



INSIDE NEWS
Lawyer calls for end to army influence on Supreme Court

INSIDE THE PULSE
Cartoons join commuters on the streets of Yangon



HEARTBEAT OF THE NATION

500 Ks.

MYANMAR TIMES

WWW.MMTIMES.COM

DAILY EDITION

ISSUE 4 | THURSDAY, MARCH 12, 2015



REFORM OF CIVIL SERVICE GETS BOOST WITH NEW POSTS

NEWS 4



THE SLOW BUT STEADY GROWTH OF E-COMMERCE

BUSINESS 10



FUKUSHIMA, FOUR YEARS ON FROM DISASTER

WORLD 14



Relatives greet detained protesters as they arrive at Letpadan Township Court from Tharyarwady Prison yesterday afternoon. Photo: Kaung Htet

No freedom for protesters

Demonstrators arrested at Letpadan on March 10 could face almost a decade in prison on five charges revealed in court yesterday, although the government has promised to release “real” students detained in the crackdown. NEWS 3

Golden Lion Wire & Cable

ISO 9001:2008

လျှပ်စစ်အန္တရာယ်ကင်းစေဖို့ Golden Lion Wire & Cable သုံးကြစို့

01 - 224351, 226306, 229410, 685646/7, 707766, 709233, 02 - 65585, 61299, Fax: 2303092

IN BRIEF

Six-way meeting on the cards

The six-way talks called for by Pyidaungsu Hluttaw are on, it was announced yesterday.

Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann called in party representatives shortly before the hluttaw session to confirm that the talks would be held, though participants afterward said no date was mentioned.

At its last session, Pyidaungsu Hluttaw approved a proposal calling for a meeting that would bring together President U Thein Sein, Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann, Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker U Khin Aung Myint, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and Rakhine National Party leader U Aye Maung, who will represent ethnic minorities.

U Soe Win, vice chair of the National Democratic Force, told reporters after yesterday's meeting that the speaker had instructed parties to start preparing for the meeting.

The meeting was attended by about 20 party leaders.

U Aye Maung said afterward, "It looks like this is it."

The government has previously described the proposal as impractical, and said it instead preferred "all-inclusive" talks, with a larger number of participants. Critics say the "all-inclusive" demand is a tactic to avoid participating in any serious negotiations. - *Htoo Thant, translation by Zar Zar Soe*

Ethnic media meet to focus on business models

Survival and profitability will be the two main themes under discussion at the third ethnic media conference, to be held in Haka, Chin State, from March 19 to 20.

Salai Mang, vice president of the organising committee, said professionals from the mainstream and foreign media had been invited to lead discussions on possible business models that would equip ethnic media to survive and develop.

"Ethnic media operate on patriotic spirit," he said. "Ethnic media need a business model so as to be sustainable."

They face a range of challenges, including locating, developing and retaining human resources.

More than 40 ethnic media organisations are expected to attend.

The first and second ethnic media conferences were held in Mawlamyine in 2013 and Taunggyi in 2014.

The agenda will also focus on the role of the ethnic media in the election later this year.

The conference is being organised by Burmese News International (BNI), Chin World and Khonumthung. - *Lun Min Mang*

Backsliding or stumbling forward? The reform debate

ANALYSIS



GUY
DINMORE

guydinmore@gmail.com

IN a harsh report this week summing up her latest mission to Myanmar, Yanghee Lee, the UN special rapporteur for human rights, noted "a growing atmosphere of fear, distrust and hostility" and urged the government to reverse what she called "the current slide towards extreme nationalism, religious hatred and conflict".

Acknowledging that Myanmar had undergone "far-reaching changes" since President U Thein Sein's reformist and quasi-civilian administration replaced military rule in 2011, Ms Lee warned that the new government was showing continued "signs of backtracking".

Events since her visit in January would only reinforce such views. Martial law was imposed last month in the border region of Kokang where intense fighting between the Tatmadaw and ethnic Chinese rebels has caused heavy civilian casualties; hired thugs have broken up protests over labour and education in Yangon; and on March 10 riot police brutally attacked students, monks and reporters outside a monastery in Letpadan, ending an eight-day stand-off and making 127 arrests.

Whether the government is deliberately backtracking on reforms or reacting in piecemeal fashion to complex events is a debate set to intensify in the run-up to parliamentary elections in November, which the president promises to be the most inclusive since independence in 1948. Western capitals that have already suspended most sanctions in support of the hoped-for transition will face growing scrutiny from critics - at home and in Myanmar - who complain they have given away too much too quickly.

Responding to the crackdown in Letpadan, the EU - which earlier had protesters outside its mission in Yangon - was quick to defend its training of police and provision of riot gear.

"This was needed, and as events show, this need still remains," the EU said, while calling for a formal investigation into the violence.

Pending such an inquiry, there were some signs that the display of police brutality on March 10 was at least in part a result of lack of discipline in responding to student attempts to breach their barricades. Some police were also seen trying to restrain their colleagues, while one offered a monk his helmet for protection.

And on the same day, U Thein Sein ordered a commission of inquiry into police action against pro-student activ-



A police officer places bullets into a cartridge outside Letpadan Township Court yesterday. Photo: Kaung Htet

ists in Yangon on March 5 when unidentified thugs wearing red armbands bearing the word "duty" broke up the protest. Deployment of such vigilantes has led to a public outcry. It remains to be seen how impartial the inquiry can be when one of its four commissioners is a serving brigadier general, U Kyaw Kyaw Tun, who is also deputy minister for home affairs, which controls the police.

Rather than a coherent effort to row back reforms, some diplomats and analysts see an overburdened and weak administration which does not enjoy full support from the various factions within the still dominant military, and is quick to appease influential lobbies without being able to deliver.

This was seen in December when the president put forward draft laws on race and religion proposed by nationalist Buddhist groups (including a rabble-raising Mandalay monk, U Wirathu, who later called Ms Lee a "whore"). The draft law, which discriminates against non-Buddhists and risks inflaming ethnic tensions, has been widely condemned by the international community, including the UN envoy. Parliament is left with the tricky and time-consuming task of amending or scrapping it.

Similarly in February the government quickly gave in to student objections over the framework National Education Law passed last year, even though some of their demands were deemed unrealistic, such as allocating 20 percent of the budget to education and giving autonomy to schools over instruction at the local level.

Again parliament has been tasked with putting together something workable. In the meantime the pace of economic liberalisation is slowing.

The government is not alone in perceptions of lacking decisiveness, however. Now part of the formal parliamentary opposition, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has been reluctant to take a bold stance on critical issues, whether it is conflict between Muslims and Buddhists in Rakhine state, or tackling nationalist Buddhists, or even defending students who were among her most loyal cohort during years of house arrest.

Yesterday her National League for Democracy stepped back from condemning the latest episode of police brutality, by expressing its opposition to "any violent action" and calling for an investigation. When reporters pressed Daw Aung San Suu Kyi for a response, she answered that the NLD "never supports violent actions ... That is why I

have nothing to say in particular."

Nicholas Farrelly, a researcher at Australian National University, says the government has "too many balls to juggle".

"It's an unenviable task and one not made any easier by the lofty expectations that many hold. Myanmar's security forces will likely struggle with managing popular movements for many years to come. It's a matter of practice, mentality and momentum," he told *The Myanmar Times* yesterday.

"At almost every level, though, Myanmar is a more democratic, more inclusive and more successful society today than it has been for a couple of generations. The thugs who gave the orders for the attack on unarmed students deserve reprimand and punishment. But it shouldn't be a surprise that flare-ups of abusive behaviour still occur.

"It would be a miracle, given the history and the politics, if this is the last time that cries of backsliding are heard. The last couple of years for Myanmar have been five steps forward, two steps back. At the very least that's a much better track record than the countries with which Myanmar should be most readily compared: Thailand and Bangladesh."

Supreme Court judge urges MPs to approve monogamy bill

HTOO THANT

thanhtoo.npt@gmail.com

A BILL to promote happy and monogamous marriages has been submitted to parliament. The bill was put forward by Supreme Court Judge U Soe Nyunt yesterday for debate in the Pyithu Hluttaw.

A range of Pyithu Hluttaw committees, including those for social development and citizens' rights, said U Tin Htut, a member of Pyithu Hluttaw Bill Committee.

U Soe Nyunt called for the adoption of the bill. "The intention is to

enable a happy married life between legally married couples, to protect women from being co-wives and to prevent marital crimes as a possible side-effect of polygamous marriage," he said.

Section 8 of the bill stipulates, "From the date the law comes into effect, a man or woman, who has officially been married to one or more partners according to a law or religion or tradition, shall not marry again until the prior marriage has been dissolved."

It also specifies that a wife or husband has the right to ask for

'A man or a woman, who has officially been married ... shall not marry again until the prior marriage has been dissolved.'

Monogamy Bill

a divorce if their spouse marries again before the existing marriage has been dissolved, on the grounds of bigamy. A partner in a marriage whose spouse had failed to dissolve a previous marriage will not be able to inherit their spouse's property.

Bigamists would be liable to a fine and up to 10 years' imprisonment.

Members wishing to debate the Monogamy Bill and the Myanmar Buddhist Women's Special Marriage Bill, also known as the interfaith marriage law, were asked to register no later than March 18.

The bills, along with others on

religious conversion and population control, were put forward by Buddhist nationalists in 2013. Known as the "protection of religion laws", the bills have been highly controversial, with local and international human rights groups declaring them discriminatory and politically motivated.

In January, United Nations special rapporteur on human rights Yanghee Lee said she believed the monogamy bill was unnecessary, as polygamy is already banned under Myanmar law.

- *Translation by Thiri Min Htun*

Civil society calls for foreign pressure

OLIVER SLOW
newsroom@mmtimes.com

CIVIL society leaders have condemned a police crackdown on student protesters in Letpadan on March 10 as "inhumane" and called on the international community to closely monitor the government and security forces to ensure there is no repeat of the violence.

"The reaction was a clear violation of the international standard of dealing with public groups, and we can see this from the attacks on people who are sick or injured, as well as even medical staff," U Aung Myo Win, director of Equality Myanmar and a member of the Civil Society Coordination Committee (CSCC), told *The Myanmar Times* yesterday. "I really denounce the use of excessive force [by the police] because you see no use of violence started by the students."

U Aung Myo Win said that the authorities had exacerbated an already tense situation by failing to respond adequately to the students' demands.

'The foreign governments have been trapped by the government's propaganda.'

Daw Khin Lay
Civil society leader

Criticism has also been aimed at the European Union, which has been training Myanmar police in crowd management and riot control since 2013.

The EU delegation issued a statement on March 10 condemning the violence and calling for a transparent investigation. The British and United States embassies in Yangon have issued similar statements.

But Daw Khin Lay, director of Triangle Women Support Group, said the international community had not spoken out strongly enough.

"We are not very happy with the international community," said Daw Khin Lay, who is also a member of the CSCC. "The foreign governments have been trapped by the government's propaganda, so they are reluctant to react to what happened at Letpadan. If the government's behaviour is not checked, then we can see this [violent crackdown] happening again."

"If the government is saying that they are in a democratic transition, is the behaviour of the police part of a democratic society? It was inhumane - it wasn't like beating students, it was like beating animals, and it is particularly shameful after the police training, and the EU needs to review its police training policy."



An activist is taken from a prison van after arriving at Letpadan Township Court yesterday. Photo: Kaung Htet

Government promises to free 'real' students

WA LONE

walone14@gmail.com

THE government announced last night it will release demonstrators detained at Letpadan on March 10 if they can prove they are "real" students, as more than 100 people appeared in court yesterday under heavy police guard.

Students and other protesters among more than 120 arrested in a brutal police crackdown in Letpadan were taken yesterday from their prison cells to court, where they were told they would face five possible charges - under sections 143, 145, 147, 332 and 505(b) of the Penal Code - and were remanded in custody for two weeks pending trial.

The charges include incitement, causing hurt to deter a public servant from his duty and rioting. They carry a total maximum punishment of nine-and-a-half years in prison.

Citing a Ministry of Home Affairs statement, the Ministry of Information reported last night that charges would be filed against those behind the students who incited the riots.

The announcement came as a second batch of almost 80 detainees arrived at Letpadan Township Court at about 7:30pm.

Earlier in the day, three blue prison vans crammed with about 50 detainees drove from Tharyarwady Prison back to Letpadan where the protesters - their hands cuffed with plastic and some showing injuries from the March 10 violence - filed into the courtroom for a one-hour hearing.

"Our human rights have been violated," some of the students shouted from the vans as they left. Some had swollen eyes and foreheads covered with plaster patches, their faces tired from the stifling heat inside the police vans.

According to the Ministry of Information, a total of 127 people were arrested on March 10 after police wielding batons ended an eight-day stand-off outside a Letpadan monastery, about 140 kilometres (90 miles) north of Yangon. Students and a small group of monks were demanding to be allowed to continue their march to Myanmar's largest city in protest against the National Education Law passed last year.

Parents and supporters waited anxiously outside the court, along with about 50 police armed with rifles.

Daw Khin Khin Yu, mother of Ko Min Thwe Thit, a detained leader of the All Burma Students Union, condemned the police crackdown and government action.

"I was a supporter of U Thein Sein's government before but now I hate them," she said.

'We are just farmers from a village ... We are so afraid of police and are never against the government.'

U Nay Win
Father of a detainee

Parents shouted out the names of their sons and daughters, asking how conditions had been in prison. Students responded by giving thumbs-up signs from behind the grills of their prison wagons.

Daw Lae Lae Moe said she had encouraged her son, Ko Min Thu Sain, an English major from Nattalin township, to get involved in the protest. But now she looked desperately worried and frustrated. "I will always encourage my son to get involved in activities to change our country's democratic education. That will make our whole country a better place," she said.

U Nay Win, father of Ma Phyto Phyto Aung, one of the arrested student leaders, said he and his wife had waited outside the prison since early in the morning to hear news about their daughter, but that the authorities had not allowed a meeting or given any information.

"I am worried about my daughter and the other students. I heard my daughter has been beaten and injured. The government should not use violence against them," he said.

Residents of Letpadan were among those arrested but some insisted they had nothing to do with the student protest.

U Kyi Aye, 65, from That Nge Gone village, about 9km from Letpadan, said he had gone to the town with his son to get documents from the township immigration office. He said his 29-year-old son Ko Ye Min Aung had been arrested when he tried to stop a policeman from taking his motorbike.

U Nay Win said he saw his son in one of the prison vehicles but had no chance to talk to him.

"We are just farmers from a village," he said. "We are so afraid of police and are never against the government."

Campaigns launched for protesters

YE MON
yeemontun2013@gmail.com

YANGON students and activists have announced plans for a series of armband campaigns in response to the violence at Letpadan.

The first is to begin today, when the Myanmar Aerospace Engineering University Students' Union will encourage all students at their university to wear black armbands to class.

"We will do the campaign for one

day only. I expect the students will wear the armbands in class," said union leader Ko Aung Yi Wai.

Meanwhile, Ko Nyi Moe Swe from the Poem Lovers Association said yesterday his group would encourage the public to wear white armbands with the words "We are students. Respect our rights" on March 13 and 15.

Students will gather in parks, markets and on public transport to explain the campaign to the public, he said.

"We will organise people to wear

the white armband if they want to and we will explain to them why we are doing this," Ko Nyi Moe Swe said. "We expect many people will wear them."

He said the campaign was intended to not only raise awareness about the violence at Letpadan but also government restrictions on the right to protest peacefully.

He said it could be followed by other action.

"The campaign is a first step ... later on, there might be protests."

Students to return to talks in capital

MRATT KYAW THU
mrattkthu@gmail.com
EI EI TOE LWIN
eieitoelwin@gmail.com

FOLLOWING a week of violent clashes between student protesters and police, the Action Committee for Democratic Education announced yesterday that it will renew talks with parliament over contested changes to the National Education Law.

The last round of discussions stalled on March 5, when a meeting between 15 student representatives and members of parliament failed to produce results.

Earlier negotiations had appeared to yield a breakthrough in February, when student organisations and lawmakers hashed out a compromise bill to supersede the Education Law that was signed into effect last September. But the government soon after backtracked on the amendments, which fired off fresh rounds of protests.

The education dispute came to a head in Letpadan on March 10 when police wielding batons and riot gear took aim at student marchers and arrested almost 130 demonstrators.

Concerned at the potential for more violence, the Action Committee said during a press conference yesterday that it will head to Nay Pyi Taw on March 16 to take a stab at re-energising talks.

Lawmakers yesterday welcomed the decision.

"Students should attend parliament discussions so that if the bill committee asks for a draft of theirs, they can respond and explain what they want," said MP U Phone Myint Aung of the Amyotha Hluttaw.

During yesterday's press conference, the action committee also urged a formal investigation into the clashes.

"We need to hold the government responsible for this violence. We have to call for the release of students who are now in the jail, and we will negotiate with officials," said Ko Zay Yar Lwin of the ACDE.

The opposition National League for Democracy yesterday also added its voice to the growing chant for an investigation, following similar calls from multiple embassies and the European Union.

The NLD issued a statement requesting the formation of an investigating commission. The statement did not elucidate who it was calling on and contained no criticism of the government's violent response to the student demonstration.

When cornered by reporters outside parliament yesterday, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was tight-lipped on the issue.

"The NLD never supports any violence," she said before adding, "I have nothing to say in particular."

But the failure to discuss the crackdown in parliament yesterday drew criticism from political analysts.

"MPs should ... be asking questions about the crackdown in parliament," analyst U Yan Myo Thein said in a post on Facebook.

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
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
Special Publications Editor MTE – Wade Guyitt
wadeguyitt@gmail.com
Regional Affairs Correspondent – Roger Mitton
rogermitton@gmail.com

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

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

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

PHOTOGRAPHICS
Director – Kaung Htet
Photographers –
Aung Htay Hlaing, Thiri, Zarni Phyo

PRODUCTION
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
ads.myanmarimes@gmail.com
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.

MCM

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@myanmarimes.com.mm

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

EXCLUSIVE

New permanent secretaries to lead civil service reform push

Thirty ministries are set to be appointed permanent secretaries, who will become the highest-ranking civil servants

SANDAR
LWIN

sdlendar@gmail.com

THE giant task of overhauling Myanmar's civil service has taken a step forward with the training of permanent secretaries to lead the reform process in up to 30 ministries.

A shortlist of 50 candidates for the top posts in Myanmar's new bureaucracy have completed a six-week training period in Nay Pyi Taw after being selected from among some 200 director generals and managing directors of the existing ministries.

Under the past socialist and military regimes, the bureaucratic apparatus was an integral part of the government, with former military personnel dominating the civil service. Under what President U Thein Sein calls the "third wave" of administrative reforms – following political and economic reforms – a politically independent and permanent civil service is to be established.

"If the government system will transform into democracy, then the bureaucracy should be transformed aiming toward that. The modern government needs a politically independent, efficient and honest bureaucracy. That has to be started now," said U Tin Maung Than, a senior research fellow at Myanmar Development Resource Institute (MDRI), a political research and training centre led by former exiles.

As a recent research paper by the Asia Foundation and the MDRI's Centre for Economic and Social Development noted, the president's reformist government has inherited "one of the gravest outcomes" of the administrative reforms implemented by former military leader Ne Win – the "deterioration of the bureaucracy's capacity to design public policy and actually implement it at the local level".

According to the reform scheme outlined by the president in his remarks launching the latest training program, a new permanent secretary department will be added to each ministry to lead the transformation. The new departments' functions will be policy analysis, relations between ministries and parliament, monitoring and evaluation of policies and projects, international and media relations, human resource and capacity building, and internal auditing.

The permanent secretaries will be senior to director generals, who are



President U Thein Sein speaks at the launch of the training program for senior civil servants in February. Photo: President's Office

currently the highest-ranking civil servants.

"The training is the first step toward the solidified and able public service system. The trained top-rank officials will have to lead this reform and the training prepared them not only with leadership skills but provided necessary knowledge to be able

20

Average years it takes for a country to establish a qualified bureaucracy, according to the World Bank's International Country Risk Guide

to lay the foundation, formulate the fundamentals of the new systems," U Zaw Oo, the president's economic adviser, who focuses on civil service reform and is leading the training, told *The Myanmar Times*.

However, U Tin Maung Than warned of the risk that the reform process had started without a thorough study of the current scheme of public services and the structure of the entire apparatus, as well as the limited capacity of civil servants who have to implement the reforms. Awareness of the importance of a politically independent civil service is very low among politicians and activists, he said.

"Of course it takes time to transform the political will of a leader into a public policy. Every policy needs to be analysed, find a suitable way to implement it, design the services to deliver based on the policy, set up the delivery system and so on," he said. "The government, opposition and local media do not have that knowledge either."

U Tin Maung Than, who has carried out an assessment of the country's public services, fears that such a lack of awareness among stakeholders could lead to a loose implementation of reforms without enthusiasm. He says it will be very difficult for the new permanent secretaries, who have to inject a new layer of

authority into the structure, to divorce bureaucratic functions from the influence of ministers and their deputies.

"For the time being, the influence of the political layer is very big. They decide so many details. They do even the staff administration. In some ministries, the ministers even give final approval for research findings," he said.

Legal provisions to insulate the civil service and protect bureaucrats from being fired by politicians have not yet been developed.

Under the 2008 constitution drafted by the military, the armed forces retain control of three key ministries – defence, border affairs and home affairs. The latter includes police and fire services as well as the General Administration Department, which manages subnational administrative structures all the way down to the country's approximately 16,700 wards and village tracts.

The military has no reserved positions among the new permanent secretaries. Officials could not be contacted for confirmation on whether any of the candidates have a military background.

U Win Min, a trainer and assessor, noted that ministers had shown more respect to the future permanent secretaries during the training period.

"Before, the departments did not know what the other departments did. Now, the trainees get to know more about the ministries and realise the necessity to negotiate between ministries over their functions, and be aware that big policies need to adjust to each other," he said.

Global experience shows that it can take decades to build an independent bureaucracy however.

The International Country Risk Guide, published by the World Bank based on the experiences of 20 countries that could carry out the fastest transition, showed it took 20 years on average to establish a qualified bureaucracy, while the country with the swiftest transition took 12 years. To ensure the rule of law takes 41 years on average and 17 years in the fastest country.

"It takes time to amend the country's bureaucracy. I think policy analysis and regulatory review should be the priorities presently," U Tin Maung Than said. "And, as the new system as a whole can't work well if the capacity of the players can't meet the required level, then there should be a focus on capacity building, especially on the way the new system operates."

YCDC looks to private sector to solve trash problem

KYAW PHONE KYAW
k.phonekyaw@gmail.com

YANGON is handing over its massive trash problem to the highest bidder.

The city plans to privatise its trash collection services as the understaffed public cleaning team can't keep pace with rapid urbanisation and its accompanying swells of rubbish.

A list of the top bids for the waste collection contract has been submitted to the district authorities, but the names of the companies have not yet been made public, U Aung Myint Maw, assistant chief engineer of Yangon City Development Committee's (YCDC) Pollution Control and

Cleaning Department, said on March 10. According to YCDC figures there is just one public cleaner for every 1300 residents – less than one for every two streets.

Just 4100 cleaners are employed to maintain more than 10,000 streets in urban Yangon, which encompasses 33 townships and has a population of 5.2 million.

"It takes the whole morning to clean Bogalay Market Street ... with 130 cleaners and five cars. You can imagine what happens with 10,000 streets," said U Aye Min, who was elected to YCDC in December.

The main challenge is a lack of funding and rules that limit the

appointment of new staff, he said.

While YCDC charges each household K1200 to K1800 per month to manage garbage, the money often does

TONNES

1690

Amount of trash produced daily by Yangon's 5.2 million residents

not find its way into YCDC coffers. As a result, income is too small to invest in resources to manage the growing amount of waste, U Aye Min said.

Yangon produces 1690 tonnes of litter every day, according to a 2012 survey. But YCDC said at best it can collect 1500 tonnes.

In South Dagon, resident Ko Than Htike Aung said YCDC only comes to empty the communal dump in his neighbourhood once every 10 days.

"The worst is the plastic garbage. I have no idea what it's like in the downtown townships, but in our township, if YCDC doesn't do something I think everywhere will be covered in plastic after 20 years," he said.

Pandal permits to be revealed on March 17



SHWEGU THITSAR

khaingsabainyein@gmail.com

YANGON authorities will announce next week how many pandals will be set up for this year's water festivities. Applicants have until tomorrow to put in their request, and the winners will be drawn by lot and announced on March 17, said the city's development committee.

All pandal construction must be completed at least three days before the festival begins.

U Soe Thein Aung, deputy head of the Engineering Department of the Yangon City Development Committee, said most applicants want to build along Kabar Aye Pagoda and Pyay roads. He said the number permitted would only be announced with the list of winners.

