

Fisheries exports continue to sink

INSIDE BUSINESS



Robot dog days

INSIDE THE PULSE



HEARTBEAT OF THE NATION

500 Ks.

MYANMAR TIMES

WWW.MMTIMES.COM

DAILY EDITION

ISSUE 2 | TUESDAY, MARCH 10, 2015



PAGE

2

PHOTO: ZARNI PHYU

At Shwedagon, a gold rush

A four-yearly call for donations to gild Shwedagon Pagoda has received a massive response from the public, with trustees expecting to place 16,000 new plates on the Buddhist landmark this year – four times what they had previously anticipated. While the thinnest plates weigh just 1 tical (0.576 ounces), the heaviest weigh up to 60 ticals and are valued at about K36 million.

A man attaches a donated gold plate to Shwedagon Pagoda.

NEWS 3

More delays for migrants

Hundreds of thousands of Myanmar workers in Thailand face an uncertain future following delays to a planned verification program.

BUSINESS 8

Conflict weakens trade

Fighting in northeastern Shan State has hit Myanmar's trade with China, with transportation costs rising due to safety concerns following attacks on trucks.

Concerns over Daiwa role in stock exchange

Japanese company has been a long-time backer of Myanmar's stock exchange push but some are concerned that it could be taking on too many roles ahead of this year's launch. BUSINESS 8

AIR CONDITIONERS (Fixed Speed / Inverter Model)



Split Type



Ceiling-cassette Type



Ceiling-suspended Type



Ceiling-concealed Type



City Multi Type

PME Co., Ltd. ISO 9001:2008

Yangon Showroom : 01-202117
Nay Pyi Taw Showroom : 09-49202185
Mandalay Showroom : 02-33506

Govt reveals \$928m plan to develop agriculture industry

HTOO THANT

newsroom@mmtimes.com

NEARLY a billion US dollars is being invested in projects to support agricultural development, parliament heard yesterday. Deputy Minister for Agriculture U Ohn Than told MPs that US\$927.786 million would be spent on 16 agricultural projects.

Foreign financial aid would fund 12 of the projects, and the remaining four would be funded by loans, he said.

The 2012 Farmland Law allowed foreign investment flow into the agricultural sector, on which more than 70 percent of Myanmar's population depends. But investment has been limited because of the loss of farmland tenure, high land prices driven by speculation and the weakness of the rule of law, said Pyithu Hluttaw representative Thura U Aung Ko from Chin State's Kanpetlet township.

More than 70 percent of foreign investments go to extracting natural resources such as oil, gas and mining, but just 1pc has gone to agriculture, he said.

The deputy minister told parliament that the government had met throughout last year with 65 foreign companies prepared to put capital into agriculture.

Foreign investment is low because of discrepancies between the Foreign Investment Law and the Vacant, Fallow and Virgin Lands Management Law, he said. The Foreign Investment Law allows an initial 50 years of investment, while the land management law allowed a maximum of only 30 years.

China, Thailand, South Korea and Japan invest in the agricultural sector. China has invested in sugarcane and fruit plantations in the north, whereas Thailand has invested in vegetable and fruit plantations in Nay Pyi Taw and Shan State.

South Korea has invested in plantations in Nay Pyi Taw, and Japan in fruit plantations and establishing cold storage systems in Nay Pyi Taw.

— Translation by Thiri Min Htun



Gold rush at Shwedagon as donations soar

AUNG KYAW MIN

aungkyawmin.mcm@gmail.com

GENEROUS donors are showering Shwedagon Pagoda with gold. The nation's premier religious site, and its most popular tourist destination, is to receive 16,000 new gold plates this year instead of the 4000 its trustees had expected.

The gold surface of the great pagoda is refurbished every four years to counteract weather damage. The surge in offerings this year will allow the board of trustees to resurface much more of the bell-shaped edifice than anticipated.

"We originally expected to be able to attach gold plates as far as the second circular band, but we can attach plates beyond the fifth circular band, as far as the octagonal section before the third terrace [from the top]. In the past, we would paste gold foil there. But now we have enough to put gold plates," said U Tun Aung Ngwe, deputy head of the pagoda's board of trustees.

Three methods of gilding are used: riveted gold plates, gold coating, and



A donor attaches gold plates to Shwedagon Pagoda. Photo: Zarni Phyto

gold foil, with plates being applied to the topmost levels of the pagoda and foil toward the base.

The plates normally come in a sheet of 1 square foot, or 10 square inches, and in varying thicknesses. The thinnest, of 1 tical – equal to 0.576 ounces – costs about K600,000. But

some plates come with up to 60 ticals, and are much thicker and heavier.

"Donors usually offer a square-foot plate of 1 tical. Heavier plates are mostly attached to the top of the pagoda, at the level of the banana bud. Plates with less gold are attached further down," said U Tun Aung Ngwe.

Plates of up to 6 ticals are made by the board's goldsmiths, but donors wishing to offer heavier plates can have them made by other goldsmiths, and the gift is then registered by the board.

Old plates have to be detached before new ones are attached, and the gold on them is recycled. All the related work, including the erection of scaffolding, is done by board employees.

Since donations were accepted last November, about 9000 gold plates have already been attached. The remainder will be attached no later than the first week of May.

Donors registered as of December 31 can make their donation this year, and those registered since can attach their plates over the next four years.

Donors may contribute cash, with some offering up to K10 million toward the upkeep of the pagoda.

Though donations of gold plate to the 2600-year-old pagoda have been taking place every four years, the records do not go back far enough to show how many such ceremonies have been held. — Translation by Emoon and Thiri Min Htun

US defends 'equitable' election support

Sixty-seven parties, including the Union Solidarity and Development Party, have benefited from US\$18 million election assistance program



E EI TOE LWIN

GUY DINMORE

THE US government has provided training to 67 political parties in Myanmar to help prepare a "level playing field" for general elections in November, says ambassador Derek Mitchell.

Mr Mitchell, appointed in 2012 as the first US ambassador to Myanmar in 22 years, told *The Myanmar Times* that the US had been "fully transparent" in its communications with the Union Electoral Commission and did not want to be in the position of violating the Myanmar constitution regarding the provision of foreign aid to political parties.

"We have trained 67 of 71 parties. This is pretty equitable," the ambassador said. "We think it helps provide a relatively level playing field in terms of

the technical capacity, in terms of our engagement."

A US embassy spokesperson confirmed that the Union Solidarity and Development Party, which holds a majority in parliament, was one of the 67 parties to receive US assistance.

With a budget of more than US\$18 million, the US government says its aim is to "strengthen the institutions of democracy and support civil society, political parties, the media, and government to conduct inclusive, transparent and credible elections in 2015".

"In compliance with Myanmar law, any support for political parties will continue to be offered equally to all parties," a US statement said, noting that more than 5400 members from 67 parties had already received training, and that the US had partnered with more than 50 civil society organisations.

The US and EU have invested considerable political capital in Myanmar's transition to democracy by lifting a broad range of sanctions while

impressing upon President U Thein Sein's reformist government the need to ensure free and fair elections and "an outcome that reflects the will of the people".

The ambassador's comments followed a joint statement on March 3 by the EU and six embassies in Yangon

'Our assistance aims to support and institutionalise the democratic process, and does not support any specific party or candidate.'

Statement issued by the EU and six embassies on March 3

declaring that they were coordinating their support in the run-up to the elections which the president said would be held in November.

"Our assistance aims to support and institutionalise the democratic process, and does not support any specific party or candidate," the statement said, signed by the EU, Australia, Denmark, Norway, Switzerland, the UK and the US.

However, members of some political parties have expressed uncertainty over the constitutional legality of such aid, and oversight by the UEC.

Section 407(c) of the constitution states that parties "directly or indirectly receiving and expending financial, material and other assistance from a foreign government, a religious association, other association or a person from a foreign country" can be deregistered.

Derek Tonkin, a former British ambassador to Thailand who chairs the non-profit Network Myanmar, commented that technical support for the

poll was "laudable, but eyebrows are likely to be raised over any support to political parties, even if such support 'will continue to be offered equitably' in the words of the joint statement".

"As a matter of diplomatic practice and principle, no diplomatic mission in Myanmar should be contemplating such assistance at all," he added, noting that the French, German and Italian embassies had not added their names to the statement.

Correction

In an article in yesterday's edition of *The Myanmar Times* ("Vacant seats, vacant hopes", March 9), it was incorrectly stated that one-quarter of the seats in parliament are filled by officers chosen by the army commander-in-chief. In fact the seats are chosen by the commander-in-chief of the Defence Services, or Tatmadaw, as the Tatmadaw encompasses the army, navy and air force. We regret the error.

KIO, govt leaders expected to meet this week

SECRECY surrounds a meeting that a leading peace facilitator says will be held later this week between President U Thein Sein, Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and leaders of the Kachin Independence Organisation.

According to U San Aung, a member of the Peace-talks Creation Group, a KIO delegation led by U Swan Ma Lut Gan and General Gun Maw are to meet the president and the senior general in Nay Pyi Taw "to resolve problems in Kachin State". The meeting will be held ahead of ceasefire talks scheduled to resume in Yangon on March 16, but the exact date has not yet been confirmed.

The KIO has in the past declined government invitations to functions in the capital. The ethnic armed group is said to be concerned about avoiding a repeat of last November's artillery attack by the Tatmadaw on their military academy in Laiza, in which 23 people were killed.

"The government has agreed to meet before the negotiations, and the KIO delegation will go to Nay Pyi Taw," said U San Aung.

The next round of talks on the national ceasefire agreement will start on 16 March, negotiators for both sides have confirmed.

However, neither the defence ministry nor the Myanmar Peace Center, which is hosting the negotiations, could shed any light on the meeting sought by the KIO.

Lieutenant Colonel Ye Yint Aung from the Public Relations and Psychological Warfare Department of the Ministry of Defence said the department had no information about the meeting.

U Min Zaw Oo, program director for the ceasefire negotiations, said, "We don't know where this comes from. MPC has no information."

KIO headquarters did not respond to a request from *The Myanmar Times* for additional information.



A migrant worker in Chiang Mai. Photo: Kaung Htet

Fresh delays for registration of migrant workers in Thailand

NYAN LYNN AUNG

29.nyanlynn@gmail.com

MORE than half a million Myanmar migrant workers are stuck in limbo after Thailand announced over the weekend yet another series of deadlines and registration processes for foreign workers.

The Myanmar migrants are holding a handful of temporary documents with ever-approaching expiration dates while they wait for Thailand to approve a new registration scheme.

Earlier this month, Myanmar announced plans to issue "certificates of identity" to more than 640,000 migrants and their dependents who hold temporary work permits and residency cards set to expire on March 31.

But according to the National News Bureau of Thailand, the documents are now good for another three months and subject to further extensions as Thailand's military junta undertakes yet another attempt to regularise the largely undocumented foreign labour force.

Cambodian, Laotian and Myanmar migrants who have their nationality verified by their embassy before March 31 will now be permitted to work for another two years in Thailand, according to a cabinet resolution dated March 3.

Temporary work permit holders who are not verified by March 31 will have until June 30 to apply for a year-long registration that can be extended upon completion of the national verification. Migrants who fail to meet the new June 30 deadline face the threat of arrest and deportation.

Most of the 640,000 Myanmar migrants awaiting verification are on

standby, however, awaiting a newly unveiled ID program to gain Thailand's blessing, said U Tun, a program officer at the Myanmar Migrant Workers Network.

"As far as I know, the plan is not finalised yet," he said.

The processing and waiting time for Myanmar migrants is complicated by the fact that many lack official

'Thai officials said the [registration] plan will have to be submitted to parliament.'

U Thein Win
Labour Affairs Department

identification documents from their own government. Without a national ID and Myanmar household registration, Myanmar citizens cannot obtain a passport.

The new certificate program could rectify this - but only if it allowed to get under way.

"We do not know why the Thai authorities have not approved it so far," said U Moe Gyo, chair of the Joint Action Committee for Burmese Affairs, which is based across the border in Mae Sot.

Myanmar's Labour Ministry said it is ready to begin accepting applications as soon as Thailand gives it the green light. But so far, Thailand hasn't even provided a timeline for possible approval.

"Thai officials said the plan will have to be submitted to parliament," said U Thein Win, director of the Labour Affairs Department. "So we just have to wait for that."

Team leaves to study road safety in Australia

AYE NYEIN WIN

ayenyeinwin.mcm@gmail.com

AS the death toll from road accidents continues to rise, the government is sending a high-level team to Australia to learn how to improve road safety - and save lives.

The sudden influx of new vehicles into the country following economic liberalisation has been accompanied by a wave of deaths and injuries on the country's streets and highways.

The delegation - which includes University of Medicine 1 professor emeritus U Thit Lwin; the heads of traffic police from Yangon, Mandalay and Nay Pyi Taw; director of the Road Transport Administration Department U Thaug Lwin; and No 3 Basic Education Department director Daw San San Yee - departed yesterday afternoon for Melbourne.

The group will study road safety standards in Australia, which U



U Thit Lwin, professor emeritus of the University of Medicine 1, at Yangon International Airport on March 9. Photo: Thiri Lu

Thaug Lwin said "are among the highest in the world".

"We want to learn from them how to change attitudes and behaviour in

our country. We will study Australia's methods and practices and try to apply them here as appropriate," said U Thaug Lwin said.

"In the past, most people died of natural causes. But now, road fatalities are the leading cause of death. It's partly a matter of education," he added. "We will study how Australia educated people and how they changed their mind-set."

The one-week trip to Melbourne is being funded by Yoma Strategic Holdings, Myanmar Marketing Research and Development, and the Rotary Club of Yangon. Later, the government will invite experts to advise on a road safety program here.

"We will be talking to a broad range of people, but one of our main concerns is how to educate children in road safety," said U Thit Lwin. "We will invite their experts to come to Myanmar and help us find the way to better road safety for our country."

CRIME IN BRIEF

Navy arrests cattle rustlers

Four men have been charged under the commodity and services act after they were allegedly caught transporting cattle without permission on March 8.

The men refused to stop for a surprise check when requested by Navy officials in Ayeyarwady Region. After officials captured the vessel, they found seven live cows, five dead cows and four buffaloes.

Driver hits student supporter

A man has been charged after he drove his car into an 18-year-old who was writing a message in support of student activists on Thudama Road.

The Toyota Crown hit the man while he was writing "give students their rights immediately, decry violence" on the busy road.

The victim was rushed to North Okkalapa Hospital and later transferred to Yangon General Hospital. - *Toe Wai Aung, translation by Khant Lin Oo*

MYANMARTIMES

Chief Executive Officer

Tony Child
tonychild.mcm@gmail.com

Editorial Director

U Thiha Saw
editorial.director.mcm@gmail.com

Deputy Chief Operating Officer

Tin Moe Aung
tinmoeaung.mcm@gmail.com

EDITORIAL

Editor MTE - Thomas Kean
tdkean@gmail.com

Editor MTM - Sann Oo
sannoo@gmail.com

Chief of Staff - Zaw Win Than
zawwinthan@gmail.com

Editor Special Publications - Myo Lwin
myolwin286@gmail.com

Editor-at-Large - Douglas Long
dlong125@gmail.com

News Editor MTE

Guy Dinmore
jeremymullins7@gmail.com

Business Editor MTE - Jeremy Mullins
jeremymullins7@gmail.com

World Editor MTE - Fiona MacGregor
fionamacgregor@hotmail.co.uk

The Pulse Editor MTE - Charlotte Rose
charlottelola.rose@gmail.com

Sport Editor MTE - Matt Roebuck
wadeguyitt@gmail.com

Special Publications Editor MTE - Wade Guyitt
wadeguyitt@gmail.com

Regional Affairs Correspondent - Roger Mitton
rogermitton@gmail.com

Chief Sub Editor MTM

Aye Sapay Phyu
tinmoeaung.mcm@gmail.com

Business & Property Editor MTM -
Tin Moe Aung
tinmoeaung.mcm@gmail.com

Timeout Editor MTM - Moh Moh Thaw
mohthaw@gmail.com

MCM BUREAUS

Mandalay Bureau Chief - Stuart Alan Becker
stuart.becker@gmail.com

News Editors (Mandalay) -
Khin Su Wai, Phyo Wai Kyaw

Nay Pyi Taw Bureau Chief - Hsu Hlaing Htun
hsuhlainghtun.mcm@gmail.com

DIGITAL/ONLINE

Online Editors - Kayleigh Long, Thet Hlaing
kayleighlong@gmail.com, thet202@gmail.com

PHOTOGRAPHICS

Director - Kaung Htet

Photographers -
Aung Htay Hlaing, Thiri, Zarni Phyo

PRODUCTION

Director - Zarni Phyo
zarnicj@gmail.com

Art Director - Tin Zaw Htway

Production Manager - Zarni

MCM PRINTING

Printing Director - Han Tun

Factory Administrator - Aung Kyaw Oo (3)

Factory Foreman - Tin Win

SALES & MARKETING

Deputy National Sales Directors -
Chan Tha Oo, Nay Myo Oo,
Nandar Khine, Nyi Nyi Tun

Classifieds Manager - Khin Mon Mon Yi
classified.mcm@gmail.com

ADMIN, FINANCE & SYSTEMS

Chief Financial Officer - Mon Mon Tha Saing
monmonthasaing@gmail.com

Deputy HR Director - Khine Su Yin
khinesu1988@gmail.com

Director of IT/Systems - Kyaw Zay Yar Lin
kyawzayarin@gmail.com

Publisher

U Thiha (Thiha Saw), 01021
Myanmar Consolidated Media Ltd.

CIRCULATION & DISTRIBUTION

Yangon - subscribe.mt@gmail.com

Mandalay - mdydistribution.mcm@gmail.com

Nay Pyi Taw - nptdistribution.mcm@gmail.com

ADVERTISING & SUBSCRIPTION ENQUIRIES

Telephone: (01) 253 642, 392 928

Facsimile: (01) 254 158

The Myanmar Times is owned by Myanmar Consolidated Media Ltd and printed by MCM Commercial Printing with approval from MCM Ltd and by Shwe Myanmar (P/00302) with approval from MCM Ltd. The title The Myanmar Times, in either English or Myanmar languages, its associated logos or devices and the contents of this publication may not be reproduced in whole or in part without the written consent of the Managing Director of Myanmar Consolidated Media Ltd.



Myanmar Consolidated Media Ltd.
www.mmtimes.com

Head Office: 379/383 Bo Aung Kyaw Street,
Kyauktada Township, Yangon, Myanmar.
Telephone: (01) 253 642, 253 651, 392808
Facsimile: (01) 254 158, 392 928

Mandalay Bureau: No. 20, 71st Street,
Between 28th street and 29th Street,
Chan Aye Thar San Township.
Tel: (02) 24450, 24460, 65391. Fax: (02) 74585.
Email: mdybranch@myanmartimes.com.mm

Nay Pyi Taw Bureau: No (15/496) Yaza Htarni
Road, Paung Laung (2)Q, Pinyinmana.
Tel: (067) 25982, 25983, 25309, 21426
Email: capitalbureau@myanmartimes.com.mm

KOKANG



People displaced by the fighting in the Kokang region take shelter in Mansu Shan Buddhist Monastery in Lashio, Shan State, on February 19. Photo: Zarni Phyo

Local aid group urges govt to help displaced in China

End War in Myanmar writes to government asking it to push China to allow humanitarian aid across the border



YE MON

yeemontun2013@gmail.com

ATTEMPTS to help people who have fled the fighting in Kokang to return to their homes are being hampered by continuing uncertainty in the self-administered zone in northern Shan State.

The humanitarian organisation End War in Myanmar says it will write to President U Thein Sein, Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and the speakers of parliament pleading for government assistance on behalf of Myanmar citizens who crossed the border into China to escape the conflict.

The group, which is based in Kunglong, northern Shan State, says some of the estimated 60,000 civilians who fled into China's Yunnan province have

appealed to them for help in returning to the Laukkai area, where fighting broke out on February 9 between the army and the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA).

End War in Myanmar member Ko Linn Ni Thwe said the Myanmar Peace Center would forward the letter to its intended recipients.

