



INSIDE BUSINESS
Satellite towns mushroom on Yangon's outskirts

INSIDE THE PULSE
Cambodia's style brigade



HEARTBEAT OF THE NATION

500 Ks.

MYANMAR TIMES

WWW.MMTIMES.COM

DAILY EDITION

ISSUE 9 | THURSDAY, MARCH 19, 2015



**OVERLOADING
BLAMED FOR DEADLY
FERRY SINKING**

NEWS 2



**INFLATION EATS
INTO PROFITS OF
LOCAL BANKS**

BUSINESS 9



**US WAS INVOLVED IN
FAILED PHILIPPINES
RAID, ENQUIRY TOLD**

WORLD 14



IN PICTURES

Ferry victims remembered at emotional service

Yangon residents light candles in the shape of the letters "SOS" on the ground at Mahabandoola Park yesterday afternoon, in a memorial for those who lost their lives in a March 13 ferry accident off the coast of Rakhine State. The official death toll from the accident stands at 63.

PHOTO: AUNG KHANT

SKorea linked to crackdown

The South Korean embassy in Yangon met government officials to request they disperse protesters from South Korean-owned factories in Shwe Pyi Thar township prior to a March 4 crackdown by plain-clothed thugs. NEWS 3

*a good sofa is
the soul of a home!*



LORENZO
LIVING STARTS HERE...

Sole Distributor : NatRay Co.,Ltd.

CasaBella One Stop Luxury Home Furnishing Centre No. 22, Pyay Road, 9 mile, Mayangone Township, Yangon. 664363 ,660769

Government to replace ageing fleet after sinking

MYATT KYAW THU
mrattkthu@gmail.com

THE ferry tragedy off the coast of Rakhine State has prompted the state government to replace the old ferries of the *Aung Takon* line with new vessels, chief minister U Maung Maung Ohn told *The Myanmar Times* on March 17.

The chief minister said *Aung Takon's* ferry service had been suspended since the tragedy, which he blamed on overloading. Inclement weather had earlier been blamed, but this was later ruled impossible by a prominent meteorologist.

"These ferries should not run any more, and people don't want to ride aboard them. We will replace them with new ferries," said U Maung Maung Ohn.

At least 63 people died in the March 13 sinking, when the 19-year-old vessel went down off Myebon on its way from Kyaukpyu to Sittwe. Search and rescue efforts led by volunteers from a local philanthropic organisation were continuing yesterday.

The ship was officially carrying 214 passengers and crew. Based on the number of survivors and bodies recovered to date, it was carrying at least 230 but it is feared that many more unregistered passengers were aboard. State-run Myanmar Insurance announced on March 16 that they would pay K500,000 compensation to the relatives of the deceased, and K400,000 to those injured in the incident.

The *Aung Takon* line was once leased to a private entrepreneur, U Kyaut Taung of Toungup township, but the government later resumed control.

U Maung Maung Ohn said the state government would set a moderate ticket price for new ferries, higher than the current price but cheaper than those of private services.

"People could not afford the higher prices if we privatised the service," he said.

Private shipping lines Malikha and Shwe Pyi Tan charge about K15,000 for travel from Toungup to Sittwe, while the state-owned ferries charge only K2500 for the same route.

Residents said only those who lacked the money for the private services booked berths on *Aung Takon*.

"No one dares to ride *Aung Takon's* ferries. They are all afraid," said Ma Thu Thu of Toungup township.

No details were given on the timeframe for or the expected cost of replacing the vessels, or where the funds would come from.

- Translation by Zar Zar Soe

Overloading blamed for ferry accident, as death toll hits 63



MRATT KYAW THU

mrattkthu@gmail.com

AS teams of volunteers recovered the remains of those lost in the *Aung Takon 3* ferry disaster of March 13, further details have begun to emerge of the events immediately surrounding the tragedy, including eyewitness accounts.

The death toll late on March 17 reached 63 as the recovery teams, led by young members of a local philanthropic organisation, continued their search and the disposal of the remains. Combined with the 169 people officials say were rescued, this means there were at least 232 people on board - 18 more than the official manifest - but survivors said there could have been up to 400 on the ferry when it went down.

Amid allegations the ferry was severely overloaded when it sunk, the Rakhine State government has formed an investigation commission and instructed the team to complete its report no later than yesterday, March 18. An earlier government statement blaming the weather has been dismissed.

Volunteer members of Duwunkyel free funeral service in Kyaukpyu are leading the search for the deceased.

On March 15, they found two bodies, which were buried in Myebon. A further 20 bodies discovered the following day were also buried in Kyaukpyu township.

"The bodies we found on [March 16] could not be identified because their state of decomposition was too advanced," U Tun Kyi, a member of the Duwunkyel free funeral service, told *The Myanmar Times* yesterday. "We will find more bodies if we can search the sunken ferry itself."

The volunteers found seven more bodies on March 17, at about 5:30pm. They were cremated on Myauk Kyein



The *Aung Takon 3* in more seaworthy times. Photo: Supplied



Rakhine State Chief Minister U Maung Maung Ohn meets survivors in Kyaukpyu on March 17. Photo: Naing Wynn Htoon

Island, the place nearest to where they were discovered, because it was too difficult to carry them to Kyaukpyu, said U Myo Myint Naing, one of the searchers.

"One of them was the captain. Some people recognised him. The bodies of two monks from Kyaukpyu were also found, and we cremated them here at once," he said.

Captain U Hla Maung Thein was listed as missing as of March 17, but 10 crew members survived, rescuers said.

In a statement to the public at the township hall in the wake of the sinking, Rakhine State Chief Minister U Maung Maung Ohn said an inquiry would investigate allegations that the captain had been drinking.

Of the 169 people the authorities say were rescued, most have gone home, and 33 were accommodated temporarily at the Basic Education Middle School 4 Kyaukpyu, while

'The crew asked the passengers to help bail out the water, but it just kept pouring in.'

U Tin Win
Ferry-sinking survivor

some of the injured are in the local hospital.

It has emerged that the ferry left Kyaukpyu port bound for the state capital, Sittwe, at about 4:30pm. Flooding began at about 7pm as it entered the waters between Naung Daw Gyi and Naung Daw Lay islands, which are notorious for treacherous currents. Attempts to stem the flooding failed, and the vessel sank at 8:15pm.

Preliminary reports estimated the death toll at 34, out of 214 passengers and crew officially listed. But ferries in these waters are known to be chronically overcrowded, as passengers pay only K2500 per ticket, instead of the K15,000 charged by private ferry companies. The *Aung Takon* line was owned by the government.

Survivor U Tin Win, of Toungup township in southern Rakhine State, told *The Myanmar Times* that the waves were just 60 centimetres (2

feet) high when the flooding started, just after the vessel had passed Naung Daw Gyi island.

"The crew asked the passengers to help bail out the water, but it just kept pouring in. Crew members were trying to lighten the load by throwing 80-pound [36.3-kilogram] bags of lime overboard. It was no good," he said. "When I went looking for my little daughter, the ferry tilted to the left. Within 10 seconds, it went down."

The government said the ferry was authorised to carry 120 tonnes of goods and 176 people. Survivors have told reporters there were about 400 passengers on board. Survivors have said they witnessed excessive loading on board, including bags of lime and other goods stacked on deck, as the ferry left port.

U Maung Maung Ohn said that the ferry sank because it was overloaded. Meteorologist U Tun Lwin has questioned a government statement issued on March 14 that the ferry sank due to bad weather, dismissing this claim as impossible.

The Rakhine Chief Minister said the regional government would take responsibility for the care of children who had lost their parents, and had also assumed responsibility for helping survivors now staying in Kyaukpyu to return to their families and jobs. The regional government has also paid K1.2 million to the families of the deceased and K500,000 to each survivor.

- Translation by Thiri Min Htun

Judge closes courts for labour activist hearings

KYAW PHONE KYAW
k.phonekyaw@gmail.com

JOURNALISTS and colleagues of labour activist Ko Thu Zaw Kyi Win were yesterday barred from sitting in on his first court appearance since being arrested for incitement on March 4.

Ko Thu Zaw Kyi Win was detained in Shwe Pyi Thar township following a crackdown on protesting garment workers on March 4. He is facing a charge under section 505(b) of the Penal Code, which carries a potential two-year jail term.

The court's legal officer has submitted a request to the regional court to shift the case to Yankin or South Okkalapa townships for security reasons.

The judge at Shwe Pyi Thar is yet to

make a decision on the request, which is opposed by the defendant because it would make it hard for his family to attend court.

The decision to close the court at yesterday's hearing was condemned by Ko Thu Zaw Kyi Win's lawyer, Ko Nay Lin Aung.

"You can see the situation. There is no violence. The judges talked a lot about open courts but even [people involved in other scheduled] cases at the court are not allowed in, and also the media. This situation is bad," he said.