YCDC has drawn up 44 regulations for organisations sponsoring pandals, the temporary wooden structures built along the roadside during the festival for partying, advertising and splashing purposes.

Application forms are available at township administration offices and

should be submitted to the engineering department, along with design plans signed by a supervising engineer, as well as a photograph and contact details of the sponsor.

For a big pandal - up to 120 by 40 feet (35 by 12.5 metres) and 20 feet (6m) high - sponsors will be charged a K10 million bond, to be redeemed after April 22. The charge for a medium-sized pandal, up to 99 by 30 feet and 16 feet high, is K6 million. The pledge will cover any fines imposed for breaches of the rules, which could amount to half the bond. Fines will also be levied, at the rate of K1 million per 10 feet, for building the pandal too big. Last year the committee took K500,000 in fines, which are also imposed for any damage to the roadway, pavements or drains.

CCTV must be installed at pandals no later than noon on April 10, and footage made available to the authorities no later than 8pm every day of the festival. Pandals may operate only between 7am and 6pm.

This year's water festival officially starts on April 13 and runs until April 17 - Myanmar New Year's Day.

Last year, the department allowed 57 big pandals and 36 medium-sized pandals, while in 2013 there were 41 and five respectively. - Translation by Thiri Min Htun

Mandalay authorities seek to ease Thingyan congestion

PHYU WAI KYAW
pwkyaw@gmail.com

TO relieve congestion in one of Mandalay's most crowded areas during the water festival, local authorities have decided to reduce the number of permits for pandals. Only 10 of the temporary wooden platforms will be authorised along the southern and eastern moats of the palace instead of the 15 permitted last year, says Mandalay City Development Committee.

Merrymakers aboard the pandals listen to music, enjoy the festive atmosphere and, most importantly, drench all passers-by with water.

The southern and eastern sides of the moat - flanked by 26th and 66th streets respectively - have long been the most favoured, with comparatively few pandals going up along the northern and western moats. But this year, apparently motivated by residents' concerns, the authorities are trying to distribute the pandals a little more widely.

"There are many pandals along the two sides, but few downtown. On 26th Street, where most pandals are built, the dense congestion makes it hard for people to get through. This year we want to encourage more pandals downtown, to ease the crowding along the moats," said U Soe Lin, head of the MCDC's revenue department.

He said there were 203 applications submitted to build pandals on



Cars slow to a crawl on 26th Street, on the southern side of Mandalay's moat, during last year's water festival. Photo: Phyo Wai Kyaw

the southern side, 16 for the east, one for the west and two for north. Applicants are charged K500,000, as well as a K2 million refundable bond to guarantee good behaviour.

In order to ensure compliance with the rules, said U Soe Lin,

pandal sponsors will be obliged to install CCTV cameras, and alcohol and tobacco advertisements are banned, though no tax is payable this year on other adverts displayed on the pandals.

- Translation by Thiri Min Htun

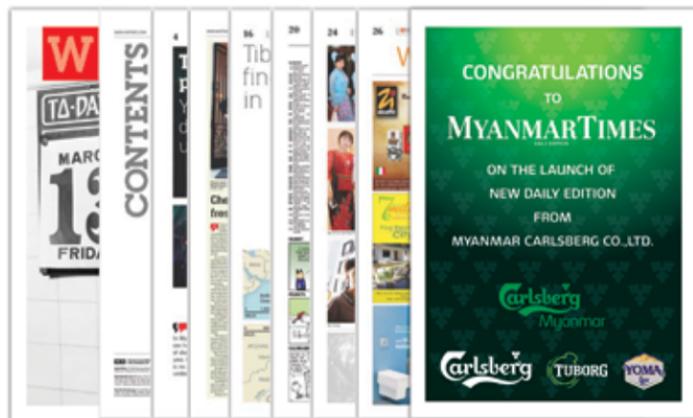
MYANMARTIMES

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.



MANDALAY

Election body formed for municipal vote

KHIN SU WAI
jasminekhin@gmail.com

WHO runs Mandalay? Amid hopes that more democracy will improve the city's development, residents will soon have the chance to elect members of the city's development committee - effectively, the city council. On March 1, Mandalay Election Commission opened an office on 27th Street and has begun to demarcate constituency boundaries.

The preparations are taking place following the passage of a law last December stipulating that almost half the members of MCDC will be chosen by popular vote.

"Once people are aware of the elections, we will discuss the criteria for selecting the representatives. Now we are setting up offices at the township and ward level," said U Khin Mg Kyaw, the electoral commission chair.

Advance voter lists are being drawn up in preparation for a May election, with the date to be announced at least three weeks in advance.

Under the current draft of the Mandalay City Development Law, which would replace legislation dating back to 1992, the seven-member committee could expand to have either 13 or 15 members, U Win Maung said.

A 13-member committee would have six elected representatives - one from each township - while a 15-member body would have seven. The current mayor, U Aung Maung, will keep the top job, while the deputy mayor would be one of the elected representatives.

Unelected members on the committee will be mostly technocrats, including engineers, doctors and lawyers, appointed by the regional government.

Under the law, candidates must be at least 30 years of age, be born

of parents who are both Myanmar citizens, hold a bachelor's degree and have lived in the township in which they are standing for election for at least 10 years. Candidates or their relatives must also own property in that township. Candidates with a criminal record will not be accepted.

U Khin Mg Kyaw said the new form of city management was likely to benefit the city.

U Thein Tun Oo, from the upper Myanmar branch of the Myanmar Lawyers' Network, said citizens' representatives had participated in the city's management during the colonial period.

It is estimated that there are 200,000 potential voters in the six constituencies, according to the one-voter one-household rule.

But the number of actual voters is likely to be far lower due to strict eligibility requirements, with tenants, unregistered households and illegal residents all excluded. When the municipal election was held in Yangon in December, barely 400,000 of 870,000 households were able to vote due to these rules.

The Yangon election generated little interest, with around three-quarters of eligible voters not bothering to fill in a ballot. Most of the slots on Yangon City Development Committee were won by prominent businessmen.

The Mandalay poll looks set to play out along similar lines. The formation of the election commission and initial steps to prepare for the poll have failed to energise the public, said U Win Htay, vice president of the Mandalay Region Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

"The flow of information from MCDC is weak so nobody is talking about it," he said. "We don't even know the eligibility criteria for the candidates."



Residents of Mone Taw village in Magwe Region's Pauk township use water from a newly installed well. Photo: Yu Yu

Climate change adaptation for dry zone to launch in April

SHWE YEE SAW MYINT
poeppwintphyu2011@gmail.com

A FOUR-YEAR project to bring water to dry-zone villages will start next month, the environment ministry has announced. The US\$7.9 million project will be implemented in Shwebo and Monywa in Sagaing Region; Myingyan and Nyaung Oo in Mandalay Region; and Chauk in Magwe Region by the United Nations Development Programme in partnership with the Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry.

More than a quarter of a million people will benefit from a project, which will also equip farmers with

the resources, knowledge and tools to cope with changing weather patterns, said UNDP regional official Nicholas Rosellini.

The project is the first to be financed by the Adaptation Fund and the UNDP. It is also supported by the regional governments and agencies concerned. Canals, community ponds, and water pumps and tube wells will be installed to ensure a continuous supply of fresh water during the dry season in 280 villages. Five thousand hectares of watershed area will be rehabilitated to improve erosion control, while the project also aims to provide climate information to help farmers plan

cultivation during the dry season.

U Kyaw Moe Oo, deputy director of the meteorology department, said changes in rainfall distribution over the past century have made agricultural planning much more difficult. Lack of resources meant weather reports were not issued daily, he said.

Farmer U Moe Kyae, from Nanthar Gone village in Yinmarbin township, Sagaing Region, said he believed temperatures had risen in recent years because of deforestation. "Our village has enough drinking water, but we worry about irrigating the paddy fields," he said. "If the dams don't retain enough water for the summer, our paddy will die."

End army Supreme Court role: lawyer

Four of seven Supreme Court judges are ex-military, according to lawyer U Hla Ko, who is calling for positions to be limited to civilians

STUART ALAN BECKER

stuart.becker@gmail.com



SUPREME Court justices should be experienced, professional civilians, a well-known Mandalay lawyer is urging. Former judge U Hla Ko last week called for the replacement of former military officers sitting as judges in the court.

Four of the seven current judges are former army officers, appointed by parliament on the recommendation of President U Thein Sein.

U Hla Ko, 71, told *The Myanmar Times* in a recent interview that justice would improve dramatically if the Supreme Court were entirely composed of civilian judges who could study the law, write their own opinions and make judgements based on their experience.

"When I was a young judge, I wrote the judgments myself. I read the proceedings; I read the law and I decided the case with my heart. That's how it should be done," he said, adding that in colonial times judgements were delivered within three days after hearing arguments.

"Now it takes three, six, even 14 months to deliver a judgment. The chief justices of the Supreme Court must be civilians and professional,

experienced judges," he said.

U Hla Ko said the erosion of justice began in 1962. In 1966, the annual book of legal precedents was 1000 pages long. By 1970, it was only 300 pages, he said. "Under the British government and even after independence, the judicial system was very good. Decisions could be made according to law. But after 1962, law books from foreign countries stopped coming in, and in 1964 the government nationalised

private business."

Experienced lawyers became difficult to find, he said, further weakening the system.

Of the current Supreme Court, U Hla Ko said that President U Thein Sein "nominated the military guys and parliament agreed. They did not inquire if they were experienced or not."

Under the constitution, parliament has "no right to refuse" the president's nomination for chief justice or

Supreme Court judges, unless it can "clearly be proved" that they do not meet the eligibility criteria.

While the constitution states that candidates should have served as a judge of a state or region High Court for at least five years, a state or regional judicial officer for at least 10 years, or an advocate for at least 20 years, it also states that they can be eligible if deemed by the president to be an "eminent jurist".

But U Hla Ko said more scrutiny

should be applied to assess the eligibility of nominees.

"I think the parliament should examine the experience of Supreme Court nominees. Experience is essential for judges, especially on the Supreme Court, which still practises the principle of the people's courts of the 1974 judicial system," he said. "They listen to the arguments and then the judicial adviser issues an opinion and writes the judgment."

"The rule of law is very important," he said. "It is the basis of all development and human rights. If trials are fair, we can get human rights, legal rights, and all other rights, including political and economic rights. The rule of law is the basis of development and without it you can't have development and peace. If you don't have rule of law, people don't trust the judicial system."

U Hla Ko is also a strong advocate of a legal aid bill that was submitted to parliament last month.

At present, an accused person who cannot afford legal representation receives legal aid at the rate of only K3000 per adjournment, leaving the accused unable to pay for a qualified lawyer. The new law should ensure better access to justice, he said.

"I'm confident it will pass," he said. "According to the constitution, people must be equal before the law, and the government must give equal legal protection to the people."

U Hla Ko: from judge to lawyer and author

Born in the village of Pauk Taw, Tada-Oo township, Mandalay, in 1943, the son of a peanut and bean farmer, U Hla Ko was the eldest of six children.

In 1965 he received a BA from Mandalay University and became an assistant township officer. In 1972 he became a judge, having earlier served as a magistrate and passed the Higher Grade Pledership Exam. He resigned as a judge when the government introduced a new judicial system in 1974 called people's courts, bringing in farmers, clerks and teachers to serve as judges. The existing judges were downgraded to advisers.

"They thought judges from those backgrounds would understand the public. But they didn't know the law, and many of them became corrupt," U Hla Ko said.



U Hla Ko at his Mandalay office. Photo: Stuart Alan Becker

He studied law in Yangon in 1981 and 1982, later becoming a Supreme Court advocate, while his wife worked as a senior assistant teacher.

In 1998, U Hla Ko opened his own law firm in Mandalay, and has been practising ever since, taking on some highly publicised cases and writing six books on the law. His first book, *Court Fees Act*, was followed by another called *Limitation Law* and then *Gambling Law*, published in 1986. Both lawyers and judges often refer to U Hla Ko's work.

Last year he was a member of a delegation sent to South Africa for an international conference on legal aid and access to criminal justice. The delegation was led by Union Attorney General U Tun Shin, and included U Ti Khun Myat, chair of the parliament's Bill Committee, and U Tin Win, another committee member. The legal aid bill now in parliament was drawn up as a result of their work.

Views

Vietnam's leader blows hot and cold

DURING a visit to Vietnam in March 1998, I was taken by two veteran journalists for a traditional sidewalk lunch of *pho* and the exquisite fried spring rolls called *nem* that are a Hanoi speciality.

Naturally, we discussed the leadership of the long-ruling Vietnam Communist Party. We focused on the growing speculation that Nguyen Tan Dung, or Zung, was the man to watch.

Hailing from Ca Mau in the deep south, two years earlier he had become the youngest member of the Politburo, the party's topmost body.

One of my colleagues, however, was of the view that Dung had been over-hyped and would soon burn out. A Western ambassador later agreed, telling me there were better contenders for the country's next premier.

They were both wrong. Dung became PM a decade later and will remain in the job until next year; meanwhile, people continue to argue about whether he's been a roaring success or an abject failure.

That's often the way when analysts judge the competence of a national leader: They invariably clash over aspects of how he has managed political strategy or policy implementation.

But it is rare for them to take totally divergent views. Yet that is what has happened with regard to Nguyen Tan Dung.

Earlier this month, one Vietnam expert, former United States diplomat David Brown, argued that PM Dung is "scrambling to stay on top", after having beaten back an attempt by party colleagues to "set him up as the fall guy" for the nation's indifferent economic performance.

In total contrast, another analyst, Daniel Veniez, an aspiring Canadian politician who has made numerous business trips to Vietnam and written prolifically about the country, asserts that Dung is a reformist who has



ROGER MITTON

rogermitton@gmail.com

been doing a fabulous job.

"You have to wonder where Vietnam would be today without the shrewd finesse, patient resolve, and steadfast determination to secure a peaceful future of Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung," Veniez said.

Que pasa? Well, first a spoiler alert: Both these men are talking through their backsides.

To be charitable, Brown's view has marginally more validity than that espoused by Veniez, who exemplifies the sycophancy of an investor anxious not to offend his potential business partners.

In truth, Dung has been struggling since Vietnam's economy began to flatline in 2008 and the PM hit a nadir four years later when – as Brown correctly intimates – he was on the verge of being deposed.

At that time, Dung's government was on a precipitous downward slope and the nation was again failing to live up to its long-heralded potential – as it still is, and that is deeply depressing to today's get-ahead generation.

After all, the *doi moi* reforms were introduced almost 30 years ago and have still not been fully realised, while endemic corruption fuels the huge public-sector debt, high rates of non-performing loans and the grossly inefficient state enterprises.

Meanwhile, regional neighbours like Indonesia and the Philippines



A man rests next to a propaganda poster featuring the Vietnam Communist Party on a street in Hanoi on March 10. Photo: AFP

surge ahead, and even Cambodia and Myanmar are moving faster to open up their markets than Dung's hidebound Communist coterie.

As a result, the PM was on the ropes in 2012; but if nothing else, Dung, an arch-practitioner of patronage politics, has always tirelessly massaged his party loyalists across the country, regularly rewarding them with kickbacks and promotions.

So he was able to draw on these cadres to repel a move by rival party leaders to scapegoat him for the economic woes and the shocking corruption he had condoned at two state-owned shipping conglomerates.

Still, after barely surviving a confidence call, the animosity against him was so intense that it broke out in public and in the first of the party's mandated polls on the performance of its leaders, Dung got the lowest vote count of all the top men.

It was humiliating and had it occurred in most Western countries or even in places like India or Japan, Dung would have been obliged to stand down.

But the man has the hide of an elephant, and in deciding to fight on, he was helped by the fact that the VCP is a monolithic body that shirks from cutting down its own leaders

for fear that it will only reaffirm the public's contempt for the party and those that lead it.

So Dung not only escaped with a warning, but over the next two years, he managed to turn things around to his own advantage, so much so that in this January's performance-assessment poll, he came out tops.

It was a remarkable turn-around that helps explain why the experts have such divergent views about him and his ability to survive.

Of course, he was helped by factors over which he had little control – turmoil in Thailand boosted Vietnam's rice exports; falling oil prices cut the trade imbalance; and Chinese aggression in the South China Sea drew a flood of nations from the Philippines to the United States to Hanoi's side.

Well, fine, you may say: Dung is no long down and out, but then neither is he soaring like a comet. He will survive until his term ends next year and then he'll be forgotten much like his tepid predecessor, Pham Van Khai.

Actually, Dung wants to go one better than Khai and retain power by securing the post of VCP general-secretary at next January's five-yearly party congress.

Not only that, but the mercurial man wants to choose his successor as prime minister and thereby ensure there'll be no untoward investigations into the unusual wealth that he and his family have acquired.

Can he do it? If you ask those experts and former veteran journalists you may be sure that the answers will again diverge totally.

Right now, the chances are that Dung will become the party's head honcho next year and that his close chum and ally DPM Nguyen Xuan Phuc will be the next premier.

But be sure to hedge your bets as you sit back and savour some Pho and Nem and watch the show unfold.

Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia: Trashing the ASEAN brand

GARETH EVANS

newsroom@mmtimes.com

HAVING a reputation for integrity and decency matters as much in international relations as in professional and personal life. States that are so regarded consistently punch above their weight – witness the Scandinavians. By contrast, those that never earn – or fritter away – such a reputation can seriously endanger their own interests, jeopardising trade, tourism, foreign investment, political support in international forums and negotiations, and the security of their own nationals abroad.

Three of Southeast Asia's most important states – Malaysia, Thailand and now Indonesia – have brought trouble on themselves in this respect in recent months. All three are raising serious doubts, in different ways, about their commitment to the rule of law, the integrity of their judicial systems and the quality of mercy in the administration of justice.

In Malaysia, the country's highest court last month rejected opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim's appeal against a five-year prison sentence and a ban against running for public office for a further five years – a shocking and indefensible decision. Prime Minister Najib Razak's government was transparently vindictive in pursuing allegations of sodomy (a crime rarely prosecuted in Malaysia) against Anwar. The evidence against him was obviously

inconclusive; the court's acceptance of it was manifestly craven.

If the fiction is maintained that the court was merely doing its judicial duty as it saw it, decency could still prevail: Anwar could be granted executive clemency. But there is no sign that Najib's government will advise such action. Anwar's real crime was that his opposition coalition of conservative Muslim, secular and Chinese parties was seriously challenging the six-decade supremacy of Najib's United Malays National Organization (UMNO), losing the 2013 election only because of a transparent gerrymander.

In Thailand, the biggest crime of former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra and his supporters was to keep winning national elections with populist campaigns that threatened the interests of the country's long-established Bangkok-based elite. Serious wrongdoing, involving bribery and institutional corruption, no doubt occurred along the way. But the scale of such offences could hardly justify last year's military coup and the subsequent repression.

Some of those in the army-installed National Reform Council and Constitutional Drafting Committee have a real interest in ensuring that Thailand's next constitution – the 20th since 1932 – will be genuinely democratic. Many do want to end, once and for all, the corrupt, vote-buying culture that has long afflicted Thai politics on both sides.

But true reform can be achieved

only in a spirit of reconciliation and the military regime's crude impeachment of deposed Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra, Thaksin's sister, in January – on trumped-up charges that seemed flimsy even to many of her diehard opponents – has made that impossible. The law, once again, has been used for nakedly political ends.

Indonesia's case is different from the other two. While less extreme, it is also troubling for the country's reputation. The grassroots-driven victory of President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo last year triumphantly consolidated the country's democratic transition, and raised high expectations for human-rights and anti-corruption

It is always tempting to claim that what happens behind sovereign borders is nobody else's business. But that is no longer true in today's interconnected world.

campaigners. But, domestically, confidence in Jokowi's capacity and will to tackle corruption has eroded with his nomination – only very belatedly withdrawn – of a suspiciously wealthy but politically well-connected candidate for National Police Chief.

Internationally, concern has been growing about Jokowi's stated determination to allow – after a long moratorium – the executions of scores of convicted drug traffickers to proceed.

What does not yet seem to have registered with Jokowi, or with enough of his fellow citizens, is the incongruity of refusing even to consider clemency for those on Indonesia's death row, while lobbying passionately for clemency for more than 200 Indonesians condemned to die elsewhere, notably in the Gulf. Decency can be credibly demanded of others only if one practises it oneself.

It seems only a matter of time before Indonesians start feeling the pain of this inconsistency. Malaysia has earned worldwide condemnation for its handling of the Anwar affair, and Thailand has lost many international friends since its latest coup, reflected in a humiliating loss in its recent bid for a seat on the UN Human Rights Council. Thai diplomats fear another such defeat in their country's current attempt to win a seat on the UN Security Council.

There are some larger regional consequences in all of this. ASEAN has

tenaciously fought for its place as the geopolitical hinge between East and South Asia, and an important player in Asia-Pacific economic and security diplomacy. In doing so, it has had to repeatedly finesse issues like Cambodia's authoritarian leadership, Myanmar's struggle with democratic transition, Vietnam's stubbornly anachronistic one-party state and even impeccably incorruptible Singapore's regular misuse of defamation laws to neutralise political opponents.

The question that ASEAN leaders must now ask themselves is just how much trashing of the Southeast Asian brand, by how many of its members simultaneously, the region can afford while still fully realising its aspirations for economic growth and political influence. It is always tempting to claim that what happens behind sovereign borders is nobody else's business. But that is no longer true in today's interconnected world. Some states may be big and powerful enough to get away with behaving badly, but winning respect for behaving well is a much stronger foundation for economic and political success. – *Project Syndicate* (www.project-syndicate.org)

Gareth Evans, a former Australian foreign minister (1988-1996) and past president of the International Crisis Group (2000-2009), is chancellor and honorary professorial fellow at the Australian National University.

Business

UMFCCI urges Chinese firms to act responsibly

Chinese firms were urged to participate in local investment in a responsible manner which avoids environmental harm during a Myanmar-China business matching event.

Representatives from 24 Chinese firms based in Tianjin in northern China visited Myanmar to study local business opportunities, though local businesspeople said it is important any investors participate in a sustainable manner.

"If Chinese invest more in projects that have no effect on nature and the social environment, it would be a good thing," said U Myo Thet, vice president of business association UMFCCI, at the March 10 event.

"During last year's visit by Chinese premier Li Keqiang to Myanmar, he insisted Chinese firms consider the environment and social impact in Myanmar."

The association also signed a memorandum of understanding with its Chinese counterpart to increase bilateral trade.

UMFCCI central executive committee member U Zaw Naing Thein said the memorandum is largely concerned with ethical and responsible investment, adding it would benefit both sides to abide by the rules.

Li Fuming, director of Chinese firm TJ-SADAC, said Chinese companies consider the environment and social impacts not only in Myanmar but other countries as well.

China is Myanmar's largest trading partner.

- Ko Ko Aung



Pedestrians cross in front of an Ooredoo sign. Photo: Aung Htay Hlaing

Ooredoo results show 2.2 million subs at end 2014

OOREDOO has racked up more than 2 million subscribers and lost QAR 531 million (US\$145.8 million) over the last year as it set up in Myanmar, according to press release from March 10.

Ooredoo also said that eight out of every 10 of its Myanmar users currently access the network through smartphones - making for healthy returns from its average customer, according to the press release.

The Qatar-based telco claimed 2.2 million users in Myanmar at the end of December 2014. Its rival Telenor claimed 3.4 million subscribers

in Myanmar at the same date at the end of last year.

Ooredoo also claimed revenues of \$51.9 million in 2014, though as it had only launched in August and is still expanding its service, it comes as no surprise that costs outweigh revenue. The red-branded telco has decided to forgo 2G technology for coverage in favour of deploying an all-3G network, which lines up with the Group's global game plan to concentrate on data, the press release said.

The firm's two main Myanmar rivals, Telenor and MPT, use mixed technology. - Catherine Trautwein

Competition law arrives



ayethidarkyaw@gmail.com

THE recently-passed Competition Law could shake up business methods, though it remains to be seen how effective it will be in practice.

Like similar laws in other jurisdictions, the object is to protect public interest from monopolistic acts, speculation in goods or services, unfair competition, abuse of a dominant position and economic concentration which weakens competition, according to a briefing note from legal advisory firm VDB Loi.

The Competition Law came into force on February 24, but had been worked on by several ministries and related industries since 2012.

VDB Loi's note said parts of the act is based on an earlier competition law from Vietnam, though some parts differ significantly.

Economist U Hla Maung said the law limits some types of advertising and may add a level of bureaucracy that could stifle small business, which deviates from today's democratic flavour.

The law requires enterprises in some cases to receive approval from a commission, opening the doors to delays and possible bribery, he said.