"We need permission from the Chinese authorities to help these people, so we want the government to negotiate with the Chinese government to let us enter their country," Ko Linn Ni Thwe said.

According to a statement released on March 8 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the deputy foreign ministers of Myanmar and China met that day in Muse township, Shan State, to discuss restoring peace, stability, law and order in the border area, and to expedite the safe return of people who had taken refuge in China.

End War in Myanmar said about 64,300 people had crossed into

Yunnan province. Of those, about half could be accommodated with friends and relatives.

U Saw Thann Lwin, an official of the Myanmar Red Cross Society, said the other 30,000 are "facing difficulties" in China. "Some of them have contacted us to help get them home as soon as possible. They are afraid to return to Myanmar by themselves. Our rescue teams are ready to assist if the

'We want the government to negotiate with the Chinese to let us enter their country.'

Ko Linn Ni Thwe
End War in Myanmar

government and Tatmadaw allow it."

Ma Mee, the registration officer with the displaced persons' camp in the Mansu Shan Buddhist Monastery in Lashio, said people were still arriving at the camp, including 22 who had come from China.

"The authorities say people are returning to Laukkai. But people are still being displaced. Fighting is continuing," she said.

General Aung Ye Win, of the defence ministry's psychological warfare department, told the Myanmar Press Council (Interim) on March 8 that 1000 families had returned to Laukkai, suggesting the situation there was improving.

But a police officer in Chinshweh town, just south of Laukkai, told *The Myanmar Times* yesterday that the army and the rebels were still fighting in the vicinity. "People are fleeing to Lashio. Most people have left Chinshweh," said the officer, who asked not to be named.

Kokang refugees return from China: report

GUY DINMORE

newsroom@mmtimes.com

CIVILIANS who fled across the border to China to escape fighting in the Kokang region are starting to return to Myanmar, according to an official delegation visiting the area, while the government is said to have asked the United Nations for humanitarian assistance.

A delegation of the Myanmar-China Friendship Association, led by two former ambassadors to Beijing, visited China from March 3 to 8 to discuss the border crisis and to see three temporary camps set up by the Chinese authorities near Lincang in Yunnan province, the official *Global New Light of Myanmar* reported yesterday.

In the highest-level shuttle diplomacy between the two countries since the conflict with ethnic Chinese Kokang rebels erupted on February 9, the Myanmar delegation met Liu Zhenmin, a Chinese deputy foreign minister, in Beijing. Mr Liu then travelled to Muse in northern Shan State on March 8 where he met U Tin Oo Lwin, deputy foreign minister, and Commodore Aung Thaw, deputy defence minister.

While in Yunnan province, the Myanmar delegation met 1100 displaced people at temporary camp 137 and about 1500 people at camp 127. Those who had taken shelter at camp 125 had already returned to their homes, the report said in the first official confirmation that refugees had gone

back from China. No figures were disclosed and it was not clear if they had returned voluntarily.

It remains unclear how many civilians have been displaced in the fighting. The Communist Party chief of Yunnan said on March 7 that more than 60,000 refugees had arrived in the border town of Lincang over the past month. Many are staying in the homes of relatives and friends.

Access for the media and aid agencies to the border has been controlled by both countries, with Kokang itself under martial law since February 17.

A senior official following events said the government had asked UN agencies to assist a few thousand displaced civilians in Kokang.

Neither the government nor the UN had immediate comment. UNICEF and its partner agencies have called on the government to give access to aid workers and agree a truce with rebels that would allow a children's immunisation program to resume.

UNICEF representative Bertrand Bainvel said that getting accurate information remains a challenge both because of restricted access and the highly fluid situation.

"UNICEF and other UN agencies are in talks with local authorities on the ground and are discussing access in order to be able to carry out needs assessments. More information is expected in the next 72 hours. UNICEF remains concerned that essential services for children have not resumed."

Police arrest armed gang in Rakhine

BORDER police have announced the arrest of five members of what they believe is a 12-strong gang of armed robbers that have been preying on Rakhine State's Buthidaung township. The gang attacked three homes in mid-February, killing two people and wounding two more.

Police announced details of the killings on March 6, after arresting three men in connection with the attacks on February 27.

On February 15, the gang killed Rahar Mauk Aular and Ann Ni Mulla as the two brothers tried to defend their home in Kyaehnotethi village. Household workers Rawhi Mulla and Adu Mawnar were wounded in the attack on the home, which is owned by Barsar Myar. The home of Adu Kawni, in the same village, was attacked the same night.

The next night, police and villagers were alerted to another attack, on the home of Shaung Shu Hauk in Ngan Chaung village, Maungdaw township. One of the alleged attackers was killed when police arrived to apprehend the gang, and another was arrested in possession of a rifle.

The members of the gang who remain at large are aged between 20 and 45, police said.

The leaders of the gang, which police said is based in the Musoni refugee camp in Bangladesh, have been named as Shaw Bi Aullar and Mahmet Rafee. The gang reportedly made its way into Myanmar by way of the Mayu mountains. - *Toe Wai Aung, translation by Emoon*

No more signatures for Union Day deal

SANDAR LWIN

sdlisandar@gmail.com

NO additional ethnic armed groups seem likely to sign the Union Day commitment announced with great fanfare last month, despite encouragement from the government, a senior Myanmar Peace Center official says.

On February 12, following a ceremony to mark Union Day, President U Thein Sein, other government and parliamentary leaders, senior military officers, the representatives of 55 political parties, and four ethnic armed groups, including the Karen National Union, signed a commitment to work toward a federal system and political dialogue.

The Kachin Independence Organisation and its allies declined to sign then, and seem not to have changed their minds since. "We have distributed the commitment text to all ethnic armed groups, but they haven't responded yet," said U Min Zaw Oo, director of the peace centre.

He suggested that they were focusing instead on negotiations toward a nationwide ceasefire agreement, which are scheduled



President U Thein Sein delivers a speech during a meeting with armed ethnic leaders in Nay Pyi Taw on February 12. Photo: AFP

for March 16 to 23 in Yangon. "Maybe after that we can see some response," he said.

The participants in the ceasefire talks are the government's Union Peace-building Work Committee and the Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT), which represents 16 ethnic armed groups.

Ethnic groups that do not sign the commitment can still join the political dialogue if they sign the nationwide ceasefire. According to the commitment, the pre-political dialogue is scheduled to begin before the election, which is scheduled for November.

KNU leader General Mutu Sae Phoe told a meeting with Kayin people in Yangon Region on February 15 that the group signed the Union Day commitment to advance its political position.

The group's general secretary, Pado Kwe Htoo Win, said the commitment could guarantee the government's political will to hold dialogue with the armed groups.

"The commitment does not mean an agreement," he said. "It is a strong indication of the government's guarantee of political dialogue. It makes the government's guarantee more complete."

US group to train police on human trafficking

A UNITED States-based advisory group will today begin introducing a new victim-centred investigation approach to top brass in the police force's anti-human trafficking unit, an official said.

From March 10 to 13, the Warnath Group will lead a training workshop in Nay Pyi Taw as part of the United States-Myanmar Joint Plan on Trafficking in Persons.

The first half of the week will focus on training 20 higher-level officials, while the latter half will train 20 junior officials, according to Lieutenant Colonel Khin Maung Hla, who will also take part in the workshop.

"I think they will collect information and data from us, and share techniques to use in investigations," he said.

The training will also focus on implementing best practices according to UN conventions and international standards.

Last year, the US State Department criticised Myanmar for failing to clampdown on human trafficking cases. In its annual *Trafficking in Persons Report*, the US continued to rank Myanmar on the Tier 2 Watch List, noting that without improvement the country could be downgraded to Tier 3. The lowest ranking, Tier 3 listing can trigger sanctions.

The State Department report emphasised paltry victims' services and "inadequate" victims' protection strategies. - *Cherry Thein*

MYANMARTIMES
HEARTBEAT OF THE NATION

မြန်မာတိုင်းမ်
MYANMARTIMES



Myanmar Times proudly announces...



NEWSPAPERS IN EDUCATION

Irrawaddy Green Towers, one of the leaders in construction of cell phone towers in Myanmar, has sponsored a one-year subscription of Myanmar Times in both English and Burmese to 54 schools in Mandalay and Upper Myanmar, including orphanages, monastic schools and government schools as part of IGT's corporate social responsibility program.

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.

This special educational program - aimed at poor and rural students -- is offered at a discount subscription rate and is open to all companies, NGOs and associations that promote literacy and English training for needy students anywhere in Myanmar. If your company would like to participate in our NEWSPAPERS IN EDUCATION program, please contact Myanmar Times Subscriptions Manager Thuzar Winn at thuzarwinn@gmail.com or by telephone on 392928 or 253642. We will stamp each newspaper with your company logo and we can help locate needy schools for you in a specific areas of Myanmar where your company would like to support education. This is a great way especially for foreign companies coming to Myanmar to engage in effective CSR.

From all of us at Myanmar Times and Myanmar Consolidated Media Ltd.: THANK YOU IRRAWADDY GREEN TOWERS

IN BRIEF

Cough campaign launched

Coughs and sneezes spread diseases, a public health campaign is to warn. The "Cover Your Cough campaign" is meant to raise awareness about the risks of spreading airborne ailments like flu and TB.

Dr Phyo Wai Tun, program manager of CAP-TB, said yesterday, "The campaign will take place in Yangon Region throughout March to help protect people from viruses."

Buses, taxis and trains will carry information stickers publicising the campaign, and programs will air on TV, radio and other media – including the bus stop directly in front of the National Tuberculosis Program (Lower Myanmar) building in Yangon.

The campaign was devised in cooperation with the health department's National Tuberculosis program as part of the fight against TB. – *Myint Kay Thi*

Mandalay Hill library reopens

A library closed since the uprising of 1988 is to be reopened, thanks to a team of young people who have renovated it. The library, located at the foot of Mandalay Hill, was seized by the military 27 years ago. It is scheduled for reopening in April.

"The board of trustees of Mandalay Hill has allowed local young people to renovate the library," said U Tun Zaw, the chair of the team of young people. "We will try to attract as many readers as we had before."

The library was founded by U Ohn Khin, a journalist with the *Burma Era*, and his wife Daw Khin Khin Lay in 1969.

U Tun Zaw said literary talks, a cartoon exhibition and entertainment will be held to mark the library's reopening.

– *Mg Zaw, translation by Zar Zar Soe*

Unrest fails to dampen arrivals

Foreign visitors through Yangon International Airport rose 7 percent in the first two months of 2015



ZAW WIN THAN

zawwinthan@gmail.com

NEITHER fighting in Kokang nor the police crackdowns on student and worker protests is deterring tourists from visiting Myanmar, travel experts told *The Myanmar Times* yesterday.

Figures for the first two months of this year show at least a 7 percent increase over the same period in 2014, itself a record-breaking year. More than 3.05 million tourists arrived in 2014, spending US\$1.14 billion, according to official figures.

The number of foreign visitors arriving in the first two months of 2015 through the Yangon gateway increased to 193,891, up from 180,927 in the first two months of 2014.

"The Chinese market is slightly affected, but the European market is still strong. For the Western press, there are more alarming issues around the world than the situation here," said U Aung Myat Kyaw, chair of the Union of Myanmar Travel Association (UMTA).

"At the ITB Travel Showcase in Berlin a few days ago, no concern was expressed about Laukkai or student protests among the international travel trade," he said.

U Phyo Wai Yar Zar, chair of Myanmar Tourism Marketing (MTM), said he did not expect either issue to affect visitor numbers.



Foreign tourists take in a sunset from the top of a pagoda in Bagan in late December. Photo: Thiri Lu

"The flow of news is as real-time as it can be, with the advantage of social media. The travel trade and potential visitors can make informed decisions," said U Phyo Wai Yar Zar.

U Kaung Min Khant, managing director of Asia Central Link Travel and Tour, played down the impact of possible cancellations resulting from the unrest. "For this season, most trips have been paid for, and cancellations are rare," he said.

The increase in tourism has largely been attributed to political and economic reforms undertaken by the government since 2010, with the stage appearing to be set for rapid and continuous growth in the industry.

More than 63pc of visitors in January and February were from Asian countries (122,555), including about 29,455 from Thailand – the largest

single group by nationality – followed by China with 16,083, Japan with 15,378 and South Korea with 13,513.

The ministry predicts about 5 million tourist arrivals for 2015, and it plans to open up more coastal areas and ethnic regions in addition to the traditionally popular destinations in the centre of the country, such as Bagan, Mandalay and Inle Lake.

However, as *The Myanmar Times* has previously reported, the majority of visitors in 2014 – about two-thirds – entered at border crossings and spent less than 24 hours in country. According to most international standards, they would not be counted as international visitors.

63%

Foreign visitors in the first two months of 2015 who were from Asian countries, with Thailand the largest single group

MYANMAR TIMES

HEARTBEAT OF THE NATION

Myanmar Times publication moves to **daily printing March 9**

Starting March 9th the *Myanmar Times* weekly English edition becomes a daily, published five days a week, Monday to Friday.

Current weekly subscribers can now subscribe to the new daily at reduced rates, or receive our main bumper weekend edition on a Friday, that includes our 28 page colour liftout with all the news, views, and features you expect from the *Myanmar Times*.



Views

The 2015 election outlook: cloudy

Questions over the constitution, electoral system and campaigning rules mean both the conduct and outcome of the election are hard to guess



SITHU AUNG MYINT

newsroom@mmtimes.com

THE election is drawing near. Some political parties are selecting candidates for seats, while others are establishing campaign committees.

At this time of preparation, it's important to ask what challenges and problems some parties and their candidates are likely to face.

Some are already asking. During the current parliament session in Nay Pyi Taw, one MP questioned whether candidates would be able to campaign freely during the election period.

U Pe Than, the Pyithu Hluttaw

Election candidates will not have the same level of freedom of speech as journalists.

representative for Myebon township in Rakhine State, asked whether candidates would have the same freedom as the media to criticise the Hluttaw, government, Tatmadaw and individuals during their campaigns.

He pointed to 21 rules introduced by the Union Election Commission in announcement 1/2014 that could endanger the right of candidates to campaign freely. He said this could result in candidates having less freedom of speech than journalists.

"If we point out the poverty of the workers, their troubles and uncertain future, we may be accused of inciting workers. If we say we don't like the current education law, we may face legal action on the grounds we are disturbing the right of students to study peacefully," he said. "We are in a situation where we can face action if someone desires it to happen. Because of this, the election commission may get lots of complaints during the election campaign."

Election commission member U Win Ko responded that candidates must comply with the rules and regulations specified by the commission. This means candidates will not have the same level of freedom of speech as journalists.

U Pe Than said he asked the question because he was concerned that complaints submitted during the campaign period, which will be heard by the commission rather than the judiciary, could affect the outcome of



Union Election Commission chair U Tin Aye speaks at a press conference in Yangon in mid-December. Photo: Aung Htay Hlaing

the election, particularly if the rules are not applied evenly.

Meanwhile, there are constitutional questions that could affect how the election plays out. Recent media reports suggest Rakhine National Party leader U Aye Maung plans to contest a Rakhine State Hluttaw seat, as he

wants to become Rakhine State chief minister if his party wins a majority of seats.

However, the constitution still states that chief ministers are appointed by the president. While there has been discussion about amending it, when this will happen and what the

outcome will remain in doubt.

Similarly, the Constitutional Tribunal has dismissed a request to decide whether the Amyotha Hluttaw's decision to adopt proportional representation in the election is constitutional.

This leaves it unclear what system – first-past-the-post or proportional – will be used for upper house seats. The Pyithu Hluttaw has already decided to continue using first-past-the-post.

The constitution is clearly important for the election. While the vote is just seven months away, no one knows clearly what will happen on the issue of constitutional change. Since there is not yet an amendment bill, we have no firm idea which clauses the Hluttaw will vote on or when.

Voter lists also remain an issue. Reform of the electoral rolls is under way but not yet complete. We still don't even know how many eligible voters there are.

Moreover, about 600,000 holders of temporary IDs, or white cards, have been given until the end of May to hand in the cards to the authorities. Without a valid ID, they will not be able to vote in the election.

A look at the broad electoral landscape reveals that there are many unresolved issues that will cloud prognostications about its conduct and outcome. Certainly there is enough uncertainty to say that it is unclear whether the election will be free and fair.

– Translation by Thiri Min Htun

Why managing development in an election year matters

MASAHIKO TANAKA

newsroom@mmtimes.com

IN a democracy, an election season is an exciting time. It is an occasion for a possible change in policy directions or a confirmation of continuity. As evidence of the vitality of democracy, passions around elections should be celebrated. But in economic development, it is also a time to test what transcends electoral politics – a broadly shared national vision to guide the country over a long period and sustained commitment to implementing a coherent strategy to realise such a vision, regardless of who is in the government. History tells us that the countries that fail to achieve such consistency fare poorly in economic development.

President U Thein Sein has articulated a simple but clear vision for Myanmar – a "prosperous and inclusive country". Few would disagree with this notion. Is there, then, a long-term strategy that Myanmar can embrace, independent of different political inclinations its people may have? I think there is, though it has perhaps not to date been described so explicitly and debated publicly.

"Inclusive development" is generally understood to mean a growth process that benefits all segments of the population, including the poorest. In the longer term, however, we must be concerned with growth that will steadily take everyone toward decent and even comfortable living. For that to happen, the economy must generate good employment opportunities – or business opportunities if one is more independent-minded – for all.

But how to make such growth a reality is often not understood well. So, how would Myanmar deliver it?

Sustained inclusive development will require many private businesses to spring up and grow robustly. They need to be innovative and competitive, and treat their employees well. They should not rely on exploitation of cheap labour to make quick money.

"Inclusive" companies rely on innovation, quality of products and services, and competitiveness. Many are in manufacturing, but they are also found in services and agriculture. They value employees, for their strength derives from the capabilities of their workers. Those are the companies that generate good jobs. Over time they help raise everyone's income, as they move into increasingly sophisticated and high-value products and services.

Encouraging vigorous growth of such companies requires sound macroeconomic management, including moderate fiscal deficits, a non-inflationary monetary policy and competitive exchange rates. But concerted government action in three important areas is also needed: upgrading of key infrastructure; high-quality education for every child, so that there is abundance of competent workers to support both innovation and high-standard production; and a business-friendly institutional environment, such as sound laws and effective enforcement, coherent and effective business regulations, and availability of financial services.

Some economies have been very successful in achieving inclusive development. These include South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Japan before them, as well as many European countries that industrialised earlier. They have all invested in these three priority areas. A strong education

system is also critical in making sure that every child can avail themselves of good economic opportunities. This is the "supply side" of inclusion.

One thing that is often overlooked is an important shift that these countries made in the overall political and economic framework. In earlier times, their economies were all dominated by the strong influence of an elite class. The ruling social class used its political power to gain special economic privileges, such as monopoly rights to produce or sell something, fabulously profitable public contracts, and tax exemptions. In fact, many companies in the old days were formed on the basis of such advantages, and this was the case in Myanmar too, until recently.

The businesspeople tended to see such arrangements as the main source of making profits. By changing that incentive framework, these countries were able to channel their best entrepreneurial minds toward innovation and competition.

It also opened opportunities to those without political connections or influence. In a sense, this represents

An appropriate strategy for building a prosperous and inclusive country has emerged. What is important now is to articulate it more explicitly and forcefully.

a "democratisation" of the economy, for it took away the exclusive status of the elite class in the economic world. When this transformation happened, and simultaneously the government invested in the three priority areas – infrastructure, education and institutional environment – their economies were put on a path of sustained and inclusive growth.

Many other countries have focused on these three basic areas, but failed to address this last requirement. Some of them have managed to generate high GDP growth for a period, but it was seldom inclusive. Income inequality often rose and businesses tended to exploit, rather than value, their workers. Lacking capacity for innovation, those countries have tended to get stuck in the "middle-income trap".

In Myanmar, the far-reaching reforms and ambitious investment programs have begun to address the three basic building blocks for an inclusive economy. More importantly, it has also taken some early steps toward changing the fundamental economic regime.