Ko Thu Zaw Kyi Win appealed personally to the judge to open the court, saying that he would accept responsibility for security if police were unable to.

"I will tell my friends not to cause any disturbance," he said, according to

Ko Nay Lin Aung, adding that the judge did not reply.

The authorities also closed Shwe Pyi Thar Township Court for other hearings involving labour activists. In one case in early March, police officers initially barred the relatives of a defendant, Ko Naing Htay Hlwin, from entering. Only after a vigorous argument were they granted permission to sit in on the hearing, but media and the defendant's colleagues were denied access.

During the hearing, Ko Thu Zaw Kyi Win also complained that the prison authorities had not allowed him to submit a request to the regional court to keep the case at Shwe Pyi Thar.

The judge said it was a decision for the prison authorities and not his responsibility.

Ko Thu Zaw Kyi Win and three other activists have threatened to launch a hunger strike if the case is transferred.

Ko Thu Zaw Kyi Win appeared in court a day after another activist, Ko Naing Htay Lwin. Today Ko Myo Min Min will appear, followed by Ko Naing Zaw Kyi Win. All face charges under section 505(b).

Workers arrested for allegedly staging an illegal protest will appear in Shwe Pyi Thar Township Court on March 23 and Insein Township Court on March 26.

If convicted they face a one-year prison term under section 18 of the peaceful protest law. In Insein township they have also been accused of rioting, which carries a potential prison term of two years.

IN BRIEF

Govt withdraws media bill

Citing "the current media situation", the government is moving to suspend consideration of a media bill drawn up in collaboration with UNESCO. The Pyithu Hluttaw yesterday agreed not to proceed with planned debate on the Public Service Media Bill.

A revised bill will now be drafted to take into account amendments arising from public comments, and to bring the text into line with the Television and Broadcasting Law, Minister for Information U Ye Htut told the media.

Private media publications have been vocal in their opposition to the draft law, which they say will prop up loss-making state newspapers and potentially put independent publications out of business. - Htoo Thant

EXCLUSIVE

SKorea urged govt to end labour protests



LAIGNEE BARRON **KYAW PHONE KYAW**

WHEN Yangon labourers from five foreign-owned factories reeled out the picket lines and demanded a meagre pay boost at the end of January, their calls were initially dismissed. Two weeks later, however, the government shifted into overdrive to quell the demonstrations at the behest of the South Korean embassy, *The Myanmar Times* has learned.

After attempts at negotiations stalled on February 17 due to factory owners rejecting demands for a K1000-a-day (US\$1) pay rise, the government deployed police units wielding batons to disperse thousands of mostly young, impoverished female workers who had massed in the streets. Dozens of protesters were bloodied and injured in the clashes, with some requiring hospitalisation after they claim police stamped over them. By the workers' count, at least 30 went missing, and two union leaders and an activist were jailed.

The crackdown policy appears to have largely been driven by the South Korean ambassador's backdoor campaign to protect his country's business interests.

South Korea and Myanmar have long enjoyed mutually beneficial relations. As of 2013, trade between the two countries stood at more than \$1.5 billion, and South Korean investment is vital to Myanmar's booming garment sector. According to industry sources, 20 percent of Myanmar's garment factories are officially South Korean-owned, with another 20pc likely run by South Koreans through locally registered companies.

The wage strike hit two South Korean garment factories - E-Land Myanmar and Costec International - as well as three other Chinese-owned factories.

The South Korean embassy told *The Myanmar Times* it requested intervention to protect its factories from financial losses and to ensure the safety of South Korean management. The embassy would not comment on whether the violent crackdowns were what it had in mind when requesting action.

"I know that the lawful right of workers should be respected. However, those striking workers occupied the entrance of the factory and prevented the moving in and out of people and products, which is a serious illegal action causing serious financial loss," the embassy's commercial attaché, Wongyoung Choi, told *The Myanmar Times* in an email. "The strikers even detained [the South] Korean managing director of Costec on ... February 3 for almost 12 hours."

Workers from Costec have denied taking hostages.

"On February 3, a foreign woman, maybe Korean ... went into the factory with about 20 workers around 8am. She didn't come out of the factory until around 8pm. We did not force her for to stay in the factory," said Ma Thein Moe Lwin, a worker from Costec.

"If the embassy says we arrested their citizen, it is a lie or misunderstanding."

But on the premise that South Korean citizens were at risk, the country's ambassador travelled to Nay Pyi Taw on February 4. In a meeting with Minister for Labour U Aye Myint the ambassador requested steps be taken to "prevent the illegal action of the striking workers," according to Mr Wongyoung.

When contacted about the alleged detention, a Costec representative hung



Police stand guard near protesting workers on March 4. Photo: Naing Wynn Htoon

up on *The Myanmar Times*.

Officials from the ministry declined to comment on South Korea's involvement in the clampdowns but on February 23, the *Irrawaddy* quoted deputy minister U Htin Aung as saying "embassies" had been in touch with senior officials about pursuing action against workers in line with existing laws.

South Korean media also cited an anonymous official from the South Korean foreign ministry who confirmed that the embassy had intervened to end the protests.

This is not the first time South Korean diplomats have orchestrated crackdowns on striking garment workers. In January 2014, the embassy in Cambodia boasted on its Facebook page that its diplomats lobbied Phnom Penh to

'The lawful right of workers should be respect. However, those striking workers occupied the entrance of the factory.'

Wongyoung Choi
South Korean embassy

deploy an elite Cambodian military unit to shut down a protest for higher wages. Ensuing clashes led to five workers being shot dead.

South Korean-owned factories also have history of mistreatment of workers. In 1996, the South Korean manager of a shoe factory in Vietnam was convicted for lining up and beating employees with a shoe. Corporal punishment was an ingrained aspect of South Korean workplaces until the 1970s.

Myanmar's recent factory demonstrations took a darker turn and escalated further after a second meeting between the South Korean ambassador and senior parliamentary officials on February 25. Both the embassy and the parliament office rejected suggestions the protests were discussed, however. They insisted that the meeting was focused on "improving relations" and gearing up for the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties.

However, a day after the meeting, the government-run *Global New Light of Myanmar* printed a picture of the Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker U Khin Aung Myint shaking hands with Ambassador Lee Baek-soon. Directly under the photo, the paper ran an article that

praised the "good results" the government was achieving in negotiating an end to the spate of factory protests.

The government also took to state-run TV to announce that the demonstrations were hurting factory profits and chasing away foreign investors. The factory workers were warned to end their strike and accept modest pay rises offered by the foreign factories.

About half the picketers took the bait, many scared off by the police clampdown. But many hundreds more continued the strike, only to find the announcement presaged an even more violent attack.

On March 4, their protest was quashed by police and plain-clothed thugs toting read armbands emblazoned with the word "duty". More than a dozen more were arrested.

Yangon Region minister U Zaw Aye Maung, who has led efforts to negotiate with the workers, declined to comment on whether the auxiliary group was sent at the South Korean embassy's behest.

But the response from the embassy has not surprised international labour groups familiar with the country's tactics.

"[South] Korean employers are notorious for their hostility toward unions and strikes," said Eunji Kang of Korean House for International Solidarity. "There is a high suspicion that Korean embassies take any steps available (even unlawful ones) to protect the benefits and interests of Korean entrepreneurs and investors."

After the March 4 crackdown, the Myanmar government went into damage control, dredging up legal codes from the 1890s to prove the legality of mobilising the plain-clothed force.

In contrast to its long-winded defence of the Cambodia episode, this time the South Korean embassy stayed silent - at least, until it agreed to speak to *The Myanmar Times*.

"The South Korean government mistakenly thinks that it's alright to export its harsh, rights abusing tactics in dealing with labor protests to other countries, but it's not," said Phil Robertson, deputy director of Human Rights Watch's Asia division. "If the workers are attacked by police responding to the embassy's call, the rest of the international community should call out Seoul as being equally responsible for those rights violations."

But workers said it makes little difference to them who sent in the attack dogs to end their protest.

"I don't know about the politics, but I am deeply scarred from that [March 4] crackdown," said Ma Thanda Aye, a worker from the E-Land garment factory. "The pain of injuries is not important, but the image of these events replays and sometimes I see them again before sleeping."

TRADE MARK CAUTION

NOTICE is hereby given that **BIS Myanmar Limited**, a company incorporated under the laws of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, and having its principal place of business at No. 2(A), Building (2), Yangon-Insein Road, Ward 9, Hlaing Township, Yangon, is the owner and sole proprietor of each of the following trade marks:



The British International School

Reg. No. 4/1884/2015



The British International School Yangon

Reg. No. 4/1885/2015



The British College Yangon

Reg. No. 4/1886/2015



The British School Yangon

Reg. No. 4/1887/2015



THE BRITISH SCHOOLS FOUNDATION
WORLD CLASS EDUCATION

Reg. No. 4/1888/2015

all used in respect of "Class 41: Providing education, training, guidance services and facilities; Managing and operating nurseries, pre-schools; primary, secondary, post-secondary schools and colleges; Providing teacher training services; Providing vocational training, organizational improvement, guidance, consultancy and support services; Providing inspection services; Providing curriculum programme development services; Arranging and conducting education related programmes, events, activities, conferences, workshops, seminars, camps, and road-shows; Arranging and conducting music, sport, drama educational trips and programmes; Managing and operating boarding schools, bus services, recreational facilities, tuition and training centres; and Developing and disseminating educational materials".