"A commission should help address the difficulties of businesspeople, not make it more rigid," he said.

U Hla Maung added that simply adding more restrictions will not help the market grow.

Including more "authorised

people" in the process will not create free and fair competition, while if the law is deficient, speculators may be able to take advantage," he said.

Government officials said they were more optimistic about the law, saying it helps even the playing field between companies of different size and influence. It will act as an umbrella, with many notifications, rules and regulations coming later, which will define what is permissible in different sectors, said U Than Maung, member of parliament's Commission for Assessment of Legal Affairs and Special Issues.

Although the government had officially launched a market economy 20 years, there were many stories of businesspeople's close relations with senior government officials creating fertile grounds for inside information, as well as possible bid rigging, monopolisation or closed sectors.

"We were not able to obstruct one company's dominance in the market. While it was once easy to unfairly do business, now we must have laws that prevent this," said U Than Maung.

He added it is important the current business environment does not follow a similar path.

"This is a new law, the first time we have had one in Myanmar on competition, so we should use it fairly instead of blaming each other," he said.

The law also lays out penalties for transgressors. VDB Loi said the penalties are provided for "acts restricting competition", adding violators may face three years in prison, and a fine of K15 million (US\$14,700).

TRADE MARK CAUTION

NOTICE is hereby given that PEPPER FOOD SERVICE CO., LTD. a company organized under the laws of Japan and having its principal office at 3-2, Azumabashi 3-chome, Sumida-ku, Tokyo, Japan is the Owner and Sole Proprietor of the following trademark:-



(Reg: No. IV/1019 /2015)

in respect of: - "Meat for human consumption; processed meat products; beef steaks; chicken steaks; pork steaks; hamburg steaks; croquettes; sausage; ham; vegetable salads; fruit salads; soups" Class: 29

"Restaurants; snack bars; self-service restaurants; food and drink catering; rental of cooking apparatus and installations; rental of exhibition halls; rental of meeting rooms." Class: 43

Any fraudulent imitation or unauthorized use of the said trademark or other infringements whatsoever will be dealt with according to law.

U Kyi Win Associates
for PEPPER FOOD SERVICE CO., LTD.
P.O. Box No. 26, Yangon.
Phone: 372416

Dated: 12th March, 2015

Investment laws re-considered

SANDAR LWIN
sdlсандар@gmail.com

THE government has begun accepting public feedback on a proposed amalgamation of two investment laws that it says will give equal opportunities to both domestic and foreign firms.

The Directorate of Investment and Company Administration launched the public consultation window yesterday and will accept feedback on the draft of Myanmar Investment Law until March 26.

The law combines the Foreign Investment law and the Myanmar Citizens Investment Law into a single piece of legislation, and was prepared by the International Finance Corporation (IFC) based on guidelines set by the department.

DICA director general U Aung Naing Oo, who is also secretary of Myanmar Investment Commission, said the combined law would result in "many changes". He said the government hoped to enact it before the end of its term in early 2016.

"In particular, the new law will express more clearly that there is no discrimination between citizens and foreign investors. We will definitely give equal opportunities," he said.

The problem is mostly one of perception rather than actual discrimination,

he said, adding that combining the laws would clear any doubts.

The modifications to the investment framework are also required under the ASEAN Common Agreement on Investment, said U Aung Naing Oo.

"ASEAN agreements are the framework for us and we have to obey them. All provisions of the ASEAN investment agreement will be included in the new law," he said.

The draft is available only in English on the department's website but a Myanmar-language version will be published online later this week, according to DICA.

DICA director Daw San San Myint said there were not yet any plans to conduct broader consultations on the draft.

"We launched the public consultation on the instructions of the Myanmar Investment Commission,"

'We will definitely give equal opportunities.'

U Aung Naing Oo
DICA director general

she said. "We will consider public feedback systematically."

The Foreign Investment Law was enacted in 2012 and the Citizens Investment Law passed in 2013.

The draft Myanmar Investment Law has seven sections, including the Myanmar Investment Commission, admission of investment, treatment of investors, investment incentives, and also dispute prevention and resolution.

The introduction to the new law says it aims to attract responsible businesses, be consistent with regional best practices and support the establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community.

According to the draft, the investment commission will include representative of the private sector and the chair will be appointed by the president. The English-language draft does not state how many members the new committee will have or how the private sector representative will be chosen.

MIC currently has 13 members and is chaired by Minister for Finance U Win Shein.

Public feedback can be sent by email to policylegal.dica@gmail.com or submitted to DICA offices in Yangon, Nay Pyi Taw, Mandalay, Taunggyi and Mawlamyine.

Lots of e-commerce competition in market's early days

BUSINESS 10



Slowing Chinese economy puts pressure on Australian miners

BUSINESS 12

| Exchange Rates (March 11 close) | | |
|---------------------------------|--------|---------|
| Currency | Buying | Selling |
| Euro | K1089 | K1107 |
| Malaysia Ringitt | K307 | K308 |
| Singapore Dollar | K756 | K764 |
| Thai Baht | K31 | K32 |
| US Dollar | K1062 | K1065 |

Talks set for last onshore agreement

AUNG SHIN
koshumgtha@gmail.com

NEGOTIATIONS for two much-delayed Production Sharing Contracts are due to be restarted in April, according to an official from the Ministry of Energy.

A 2013 bidding round saw rights awarded to foreign firms and their local partners for 16 of the 18 onshore blocks on offer. Of those 16, the Production Sharing Contracts necessary for exploration and production activities to begin at the blocks have been signed for all but two of them.

The last two are left to be inked between Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise and Petroleum Exploration Limited (PEL) of Pakistan and their local partners.

A Ministry of Energy official said the signing of the contracts for these two blocks has been delayed for a year.

"We are going to resume negotiations in early April before the Water Festival," he said.

The official, who requested anonymity as he is not allowed to speak to the media, did not provide any more details for negotiations on onshore block J in Mon State and block O in Ayeyarwady Region.

Islamabad-based PEL has not returned two separate requests for comment on the delay.

Officials have said several times the Production Sharing Contracts are near to being signed, but so far they have not materialised.

Last year a Ministry of Energy official told *The Myanmar Times* that the delay was caused by problems in Pakistan.

The onshore bidders were required to have local partners. PEL chose Parami Energy and Precious Stone Mining as its partners for the two blocks.

Precious Stone Mining managing director U Kyaw Lay said the contracts have also been helped up due to an unclear situation between the two local partners.

"We have now agreed to terms and conditions for the Production Sharing Contract with the Ministry of Energy. The signing ceremony will happen in April, and Precious Stone will receive at least 20 percent of block O," he said.

A British firm called Siren E & P had previously been involved in PEL's bids for the blocks, but the Ministry of Energy official said it is no longer participating.

"The signing will only be for PEL with Parami and Precious Stone, as awarded in the bid," the official said. "No other international company is involved."

Parami Energy is set to take a 20pc share in both of the blocks, according to its chief executive Ken Tun.

"We are meeting internally soon to confirm the Production Sharing signing, but it mainly depends on the Energy Planning Department," he said.

The other 14 onshore blocks were signed from July to September 2014.



IN PICTURES

Fish sellers hang out at San Pya fish market early in the morning. The fish industry is currently in decline, according to local experts. *Photo: Naing Win Tun*

South Africa makes its pitch



MANNY MAUNG

Twitter: @mannymaung

SOUTH Africa aims to share with Myanmar its experiences of trade and business partnerships, as well as its own history of transitioning into a democratic country, according to South African ambassador for Thailand Deon Seals.

Speaking at an investment seminar held in Yangon yesterday, Mr Seals said the two countries already have excellent economic and multi-lateral ties, which he hopes will be strengthened by a visit of a South African delegation to Myanmar this week.

"In fact, there has been a request by the Myanmar authorities for us to come and share some of our experiences, and we're doing it as we speak," Mr Seals said.

"But we know that Myanmar itself has a lot to share with us, and a lot to offer and that is why we are also here."

Mr Seals added South Africa aims to build ties and engage Myanmar in relationships for the long term.

The South Africa delegation is showcasing the Northern Cape region of South Africa, the largest region in the country but also the least populated, at about 1 million people.

The province accounts for about 7 percent of global diamond exports, 13pc of all zinc and lead exports, and more than 25pc of the world's manganese exports.

Mr Seals said the Northern Cape offered potential investors opportunities in the mining sector - including semi-precious stones and rare earth minerals - as well as agriculture, tourism and the knowledge economies.



Two women take in a diamond necklace at a Yangon shop. Graham MacDonald, chair of the South African-Thai Chamber of Commerce, said there has been interest from Myanmar in the South African diamond trade. *Photo: Staff*

Chair of the South African-Thai Chamber of Commerce Graham MacDonald said there was strong interest from Myanmar to invest

in the Northern Cape region.

"We have received enquiries from those in the diamond trade here about sending them to Kimberley, specifically to learn how to cut and polish diamonds and other semi-precious stones to an international standard," he said during the seminar.

"There is no international standard certifications [in Myanmar] and South Africa is among the best in the world."

About 93pc of the Northern Cape region's exports are sent to Europe.

However, as the European debt crisis continues to affect the continent's economy, it has shrunk the most important market for South

Africa - hence an effort to drum up investments from Myanmar and other of the 10 ASEAN member countries.

Mr MacDonald sought to reassure any nervous investors that trade and investment with South Africa would be transparent - and profitable.

"The World Economic Forum has just voted South Africa number one in the world for accounting and auditing, and number two in the world for good governance," Mr Graham said.

"It is also best in the world with regulating security exchanges, so anybody who wants to invest in South Africa: Feel safe with your investment."

PERCENT

93

Share of South Africa's exports currently heading to Europe. The country aims to diversify

E-commerce slowly escalates



AUNG
KYAW
NYUNT

aungkyawnyunt28@gmail.com



CATHERINE
TRAUTWEIN

newrooms@dmmtimes.com.mm

RAPIDLY improving internet and connectivity rates are bringing more people online, but changing shoppers' preferences is still a struggle for online shopping businesses.

Companies are crowding in to online shopping in a bid to be Myanmar's version of Amazon or Alibaba. With all the competition, though, it is increasingly difficult to stand out in an industry that is only now finding its feet.

Zaw Gyi Mart has been around for two years, but counts only 10,000 total users since its inception, said U Zaw Min Aung, managing director of parent company Za Information Technology.

Zaw Gyi Mart links users with IT gear, fashion items, beauty products – even helium balloons. The firm hopes to stand out by not charging for product delivery within the Yangon area, with plans to eventually expand this service to other areas. It also supports its customers with exchanging defective products under warranty.

"I believe e-commerce will keep expanding in Myanmar, because the internet connection is becoming faster," he said.

While local online stores are inspired by international giants, there are important local differences. Myanmar is still largely a cash society, and the different technologies such as credit cards and online secure payment have been slow to emerge. Requiring a payment for a good before receiving it means the buyer may be at risk if the store does not deliver, while the store may be left with unpaid-for merchandise if it requires payment after the fact.

At Zaw Gyi Mart, customers can pay using cash on delivery, money transfers through banks, online payment, mobile systems and MPU cards.

There is also a problem of logistics. Many goods sold at online shops are not stored in the country, and must be imported from overseas, requiring a significant turnaround time. Transporting goods through Yangon to different addresses can also be uneconomical for stores. Potential customers say the concept will take some time to catch on.

U Win Ko Oo said people are still gaining the knowledge of e-commerce necessary for consumers to make extensive use of

online services.

And Ma Khin Khin Thet said Myanmar people like to shop by testing products in person rather than trusting online stores.

"It's a very niche market in Myanmar for e-commerce," said U Kyaw Aye Naing, owner of online shopping site Shwe99. "People would like to feel and see traditionally before they buy any goods. And also sizing is one of the issues for the clothing market."

Shwe99 – a purely online store that sells clothing, electronics, fashion accessories and more, and also takes customer requests for products not on hand – came online in 2011, U Kyaw Aye Naing said. The site logs about 100 to 150 site visits monthly.

Whether shopping and shoppers move entirely online can also depend on industry – and who is involved. While many local online shops are essentially only a Facebook page and a creator, there are also bigger, foreign-

'It's a very niche market in Myanmar for e-commerce. People would like to feel and see traditionally before they buy goods.'

U Kyaw Aye Naing
Shwe99 online shop

backed firms involved in the business.

Rocket Internet's Myanmar vehicle marketplace Motors.com.mm sees about 160,000 visitors a month, according to the company's country manager Rianne Roggema, and Amazon lookalike Shop.com.mm – which offers home goods, tech, clothing and more – gets more than 10,000 site visits per day.

Meanwhile, about five users make purchases per day on Yangon Online Store, according to a company official. Its sales range



A customer checks in at Yangon Online Store on Yaw Min Gyi street. The firm is one of the more established local online retailers. Photo: Staff

from Apple products to power tools. Another platform, Myanmar Online Store – where customers can find a range of IT, household, health and beauty products and more – receives about 3000 to 10,000 monthly visitors, said its co-founder U Nyan Min Aung. And a recently launched online store for grocery shopping has been visited more than 2800 times.

Yet the number of hits alone does not define online commerce – and offline browsing can remain crucial to online business.

"Nobody would ever buy a car only for seeing six pictures and a description," Ms Roggema of Motors.com.mm previously told *The Myanmar Times*. "With fashion, for instance, you can do that ... We're not even trying to take this physical contact away, because that's never going to happen."

The company recently held a press conference announcing a US\$25 million capital injection in global classifieds platform Carmudi.com, whose Myanmar arm is called Motors.com.mm. The investment will be spread among Carmudi properties in eight countries, seven in Asia. It remains unclear how much of that money the Myanmar market will see.

While Myanmar's infrastructure cannot yet

support the entire ecosystem around online businesses – some, like Zaw Gyi Mart, have made headway with users. Online grocery shop Daily Mart, which lists more than 1400 products and averages 48 daily site visits, has eclipsed 32,000 page

views since its debut in January, according to founder Ko Htut Thant Syn.

Though some user ranks remain minimal, still stats show that progress has been made in a short time.

"The e-commerce industry is growing in Myanmar with the help of better internet penetration and growing mobile-phone usage density. People are already familiar with internet since social media like Facebook is getting very popular," Ko Htut Thant Syn said. "When the online payment system comes in place, it will get much exposure and a lot of people will get engaged in shopping online because it saves time."

The internet industry landscape has changed drastically since Erwin Sikma, Carmudi.com co-founder and global managing director, came to Myanmar more than two years ago. "When I started here, people sort of didn't know what internet was," he said.

Today, more than nine out of 10 professional dealers in Yangon, Mandalay and Nay Pyi Taw advertise their cars on Motors.com.mm, Ms Roggema said.

And about 8000 cars, motorbikes and commercial vehicles – put up for sale by more than 200 dealers – populate the platform.

Recently, users have also turned to mobile applications to head online.

Over the past half-year, Ms Roggema said, Motors.com.mm's application has been installed more than 35,000 times, representing a 600pc jump in growth.

"[Myanmar is] still probably on a couple of aspects the least developed [market] in Asia, but it's so extremely quickly catching up," Mr Sikma said.

Since Myanmar opened up, the e-commerce market has gained some momentum – and entrepreneurs see movement ahead.

"I think e-commerce industry in Myanmar is still a little bit in the early stage, but we now have mobile phones and internet easily available to everyone. E-commerce will grow big," said Daily Mart's Ko Htut Thant Syn. "With the new job opportunities being created, people will get busy and they are looking for more ways to save time and e-commerce could be the answer."

"It could be one of the fastest growing industries in coming few years."

IN BRIEF

MIC provides permits for two more international oil companies

The Myanmar Investment Commission has given permits to two more international companies planning to conduct offshore exploration and production.

The UK's BG Exploration and Production and Australia's Woodside Myanmar received the right to conduct exploration and production in shallow water blocks A-4 and A-7, and deep-water blocks AD-2 and AD-5.

The two firms are partnering with local companies Myanmar Petroleum Exploration and Production, and still need to sign Production Sharing Contracts before exploration can begin.

A total of nine international firms that participated in the 2013 offshore bidding have now received permits, while five have signed Production Sharing Contracts.

– Aung Shin

Telenor's Net Monday marks one year at People's Park

Telenor celebrated the 1-year anniversary of its Net Monday events March 9 – a milestone to mark progress in the Norwegian telco's short history in Myanmar.

The company's Net Monday events started last year before the Telenor network had even launched. Since then, the series has reached 10,000 students from five universities and travelled to four cities, according to Telenor Myanmar CEO Petter Furberg.

Conditions have changed quite a bit for Telenor since it held its first Net Monday last year. Since its first event, the Norway-based telco has scaled up service sites to number 1622 in Myanmar – putting its network at just over 20pc complete, by its own metric.

The company's coverage currently spans 170 townships in nine states, divisions and districts, and nearly 60 percent of Telenor users on average surf the internet each month, Mr Furberg told the crowd gathered at People's Park in Yangon.

"The beginning has been remarkable," he said. The company plans to reach 4000 base stations by the end of the year, half of the total it believes is ultimately necessary.

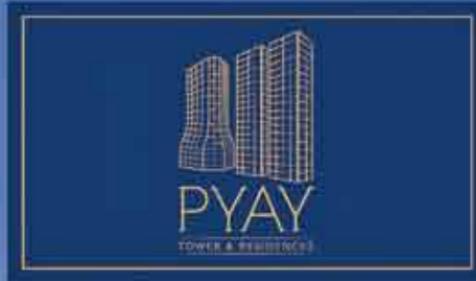
Telenor and Ooredoo both won licences last year to begin service.

– Catherine Trautwein

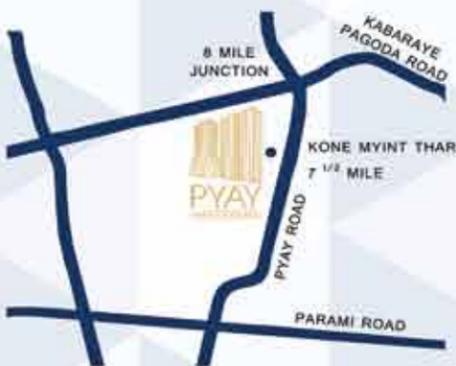


A user checks out Yangon Online Store's mobile site. Photo: Staff

FREEHOLD GRADE - A OFFICE
 &
 LUXURY CONDOMINIUM
 @ 7 1/2 MILE, PYAY ROAD



The Epitome of Excellence



Pyay Residences is aimed to epitomize excellence, sophistication and class in high end luxury living with top of the line design touches and exquisite lifestyle amenities.

- Gourmet Kitchen and Private Dining Rooms for Entertainment
- Lavish Clubhouse and Meeting Facilities
- Multipurpose Function Room
- Private "Spa in the Sky" Exclusively for Residents
- Infinity Edged Swimming Pool
- Fully Equipped Gymnasium
- Private Lifts
- En-suite Bathrooms
- Children Wading Pool
- Private Movie Theatre



NOBLE TWIN DRAGONS

FOR ENQUIRIES
 09254508082 / 09254508089
www.pyaytowerresidences.com

SALES OFFICE - 9:00 AM TO 5:00 PM (OPEN DAILY)
NO-39(A), 7.5 MILES, PYAY ROAD, MAYANGONE TSP, YANGON

A DEVELOPEMENT BY NOBLE TWIN DRAGONS

BEIJING

Chinese growth slows to multi-year lows

GROWTH in China's industrial output, retail sales and fixed asset investment all slowed to multi-year lows in January and February, official data showed yesterday, as the world's second-largest economy expands at its weakest pace in a quarter-century.

Industrial output, which measures production at China's factories, workshops and mines, rose 6.8 percent year-on-year in January and February, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said yesterday.

That was the lowest since a reading of 5.7pc in December 2008, according to previous figures.

Retail sales, a key indicator of consumer spending, gained 10.7pc during the first two months from the year before, the NBS said, the worst since 9.4pc in February 2006.

And fixed asset investment, a measure of government spending on infrastructure, expanded 13.9pc during the period, the NBS added - the lowest since 13.7pc for the whole of 2001.

The NBS released statistics covering two months to ease out distortions due to China's Lunar New Year holiday last month. The data are the latest snapshot of the health of the country,

PERCENT
7.4

China's GDP growth last year, the slowest since 1990

a major driver of the global economy but which is in a delicate transition

from decades of frequent double-digit annual growth to a new, slower model authorities say is more sustainable.

China's gross domestic product (GDP) expanded 7.4pc last year, its slowest since 1990, and last week leaders lowered the country's 2015 GDP growth target to "approximately 7 percent", from last year's objective of about 7.5pc.

Data so far this year have indicated a further slowing and the People's Bank of China announced a cut benchmark deposit and lending interest rates in late February for the second time in three months. - AFP

SYDNEY



Chinese demand for Australian resources may have knock-on effects to the broader economy down under. Photo: AFP

Oz miners fret China slowdown

AUSTRALIAN miners are bracing for a tough year with economic powerhouse China cutting its growth target to a 15-year low, reinforcing a gloomy outlook for commodity prices that is hurting smaller players.

The price of iron ore recently fell below US\$60 - a six-year low - owing to slowing Chinese growth and a supply glut, increasing the squeeze on miners with high costs.

Australia is home to two of the world's resource giants, BHP Billiton and Rio Tinto, and its largest exports are iron ore and coal.

As an unprecedented mining investment boom that has helped the economy avoid recession for more than two decades wanes, a sluggish China - the country's largest trading partner - is heaping more pressure on domestic growth and companies.

"What we've seen for Australian miners is it's a reinforcement of the pessimistic outlook that most people have had regarding China's growth and that it's still slowing," said Fat Prophets resources analyst David Lennox.

"That's really been the broad impact across the commodities sector."

Last week, China lowered its 2015 economic growth target to "approximately 7 percent", citing "formidable" difficulties for the world's second-

largest economy after a decades-long boom.

China is the world's largest manufacturer of crude steel, of which iron ore is a key ingredient. As the economy slows, steel use in construction and infrastructure drops, reducing iron ore demand.

Now smaller miners that thrived as the iron ore price soared, peaking at \$191.70 in February 2011, are struggling and slashing costs.

Compounding their plight is the continued increase in iron ore supply from the four major players - BHP, Rio, Brazil's Vale and Australia's Fortescue - to maintain their share of exports.

Rio's iron ore chief executive Andrew Harding said on March 10 the miner was not "in a race to the bottom", but that cutting supply or expansion "would not be in the best interests of shareholders nor indeed of our community and the Australian and West Australian governments".

Instead, the brunt of the pain has been experienced by the shareholders of junior miners.

The share prices of Atlas Iron, BC Iron and Mount Gibson Iron have plummeted by between 78 and 90pc over the past year and saw them fall from the benchmark S&P/ASX200 index this month.

Atlas Iron has since returned to the ASX200, which tracks 200 of the largest Australian-listed companies, but the move highlights its predicament.

"Now we get to the stage where their cost-reduction programs are highly advanced and the iron ore price keeps on falling, so something has to give," Patersons Securities' research head Rob Brierley said.

The situation for the smaller operators has become so acute that waiting for the price to recover was now not viable, he added.

"So far we've had Territory Iron, Western Desert and Sherwin Iron - three Northern Territory producers that have stopped. We've had Arrium that have reduced their production by 4 million tonnes," Brierley said.

"The next ones are the West Australian juniors. I would expect them to rationalise their production, similar to what Arrium have done. It's a fight to the end for market share and it's not going to be Rio Tinto that closes down."

A similar set of circumstances has developed in the energy sector, where the oil market has lost about 50pc of its value since June in a global supply glut, exacerbated by the OPEC cartel's decision not to cut production.

The low prices point to a potential

wave of merger and acquisition activity, according to a report by global consultancy AT Kearney this month.

"Oil price volatility will put a brake on deals until prices settle ... Expect significant M&A activity as a response to sustained low oil prices," an unnamed industry executive told AT Kearney.

Australia is set to become the world's biggest liquefied natural gas (LNG) producer, with predictions it will overtake Qatar by 2020 as it unlocks reserves to meet Asian demand.

As most LNG is sold at long-term contracts, which is linked to the oil price, the decline has directly impacted local operators including big players Woodside Petroleum, Oil Search and Santos.

"Investors are certainly focusing on companies in terms of their ability to survive a long period of lower oil prices, and the companies have taken action over the last few months to reduce [capital expenditure] plans and to ... lower operating costs," UBS energy analyst Nik Burns said.

"Amongst the smaller listed companies, you would expect more 'M' than 'A'. In the fight for survival, there could be an opportunity ... for companies to get together and reduce corporate overheads."