For instance, the Myanmar Investment Commission has been re-established to bring more transparency and rigorous evaluation to the business licensing process, thereby reducing questionable deals. The special treatment that government-owned enterprises or government-associated companies used to receive has been largely eliminated. It is also reforming its tax policies and tax collection systems. Very importantly, the president has stressed the importance of fighting corruption. Corruption is usually the flip side of the special deals given to the business elite. Fighting corruption, therefore, means closing off such "old" ways of making money.

One may ask why we should

expect Myanmar to succeed where many others have failed. Although cultural generalisation is risky, Myanmar's traditional values seem to put the country in a good position to pursue inclusive development. Its tradition of honesty and diligence remains firm; so are the traditions of valuing education and strength in basic literacy and numeracy. They will all serve the country well in moving into high-value economic activities. Its geographic location is already well recognised as an advantage. Inclusive development is entirely feasible for Myanmar.

An outline of an appropriate strategy for building a prosperous and inclusive country in Myanmar has emerged. What is important now is to articulate it more explicitly and forcefully to the public so that everyone understands what additional actions government will have to take to realise the long-term vision. I believe such an effort is crucial, as it will ensure that not just the broad vision but also the basic strategy to achieve it is owned by the nation and becomes an enduring and collective commitment. If that happens, then Myanmar can go through the year of elections with more confidence, for at least the fundamental path of economic development will not be easily shaken, no matter what the election outcomes, and it can expect steady progress toward the shared vision.

Myanmar may have started its work on building an inclusive economy late. If it sustains a sound strategy, and remains mindful of the key question of transforming the business and political culture early, its future will be bright.

Masahiko Tanaka is head of the Japan International Cooperation Agency office in Myanmar.

Business

Daiwa underwriter bid raises finance industry's eyebrows

JEREMY MULLINS

jeremymullins7@gmail.com

JAPANESE securities company Daiwa Securities Group has entered a bid for an underwriter licence along with its Myanmar partner, prompting some observers to question whether the firm and its sister companies may be positioned for too much control on the forthcoming Yangon Stock Exchange.

The firm submitted a bid by March 6 to be an underwriter on the exchange, while its sister company Daiwa Institute of Research is also a part-owner of the YSX. Daiwa arms are also involved in advising companies on preparing to list, as well as training and equipment sales.

Competitors have expressed concern that Daiwa may end up filling too many roles with the exchange, possibly leading to a conflict of interest among the different branches - though Daiwa officials refuted these claims.

Filling one or two functions are fine, but "not everything at the same time", said one banker, who requested anonymity. He added that his bank is considering reducing its participation partly because of the reach of Daiwa.

"There are serious doubts in the market by companies who are going to invest," he said.

Daiwa has a long history in Myanmar, participating in the Myanmar Securities Exchange Centre since 1996. The centre currently functions as an over-the-counter market for shares in two public companies, though trading is relatively quiet.

'If Daiwa does not meet the [selection] criteria, we will not choose Daiwa. If they meet the criteria, we will choose it.'

U Maung Maung Thein
Deputy finance minister

Daiwa Securities' sister company Daiwa Institute of Research is a part-owner of the Yangon Stock Exchange joint venture company along with two partners, according to a December press release.

It holds one seat on the board, while the Japan Exchange Group holds another seat, and Myanma Economic Bank - Daiwa's partner in the Myanmar Securities Exchange Centre - holds three seats on the board, including the company president.

Deputy finance minister and Securities and Exchange Commission of Myanmar chair U Maung Maung

Thein said Daiwa's underwriter bid would not be given preferential treatment.

"If Daiwa does not meet the [selection] criteria, we will not choose Daiwa," he said. "If they meet the criteria, we will choose it. We will not give preference to Daiwa because it is Daiwa."

U Maung Maung Thein also said that it was possible that partners in the Myanmar Securities Exchange Centre could change in the future. He added that even if the partners were to stay the same, there would be lots of business for other firms involved in the exchange.

Joint ventures and local companies were allowed to submit bids to be service providers on the exchange by March 6, though wholly owned foreign companies were prohibited from bidding.

In an emailed statement to *The Myanmar Times*, Daiwa said that without its partner's consent it could not confirm that it had submitted a bid to be a service provider on the exchange.

However, Daiwa defended its role supporting the development of capital markets in Myanmar, adding it actively contributed to development in the country when others shied away.

"Until recently, most of the developed nations were hesitant to support Myanmar while the US imposed economic sanctions, but only Japan actively supported Myanmar, as did Daiwa. Daiwa has been playing multiple roles toward the establishment of a stock market, as a representative of Japan because no one else was willing to do so," it said.

"It seems inappropriate and inaccurate to condemn Daiwa as being unfair if you understand the history and background."

It added that under YSX's shareholding structure more than half the shares and the board were controlled by Myanmar. Japan does not have the power to make decisions on its own, and there are also a number of Japanese entities involved in decisions beside Daiwa.

"There is, therefore, no room for conflict of interest to occur," it said. Some experts say the Yangon Stock Exchange (YSX) must be cautious about perceptions, particularly in its early stages.

Sean Turnell, an expert on Myanmar's economy at Australia's Macquarie University, said there were ways in which the entity could be structured to avoid conflict-of-interest issues.

"However, at this foundational stage, it seems to me that the proposed YSX must be purer than pure," he said.

Mr Turnell said the exchange must send strong good-governance signals and overcome a widespread lack of knowledge about how such exchanges work, adding that he thinks Daiwa should reconsider its position.

The YSX is slated to open in the last quarter of 2015. The listing criteria has not yet been finalised, though a number of companies have expressed interest in eventually listing on the exchange.



Tatmadaw soldiers patrol a road in Shan State last month. While the conflict has died down, trade is still suffering.

Photo: Zarni Phyo

China trade weakens in conflict's wake



AYE THIDAR KYAW

ayethidarkyaw@gmail.com

TRADE has gone quiet along the China-Myanmar border for the past three weeks as violence flared in northern Shan State, according to Ministry of Commerce officials.

Fighting in the Kokang area of Shan State broke out in February, and while conflict between the Tatmadaw and Kokang rebels caused dozens of casualties on both sides, commercial trade was not spared. Two trucks carrying fruit were attacked on the highway between Muse and Pansai, with one destroyed.

Ministry of Commerce adviser U Maung Aung said traders have now backed off, feeling unsafe to do business.

"The issue [of trucks being attacked] slowed trade in the area. The situation totally depends on security," he said.

"On the other hand, the governments of the two countries are likely to protect economic ties because the demand for trade is huge."

China is Myanmar's largest trading partner. China's figures show bilateral trade totalled US\$24.9 billion in 2014, a 145 percent increase on a year earlier.

Myanmar's figures generally show lower trade volumes than its neighbours'. Ministry of Com-

merce figures show China occupies about 80pc of Myanmar's trade. Myanmar's trade totalled \$5.9 billion in the 2014-15 fiscal year until February, an increase of about \$1.7 billion on the year previous.

Chinese-manufactured goods are a common sight in local markets, while goods such as resources and agricultural products flow the other way. The Muse-Ruili crossing connecting northern Shan State to Yunnan province is the main overland portal.

'Traders are currently avoiding these routes, but they will try again soon as the products are essential.'

U Maung Maung Lay
UMFCCI

There are a number of other border crossings, including the Chinshweh crossing in the Kokang area, as well as Lwejal and Kanpeiktee crossings in Kachin State.

Transport costs have increased with the spate of violence.

Agri-products trader U Soe Naing, owner of Mahar Nyiko compa-

ny in Mandalay, said his transport costs for shipments to Muse have increased to K105 a viss (1.6 kilograms or 3.6 pounds), from K90 before the Kokang fighting began.

"We've started shipping again even with the higher costs," said U Soe Naing. "I hope the situation returns to normal soon."

Trade Promotion Department director U Win Myint said some of the Ministry of Commerce's mobile enforcement teams are in the area to keep an eye on illegal traders looking to take advantage of the conflict.

The unstable situation has traders concerned about the safety of commerce.

"Rebel groups are everywhere in northern parts; that means it's unsafe for everybody," he said. "Traders are worried about being attacked and concerned about losing their goods."

U Win Myint added that the conflict is not directly concerned with mainland China and is unlikely to impact overseas commerce.

There has likely not yet been enough impact from the fighting to damage trade in the longer-term.

U Maung Maung Lay, secretary of prominent business association UMFCCI, said the situation is unlikely to stop private sector trade for the long term.

"Traders are currently avoiding these routes, but they will try again soon as the products are essential and highly in demand between both countries," he said.

Mandalay distilleries forced to close due to environment concerns

BUSINESS 10



Historic Indian city tries out high-tech label

BUSINESS 12

Exchange Rates (March 9 close)		
Currency	Buying	Selling
Euro	K1138	K1156
Malaysia Ringitt	K307	K308
Singapore Dollar	K756	K764
Thai Baht	K31	K32
US Dollar	K1049	K1053

Fishery sales keep slipping away

Overfishing and environmental damage is leading to smaller natural stocks, while fish farms are slow to come onstream, say industry insiders



ZAW HTIKE

zawhtikemjn1981@gmail.com



NAY ZAW AUNG WIN

nayzawaungwin@gmail.com

U YAQOUB says there is no question whether the fish business is in crisis.

A 50-year-old resident of Kyimyindaing township, he employs two regular workers to meet local demand for the important protein source.

He meets with brokers representing fish farms, negotiates the price and finalises orders. When the fish arrive, they are weighed and then paid for.

In turn, U Yaquob sells the fish to local-level fish sellers operating at Yangon's markets.

"In the past, we only needed to buy the bigger fish, but now we cannot afford to be selective since stocks are depleted," he said. "Now, we have to buy smaller fish too."

U Yaquob is hardly alone in attempting to draw attention to a fading industry.

Fish businesses are aware of significant opportunities both domestically and abroad, but are being held back by a lack of capital and declining stocks, according to Myanmar Fishery Federation general secretary U Win Kyaing.

While domestic and international demand is higher than ever for the protein, industry insiders say natural production has been speedily decreasing. They blame broken fishing rules, improper techniques such as poison or electric shocks, climate change, agricultural runoffs destroying habitats and waste chemicals.

Fixing these problems will be difficult, if not impossible. U Win Kyaing said for instance it is difficult to make sure rural people are following local rules, as their small-scale industries are often their only source of livelihood.

"Though there are several rules and regulations, poor people cannot pay attention to them, as they are struggling. They fish despite any ban," he said.

Myanmar occupies the 14th spot

internationally in terms of total fish stocks, but research conducted in 2013 showed even then that numbers are on the decline.

Department of Fishery statistics for 2012-13 exports, the most recent year available, reached US\$378 million, down from \$396 million in 2011-12.

Industry statistics produced by different bodies often have wide discrepancies. The Food and Agriculture Organisation pegged 2011 exports at \$555 million, the latest year for which it provides update figures. It also showed 4.5 million tonnes in production for 2012, of which about 885,000 tonnes came from aquaculture and 3.6 million tonnes from capture.

The Myanmar Fishery Federation, meanwhile, pegged 2012-13 exports at \$536 million, with officials claiming figures would likely fall below \$450 million when the 2013-14 statistics are finalised.

Fishery experts say a downward trend has persisted in the industry, with the last two or three years having been increasingly poor.

"Fish resources from the land and sea are very obviously decreasing. In the future, the trend will be the same," said U Win Kyaing.

Even maintaining current levels of production is a challenge, given declining stocks and poor infrastructure and technology. The main requirement for the industry is money, to build aquaculture facilities, processing plants and increase exports.

While the amount of fish products available for export is falling, local firms have not enjoyed such advantageous market access as they do now. Sanctions enacted by other countries previously made exports challenging, particularly accessing markets like Europe which pay the most for imports.

Domestic consumption is also on



A fish is tossed through the air at a Yangon wholesale market. Photo: Boothee

the upswing, driven by better roads and more express delivery services making it easier to move fish around the countryside.

"Within the last five years, I think local consumption has probably doubled. Everywhere in Myanmar you can get all kinds of fresh fish very easily," said U Win Kyaing. "It's much different from a few years ago."

While catches from inland waterways and offshore seas may be declining, the fish breeding industry is picking up some of the slack. Building fish farms is expensive, and industry players consistently request greater access to finance.

Many fish farmers take loans from institutions other than banks, with interest rates of up to 36 percent for one year, he said. Currency fluctuations have compounded difficulties with loans.

Local fish farms often lag behind

regional competitors, unable to afford necessary upgrades.

Financing for niche areas in the industry, such as prawn breeding, will also take some time - and, importantly, money - to establish.

The supply shortfall and demand increase has also led to rising prices for consumers. U Win Kyaing said he reckons prices for fish products are an average 50pc higher than half a decade ago.

Myanmar Fishery Federation vice president U Hnin Oo said the lack of a proper banking system is the main reason the fisheries industry has lost momentum.

Treasure Bank, which was formerly branded as Myanmar Livestock and Fisheries Development Bank, is not able to fully capitalise the industry, he said.

"Because of a lack of proper capital - and even though we have

preferential market access from the European Union - we still have not been able to properly penetrate the market," said U Hnin Oo.

"Without capital, we cannot upgrade production, and so, we cannot produce better-quality products."

U Thaug Htay, 43, from Pazundaung township, is another fish broker.

He sells every type of fish on the market except crabs, and lately prawns as well.

"Prawns have now become really expensive and people are not buying much," he said. "Demand for herring is quite high, however."

U Thaug Htay is one of thousands dependant on the industry. Though he is watching business become tough, he says he is not sure why.

"I don't know about that. I am just a trader," he said. "I sit here and sell things. That's all."

Myanmar FoodBev **MYANMAR HoReCa**

2nd International Exhibitions for Food, Beverage, Hotels, Restaurants and Catering

ဒုတိယအကြိမ် မြန်မာ နိုင်ငံတကာ အစားအသောက် အဖျော်ယမကာ ပြပွဲ နှင့် ဒုတိယအကြိမ် မြန်မာ အစားအသောက် ဝန်ဆောင်မှု လုပ်ငန်း ပြပွဲ

12 - 14 March 2015

Myanmar Convention Centre (MCC) | Yangon

12-13 March (9.00 - 17.00 hrs.) | 14 March (9.00 - 16.00 hrs.)

Highlights of the Events

- ❖ First launched international product and special offer at Myanmar FoodBev and Myanmar HoReCa 2015
- ❖ Special Shows and Competitions by Myanmar Hospitality Professionals Association:
 - Baking | Food Cooking | Fruit Carving
 - Floral Arrangement
 - Napkin Folding
 - Bed Making
- ❖ Special Shows by Myanmar Restaurants Association:
 - Barista
 - Cocktail
 - Food Cooking

www.myanmarfoodbev.com

Local : (01) 299781, (09) 732 01636, (mobile) 09 250 206 312
 Email : sankyawg@gmail.com

International : +662 713 3033 Email : info@icvex.com

Organized by

Jointly Organized by

Officially Supported by

Local Organizer

Supporting Media

Free!

MANDALAY

Closed distillers exacerbate MDY alcohol shortage

KHIN SU WAI
jasminekhin@gmail.com

FOUR distillers in Mandalay's industrial zone have been closed since the beginning of February, compounding the difficulty of buying booze after some retailers stopped selling imported liquor.

Mandalay City Development Committee official U Myint Soe said the distillers were closed because of their disregard for environmental rules. Many were discarding waste water directly into the environment without treatment, leading the committee to force the distillers to suspend operations.

The four distillers make alcohol for a range of well-known and more elusive brands, meaning that while each shut-down factory has increased prices, it is by different amounts.

An official at one of the factories, who requested anonymity, said it is simply waiting for further instructions to see if it can resume work.

Villagers from Mandalay Region's Amarapura township have complained of environmental damage from run-off from the industrial zone in Pyigyitagun township. Protests

led local authorities to close nearby factories, including four distilleries.

The distilleries were variously producing well-known local brands as well as generic alcoholic beverages sold in tanks.

In Mandalay, there are other distilleries located near Yankin Hill and Mandalay Hill in the city's east and north, though much of the industry has been centred on the southern industrial zone.

Experts say there are about 20 distilleries in the city.

Closing four of them has led the cost of inputs to drop, improving business for the other distilleries that remain open.

U Win Htay from Pyi Win Maung sugar factory said he has been selling large quantities of sugar daily, but much less with the closure. He added his bottom line has been affected by the distilleries' closure.

The move to close Mandalay distilleries for environmental reasons comes at the same time as a separate move by some retailers to take foreign alcohol off their shelves.

The retailers complain that due to a lack of legal means of importing alcohol, they are forced to import illegally.

Experts push for IP

NYAN LYNN AUNG
newsroom@mmtimes.com

THE much-delayed Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) law may finally be enacted this year, as a draft is due to be debated during the next parliamentary session, according to Science and Technology Ministry head of IPR department Daw Moe Moe Thwe.

The IPR law is currently in its 12th draft, covering copyright, industrial design trademarks and patents. It will set out modern penalties including fines and imprisonment for breaches in the law, updating intellectual property rules that in some cases are non-existent and in others are traced to a copyright law enacted in 1914.

Daw Moe Moe Thwe said the aim is to have rules that follow international norms while adhering to local standards.

Updated IPR laws have been

in draft form for nearly a decade. Though officials have frequently said the rules are important and are nearly completed, they have not materialised so far.

The current draft provides 10 years' protection for patents and trademarks, 15 years for industrial design, and for copyright, the lifetime of the creator plus 50 years after his or her death.

U Aung Soe Oo, a councilor at the ASEAN Intellectual Property Association, said it is important that ideas receive protection.

"Laws must prevail to protect technological innovation and international copyright, because most foreign investors are using technology, and local innovators are also creating new products," he said.

U Moe Min Thu, senior associate at Rouse Myanmar Company Ltd, said there is lack of protection particularly for technology at the moment.



In South Okkalapa: Residents fund their own street repairs



TIN YADANAR HTUN

yadanar.mcm@gmail.com

SOUTH Okkalapa township residents have banded together to fund their own road repairs, hoping to avoid more floods come rainy season.

The township is on the outskirts of Yangon and previously did not have a flooding problem. While development in the area has picked up, so has flooding, say local residents.

U Win Naing, administrator of the township's 10th ward, said residents have concocted their own plans to repair the streets, outside existing governing structures.

"Volunteers have collected money and begun rebuilding the streets without relying on administrators, though the Union Solidarity and Development Party has chipped in with cement and sand for a few streets," he said.

Local residents say the repairs are providing a much-needed service. Some expressed frustration that authorities were not able to repair the roads, leaving it up to the locals.

U Than Aung has volunteered for road repairs on Damayzar 1st Street.

His road was repaired last month. There are over 40 houses on the street, and volunteers asked for K100,000 for each 10 feet of frontage - so a house with 30 feet of frontage on the road was asked to contribute K300,000.

"All residents were eager to get the streets repaired, so we decided to do it with our own funds," he said.

The community organised, breaking up the different roles and assigning them to volunteers. Funding was collected centrally and then used to hire contractors to get the streets in order.

"We are happy to repair everything with our own funds, because it shows the residents' unity," he said.

U Than Aung said volunteers on his street received a donation of 500 bags of cement from the

USDP, though not every street repair organisation received similar contributions.

It took about a month for U Than Aung's group to receive all the bags, meaning repairs on Damayzar 1st Street were spread out over a month.

Another resident said there had been repairs conducted by authorities two years ago, but only half of the project was completed. Residents waited for two years for road builders to return, though they never did.

"Our roads were repaired, but only one half was finished and the other half left behind," said U Han Win, a resident of South Okkalapa's 9th ward on Innwa Road. "In the end, it was money from residents that saw the project completed."

Even the main roads are being fixed by area residents rather than authorities.

"Transportation is more important than ever. Improving living standards requires good transportation for citizens," he said.

Others say they were proud to be able to complete the works themselves.

"We are happy to repair our own streets," said Daw Thandar, a resident of Damayzar 3rd Street in South Okkalapa's 10th ward.