Any fraudulent imitation, unauthorised use of the said trade marks or other infringement of the rights of **BIS Myanmar Limited** in any manner whatsoever shall be dealt with according to law.

Dated this 19th day of March, 2015.

Daw Wint Thandar Oo, Advocate

for **BIS Myanmar Limited**

c/o **Polastri Wint & Partners Legal Services Ltd.**

No. 659 (B), Mya Kan Thar (1) Street, Kamaryut Township, Yangon.

E-mail: wint@pwplegal.com

MYANMARTIMES မြန်မာ့အသံ

JOB WATCH SECTION

Call: Chan Tha Oo
09: 25400 6188, 01: 392928

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

Chief Sub Editor MTM – Aye Sapay Phyu
News & 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.myanmartimes@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 Myanmar Times Press (00876) with approval from MCM Ltd and by Shwe Myanmar (P/00302) with approval from MCM Ltd. The title The Myanmar Times, in either English or Myanmar languages, its associated logos or devices and the contents of this publication may not be reproduced in whole or in part without the written consent of the Managing Director of Myanmar Consolidated Media Ltd.



Myanmar Consolidated Media Ltd.
www.mmtimes.com

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

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

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

IN DEPTH

Religious defamation law takes on new role

Once used to jail dissidents, 295(a) now being employed to appease nationalist groups



WA LONE

GUY DINMORE

CIVIL society activists and lawyers are concerned that a religious defamation law that once served as a tool of the military junta to jail its opponents is now being used selectively by the authorities to placate powerful Buddhist nationalists ahead of this year's elections.

New Zealander Phillip Blackwood and his Myanmar business partners, U Tun Thurein and Ko Htut Ko Ko Lwin, drew the ire of the Patriotic Buddhist Monks Union for a psychedelic image of the Buddha wearing headphones that was posted on Facebook to promote a drinks night at their since-closed VGastro bar.

They were sentenced by a Yangon court on March 17 to two-and-a-half years in prison with hard labour under section 295(a) of the Penal Code. They pleaded not guilty and intend to appeal.

On the same day, Chaung-Oo Township Court in Sagaing Region upheld charges under 295(a) against U Htin Lin Oo, an author and former information officer of the National League for Democracy, whose criticism of Buddhist extremists in a speech last October had angered the Committee for the Protection of Nationality and Religion, known in Myanmar as the Ma Ba Tha. His application for bail was denied and he remains in prison awaiting trial.

In both cases, monks from such groups have attended the trials.

Section 295(a) of the penal code prohibits "deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs".

That section and 295 – defiling a place of worship – was commonly used by the then military junta to jail political opponents, particularly monks and nuns involved in the 2007 "saffron" uprising.

U Kyi Myint, a High Court lawyer, said the military government used that law – introduced under British colonial rule – against its opponents, and that it remained open to abuse. He noted that it was not applied in cases where pro-government entities have made attacks on religion.

"Section 295 has been made by the British to be used in good way, but now the authorities use it in the wrong way as a weapon of punishment ... to maintain political power," he said.

Sai Nyunt Lwin, secretary of the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy, said judges had been under pres-



Controversial Buddhist monk U Wirathu talks during a protest against UN special rapporteur on human rights Yanghee Lee in Yangon on January 16. Photo: AFP

sure and were influenced by someone trying to damage the supposed independence of the judiciary. "Perhaps the government might use this law to gain political profit, but I think it's not a good prospect for the future to influence the judges," he said.

Nay Phone Latt, a blogger, commented that no one was safe because the authorities could use the law as they wanted. There was still no clear law on use of the internet, he noted.

Rights activists see the court cases – and the passage through parliament of four controversial religion and race laws drafted by Ma Ba Tha – as the government's weak response to the growing strength of hardline Buddhist nationalists whose hate rhetoric is often directed at the country's Muslim population.

As an example of the rise of religious intolerance, Yanghee Lee, UN

special human rights envoy to Myanmar, told UN delegates in Geneva on March 16 of the latest attack on her by the monk U Wirathu, a founding Ma Ba Tha member who had previously called her a "whore" for her reporting on Rakhine state's Rohingya Muslims.

"The beastly woman has done it again. It looks like she hasn't learnt a lesson," she quoted him as saying. "This time I will not say it verbally. I will say it with my slipper ... Oh dear patriots, let us find ways and means to teach the beastly woman a lesson."

Matthew Smith, director of Fortify Rights, an NGO, commented, "This is an election year and religion is already being used for political purposes. It's become a race to the bottom to determine who is a stronger defender of conservative Buddhism."

IN BRIEF

Ceasefire negotiations focus on military issues

Peace negotiators say they expect to finalise discussions on military-related issues in a draft nationwide ceasefire today. Talks between the Union Peacemaking Work Committee (UPWC) and the Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT), which is negotiating on behalf of 16 armed groups, started on March 17.

On the first day talks focused on ways to de-escalate conflict, and negotiators covered seven chapters.

The second day focused on sections considered most integral to the accord – those relating to military affairs, including codes of conduct and the establishment of a joint monitoring committee.

"We have reached agreement on almost all points," NCCT member Khun Okkar said at the conclusion of yesterday's meeting. "We are going to discuss [three] points tomorrow. We hope we will conclude [the military-related sections] at tomorrow's meeting."

He declined to say what agreements had already been reached.

Talks are expected to continue until March 22. Negotiators said yesterday they expect to conclude the draft nationwide ceasefire on the final day.

"The first two days of discussions passed smoothly and we didn't face any difficulties," said senior Myanmar Peace Center official U Hla Maung Shwe.

– Ei Ei Toe Lwin



Mt Popa fire weakens

A fire that has been raging on the flanks of Mount Popa is weakening, observers say. Local authorities and volunteer members of the Popa Lovers' Association, based in Kyaukpadaung township, Mandalay Region, cut firebreaks to stem the blaze, which has been raging for five days.

The fire, said to have been caused by negligence, has caused great damage to local forests.

It is the first major outbreak in 40 years.

Mount Popa is a volcano, 1518 metres high, and can be seen as far as 60 kilometres away, beside the Ayeyarwady River.

Neighbouring Taungkalat, a 737m volcanic plug, is a famous centre for the worship of animist nat spirits. – Khin Su Wai

Journalists jailed for defaming military MP

YE MON

yeemontun2013@gmail.com

TWO staff from *The Myanmar Post* were sentenced to two months' prison with hard labour by Mawlamyine Township Court yesterday for defaming a military MP.

Major Thein Zaw, a representative of the Mon State Hluttaw, asked police to charge chief editor U Than Htike Thu and deputy chief reporter U Sann Moe Tun under section 500 of the Penal Code for a story the journal published last year, titled "Military

representatives have to take part in the workshop due to the country's low education".

The MP alleged that things were attributed to him in the article that he did not say.

Editor-in-charge Ko Zin Thaw Naing said the decision was unfair and the journal planned to appeal to the Union Supreme Court.

"We wouldn't have quoted him if he didn't say it. We wrote exactly what he said at the workshop. He should have contacted us if the story was wrong and we would have writ-

'We wouldn't have quoted him if he didn't say it. We wrote exactly what he said at the workshop.'

Ko Zin Thaw Naing
The Myanmar Post

ten a correction, but he never did that," Ko Zin Thaw Naing said.

The defendants' lawyer, U Tun Aung, also questioned the fairness of the verdict. He said judges tended to find in favour of military complainants.

U Thiha Saw, a member of the Myanmar Press Council (Interim), said the council could not mediate in the dispute because the military representative went straight to the police with his complaint.

"If they had presented it to the press council first, the case would not have reached the court," he said.

White armband campaign gears up to go national

YE MON
yeemontun2013@gmail.com

A CAMPAIGN to distribute white armbands in support of students arrested in the Letpadan police crackdown is gearing up to go national today, despite opposition from authorities.

Ko Nyi Moe Swe of the Poetry Lovers' Association, which is active in the campaign, said yesterday they would distribute more than 15,000 armbands in 20 townships.

The armbands bear the words "We are students. Respect our rights". About 5000 were distributed in Yangon by student supporters and activists on March 13 and 15 to focus public disapproval of the March 10 crackdown in Letpadan, which resulted in more than 120 people being arrested, and many beaten, while protesting against the National Education Law. The armband campaign then paused for three days during school matriculation exams.