- AFP

IN BRIEF

Japan McDonald's: gripes to go

McDonald's Japan is to launch a new smartphone app for customer complaints as it looks to turn the page on a series of scares including the discovery of a human tooth in some fries.

The move comes with in-country sales sliding, profits plunging and the burger giant's reputation in Japan badly dented. The firm also said it was reviewing its procedures for dealing with suspected cases of product tampering and will draft new rules on communication with customers.

The chain came in for heavy media criticism for its handling of incidents over the past year in which unexpected objects were discovered in food.

Europe caps credit card fees

EU lawmakers backed a deal to cap the fees that banks charge businesses to process payments by credit and debit cards, saying it would lower costs for shoppers.

The deal overwhelmingly approved by the European Parliament in Strasbourg applies to both cross-border and domestic card payments, it said in a statement. It will lead to a reduction of about 6 billion euros (US\$6.45 billion) a year in hidden fees, according to the European Commission.

Tech website goes under

Gigaom, one of the oldest major technology news blogs, announced it was shutting down after running out of cash. "Gigaom recently became unable to pay its creditors in full at this time," its website stated. "As a result, the company is working with its creditors that have rights to all of the company's assets as their collateral. All operations have ceased." Started in 2006 by Indian-born journalist Om Malik, the site claimed to have some 6.5 million readers. In 2012, it acquired a rival website, paidContent.

PlayStation launches China sales

Japanese electronics giant Sony will launch its PlayStation gaming console in China next week, it said after a more than two-month delay in officially selling its products to Chinese consumers.

The company originally planned to launch PlayStation 4 consoles in China on January 11, but abruptly announced a delay only three days beforehand, giving no reason for the change.

China last year authorised the domestic sale of game consoles through its first free-trade zone (FTZ) in Shanghai, ending a ban imposed in 2000, although unofficial imports have long been widely available.

- AFP



Tidjane Thiam. Photo: AFP

Credit Suisse changes chiefs

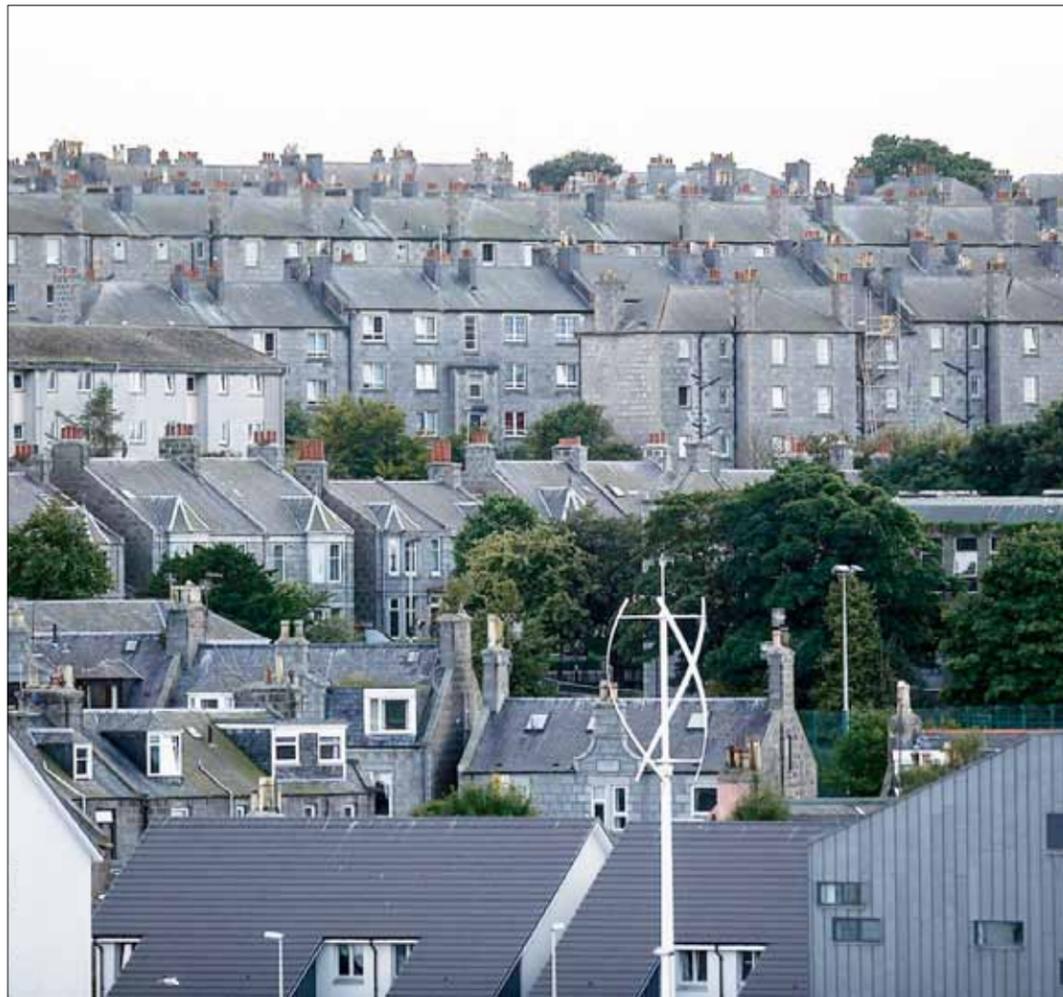
Credit Suisse Group's appointment of Tidjane Thiam as chief executive officer boosted shareholder expectations that the firm will shift away from investment banking toward its more profitable money management businesses.

Brady Dougan, the investment banker who has led Switzerland's second-biggest lender since 2007, has faced pressure to reduce the focus on the securities unit as rules that demand higher capital hurt returns and weakened the company's buffers.

The switch to Mr Thiam, who has spent the past decade running insurance businesses, is a signal that the firm may follow competitors including UBS Group in making deeper cuts to the investment bank.

- Bloomberg

EDINBURGH



Rows of terraced residential properties stand on a hill in Aberdeen, Scotland. Just six months ago, Aberdeen was the economic linchpin of Scotland's campaign to split from Britain as oil traded above US\$100 a barrel. Now Scotland may be helping to calm troubled financial markets. Photo: Bloomberg

Scotland may emerge as UK's pacifiers

LESS than a year after their failed bid to leave Britain rippled through financial markets, Scotland's nationalists may emerge as pacifiers.

With just under two months to go before the British election, polls show the Scottish National Party is on course to take the most seats in Scotland. Leader Nicola Sturgeon said she would potentially support a minority Labour government in London. She ruled out any deal with Prime Minister David Cameron's Conservatives, who want to hold a referendum on Britain's European Union membership.

Britain leaving the EU "is the biggest market scare", said Jason Simpson, a fixed-income strategist at Societe Generale in London. "The irony being obviously that with one swipe they could deprive Labour of a potential majority and on the other side might be in a position to allow them to govern."

The election on May 7 looks like it will be the tightest since the 1970s and the question over the EU has become a bigger concern for financial markets than traditional party divisions on spending and taxation. The unease has been seen in the pound, with volatility last month rising to a more than two-year high.

Labour, backed by trade unions and whose leadership has attacked the government over the speed of budget cuts, ruled out a vote on EU membership. The Conservatives, historically the party of the free market and the first to deregulate the financial industry, aim to hold one by the end of 2017.

"If the UK wants to remain the financial hub within Europe, it's certainly something that will be faced with some opposition if they are outside," said Michael Markovich, head of quantitative analysis at Credit Suisse Group in Zurich. He said that scenario is "not on the

radar" at the moment.

Yields on 10-year gilts have dropped to 1.85 percent from 2.52pc on the eve of the September 18 referendum on Scottish independence. The vote was 55pc to 45pc in favor of maintaining the three-centuries-old union with England.

Six-month implied volatility for the pound against the dollar surged to 10.53pc on February 12, the most since June 2012. In the run-up to the Scottish referendum, price swings surged and the sterling slipped as surveys showed the independence campaign gaining ground, with one putting it ahead. Now it is another plebiscite that's causing anguish.

‘[An EU referendum] is probably going to be pretty alarming and it will deter some overseas investors.’

John Wraith
UBS Group

A selloff that resulted from concern that Britain would exit the EU would probably be felt more in the market for longer-dated bonds, while securities with shorter maturities would be insulated by the prospect of an economic and investment slowdown, said Societe Generale's Mr Simpson.

"That would steepen up the curve quite a lot," he said.

Polls show Labour and the Conservatives running neck-and-neck with neither party set to get enough votes to govern on their own. The

SNP is set to win some of Labour and the Liberal Democrats' safest seats, according to surveys by Conservative peer Michael Ashcroft. That suggests the SNP could be a key player in talks to form the next government in London.

Mr Cameron has pledged to negotiate more favourable terms for Britain in the EU, and put the results to a referendum should he win an outright majority. Labour plans to govern alone and leader Ed Miliband said at the weekend that voting for the SNP risks handing victory to the Conservatives.

A prominent SNP role in a new parliament would bring its own complication as the party will probably continue agitating "for more powers for Scotland, right up to the point of demanding an independence referendum, especially if we have a Conservative government that calls an EU referendum", said John Wraith, head of British rates strategy at UBS Group in London.

"You could say they might work quite harmoniously with a Labour government, but don't forget they are currently campaigning to try and stop Labour getting a majority," Mr Wraith said. An EU referendum "is probably going to be pretty alarming and it will certainly deter some overseas investors from investing too aggressively in UK assets", he said.

Gilts have lost 1.7pc this year, partly reflecting speculation that that the Bank of England will raise interest rates this year.

Policymakers, who have kept the benchmark cost of borrowing at a record-low 0.5pc since March 2009, have signalled that the next move in rates is more likely to be an increase. US Treasuries have gained 0.1pc while euro-area debt returned an average 3pc.

— Bloomberg

NEW YORK

Chevron to sell assets as prices fall

US oil giant Chevron said it plans US\$15 billion in asset sales through 2017 as it seeks to maintain a strong dividend for shareholders amid lower oil prices.

The divestment program expands by 50 percent a previous target to sell \$10 billion in assets through 2016, according to a presentation by Chevron chief executive John Watson made late March 10.

In 2014, Chevron divested \$6 billion in assets, including the \$1.3 billion sale of a stake in a Chad oil project to the Republic of Chad. The deal also comprised Chevron's interest in a pipeline system that transports oil from Chad to Cameroon.

Mr Watson said the company was on track to increase production from 2.57 million barrels of oil equivalent per day in 2014 to 3.1 million in 2017. Major projects ramping up include Texas shale ventures and natural gas developments in Australia and Angola.

"We are well-positioned to manage through the recent drop in commodity prices and are taking several responsive actions, including curtailing capital spending and lowering costs," Mr Watson said.

Shares in Dow member Chevron plummeted 3.1 percent to \$48.46 in late-afternoon trade.

The move follows Chevron's Janu-

ary announcement of a 2015 capital budget of \$35 billion, down 13pc from last year. The company also halted its share buyback program, citing the big drop in oil prices.

In recent months, Chevron has also withdrawn from exploration ventures in Poland, Romania, Lithuania and Ukraine.

US BILLION

\$15

Value of assets Chevron said it plans to put up for sale

Other large oil companies, including ExxonMobil and Royal Dutch Shell, have also trimmed spending in response to about a 50pc drop in oil prices since June. Leading oil services companies, including Halliburton and Schlumberger, have announced deep job cuts. — AFP

SEOUL

South Korea to punish firms giving in to north

SOUTH Korean companies will be penalised if they yield to pressure from North Korea to raise the salaries of workers in their joint Kaesong joint industrial complex, Seoul officials said.

Seoul has been seeking discussions 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 companies 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, which lies just over the border in North Korea.

The North has refused to engage in dialogue with the South over the issue.

The South's unification ministry, which handles cross-border affairs, said on March 10 the firms in Kaesong would face "legal and administrative punishment" if they agree to raise wages.

"The situation will get worse if we succumb to North Korea's demands," a South Korean ministry official told reporters.

He added that Seoul would take a "strong" stance in the case in order not to set a bad precedent for the future.

South Korean companies setting up in Kaesong have a source of cheap, Korean-speaking labour, as well as preferential loans and tax breaks from Pyongyang, which also effectively underwrites their investment in the complex.

Observers say the wage row is part of a battle to assert control over the running of the industrial zone.

First opened in 2004 as a rare symbol of cross-border cooperation, it had previously been spared the fallout from the regular eruptions in relations between the two Koreas.

But the North effectively closed down the park for five months in 2013 following a surge in military tensions.

When it reopened in September, the two sides created the joint committee to deal with any further problems related to operations at the complex.

— AFP

The Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Yangon

is looking for a

Senior Information Assistant(m/f)

to join our highly motivated team and work in the political, economic and press section of the Embassy.

For more detailed information please look at:

www.rangun.diplo.de

Deadline for applications: **March 20th, 2015**

World

WORLD EDITOR: Fiona MacGregor

BANGKOK

Lèse majesté upheld

THE elderly parents of a former Thai princess were both jailed for two-and-a-half years yesterday after pleading guilty to defaming the monarchy, an institution protected by one of the world's toughest lèse majesté laws.

Apiruj Suwadee, 72, and his 66-year-old wife Wanthanee are the latest close relatives of fallen former princess Srirasmi to face legal proceedings after a corruption scandal involving her family erupted late last year.

Both had pleaded guilty to insulting the royal family, lodging a malicious claim and asking officials to file false charges against a woman in 2003.

"The judge convicted two defendants on insulting the monarchy and sentenced them to five years in prison," a verdict published by the court stated on March 11.

"Due to their confession the judge halved the sentence to two years and six months without probation," it added.

At least eight of Srirasmi's family have now been convicted and jailed for lèse majesté - her elder sister and brother-in-law, two brothers, a nephew and her parents.

Another relative, Pongpat Chayapun, the former head of Thailand's elite Central Investigation Bureau, was handed a 31-year jail term for a series of convictions linked to an alleged criminal empire that spanned illegal gambling, extortion and kidnapping. He was initially sentenced to six years for lèse majesté.

Srirasmi's siblings were arrested in the wake of that scandal alongside a slew of senior police officers.

But the case against her parents came later and centred on a former neighbour's complaint that she had

been jailed for 18 months on a fraud charge brought maliciously by the Suwadee couple more than a decade ago.

According to the court verdict, the Suwadees made false claims about Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn - who was married to their daughter at the time - in a bid to threaten their neighbour.

Vajiralongkorn divorced Srirasmi and she renounced her royal title following the scandal, which has gripped a public unused to seeing palace intrigue play out in the open.

She and a younger sister have not been arrested but have retreated from public view.

The spectacular demise of the former princess's family comes at a time of heightened anxiety over the health of the country's revered but ailing monarch.

Experts say the last decade of political turmoil in Thailand is intertwined with concerns among competing elites over the direction of the kingdom once the reign of 87-year-old King Bhumibol Adulaydej comes to an end.

Bhumibol has largely been confined to a Bangkok hospital in recent months, but he made a rare public appearance on March 9.

Under the royal defamation law - one of the world's strictest - anyone convicted of insulting the king, queen, heir or regent faces up to 15 years in prison on each count.

But reporting lèse majesté cases is fraught with difficulty. Both Thai and international media must heavily self-censor when covering the country's lèse majesté rules. Even repeating details of the charges could mean breaking the law under section 112. - AFP

PHNOM PENH

Tribunal sheds light on Khmer Rouge training

FORMER Democratic Kampuchea "Brother No 2" Nuon Chea told cadre to "train and refashion" themselves to become "one of the people in the peasant class" at yearly study sessions in Phnom Penh during the regime's reign, the Khmer Rouge tribunal heard yesterday.

Resuming testimony for a second day, accused former head of Takeo province's Tram Kak district Neang Ouch, the brother-in-law of high ranking Khmer Rouge official Ta Mok, recalled attending two meetings hosted by co-defendant Mr Chea in 1977 and 1978.

"I can recall some [of the meeting] that [was] on the building of a peasant class and about the class struggle and to get rid of the capitalist class from within ourselves," the 72-year-old, whose alias is Ta San, said.

"I remember about class struggle, and we had to get rid of this capitalist class, because it happened to me personally, so I had to train myself to refashion myself to become one of the people in the peasant class."

Pushed on whether communist party policy was discussed, Mr Ouch said he could not recall more about the sessions - which were attended by selected cadre from the district levels - because of his bad memory.

The witness - who called himself

a victim of the regime because his elder brother disappeared - denied ever meeting co-defendant Khieu Samphan.

He recalled greeting a Chinese delegation in Leay Bor commune but denied meeting Khmer Rouge leaders Pol Pot and Ieng Sary, despite an extract from the communist's radio station indicating they had travelled with the Chinese.

As on March 9, Ouch's role in the Khmer Rouge came under heavy scrutiny, particularly in light of documents written and signed by him ordering arrests, interrogations and, in one case, the execution of mothers with young children and widows, using the phrase "sweep them clean".

Continuing to insist he was an "assistant to Tram Kak district" and not, as he has been identified by several witnesses, the district secretary, Ouch said he was "simply following orders" from "Ta Ron", a Sector 13 official who he claimed had taken charge of the district in 1977 but didn't sign orders because he couldn't write well.

"When [Ta Ron] ordered me to send anything or anyone to any place, I [would] ask the district militia to implement that order," he said, adding he obeyed because he feared for his life.

The trial continues.

- The Phnom Post



In a picture taken on March 8, 2015, Takayuku Ueno searches for missing bodies in a coastal area in Minami-soma, north of the desolate winter beach for the bones of his three-year-old son, unable to move on in his grief until he finds the remains of a body.

FUKUSHIMA

Fukushima, four years on

JAPAN marked the fourth anniversary of the March 10 quake-tsunami disaster that swept away thousands of people and sparked a nuclear crisis, a tragedy that has left visible scars on the landscape and continues to wreak misery for many.

Remembrance ceremonies were being held in towns and cities around the disaster zone and in Tokyo, where Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko are to lead tributes to those who died in Japan's worst peace-time disaster.

Television footage showed victims and volunteers joining their hands in prayer near the shell of a tsunami-hit building in the north-eastern port town of Minamisanriku, one of the many stark reminders of the destruction.

A national minute of silence is to follow the wail of tsunami alarm sirens at 2:46pm the exact moment a 9.0-magnitude undersea quake hit.

Its gigantic force unleashed a towering wall of water that travelled at the speed of a jet plane to the coast. Within minutes, communities were turned to matchwood, and whole families drowned.

The National Police Agency said a total of 15,891 people are confirmed to have died in the disaster, with another 2,584 still listed as missing. Human remains are still occasionally found.

For thousands of relatives, the absence of a body to mourn makes

the process of moving on much harder, and some continue to carry out their own physical search.

"Somebody needs to do this, walking along the shore," said Takayuki Ueno, who at the weekend combed a desolate winter beach for the bones of his three-year-old son.

At the beach in Shichigahama, 28 police and coastguard officers offered a silent prayer in the morning before they began their search for the bodies of two townspeople still missing.

"We have found bones on the beach but they are mostly from animals," said Hidenori Kasahara, a police officer who was sifting through the sand.

"We still hope to find [the bodies] for the sake of their families," said.

The nuclear disaster that the tsunami caused at the Fukushima plant continues to haunt Japan and colour national debate.

The crippled plant remains volatile and the complicated decommissioning process is expected to last for decades.

Although there is little evidence so far, fears persist over the effect on health of radioactive leaks.

After successfully removing spent fuel rods from a storage pool at Fukushima, plant operator Tokyo Electric Power is still struggling to handle an ever-increasing amount of contaminated water.

Japan's entire stable of nuclear reactors were gradually switched off after the disaster.

While Prime Minister Abe's government and much of industry is keen to get back to atomic generation - largely because of the high costs of dollar-denominated fossil fuels to an economy with a plunging currency - the public is unconvinced.

A nuclear watchdog has so far given the green light to refring four reactors at two plants, but the actual restarts will be delayed until a months-long public consultation is finished and local authorities give their blessing.

Despite government pledges of billions of dollars in reconstruction aid, progress in disaster-hit regions has been slow; some communities remain ghost towns, and thousands of disaster refugees struggle to cope.

According to the government, nearly 230,000 are still displaced - many of them by the nuclear disaster - of whom 80,000 live in temporary housing.

"Reconstruction is shifting to a new stage," Mr Abe told a news conference on March 9.

"We will help disaster victims become self-sustaining," Mr Abe said. "As the government, we will provide the best possible support."

- AFP

New lawsuit questions legality of NSA surveillance

WORLD 19



Critical food shortages take hold in Madagascar

WORLD 18



Workers at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. In cold drizzle Takayuki Ueno combs a field of rice that was destroyed by Japan's monstrous tsunami four years ago. Photo: AFP

Years on

NAGALAND, INDIA

42 charged over lynch mob attack

INDIAN police announced on March 9 that they have charged 42 people after the killing and lynching of a rape suspect who was dragged from his prison cell, with more arrests overnight.

Police have charged the men with rioting, arson and unlawful assembly over the attack by a frenzied mob on Syed Farid Khan in northeastern Nagaland state, widely condemned as a barbaric act of vigilante justice.

Thousands of people stormed the Dimapur Central Prison last week to snatch Khan, stripping him naked and beating him to death with sticks in the streets before stringing him up to a clock tower.

"Some of these 42 arrested men were also directly involved in the lynching of the rape suspect Khan, and will face additional charges," Inspector General of Police, Wabang Jamir, told AFP from Dimapur city, after 18 were

arrested on March 9 in an initial sweep.

Tensions had been rising in Dimapur ahead of the incident after Bengali-speaking Mr Khan was arrested on February 24 for allegedly raping a 19-year-old tribal woman multiple times.

Eighteen people were arrested on Sunday over the attack in Dimapur where hundreds of riot police have been patrolling the streets in case of further trouble.

The lynching comes as India is in the midst of a raging controversy over a government order to ban the broadcast of a documentary about the December 2012 fatal gang-rape of a young student in New Delhi.

India has seen an outpouring of anger over frightening levels of violence against women since the 2012 attack, which sparked shock both within India and around the world.

But the lynching is also linked to ethnic tensions in Nagaland, whose indigenous tribal groups have for years accused growing numbers of Muslim migrants from neighbouring Assam state and Bangladesh of settling on their land and eating into resources.

The mob overpowered security at the prison searching for Khan, whom Nagaland's government initially said was a Bangladeshi immigrant.

Mr Jamir said the city was "slowly returning back to normal" with police lifting a curfew, but internet and mobile restrictions would remain for another 48 hours.

"Complete curfew orders have been relaxed today but some prohibitory orders still continue," Jamir said from Dimapur, around 1,660 kilometres (1,030 miles) east of New Delhi. — AFP



Protesters in Tinsukia demonstrate on March 8, 2015 against the mob killing of a man accused of rape in neighbouring Nagaland state. Police in India charged 18 people on March 8 after a frenzied mob stormed a prison and lynched a man accused of rape in the country's northeast, as tensions remained high, a senior officer said. Photo: AFP

JAKARTA

Diplomatic stoush over executions continues

AN Indonesian minister has warned a "human tsunami" of asylum-seekers could be unleashed on Australia in retaliation if Canberra keeps pressing for clemency for two Australian drug smugglers on death row, as ties between the neighbours fray.

Several foreigners are due to be executed for drug-related crimes with Australia among countries pleading with Indonesian President Joko Widodo to show mercy to their citizens.

They include Australians Andrew Chan and Myuran Sukumaran, as well as a Frenchman, a Brazilian, three Nigerians and convicts from the Philippines and Ghana.

Australia's repeated calls for clemency have included comments by Prime Minister Tony Abbott that appeared to tie his country's aid donations to the pair's fate — a notion that caused great offence in Indonesia.

Indonesian Security Minister Tedjo Edhy Purdijatno said this week that his country could release a "human tsunami" of asylum-seekers in retaliation.

"Indonesia has done a lot in preventing illegal migrants from other countries from going to Australia," he

was quoted as saying by Indonesian media.

"If Canberra keeps acting this way, Jakarta will certainly release migrants wanting to go to Australia.

"There are over 10,000 currently in Indonesia. If they are released and we let them go to Australia, it will be like a human tsunami."

Australia has struggled for years to stem a rising tide of asylum-seekers trying to reach its shores, often from transit hubs in Indonesia.

Many have died making the hazardous journey in crammed, rickety boats, normally after paying huge fees to people-smugglers.

Mr Abbott last month said Jakarta should remember the US\$1 billion of assistance sent from Australia in the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, which killed around 220,000 people.

But the bid backfired in Indonesia, where groups of protesters this week delivered bags of coins to the Australian embassy, saying they were handing back tsunami aid money, shouting "Shut Abbott's mouth" and "Abbott, say sorry".

Virgin chief Richard Branson on entered the fray yesterday, urging that the death row inmates to be spared

and saying the death penalty was a "failed deterrent".