"As Buddhists, people who give charitably for rebuilding their streets will receive many good advantages in the future."

'All residents were eager to get the streets repaired, so we decided to do it with our own funds.'

U Than Aung
Local resident

Offshore gas fields to halt in April

AUNG SHIN
koshumgtha@gmail.com

THREE of the country's four offshore gas fields are to be shut down in April "for annual maintenance", according to a senior official with Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise.

The Yadana, Yetagun and Zawtika gas fields are to be halted for about a week each at the end of April, said the official, who is an offshore director but declined to be named.

"We have negotiated with PTT [the gas buyer] for gas exports, and with the Ministry of Electric Power for domestic supply, to arrange a shutdown of the gas fields for maintenance," he said yesterday.

"It will start in April around the time of the water festival."

Thailand relies heavily on natural

gas for 70 percent of its electricity generation, with about one-fifth of its supply coming from Myanmar, according to Reuters.

Yadana and Yetagun will be shut down for maintenance from April 10 to 19 and Zawtika from April 20 to 27, according to Reuters news agency, which quoted a statement from Thailand's state-owned PTT.

The Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise official said the shutdown must be done to maintain gas production platforms.

"We tried to set different dates for maintenance on Yadana, Yetagun and Zawtika to avoid gas shortages," he said.

"Within the maintenance days, no gas will be produced."

Current gas production of Yadana is about 830 million cubic feet per day (mmcf), while Yetagun

is producing 350 mmcf and the new Zawtika site produces 80 to 90 mmcf.

French firm Total E&P Myanmar is the operator of Yadana, where commercial gas production started in 1998. Yetagun began in 2000, operated by Petronas Carigali Myanmar. PTTEP is the operator of Zawtika, which began production last year.

The three fields together export about 1.3 billion cubic feet per day of natural gas to Thailand and supply around 280 mmcf for domestic use.

Natural gas has declined in price over the last six months as crude oil dropped significantly. Some international petroleum firms in foreign markets have discussed slowing investments and production in reaction to the dropping prices.

Location of the three gas fields



TOKYO

Japan growth less than hoped

JAPAN'S economy grew less than initially thought in the final quarter of 2014, revised government data showed yesterday, revealing an even weaker emergence from recession than previously believed.

The poor data could put the Bank of Japan under pressure to launch more stimulus, economists said, as the world's third-largest economy struggles to rid itself of two decades of lassitude.

The Cabinet Office said the economy expanded just 0.4 percent in the October-December period from the previous quarter, down from an initial estimate of 0.6pc growth, with corporate capital investment shrinking.

Despite the downgrade, the data still confirmed the Japanese economy had crawled out of recession at the end of 2014, after two consecutive quarters in which gross domestic product (GDP) contracted.

"The result showed that Japan's economy bottomed out from a 'technical recession' following the April VAT hike in October-December quarter, while the pace of recovery was still limited," Credit Suisse economists said in a note.

Japan's economy stuttered last year after an April sales-tax rise cut off the flow of consumer spending, which had shown healthy growth until then.

Yesterday's figures, if annualised, show GDP growth revised down to 1.5pc from the previous figure of 2.2pc.



Japan's economy is also trying to make a turn. Photo: AFP

That places Japan well behind the United States, where revised data showed the economy growing an annualised 2.2pc in the fourth quarter.

Over the full calendar year the Japanese economy logged zero growth, a significant slowdown from an expansion of 1.6pc in 2013.

Capital Economics said the revised GDP data support the case for more easy cash from the central bank.

"We still think that the Bank of Japan will announce more stimulus next month" to achieve its inflation target of 2.0pc, said Marcel Thieliant, Japan

economist at Capital Economics.

Sustained inflation is a key measure of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's pro-spending growth blueprint, dubbed Abenomics, which was set in motion in late 2012, sending the yen plunging and boosting stock prices.

The central bank expanded its already massive asset-purchasing program in October.

But Japan's inflation rate has now dropped to its lowest level since just after Abenomics was unleashed.

Core inflation in January came in

at 2.2pc, but once the effect of the tax hike is stripped out, prices were seen squeaking up just 0.2pc from a year earlier, the worst reading since a 0pc rate in May 2013.

While they have not helped the inflation cause, lower oil prices have combined with a fall in the value of the yen to bolster Japan's current account balance - the broadest measure of trade with the rest of the world, including trade in goods and services as well as tourism and returns on foreign investment.

- AFP

SEOUL

Two Koreas battle over industry zone

SOUTH Korea yesterday vented its frustration with North Korea's refusal to engage in dialogue over the salaries of workers in their Kaesong joint industrial complex, and questioned Pyongyang's commitment to developing the zone.

Seoul has been seeking talks for several weeks since Pyongyang announced it planned to unilaterally raise the basic salary of the 53,000 North Korean workers employed across more than 100 South Korean firms operating in Kaesong.

The move would increase the average monthly sum the South pays for each worker - including allowances, welfare and overtime - from US\$155 to \$164. The South has rejected the idea, citing an existing agreement that any wage rise had to be agreed by a joint committee overseeing the management of the complex.

It has made repeated requests for a dialogue to discuss the issue, which have been spurned to Seoul's "deep regret," said the South's Unification Ministry which handles cross-border affairs. "It is questionable whether North Korea is really willing to develop the Kaesong industrial complex," said ministry spokesperson Lim Byeong-Cheol.

Observers say the wage row is part of a battle to assert control over the running of Kaesong. It first opened in 2004 as a rare symbol of cross-border cooperation. - AFP

Secret Recipe®

...life is sweet

International Accolades

- Best Cheesecake Award
- Best Lamb Shank Award
- Most Original Cake Award
- Excellent Food Award In Singapore
- Best Restaurant Award in Singapore
- Best Restaurant Award in Indonesia

"The Golden Land" is about to get sweeter






International award-winning lifestyle cafe

NOW OPEN!
Since 8 March 2015

Shwegondaing Ocean Super Centre
2nd Floor, Shwegondaing Ocean Super Centre, Bahan Township, Yangon, Myanmar.
Tel: 01-8604618, 09-25066287

secret recipe myanmar | www.secretrecipemyanmar.com










malaysia • singapore • indonesia • thailand • china • brunei • cambodia • myanmar

Congratulations on your Opening:



SALES DIRECT CO., LTD.



—Tour Mandalay—
TRULY TAILORED EXPERIENCES SINCE 1996

INDIA

Allahabad: a high-tech city in unlikely surroundings

ITS roads are clogged with traffic, the pavements overflow with rubbish and power cuts are a fact of life.

But Allahabad, an ancient settlement on the banks of the Ganges, is hoping to become one of India's first tech-savvy "smart cities" under ambitious plans being piloted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"We are the spiritual capital of India. This place is known as king of the pilgrims. Of course we should be a smart city," Swami Anand Giri said at a crowded Hindu temple overlooking the holy river, as devotees filed in to touch his feet and receive his blessing.

Plans for the city have been gathering pace since Mr Modi signed a memorandum of understanding with US President Barack Obama during a visit to India in January. The document promised American assistance, with a potential tie-up with global firms.

Allahabad, one of India's oldest cities mentioned in ancient Hindu texts and surrounded by sacred rivers and farmland, was one of three selected for the first phase, along with eastern port Visakhapatnam and Ajmer in the desert state of Rajasthan.

But along with the plans, which include a power plant run on cow dung and another on tonnes of collected plastic rubbish instead of polluting coal, come the growing expectations of a city used to neglect.

Mr Giri said technology could be used to clean up the filthy Ganges, whose confluence with the Yamuna river in Allahabad draws millions of

devotees, ascetics and foreign tourists for the Kumbh Mela and other festivals in heaving seas of humanity.

"I've seen those machines cleaning up the Thames in London. We should have them too," said Mr Giri.

Solar panels in every home could also help to boost power output, with their stored energy kicking in when the city's daily three-to-four hour blackouts hit, according to senior professor CK Dwivedi at the University of Allahabad.

But some have sought to rein in expectations, with Diane Farrell, acting president of the US-India Business Council, saying companies would only become involved in the city's projects if there was a clear profit to be made.

"Right now the cities are in a phase where they are putting all of their aspirations on the table, but then you have to sit back and work out how to pay for it," Ms Farrell, who visited the city as part of a US fact-finding delegation in January, told AFP by phone from Washington.

"Cities cannot be reliant on US companies for funding or foreign governments. They need to develop successful PPPs [public-private partnerships]."

"They have to take responsibility. Maybe additional taxes have to be introduced to fund these projects," she said.

Shortly after sweeping to power in May, Mr Modi pledged 70.6 billion rupees (US\$1.2 billion) this financial year to kick start his goal of developing as many as 100 energy-efficient,

Indian commuters travel along a busy road during a traffic jam in the middle of the old city in Allahabad. Photo: AFP



technology-driven "smart cities".

But with millions of Indians pouring into cities from poor rural areas every year, straining already stretched affordable housing, public transport and basic services, much more money is needed.

The government's February 28 budget provided little additional funding for the "smart cities" project, despite Urban Development Minister Venkaiah Naidu's estimates that \$952 billion worth of investment is needed over the next 20 years.

"When you look at the challenges facing India's cities, it's easy to start hyperventilating," said Anil Menon, responsible for developing smart city strategies in India at tech giant CISCO.

"The key is to get started on the basics."

On the couch in his office, Alla-

habad's municipal commissioner or chief executive, Devendra Kumar Pandey, threw down a folder with pages of ideas proposed so far, including many from several Indian companies keen to get involved.

Along with the alternative power plants are proposals for optical fibre rollout to create WiFi hotspots, door-to-door garbage collection with bigger machinery and manpower to stop dumping in public areas, and food processing plants to assist farms surrounding Allahabad, which has little industry.

Then there's a possible new airport for the city which sees only a handful of commercial flights every week and vies for space with the air force.

"We are at the planning stage, not the project stage," Mr Pandey stressed.

"We will try our best and hope

for the best."

As night fell, crowds thronged the market in the densely packed old centre, jostling on the roads with rickshaws, motorcycles and cows for the approximately 2 metres (6.5 feet) of space as traffic inched forward in both directions.

"There needs to be traffic management," said clothes shop owner Mohanji Tandon Bhiya, suggesting traffic lights, cameras and off-street parking via a central command centre.

"It's also dangerous," he said, pointing to a tangled mess of electrical wires dangling over the street, as shops snatched power from the grid.

"There hasn't been any development here for 40 years," said Mr Bhiya, a staunch Modi supporter. "But the smart city is sure to come true, because there is a vision behind it." - AFP



IN PICTURES

PHOTO: AFP

Philippine customs officers inspect smuggled used clothing, during a press conference announced seizures of US\$250,000 in goods at the Manila international container port yesterday.

HONG KONG

Asia markets dip on strong US jobs data

ASIAN markets mostly retreated yesterday after a strong US jobs report increased expectations the Federal Reserve will hike interest rates soon, while Tokyo took a hit from data showing Japan's economy grew slower than first thought in the last quarter of 2014.

The euro struggled at 12-year lows against the dollar as the European Central Bank (ECB) prepares to kick off its bond-buying stimulus program.

Tokyo fell 0.95 percent, or 180.45 points, to end at 18,790.55, Sydney skidded 1.31pc, or 77.56 points, to close at 5,821.30 and Seoul shed 1.00pc, or 20.12 points, to 1,992.82.

In the afternoon Hong Kong was 0.47pc lower but Shanghai edged up 0.10pc, reversing earlier losses.

Regional investors followed their US peers, who ran for the exit on March 6 after the Labor Department said 295,000 jobs were created in February, pushing the unemployment rate down to 5.5pc, the lowest level since May 2008.

Analysts said the latest strong jobs report - which also follows a slew of other positive indicators - increased the likelihood the Fed will lift rates from near-zero as early as the summer. The Dow tumbled 1.54pc and the S&P 500 fell 1.42pc, while the Nasdaq lost 1.11pc.

"The market's response to the

much-awaited US payrolls report was abrupt," Kimberly Martin, a markets strategist in Wellington at Bank of New Zealand, said in a note to clients.

"This will provide sufficient ammunition for the Fed to remove patience from their statement at the next meeting and undertake an initial rate hike in June."

While US stocks retreated, the dollar picked up against the yen. In afternoon trade yesterday it was at 121.05 yen, compared with 120.78 yen in New York and well up from the 120.01 yen seen in Tokyo early on March 6.

Also, the euro bought \$1.0843 compared with \$1.0842 in New York.

However, the single currency was at 131.16 yen against 130.95 yen.

The euro, already under pressure because of a stuttering eurozone economy and worries over Greece's future, is expected by some experts to reach parity with the dollar by next year as the ECB rolls out its bond-buying program.

The \$1.2 trillion quantitative easing scheme, which started yesterday, is the long-awaited "bazooka" designed to help kickstart the eurozone and fight off deflation.

The US jobs figures also sent the dollar rallying against emerging economy currencies as dealers move their cash back in search of safer and healthier returns. - AFP

ISLAMABAD

Pakistan takes action against tax-dodgers

PAKISTAN has begun chasing wealthy tax-dodgers who enjoy lives of extravagance and luxury, but revenue officials face huge challenges in trying to force the very richest – and most influential – to pay up.

Pakistan's tax-to-GDP ratio of 9.5 percent is among the lowest in the world and the government is under pressure from foreign donors and lenders, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF), to increase collection to boost the struggling economy.

Revenue authorities say they have identified about a quarter of a million new taxpayers who they project will add around 14 billion rupees (US\$140 million) to government coffers.

Broadening the tax base and improving the economy after years of drift and sluggish growth under the last government was a key pledge in Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's 2013 election campaign, when he was swept to power for a third time.

Currently less than 1pc of Pakistanis pay income tax and the government collected just \$8 billion in total income tax in the 2013-14 fiscal year – barely enough to cover just the country's defence expenditure of \$7 billion.

The finance ministry is aiming to boost the tax-to-GDP ratio to 15pc in the current fiscal year ending June 30.

As part of those efforts, the Federal Bureau of Revenue (FBR) is compiling lifestyle and vehicle data to try to trace unregistered taxpayers, including wealthy landlords and businesspeople zipping between their luxury homes in imported Mercedes.

"We are collecting information from the vehicle registration authority, car manufacturers, utility companies, telecom companies and property

registration offices and tracing people who are not paying any tax," said FBR spokesperson Shahid Hussain.

The data is used to generate profiles of potential taxpayers, after which demands are issued for them to pay income tax.

"FBR has already issued notices to 261,250 potential tax payers," Mr Hussain said, adding that that new taxpayers have paid 570 million rupees since the crackdown started.

It is not just dodgy businesspeople who have been caught – several lawmakers have been found paying either no tax or very little and not filing their mandatory annual tax statements.

The FBR has taken punitive measures against some "chronic defaulters", freezing nearly 300 bank accounts, seizing more than 100 vehicles, putting 78 properties up for sale and issuing arrest warrants in 40 cases.

"Employing information technology, the FBR is creating a central database which would contain information about all taxpayers and nobody will be left undetected," Mr Hussain said.

A new FBR department tasked with broadening the task net started working in July 2013 and within one year it started showing results, he added.

But Pakistan is a country where wealth and political influence go hand in hand.

For generations, landowners and industrialists have given patronage to political parties and scant attention has been paid to their assets by the taxman.

Changing this privileged arrangement is a tricky proposition.

Umar Cheema, an investigative journalist for Pakistani daily *The News* who has done several major exposes



Pakistan has lots of high-income people, but little tax revenue. Photo: AFP

on tax-dodgers, says the FBR's commitment is encouraging, but he does not expect them to net any big fish.

"FBR is after those who can't influence them," said Mr Cheema, citing several well-known tycoons considered among Pakistan's richest whose names were missing from a list of the country's top 100 taxpayers.

"It can be done only by waging a war against tax cheaters without discrimination of good and bad cheaters," Mr Cheema said.

Pakistan's central bank said in a recent report that tax revenue growth was not keeping up with budget targets.

The tax take grew 11.7pc in the first quarter of the current fiscal year,

against an annual target of 26.9pc – but this was only half the growth of the same period during the previous fiscal year, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The central bank has urged the government to simplify tax procedures and do more to increase the documentation of the economy.

A vast amount of business in Pakistan is done off the books, making transactions hard to trace and levy dues on.

"Although FBR has taken a number of measures to increase tax collection, these focused more on deductions at source, and/or increasing the tax rates," a recent SBP report said, warning such measures had enjoyed "limited success" in the past.

The IMF, though, has said the government's reform program – tied to a \$6.6 billion loan from the Washington-based lender – was on track, and expects growth to accelerate to 4.3pc in the 2014-15 fiscal year from 4.1pc previously.

But even with growth quickening and officials insisting they are making inroads, challenges to the government's efforts to gather taxes remain considerable. – AFP

FRANKFURT

Europe starts latest QE buy-up program

THE European Central Bank began its long-awaited 1.1 trillion euro (US\$1.2 trillion) quantitative easing program yesterday, to stimulate growth and ward off deflation across the eurozone.

The program calls for the eurozone central bank to buy around 60 billion euros of public and private bonds each month – a policy it will apply until at least September 2016.

The move comes as traditional efforts to boost sluggish economic activity in the 19-nation eurozone have been exhausted through rate cuts that have brought borrowing costs to nearly zero.

The policy known as quantitative easing, or QE, is also being adopted as the eurozone faces a growing risk of deflation, which can lead consumers to put off purchases in the expectation that prices will drop further.

This can in turn put the brakes on production and job creation.

The strategy behind the ECB's QE program is similar to that of earlier schemes introduced by the US Federal Reserve and the Bank of England to pump money into the economy with massive purchases of government bonds, aiming to foster easier credit and spur economic activity.

Under QE, a central bank creates money electronically and uses it to buy the debt that countries issue to pay their bills. That pushes down interest rates on bonds and other financial assets, making it cheaper for companies to borrow and invest, increasing spending and employment.

But some observers warn that US and British successes with QE

do not make it a surefire remedy for Europe.

"[We] doubt very much that the new policy will prompt a meaningful economic recovery or counter the threat of deflation as the ECB hopes," said a recent weekly report by Capital Economics.

"There is still a large degree of slack in the labour market despite recent falls in the number of unemployed, and the business surveys remain consistent with only weak growth, raising the chances of a sustained bout of deflation."

ECB President Mario Draghi has dismissed such doubts, and noted when announcing the QE launch date on March 5 that markets have already reacted with some optimism to the prospect of QE in Europe.

"We have already seen a significant number of positive effects from these monetary policy decisions," he said.

Mr Draghi's confidence was backed up by an upward revision of the ECB's growth forecasts, which now see the area-wide economy expanding by 1.5 percent this year, 1.9pc in 2016 and 2.1pc in 2017.

The ECB chief has similarly waved off concerns that private banks facing increasingly stiff post-crisis capital requirements may not want to part with bonds the ECB will need in huge quantities.

Mr Draghi noted that those same banks did not hesitate to sell bonds that were on their books when the Fed and BoE rolled out QE policies whose success the ECB and entire eurozone now need to replicate.

– AFP



British Ambassador's
Scholarship

Full Scholarship for Y6 student



The British School
Yangon

The British Ambassador and the British School Yangon are proud to announce the launch of a yearly scholarship offered to Myanmar pupils of exceptional ability who for financial reasons would not otherwise have the opportunity to attend the school.

The scholarship covers all school fees from Year 6 to the end of Secondary school and is worth \$25,000 per year.

The scholarship is open to Myanmar citizens born between 1 Sep 2004 and 31 Aug 2005. Applicants will be required to pass a rigorous examination.

For more info email: info@britishschoolyangon.org

World

WORLD EDITOR: Fiona MacGregor

ABU DHABI

Solar plane takes off on round the world first for green-power travel

THE first attempt to fly around the world in a plane using only solar power launched yesterday in Abu Dhabi in a landmark journey aimed at promoting green energy that will test its pilots' endurance to the limits.

The Solar Impulse 2, piloted by Andre Borschberg of Switzerland, took off at 7:12 am local time from Al-Bateen airport and headed to Muscat, the capital of Oman, where it was expected to land later yesterday after the first leg of the journey.