"We launched the white campaign to counter the red armbands and red collars which were



Activists distribute armbands in Yangon on March 13. Photo: Naing Wynn Htoon

worn by Swan Ar Shin and the riot police who beat and arrested the student protesters in Yangon and Letpadan," said Maung Saung Kha, leader of the Poetry Lovers' Association.

Vigilantes used by the authorities to break up peaceful demonstrations in Yangon and elsewhere wore civilian clothes and red armbands emblazoned with the word "duty".

The national campaign will see white armbands circulated in Letpadan, Yangon, Mandalay, Pyay, Magwe, Pakokku, Patheingyi and 13 other townships.

The armbands have been spotted in parks, markets, tea shops and on public transport in Yangon city. A Facebook campaign has attracted international support as well, with the "We support Myanmar Students" page drawing more than 23,000 "likes".

Ko Nyi Moe Swe said administrators in some townships in Yangon had warned them not to gather as a crowd.

"We've been warned along the Inya [Lake] embankment. The authorities said we don't have permission and that we should request it from the police station. But we told them this is just a campaign, not a protest, so we don't need the permission. Then they allowed us to continue the campaign," he said.

Several dozen of those arrested in Letpadan have since been released without charge, but those still in custody could face several years in prison.

NNER meets hluttaw over education law changes

THE National Network for Education Reform called on parliament on March 17 to consider amending the controversial National Education Law. The NNER wants the Amyotha Hluttaw Bill Committee to take up an amendment bill that it says is based on the people's will.

The NNER version of the changes was agreed on by the government, MPs and student organisations at a meeting in Yangon in February, said leader U Thein Lwin. "We want a quality education system under democratic management," he said.

He added that student unions, active and retired teachers, students, parents, and people from different regions and states discussed the education law in October, 2012. At an education conference in 2013, 20 representatives from different regions attended.

"The draft reflects all the input we received. It reflects social justice and human dignity, and the need for equal rights," he said. "The Ministry of Education should also support the introduction of a better education system than we have now." - *Pyae Thet Phyto, translation by Thiri Min Htun*

Restaurant association to work with Unilever

INTERNATIONAL food company Unilever has teamed up with Myanmar Restaurant Association to bring clean and healthy food to the streets of Yangon. MRA yesterday announced it would sign an agreement with Unilever Food Solution Company of Thailand on March 30 to establish international health standards in the city's roadside food stalls.

MRA secretary general U Kyaw Myat Moe said Unilever would train stallholders in the importance of cleanliness in the storage and preparation of food. "They will check up on the stallholders to see if they prepare food the way they've been trained to," he added.

MRA selected 18 roadside sellers from six downtown townships last September in preparation for this exercise.

'They will check up on stallholders to see if they prepare food the way they've been trained to.'

U Kyaw Myat Moe
Myanmar Restaurants Association

"We'll try to help them reduce waste and improve the quality of their food so that their earnings increase," he said. The selected stallholders have undergone medical examinations.

"Students, office workers and passers-by rely on these stalls for good food when they get hungry. They will be reassured to see them putting on safety gloves to make salad, and ensuring that the water they use is fresh," said U Kyaw Myat Moe.

The stallholders will also be trained in looking after food in different weather conditions. - *Ei Ei Thu*

MPT
မြန်မာ့သတင်းစာနှင့် ဆက်သွယ်ရေး ဝန်ဆောင်ခ

ဆွေသဟာအစီအစဉ်
ပရိုမိုးရှင်းအစီအစဉ်

အလျင်မြန်ဆုံးအင်တာနက်ကို
အသင့်တင့်ဆုံးဈေးနှုန်းဖြင့် ရယူလိုက်ပါ။

အင်တာနက်သုံးစွဲခ
၅၀%
အထူးလျော့စျေး

၁၀၀၀ လျှင် ၁၀၀၀
၁၀၀၀ လျှင် ၅၀၀၀
၇ကျပ် ၅၀ပြား

ပုဂ္ဂိုလ်ရေး အသုံးပြုရန် အထူးလျော့စျေးနှုန်းများကို ရယူနိုင်ရန် MPT ၏ ဆွေသဟာအစီအစဉ်ကို ယခုပင် ဝင်ရောက်လိုက်ကြရအောင်!

ဆွေသဟာအစီအစဉ်ရယူရန်

Prepaid သုံးစွဲသူများအတွက် **SWE** ဟုခေါ်တွင် **၁၃၃၂** သို့ SMS အခမဲ့ဖုန်းနံပါတ်

Postpaid သုံးစွဲသူများအတွက် **POSTSWE** ဟုခေါ်တွင် **၁၃၃၂** သို့ SMS အခမဲ့ဖုန်းနံပါတ်

- ဆွေသဟာဝန်ဆောင်မှုကို ရယူခြင်းမှာ အခမဲ့ဖြစ်ပါသည်။
- GSM နှင့် WCDMA အသုံးပြုသူများအတွက် ဖြစ်ပါသည်။
- အင်တာနက် 1MB လျှင် ၇ကျပ် ၅၀ပြား အထူးလျော့စျေးနှုန်းကာလသည် မတ်လ(၃၀)ရက်နေ့အထိ ဖြစ်ပါသည်။

CALL CENTER 103
မေးမြန်းမှုနှင့် သတိပေးချက်များအား အခမဲ့ဝက်ဆိုက်သို့ ခေါ်ဆိုပါ။
ဖုန်း (၂၅) နံပါတ် အခမဲ့ ခေါ်ဆိုနိုင်ပါသည်။
http://www.mpt.com.mm
http://facebook.com/mptofficialpage

Govt go-slow on minimum wage panned

NYAN LYNN AUNG



29.nyanlynnaung@gmail.com

A UNION leader has urged the government to speed up its consideration of the minimum wage, warning that delay could bring more industrial unrest. U Aung Lin, chair of the Myanmar Trade Unions Federation, said yesterday that the government should try to finalise the matter by April, four months earlier than planned.

His call has received significant support, with U Maung Maung Win, a lawyer and member of the government's labour Arbitration Council,

KYAT

10,000

Amount a family of four needs to cover daily expenses in Yangon Region, according to cost-of-living survey

describing wages as the "fundamental cause" of recent protests and strikes in industrial zones.

"The government should start setting the minimum wages, instead of collecting surveys all the time. It's just delaying the process," he said.

U Ye Naing Win, a member of the Cooperative Committee for Trade Unions, said setting the minimum wage would be beneficial for both employers and workers.

"For employers, it will reduce labour disputes and they will know exactly what their labour costs will be, rather than costs increasing whenever there is a protest," he said.

On March 13, deputy labour minister Daw Win Maw Tun announced that the minimum wage would be introduced in August, following the completion at the end of February of a cost-of-living survey conducted in most areas of the country.

Initially, however, the wage would be applicable only in Yangon Region, and extended to other states

and regions later. A 60-day transition period would be allowed after the announcement of the minimum wage for any objections.

The deputy minister declined to say how much the minimum wage would be, noting only that early results from the cost of living survey - which began in late January in Yangon and Bago regions - indicated that the cost of living for a family of four in Yangon Region exceeded K10,000 a day.

"We will consult the parties involved, including the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry [UMFCCI] and labour organisations," she said.

Daw Tin Mar Htway, a director of the ministry's Minimum Wages Survey Department, said there have been delays in collecting cost-of-living data in some parts of the country, including conflict-affected areas and those with poor transport and communication infrastructure, such as Chin State and Tanintharyi Region.

The debate over the minimum wage follows a wave of protests over low pay that stopped work at a number of garment factories in Shwe Pyi Thar township, Yangon Region, before the last of the demonstrators were set upon by civilian thugs on March 4.

The Ministry of Labour and the Myanmar Garment Manufacturers' Association have both cautioned in recent weeks that the unrest is scaring off foreign investment.

MGMA chair U Myint Soe said employers would pay higher salaries if workers were better trained and the government relaxed rules and regulations that hamper expansion.

"We need better market access, more productivity, and relaxing of some government rules and regulation," he said. "If that happens, we could pay more regardless of whether there is a minimum wage."

U Aung Lin from the MTUF said high real estate, poor electricity supply and double taxation were holding back investment in manufacturing more than wage disputes.

"Employers spend much more on those parts of their business than salaries. But when they lose money, they try to shrink labour costs," he said.

He said the government could expect more strikes the longer it delays introducing the minimum wage. "Unless the minimum wage is fixed soon, disputes will keep arising."

Department plans thousands of wells for dry zone, coastal areas

CHERRY THEIN

t.cherry6@gmail.com

THE government will dig more than 3500 wells in dry regions and states over the next year. The Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries and Rural Development has launched a long-term water-supply project in the dry zone, delta and coastal regions, where access to clean and safe water is limited.