Mr Branson said Portugal, which decriminalised drug use in 2001, was an example of how the issue could be tackled. Health experts have credited Portugal's move as partly responsible for drug addiction decline.

His plea came as Australian media said Mr Sukumaran, 33, had made a personal appeal to Widodo by painting a portrait of the president, signing it "people can change".

Mr Sukumaran and Mr Chan, 31, started programmes that ranged from painting to photography in the decade they were held at Kerobokan jail in Bali after their arrests in 2005 as ring-leaders of the so-called "Bali Nine".

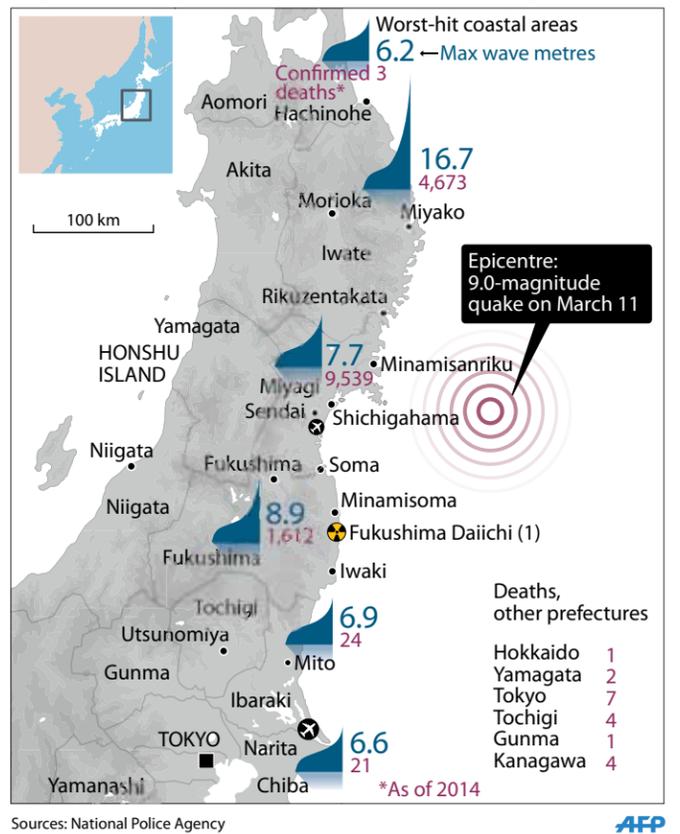
The French convict facing execution, Serge Atlaoui, yesterday appeared in a court outside Jakarta to apply for a judicial review of his death sentence, a last-ditch bid to avoid the firing squad.

His lawyers are asking for his sentence to be reduced, arguing he was merely installing machinery in a factory producing ecstasy and was not personally involved with the drugs trade.

The case was adjourned to March 25, after which lawyers expect it to be sent to the Supreme Court. — AFP

March 2011 Japanese quake and tsunami

15,891 confirmed deaths 2,584 missing 6,152 injured



Sources: National Police Agency

AFP

MANILA

Plea bargain on the cards for US marine

A PHILIPPINE court has offered a plea bargain to the US marine accused of murdering a transgender Filipina, according to lawyers, in a case that has strained Philippine-US ties.

This would give the detained marine, Lance Corporal Joseph Pemberton, a chance to avoid a murder trial that could land him in prison for 40 years if convicted, a state prosecutor and lawyers for the victim's family said.

Mr Pemberton, aged 19 at the time of the killing, had previously asked the court through his lawyers to downgrade the murder charge to homicide, which carries a maximum 20-year prison term.

Lawyers for Mr Pemberton could not be reached for comment on the March 10 court proceeding, which was off limits to the press.

Prosecutors and lawyers for the family of the victim, Jennifer Laude, as well as Mr Pemberton's defence team, were summoned to a hearing in the northern port of Olongapo to discuss the plea bargain process.

The victim's family said they would not oppose the plea bargain as long as Mr Pemberton served jail time.

"From the beginning until now, that's what we want: to see him in jail for what he did to my child," the

victim's mother Julita Laude said.

Prosecutors allege Mr Pemberton met Ms Laude in Olongapo shortly after the US marine took part in joint military exercises in the Philippines.

Ms Laude, a 26-year-old also known as Jeffrey, was found dead on October 12 last year in a hotel in Olongapo's red light district shortly after checking in with Mr Pemberton.

Prosecutors have described an unprovoked and relentless attack against Ms Laude, whose head was plunged into a toilet until she died.

One option that the American could consider is to agree to pay damages and plead guilty to a lesser charge, Olongapo chief prosecutor Emilie Fe de los Santos told AFP.

"They [Mr Pemberton and the Philippine state prosecutors] have to agree on all points. After that, we'll inform the court. But ... there was no offer" agreed to by both parties, Ms de los Santos said, outlining the court's instructions.

"There is no final agreement... As of now, the charge is still murder," Virgie Suarez, a lawyer for the victim's family told AFP.

If the parties fail to agree, the murder trial will proceed and the court will order prosecutors to start



Protesters display placards during a protest near the court in Olongapo City, north of Manila, on March 10. Photo: AFP

presenting their evidence and witnesses on March 23, the lawyers said.

Legal observers say that theoretically, a plea bargain would help resolve the case within a one-year period set under a joint US-Philippine defence agreement for US servicemen accused of committing crimes in the Philippines.

Mr Pemberton is currently under US military guard at a Philippine military base in Manila, the US government having refused to hand over custody to Philippine authorities.

Security was tight at the courthouse, with only lawyers, legal staff, US embassy representatives and the family of the victim allowed inside.

Philippine police stood guard as anti-US demonstrators staged a rally outside the courthouse demanding Mr Pemberton be transferred to Philippine custody.

The US military has had an enduring presence in its former colony since the Philippines gained independence in 1946.

Military exercises involving thousands of US soldiers take place each year, with a new agreement signed a year ago allowing a greater US troop presence in the country – part of US President Barack Obama's so-called pivot to Asia.

Philippine President Benigno Aquino had courted a greater US presence in an effort to counter perceived rising Chinese aggression in a long-running territorial dispute in the South China Sea. – 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

CANBERRA

Abbott in hot water over 'lifestyle' comment

AUSTRALIAN Prime Minister Tony Abbott faced a wave of criticism yesterday, including that he was unfit to be leader, after describing living in remote Aboriginal communities as a "lifestyle choice".

The country's indigenous people are the nation's most disadvantaged, with a much shorter life expectancy than other Australians while suffering disproportionate levels of imprisonment and social problems such as unemployment.

Mr Abbott said late on March 10 that he supported a plan to close

more than 100 remote Aboriginal communities across the vast Western Australia state if essential services could not be provided.

"It's the job of the taxpayer to provide reasonable services in a reasonable way, to indeed to provide high quality services in a reasonable way," he told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

"What we can't do is endlessly subsidise lifestyle choices if those lifestyle choices are not conducive to the kind of full participation in Australian society that everyone should have."

Aborigines have lived in Australia for at least 40,000 years and the comments drew stinging criticism, with Mr Abbott's key indigenous advisor Warren Mundine saying Aboriginal people had a cultural connection to their land, and it was not simply a matter of going to "live in the bush".

"These people are actually living on their homelands and it affects a lot of things. It affects their cultural activities, it affects their native title, it affects a number of areas," he said.

"It's about their life, it's about their very essence, it's about their very culture."

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Mick Gooda said the comments were "baffling" and would cause offence in the indigenous community.

"We're going to make a situation that's pretty bad already in those places even worse," he said.

Mr Abbott defended the remarks yesterday, saying he was being realistic.



Australian PM Tony Abbott holds a boomerang at the opening of the 44th Parliament in Canberra in 2013. Photo: AFP

'What we can't do is endlessly subsidise lifestyle choices if those lifestyle choices are not conducive to the kind of full participation in Australian society that everyone should have.'

Tony Abbott
Prime minister of Australia

"If you or I chose to live in a very remote place, to what extent is the taxpayer obliged to subsidise our services?" he said.

"It is incredibly difficult for the kids to go to school if there's only half a dozen of them and getting teachers there is all but impossible.

"Similarly it's very difficult for adults to get a proper job if there's no employment within hundreds of

miles. And this is where we have to be a little bit realistic."

Abbott last year spent almost a week running the government from a remote Aboriginal community in the nation's far north and will do the same this year.

Rolf de Heer, an acclaimed filmmaker who has made indigenous movies including *Ten Canoes*, said the comments were "so inappropriate that

it's laughable".

"It shows such ignorance that he has no right to be the prime minister of Australia," the *Sydney Morning Herald* quoted him as saying.

Aborigines are believed to have numbered around 1 million at the time of British settlement in 1788, but there are now just 470,000 out of a total population of 23 million.

- 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

MAIDUGURI

Boko Haram strikes with market bomb

A BOMB attack rocked the Nigerian city of Maiduguri on March 10, days after Boko Haram bombings killed 58 people, as the government said the group's allegiance to the Islamic State showed the militants were weakening.

A suspected female suicide bomber blew herself up at the crowded Monday Market, which has been repeatedly hit by Boko Haram attacks, including this past weekend, according to witnesses.

Borno state police commissioner Clement Adoda told reporters that at least seven people died and 17 others were injured in the explosion.

Medical sources said staff were "overwhelmed", as they were still treating some of the 139 people injured in blasts on March 7.

Mohammed Kanar, the northeast coordinator for Nigeria's main emergency management agency (NEMA) said the authorities successfully carried out a controlled explosion on a second device.

"Another bomb planted ... not far from the market was safely destroyed by security operatives. People mistook the explosion for a second attack," he said.

The latest attack came after the government in Abuja described the

militants' pledge of allegiance to IS as a sign of weakness in the face of growing military pressure from Nigeria and its allies.

National security spokesperson Mike Omeri called it "an act of desperation and comes at a time when Boko Haram is suffering heavy losses".

He added, "Boko Haram is on the way to being eliminated."

"No foreign extremists can or will change this fact - as long as the Nigerian military continues to receive cooperation and commitment from its citizens and allies."

"There will be no Islamic State in Nigeria: the only state that will exist is the united Federal Republic of Nigeria."

Mr Omeri's tough talk come as Boko Haram is being squeezed out of captured territory in three northeastern states of Nigeria by a regional coalition of Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon.

The armies have claimed a series of successes in recent weeks, with the operation designed to secure and stabilise the northeast so that elections can take place on March 28.

The Nigerian army said on March 10 it had foiled a Boko Haram attack on the town of Gombi, in Adamawa state, on Monday evening, seizing heavy weaponry and ammunition.

That followed a Chadian and Nigerian offensive on March 9 to retake the Borno state town of Damasak, which fell into rebel hands last November.

Niger said that as of March 8, 24 police and soldiers as well as one civilian were killed since the country became involved in the regional fight-back.

Some 513 Boko Haram fighters were killed in the same period in fighting in southeastern Niger, national police spokesperson Adily Toro said but there was no independent verification of the numbers.

Security analysts have said Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau's



Rescuers arrive at the scene of a blast where a suspected female suicide bomber blew herself up at the crowded Monday Market in Maiduguri, Nigeria on March 10. Photo: AFP

'There is a full-blown humanitarian crisis around [Lake Chad], not only in Nigeria, but also in the surrounding countries.'

Jean-Yves Clemenzo
ICRC spokesman

pledge of allegiance to his IS group counterpart Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi may only have propaganda value in the short term.

But they did not rule out possible closer links in the future.

The March 10 bomb attack in Maiduguri - and a spate of others across the wider north - have underscored the fragile security in the run-up to the elections, which Mr Shekau has vowed to disrupt.

The Boko Haram conflict, which began in 2009, has claimed more than 13,000 lives and left some 1.5 million homeless, with refugees spread across Nigeria and neighbouring countries.

On March 10, the International Committee of the Red Cross warned of an increasingly dire situation for the displaced in the strategic Lake Chad region, where Nigeria meets Niger, Chad and Cameroon.

"There is a full-blown humanitarian crisis around this lake, not only in Nigeria, but also in the surrounding countries," ICRC spokesperson Jean-Yves Clemenzo told reporters in Geneva.

The organisation said it had stepped up its efforts in the region, providing food, household items, sanitary facilities and assistance to help cope with the influx of casualties.

But the head of the ICRC delegation

in Nigeria Karl Mattli said, "It's not enough. More has to be done."

The vast numbers of displaced people - many of whom have flocked to Maiduguri - has been a nagging question in the run-up to the vote, at which President Goodluck Jonathan is seeking re-election.

The region is a main opposition stronghold but with many voters unable to return home to cast their ballots, the validity of the overall result may be questioned if they are disenfranchised.

Nigeria's electoral commission is scrambling for a solution to the issue, including temporary voter ID cards.

- AFP

BERANO

Food shortages hit hard in Madagascar drought

CLUTCHING a small bag of corn in one hand, six-year-old Haova Toboha scratches the ground with the other in hopes of turning up stray kernels left from a UN food handout.

"I found these and I'll add them to the corn given to my parents" by the UN World Food Programme (WFP), said the little girl with the plastic bag in the village of Berano, southern Madagascar.

In villages across the southern part of the world's fourth-biggest island, a months-long drought ravaged last season's crops.

People are famished: children are wasting away.

WFP rations currently are keeping some 120,000 people alive in the wake of the October-through-February drought that destroyed the harvest in a country where one of every two toddlers under three suffers retarded growth due to inadequate diets.

With food increasingly scarce due to the lack of rain, the UN food agency has launched an appeal to donors to help rebuild food stocks. "We need support now," said the deputy WFP representative to the Indian Ocean island, Fatima Sow Sidibe.

Unlike 1991, when hundreds of people died of hunger in the region, experts say the situation cannot yet be described as "famine".

"In those days people would leave the village in search of water and die on the way there," said Bertrand Randrianarivo, who was born in the

south and has worked in the area with non-governmental organisations since 2001.

"Drought comes every five or six years," he said, saying the largely isolated region needs to build water catchment systems and improve its links with the rest of the island.

While the WFP sees the latest drought as causing acute food insecurity rather than famine, the villagers themselves say they are wasting away.

Raharisoa, a terrifyingly thin woman of 25, sits on the ground. Her two-year-old daughter died of hunger in December.

"We couldn't look after our child," she sighs. "Because of the famine, the adults are weak and cannot take care of the little ones."

The government says 200,000 to 350,000 people are suffering from hunger in the low-income nation of 22 million people, which is ranked 155th of 187 countries on the UNDP's Human Development Index.

More than 70 percent of the population lives below the poverty line.

In the last weeks, WFP rations have enabled 120,000 people to get regular meals.

And while Agriculture Minister Roland Ravatomanga has pledged to distribute food aid to drought-struck areas, this would have to come on top of the government's efforts to find help for victims of last month's floods that left 22 dead and drove more than 63,000 from their homes - AFP

ISLAMABAD

Pakistan lifts death penalty moratorium

PAKISTAN has lifted its moratorium on the death penalty in all capital cases, officials said on March 10, after restarting executions for terrorism offences in the wake of a Taliban school massacre.

The interior ministry has directed provincial governments to proceed with hangings for prisoners who have exhausted all avenues of appeal and clemency, a senior official told AFP.

Another government official confirmed the news.

Pakistan has hanged 24 convicts since resuming executions in December after Taliban militants gunned down more than 150 people, most of them children, at a school in the restive northwest.

The partial lifting of the moratorium only applied to those convicted of terrorism offences, but officials said it has now been extended.

"The government has lifted the moratorium on the death penalty," the senior interior ministry official said.

"The interior ministry has directed the provincial home departments to expedite the executions of all condemned prisoners whose mercy petitions have been rejected by the president."

The official said there are around 1000 condemned prisoners around the country whose appeals and clemency petitions have failed.

The home secretary of southwestern Baluchistan province, Akbar Hussain Durrani, confirmed to AFP the government had issued instructions to resume executions.

"We have received a letter from federal government asking to expedite

all death penalty cases for executions whose mercy petitions have been rejected," Mr Durrani told AFP in provincial capital Quetta.

Until December's resumption, there had been no civilian hangings in Pakistan since 2008.

Only one person was executed in that time - a soldier convicted by a court martial and hanged in November 2012.

Rights campaign group Amnesty International estimates that Pakistan

1000

The estimated number of prisoners in Pakistan whose clemency bids and appeals have failed

has more than 8000 prisoners on death row, most of whom have exhausted the appeals process.

Supporters of the death penalty in Pakistan argue that it is the only effective way to deal with the scourge of militancy.

The courts system is notoriously slow, with cases frequently dragging on for years, and there is a heavy reliance on witness testimony and very little protection for judges and prosecutors.

This means terror cases are hard to prosecute, as extremists are able to intimidate witnesses and lawyers into dropping charges.

Human rights campaigners and the European Union have been highly critical of the resumption of executions.

Sarah Belal of the Justice Project Pakistan (JPP) rights group condemned the move to extend executions as "irresponsible", saying it put the lives of vulnerable citizens at risk.

"We've seen time and time again that there is immeasurable injustice in Pakistan's criminal justice system, with a rampant culture of police torture, inadequate counsel and unfair trials," she said in a statement.

In the latest case, an anti-terrorism court in Karachi on March 9 issued death warrants for two men convicted of murder during a house robbery.

The two men, Mohammad Afzal and Mohammad Faisal, are due to be sent to the gallows on March 17.

The announcement could also pave the way for the execution of Mumtaz Qadri, a former police bodyguard who shot dead Punjab governor Salman Taseer in Islamabad in 2011.

On March 9 a court in Islamabad upheld the death sentence passed on Qadri for the attack, which he said he carried out to punish Mr Taseer for questioning the country's strict blasphemy laws.

But the judges also cancelled Mr Qadri's conviction terrorism charges, which before the March 10 announcement made it unlikely he would be hanged. - AFP



IN PICTURES

PHOTO: AFP

A wall stencil depicts a dog with the head of US President Barack Obama next to the sentence "Barking dogs seldom bite" in Caracas on March 10. Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro has requested special legislative powers to confront what he termed "imperialist aggressions" from the United States, as relations between the countries deteriorated further.

CARACAS

Venezuela tackles 'imperialist' US

VENEZUELAN President Nicolas Maduro has requested special decree powers to confront what he termed "imperialist aggressions" from the United States, as relations between the countries sank further.

Mr Maduro will submit his request to the National Assembly, dominated by his ruling socialist party, a day after US President Barack Obama ordered new sanctions against seven Venezuelan officials over an opposition crackdown.

The Venezuelan leader wrote on Twitter that he would attend the assembly session to "personally deliver the request for the Enabling Law for Peace and Sovereignty".

He had declared on national television late on March 9 that he would ask for an "anti-imperialist law to prepare ourselves for all scenarios and win through peace", but he did not provide details.

Shortly after the US sanctions were

announced, Mr Maduro recalled his envoy to Washington and denounced the US action as "the most aggressive, unjust and harmful blow against Venezuela".

The US State Department denied that Washington was promoting "instability" or seeking to undermine Mr Maduro's administration, with spokeswoman Jen Psaki saying "the goal of the sanctions is to persuade the government of Venezuela to change their behavior."

Analysts and non-governmental organisations said Mr Maduro could seize on the special powers to curb individual rights, invoking the specter of an external threat to justify his request.

"Using the external enemy, which is imperialism, the government takes advantage to build a more repressive legal framework," Edgar Gutierrez, of the Venebarometro polling firm, told AFP.

Rocio San Miguel, head of the

Control Ciudadano NGO specialising in security issues, said the legislation would "be an instrument against the internal enemy ... to undermine human rights."

Mr Maduro, who was elected to succeed his late mentor Hugo Chavez in April 2013, had obtained one-year-long powers to impose economic laws by decree later that same year. Chavez issued hundreds of decrees during his 1999-2013 administration.

Mr Maduro's popularity has sunk in the past year amid an economic crisis, galloping inflation and huge lines outside supermarkets plagued by drastic food shortages.

He is likely to gain special powers again. Mr Maduro would need 60 percent of the unicameral assembly's votes, a majority his party holds with 99 pro-government deputies out of 165 lawmakers.

Mr Maduro has accused

Washington of backing an opposition plot to overthrow him in a coup that would have involved bombing the presidential palace. The US government has dismissed the charges as baseless.

In activating the sanctions, Mr Obama called the situation in oil-rich Venezuela "an extraordinary threat to the national security" of the United States.

The two nations have not exchanged ambassadors since 2010. The US State Department restricted visas to dozens of Venezuelan officials last month, prompting Maduro to demand Washington to reduce its diplomatic presence in Caracas and require visas for US tourists.

Venezuela's regional allies Cuba and Ecuador closed ranks behind Caracas.

An official statement published in communist Cuba's state-run media called the US sanctions "arbitrary and

aggressive". It was the first confrontation between Havana and Washington since the two countries agreed to seek normal relations in December.

"Cuba again reiterates its unconditional support and that of our people for the Bolivarian Revolution, the legitimate government of President Nicolas Maduro, and the heroic brotherly people of Venezuela," the statement said.

Ecuador's leftist President Rafael Correa took to Twitter to denounce the US sanctions as "grotesque" and a "sick joke".

The European Union said it was closely watching developments in Venezuela but would not join Washington in imposing sanctions.

The secretary general of the Organization of American States, Jose Miguel Insulza, said the regional body's permanent council should hold a meeting about the US-Venezuela row. — AFP

WASHINGTON

Lawsuit takes on NSA surveillance

A LAWSUIT filed on March 10 by the operator of Wikipedia and other organizations challenges the US government's mass online surveillance programs, claiming that tapping into the Internet "backbone" is illegal.

The lawsuit was filed in Maryland federal court by the Wikimedia Foundation, Amnesty International USA, Human Rights Watch and other organizations.

It said the effort by the National Security Agency and other intelligence services "exceeds the scope of the authority that Congress provided" and violates US constitutional guarantees.

"We're filing suit today on behalf of our readers and editors everywhere," said Jimmy Wales, founder of Wikipedia, in a statement.

"Surveillance erodes the original promise of the internet: an open space for collaboration and experimentation, and a place free from fear."

The lawsuit claims that by tapping into the internet backbone, "the NSA is seizing Americans' communications en masse while they are in transit, and it is searching the contents of substantially all international text-based communications," effectively sweeping up

data of many people unrelated to the effort to thwart terrorism.

"Rather than limit itself to monitoring Americans' communications with the foreign targets, the NSA is spying on everyone, trying to find out who might be talking or reading about those targets," said Patrick Toomey of the American Civil Liberties Union, which is representing the organizations.

"As a result, countless innocent people will be caught up in the NSA's massive net."

The lawsuit argues that based on documents leaked by former NSA contractor Edward Snowden, the NSA intercepts virtually all internet communications flowing across the network of high-capacity cables, switches, and routers that make up the internet backbone.

Also joining the suit are the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, Pen American Center, Global Fund for Women, *The Nation Magazine*, the Rutherford Institute, and the Washington Office on Latin America.

The defendants include the NSA and chief Michael Rogers, the office of

the Director of National Intelligence and its chief James Clapper, and US Attorney General Eric Holder.

Asked about the suit, a Department of Justice spokesperson said only that the agency "is reviewing the complaint".

A similar lawsuit was filed last year by the Electronic Frontier Foundation.

A 2013 lawsuit from Amnesty International on similar ground was dismissed because the courts found the group lacked "standing", or evidence showing it had suffered damage from the surveillance.

Wikimedia argued however that the vast surveillance program has had a direct impact because leaked documents suggested intelligence services had direct access to Wikipedia.

"Because these disclosures revealed that the government specifically targeted Wikipedia and its users, we believe we have more than sufficient evidence to establish standing," the group said in a statement.

Mr Snowden has said that the 2013 ruling contributed to his decision to expose the NSA's surveillance activities a few months later. — AFP

DUBLIN

Drug rush: Ireland races to close legal loophole

IRELAND'S parliament sat late into the night on March 10 to rush through emergency laws to close a loophole making the possession of ecstasy, ketamine, magic mushrooms and other drugs temporarily legal.

The situation arose after the Court of Appeal struck down part of Ireland's 1977 Misuse of Drugs Act after a legal challenge.

Health Minister Leo Varadkar, who is a medical doctor, warned that the substances "all have very significant health risks that outweigh any perceived recreational benefits".

Dr Varadkar said legislation had been prepared in advance of the court decision and that it would pass both houses of parliament within 24 hours.

"We had no way of knowing what the court would decide today, but we prepared for this possibility," Dr Varadkar said.

"The emergency legislation I am introducing today will re-instate

the status quo ante and re-control all drugs that were controlled prior to this judgement."

The legal challenge was brought by a man prosecuted for possession of methylethcathinone, a substance once stocked by "head shops" that sell legal or herbal stimulants.