The takeoff, which was originally scheduled for March 7, but delayed due to high winds, capped 13 years of research and testing by Mr Borschberg and fellow Swiss pilot Bertrand Piccard.

Two hours and 15 minutes into the flight, Mr Borschberg was 13 percent of the way to Muscat and attempting to give media interviews before calling his wife, according to a website monitoring his progress.

Shortly before take-off, the 63-year-old pilot tweeted that the "challenge to come is real for me & the airplane".

"This project is a human project; it is a human challenge," Mr Borschberg, co-founder and chief executive of the Solar Impulse project, told reporters on March 8.

The wingspan of the one-seater plane, known as the Si2, is slightly bigger than that of a jumbo jet, but its weight is around that of a family car.

From Muscat, it is due to make 12 stops on an epic journey spread over five months, with a total expected flight time of around 25 days.

It is due to cross the Arabian Sea to India before heading on to Myanmar, China, Hawaii and New York.

Landings are also earmarked for the midwestern United States and either southern Europe or North Africa, depending on weather conditions.

The longest single leg will see a lone pilot fly non-stop for five days across the Pacific Ocean between Nanjing, China and Hawaii, a distance of 8500 kilometres (5270 miles).

Mr Borschberg and Mr Piccard will alternate stints flying the plane, which can hold only one person, with the aircraft able to fly on autopilot during rest breaks.

The pilots have undergone intensive training in preparation for the trip, including in yoga and self-hypnosis, allowing them to sleep for periods as short as 20 minutes but awaken feeling refreshed.

All this will happen without burning a drop of fuel.

The pilots will be linked to a control centre in Monaco where 65 meteorologists, air traffic controllers and engineers will be stationed. A team of 65 support staff will travel with the two pilots.

Should a problem occur while sleeping, the ground staff can wake up the pilot.

"We want to share our vision of a clean future," said Mr Piccard, chair of Solar Impulse, said of the mission.

"Climate change is a fantastic opportunity to bring in the market new green technologies that save energy, save natural resources of our planet, make profit, create jobs and sustain growth."

The pilots' idea was ridiculed by the aviation industry when it was first unveiled.

But Mr Piccard, a 57-year-old who

hails from a family of scientist-adventurers and who in 1999 became the first person to circumnavigate the globe in a hot air balloon, clung to his belief that clean technology and renewable energy "can achieve the impossible".

The plane is powered by more than 17,000 solar cells built into wings that, at 72 metres (236 feet), are longer than that of a jumbo and approaching those of an Airbus A380 superjumbo.

Thanks to an innovative design, the lightweight carbon fibre aircraft weighs only 2.3 tonnes, about the same as a family 4x4 and less than 1 percent of the weight of the A380.

The Si2 is the first solar-powered aircraft able to stay aloft for several days and nights.

The propeller craft has four 17.5 horsepower electric motors with rechargeable lithium batteries.

It will travel at 50-100 kilometres per hour, with the slower speeds at night to prevent the batteries from draining too quickly.

The Si2 is the successor to Solar Impulse, a smaller aircraft that notched up a 26-hour flight in 2010, proving its ability to store enough power in the batteries during the day to keep flying at night.

It made its last successful test flight in the United Arab Emirates on March 2, and mission chiefs reported no problems. It is scheduled to arrive back in Abu Dhabi in July, flown by Mr Piccard.

For him, "the project should not finish in July, it should start in July". A petition was launched at futureisclean.org to campaign in favour of clean energy. — AFP



CILACAP, INDONESIA

Bali Nine families

Relatives of two Australian men awaiting execution for held prior to their forthcoming death sentences, which

THE families of two Australian drug smugglers facing imminent execution in Indonesia visited them yesterday for the first time on a prison island where they will be put to death.

Myuran Sukumaran and Andrew Chan, the ringleaders of the so-called "Bali Nine" drug trafficking gang, were sentenced to death in 2006 for trying to smuggle heroin out of Indonesia.

They recently lost their appeals for presidential clemency, typically the final chance to avoid the firing squad, and were expected to be executed soon with other foreign drug convicts.

The men, in their early 30s, were moved last week from their jail on Bali to Nusakambangan prison island off Java, where the executions are due to take place.

Australia has mounted a sustained diplomatic campaign to stop the executions going ahead.

Prime Minister Tony Abbott issued a fresh appeal yesterday, saying, "We respect Indonesia's sovereignty, of course; we respect Indonesia's system, of course."

"But we think it's right and proper that Indonesia should look to its own long-term best interests and its own long-term best values."

Earlier yesterday the men's relatives arrived at Cilacap, the port town on Java that is the gateway to Nusakambangan, as they headed to see them.

"We're fairly excited to go see Andy today," Mr Chan's brother Michael told reporters.

'We just want to see him for ourselves ... and let him know we love him.'

Chintu Sukumaran
Brother of Myuran Sukumaran

"It's been a few days. We're just looking forward to see him when we get over there, giving him a hug."

Mr Sukumaran's brother Chintu said he and his mother Raji and sister Brintha "have been waiting, counting down the days".

"We've been told he's doing well, so we just want to see him for



The Solar Impulse 2 taxis on the tarmac of al-Bateen airport in Abu Dhabi on March 9. Photo: AFP



The Solar Impulse 2, takes off from al-Bateen airport on March 9. Photo: AFP



Swiss pilot Bertrand Piccard (left) hugs his compatriot, pilot Andre Borschberg, before setting off from Abu Dhabi on March 9. Photo: AFP

Red Shirts behind latest Bangkok bomb, say police

WORLD 16



IN PICTURES

Photo: AFP

German Chancellor Angela Merkel shakes hands with Japanese auto giant Honda Motor's humanoid robot Asimo as museum head and former astronaut Mamoru Mori looks on at the National Museum of Emerging Science and Innovation in Tokyo on March 9. Ms Merkel was on a two-day visit to Tokyo and will have talks with her Japanese counterpart Shinzo Abe.

MORE RIGHT



Chechen former police officer confesses to Nemtsov killing

WORLD 17

TOKYO

Merkel: 'Honesty' key to reconciliation

GERMAN Chancellor Angela Merkel waded into the fraught area of wartime forgiveness during a visit to Japan yesterday, saying that "facing history squarely" and "generous gestures" are necessary to mend ties.

Ms Merkel was speaking in Tokyo ahead of the 70th anniversary of Japan's defeat in World War II, in which Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's conservative views on Tokyo's war crimes are under scrutiny, and as China and South Korea continue to call for ever more contrition.

"Germany was lucky to be accepted in the community of nations after the horrible experience that the world had to meet with Germany during the period of National Socialism [Nazism] and the Holocaust," she said.

"This was possible first because Germany did face its past squarely, but also because the Allied Powers who controlled Germany after the Second World War would attach great importance to Germany coming to grips with its past."

"One of the great achievements of the time certainly was reconciliation between Germany and France ... The French have given just as valuable a contribution as the Germans have," she said.

Relations between Japan and its wartime victims, China and South Korea, are at a low point, with Beijing and Seoul both demanding Tokyo does more to atone for its past.

Nationalists in Japan say Tokyo has apologised enough for the past, and

that the constant references to WWII are covering flak for governments in China and South Korea who are seeking to direct popular anger elsewhere.

There were "great minds and great personalities who said we ought to adopt a policy of rapprochement ... and without these generous gestures by our neighbours this would not have been possible", Ms Merkel told her audience.

The public lecture came on the first day of a two-day trip to Tokyo, her first in seven years, and one that comes after Mr Abe visited Germany last year.

China's foreign minister Wang Yi on March 8 said Mr Abe would be welcome at Beijing's commemorations of the end of WWII if he is "sincere" about history.

Beijing has not given a specific date for the parade, but it regards September 3, the day after Japan signed its formal surrender to Allied forces on board the USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay, as victory day.

"It's difficult for me as the German chancellor to give you advice on how to deal with part of your neighbourhood," Ms Merkel said in response to questions.

"But I think history and experience tells us also that peaceful means of reconciliation have to be found," she said.

Ms Merkel was due to visit the Imperial Palace to meet Emperor Akihito later yesterday before a formal sit down with Mr Abe, where a range of issues were due to be discussed. — AFP

es visit execution island

drug smuggling offences have travelled to the prison island on which they are expected to be enacted imminently despite appeals from Australia's leader.

ourselves, just to make sure, and let him know that we love him."

The families, escorted by consular officials, were expected to spend several hours on the island before returning to Cilacap.

Foreign drug convicts from France, Brazil, the Philippines, Nigeria and Ghana also recently lost their appeals for presidential

clemency, and are expected to be executed at the same time as the Australians on Nusakambangan.

The Australians, a French convict, Serge Atlaoui, and a Filipina, Mary Jane Fiesta Veloso, are all mounting legal challenges to their sentences, although Indonesian officials insist an appeal for presidential clemency is a death row convict's

final chance to avoid execution.

A lawyer for Mr Chan and Mr Sukumaran said at the weekend that a court will on March 12 hear the latest legal appeal by the pair.

They had sought to challenge President Joko Widodo's decision to reject their pleas for clemency, but a Jakarta court last month dismissed that bid. Their lawyers have now lodged an appeal against that decision.

Mr Widodo, who took office in October, has been a vocal supporter of the death penalty for drug convicts, saying that Indonesia is facing an "emergency" due to rising narcotics use.

He said in an interview broadcast at the weekend that he might be open to abolishing capital punishment, but only in the future and if the public were in favour.

The president has refused to change course despite appeals from Australia, France and Brazil.

He added that Mr Chan and Mr Sukumaran had been "thoroughly rehabilitated and reformed" during a decade behind bars.

Mr Abbott said it had not been possible to arrange another conversation with Mr Widodo about the looming executions, as he wanted, but Canberra would continue trying. — AFP



A boat carrying Australia Consul General to Bali Majell Hind and lawyer Julian McMahon (centre) crosses from Nusakambangan prison island and Cilacap on central Java on March 7. Photo: AFP

SYDNEY

Australians 'sick' of UN asylum row: Abbott

PRIME Minister Tony Abbott lashed out at criticism over Australia's treatment of asylum-seekers yesterday, saying the country was "sick of being lectured" by the United Nations.

Canberra sends asylum-seekers arriving by boat into detention on Papua New Guinea's Manus Island or the small Pacific state of Nauru and refuses them resettlement in Australia, policies which are condemned by refugee and rights advocates.

In a new report to be submitted to the UN Human Rights Council, the body's Special Rapporteur on Torture added to the criticism by finding that aspects of Australia's asylum-seeker policies violated the convention against torture.

"I really think Australians are sick of being lectured to by the United Nations, particularly, given that we have stopped the boats, and by stopping the boats, we have ended the deaths at sea," Mr Abbott told reporters when asked about the findings.

Australia's conservative administration, which also turns back boats carrying asylum-seekers where possible, has succeeded in stemming the tide of would-be refugees arriving on unauthorised vessels.

Mr Abbott said that putting an end to the dangerous people-smuggling route to Australia, mostly via Indonesia, was the "most humanitarian, the most decent, the most compassionate thing you can do".

Hundreds of people drowned at sea as the people-smuggling trade flourished under the previous Labor government, he said.

"We have stopped the boats and I think the UN's representatives would have a lot more credibility if they were to give some credit to the Australian government for what we've been able to achieve in this area," he added.

The UN rapporteur found there was substance to the allegations that Australia failed to provide adequate detention conditions, end the detention of children, and put a stop to escalating violence and tension at Manus.

As such, it had violated the right of the asylum-seekers to be free from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, it said.

Asked about the conditions that asylum-seekers lived in on Manus, Mr Abbott said these were "reasonable under all the circumstances".

"All of the basic needs of the people on Manus Island are being met ... Everyone's needs for food, for clothing, for shelter, for safety are being more than met," he said.

But Daniel Webb, from Australia's Human Rights Law Centre, said while Canberra always insisted it complied with all human rights obligations, the rapporteur found the policies were breaching international law.

— AFP

BAMAKO

UN peacekeeper and children killed in Mali

A PEACEKEEPER and two children died when militants shelled a UN base in northern Mali, heightening security fears as police hunted jihadists who launched a deadly Bamako nightclub assault.

The UN's Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) force said more than 30 rockets were fired at its barracks in the rebel stronghold of Kidal from 5:40am on March 8.

"Once they had established from where the rockets were being fired, MINUSMA troops immediately returned fire 2 kilometres from the compound, at around 6am," the force said in a statement.

"According to preliminary reports, one MINUSMA soldier died and eight others were injured. The shelling also claimed victims among the citizens of Kidal outside the compound, killing two and injuring four."

The force said in an update on Twitter that the civilian victims - members of the nomadic Arab Kunta tribe - were children and that only three other civilians had been wounded. Their encampment near the UN base was hit by stray rockets as the attack got under way, a MINUSMA source said.

Sources inside the force also said the peacekeeper, like the majority of personnel at the base, was Chadian.

The UN Security Council

issued a statement condemning the "heinous" assault and warned that "those responsible for the attack shall be held accountable" while calling on the Malian government to investigate.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon also condemned the "intolerable" killings, calling them a "breach of international humanitarian law".

"MINUSMA strongly condemns these heinous terrorist acts, whose only goal is to thwart all the efforts currently under way to achieve lasting peace in Mali," the force said.

No group has claimed responsibility, although Kidal is the cradle of northern Mali's Tuareg separatist movement, which has launched several uprisings from the region since the 1960s.

Tuareg and Arab militias - loyalist and anti-government - forged a peace agreement with the Malian government earlier this month in Algiers, although the main rebel groups have yet to sign it.

Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and other jihadist groups also carry out attacks in Kidal, including the 2013 murders of French journalists Ghislaine Dupont and Claude Verlon.

In Bamako, police in bullet-proof vests patrolled the area where a masked gunman had early on March 7 burst into La Terrasse, a

popular venue among expats, spraying automatic gunfire and throwing grenades.

Al-Murabitoun, a jihadist group run by leading Algerian militant Mokhtar Belmokhtar, has claimed responsibility for that attack, which left a Frenchman, a Belgian and three Malians dead.

It said in an audio recording carried by Mauritanian news agency Al-Akbar the operation was carried out "to avenge our prophet against the unbelieving West which has insulted and mocked him".

Vehicle checks were stepped up on the three bridges over the Niger river as detectives focused on a black four-wheel drive apparently used by the nightclub attacker and an accomplice.

"We cannot say much more at this stage but there are clues about the vehicle used to transport the author of the crimes committed in Bamako," a police source said.

MINUSMA, which has around 10,000 personnel in Mali, said it has made investigators and crimes scenes experts available to the authorities.

The French victim has been named as 30-year-old Fabien Guyonard, a single man with no children who had lived in Bamako since 2007 and worked at US construction company ICMS Africa. - AFP

BANGKOK

Police blame Red Shirts for latest bomb

THAI police yesterday accused a network of "Red Shirt" supporters of the toppled government of trying to destabilise the kingdom after the second small bomb attack to hit Bangkok in recent weeks.

Two men were detained on the night of March 7 after a brief shoot-out with security forces that followed a grenade attack at the Criminal Court, which caused minor damage to the building's car park but no injuries.

National Police spokesperson Prawut Thavornsiri said they are hunting another man and two women from the same apparent cell.

"Based on our investigation they have links with the Red Shirts," he said.

His boss, Police General Somyot Poompanmoung, said the blast was carried out by the "same network of people" responsible for twin pipe bombs that exploded last month outside a downtown shopping mall, slightly injuring two people.

That incident was the first major disruption to an uneasy peace imposed under martial law since last May's coup that removed the elected government of Yingluck Shinawatra.

"I think there are many groups attempting to do a similar thing," Mr Somyot told reporters, vowing to arrest anyone linked to the group.

The Red Shirts are a grassroots political movement that opposes the coup and supports the fallen government of Yingluck whose family have dominated Thai politics for more than

a decade.

But their resistance to the coup has been muted, with Red Shirt leaders under observation by the military and warned against breaching martial law by organising political rallies.

Red Shirt leader Jatuporn Prompan dismissed the link with his group, insisting they were non-violent and have nothing to gain from stoking tensions under martial law.

"We are not involved. It would be a disadvantage to us ... No-one is that stupid," he said on his daily television program.

Pressure has been mounting on the junta to lift martial law, with an increasing number of political figures and campaigners grumbling that debate is being stifled just as Thailand needs it most.

The junta-picked National Legislative Assembly is next month due to deliberate on a draft constitution, which the junta says will provide the bedrock for a return to democracy.

But critics doubt whether a new charter will bridge Thailand's deep political divisions.

Junta chief and Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha, who has so far resisted calls to end martial law, said the bombers wanted to revive tensions but declined to directly link them to the Red Shirts.

"The perpetrators want to create panic and chaos ... in order to make the public aware that they still exist," he told reporters.

- AFP

Myanmar's only award-winning paper

Delivered to your home or office, five days a week



Never miss a copy. Subscribe now.

FREE DELIVERY in Yangon, Nay Pyi Taw and Mandalay CALL NOW 392928 or 253642

Or email: subscribe.mt@gmail.com, mdydistribution.mcm@gmail.com, nptdistribution.mcm@gmail.com



IN PICTURES

PHOTO: AFP

Rebecca Cross and Scottish Terrier "Knopa" - bred in the US, with Russian ownership - celebrate with their trophy after winning the Best in Show category at Crufts Dog Show in Birmingham,

England, on March 8. Crufts is one of the largest dog events in the the world, with thousands of entrants competing for the coveted top title. However growing competition from foreign-owned dogs has sparked concern that not everyone may be playing fair. Owners of a prize-winning Irish Setter who died after competing at the renowned show claimed on March their dog had been poisoned at the event.

MOSCOW

Chechen confesses to Nemtsov contract killing

A FORMER police officer from Chechnya has confessed to his involvement in what investigators said was the contract killing of opposition activist Boris Nemtsov.

Four other suspects have denied any connection to the killing of Mr Nemtsov, who was shot four times in the back on February 27 while walking with his girlfriend along a bridge near the Kremlin in a brazen assassination that has sent shivers through the country's opposition.

Interfax news agency quoted a law enforcement source as saying that a sixth suspect threw a grenade at police who came to arrest him in the Chechen capital Grozny and killed himself with another grenade on March 7.

In Moscow, heavily armed masked police marched the five handcuffed suspects through hallways packed with journalists and into two separate courtrooms where they were ordered to be held for around two months pending the investigation.

According to documents read out in court, the accused are charged under a section of the Russian criminal code relating to murders carried out for financial gain, Interfax reported.

The charges also involve extortion and banditry. Investigators said they were still seeking others who may have been involved. However, as in a string of other killings of Russian opposition figures, officials have

yet to shed light on who might have ordered the late-night murder of the 55-year-old Nemtsov, a fierce critic of President Vladimir Putin.

Zaur Dadayev, a decorated former deputy commander in a Chechen police unit born in 1982, and Anzor Gubashev, 31, who worked for a private security company in Moscow, were arrested on March 7 in Ingushetia, which neighbours Chechnya.

They were both charged with murder but Mr Gubashev denied involvement.

"The participation of Dadayev is confirmed by his confession," said presiding judge Nataliya Mushnikova, according to state news agencies.

Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov said he was baffled by the arrest.

"I knew Zaur Dadayev as a true Russian patriot ... He was one of the bravest and worthiest soldiers of his regiment," Kadyrov said on Instagram.

Court spokesperson Anna Fadeyeva told the RIA Novosti news agency that the other three men were still only suspects at this stage. They are Mr Gubashev's younger brother Shagid, Ramzat Bakhayev, 45, and Tamerlan Eskerkhanov, 34.

The men are all from the volatile northern Caucasus region where Russia has fought two devastating wars against Chechen separatists and where security forces continue to clash with Islamist insurgents.



Zaur Dadayev stands inside a defendants' cage at a district court in Moscow on March 8. Photo: AFP

"The suspects denied their involvement in this crime but investigators have proof of their involvement," a representative for the probe told the court.

