the United States and Ukraine. The official draw ceremony was held in New Zealand on February 10, and the 24 teams were drawn into six groups of four.

The first-round matches to be played in Auckland, Wellington, Hamilton, Dunedin, New Plymouth and Christchurch.

Myanmar U-20 team striker Than Paing said after the results were announced that the other teams in their group were very strong, but Myanmar would do their best.

"We need to watch videos of our opponents playing in matches so we can prepare to meet them in the World Cup," he said.

Myanmar will face the United States in their opening match on May 30, followed by Ukraine on June 2 and New Zealand on June 5.

The winner and runner-up in each group, as well as the best four third-place teams, will advance to the round of 16.

As preparation for the World Cup, Myanmar's U-20 team will compete in the Three Nations Tournament against Fiji and Uzbekistan at Mandalay Thiri Stadium in Mandalay from February 15 to 19.

After the tournament ends, Myanmar will participate in joint training in England, Germany and Australia in the lead-up to the World Cup.

Last October, Myanmar's U-20 team participated in 2014 AFC U-19 Championship and qualified for the 2015 FIFA U-20 World Cup after reaching the semi-finals stage.

The competition in New Zealand marks the Myanmar U-20 team's debut in World Cup competition.

- With AFP

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