Last fiscal year they provided 3559 wells, and will dig 3552 more in priority areas, including Ayeyarwady Region, starting in April. Priority zones will designated depending on whether they include shallow lakes, hand-scooped waterholes, and spring- and rain-watered tank supplies.

Department of Rural Development

assistant director U Win Min Oo told *The Myanmar Times* that more than 20,000 villages still lack access to water.

"We have been implementing this

20,000

Villages, of a total of 64,000, that lack access to water, according to the Department of Rural Development

project since 2011, but more still has to be done at a nationwide level," he said, adding that climate change and

population increases had pushed up demand in some places.

The project provided 1611 wells in 2011-12, 1571 in 2012-13 and 2028 in 2013-14.

More than 30,000 out of 64,000 villages had access to water in 2014, the ministry's annual report said.

In a project coordinated with the health ministry and a Japanese university team, lead and arsenic levels in the water in Ayeyarwady Region's Thapaung township are also being tested.

The project also provided tube-wells in delta and coastal areas where groundwater was tainted with seawater.

"Thapaung is a pilot project and we plan to expand it to other townships based on the results," said U Win Min Oo.



IN PICTURES

PHOTO: THIRI LU

Workers weld a section of the Yangon mayor's Thingyan pandal in front of City Hall on March 17. Thingyan's water-throwing festivities kick off on April 13 and wind down on the evening of April 16, a day before Myanmar New Year's Day.

FALAM, CHIN STATE

Chin party launches campaign to win youth, women vote

BILL O'TOOLE

botoole12@gmail.com

WITH the exact date of the November election yet to be announced, the Chin Progressive Party this week launched the first stage of its campaign with a series of town hall meetings across the state aimed at enticing both voters and potential CCP candidates.

The party, which won 12 seats in the state and national parliaments in the 2010 election, is in the earliest stages of planning for the November poll, and has yet to settle on how many seats they will contest.

Speaking to *The Myanmar Times* after a meeting in Falam on March 17, chair Salai No Than Kap said the CCP's

first priority is expanding membership beyond the older Chin men who dominate the party.

"There are many more women voters than men. Their role is very important in winning votes," he said. "We are not that strong in the younger generation, so we are organising young people."

Salai No Than Kap shared the stage in Falam with local rights activist Ma Cherry Za Hau, who will be running on the CCP ticket this November.

"I chose to join because the leadership is very open to gender equality," she said after the meeting. "Usually Chin women let their husbands vote for them. Today I'm trying to convince women to come to the polling station by themselves."

Salai No Than Kap stressed the freedom the CCP offers its members relative to other political parties. "National League for Democracy or Union Solidarity and Development Party MPs have to get their party's consent before asking a question in parliament. But in the CCP there are no restrictions. My members of parliament never consult me before they put forward [bills]," he said, adding that this was not a problem "as long as they are doing good things for the country."

While many groups both locally and internationally are already raising concerns about the possibility of fraud and corruption during the election, both Ma Cherry Za Hau and Salai No Than Kap said they were confident the count

'Usually Chin women let their husbands vote for them. Today I'm trying to convince women to come to the polling station by themselves.'

Ma Cherry Za Hau
Chin Progressive Party candidate

would be free and fair.

"Times have changed. The international community is watching," he said, adding that the CCP would also be training its members as election observers.

Asked about the party platform, Ma Cherry Za Hau said they would emphasise using political power to bring better infrastructure to their home state, which ranks as the poorest in the nation.

"Chin people always think that any services provided by the government are a donation or a mercy, but I emphasise that these are our human rights," she said. "Education, health, electricity, water supply; everything is about human rights."

Views

Malaysia leads the way, again, in making a mockery of rule of law

It may seem unlikely in light of recent events, but Malaysia was once a beacon of hope in a region not known for fair administration of justice

THE problem with this region, as the former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans restated this month, is a growing disrespect for the rule of law.

Nations that neglect to foster a reputation for integrity and decency, said Evans, endanger their own interests and jeopardise trade, tourism, foreign investment, national security and political support.

More specifically, those like Cambodia, Myanmar, Singapore and Vietnam that sentence people to jail for self-serving political reasons or on frivolous religious grounds deserve all the contempt they get.

In his article titled "Trashing the ASEAN Brand", Evans took a justified and long overdue swipe at such governments and gave prominent attention to two of the worst cases: Malaysia and Thailand.

It is not hard to see why, given that the duo - both founding members of ASEAN - has in the past made attempts to establish strong democratic credentials and adhere to a semblance of the rule of law.

Indeed, until recently, they were regarded by many as potential beacons of hope in a region not known for integrity and decency in the administration of justice.

Those beacons have now dimmed and the hope has fizzled out like a damp squib, as political survival, personal enrichment and self-aggrandisement have taken precedence over the public will.

Arguably, the worst case is Thailand, where a shameful scenario continues to unfold and where the most sickening aspect is the lack of public outrage.

Evans, whose capacity to fulminate has few parallels, trenchantly noted that the impeachment of former Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra "on trumped-up charges" has made political reconciliation impossible.

Sadly, he is almost certainly correct. There is simply no way to put lipstick on this pig and the future



ROGER MITTON
rogermitton@gmail.com

for Thailand remains ominous and scary.

That said, an even more depressing scenario is playing out in Malaysia, which Evans tackles first in his bleak appraisal of the way the region's ruling elites have twisted the rule of law to their own advantage.

As this column noted a month ago, the long-ruling National Front coalition, led by Prime Minister Najib Razak, has been steadily sinking into a treacherous pit of venality and incompetence.

Some have argued that the criticism was excessive, including that made by Evans and that carried in the *New York Times*, which exposed the huge financial losses of a wealth fund set up by Najib's stepson, Riza Aziz.

However, it is now apparent that the barbs did not go far enough. Under Najib's corrupt and hapless leadership matters have gone from bad to worse and the rule of law has been shamelessly flouted.

Consider how the PM, fearing growing disquiet in the Malay heartland states, acquiesced to - indeed, some would say tacitly encouraged - racist taunts and actions by his more extreme UMNO colleagues.

A classic example occurred earlier this month when one of his ministers urged the majority Malay community to boycott shops and businesses run by Malaysia's Chinese minority.

Cloaked in the perverse logic that it would force Chinese traders to reduce their prices and so make life easier for the Malays, this racial



Nurul Izzah, daughter of Malaysian opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim, gives a thumbs up after being released on bail in Kuala Lumpur on March 17. Photo: AFP

freakonomics drew not a whimper of protest from Najib.

His craven behaviour appeared to derive from a belief that since the Chinese and Indian voters had largely deserted him in the last election, he might as well ignore them and pander to the Malay ground.

Under Najib's corrupt and hapless leadership matters have gone from bad to worse and the rule of law has been shamelessly flouted.

In this regard, he has even deferred to Islamic chauvinists and agreed to allow UMNO to consider demands for Sharia to be introduced and to be applied to non-Muslims as well as Muslims.

As for the attacks on his unexplained wealth and his shopaholic wife's insatiable desire for expensive jewellery and handbags, the PM's office issued a statement saying that Najib had "legacy family assets".

That sparked an astonishing and very public rebuttal from the PM's four brothers, who said their father was "a highly principled man, well-known to all who knew him for his frugality".

In other words, he was the complete opposite of Najib and could not have left much money to his children, so it was a lie to suggest that the PM had inherited all his dough from his father.

In an attempt to recoup ground, Najib called the 190 UMNO constituency heads from across the country to come to an extraordinary meeting in Kuala Lumpur on March 8 to pledge loyalty to his leadership.

Unfortunately for him, 31 refused.

So too did the party's No 2, Deputy PM Muhyiddin Yassin, who is from Johor state, and Mukhriz Mahathir, the chief minister of Kedah state and a son of former PM Mahathir Mohamad, who has called on Najib to resign.

Johor and Kedah are UMNO bastions and if they have turned against the PM he is on very dangerous ground.

Desperate to save his skin, Najib then orchestrated another debasement of the rule of law and had Nurul Izzah Anwar, a daughter of the jailed opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim, arrested for sedition.

In his censorious article, Evans had called the jailing of Anwar "a shocking and indefensible decision", and asserted that Anwar's real crime was to have almost defeated Najib in the previous election.

Last week's arrest of Nurul Izzah, ostensibly because - as an opposition MP - she had raised questions in parliament about the grounds for her father's conviction, is even more shocking and indefensible.

After all, sedition is defined in law as carrying out actions that are deemed to have the potential to spark violent insurrection against the established order.

Is that what young Ms Nurul's words in parliament are deemed to have done? Brought Malaysia to the brink of revolution?

It is preposterous and deeply offensive, and the fact that she has now been released on bail does not make things much better.

As Evans rightly intimates, if anyone has reduced Malaysia to the level where an outraged citizenry might rise up against the sordid twisting of the rule of law it is Najib and his discredited regime.