However no information emerged as to the possible motive behind the killing of the former prime minister turned charismatic opposition leader who was one of the last outspoken opponents to Putin. Mr Nemtsov's allies believe his assassination was a hit ordered by the top levels of government determined to silence dissenters. The allegation has been strenuously denied. - AFP

THE MYANMAR TIMES DAILY SUBSCRIBE NOW!

MYANMARTIMES
HEARTBEAT OF THE NATION

NORMALLY (ONE YEAR) - 156,000 Ks
NOW ONLY - 97,000 Ks
(US dollar also acceptable at current rates)

name national ID card number

address

township division/state

email phone fax

Yangon: 379/383, Bo Aung Kyaw St, Kyauktada Tsp.
Mandalay: No. 20, 71st St, Between 28th & 29th St, Infront of Nandaw Clinic, Chan Aye Thar San Tsp.
Nay Pyi Taw: No. 15/496, Yarza Htar Ni Road, Paung Laung 2 Qtr, Pyinmana.



FREE DELIVERY in Yangon, Nay Pyi Taw and Mandalay **CALL NOW 392928 or 253642**
Or email: subscribe.mt@gmail.com, mdydistribution.mcm@gmail.com, nptdistribution.mcm@gmail.com

BEIJING

A delegate wearing ethnic minority clothing prepares to attend the third session of the 12th National People's Congress at the entrance of the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on March 8. China's Communist Party-controlled legislature, the National People's Congress (NPC), gathers in the capital for the annual show of political theater, with the "rule of law" high on the agenda. Photo: AFP



Confident China vows to support Russia

As politicians gather for the 12th National People's Congress, China's new foreign minister is flexing his diplomatic muscles on the world stage

CHINA has asserted its place on the global diplomatic stage, pledging to steadfastly support Russia in the face of Western sanctions, scolding regional rival Japan and making clear it sees the US as an equal.

Foreign minister Wang Yi, speaking to reporters at a packed annual press conference on March 8, staunchly defended China's national interests, while proclaiming that its rise is no threat to the international order.

He stressed that Beijing would not abandon old friends and allies such as Moscow, which is beleaguered under sanctions and international opprobrium, and Pyongyang, in recent years more often than not a headache for China's leaders rather than an asset.

Chinese President Xi Jinping is due to visit the US later this year and Mr Wang emphasised that the two countries are equals that must work to overcome tensions.

The two presidents were ex-

pected to "inject new momentum into efforts to build a new model of major country relations between China and the United States", Mr Wang said, using Beijing's favoured description of their ties, suggesting they are on the same footing.

"China and the United States are two large countries," he added. "It's impossible for there not to be any disagreements between us."

Mr Wang vowed to deepen economic and diplomatic cooperation with Russia, even as it faces Western sanctions over the annexation of Crimea and the conflict in Ukraine.

Beijing and Moscow have regularly used their veto power on the UN Security Council to thwart Western initiatives such as on Syria's civil war, and Mr Wang said they would "continue to carry out strategic coordination and cooperation to maintain international peace and security".

Sino-Russian relations were based on "mutual need", he said, and they would work to increase trade to an annual US\$100 billion a year while intensifying cooperation in sectors including finance and energy.

Oil and gas are crucial to Russia, which has suffered from the plunge in global crude prices, and Mr Wang's comments suggest President Vladimir Putin, with whom Mr Xi has a strong personal relationship, can count on Beijing's support.

Mr Wang stuck largely to Beijing's script, reserving his theatrics for traditional bete noire Japan, which received a finger-wagging denunciation over what Beijing

sees as its recalcitrance over World War II history.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe will only be welcome at commemorations Beijing plans for the 70th anniversary of the war's end if he is "sincere" about history, Mr Wang said.

China-Japan relations have plunged over issues including territorial disputes and Japan's 19th- and 20th-century invasions, while China's Communist Party regularly stokes nationalism as part of its claim to a right to rule.

Mr Abe is a nationalist who feels Japan has apologised enough and that after seven decades of peace has earned a right to be more assertive of its interests, including defence and sovereignty, as well as how it sees its own history.

"This issue has been haunting the China-Japan relationship," Mr Wang said, pointing his index finger in the air and referring to the conflict, in which China says more than 20 million of its citizens died.

"Those in power in Japan should first ask themselves what they have done on this score," he said.

He was also defiant over Beijing's interests in the South China Sea, almost of all which it regards as its territory amid disputes with Southeast Asian countries.

Asked about reports Beijing was reclaiming land in the area, he said China was "carrying out necessary construction on its own islands and reefs".

"We have every right to do things that are lawful and justified," he added.

A career diplomat and expert on Japan, Mr Wang assumed his posi-



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi listens to questions during a press conference as part of the National People's Congress in Beijing on March 8. Photo: AFP

tion in March 2013 and is the face of Chinese foreign policy, the counterpart of officials such as US Secretary of State John Kerry.

He was speaking on the sidelines of the National People's Congress, China's Communist-controlled parliament.

China's most influential foreign policy official, however, is Yang Jiechi, a member of the State Council, or Cabinet, who was Mr Wang's predecessor as foreign minister.

Mr Wang also stressed Beijing's close historical ties with Pyongyang, which go back to the Korean War when Chinese forces guaranteed its survival.

But he also illustrated the

challenge of dealing with the nuclear-armed neighbour and its youthful, often unpredictable leader Kim Jong-Un, the third generation in his family to helm the country.

Three years after coming to power Mr Kim has yet to meet Mr Xi, but Moscow said in January that the North Korean leader would be among those attending ceremonies to mark the 70th anniversary of the Soviet Union's victory over Nazi Germany.

"As to when our leaders will meet it will have to suit the schedule of both sides," he said, implicitly acknowledging that no such encounter was likely soon.

— AFP

'China and the United States are two large countries. It's impossible for there not to be any disagreement between us.'

Wang Yi
China's foreign minister

NICOSIA, CYPRUS

2 million migrant birds killed in Cyprus as illicit taste for rare delicacy soars

MORE than 2 million migratory birds were killed in Cyprus last autumn to feed an illicit taste for the delicacy on the Mediterranean island, a conservationist group said yesterday.

The survey by Birdlife Cyprus was carried out in the key season between September and October and estimates the number of birds indiscriminately trapped in nets or with limesticks.

The group said its surveillance showed “a dramatic situation of this illegal activity sadly taking place”, with the number of mist nets used almost doubling in 2014 from the year before.

It found some 16 kilometres (10 miles) of net supports active during autumn and more than 6000 limesticks were reported from enforcement agencies and other non-governmental organisations.

Limesticks are twigs covered in a sticky substance that instantly trap birds that alight onto them, leaving them to dangle helplessly.

“With these trapping levels for autumn 2014, BirdLife Cyprus estimated that over 2 million birds could have been killed across the whole of Cyprus,” said Birdlife, the most since it began monitoring the activity 13 years ago.

Such methods are used to catch blackcaps and song thrushes, much sought after delicacies that fetch up to

80 euros (US\$86) for a dozen at Cypriot restaurants.

The Game and Fauna Service, in charge of the fight against poaching in Cyprus, says the illegal trade is worth about 15 million euros a year.

Birdlife said the figures showed illegal trappings were now “out of control” and that more needed to be done by the authorities in Cyprus, including the British military at bases on the island.

Birdlife Cyprus chief Claire Papanoglou said poaching was a “serious, persistent and growing problem” in “what has been the worst year with the highest trapping levels since the start of the monitoring program in 2002”.

Tim Stowe of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds called for zero-tolerance by the British military.

A huge crackdown on trappers and restaurants was enforced before Cyprus joined the European Union in 2004, but now conservationists say the government lacks the political will to eradicate the trade.

Birdlife has also called for tougher sentencing available to the courts.

The law provides for penalties of up to three years in jail and fines as high as 17,000 euros but these are rarely imposed. — AFP



A picture released by the Committee against Bird Slaughter (CABS) taken in Paralimni on April 15, 2014, shows a Lesser Whitethroat (*Sylvia curruca*) caught on a limestick bird trap. Photo: AFP

IN BRIEF

SYDNEY

‘British’ jihadist actually an Aussie
A Westerner pictured alongside Islamic State group fighters and dubbed by media as “Britain’s white jihadi” is in fact a teenager from Australia who converted to Islam, a report said yesterday.

A picture of the meek-looking youth, holding a rifle and sitting in between two jihadists with a black IS flag in the background, emerged on Twitter in late December.

At the time the militant group, which has run rampant through swathes of Iraq and Syria, hailed his recruitment as “a major coup” with the British media dubbing him “Britain’s white jihadi”.

Doubts about the authenticity of the picture subsequently emerged after a blogger claimed he had fabricated the image to hoax the British press.

But Australia’s Fairfax Media said the photograph had now been positively identified by friends of the teenager and members of two mosques in Melbourne.

It identified him as a former high-achieving 18-year-old student called Jake, declining to reveal his full name at the request of a family member.

BAGHDAD

Top US general flies into Iraq

The US military’s top officer landed in Baghdad yesterday as Iraqi forces battle the Islamic State group in their largest operation to date against the jihadists. General Martin Dempsey, chair of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, flew in on a C-17 military transport aircraft. He was due to hold talks with top Iraqi officials.

NEW DELHI

Tamils to be repatriated

India said yesterday it was working with Sri Lanka’s new government to repatriate thousands of ethnic minority Tamils who fled the island during nearly four decades of separatist war.

Indian Foreign Secretary S Jaishankar said discussions were ongoing for the return of 100,000 refugees

from the southern state of Tamil Nadu, which is separated from Sri Lanka by a narrow stretch of sea.

ISLAMABAD

Blasphemy killer loses appeal

A Pakistani court yesterday upheld the death sentence handed to a former police bodyguard for murdering a provincial governor who sought reform of blasphemy laws. The Islamabad High Court dismissed an appeal against the sentence by Mumtaz Qadri, who shot dead Punjab governor Salman Taseer outside an upmarket coffee shop in Islamabad in 2011.

WASHINGTON

Baby survives 14hrs in icy lake

A baby in the US state of Utah survived a car crash that killed her mother by dangling upside down in her car seat above a river’s frigid waters for 14 hours, police said.

A fisherman found the 18-month-old child and woman on March 7 in a four-door car flipped over in the Spanish Fork River in Utah, according to a police report.

The daughter apparently spent hours upside down in a rear passenger car seat as temperatures in the area dropped below freezing overnight.

The man called a rescue crew that was able to navigate the cold river and flip the car to get the little girl to emergency care.

Seven rescuers had to be transferred to a hospital to be treated for hypothermia and were later released.

Images posted on Twitter showed the partially submerged vehicle being hoisted by rescue crews.

Spanish Fork police identified the mother as Lynn Jennifer Groesbeck, 25, according to the *Salt Lake Tribune*.

Ms Groesbeck’s family said she was driving to her home on the night of March 6 at the time of the crash.

Police believe she struck the side of the bridge before plunging into the river.

The toddler was in a stable but critical condition at the hospital, the newspaper said. — AFP

DFSDF

‘Hermit’ suspected of stabbing spree

A MAN suspected of stabbing five elderly people dead at a family home in rural Japan was being quizzed by police yesterday, with reports saying he is a *hikikomori* or social misfit who lived nearby.

Media descended on the usually quiet island of Awajishima, with helicopters hovering over the farmstead where the five were slain some time before 7am local time.

Police who were called to the scene found the bloodied bodies of a man and a woman, both aged around 80 years, in the main house on the site.

Two unconscious women, aged

around 60 and 80 years were discovered in another building, while a badly injured man in his 60s was found outside.

All three were rushed to hospital where they were later confirmed dead.

Detectives arrested unemployed Tatsuhiko Hirano, a police spokesperson said, with reports saying he initially admitted the multiple killing.

The 40-year-old Hirano lives in the area with his father and grandmother, Jiji Press reported.

Locals told the agency he rarely leaves his home and has largely been isolated from society since his school

days.

The phenomenon of so-called *hikikomori* – literally “the withdrawn” – rears its head fairly frequently in Japan.

Often it applies to maladjusted people in their late teens or early 20s who shut themselves away for years at a time in their parents’ homes, many living in darkened bedrooms with little or no human contact.

While many eventually emerge, others continue well into adulthood, protected from the pressures of life by their ageing parents.

— AFP

NEW DELHI

TV news goes blank over rape doc ban

AN Indian news network ran a blank screen for an hour in protest at a controversial government ban on airing a documentary about the savage gang-rape of a Delhi student.

NDTV broadcast a blank screen with only a flickering lamp in the background for an hour from 9pm to 10pm on March 8, when it was due to have shown the documentary, India’s Daughter, to mark International Women’s Day.

The channel has made no public comment about the ban, but its editorial director Sonia Singh tweeted ahead of the protest, “We won’t shout, but we will be heard”.

India obtained a court order banning the film, which included an interview with one of the convicted rapists, Mukesh Singh, on March 3 on the grounds it risked fuelling public anger.

Home Minister Rajnath Singh said comments in which Mr Singh blamed the 23-year-old victim and said she should not have been out at night were “highly derogatory and an affront to the dignity of women”.

The ban triggered a storm of protest in India, and many people welcomed NDTV’s move.

“Well done NDTV for deciding to go off air for one hour... Very innovative and powerful,” Rifat Jawaid tweeted.

“Wish I could post a blank tweet in solidarity with NDTV’s protest,” tweeted Tushar Gandhi, the great grandson of India’s independence hero Mahatma Gandhi.

‘We won’t shout, but we will be heard.’

Sonia Singh

NDTV editorial director

India’s Daughter, by award-winning British filmmaker Leslee Udwin, was due to be shown in seven countries including India and Britain on March 8.

The BBC brought forward its

showing of the film to March 4 after India announced its ban, citing intense public interest.

The father of the victim, who died of injuries sustained during the shocking attack in 2012, has said everyone should watch the documentary, which showed “the bitter truth” about attitudes to women in India.

Officials at the jail where Mr Singh is being held said they had asked the BBC not to show the documentary, claiming Udwin had violated the terms of the agreement allowing her to interview the prisoner.

But Ms Udwin has insisted she had complied fully with the agreement.

India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a vocal champion of women’s rights in India, has so far made no comment on the row.

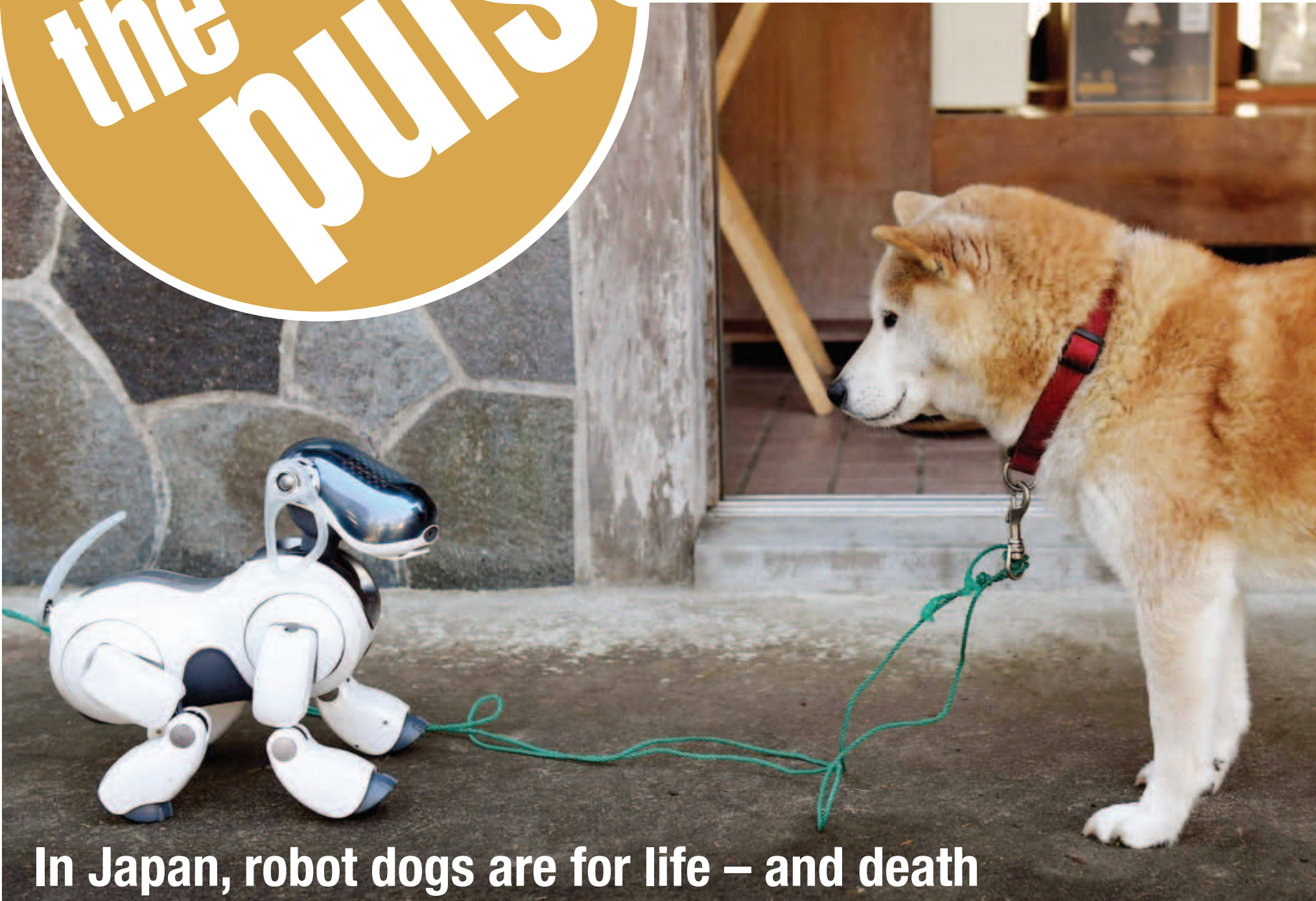
On March 8 he urged an end to all forms of discrimination against women, tweeting that “our heads hang in shame when we hear of instances of crime against women”.

— AFP

GET YOUR FINGERS ON IT

the pulse

Robot do



In Japan, robot dogs are for life – and death

INCENSE smoke wafts through the cold air of the centuries-old Buddhist temple as a priest chants a sutra, praying for the peaceful transition of the souls of the departed.

It is a funeral like any other in Japan. Except that those being honoured are robot dogs, lined up on the altar, each wearing a tag to show where they came from and which family they belonged to.

The devices are “AIBOs”, the world’s first home-use entertainment robot equipped with Artificial Intelligence (AI) and capable of developing its own personality.

“I believe owners feel they have souls as long as they are with them,” said Nobuyuki Narimatsu, 59, who heads an electronics repair company specialising in fixing vintage products.

Sony rolled out the first-generation AIBO in June 1999, with the initial batch of 3000 selling out in just 20 minutes, despite the hefty 250,000 yen (more than US\$2000) price tag.

Over the following years, more than 150,000 units were sold, in numerous iterations, ranging from gleaming metallic-silver versions to round-faced cub-like models.

The dog came with an array of sensors, a camera and microphone. The final generation could even talk.

By 2006, Sony was in trouble; its business model was broken and it was facing fierce competition from rivals in all fields. The AIBO, an expensive and somewhat frivolous luxury, had to go.

The company kept its “AIBO Clinic” open until March 2014, but then – politely – told dedicated and loving owners that they were on their own.

For Hideko Mori, 70, that nearly spelled disaster.

Mori has had her AIBO for around eight years. She enjoys the conversations she has with it, and thinks it far more convenient than a real puppy.

“He doesn’t require feeding and he doesn’t pee ... Actually he does pee by cocking his leg, making an indescribably beautiful tinkling sound.” But, she said, nothing actually comes out.

“I never thought there was a limit to his life.”

But in May last year her beloved AIBO, whose name is simply “Aibo”, became immobile.

“I e-mailed a former Sony worker on behalf of Aibo, saying, ‘Do I

have no choice but to die like this because I can’t walk?’” she said.

The engineer introduced her to A FUN, a company that employs former Sony engineers, who fixed her machine in two months.