Methylethcathinone was added to the list of banned substances in 2011 after a government crackdown.

But the judges found the stimulant's addition to the list was unconstitutional as parliament had not been consulted.

As a knock-on effect, over 100 drugs restricted by that part of the law were no longer illegal to possess.

The sale, supply, import and export of the drugs remained illegal however.

In addition, "the supply, possession or sale of older drugs such as heroin, cocaine or cannabis" was not affected, according to the Department of Health. — AFP



Cartoons join commuters on the streets of Yangon



NANDAR AUNG



nandaraung.mcm@gmail.com

SUMMERTIME in downtown Yangon is not the best occasion for strolling the streets and sightseeing. But one visitor from outside the city doesn't seem to mind, much as he admits to disliking the traffic, the noise, the crowds, the tall buildings and the heat.

It's almost noon. The 58-year-old man in the white shirt and the faded blue traditional longyi, who arrived in town just this morning, has found something to interest him.

Down from Monywa, Sagaing Region, with his family, U Shwe Byaing loves cartoons. And downtown Yangon is, for the next few weeks, Cartoon Central.

"I've seen plenty of comics and satirical cartoons. But not like these," U Shwe Byaing said. "It is a good display, and tells us a lot about the artists' opinions and experiences in Yangon."

He was talking about the work of Soe Thaw Dar and his friends.

Downtown Stories features a group of five cartoonists whose work reflects their life stories – how they came to live in Yangon, the Big Mohingya, and what they think about our city. It is a series of critical autobiographies in picture form and could even be, in an ephemeral sort of way, a legacy.

His quartet of companions in cartoonship, Maung Maung Aung, Shwe Min Thar, Thiha Sa Khan Thitt and Wing Aung, are displaying their work not in some cloistered air-conditioned gallery, but on the sweaty, gritty, stony street, namely Pansodan Road, starting March 3 until March 22. It is one of the projects of the three-week *My Yangon My Home*, the Yangon Art and Heritage Festival which began on March 1.

"I was brought up in a rural part of Yangon Region. But I think our city is the place where dreams can come true. Someone from the countryside who wants to make something of themselves has to come here for career fulfilment," says Soe Thaw Dar, 51, who has been turning out cartoons for more than three decades. "This series is a way for all our friends to showcase and share their experiences and the kind of life they have led here. This is different from ordinary cartooning or comic-writing. I hope cartoon-lovers will appreciate our work."

It may even provide a distraction from the heat, at least for a brief respite.



A woman examines one of the giant cartoons on display as part of the Yangon Art and Heritage Festival. Photo: Naing Wynn Htoon

ZON PANN PWINT
zonpann08@gmail.com

HE wears simple clothes and speaks softly. She sits in teashops and buys bananas at roadside stalls. It would be easy to pass her in the street without a second glance.

But perhaps, for those who don't know, in the few paintings hung in her half-concrete, half-wooden two-storey house south of Shwedagon Pagoda there is a clue.

The oil painting of King Thibaw and Queen Supayalat, a black-and-white photograph of their four daughters, and a mildewed portrait in oils of the king's youngest daughter and her husband are displayed just as an ordinary person might arrange family photographs in the living room. For this living room is occupied by Daw Devi Thant Cin, descendant of royalty.

She is a great granddaughter of the last monarchs of Myanmar, King Thibaw and Queen Supayalat.

"The painting was left unfinished," said Daw Devi Thant Cin, who takes pride in the artwork handed down from her father, himself the son of the last king's youngest daughter, the fourth princess.

The portrait is a masterpiece of U Ba Yin Galay, who studied art in Austria and Russia in 1952. She doesn't remember when her father commissioned it.

"The artist passed away in 1988 while putting the finishing touches to his painting. U Ba Yin Galay's son is an artist too. While my father was alive, we thought to have the painting completed by his son. But my father's friends advised us to leave it as it was, the last work of the celebrated U Ba Yin Galay," she said.

Unable to afford expensive renovation and cleaning, she tries to remove the mildew from the canvas with the traditional method of cutting a potato into half and using it to wipe the surface.

"People come to my house and offer money for the painting. I cannot



Daw Devi Thant Cin poses next to a painting of her great grandparents, King Thibaw and Queen Supayalat. Photo: Zon Pann Pwint

Descended from royalty

sell," says Daw Devi Thant Cin, who is an environmentalist and editor of *Aung Pin Lae* environmental magazine.

She shows another photograph in a gold frame, showing four ladies in royal costumes posed stylishly for a group photograph. One of them is her grandmother.

"Isn't their pose modern? They are very much at ease, not at all stiff," she said.

Growing up in Ratnagiri, the four princesses went to the photo studio without their father's consent. The negatives were later found in a rubbish bin in the *Thuriya* (The Sun) newspaper building. The newspaper was established in 1911.

When then-Burma was colonised by the British in 1885, the king, the queen – who was pregnant with their third at that time – and their two daughters were brought to Ratnagiri, India. The queen was delivered of a girl in what was then called Madras. The fourth princess, Ashin Hteik Su Myat Paya Galay, grandmother of Daw Devi Thant Cin, was born in Ratnagiri in 1887.

The first princess (1890-1947) married Gopal Bhauro Sawant and had a daughter, Tu Tu (1906-2000), who had 11 children, who are still living in India. The second princess (1881-1956) married Kin Maung Lat, and they adopted a child.

When the king passed away in

1915, the queen and her two youngest daughters returned to Myanmar. The third princess married prince Hteik Tin Kodaw Gyi and had a daughter, and the fourth princess wed U Ko Ko Naing. The couple had six children, all born in this country, of whom the fifth was Taw Paya Galay, father of Daw Devi Thant Cin.

Born into the still-royal family in 1947, she never acquired a regal manner, bearing in mind her father's instruction not to be arrogant and proud, but to be humble and work for others.

She eventually became a senior official with the Department of Irrigation, but she owns neither a house nor a car.

'We never get any attention. Some of my cousins have opened a teashop and some sell mohinga. Just like ordinary people.'

Daw Devi Thant Cin

She was forced to retire early for taking part in the 1988 uprising. "My senior officer told us not to confess any involvement in the protest or we would face dismissal. But when they asked me, I told the truth," she said.

She lives in the house that the British governor gave her grand-uncle, sharing with the families of two cousins. "The British governor at the time gave a 50-square-foot plot of land near my great-grandmother Queen Supayalat's tomb to her son-in-law so that he could tend her grave. My father's sister built the two-storey house on the land," said Daw Devi Thant Cin.

A jade merchant once offered to buy the house, but her father refused, fearing it would be turned into a gambling den.

"We never get any attention," she says, referring to the other surviving descendants of the royal couple. "Some of my cousins have opened a tea shop and some sell mohinga. Just like ordinary people."

Promoting literature: Sarpay Beikman building can be hired free to develop Myanmar literature

MYINT KAY THI
myintkay94thi@gmail.com

A DOWNTOWN Yangon building has been set aside for the promotion of literature. The Information Ministry has announced that the Sarpay Beikman building, on Merchant Street, will be offered rent-free for literary talks and other purposes serving the development of literature, said U Myo Myint Maung, general manager of the ministry's Printing and Publishing Department on March 9.

"We announced in January our intention to develop Myanmar literature. No one has yet applied, but we have had approaches," he said.

Literary discussions, conferences, seminars and forums can be held in the building.

"Any organisation devoted to literature and literary development can use the building in line with our rules and regulations," he said, adding that political parties would not be accepted.

According to state-run media, the ministry wants to spur the proliferation of aesthetic written works, increase the number of libraries and modernise journalism. The means used include holding readings and exchanging literary opinions, participation in forums and workshops, and presenting of



The Sarpay Beikman. Photo: Thiri Lu

literary exhibitions and intellectual discussions.

The building offers a hall with seating for 360 and a sound system.

Those interested can apply to the Ministry of Information's Department of Printing and Publishing, providing the details of their organisation and the event they are planning.

Swedish artist back in YGN for second solo show

KAYLEIGH LONG

SWEDISH artist Caspar Johanssen arrived in Yangon in 2007 as the protests, which became known as the Saffron Revolution, began to gather momentum.

Of his knowledge of the country at the time, he says he had "no idea. None. Military, Aung San Suu Kyi. That was about it."

Focusing full-time on his art, Caspar quickly fell in to step with the Yangon scene, making friends through the gallery circuit as well as at the street level. "It's not like Sweden – everyone knows everyone here," he said. "I saw tagging, some street art – I was impressed that it existed at all."

In 2012 Caspar, who produces work under the moniker CAP, returned to his native Sweden. Two years on, he's back with his second solo show at Pansodan Gallery.

The body of work encompasses his time in Myanmar, almost all of which is informed by photographs he took to document his years here.

"I don't take photographs for any real reason. I like documenting things, and so I go back through my library and see how images can intersect with an idea I've had," he said.

The show features his stamp-based work, as well as block prints, which look at the haphazard tangles of electrical wire that can be seen on any given Yangon street.

A poster image of a police officer, entitled "The Change", is taken from a shot he took during US President Obama's 2012 visit to the city. Upon reviewing his photos he noticed that there was something about the way the policeman was standing, so he removed the stamp-rendered policeman from his context and cast him onto a dance floor. His works are spiked with a dark humour and loaded with political commentary.

"It's human rights abuses and injustices I try to look at," he said. One of his works renders in stamps a *Baywatch* poster for the "Bay of Bengal: Last resort hotel" – which packs a punch for anyone who understands the context.

Indeed, there is a subtlety to CAP's art which he admits is intentional. "In terms of getting a message across, it's not about being explicit. There are ways of saying things without saying them."

CAP's *Transition This* is open to the public every day from 10am until 6pm until March 15 at the Pansodan Gallery, Pansodan Street (upper block), Yangon.



Swedish artist CAP's dancing policeman is one of the works on display at the Pansodan Gallery. Photo: Supplied

Hong Kong gets creative as Art Basel comes to town

A FLYING forest, a styrofoam mausoleum and a giant seesaw will greet visitors to Hong Kong's Art Basel fair from March 13 as the finance hub transforms into a creative playground.

The annual show comes as Hong Kong's status as a centre for collectors grows, with artists, gallerists and celebrities gathering at the harbourside convention centre.

Greater China, grouping the mainland, Hong Kong and Taiwan, maintained its market leader status in 2014, accounting for US\$5.6 billion in global art sales - closely followed by the United States - according to data firm Artprice.

But while the slick international display of Art Basel, which drew 60,000 visitors last year, is the headline event during Hong Kong's Art Week, smaller shows pop up all around town to coincide with the show - many of them throwing the

spotlight back on grassroots talent.

"The art market in Hong Kong has seen such a boom in these last few years and yet local art is still pigeon-holed as 'emerging,'" said Katie de Tilly, of Hong Kong's central 10 Chancery Lane gallery and co-founder of the Chai Wan Mei Design Festival.

Chai Wan is a mainly residential area in the far east of Hong Kong Island, where former industrial warehouses are now home to galleries and local artists' studios.

"It's less polished than the whirl of the fairs and you really get a feel for Hong Kong's artistic soul," she said of the festival, which is in its fourth year.

Co-founder Claudia Albertini compared the Art Week buzz to the atmosphere at European fashion weeks.

"I don't think Hong Kong is far behind art cities like Miami and Berlin. It plays an important part on the global art stage," she said.



Visitors are seen next to an artwork entitled "rem(a)inder" by Michelangelo Pistoletto at Art Basel in Hong Kong in 2014. The 2015 edition of the annual show, which opens tomorrow, comes as Hong Kong's status as a centre for collectors grows. Photo: AFP/Philippe Lopez

A new event, Art Central, will also take place from March 14 on the Hong Kong waterfront.

"The fair is completely rooted in our city, with a focus on Hong Kong galleries and artists, and regional market trends," said co-founder Tim Etchells.

Art Basel Hong Kong kicked off three years ago and is the newest addition to the international art show, which started in Switzerland in 1970 and also has a Miami Beach edition.

Champagne-soaked and glamorous, it attracted celebrities

including model Kate Moss and Russian oligarch Roman Abramovich to Hong Kong last year, with Victoria Beckham and Hollywood star Susan Sarandon set to attend this year.

Central to the display will be the large-scale "Encounters" pieces, including a suspended forest of olive trees by Irish artist Siobhán Hapaska, a mausoleum made from styrofoam boxes by Hong Kong-based Portuguese artist João Vasco Paiva and a giant seesawing log propped up by Indian Buddhist statues by Indian artist Tallur L N.

But while Art Basel can shine a

spotlight on new talent, Hong Kong-based art critic John Batten said the city needs to go further if it wants to be taken seriously as an art hub, including boosting the number of art museums.

Hong Kong, which is home to multiple gallery spaces, currently has just one museum dedicated to art, the Hong Kong Museum of Art.

"We are very poorly furnished by our public arts sector," says Batten.

"That's one of the reasons why this week has such a big buzz in Hong Kong, because we don't get much of it in the year." - AFP

Top Gear presenter Jeremy Clarkson suspended over 'fracas'

THE BBC said on March 10 it had suspended Jeremy Clarkson, the controversial host of popular motoring programme *Top Gear*, after he was involved in a "fracas" with a producer.

The outspoken 54-year-old presenter helped the show become an immensely popular television program, with 350 million viewers a week in 170 countries.

But he was on his final warning after a string of controversies including accusations he used racist language.

"Following a fracas with a BBC producer, Jeremy Clarkson has been suspended pending an investigation," the BBC said in a statement. "No one else has been suspended."

The *Radio Times* magazine said Clarkson was being accused of aiming a punch at a male producer in an incident that occurred last week but was reported to the BBC on March 9.

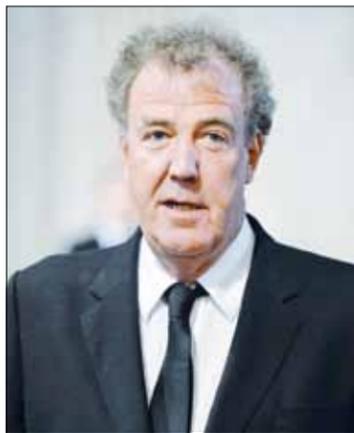
The broadcaster had earlier said, "The BBC will be making no further comment at this time."

No sooner had the suspension been announced than fans of Clarkson set up a petition to the BBC to reinstate him.

"We the undersigned petition the BBC to reinstate Jeremy Clarkson. Freedom to fracas," said the online appeal at www.change.org, which quickly gained more than 122,000 signatures.

"I'm signing because Clarkson is a superb presenter and *Top Gear* is without doubt one (of) the BBC's better programmes. The viewing figures support this," wrote one supporter named Peter Maxwell.

"I pay my TV license to ensure that irreverent people can express themselves," said another named



From racism to 'fracas': Jeremy Clarkson is in hot water again. Photo: AFP/Ben Stansall

Veronique Favreau.

As the story made the front pages of most British papers yesterday, Clarkson tweeted, "Sorry Ed. It seems I knocked your 'I'm a human' piece down the news agenda."

He was apparently referring to a BBC interview with the wife of opposition Labour Party leader Ed Miliband.

Clarkson in February indicated he might have been unhappy with the show by tweeting: "Wanted: new presenter for *Top Gear*. Applicant should be old, badly dressed and pedantic but capable of getting to work on time."

The BBC cancelled the broadcast of the latest episode scheduled for March 8, in which Clarkson and co-hosts Richard Hammond and James May were to showcase classic cars.

Former England footballer Gary Lineker, who was due to appear as a

"star in a reasonably priced car" in the episode, tweeted, "I don't think I'm ever meant to appear on *Top Gear*!"

Top Gear is one of the BBC's biggest brands and is a major earner for the broadcaster, though it has been dogged by a series of scandals.

The show's executive producer Andy Wilman described 2014 as "an annus horribilis" after accusations of racism and an incident in which the show's crew were driven out of Argentina.

Protests broke out there over the number plate of a Porsche, "H982 FKL", which was interpreted by some as a reference to the Falklands War between Britain and Argentina in 1982.

Clarkson was among those forced to abandon their vehicles after an angry crowd pelted the crew with stones, but the BBC denied the registration plate was intended as a deliberate provocation.

Most damaging for Clarkson have been accusations of racism while reciting an old nursery rhyme in leaked footage, something the presenter denied.

Britain's broadcasting watchdog also criticised the BBC in July after Clarkson used an "offensive racial term" in an episode on Myanmar.

Regulator Ofcom said Clarkson's use of the word "slope" as slang for a person of Asian origin was potentially offensive and that the BBC had failed in its duty to viewers by broadcasting it.

Top Gear previously got into hot water over its depictions of Albanians, Romanians and Germans, and the BBC apologised to Mexico after the show described Mexicans as "lazy" and "feckless". - AFP

Book traces 15 years of corruption

NYEIN EI EI HTWE
nyeineiehtwe23@gmail.com

A COLLECTION of feature essays about corruption in Myanmar, previously published in local news journals and international newspapers, will be launched in Yangon and Mandalay on March 12.

The book, entitled *Fighting corruption*, is a compilation of articles co-written by Naing Ko, who holds a PhD in Governance and Anti-corruption from the Australian National University, and Nyan Lynn Aung, a senior reporter at *The Myanmar Times*. The articles, which are presented in the book in both Myanmar and English, were previously published in *The Myanmar Times* as well as *The Nation* newspaper, *The Diplomat* magazine and other local papers over the past 15 years.

"There is not much difference between 2000 and the present day in terms of both politics and

economics in Myanmar," said Nyan Lynn Aung. "People from other countries seem to think that the situation in Myanmar is changing, but if you look at the stories we wrote 15 years ago, you can see that we are in the same situation now as we were back then."

The book, which took about one year to compile and translate, explores issues such as the detainment of political prisoners, Myanmar's notorious "tea money" culture and rule-of-law. Another chapter, entitled "Burma's economic priorities: stock exchange versus electricity," examines the need to improve basic infrastructure in the country in order for economic reforms to be viable.

"The book is intended for Myanmar students and young people who want to play a role in the development of their country," said Naing Oo.

The book (K1500) will be stocked in bookstores in Yangon and Mandalay.

What's on

TODAY

Transition this! Swedish street artist CAP's second solo exhibition (until March 15). Pansodan Gallery, Pansodan Street
Folk on Fire with LN'R band. Mojo Bar, 135 Inya Road, Bahan 9:30pm

TOMORROW

The art of bartending: cocktail show. Nine award-winning bartenders will showcase their nine best cocktails. Sample cocktails

Got an event?
List it in What's On!
whatsonmt@gmail.com

for free! Myanmar Convention Center, Mindhamma Road, Mayangone township 1-2:30pm
Aaron Gallegos Trio. Blending diverse influences from Flamenco, jazz and world music. Gekko, 535 Merchant Road



Invitation to the G-Class experience in Graz, Austria

All expenses paid trip for the first 4 customers from now till 15 March, 2015



Mercedes-Benz G-Class, gives you more than an extremely capable, AMG high-performance, all-terrain vehicle, you get an exclusive, invitation only trip for the G-Class Experience in the home of the G-Class in Graz, Austria.

Only available to G-Class owners, the program starts with a stay at a charming hotel located at the center of stunning scenery of Graz, Austria, then takes you to the G-Class Factory

for a factory tour and to experience the driving characteristics of the G-Class under different conditions demonstrated by professional test drivers.

The highlight of the trip is the actual off-road driving experience attended by professional test drivers in the wilds of Graz, an extremely fast downhill test ride by professional test drivers, then experience the thrilling Iron-Schockl.

For more information, please call 09 260259996 or visit our showroom today.

www.mercedes-benz.com.mm
www.facebook.com/MercedesBenzMyanmar



Mercedes-Benz
The best or nothing.

* Terms and conditions apply.

Distributed by Automobile Alliance Co., Ltd. and Serviced by Cycle & Carriage Automobile Myanmar Co., Ltd.
Yangon: 51 Pyay Road, Mayangone Township. Opening hours: 9:00am - 9:00pm. Tel: 09 260259996, 09 260259997
Mandalay: No.1 Junction of 26th and 66th Street, Sedona Hotel. Opening hours: 9:00am - 6:00pm. Hotline: 09 5057045

DOMESTIC FLIGHT SCHEDULES

| YANGON TO MANDALAY | | | |
|--------------------|---------|-------|-------|
| Flight | Days | Dep | Arr |
| Y5 775 | Daily | 6:00 | 7:10 |
| W9 515 | 1 | 6:00 | 7:25 |
| YH 909 | Daily | 6:00 | 7:40 |
| YH 917 | Daily | 6:10 | 8:30 |
| YJ 891 | Daily | 6:00 | 8:05 |
| YJ 811 | 3 | 6:30 | 7:55 |
| K7 282 | Daily | 6:00 | 8:10 |
| W9 201 | Daily | 7:00 | 8:25 |
| YH 835 | 1,7 | 7:00 | 8:40 |
| YH 831 | 4,6 | 7:00 | 8:40 |
| W9201 | 1 | 7:00 | 8:25 |
| 7Y 131 | Daily | 7:15 | 9:20 |
| K7 266 | Daily | 8:00 | 10:05 |
| 8M 6603 | 4 | 9:00 | 10:10 |
| YJ 751 | 5 | 10:45 | 14:50 |
| YJ 211 | 5,7 | 11:00 | 12:25 |
| YJ 601 | 6 | 11:00 | 12:25 |
| YJ 201 | 1,2,3,4 | 11:00 | 12:25 |
| YH 911 | 2 | 11:00 | 12:40 |
| YJ 761 | 1,2,4 | 11:00 | 12:55 |
| YJ 233 | 6 | 11:00 | 12:55 |
| YH 729 | 2,4,6 | 11:00 | 14:00 |
| YH 737 | 3,5,7 | 11:15 | 13:25 |
| YH 727 | 1 | 11:15 | 13:25 |
| W9 251 | 2,5 | 11:30 | 12:55 |
| 7Y 941 | 1,3,4,6 | 11:45 | 13:10 |
| 7Y 841 | 2,5 | 11:45 | 13:10 |
| 7Y 943 | 7 | 11:45 | 13:10 |
| K7 822 | 4,7 | 12:30 | 16:55 |
| YJ 151/W9 7151 | 1 | 13:00 | 16:45 |
| K7 622 | 1,3,5,7 | 13:00 | 14:25 |
| K7 226 | 2,4,6 | 13:30 | 14:55 |
| 7Y 241 | Daily | 14:30 | 16:25 |
| YH 731 | Daily | 14:30 | 16:40 |
| Y5 234 | Daily | 15:20 | 16:30 |
| W9 211 | 4 | 15:30 | 16:55 |

| YANGON TO NYAUNG U | | | |
|--------------------|-------------|-------|-------|
| Flight | Days | Dep | Arr |
| K7 282 | Daily | 6:00 | 7:20 |
| YJ 891 | Daily | 6:00 | 7:20 |
| YH 909 | Daily | 6:00 | 8:25 |
| YH 917 | Daily | 6:10 | 7:45 |
| YJ 141 | 1 | 6:20 | 7:40 |
| YJ 881 | 7 | 6:30 | 7:50 |
| YJ 881 | 1,2,4,5 | 6:45 | 8:05 |
| YJ 801 | 6 | 7:00 | 8:20 |
| K7 242 | Daily | 7:00 | 8:20 |
| 7Y 131 | Daily | 7:15 | 8:35 |
| 7Y 121 | 1 | 8:20 | 9:40 |
| K7 264 | Daily | 14:30 | 16:40 |
| 7Y 241 | Daily | 14:30 | 17:10 |
| YH 731 | 1,2,3,4,5,7 | 14:30 | 17:25 |
| W9 129 | 1,3,6 | 15:30 | 17:35 |
| W9 211 | 4 | 15:30 | 17:40 |
| W9 129 | 1 | 15:30 | 17:35 |

| YANGON TO MYITKYINA | | | |
|---------------------|---------|-------|-------|
| Flight | Days | Dep | Arr |
| YH 829 | 5 | 7:00 | 9:40 |
| YH 835 | 1,7 | 7:00 | 10:05 |
| YH 831 | 4,6 | 7:00 | 10:05 |
| YH 826 | 3 | 7:00 | 10:05 |
| YJ 201 | 1,2,3,4 | 11:00 | 13:50 |
| YJ 233 | 6 | 11:00 | 16:05 |
| W9 251 | 2,5 | 11:30 | 14:25 |
| 7Y 841 | 5 | 11:45 | 14:35 |
| K7 622 | 1,3,5,7 | 13:00 | 15:55 |
| YJ 151 / W9 7151 | 1 | 13:00 | 16:45 |