DFM ROAD SHOW

28/29 MARCH, 2015
(TAW WIN CENTER)

ကားများကို သုံးစွဲနိုင်ရန် အတွက်
DFM (PASSENGER CAR) နှင့် DFSK (MINI COMMERCIAL CAR) များ
အရောင်းပြင်ဆင်ပြီး လာရောက်ဝင်ရောက်နိုင်ပါကြောင်း စိတ်ချစရာအတိုင်း ဖြစ်ပါသည်။



WARRANTY
24 HOURS
2 YEARS OR 100,000 KM



CONTACT PHONE
01 230 4801, 01 230 4802

SHOWROOM & SERVICE CENTRE
No (19) Baho Road, Aung Chan Thar Quarter, Sanchaung Township, Yangon.
www.dongfeng-myanmar.com | www.facebook.com/dongfeng.myanmar

Business

A tale of two New Cities as satellite towns grow on outskirts



TIN
YADANAR
HTUN

yadanar.mcm@gmail.com

SATELLITE towns are popping up in Yangon's outskirts, as the city's population grows and residents look for space to expand.

Padamyar and Pearl New Cities are both located in the north of the city's Mingalardon township. While they have existed for years, largely as a space for various government departments, they have recently caught on as places to call home.

"It's become a densely populated place since late 2012," said local real estate agent U Kyaw Aung. "People are becoming interested in the New Towns."

The two New Cities were slowly begun about 1970, though initially only as permit land that was rented by tenants. They predate similar satellite towns in the new Dagon townships to the east, and now count as two of Mingalardon township's 31 wards. The township itself is one of Yangon's largest by area, including the Yangon airport, several industrial parks and golf courses.

Interest in the area had previously been minimal, with many kept away by poor utilities. With local improvements to electricity, water and transportation beginning in earnest around 2012, downtown residents have been relocating further uptown.

Of the two, Padamyar is more densely populated than Pearl, although both of them are growing, say local residents. Padamyar is smaller and most lots are tiny, starting at around 1800 square feet. Pearl has larger plots, up to 10,000 square feet, and much of it is composed of large housing compounds and farms.

The two New Cities - called myothit in Myanmar language - are also attracting notably different clientele. Pearl sees plenty of retired officials and businesspeople keen for the large land plots, while Padamyar has more of a blue-collar feel.



Construction is under way at the entrance to Pearl New City.
Photo: Zarni Phyo

Much of Yangon's growing industrial might is springing up in Mingalardon township. With dozens of factories opening nearby, workers are keen to move in to the satellite cities, rather than living in downtown homes.

Pearl New Town resident U Zaw Zaw said there are lots of industry at the edge of the township.

"The government paved the main road in Mingalardon in 2012, and now people are interested in moving here," he said.

Property agent U Yan Aung said the two New Cities have become particularly prosperous since late 2012, though there are a number of similar satellite cities that were attempted.

"Many people have moved to these two towns, and their price is now quite high," he said.

Although land prices vary significantly, U Yan Aung said 18,000

square feet on the main road in Pearl myothit can fetch as much as K750 million (US\$720,000), while more isolated properties in the area can cost a minimum of K80 million.

Granted land is now sometimes available at the two New Cities, which is a notable attraction for those who would like to own their hand. Combined with vastly improved infrastructure and cheaper prices compared to downtown, it is drawing growing interest - though the long commute downtown throws off many.

With the success of the area has come speculation, according to local agent U Than Win.

There are many manipulators interested in the land, setting up frequent appointments, he said. Business has dropped off somewhat in line with a general slowdown of the Yangon market.

The price spike in the area started in 2012, with some prices changing on a daily basis. Transportation is the key to the area - land away from the main roads is much less sought-after than property located on important land links.

Local residents say the pace of change in the formerly sleepy neighbourhoods has been dizzying.

Daw Khin May, resident of Pearl myothit, first moved in forty years ago.

"At the time it was at the start of the new town and there were only a few houses in Pearl," she said. "When I started building the house, I was given a house number, and it was number 2, the second house in the area."

Initially serving large government officials in various capacities, only recently has the area become a hotspot for civilians as well.

Daw Khin May said she pays fees for her house, land and water use every three months. Prices vary

but it is always under K2000, she claimed.

The land her home sits on is owned by the government, similar to many of her neighbours who likewise do not own the land. She said usually only the area's main properties are grant land which can be owned outright.

"Only houses on the main roads seem to have granted land," she said.

"With fees so low, many residents are not interested in taking grant land."

The area also has an agricultural twist to it. While farmland is increasingly being crowded out in the area, many local residents still grow produce.

"If we throw out a mango seed, it can turn into a plant, because the soil is so good," said local resident U Soe Wai.

Electricity has finally been extended across most of Mingalardon township, reaching the two New Cities a few years ago. Since 2010, roads are gradually been extended and paved over. Most of the area's water still comes from tube wells, with much being scooped by hand.

The boomtown feel of the area extends to the lack of health clinics and schools, with many local residents forced to travel far to find them - though this is slowly improving.

All the infrastructure improvements are not making the area any closer to downtown, though. At rush hour it can be a two-hour drive to Sule Pagoda, too far for most commuters to the area. For those with workplaces uptown, though, the commute is much more manageable.

Ma Thu Thu Aung, a university student and resident of Padamyar, said while getting downtown is a pain, travelling around the area is simple. Motorcycles are permitted



in the area, providing an economic mode of transportation, with no need for many taxis or buses that provide the vital links in the downtown townships.

She listed a number of other advantages behind the area - cheaper food, growing number of stores, KBZ bank branches arriving, and a more pleasant all-around lifestyle.

With Yangon's population continuing to expand, it is likely the satellite areas will simply expand in the future. Still, infrastructure and transportation links in particular still lag the more developed parts of Yangon.



A sign marks Padamyar New City in Mingalardon township.
Photo: Zarni Phyo

Shuttered government fertilizer factory looks for investors

BUSINESS 10



People turn out to protest Sri Lanka's central bank head

BUSINESS 11

Exchange Rates (March 18 close)		
Currency	Buying	Selling
Euro	K1089	K1107
Malaysia Ringitt	K307	K308
Singapore Dollar	K765	K769
Thai Baht	K31	K32
US Dollar	K1070	K1074

Bank bottom line hit by inflation

AYE THIDAR KYAW
ayethidarkyaw@gmail.com

BANKS are facing a profits squeeze as the gap between deposits and lending narrows, while rising inflation prompts some customers to take out their cash and spend it.

The offer of competitive savings rates to attract more cash deposits is cutting into profits as well.

Although the government-imposed floor is 8 percent, many banks have begun offering higher rates to attract deposits, with some term deposits around 10pc. Meanwhile, interest rates on loans are capped at 13pc.

"To maintain profit levels, banks have to adjust interest rates for lenders, but the Central Bank has already set the high and it's unlikely change any time soon," said Kanbawza Bank vice president U Than Lwin. "But if the Central Bank allows us, there are ways of making more money," he said.

Banks are offering about 15 products, about one-third the number typically offered by international banks, he said. These include issuing recommendation letters for foreign residents, funds clearance or arranging notary public services.

Asia Green Development Bank executive director U Soe Thein said

the government had tried to borrow money from the public to relieve the budget deficit, but the banks had insufficient cash.

Interest rates in Myanmar, designed to protect against inflation or to buttress a weak currency, are the highest in ASEAN.

Raising rates on deposits like this is an appropriate strategy for the banks individually, and for the system as a whole, said economist Sean Turnell from Australia's Macquarie University. It protects depositors somewhat against the erosion of purchasing power from inflation, and also to some extent against the falling value of the kyat against the US dollar, he said.

"In many ways this is also a positive development on another front - competition," said Mr Turnell. The fact that banks feel compelled to increase the returns they offer to depositors suggests that competition in the industry is working in the consumers' interests.

"However, one might imagine in the longer term that there will be pressure to increase interest rates on loans too (currently capped by regulation), since bank margins will be eroding and, along with these, bank profitability. When that happens,

borrowing consumers will be worse off. "Again, however, all of this is standard practice more or less everywhere," he said.

Economist U Khine Tun said there are a number of sequential effects from the rise of deposit interest rates. By raising rates, the money supply can be reduced because high rates attract more savings. Fewer kyats in the market will boost the exchange rate and reduce inflation.

On the other hand, if lending rates increase together with the deposit rate, it will discourage investment as investors seek low-cost production methods yielding efficiency gains.

"The negative effect of the increase of deposit interest rates is troublesome for banks in the long run. They will have narrow their profit margins. The fall of a bank can be harmful to the whole economy, unlike the fall of any other industry," he said.

Despite higher inflation, bank savings deposits rose in 2014, in part because of expanded bank services.

GIZ's updated analysis of the Myanmar financial sector said the deposit rate was significantly higher, at about K17 trillion (K17,384,273 million) in 2013-14 fiscal year, than the K6 trillion (K6,961,248 million) of 2011-12.