“I was so happy to see him back to health and at home,” she said.

Hiroshi Funabashi, 61, who supervises repairs at A FUN, said troubled AIBO owners think of him more as a doctor than an engineer.

“The word ‘repair’ doesn’t fit here,” he said at his home in Kasama, north of Tokyo. Scattered around him are dozens of AIBOs sent in with problems owners typically describe as “aching joints”.

“For those who keep AIBOs, they are nothing like home appliances. It’s obvious they think their [robotic pet] is a family member,” he said.

Funabashi says he does not enhance the functions of aged AIBOs, but tries to restore them to health.

The problem is that repairs can take weeks or even months because of a shortage of spare parts. Dozens of AIBOs are now “hospitalised”, with more than 180 on the waiting list.

The only source of genuine parts are “dead” robots, who become donors for organ transplantation, but only once the proper respects have been paid.

Bungen Oi, a priest at the 450-year-old Kofukuji temple in Isumi, east of Tokyo, says the AIBO service last month was an occasion on which the robots’ souls could pass from their bodies.

“I was thrilled over the interesting mismatch of giving cutting-edge technology a memorial service in a very conventional manner,” he said.

It is a mismatch that humans will probably become more used to over the coming years and decades, as robots with “personalities” become ever more part of our lives.

Later this year, Japanese telecoms giant Softbank says it is going to start selling the humanoid Pepper to the public.

Despite the \$2000 cost, Pepper will be useless for housework, but developers say it will learn to imitate and intuit human emotions over time.

This blurring of lines means more people could feel the kind of attachment that AIBO owners know so well, said A FUN’s Funabashi.

“I don’t know if people will develop affection [towards a new generation of robots] in five, six years’ time,” he said. “But I think we need to recognise they are not ordinary electrical devices.” – AFP



A priest performs a robot dog funeral. Photos: AFP/Toshifumi

g days



Ma Sin Mar Aung speaks at the International Women's Day celebration on March 8. Photo: Zarni Phyo

Women speak out against injustice

NYEIN EI EI HTWE

nyeineiehtwe23@gmail.com

WOMEN must find their voice and speak out against the discrimination they continue to suffer, participants in an International Women's Day celebration heard on March 8. The event took place at Sein Lan So Pyay Garden, Yangon.

Ma Zin Mar Aung, founder of the women's organisation Rain Fall (which stands for Re-socialisation and Increased Non-discrimination For All), called on women to make their views known on all the problems relevant to them, including family issues. In 2007, Ma Zin Mar Aung was sentenced to 20 years in prison for political activism.

"If women fail to speak out about their problems, who else will speak for us? Every day we see pictures of women taking part in student protests, labour protests, land-grab issues and displaced persons' camps. They are still discriminated against because they are women," Ma Zin Mar Aung said.

The barriers to political action that women faced could be overcome, she said. Political wives were expected to support their husbands, but a woman wishing to make her own way in the political world needed a good income, and had to take time to look after her family and do the household chores.

"Women are afraid to confront change in their lives. They want a tranquil family life secure in an organised society. But they must be aware that change is just a challenge and their husbands also need to understand what their wives are eager to do," said Ma Zin Mar Aung.

She added that in Western countries, where traditional gender roles are much more fluid, men and women work together to take care of their families, with men sometimes doing the cooking while their wives go shopping.

By contrast, in a traditional society, women seeking to take action face much more pressure and resistance than men.

"I could cite several examples. One day, when my friend and I were working for a local foundation that supports prisoners, we went to a restaurant on 19th Street to eat their boiled rice, which was particularly delicious. When we got back to the office, we were told that many people had called in to complain that we'd been drinking beer."

Not, she said, that there was anything wrong with women drinking beer in many countries. But in Myanmar, many people assumed that a woman who called herself a feminist was bound to drink and smoke cigarettes and generally break all the rules.

"Rumours can kill people, especially women in Myanmar, and people should think carefully about the image they might be projecting," she said.

Even when women became active in political parties, as they had been for many years, their main role was to raise funds or to make the coffee when guests came, not as decision-makers.

"When we internalise such values, we end up discriminating against ourselves. Women are not servants. Just because our social skills are good doesn't mean we should not aspire to higher positions in political parties too," said Ma Zin Mar Aung.

She urged the government to engage in women's issues, not just by paying lip-service but through genuine action.

She then spoke of the Interfaith Marriage bill proposed last year by the extremist Buddhist monk U Wirathu and his followers.

"They want to rule our thoughts, our social lives and now even our marriages. When I spoke out against these proposals, I received threatening letters and emails. Even

in women's issues, they could not accept that women should have a say," said Ma Zin Mar Aung.

Cherry Sahau, a Chin national and secretary of the Chin Progressive Party, who organises Myanmar women's activist organisations, also supported Ma Zin Mar Aung's opposition to the bill.

"The law speaks of Buddhist women, but in Chin State, some believe in Buddhism and some are Christians. That doesn't mean there is no unity," she told the participants, adding that the difference in the level of development in the city and the ethnic areas had penalised women in terms of education, business, rights and mental development.

"Most ethnic people work in agriculture and live in poverty, and growing crops is the only occupation their daughters know. If they aren't going out to the paddy fields, they don't go out at all," she said.

She said government budgets for ethnic areas were too small, and true economic development would both raise the status of women and advance the peace process.

Cherry Sahau said that, few as successful women leaders are, fewer still are from ethnic areas because of the inequalities of the education system.

"If you are young, female and ethnic it's hard to speak out because the culture impedes young women, especially in the men's world of politics," she said.

'They want to rule our thoughts, our social lives and now even our marriages. When I spoke out against the marriage bill I received threatening letters'

Ma Zin Mar Aung

Women's rights activist

Unfamiliarity with the Myanmar language was another barrier to progress. "We get funny looks because of our accents. Ethnic women are inhibited about speaking out in society," she said.

Ko Aye Khaing, director of a research institute studying parliament, said there were too few women MPs. In Pyithu Hluttaw there are 319 male MPs and 22 women, and in Amyotha Hluttaw, there are only four female MPs.

"They can ask questions in parliament about governance, the economy, education, ethnic matters, the environment and so on. But so few women cannot represent the whole country, and can hardly aspire to leadership positions," he said, adding that women should demand their rights and call for respect for their value and dignity.



Members of the Thai blind orchestra perform during a concert at the Thai Elephants Research and Conservation Fund in Thailand's Khao Yai National Park on January 31. Photo: AFP/Nicolas Asfour

Blind children defy 'bad karma' to play in Thai orchestra

DEFTLY feeling their way along the bumps of the braille score, the young players of Thailand's first blind orchestra memorise scales, defying both their impairment and ingrained negative attitudes toward disability.

It is rehearsal time just hours ahead of a concert at an open-air auditorium in a national park, and about 30 fledgling classical musicians enthusiastically strum, pluck and bow instruments they have held but never seen.

"At first it was really hard for me ... I wanted to stop," said Joe, a 14-year-old budding cellist who picked up the instrument nine months ago.

"But when I realised that others could do it, I gave it another try," he said, smiling broadly.

Official figures show that Thailand is home to 1.8 million disabled people - of whom about 180,000 are blind - in a population of more than 64 million.

Yet campaigners say state provision for disabled people is poor, compounding a widely held Buddhist belief in karma that, in the minds of many, links physical impairments with the supposed "misdeeds" of a past life.

The Thai Blind Orchestra, made up of players aged between eight and 15 years, offers a rare positive platform for disabled Thais.

The orchestra, which uses donated instruments, was brought together by a professional classical musician whose day job is looking after elephants in the Khao Yai National Park in northeastern Nakhon Ratchasima Province.

The seeds of the idea were planted when the blind students met their soon-to-be maestro, Alongkot Chukaew, at his conservation classes in the park.

Teaching with the help of audible aids, including his guitar, the 43-year-old Alongkot noticed

that music caught the attention of the children.

He asked his music teachers to play different instruments and encouraged the youngsters to follow the sound they liked best.

As their affinity with their chosen instrument mushroomed, Alongkot introduced a braille system for the students to learn to read classical music.

Shown one-on-one how to position their fingers on their instruments, the children then memorise the notes and the correct placement to make the right sounds.

"It was hard because they cannot see the demonstration of where to put their fingers or hold the bows," Alongkot said. "But it was fun."

"Some people might not like their performance, but the kids are happy and have fun with it," he said, adding they are not looking to compete.

Attitudes toward disability across Southeast Asia are often shaped by a sense of karmic destiny.

The same philosophy that encourages people to do good deeds so they may be rewarded on reincarnation also leads people to believe that the disabled suffer their impediments because of their actions in a past life.

It is something that holds back progressive policies and leaves many of the region's disabled in poverty or hidden at home by ashamed families.

"Disabled people are the poorest of the poor," explained Supornthum Mongkolsawadi, a Thai double-amputee from childhood who now campaigns for improved rights.

"The belief in karma makes disabled people think they should just surrender and accept their fate," added the 48-year-old, who heads the Redemptorist Foundation for People with Disabilities.

Activists say other countries in the region such as Malaysia,

Singapore and the Philippines tend to have a better track record of rolling out disability aids and policies.

Supornthum blames Thailand's lag on years of political instability and short-lived governments for hampering policy changes to transport, education and health.

While the law codifies equality, in practice life remains at best complex for many disabled Thais.

Most public transport lacks wheelchair access, few state offices have ramps, and there are no braille signs and few voice signals.

Jobs are also sparse while social opprobrium runs high.

But Supornthum sees some reasons for hope, saying the ruling Thai junta is well placed to drive change after it vowed to make society more inclusive and include rights for all in its reform agenda.

In January, a Bangkok court ordered that lifts be installed at 19 more stations of the capital's elevated skytrain service within a year - up from four currently - an issue Supornthum has campaigned on for eight years.

But for real change to take place, Thailand must first shed its preconceptions about disability, said Rosalina Alexander McKay, an activist from the Rainbow Room Foundation in Bangkok.

"You don't have to change the belief system but you have to change your ways of looking at things," said McKay, who has a seven-year-old daughter with Down's syndrome.

As sighted volunteers prepare to lead the orchestra to their seats and their instruments on the open-air stage, cellist Joe said he refuses to be held back by received notions of karma.

"I cannot see but I have good ears ... That is my gift in music," he said. "When we lose one thing, there will always be a substitute."

- AFP

The Global Gossip

This week, in ninjas

Japanese officials are enlisting one of the country's best-known historical figures - the ninja, martial-arts master and stealth agent of feudal times - to encourage tourism.

Governors and mayors from prefectures around the country traded their usual bland suits for ninja costumes on March 8 to announce the launch of the "ninja council".

It sees local authorities forming an alliance with tourism agencies to thrust ninjas - usually known for their ability to become nearly invisible - into the spotlight.

Ninjas are a "subject that always comes up whenever we go abroad to promote tourism", said Hiroshi Mizohata, former head of the transport ministry's Japan Tourism Agency.

The not-so-stealthy move comes as local governments turn to tourism as a promising economic growth driver ahead of the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo.

"Through ninja, we want to revive our communities," said Eikei Suzuki, governor of Mie prefecture, known for the "Iga" school of ninja.



The power of the ninja: Japan's "ninja council" will help to kick up tourism. Photo: AFP/Yoshikazu Tsuno

ROME Cheese makers kick up a stink

Parmesan makers cried foul last week over the huge scale on which the famous Italian cheese is copied in the United States.

For the first time, the number of wheels of cheeses made outside Italy in the style of the celebrated Parmigiano Reggiano and the similar Grana Padano now exceeds production in their Italian home regions, the country's biggest agriculture group Coldiretti said.

Over 300,000 tonnes of what Italians consider to be "fake"

versions of the famous cheeses were produced overseas - for the most part in the United States - compared to 295,000 tonnes produced in Italy, Coldiretti said as producers staged a demonstration over the issue in Bologna.

While the soft blue cheese Gorgonzola may be enjoying surging international sales, the hard cheeses have suffered a drop in exports, damaging a sector already struggling to recover from an earthquake which tore through the Emilia Romagna region in 2012.

Producers "find themselves facing a situation more serious than the earthquake which three years ago knocked over thousands of wheels and destroyed warehouses," Coldiretti said.

Exports of Parmesan to the United States dropped 10 percent last year, amid reports of an increase in popularity of a kit which claims users can make the cheese themselves at home in just two months.

Parmigiano Reggiano producers last year were forced to swallow a 20pc drop in prices to US\$8.11 per kilo over the year, while prices for consumers dipped just 4.0pc.

According to Coldiretti, one in four small producers of Parmesan have gone out of business since 2007.



An Italian chef cuts up samples of parmesan cheese to serve to visitors at the annual "Foodex" food exhibition in Tokyo on March 3. Photo: AFP/Yoshikazu Tsuno

SYDNEY And finally, in condom news...

An Australian broadcaster on March 5 revealed how it discourages staff from having babies and taking maternity leave - a big jar of condoms at work.

A senior executive in Perth for Southern Cross Austereo, which runs the radio station that became embroiled in a British royal fake call scandal in 2012, said a third of her 100 staff were on maternity leave or covering for someone who was.

"We do have a big jar of condoms at work," Linda Wayman, who is boss of the broadcaster's two Perth stations Mix 94.9 and Hit 92.9, told a conference on recruitment and culture.

"I'm not lying, I'm not exaggerating," she added, according to the conference organisers Mumbrella, a marketing and media website.

"I do encourage people regularly to have sex with condoms. That is a big area of focus for me, encouraging people to have sex with condoms."

Wayman also revealed she runs an "Angelina Jolie award", in recognition of the child-adopting actress, to reward employees who have flourished in more senior roles made available by women on maternity leave.



Disney's "Cinderella" to be released in theaters on March 13, stars Grumpy the Cat, seen here posing on his arrival at the film's premiere in Hollywood, California, on March 1. Photo: AFP/Frederic J Brown

Seeing red



Galliano



Galliano



Galliano



Elie Saab



Galliano



Galliano



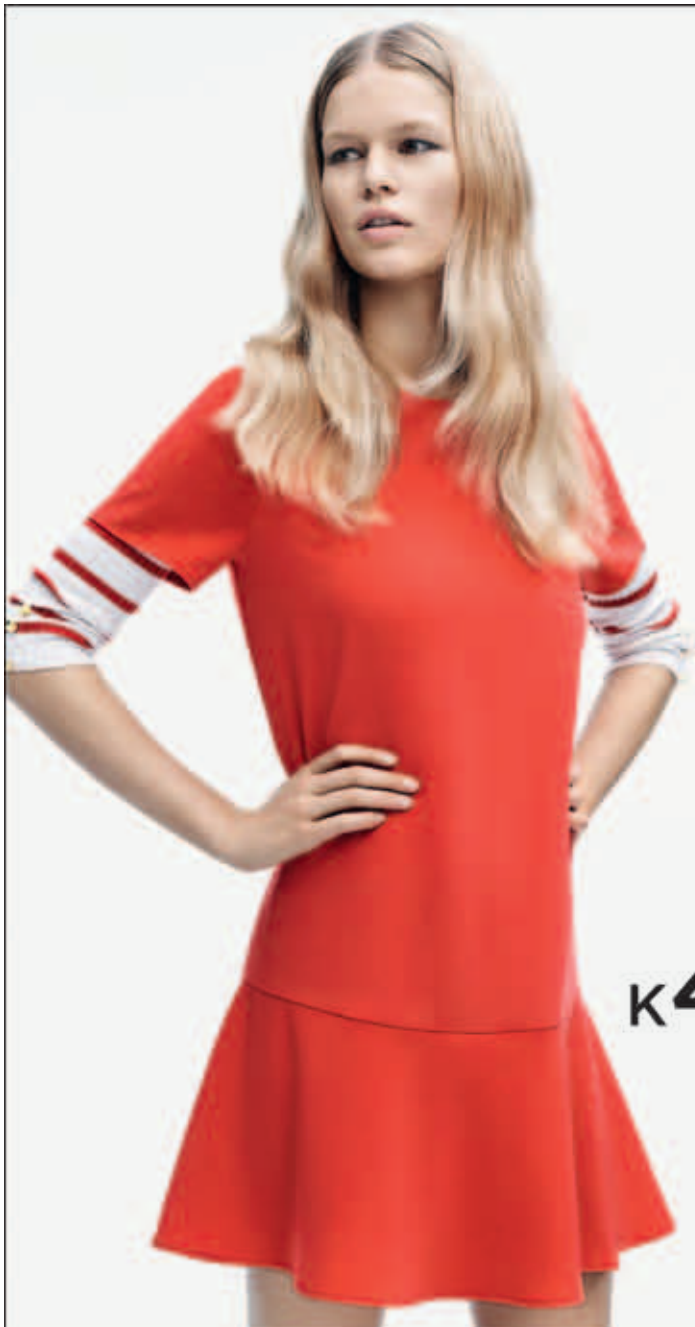
Nina Ricci



Olympia Le Tan

Red looks set to be the new black next season, as seen all over the runways at the 2015-2016 fall season fashion shows in Paris this month. John Galliano's show saw models draped in floor-sweeping pillar-box-red creations, while his koi-karp print dresses were injected with flashes of scarlet. If you're not ready for head-to-toe sequins a la Nina Ricci's collection, try accessorising with bright accents, as seen in the Olympia Le Tan show.

Photos: AFP



MANGO

BARCELONA

DRESS
K42,900

MANGO.COM

YANGON, BLAZON DEPARTMENT STORE, TAW WIN CENTER

CRICKET

Associates treated as second-class citizens, says Irish captain

IRELAND cricket captain William Porterfield insisted March 9 his side belonged among the world's elite and said he despised the tag of "Associate" which virtually brands a host of teams as second-class citizens.

Non-Test-playing Ireland are on course for a World Cup quarter-final place and can ensure a spot in the last eight if they shock defending champions India on March 10.

They already have six points from three wins and a defeat in Pool B, seeing off Test sides West Indies and Zimbabwe as well as the amateurs of the United Arab Emirates.

Their only defeat so far was a 201-run wake-up call against South Africa.

Victory over either India or Pakistan, in their final group game in Adelaide on March 15, will put them in the quarter-finals with Pakistan or West Indies heading home.

"I don't like that tag of Associates," said Porterfield, whose team qualified for the tournament as one of four non-Test sides alongside Afghanistan, UAE and Scotland.

"I don't think teams should be associated any differently, and putting those tags on us.

"As far as I'm concerned, there is a ranking system in place and that's where we're at," added Porterfield, whose team is ranked 11 in the world.

Non-Test teams, however, could miss out on the 2019 World Cup with the International Cricket Council planning to reduce the number of participating teams from 14 at the ongo-

ing event to just 10.

"Hopefully the ICC will take notice and will start looking at the next World Cup," said Porterfield.

"Obviously, cutting teams in the World Cup isn't the way forward unless that's the vision for the game.

"If you want to progress your game and grow the game of cricket, then cutting teams in world competitions isn't the way forward."

Regardless of his fears for future tournaments, Porterfield is relishing the tantalising prospect of making the quarter-finals.

"Yeah, it's a nice position to be in," he said. "We want to be in the quarter-finals. We set ourselves this goal before we came here but it doesn't count for anything if we don't keep getting good performances and good starts to the game."

Porterfield, whose team also made it to the second round of the 2007 World Cup in the Caribbean by shocking Pakistan, said they will not be paying India too much respect.

"It's like any other game. We've gotten into each game with two points up for grabs, and tomorrow isn't any different. We've approached each game with great clarity and great professionalism and we've prepared very well."

Porterfield relished the publicity his team was generating back home.

"You speak to people who are back home and the stories that you see coming out are great, and that's where cricket is going in Ireland. So, hopefully, yeah, we do make those quarter-finals

and keep pushing on as a country ourselves."

Andy Moles, coach of fellow Associate side Afghanistan, also supported the expansion rather than retraction of opportunities for cricket's so-called minnows. On March 9 he praised his side for exceeding expectations at their first World Cup but insisted on the need to keep playing against top sides to maintain momentum and become a real force in the game.

Afghanistan proved competitive in their tournament debut, including posting a win against Scotland, even though the nation only contested their first one-day international in 2009.