| MANDALAY TO YANGON | | | |
|--------------------|-------------|-------|-------|
| Flight | Days | Dep | Arr |
| YH 910 | Daily | 7:40 | 9:45 |
| Y5 233 | Daily | 7:50 | 9:00 |
| YJ 811 | 3 | 8:10 | 10:05 |
| YJ 891 | Daily | 8:20 | 10:15 |
| K7 283 | Daily | 8:25 | 11:30 |
| YH 918 | Daily | 8:30 | 10:45 |
| W9 201 | Daily | 8:40 | 10:35 |
| 7Y 132 | Daily | 9:35 | 11:30 |
| K7 267 | Daily | 10:20 | 12:25 |
| YH 830 | 5 | 11:05 | 14:55 |
| YH 836 | 1,7 | 13:20 | 14:45 |
| YH 832 | 4,6 | 13:20 | 14:45 |
| YJ 212 | 7 | 15:00 | 16:25 |
| YJ 212 | 5 | 15:00 | 17:05 |
| YJ 752 | 5 | 15:05 | 16:30 |
| YH 912 | 2 | 15:30 | 17:25 |
| YJ 202 | 1,2,3,4 | 15:30 | 16:55 |
| YJ 762 | 4 | 15:50 | 17:00 |
| YJ 602 | 6 | 16:25 | 17:35 |
| YJ 762 | 1,2 | 16:35 | 18:00 |
| YH 732 | 6 | 16:40 | 18:05 |
| 7Y 242 | Daily | 16:40 | 18:45 |
| YH 732 | 1,2,3,4,5,7 | 16:40 | 18:45 |
| YH 728 | 1 | 16:45 | 18:10 |
| W9 152/W97152 | 1 | 17:05 | 18:30 |
| Y5 776 | Daily | 17:10 | 18:20 |
| W9 211 | 4 | 17:10 | 19:15 |
| K7 823 | 2,4,7 | 17:10 | 18:35 |
| 8M 6604 | 4 | 17:20 | 18:30 |
| K7 227 | 2,4,6 | 17:20 | 18:45 |
| 8M 903 | 1,2,4,5,7 | 17:20 | 18:30 |
| YH 738 | 3,5,7 | 17:25 | 18:50 |
| K7 623 | 1,3,5,7 | 17:40 | 19:05 |
| YH 730 | 2,4,6 | 17:45 | 19:10 |
| YJ 234 | 6 | 17:45 | 19:10 |
| W9 252 | 2,5 | 18:15 | 19:40 |

| NYAUNG U TO YANGON | | | |
|--------------------|-------------|-------|-------|
| Flight | Days | Dep | Arr |
| YJ 891 | Daily | 7:35 | 10:15 |
| YH 918 | Daily | 7:45 | 10:45 |
| YJ 141 / W9 7141 | 1 | 7:55 | 10:55 |
| YJ 881 | 7 | 8:05 | 10:10 |
| YJ 881 | 1,2,4,5 | 8:20 | 10:25 |
| YH 910 | Daily | 8:25 | 9:45 |
| YH 835 | 6 | 8:35 | 9:55 |
| K7 242 | Daily | 8:35 | 11:45 |
| 7Y 131 | Daily | 8:50 | 11:30 |
| 7Y 121 | Daily | 9:55 | 14:10 |
| K7 283 | Daily | 10:10 | 11:30 |
| K7 265 | Daily | 16:55 | 18:15 |
| 7Y 242 | Daily | 17:25 | 18:45 |
| W9 129 | 1,3,6 | 17:50 | 19:10 |
| YH 732 | 1,2,3,4,5,6 | 17:25 | 18:45 |

| MYITKYINA TO YANGON | | | |
|---------------------|---------|-------|-------|
| Flight | Days | Dep | Arr |
| YH 832 | 4,6 | 11:55 | 14:45 |
| YH 836 | 1,7 | 11:55 | 14:45 |
| YH 827 | 3 | 11:55 | 14:45 |
| YH 830 | 5 | 12:30 | 14:55 |
| YJ 202 | 1,2,3,4 | 14:05 | 16:55 |
| YJ 152 / W9 7152 | 1 | 15:35 | 18:30 |
| K7 623 | 1,3,5,7 | 16:10 | 19:05 |
| YJ 234 | 6 | 16:20 | 19:10 |
| W9 252 | 2,5 | 16:45 | 19:40 |

| YANGON TO HEHO | | | |
|------------------|-------------|-------|-------|
| Flight | Days | Dep | Arr |
| YJ 891 | Daily | 6:00 | 8:50 |
| K7 282 | Daily | 6:00 | 9:00 |
| YH 917 | Daily | 6:10 | 9:35 |
| YJ 141 / W9 7141 | 1 | 6:20 | 8:35 |
| YJ 811 | 3 | 6:30 | 8:40 |
| YJ 881 | 7 | 6:30 | 8:45 |
| YJ 881 | 1,2,4,5 | 6:45 | 9:00 |
| K7 242 | Daily | 7:00 | 9:15 |
| YJ 201 | 1 | 7:00 | 9:10 |
| 7Y 131 | Daily | 7:15 | 10:05 |
| K7 266 | Daily | 8:00 | 9:15 |
| 7Y 121 | Daily | 8:20 | 10:35 |
| Y5 649 | Daily | 10:30 | 12:45 |
| YH 505 | 1,2,3,4,5,6 | 10:30 | 11:55 |
| YJ 751 | 3,7 | 10:30 | 11:40 |
| YJ 751 | 5 | 10:45 | 11:55 |
| YJ 761 | 1,2,4 | 11:00 | 12:10 |
| YJ 233 | 6 | 11:00 | 12:10 |
| YH 727 | 1 | 11:15 | 12:40 |
| YH 737 | 3,5,7 | 11:15 | 12:40 |
| 7Y 941 | 1,2,4,6 | 11:45 | 13:55 |
| K7 828 | 1,3,5 | 12:30 | 13:45 |
| K7 822 | 2,4,7 | 12:30 | 13:45 |
| K7 264 | Daily | 14:30 | 15:45 |
| 7Y 241 | Daily | 14:30 | 15:40 |
| YH 731 | Daily | 14:30 | 15:55 |
| W9 129 | 1,3,6 | 15:30 | 16:40 |

| YANGON TO MYEIK | | | |
|-----------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Flight | Days | Dep | Arr |
| Y5 325 | 1,5 | 6:45 | 8:15 |
| 7Y 531 | 1,5 | 7:00 | 8:38 |
| K7 319 | 2,4,6 | 7:00 | 9:05 |
| Y5 325 | 2 | 15:30 | 17:00 |

| YANGON TO SITTWE | | | |
|------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Flight | Days | Dep | Arr |
| W9 309 | 1,3,6 | 11:30 | 12:55 |
| K7 422 | Daily | 13:00 | 14:55 |

| YANGON TO THANDWE | | | |
|-------------------|-------------|-------|-------|
| Flight | Days | Dep | Arr |
| YJ 141 / W9 7141 | 1 | 6:20 | 9:50 |
| K7 242 | Daily | 7:00 | 10:35 |
| YH 505 | 1,2,3,4,5,6 | 10:30 | 13:10 |
| W9 309 | 1,3,6 | 11:30 | 13:50 |
| 7Y 122 | Daily | 12:15 | 13:05 |
| K7 422 | Daily | 13:00 | 13:35 |
| Y5 421 | 1,3,4,6 | 15:45 | 16:40 |

| YANGON TO DAWEI | | | |
|-----------------|-------|------|------|
| Flight | Days | Dep | Arr |
| K7 319 | 2,4,6 | 7:00 | 8:10 |
| 7Y 531 | 1,5 | 7:00 | 7:48 |

| YANGON TO LASHIO | | | |
|------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Flight | Days | Dep | Arr |
| YJ 751 | 5 | 10:45 | 13:00 |
| YJ 751 | 3,7 | 10:30 | 12:45 |
| YH 729 | 2,4,6 | 11:00 | 13:00 |
| 7Y 741 | 1,5 | 11:30 | 13:18 |
| K7 828 | 1,3,5 | 12:30 | 14:50 |

| YANGON TO PUTAO | | | |
|-----------------|------|-------|-------|
| Flight | Days | Dep | Arr |
| YH 831 | 6,4 | 7:00 | 11:00 |
| YH 826 | 3 | 7:00 | 11:00 |
| YH 835 | 7,1 | 7:00 | 11:00 |
| W9 251 | 2,5 | 11:30 | 15:25 |

| HEHO TO YANGON | | | |
|------------------|-------------|-------|-------|
| Flight | Days | Dep | Arr |
| YJ 141 / W9 7141 | 1 | 8:50 | 10:55 |
| YJ 811 | 3 | 8:55 | 10:05 |
| YJ 881 | 7 | 9:00 | 10:10 |
| YJ 891 | Daily | 9:05 | 10:15 |
| K7 283 | Daily | 9:15 | 11:30 |
| YJ 881 | 1,2,4,5 | 9:15 | 10:25 |
| W9 201 | Daily | 9:25 | 10:35 |
| K7 243 | Daily | 9:30 | 11:45 |
| YH 918 | Daily | 9:35 | 10:45 |
| 7Y 132 | Daily | 10:20 | 11:30 |
| 7Y 121 | Daily | 10:50 | 14:10 |
| K7 267 | Daily | 11:10 | 12:25 |
| YH 506 | 1,2,3,4,5,6 | 11:55 | 14:00 |
| YJ 752 | 5 | 14:20 | 16:30 |
| YJ 762 | 4 | 15:50 | 17:00 |
| YJ 762 | 1,2 | 15:50 | 18:00 |
| 7Y 241 | Daily | 15:55 | 18:45 |
| YH 732 | 1,2,3,4,5,6 | 15:55 | 18:45 |
| K7 829 | 1,3,5 | 16:10 | 17:25 |
| YH 728 | 1 | 16:00 | 18:10 |
| YJ 602 | 6 | 16:25 | 17:35 |
| K7 264 | Daily | 16:30 | 18:15 |
| YH 738 | 3,5,7 | 16:40 | 18:50 |
| YJ 752 | 3,7 | 16:45 | 17:55 |
| W9 129 | 1,3,6 | 16:55 | 19:10 |

| MYEIK TO YANGON | | | |
|-----------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Flight | Days | Dep | Arr |
| Y5 326 | 1,5 | 8:35 | 10:05 |
| 7Y 532 | 1,5 | 10:45 | 12:18 |
| K7 320 | 2,4,6 | 11:30 | 13:35 |
| Y5 326 | 2 | 17:15 | 18:45 |

| SITTWE TO YANGON | | | |
|------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Flight | Days | Dep | Arr |
| W9 309 | 1,3,6 | 13:10 | 14:55 |
| K7 423 | Daily | 15:10 | 16:30 |

| THANDWE TO YANGON | | | |
|-------------------|-------------|-------|-------|
| Flight | Days | Dep | Arr |
| YJ 141 / W9 7141 | 1 | 10:05 | 10:55 |
| K7 243 | Daily | 10:50 | 11:45 |
| YH 506 | 1,2,3,4,5,6 | 13:10 | 14:00 |
| 7Y 122 | Daily | 13:20 | 14:10 |
| W9 309 | 1,3,6 | 14:05 | 14:55 |
| K7 422 | Daily | 14:10 | 16:30 |
| Y5 422 | 1,3,4,6 | 16:55 | 17:50 |

| DAWEI TO YANGON | | | |
|-----------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Flight | Days | Dep | Arr |
| K7 320 | 2,4,6 | 12:25 | 13:35 |
| 7Y 532 | 1,5 | 11:30 | 12:18 |

| LASHIO TO YANGON | | | |
|------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Flight | Days | Dep | Arr |
| YJ 752 | 5 | 13:15 | 16:30 |
| K7 829 | 1,3 | 15:05 | 15:55 |
| K7 829 | 5 | 15:05 | 17:25 |
| YJ 752 | 3,7 | 15:40 | 17:55 |
| 7Y 742 | 1,5 | 16:00 | 17:48 |
| YH 730 | 2,4,6 | 16:45 | 19:10 |

| PUTAO TO YANGON | | | |
|-----------------|------|-------|-------|
| Flight | Days | Dep | Arr |
| YH 836 | 1,7 | 11:00 | 14:45 |
| YH 832 | 4,6 | 11:00 | 14:45 |
| YH 827 | 3 | 11:00 | 14:45 |
| W9 252 | 2,5 | 15:45 | 19:40 |

Domestic Airlines

- Air Bagan (W9)**
Tel: 513322, 513422, 504888. Fax: 515102
- Air KBZ (K7)**
Tel: 372977-80, 533030-39 (airport), 373766 (hotline). Fax: 372983
- Asian Wings (YJ)**
Tel: 515261-264, 512140, 512473, 512640
Fax: 532333, 516654
- Golden Myanmar Airlines (Y5)**
Tel: 09400446999, 094004

INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT SCHEDULES

| YANGON TO BANGKOK | | | |
|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Flights | Days | Dep | Arr |
| PG 706 | Daily | 6:05 | 8:20 |
| 8M 335 | Daily | 8:40 | 10:25 |
| TG 304 | Daily | 9:50 | 11:45 |
| PG 702 | Daily | 10:30 | 12:25 |
| TG 302 | Daily | 14:50 | 16:45 |
| PG 708 | Daily | 15:20 | 17:15 |
| 8M 331 | Daily | 16:30 | 18:15 |
| PG 704 | Daily | 18:35 | 20:30 |
| Y5 237 | Daily | 19:00 | 20:50 |
| TG 306 | Daily | 19:50 | 21:45 |

| BANGKOK TO YANGON | | | |
|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Flights | Days | Dep | Arr |
| TG 303 | Daily | 8:00 | 8:45 |
| PG 701 | Daily | 8:45 | 9:40 |
| Y5 238 | Daily | 21:30 | 22:20 |
| 8M 336 | Daily | 11:55 | 12:40 |
| TG 301 | Daily | 13:05 | 13:50 |
| PG 707 | Daily | 13:40 | 14:30 |
| PG 703 | Daily | 17:00 | 17:50 |
| TG 305 | Daily | 18:05 | 18:50 |
| 8M 332 | Daily | 19:20 | 20:05 |
| PG 705 | Daily | 20:15 | 21:30 |

| YANGON TO DON MUEANG | | | |
|----------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Flights | Days | Dep | Arr |
| DD 4231 | Daily | 8:00 | 9:45 |
| FD 252 | Daily | 8:30 | 10:20 |
| FD 256 | Daily | 12:50 | 14:40 |
| FD 254 | Daily | 17:35 | 19:25 |
| FD 258 | Daily | 21:30 | 23:15 |
| DD 4239 | Daily | 21:00 | 22:55 |

| DON MUEANG TO YANGON | | | |
|----------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Flights | Days | Dep | Arr |
| DD 4230 | Daily | 6:30 | 7:15 |
| FD 251 | Daily | 7:15 | 8:00 |
| FD 255 | Daily | 11:35 | 12:20 |
| FD 253 | Daily | 16:20 | 17:05 |
| FD 257 | Daily | 20:15 | 20:55 |
| DD 4238 | Daily | 19:25 | 20:15 |

| YANGON TO SINGAPORE | | | |
|---------------------|-------|-------|---------|
| Flights | Days | Dep | Arr |
| 8M 231 | Daily | 8:00 | 12:25 |
| Y5 2233 | Daily | 9:45 | 14:15 |
| TR 2823 | Daily | 9:45 | 2:35 |
| SQ 997 | Daily | 10:25 | 15:10 |
| 3K 582 | Daily | 11:45 | 16:20 |
| MI 533 | 2,4,6 | 13:35 | 20:50 |
| 8M 233 | 5,6,7 | 14:40 | 19:05 |
| MI 519 | Daily | 16:40 | 21:15 |
| 3K 584 | 2,3,5 | 19:30 | 00:05+1 |

| SINGAPORE TO YANGON | | | |
|---------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Flights | Days | Dep | Arr |
| TR 2822 | Daily | 7:20 | 8:45 |
| Y5 2234 | Daily | 7:20 | 8:50 |
| SQ 998 | Daily | 7:55 | 9:20 |
| 3K 581 | Daily | 9:10 | 10:40 |
| MI 533 | 2,4,6 | 11:30 | 12:45 |
| 8M 232 | Daily | 13:25 | 14:50 |
| MI 518 | Daily | 14:20 | 15:45 |
| 3K 583 | 2,3,5 | 17:20 | 18:50 |
| 8M 234 | 5,6,7 | 20:10 | 21:35 |

| YANGON TO KUALA LUMPUR | | | |
|------------------------|-----------|-------|-------|
| Flights | Days | Dep | Arr |
| 8M 501 | 1,2,3,5,6 | 7:30 | 11:30 |
| AK 505 | Daily | 8:30 | 12:45 |
| MH 741 | Daily | 12:15 | 16:30 |
| MH 743 | Daily | 16:00 | 20:15 |
| AK 504 | Daily | 19:05 | 23:20 |

| KUALA LUMPUR TO YANGON | | | |
|------------------------|-----------|-------|-------|
| Flights | Days | Dep | Arr |
| AK 504 | Daily | 6:55 | 8:00 |
| MH 740 | Daily | 10:05 | 11:15 |
| 8M 502 | 1,2,3,5,6 | 12:30 | 13:30 |
| MH 742 | Daily | 13:55 | 15:05 |
| AK 502 | Daily | 17:20 | 18:25 |

| YANGON TO BEIJING | | | |
|-------------------|-------|-------|---------|
| Flights | Days | Dep | Arr |
| CA 906 | 3,5,7 | 23:50 | 05:50+1 |

| BEIJING TO YANGON | | | |
|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Flights | Days | Dep | Arr |
| CA 905 | 3,5,7 | 19:30 | 22:50 |

| YANGON TO GUANGZHOU | | | |
|---------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Flights | Days | Dep | Arr |
| 8M 711 | 2,4,7 | 8:40 | 13:15 |
| CZ 3056 | 3,6 | 11:35 | 15:55 |
| CZ 3056 | 1,5 | 17:40 | 22:10 |

| GUANGZHOU TO YANGON | | | |
|---------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Flights | Days | Dep | Arr |
| CZ 3055 | 3,6 | 8:35 | 10:35 |
| CZ 3055 | 1,5 | 14:40 | 16:40 |
| 8M 712 | 2,4,7 | 14:15 | 15:50 |

| YANGON TO TAIPEI | | | |
|------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Flights | Days | Dep | Arr |
| CI 7916 | Daily | 10:50 | 16:10 |

| TAIPEI TO YANGON | | | |
|------------------|-------|------|------|
| Flights | Days | Dep | Arr |
| CI 7915 | Daily | 7:00 | 9:50 |

| YANGON TO KUNMING | | | |
|-------------------|-------------|-------|-------|
| Flights | Days | Dep | Arr |
| CA 416 | Daily | 12:30 | 15:55 |
| MU 2012 | 3 | 12:40 | 18:50 |
| MU 2032 | 1,2,4,5,6,7 | 14:50 | 18:15 |

| KUNMING TO YANGON | | | |
|-------------------|-------------|-------|-------|
| Flights | Days | Dep | Arr |
| MU 2011 | 3 | 8:25 | 11:50 |
| CA 415 | Daily | 11:10 | 11:30 |
| MU 2031 | 1,2,4,5,6,7 | 13:30 | 14:00 |

| YANGON TO HANOI | | | |
|-----------------|-----------|-------|-------|
| Flights | Days | Dep | Arr |
| VN 956 | 1,3,5,6,7 | 19:10 | 21:25 |

| HANOI TO YANGON | | | |
|-----------------|-----------|-------|-------|
| Flights | Days | Dep | Arr |
| VN 957 | 1,3,5,6,7 | 16:40 | 18:10 |

| YANGON TO HO CHI MINH CITY | | | |
|----------------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Flights | Days | Dep | Arr |
| VN 942 | 2,4,7 | 14:25 | 17:05 |

| HO CHI MINH CITY TO YANGON | | | |
|----------------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Flights | Days | Dep | Arr |
| VN 943 | 2,4,7 | 11:45 | 13:25 |

| YANGON TO DOHA | | | |
|----------------|-------|------|-------|
| Flights | Days | Dep | Arr |
| QR 919 | 1,4,6 | 7:55 | 11:40 |

| DOHA TO YANGON | | | |
|----------------|-------|-------|---------|
| Flights | Days | Dep | Arr |
| QR 918 | 3,5,7 | 19:45 | 04:59+1 |

| YANGON TO SEOUL | | | |
|-----------------|-------|-------|---------|
| Flights | Days | Dep | Arr |
| OZ 770 | 4,7 | 0:50 | 8:50 |
| KE 472 | Daily | 23:55 | 07:45+1 |

| SEOUL TO YANGON | | | |
|-----------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Flights | Days | Dep | Arr |
| KE 471 | Daily | 18:30 | 22:30 |
| OZ 769 | 3,6 | 19:30 | 23:40 |

| YANGON TO HONG KONG | | | |
|---------------------|-------|------|------|
| Flights | Days | Dep | Arr |
| KA 251 | Daily | 1:10 | 5:25 |

| HONG KONG TO YANGON | | | |
|---------------------|---------|-------|---------|
| Flights | Days | Dep | Arr |
| KA 252 | 2,4,6 | 22:20 | 00:15+1 |
| KA 250 | 1,3,5,7 | 21:50 | 23:45 |

| YANGON TO TOKYO | | | |
|-----------------|-------|-------|---------|
| Flights | Days | Dep | Arr |
| NH 914 | Daily | 22:10 | 06:45+1 |

| TOKYO TO YANGON | | | |
|-----------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Flights | Days | Dep | Arr |
| NH 913 | Daily | 11:45 | 17:15 |

| YANGON TO DHAKA | | | |
|-----------------|------|-------|-------|
| Flights | Days | Dep | Arr |
| BG 061 | 2 | 11:45 | 13:00 |
| BG 061 | 5 | 19:45 | 21:00 |

| DHAKA TO YANGON | | | |
|-----------------|------|-------|-------|
| Flights | Days | Dep | Arr |
| BG 060 | 2 | 8:30 | 10:45 |
| BG 060 | 5 | 16:30 | 18:45 |

| YANGON TO INCHEON | | | |
|-------------------|---------|-------|---------|
| Flights | Days | Dep | Arr |
| PG 724 | 1,3,5,6 | 12:50 | 14:45 |
| W9 607 | 4,7 | 14:30 | 16:20 |
| 8M 7702 | Daily | 23:55 | 07:45+1 |

| INCHEON TO YANGON | | | |
|-------------------|---------|-------|-------|
| Flights | Days | Dep | Arr |
| PG 723 | 1,3,5,6 | 11:00 | 11:55 |
| W9 608 | 4,7 | 17:20 | 18:10 |
| 8M 7701 | Daily | 18:30 | 22:30 |

| YANGON TO CHIANG MAI | | | |
|----------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Flights | Days | Dep | Arr |
| Y5 251 | 2,4,6 | 6:15 | 8:05 |
| 7Y 305 | 1,5 | 11:00 | 12:50 |
| W9 607 | 4,7 | 14:30 | 16:20 |

| CHIANG MAI TO YANGON | | | |
|----------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Flights | Days | Dep | Arr |
| Y5 252 | 2,4,6 | 9:25 | 10:15 |
| 7Y 306 | 1,5 | 13:45 | 14:35 |
| W9 608 | 4,7 | 17:20 | 18:10 |

| YANGON TO GAYA | | | |
|----------------|---------|-------|-------|
| Flights | Days | Dep | Arr |
| 8M 601 | 1,3,5,6 | 10:30 | 11:50 |

| GAYA TO YANGON | | | |
|----------------|---------|-------|-------|
| Flights | Days | Dep | Arr |
| 8M 602 | 1,3,5,6 | 12:50 | 16:00 |

| MANDALAY TO BANGKOK | | | |
|---------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Flights | Days | Dep | Arr |
| PG 710 | Daily | 14:15 | 16:40 |

| BANGKOK TO MANDALAY | | | |
|---------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Flights | Days | Dep | Arr |
| PG 709 | Daily | 12:05 | 13:25 |

| MANDALAY TO SINGAPORE | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------|-------|-------|
| Flights | Days | Dep | Arr |
| MI 533 | 2,4,6 | 15:45 | 20:50 |
| Y5 2233 | 1,2,4,5,6 | 7:50 | 14:15 |

| SINGAPORE TO MANDALAY | | | |
|-----------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Flights | Days | Dep | Arr |
| Y5 2234 | Daily | 7:20 | 16:30 |
| MI 533 | 2,4,6 | 11:30 | 14:50 |

| MANDALAY TO DON MUEANG | | | |
|------------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Flights | Days | Dep | Arr |
| FD 245 | Daily | 12:50 | 15:15 |

| DON MUEANG TO MANDALAY | | | |
|------------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Flights | Days | Dep | Arr |
| FD 244 | Daily | 10:55 | 12:20 |

| MANDALAY TO KUNMING | | | |
|---------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Flights | Days | Dep | Arr |
| MU 2030 | Daily | 13:50 | 16:40 |

| KUNMING TO MANDALAY | | | |
|---------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Flights | Days | Dep | Arr |
| MU 2029 | Daily | 12:55 | 12:50 |

| NAY PYI TAW TO BANGKOK | | | |
|------------------------|-----------|-------|-------|
| Flights | Days | Dep | Arr |
| PG 722 | 1,2,3,4,5 | 19:45 | 22:45 |

| BANGKOK TO NAY PYI TAW | | | |
|------------------------|-----------|-------|-------|
| Flights | Days | Dep | Arr |
| PG 721 | 1,2,3,4,5 | 17:15 | 19:15 |

International Airlines

Air Asia (FD)
Tel: 09254049991-3

Air Bagan Ltd.(W9)
Tel: 513322, 513422, 504888. Fax: 515102

Air China (CA)
Tel: 666112, 655882

Air India
Tel: 253597-98, 254758. Fax 248175

Bangkok Airways (PG)
Tel: 255122, 255265. Fax: 255119

Biman Bangladesh Airlines (BG)
Tel: 371867-68. Fax: 371869

Condor (DE)
Tel: 370836-39 [ext: 303]

Dragonair (KA)
Tel: 255320, 255321. Fax: 255329

Golden Myanmar Airlines (Y5)
Tel: 09400446999, 09400447999
Fax: 8604051

Malaysia Airlines (MH)
Tel: 387648, 241007 [ext: 120, 121, 122]
Fax: 241124

Myanmar Airways International (8M)
Tel: 255260. Fax: 255305

Nok Airline (DD)
Tel: 255050, 255021. Fax: 255051

Qatar Airways (QR)
Tel: 379845, 379843, 379831. Fax: 379730

Singapore Airlines (SQ) / Silk Air (MI)
Tel: 255287-9. Fax: 255290

Thai Airways (TG)
Tel: 255491-6. Fax: 255223

Tiger Airline (TR)
Tel: 371383, 370836-39 [ext: 303]

Vietnam Airlines (VN)
Tel: 255066, 255088, 255068. Fax: 255086

Airline Codes

| |
|------------------------------------|
| 3K = Jet Star |
| 8M = Myanmar Airways International |
| AK = Air Asia |
| BG = Biman Bangladesh Airlines |
| CA = Air China |
| CI = China Airlines |
| CZ = China Southern |
| DD = Nok Airline |
| FD = Air Asia |
| KA = Dragonair |
| KE = Korea Airlines |
| MH = Malaysia Airlines |
| MI = Silk Air |
| MU = China Eastern Airlines |
| NH = All Nippon Airways |
| PG = Bangkok Airways |
| QR = Qatar Airways |
| SQ = Singapore Airways |
| TG = Thai Airways |
| TR = Tiger Airline |
| VN = Vietnam Airline |
| Y5 = Golden Myanmar Airlines |

Subject to change without notice

FOOTBALL

Bhutan take World Cup shot

THE tiny Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan, officially the worst team in international football, begins its first-ever World Cup qualifying campaign on March 12 on the balmy shores of the Indian Ocean.