Bank workers process kyat notes. Photo: Staff

Online grocery seller takes its shot



CATHERINE TRAUTWEIN

newroom@mmtimes.com.mm

A TECH startup wants to cut down on the tumult associated with grocery shopping in Yangon, and is urging customers to browse for their daily bread online instead of in person.

Yet online grocery shopping does not seem the most obvious choice of services, given the city's crowded streets and shopping habits of visiting the local market almost daily.

But Daily Mart, which went live in January, has eyes for future growth, according to co-founder and executive director Ko Htut Thant Syn.

"I think it may be a little bit early, but it is the right time because the internet penetration is getting better," she said. "More people are exposed to the technology, and they believe it will help them."

On average, the platform receives less than a handful of orders per day - between three and five - and around 48 site visits. Ko Htut Thant Syn wants to bring orders up to double digits in the next six months, and said a minimum of 20 orders a day would make for a "very comfortable" position.

"I think we are still a bit early to enter the market, but we are already here, so we just move on," co-founder and operations director Ma Zin Mar Lwin said. "We will try to get more people to know this kind of service and how convenient it can become in their daily lives."

The firm claims the mantle of Myanmar's first online grocery shop. The business model exists elsewhere, but has proven tricky to execute.

In Myanmar, it's early days not

only for the infant startup, but also for the e-commerce industry around it. With recent telco rollouts across the country and development in internet infrastructure, more and more people are moving online; but major hurdles in the form of online payment systems and logistics remain to be tackled before businesses work like Amazon Prime.

Ko Htut Thant Syn said Daily Mart came about when he and Ma Zin Mar Lwin melded their ideas of starting a delivery service and selling

goods to consumers. A subsidiary of Global Green Development Group, whose other ventures reside firmly offline in property and construction, Daily Mart received monetary backing from the firm's CEO but no external support.

Meanwhile, the streets of Yangon, crowded with taxis, set the stage for Daily Mart's launch - as did the success of similar online stores in other markets.

"Our main intention is to help people save time," Ko Htut Thant Syn

said. "You don't have to get stuck in traffic, you don't have to wait for the queue and you don't have to carry heavy items back home."

Daily Mart stakes its advantage on convenience. The business sets up a trade-off between the hassle of traditional shopping - which burns petrol and time - and the mark-up that can accompany buying things online.

Daily Mart's digital shelves house more than 1400 products. Customers who click around, fill their cart and order goods pick

from among three delivery windows to wait for product drop-offs. After an order gets confirmed, Daily Mart fills it from stock at its warehouse and sends items via drivers to consumers' doors across 24 of Yangon's townships. Customers currently pay cash on delivery, while online payment will arrive soon.

For now, delivery on orders at more than K10,000 costs nothing - on other purchases, it could run customers up to K2000. Ko Htut Thant Syn called the company's margins "very small", and Ma Zin Mar Lwin said Daily Mart must keep its prices close to the market. The company sometimes buys stock in less bulk than other players, making the deals less attractive.

'I think we are still a bit early to enter the market, but we are already here, so we just move on.'

Ma Zin Mar Lwin
Co-founder of Daily Mart



Yangon's traffic problems are one challenge among many for a local online grocery shop. Photo: Staff

The shop casts a wide net to catch customers. Ko Htut Thant Syn said it targets everybody - expats, moms, elderly men and women - "because everybody has to go grocery shopping". It should appeal particularly to the time-strapped, with Ma Zin Mar Lwin describing potential customers as people without their own means of getting around, or who don't want to deal with sitting in traffic.

The site is accessible via mobile, and Daily Mart is moving toward offering a mobile application.

TRADE MARK CAUTION

NOTICE is hereby given that **SK HOLDINGS CO., LTD.** of 99, Seorin-dong, Jongro-gu, Seoul, Republic of Korea is the Owner and Sole Proprietor of the following trademark: -



(Reg: Nos. IV/8789/2008 & IV/4373/2012)

in respect of:- "ammonia, anti-corrosive agents, antifreezing solution, antioxidants, brake solution, butadiene, catalysts, caustic soda for industrial purposes, cellulose derivatives(chemicals, chemical preparations for the manufacture of paints, diethyl malonate, diisopropyl malonate, diketene, dimethyl malonate, dimethyl terephthalate, dimethylformamide, dimethylamine, epichlorohydrine, ethoxylate, ethylene, ethylene amines, ethylene glycol, ethylene oxide, ethylene vinyl acetate, fatty amine, fertilizer, fire detergent agent, fluids for hydraulic circuits, formic acid, fumed silica, furfuryl alcohol, hypochlorite of soda, isopropyl alcohol, melamine, methyl chloride, methyl metal acrylate, methylamine derivatives, methylene chloride, microorganism(excluding yeast) not for medical purposes, neopentyl glycol, photoresist, plasticizer, polycrystalline silicone, polyester, polyethylene, polyethylene resins, polyethylene terephthalate, polymethylmeta acrylate, polypropylene, polypropylene resins, polytetrafluoro ethylene, polyvinyl butyral film, polyvinyl chloride, potassium sorbate, power steering fluid, propylene, purified terephthalic acids, refrigerants, semi-processed synthetic resins, silicones, sodium carboxymethyl cellulose styrene monomer, solvent, surface-active chemical agents, synthetic resins, terephthalic acids, tetramethyl ammonium chloride, tetramethyl ammonium hydroxide, toluene, transmission fluid, trimethylamine hydrochloric acid, unprocessed acrylic resins, unprocessed artificial resins, unprocessed epoxy resins, unprocessed plastics, unprocessed synthetic resins, urea, urethane resins, UV chemical stabilizer, vulcanization accelerators, water treating agents" - Class: 1

"benzene, benzol, combustible oil, crude oil, cutting fluids, cutting oil, denatured fuel alcohol, diesel oil, dust removing preparations, fuel gas, fuel with an alcohol base, gas oil, gasoline, grease for belts, heavy oil, industrial oil, kerosene, lighting oil, LNG(liquefied natural gas), LPG(liquefied petroleum gas), lubricating oil, methylated spirit, moistening oil, naphtha, non-slipping preparations for belts, oil for paints, oil for the preservation of leather, olefin, petroleum jelly for industrial purposes, propane gas, solid fuels, stearine, synthetic petroleum, xylene" - Class: 4

"acetate fiber, acetate tow, bags of textile for packaging envelopes and pouches, Bags(sacks) for the transport and storage of materials in bulk, Carbon fibers [fibres] for textile use, cleaning tow, cotton tow, cotton waste(flock) for padding and stuffing, cushioning and stuffing packing materials, not of rubber or plastics, plastic fibers for textile use, polyester fiber, polyester staple fibers, raw cotton, raw fibrous textile, raw linen, raw wool, ship's sails, tents, textile fibers, tow, treated wool" - Class: 22

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 **SK HOLDINGS CO., LTD.**
P.O. Box No. 26, Yangon.
Phone: 372416

Dated: 19th March, 2015



Farmers spread fertilizer on a field in Myanmar. Photo: AFP

Shuttered fertilizer factory asks for investors



AUNG SHIN

koshumgtha@gmail.com

MYANMA Petrochemical Enterprise has invited local and international firms to partner with it in the shuttered No 3 fertilizer factory in Magwe Region.

The invitation for letters of expression of interest come as its parent organisation the Ministry of Energy has

been working on a number of planned joint ventures, aiming to professionalise operations of several state-owned firms.

The deadline for expressions of interest is March 23. The chosen firms will partner with Myanma Petrochemical Enterprise in a joint venture production, storage, distribution and marketing, a statement said.

No 3 factory is located in Kyawzwa village, Aunglan township, of Magwe Region. It is designed for a capacity of 360 tonnes of ammonia per day and 600 tonnes of urea per day. The fertilizer factory makes use of 11.5 million

standard cubic feet of natural gas a day. It has been shut since 2010, with low productions of 450 tonnes of urea per day in the latter days of its operations.

There are currently five state-owned fertiliser factories in the country, with total designated capacity of 3350 tonnes.

The Ministry of Energy has also invited private firms to join it for ventures at a state-owned refinery and LPG plants.

It plans to expand semi-state owned enterprises for various midstream and downstream energy businesses.

Norwegians to support offshore technical training

AUNG SHIN
koshumgtha@gmail.com

THE Norwegian Environmental Agency will aim to boost government staffs' technical skills through training on Environmental and Social Impact assessments for offshore oil and gas, according to an official.

The training is to take place in Nay Pyi Taw from March 23 to 25, covering technical knowledge of the assessment surveys for offshore oil and gas exploration and production, for both local and international companies.

Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (EIA/SIA) must be completed as part of oil and gas investments.

Dozens of firms won new onshore and offshore petroleum blocks in 2013.

With the Production Sharing Contracts now mostly signed between Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise and the private companies, the impact assessments are the next step.