Moles said his players, many of whom learned their cricket in refugee camps, were passionate about showing the world there was more to their country than war and unrest.

"These guys have got nothing really compared with Full Member nations in terms of rewards for playing the game," he told New Zealand's Radio Sport.

Afghanistan had just three matches against top-eight nations in the two years leading up to the World Cup. In contrast, New Zealand had 17 ODIs in the five months before the event opened.

Moles said there was a new generation of players in Kabul, where cricket's popularity has soared in recent years.

"[But] if they're going to be able to hold their own against better sides then they need to get exposure against those better players ... so they don't just get exposed just at World Cup events," he said. - AFP



IN PICTURES

Mohammad Mahmudullah became the first Bangladesh batsman to score a World Cup century, inspiring the victory that eliminated England from the World Cup on March 9, at the Adelaide Oval. Bangladesh became the most recent nation to be elevated from Associate when they acquired Test status in 2000.

Photo: AFP

RUGBY UNION

World Rugby signs historic agreement with International Gay Rugby

MATT ROEBUCK

ADVOCATES of equality in sport have praised the move by World Rugby, the international governing body of Rugby Union, to sign a historic agreement with International Gay Rugby, committing the organisation to "educate and eliminate homophobia in rugby."

The agreement, signed at World Rugby House in Dublin, was announced late last week in a press release from World Rugby and outlines a commitment between the two organisations to work together to educate and eliminate homophobia in rugby.

Chair of World Rugby Bernard Lapasset said, "Rugby is an inclusive sport which has at its heart character-building values of passion, integrity, solidarity, respect and discipline. The signing of this historic agreement underscores our commitment to those values and our strategic vision - a game for all, true to its values."

"The bold step by World Rugby to commit to these shared purposes with IGR reflects the character-building values that are important to us all in the sport. Hopefully, other sporting governing bodies can look to World Rugby as a role model and follow suit," said chair of International Gay Rugby Jeff Wilson, in World Rugby's press release.

"It is of interest that the lead announcer of this agreement was the mainstream organisation," Marc Naimark, a member of the organising committee of Paris 2018 Gay Games told *The Myanmar Times* on March 9.

"For many years rugby has proven to be one of the most LGBT-friendly



World Rugby chair Bernard Lapasset (right) displays the agreement with International Gay Rugby chair Jeff Wilson (left).

Photo: World Rugby/Dan Sheridan/INPHO

sports, with organisations at the local, regional, national, and international level taking actions in favor of the fight against homophobia in sport," added Naimark.

"Rugby has provided many great allies, including outstanding players like Ben Cohen and David Pocock advocating for LGBT inclusion."

Underthetermsofthememorandum

of understanding signed by the two organisations, World Rugby and IGR have agreed to recognise and respect "the right of any player, official and spectator to be involved with rugby without discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation or identification", and "the common goal of inclusion and the elimination of homophobia in rugby."

The agreement also focuses on the provision and use of educational tools to work "with regional associations and member unions to improve tolerance and acceptance of LGBT players at all levels within rugby union."

"We're delighted to see this collaboration between World Rugby and International Gay Rugby. What is particularly exciting about the agreement

between the two international associations is its emphasis on education," said Lou Englefield, director of Pride Sports, an UK-based organisation for LGBT sport.

"We believe effective culture change to make LGBT people feel safe and welcome, on the playing fields and in changing rooms, can only be achieved through education; by raising the awareness of all rugby's stakeholders from grassroots to the professional game, from junior to open age rugby," she added.

International Gay Rugby is also a member of the Federation of Gay Games and will be promoting rugby at Paris 2018.

Naimark, a former board member of the Federation of Gay Games, held reserved optimism for World Rugby's position as a role model for other sporting bodies.

"There is real potential for concrete action in favour of inclusive sport here [but] it should be noted that the countries that are the most visible in world rugby are among the most progressive countries in terms of LGBT rights and inclusive sport.

"This stands as a counter example to organisations like the Commonwealth Games Association or the International Olympic Committee, made up of a majority of countries where homophobia is endemic, and even official government policy.

"The initiatives of the IOC under Thomas Bach are exciting, and will likely be effectively implemented at the Olympics themselves, but it will be hard for them to trickle down to national sport organisations that can themselves be vectors of homophobia locally."

FOOTBALL

Elimination unthinkable for out-of-form Real Madrid

EUROPEAN champions Real Madrid will expect to take another step toward to becoming the first team in 25 years to retain the Champions League when they host Schalke on March 10 holding a 2-0 lead from the first leg of their last 16 tie.

Madrid have strung together 10 consecutive victories in Europe stretching back to their successful run to their 10th European Cup last season, but have found the going a lot tougher domestically in 2015.

Los Blancos surrendered their lead at the top of La Liga at the weekend as they were beaten 1-0 at Athletic Bilbao, whilst Barcelona thrashed Rayo Vallecano 6-1.

That was Madrid's fourth defeat in 14 games this year with coach Carlo Ancelotti admitting he was at a loss to explain how his star-studded strike force of Cristiano Ronaldo, Karim Benzema and Gareth Bale has so suddenly gone off the boil.

"It seems strange to say Madrid have a problem up front when we have scored so many goals throughout the season, but I think it is the truth," said the Italian on March 7.

However, captain Iker Casillas has insisted that they won't suffer a hangover from their La Liga woes at the Bernabeu.

'This competition is different. For Madrid fans it means everything'

Iker Casillas
Real Madrid Captain



Real Madrid's Brazilian defender Marcelo sinks to his knees during Real Madrid's 1-0 defeat to Athletic Club Bilbao on March 7. Photo: AFP/ Ander Gillenea

"This competition is different. For Madrid fans it means everything," he told the club's website.

Schalke were on the receiving end on Real's run towards the title at the same stage of the competition last season in a 9-2 aggregate hammering.

And Casillas is adamant that Ancelotti's men still have all the qualities required to go all the way once more.

"We know that it will be very difficult but we will fight to achieve it. We are ambitious and we have a mixture of youth and experience so why not?"

"Last year we played against teams that had caused us problems in the past and we were capable to play good football and get to the final. We will give everything to get to Berlin.

"We have the team to do it and we hope to repeat the success of last year." Madrid will be boosted by the

return of Luka Modric after over four months out with a torn thigh muscle.

Sergio Ramos also returned to training on March 8 after a month on the sidelines with a hamstring problem, but isn't expected to be risked by Ancelotti with a potentially decisive La Liga clash with Barcelona just 10 days away.

Schalke, meanwhile, enjoyed a far more successful weekend as they registered a first win in five games with a 3-1 victory over Hoffenheim.

That result boosted the Royal Blues chances of a return to the Champions League next season, but left-back Christian Fuchs retains hope a famous comeback at the Bernabeu.

"We travel now to Madrid in a positive frame of mind, no one will bet on us, so maybe there is a chance for us," said the 28-year-old. - AFP

WINTER SPORTS

Speed skater Sven claims record seventh world crown

DUTCH speed skater Sven Kramer captured his seventh All-Around world title on March 8, capping his weekend with a triumph in the 10,000 metres.

Titles in 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2012 and 2013 had already given the two-time 5000m Olympic champion the most All-Around world triumphs in history.

He finished the four races of the 2015 championships on the Olympic oval in Calgary with 146.509 points, with Russia's Denis Yuskov second with 146.934 and Norway's Sverre Lunde Pedersen third on 147.182.

Kramer had led after the opening day on March 7, when he won the 5000m and finished 10th in the 500m. He benefitted from the early crash

in the 500m of compatriot and defending champion Koen Verweij.

On March 8, Kramer tied for third in the 1500m before his closing 10,000m victory.

On the women's side, Czech Martina Sablikova added a third title to the all-around crowns she earned in 2009 and 2010.

With wins in the 3000m and 5000m, Sablikova denied the Netherlands' Ireen Wust a fifth-straight all-around world title.

Sablikova finished with 157.717 points, while Wust, a double gold medalist at the Sochi Olympics, was second with 1:59.278.

Norway's Ida Njatus, fastest in the 1500m on March 8, was third overall with 159.795 points. - AFP

Jansrud secures super-G globe

HOME favourite Kjetil Jansrud delighted his hordes of fans in Kvittfjell, Norway by storming to victory in the World Cup super-G on March 8 to claim the crystal globe for the season's best skier in the discipline.

Jansrud, who won super-G gold and downhill bronze at last year's Sochi Winter Olympics, garnered 100 points for the win, putting him out of

reach of Italian Dominik Paris, who could only finish fourth here, with only the season finale in Meribel to come.

The victory also helped Jansrud close the gap on Austrian Marcel Hirscher in the race for the overall World Cup title, the Norwegian now on 1,076pts behind Hirscher's 1,128.

- AFP

Vonn victory sets up season finale

AMERICAN veteran Lindsey Vonn slid to a win in the women's World Cup super-G in Garmisch on March 8 to ensure the race for the discipline's crystal globe with Austrian arch-rival Anna Fenninger goes down to the wire.

Vonn, who won super-G bronze

at last month's world championships, timed 1min 16.65sec down the 2.18km-long Kandahar piste in brilliant sunshine for her 65th World Cup victory.

Slovenia's Tina Maze was second, at 0.20sec, while Fenninger came in third (+0.36sec). - AFP

TENNIS

Longest match in Davis Cup history

ARGENTINA'S Leonardo Mayer ground out the longest win in Davis Cup history on March 8, to keep his nation's hopes alive in their derby clash with Brazil while Switzerland's title defence ended with a whimper in Liege.

In searing heat in Buenos Aires, Mayer beat Brazil's Joao Souza 7-6 (7/4), 7-6 (7/5), 5-7, 5-7, 15-13 in six hours and 42 minutes, the second-longest singles match on record.

Mayer needed 11 match points to close out a first-round epic which surpassed the previous Davis Cup record of six hours 22 minutes for John McEnroe's 1982 win over Mats Wilander.

Mayer found the energy, somehow, to bounce up and down in celebration, but shortly afterwards he was treated for dehydration.

The only longer recorded singles match was the legendary 11-hour battle between John Isner and Nicolas Mahut at Wimbledon in 2010.

But the marathon win only levelled the tie at 2-2, and Argentina's Federico Delbonis was leading Thomaz Bellucci 6-3 when darkness stopped play in the decisive fifth rubber.

"We both deserved the victory, to me," Souza said. "But one guy had to lose the match. I just want to say congrats to him."

In Liege, Switzerland's title defence proved short-lived as Belgium won 3-2 against a side missing Roger Federer and Stan Wawrinka, who led them to their first Davis Cup crown last year.

Henri Laaksonen forced a fifth rubber for Switzerland with a hard-fought 6-3, 3-6, 3-6, 7-6 (7/5), 6-1 victory over Steve Darcis.

But David Goffin, the world number 21, easily dispatched 321st-ranked Adrien Bossel 6-4, 6-0, 6-4 in the decisive match.

Belgium next play Canada, who were also pushed to a fifth match in a 3-2 triumph over Japan.

World number four Kei Nishikori did his part with a 3-6, 6-3, 6-4, 2-6, 6-4 victory over Canada's world number six Milos Raonic in the marquee match in Vancouver.

But Vasek Pospisil made short work of Go Soeda 7-5, 6-3, 6-4 to put Canada through as they seek to improve on their best previous Davis Cup showing, a run to the semi-finals in 2013.

Elsewhere, Andy Murray sealed a quarter-final berth for Britain, and Australia and Kazakhstan joined already qualified France and Serbia in the last eight.

Murray, the world number five, starred for Britain, claiming victory with a 7-6 (7/4), 6-3, 7-6 (7/4) win over US number one Isner in Glasgow.

It sealed the winning point in an eventual 3-2 triumph and set up a final eight meeting in July against last year's runners-up France, who lost both meaningless reverse singles as they polished off a 3-2 victory over Germany in Frankfurt.

"It's a big win," said former Wimbledon champion Murray. "I was very emotional the whole weekend."

"To be in the quarter-finals for the second consecutive year is incredible."

Bob and Mike Bryan had kept the United States in with a chance of a dramatic fightback as they held off a strong challenge from Jamie Murray and Dom Inglot on March 7.

The tie ended 3-2 after James Ward retired in the final dead rubber while leading Donald Young.

In Ostrava, Bernard Tomic beat Lukas Rosol in straight sets to lead Australia past the Czech Republic and into a quarter-final clash with Kazakhstan.

Tomic, the 22-year-old world number 38, saw off 29-year-old Rosol, ranked 31, 7-6 (7/4), 6-3, 7-6 (7/5).

"I was playing confidently and consistently and that was the key, I think," said Tomic. "I'm happy with the way I did it today."

Czech Jan Mertl beat Samuel Groth 6-3, 6-2 in a dead rubber to round off the score.

It was the seventh time in eight Davis Cup encounters that 28-time champions Australia have beaten the Czech Republic.

They'll take on a Kazakhstan team that squeezed past Italy 3-2 in Astana.

Aleksandr Nedovyesov, 28, gained the winning point, beating Fabio Fognini 7-6 (7/5), 3-6, 4-6, 6-3, 7-5 after Mikhail Kukushkin earlier beat Andreas Seppi 7-6 (10/8), 6-0, 6-4.

Serbia, who had advanced unbeaten on March 7, completed a 5-0 rout of Croatia. The Novak Djokovic-led Serbs now await the winner of Argentina versus Brazil.



Argentina's tennis player Leonardo Mayer (left) celebrates with team captain Daniel Organic. Photo: AFP

Sport

Cricket's minnows speak out on World Cup exclusion

SPORT 26



CYCLING

Governing body shamed by Armstrong doping report

Independent commission questions UCI chiefs McQuaid and Verbruggen

AN independent commission on March 9 accused top leaders of cycling's world body of protecting Lance Armstrong despite mounting signs that the now-disgraced Tour de France winner was a doping cheat.

The commission also slammed money and benefits used during elections for the presidency of the International Cycling Union (UCI) and called for major changes in the way it is run.

The Cycling Independent Reform Commission, led by Dick Marty, a Swiss politician and former state prosecutor, was set up following allegations that Armstrong made cash donations to the UCI in a bid to cover up doping failures.

Armstrong, who defeated cancer to go on and win seven straight Tour de France races from 1999 to 2005, was stripped of his titles in 2012 and banned from the sport for life. The fallen US cycling hero, 43, now admits taking banned substances.

The commission said it found links between donations amounting to \$125,000 he made to the UCI and a cover up of his drug failures. The CIRC gave a damning assessment however of efforts by the UCI under past presidents Hein Verbruggen and Pat McQuaid to shield Armstrong from investigation.

"Numerous examples have been identified showing that UCI leadership 'defended' or 'protected' Lance Armstrong and took decisions because they were favourable to him. This was in circumstances where there was strong reason to suspect him of doping," said the commission report.

The UCI "purposely limited the scope" of one 2005 independent investigation into Armstrong.

"UCI exempted Lance Armstrong from rules, failed to target test him despite the suspicions, and publicly supported him against allegations of doping, even as late as 2012."

The commission said "requesting and accepting donations from Lance Armstrong, given the suspicions, left UCI open to criticism."

In 1999, Armstrong was allowed to provide a backdated doctor's prescrip-

The allegations against Lance Armstrong

The US Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) published a report against Armstrong in 2012 that outlined "the most sophisticated, professionalized and successful doping program that sport has ever seen," according to chief executive Travis Tygart

Drugs

Linked to allegations against Armstrong and the US Postal Service Pro Cycling Team

Testosterone
Promotes protein synthesis, muscle growth

Human growth hormone
Acts on cellular metabolism, skeletal growth, enhances power of steroids

EPO
Erythropoietin, hormone stimulates production of red blood cells to increase oxygen carried to muscles

Cortisone
Affects metabolism, lessens pain, reduce tiredness

Blood transfusion
Increases red blood cells

Enforcement

Of a doping culture

Pressure
On teammates to follow the doping plan

Distribution
Of EPO syringes

Supply
Of testosterone patches to teammates

Cover-up

A sophisticated system to evade detection

Avoidance
Of tests and testers "we hid": Tyler Hamilton, USPS team member

Surveillance
Of testing teams

Saline drips
Before drug tests to lower red blood cell ratios

False prescription
Cortisone cream to treat a saddle sore

Limiting EPO use
to tiny traces, boosted by altitude tents

Make-up
Covered injection bruises on arm

Threats
To a rider who spoke out: "I have a lot of time and money and I can destroy you" spoken to 2004 Tour rider Filippo Simeoni

Source: USADA/WADA/FIFA

tion "to avoid sanction" during the 1999 Tour de France when four out of 15 tests taken showed banned corticosteroids.

When Armstrong made a comeback in 2009, the UCI allowed him to compete in the Tour Down Under in Australia even though he had not been available for testing for the previous six

months, as required.

The commission said it had information that McQuaid "made a sudden u-turn" to let Armstrong return 13 days early, against the advice of UCI staff.

It added that there was "a temporal link between this decision" and Armstrong's move announced later the

same day "to participate in the Tour of Ireland." McQuaid's brother was an organiser of the race.

The commission said Armstrong was seen as the "perfect choice to lead the sport's renaissance" after the Festina drug scandal on the Tour de France in 1998.

"The fact that he was American opened up a new continent for the sport, he had beaten cancer and the media quickly made him a global star."

The commission highlighted lapses in cycling's general anti-drug regime including drug testers sometimes leaking information about who would be the target of tests.

It said there were "serious allegations" that riders from one unnamed country paid what was called an "anti-doping tax" to avoid tests. The commission said the the accusations were received late in its mandate so had been passed to the UCI for further investigation.

'Numerous examples have been identified showing that UCI leadership 'defended' or 'protected' Lance Armstrong.'

CIRC report

"The significant risk for cycling is that the number of doping scandals and damage to the sport's reputation will cause both existing sponsors to leave the sport and deter new sponsors," said the report, highlighting the exit of Rabobank, a Dutch bank, in 2012.

Neither Verbruggen nor McQuaid made an immediate comment.

The report also highlighted how before the Irishman succeeded the veteran Dutch sports baron in 2005, Verbruggen offered McQuaid "paid work" at the UCI for six months before the election.

McQuaid was also a paid consultant to the 2004 Road World Championships in Verona, Italy when he was president of the UCI road racing commission.

- AFP

MOTOR SPORT

F1 drama moves from circuit to courtroom

ALLOWING Formula One driver Giedo van der Garde to start the Australian Grand Prix would be "reckless", lawyers for Sauber Motorsports said March 9 as the Dutchman launched a legal bid to race this weekend.

Van der Garde claims he was guaranteed one of two seats on the Sauber team last year but bosses at the Swiss outfit reneged on the deal and instead handed them to Swede Marcus Ericsson and rookie Brazil-

ian Felipe Nasr.

The Dutchman, a reserve driver at Sauber last year, originally took his case to a Swiss arbitration tribunal which ordered Sauber to keep him on the team, reports said.

On March 9 he sought to have the Victorian Supreme Court enforce the ruling in its jurisdiction just days ahead of the opening practice session for the first Formula One race of the season.

In opening its defence, Sauber lawyer Rodney Garratt said van der Garde had not trained in the team's new car and had not gone through the two-week custom seat-fitting process.

He argued that allowing him in a car he was not fitted for or trained in would put other drivers and support staff at an "unacceptable" risk and it would be "reckless and dangerous".

"Mr. van der Garde has no expe-

rience driving the c34 Ferrari and would not have sufficient time to learn," Garratt told the court, *Australian Associated Press* reported.

Van der Garde, Ericsson and Nasr were all in court for the opening statements with the hearing continuing. It is not clear when Justice Clyde Croft will make a ruling.

The case is just one of a number of off-circuit dramas that are playing out in the final countdown to the

season-opening Australian Grand Prix in Melbourne.

Fewer cars, teams and drivers will start this year's championship, one of the sport's stars Fernando Alonso is mysteriously missing amid a spiral of conspiracy theories, and, as financial constraints continue to eat into its balance sheets, the global juggernaut that mixes glamour, danger and speed faces an uncertain future.

- AFP