Three years before football's elite do battle at the finals in Russia, Bhutan and their hosts Sri Lanka are among the 12 lowest-ranked teams in the Asian Football Confederation who will kick off the worldwide qualification marathon.

The winners will advance to the second round, where they may face Myanmar, depending on the results of the draw at AFC House, Kuala Lumpur on April 14. The first game in the second round will be played on June 11.

No team from the Indian sub-continent has ever qualified for the finals, a record that seems unlikely to change any time soon despite a growing interest in football in the cricket-mad region.

India and neighbouring Pakistan are joint 171st in the latest FIFA rankings while Sri Lanka are 173rd.

But the dubious honour of propping up the 209-nation league table falls to Bhutan, a remote and mountainous region that has been nicknamed both the "Land of the Thunder Dragon" and the world's "Last Shangri-La".

Trying to adapt to conditions in Colombo, Sri Lanka's palm-fringed coastal capital, will add to the challenges for players more accustomed to a backdrop of snow-tinged peaks.

The match kicks off at 3pm local (4pm in Myanmar) at the Sugathadasa Stadium where temperatures should be around 30-35 Celsius (90 Fahrenheit).

In a bid to acclimatise, Bhutan have spent the build-up at a training camp in Thailand.

"We have made good use of the time we had, spending a couple of weeks in Bangkok. That has really helped us to adapt to the weather and the heat," Bhutan's skipper Karma Shedrup Tshering said on YouTube.

"We are expecting to win, but you



Maldives footballer Ali Asfaq (centre) vies with Bhutanese opponents Pema (left) and Chencho during the 2013 SAFF Championship match in Kathmandu. Photo: AFP

never know in the game of football so we just go there, give our best," added the 28-year-old midfielder.

While Bhutan's football federation has begun paying a select group a monthly fee of 10,000 ngultrum (around US\$160), most players have other jobs or are studying.

One of the few professionals is striker Chencho Gyeltshen who plays for Thai side Buriram United.

Despite the lack of experience, the president of the kingdom's football federation says Bhutan are no pushovers and is "not really bothered" by the title of the world's worst team.

"Sri Lanka is a team that is not way

way beyond the quality level of football that is being played in Bhutan," Dorji Ugen Tsechup said in a recent interview with the BBC World Service.

"It would depend on that particular day, how our boys perform, and we are hopeful."

Bhutan has only been a member of FIFA since 2000, registering just three victories since entering the international fold.

The last meeting between the two sides was at the 2013 South Asian Football Federation tournament in Nepal, when Sri Lanka won 5-2.

Former Sri Lanka captain Ashok Nawgalage said the hosts should swat

aside the basement boys, given the disparity in rankings, and even questioned whether there was any point in the match.

"There is no point in punching someone who is 36 positions below us," Nawgalage told AFP. "Playing Bhutan is not very useful, even in terms of acquiring experience."

But if adapting to conditions in Colombo will be a challenge for Bhutan, their hosts will face a similar culture shock when they travel to Bhutan's capital Thimphu for a return match on March 17.

The match will be at the Changlimithang National Stadium, one of the

most picturesque arenas in international football, and also hosts archery tournaments - the kingdom's national sport.

Bhutan was the last country in the world to get television and its debut in the most popular sporting contest is another sign of the end of its traditional isolationism.

Even if Bhutan are one of the first casualties on the road to Russia, the team are determined to do their country proud.

"I cannot guarantee 100 percent a win. But we'll fight till the last minute," winger Kuenga Gyeltshen told Bhutan's Kuensel news website. - AFP

GOLF

PGA caddies seek compensation for wearing bibs

CADDIES on the US PGA Tour have gone to court seeking compensation for having to serve as walking billboards while helping players and their cause could soon receive global support.

Eugene Egdorf, a lawyer for the Lanier Law firm retained by the caddies, told AFP that they are fighting for fairness in a situation where they often lack restrooms and parking while serving a vital role for the stars who lure big crowds.

"We would have preferred to come up to a business solution fair to everybody, the PGA and the caddies," Egdorf said.

"It's not about the money. It is about fairness. They have left us with no other

'It's about a freedom case. It's their business, their body'

Eugene Egdorf
Lawyer

choice. It's about a freedom case. It's their business, their body. Some don't want to have advertisements."

Caddies typically wear bibs with the logo of the financial backer of the PGA event and their player's name on the back when they walk around the course carrying bags and giving guidance to players about their shotmaking as they walk along courses.

While they are paid for their work by players, they are not compensated for their secondary informative role to spectators.

Egdorf said the lawsuit, filed in San Francisco, is expected to receive an objection from the PGA Tour, which would lead to an amended motion with 75 additional caddies from around the world, including Australia and South America as well as New Zealand's Steve Williams, who has worked with Tiger Woods and Adam Scott among others.

Caddies seek a retirement plan and a deal on other health issues that Egdorf estimated might cost \$4 million rather than much greater amounts being sought in the lawsuit, reportedly \$50 million and potentially more. - AFP

FOOTBALL

Sculpture of England's football defeats sold for \$646,000 - to a francophone

A granite monument with every defeat ever suffered by the England football team over 124 years engraved on it sold for \$646,000 on March 10.

The gloomy sculpture by Italian artist Maurizio Cattelan was sold to an anonymous French-speaking bidder at a Sotheby's auction in London.

"Carved into it are all the defeats of England's national football team. I guess it's a piece which talks about pride, missed opportunities and

death," said Cattelan.

Its list of defeats begins with England's 1874 2-1 defeat to Scotland, and spans infamous games such as the 1986 2-1 loss to Argentina, remembered for Diego Maradona's "Hand of God" goal.

Carved in 1999, the untitled artwork ends with Romania's 2-1 victory at the 1998 World Cup.

Its sale comes in the wake of one of England's worst-ever performances

in a World Cup in 2014, in which the team lost to Italy and Uruguay and crashed out without a single win.

Cattelan is known for humorous and satirical works, including one sculpture that shows Pope John Paul II struck by a meteorite.

His comment on England's footballing woes was sold at Sotheby's "Bear Witness" auction of a collection of 550 artworks that has so far raised £26.5 million (US\$40 million).

IN BRIEF

Cricket Former Pakistan pace prodigy issues warning

Mohammad Aamer urged young players to be careful of the company they kept to avoid "destroying" their lives, as he prepared to make his return from a spot-fixing ban on March 10.

The 22-year-old was due to begin his first game back in domestic cricket on March 9 but the first two days in the garrison town of Rawalpindi, not far from Islamabad, were cancelled due to a waterlogged pitch.

Aamer was one of three Pakistanis banned from all cricket for at least five

years for arranging no-balls to order in a Test against England at Lord's in 2010.

Aamer's ban was originally due to expire on September 2, but the International Cricket Council used discretionary powers to allow him to return to domestic cricket early, citing his early admission of guilt and cooperation with anti-corruption authorities.

Badminton Banned Lee looking to 2016

Malaysian badminton ace and twice Olympic medalist silver Lee Chong Wei is hoping he will be able to compete in

the 2016 Olympic Games, a report said March 11, following an announcement that his long-awaited doping case will be heard next month.

"Hopefully it will be over soon ... I am waiting for positive news. The Olympic qualifying period starts on May 1 and I hope to be cleared by then," he was quoted as saying by the Star newspaper.

The Badminton Association of Malaysia said on March 10 that Lee's hearing will be in Amsterdam on April 11, where the player's lawyer will submit documents to a three-man Badminton World Federation panel.

CRICKET

Ireland furious over 'vicious personal attack' on Mooney

THE Zimbabwe and Ireland teams at the World Cup united on March 11 to condemn a newspaper article which mocked Irish all-rounder John Mooney's battle with alcohol and depression.

Mooney took the boundary catch which eliminated the Africans from the World Cup in Hobart March 7.

But his match-winning efforts were greeted in the *Zimbabwe Herald* under the headline "Alcoholic dumps Zimbabwe out of WC".

The 33-year-old Mooney has suffered from depression and battled alcohol abuse in the past and was forced to quit Ireland's tour of the West Indies last year.

Zimbabwe batsman Brendan Taylor, who was the stand-in captain in Saturday's game, issued an apology to Mooney yesterday.

"On behalf of the Zimbabwe cricket team, we just want to express our apologies to @Irelandcricket and John Mooney for the unacceptable article,"

tweeted Taylor, who made 121 in the game which his team lost by an agonising five runs.

Taylor shared a fifth-wicket stand of 149 with Sean Williams (96) but the game – and Zimbabwe's future in the tournament – turned with Zimbabwe needing 32 to win off 20 balls when Williams hooked Kevin O'Brien toward deep midwicket where Mooney reached high to grab the ball.

There were doubts over whether the big Irishman had touched the boundary with his foot, which would have resulted in a six.

As the decision was reviewed, Williams left the field and the catch stood.

"You've got to take his [Mooney's] word for it," said Taylor in the immediate aftermath of the game.

The *Zimbabwe Herald* article questioned the Irishman's credibility, claiming the catch "was a shameless piece of fielding dishonesty ... [I]s it possible for a person like Mooney to be trusted?"

Cricket Ireland chief executive Warren Deutrom condemned the article as "crass" and represented a "gross error of judgement".

"It would be easy to dismiss [the story] as a childish diatribe if it wasn't for the vicious personal attack on John which cannot pass without comment, and possible action," said Deutrom in a statement.

"John represents his country with honour, distinction and integrity. That he does in the face of personal challenges about which he has spoken openly and movingly demonstrates incredible hard work and great courage.

"We understand, as does John, that public figures may occasionally be subject to negative comment, but in mocking John in such a contemptuous fashion, and using his personal difficulties as a mere punchline, the *Zimbabwe Herald* has demonstrated breath-taking crassness and a gross error of editorial judgement." – AFP

MOTOR SPORT

Van der Garde's F1 legal bid hangs in balance

GIEDO van der Garde's bid to compete at the Australian Grand Prix hung in the balance on March 11 after Sauber appealed against a court order to let him race.

The Dutchman won the case but the Victoria Supreme Court agreed to hear Sauber's appeal on March 12, a day before official practice starts at the season-opener in Melbourne.

Van der Garde claims he was guaranteed a seat for the 2015 season but that Sauber reneged on the deal and instead handed berths to Sweden's Marcus Ericsson or rookie Brazilian Felipe Nasr, who are heavily sponsored.

He originally took his case to a Swiss arbitration tribunal which ordered Sauber to keep him on the team. Victoria Supreme Court Justice Clyde Croft backed that ruling, enforcing it in Australia.

Croft said his decision was made purely on points of law.

The outcome opened the door for van der Garde, 29, a reserve driver for the Swiss team last year, to compete in the March 8 season-opener, pending Sauber's appeal.

"We'll see what comes out tomorrow and I'm still hopeful," van der Garde told reporters outside court after it agreed to hear the appeal.

"I'm very fit and very strong. I'm looking forward to going back to the team, [to] work hard and do our best for the weekend," he added.

Sauber lawyer Rodney Garratt had earlier argued it would be "reckless" to let him compete in an unfamiliar car tailored to another driver and without going through the two-week seat-fitting process.

He said such a move would be "dangerous" and put other drivers and



Giedo van der Garde (left) appears outside the Victoria Supreme Court. Photo: AFP

support staff at an "unacceptable" risk. "Mr van der Garde has no experience driving the C34 Ferrari and would not have sufficient time to learn," Garratt told the court.

But van der Garde's lawyer Tom Clarke argued that in 2012, a Formula One driver was fitted with a seat just three days after being granted a drive by an emergency ruling.

Sauber's chief executive Monisha Kaltenborn said the team was "disappointed" with the ruling, in a statement released before it launched its appeal.

"What we cannot do is jeopardise the safety of our team, or any other driver on the track, by having an unprepared driver in a car that has now been tailored to two other assigned drivers," Kaltenborn said.

Van der Garde insisted there would be no safety issues if he was in the cockpit for the March 15 race.

"No, not at all. I'm the fittest ever. I've been training the last three months flat-out," he said, adding that despite the dispute he was keen to work with Sauber again. – AFP



IN PICTURES

Sri Lanka's Kumar Sangakkara on March 11 became the first player to score four successive one-day international centuries, setting a new record in a World Cup match against Scotland in Hobart.

PHOTO: AFP

EUROPEAN GAMES

Armenia will go to Azerbaijani Games

ARMENIA'S National Olympic Committee announced March 11 that it will send athletes to the inaugural European Games set for later this year and hosted by arch-foe Azerbaijan.

"Armenian athletes have had some outstanding results in recent times and have serious chances of winning medals at the European Games," Armenian NOC secretary general Grachia Rostomyan told a press conference.

"It is entirely up to the country's NOC to make a final decision on the matter."

However, the NOC decision has been hotly contested between the Olympic Committee chiefs and some of the country's sports federation bosses, who have opposed the idea of participating in the fledgling Games to be held in Azerbaijan's capital Baku from June 12-28.

Armenia and Azerbaijan are locked in a festering decades-long dispute over the region of Nagorny Karabakh which Armenian-backed separatists seized in a bloody conflict in the early 1990s.

"There's no need for our athletes to go to Baku," Levon Julfalakyan, the country's Greek-Roman wrestling team squad head coach said.

"They will never get a fair deal for their performances in Azerbaijan."

His statement was backed by Armenia's gymnastics boss Albert Azaryan.

"Regardless of our athletes' performances they will never be given a chance to win in Baku by any means," he said.

"Armenia has a difficult relation-

ship with Azerbaijan and the trip to Baku could become a pretty risky affair."

Meanwhile, the organisers of the European Games have already given security guarantees for the members of the Armenian delegation at the event.

The 2015 European Games will be the inaugural edition of an international multi-sport event for athletes representing the Olympic committees of Europe.

The dispute between two former Soviet republics over the region of Nagorny Karabakh has its immediate roots in a war that left some 30,000 people dead after ethnic-Armenian separatists backed by Yerevan seized the territory from Azerbaijan.

Despite years of internationally mediated negotiations since the 1994 ceasefire, the two sides have not yet signed a final peace deal.

Baku, whose military spending exceeds Armenia's entire state budget, has threatened to take back the region by force if negotiations fail to yield results, while Armenia, which is heavily armed by Russia, says it would crush any offensive.

Karabakh is internationally recognised as part of Azerbaijan but the ethnic-Azeri community – which before the war made up around 25 percent of the population – was entirely driven out.

Almost all of the current 145,000 population of the enclave is Armenian and the region has declared itself the Nagorny Karabakh Republic. – AFP

Sport

Sauber appeal F1 starting grid legal decision

SPORT 27



FOOTBALL

United make a point

MATT ROEBUCK
matt.d.roebuck@gmail.com

A from saw Ayeyawady United save a draw in their clash with Indonesian champions Persib Bandung at Thuwunna Youth Training Centre Stadium on March 11. Their second draw in two games puts them third in Group H after Lao Toyota FC lost 2-1 away to the Maldives' New Radiant SC.

A 45th-minute goal from Persib skipper Atep sent the visitors into the tunnel with a half-time lead but as the side tired in the second half Fonseca struck a magnificent curling goal from about 25 yards out to secure United's second draw in the competition.

"When you concede in the 45th and come back, as a coach it leaves you satisfied," said Ayeyawady's Macedonian coach Marjan Sekulovski.

"I was very happy with the way my players performed, especially in the tactical areas of the game," he added.

"There is a difference of about 500 places between our two teams in the rankings. They have seven national players and two very strong foreigners. Persib are like the Manchester United, the Manchester City, Chelsea or Arsenal of this part of Asia."

"They had their national-level players. My four U23 players have been taken away to Japan for a friendly. Had they been playing I don't know what would have happened but I would have had more options to win the game."

"I have to be satisfied with that performance. At the end of the match we made chances and could have come away with the win. If we play like this again in the next match then we have a good chance of a result."

The Persib coach complained after the game of the difficulties his players had taking to the field in the mid-afternoon sun and with the thermometer touching 38C his players opened up with a smooth passing game, keen to retain possession and avoid chasing the ball.

First-half chances were largely



The Ayeyawady team take on water. Photo: Ayeyawady United FC/Facebook

restricted to long-range efforts, with players typically struggling to keep their heads over the ball and shots sailing high above the woodwork. Only Persib's Makan Konaté in the 10th minute and Ayeyawady left-back Chit San Maung in the 43rd gave the opposition shot-stoppers any action.

As half-time approached, Naumov Riste was dispossessed by Vladimir Vujovic on their edge of the Persib box. The Montenegrin ran at pace with the ball into the opposition half before spreading the ball wide to the right and attacking the box.

It seemed as if the mind of Ayeyawady's defence was already consumed by thoughts of half-time oranges as the ball was played easily through them to Atep Rizal, the Persib captain, who left unmarked on the edge of the six-yard box, made no mistake.

The second half got off to a slow start, as the visitors tired and United attempted to stick to their approach.

"We knew we had to stick to our game plan, if we tried to over-attack, Persib would have killed us on the counter," said Sekulovski after the game.

But as the game approached the hour mark Ayeyawady's Edison Fonseca awoke and looked to wrestle back the match for the home team. In the 56th he made a run into the box and in attempting to latch onto a through ball, he threw himself to the floor in the failed effort.

Just a minute later his exertions paid off as Fonseca made an audacious attempt from about 25 yards out. Stood to the left of the goal, the ball was played across the box, and curled away from the keeper at the last mo-

ment to find the top right-hand corner of the goal and bring Ayeyawady back into the match.

As the ball hit the back of the net even the Colombian seemed taken aback by the quality of the strike, coach Sekulovski was so delighted that he dropped to his knees and shined his striker's boots.

The goal seemed to give Fonseca confidence as he continued to attack the Persib box, attempting step-overs and other tricks to find his way once more into a striking position.

But although the equaliser opened up the game, giving it the spark of energy the first half had so sorely needed, neither team could find a way to a victory.

Persib's best opportunities of the half came from a series of three strong corners that the Ayeyawady defence did well to handle safely.

The closest anyone came to securing three points was the Macedonian forward Riste, who leapt in the 66th minute to make contact with a Moe Win cross, an attempt that left the Persib keeper standing as it rattled the frame.

"I think our team could have come away with a victory but we failed to deal with Fonseca in the second half," said Persib Bandung coach Emral Abus after the game.

When asked about Ayeyawady's players missing with the U23 squad in Japan, Abus commented, "I think this was lucky for me. These additional players could have made the game very difficult for me."

| Teams | P | W | D | L | GF | GA | GD | PTS |
|------------------------|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|-----|
| PERSIB BANDUNG (IDN) | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| NEW RADIANT SC (MDV) | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 5 | -2 | 3 |
| AYEYAWADY UNITED (MYA) | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 2 |
| LAO TOYOTA FC (LAO) | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 4 | -1 | 1 |

Sweet Sixteen for Myanmar women

MATT ROEBUCK

MYANMAR Women got their Olympic qualifying round one tournament off to a flying start at Mandalay's Mandalay Thiri Stadium when they beat Sri Lanka 16-0.

Goals included a hat-trick for Naw Ar Lo Wer Phaw and five a piece for Win Theingi Tun and Khin Moe Wai. Yee Yee Oo chipped in with a brace in addition to a Nisansala Manawadu own-goal.

The scoreline provides a sizeable goal difference that may come in handy for the hosts when they face India on March 15, in what will likely be a deciding encounter.

India will first face Sri Lanka on March 13.



Myanmar's strikeforce went on the rampage in Mandalay. Photo: MFF/Facebook

FOOTBALL

More migrants needed to build Qatari World Cup

QATAR will more than double the number of migrant labourers in the country to 2.5 million by 2020 ahead of hosting the World Cup, a senior royal family member said March 10.

Sheikh Nasser bin Abdulrahman bin Nasser al-Thani told a business conference in Doha that the number of workers would reach "2.5 million within three to five years".

It is estimated that there are anywhere between 700,000 and one million migrant workers in the tiny Gulf kingdom, out of a total population of 2.3 million.

The new arrivals will work on major projects in the run-up to the football World Cup being held in the country in 2022.

Sheikh al-Thani is the chair of Daruna, a company that specialises in building migrant labour housing.

He was speaking at the "Qatar Projects" conference, a two-day event that brings together business leaders, consultants and government figures from the infrastructure, transport and energy sectors.

Al-Thani also on March 10 unveiled proposals for a new accommodation centre for migrant labourers in Qatar, which he said would greatly improve housing standards.

"We are offering our guest workers a living standard of the highest Qatar has ever seen," he said.

Qatar is spending over US\$200 billion over the next decade on a number of huge infrastructure projects, including a metro system for Doha, developing the country's roads, and building a new port.

The city of Lusail which will house the stadium where the World Cup final will be played is also being built and the country's main airport, Hamad International, is being upgraded.

The increase in labourer numbers flooding into Qatar is likely to reignite the issue of workers rights in the energy-rich country.

Qatar has come under huge international pressure to better conditions for labourers in the country working on World Cup projects.

In recent weeks, Qatar has announced a major reform of the labour market to implement an electronic payment scheme which should ensure thousands of workers are paid on time.

The change, long championed by rights groups, should mean workers get paid at least once a month and, in some cases, every fortnight.

But campaigners have called on the Qatari government to do more, including addressing the controversial "kafala" sponsorship system, which enables employers to prevent foreign workers from leaving the country or changing jobs and has been likened to modern-day slavery.

Other areas where campaigners have called for change include the confiscation of passports by employers, workers not being issued an exit visa so they can leave Qatar, and migrant labourers having to pay recruitment fees. - AFP