"The objective of the training is to understand the EIA/SIA process for offshore oil and gas projects," said an official from the Environmental Conservation Department under the Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry.

Trainees will include 20 people from the EIA/SIA team, five from Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise, and five people from related government

ministries, he said.

"It is the first time the Norwegian association is supporting this kind of technical training for oil and gas projects," the official said.

The Environmental Conservation Department is the focal department for reviewed EIA/SIA reports from extractive projects, such as mining and oil and gas.

'It is the first time the Norwegian association is supporting this kind of technical training for oil and gas projects.'

Environment Ministry official

A law on environmental conservation was passed in March 2012, with the follow-up rules and regulations published in June last year - though the EIA/SIA procedures are still works in progress.

Completing the EIA/SIAs is common practice in much of the world, though local experience on the issues is still improving.

YCDC in large spend to repair downtown drainage

The Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC) spent about K4.9 billion [US\$4.7 million] to repair downtown drainage systems particularly in Botah-taung township, a state-run newspaper said on March 16.

Officials are currently working on extending drainage systems and repairing ones that had been destroyed in flood last year, the committee said.

Work is being completed with an eye to getting ahead of the rainy season.

"Works should be done by end of this financial year [April 1]. We are working hard to finish by the end of this month," said the YCDC deputy head of the roads and bridges department. He called the city's drainage system "ruined" and obsolete.

"Yangon has an underground drainage system which was built during colonial times," he said. "Before repairing all of the systems, we focused on the downtown area, especially Thein Phyu main underground drainage."

YCDC spent K1.2 billion on renewing Thein Phyu's underground drainage system and making it eight feet wide and 12 feet deep. Work started in October, 2014. YCDC plans to fix the rest of the drainage systems and underground waste water systems around the Yangon municipal area in coming years.

- Noe Noe Aung

MYANMARTIMES မြန်မာ့အသံစာမဂ္ဂဇင်း

TRADE MARK SECTION

Call: Chan Tha Oo
09: 25400 6188, 01: 392928

WASHINGTON

Chief defends Etihad as David

ETIHAD Airways chief James Hogan defended the UAE carrier March 17 against harsh attacks from US airlines over subsidies, saying his company was a "David" battling the US "Goliaths".

Mr Hogan told an aviation industry summit in Washington that airlines everywhere benefit from state support, dismissing the claims of unfair competition by Gulf carriers in a report released by the top three US airlines.

As a battle heats up between Gulf airlines and rivals in Europe and the US, he accused the three US carriers - American Airlines, Delta Airlines and United Airlines - of themselves hiding behind protection.

"The world's two largest airline markets, the United States and the European Union, are closed, giving their own airlines a huge advantage in scale and scope," he told the US Chamber of Commerce Foundation's 14th Annual Aviation Summit.

'Many, many airlines, including many in this room, have benefited from years of government bailouts, write-offs and loans.'

James Hogan
Etihad head

Mr Hogan said established aviation giants were built on various kinds of state support, including preferential market access, infrastructure and airports, hardly different from what Gulf carriers Qatar Airways, Etihad and Emirates are accused of.

He also cited the government-backed bailouts of US carriers when they failed.

"Many, many airlines, including many in this room, have benefited from years of government bailouts, write-offs and loans, everything from bankruptcy protection to covering pension fund obligations to straight-out financial payments."

"Etihad is a David who's been facing Goliaths since 2003," he argued.

"The three biggest US airlines working together carry 34 times more" passengers.

In early March, American Airlines, Delta Airlines and United Airlines, along with US airline labour groups, accused the Gulf three of enjoying interest-free loans, subsidised airport charges, government protection on fuel losses, and below-market labor costs that are considered unfair subsidies by the World Trade Organization.

They called on the US government to open new talks over bilateral air agreements to address what they said are violations of those pacts, giving the Gulf carriers unfair competitive advantage.

Qatar Airways chief Akbar al-Baker said on March 16 the problem was that the US carriers do not differentiate between what is a subsidy and what is the "legitimate" equity that a state-owned carrier gets.

Delta anyway flies "crap airplanes that are 35 years old", he added.

- AFP

COLUMBO

Sri Lanka Central Bank head on leave, under investigation

SRI Lanka's central bank chief has taken leave while a committee investigates allegations one of his family members benefited unduly from a US\$76 million bond auction, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said late March 17.

Newly appointed governor Arjuna Mahendran was on leave from Monday amid the probe into the sale of the 30-year treasury bonds, half of which were allegedly snapped up by his son-in-law.

"Mr Mahendran has taken a leave of absence from [March 16] in the interests of transparency,

Mr Wickremesinghe told parliament, stressing that the official had not been asked to step down.

The allegations against Mahendran risk damaging new President Maithripala Sirisena who won elections partly on accusing his predecessor of cronyism and corruption.

Mr Mahendran, who took charge of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka after Mr Sirisena's win in January 8 elections, could not be contacted for comment.

The bank sold 10 billion rupees (US\$76 million) of bonds in February at a coupon rate of 12.5 percent, after earlier indicating to the market that 1 billion would be sold at 9.5pc.

The opposition and local media have alleged the bonds were issued at an above-market interest rate and that Mr Mahendran's son-in-law's company bought about half.

They allege the relative benefited from inside information about the rate and volume of bonds the bank planned to issue.

- AFP



Sri Lankan police personnel look on as opposition legislators demonstrate against an allegedly controversial bond sale opposite the Central Bank building in Colombo on March 18, 2015. Photo: AFP

MILLION US\$

76

Size of the bond sale that has landed Sri Lanka's central bank governor in hot water

ပျော်ရွှင်စရာ အထူးဈေးနှုန်းများကို ရယူနိုင်ရန်
MPT ၏ ဆွေသဟာအစီအစဉ်ကို ယခုပင် ဝင်ရောက်လိုက်ကြရအောင်!
 အင်တာနက် 1MB လျှင် ၇ကျပ် ရွတ်ပြားနှုန်းနှင့်
 ဖုန်းခေါ်ဆိုခ ဝမ်းနစ်လျှင် ၂၅ကျပ်နှုန်း (နှစ်သက်ရာ MPT မိုဘိုင်းနံပါတ် ၃ ခု)

ဆွေသဟာအစီအစဉ်ဝင်ရောက်ရန်
SWE ကို
1 3 3 2 သို့ SMS
 အခမဲ့ပေးပို့လိုက်ပါ။

ဆွေသဟာအစီအစဉ်ရယူရန်
 Prepaid သုံးစွဲသူများအတွက် **SWE** ဟုခေါ်တွင် **1 3 3 2** သို့ SMS အခမဲ့ပေးပို့ပါ။
 Postpaid သုံးစွဲသူများအတွက် **POSTSWE** ဟုခေါ်တွင် **1 3 3 2** သို့ SMS အခမဲ့ပေးပို့ပါ။

- ဆွေသဟာဝန်ဆောင်မှုကို ရယူခြင်းမှာ အခမဲ့ဖြစ်ပါသည်။
- GSM နှင့် WCDMA အသုံးပြုသူများအတွက် ဖြစ်ပါသည်။

CALL CENTER 103
 မဲလိကာရမိုင် သတင်းပတ်လျှောက်များအား အခမဲ့ခေါ်ဆိုနိုင်ပါသည်။
 ၈၄၈၆ (၂၄) နာရီလုံး အခမဲ့ ခေါ်ဆိုနိုင်ပါသည်။
 မဲလိကာရမိုင် သတင်းပတ်လျှောက်များအား အခမဲ့ခေါ်ဆိုနိုင်ပါသည်။
 http://www.mpt.com.mm
 https://facebook.com/mptofficialpage

European move a blow to US: Chinese media

CHINESE state media took a victory lap yesterday, gloating over the decision of major European powers to join a Beijing-backed multinational lender that the United States perceives as a threat to the Washington-led World Bank.

"Welcome Germany! Welcome France! Welcome Italy!" said a commentary in the official Xinhua news agency, describing the United States as "petulant and cynical".

Berlin, Paris and Rome said in a joint statement Tuesday that they want "to become founding members of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)", after Britain last week announced ambitions to be the first major Western country to join - drawing a rare rebuke from close ally Washington.

Calling the triple decision a "brave yet rational move", Xinhua said it contained a stark message for the US.

Washington was "trying to forge an anti-AIIB front" among its allies, the commentary said, but "sour grapes over the AIIB makes America look isolated and hypocritical".

"As more and more Western countries mull over joining the China-led

lending body, the US will feel lonelier if it continues to be a holdout," it added. "So Washington, what are you waiting for?"

China touts the US\$50 billion institution as a tool for financing regional development alongside other lenders such as the World Bank and the Japan-led, Manila-based Asian Development Bank (ADB).

US Treasury Secretary Jacob Lew did not dress down Germany, France and Italy, but questioned whether the AIIB would "adhere to the kind of high standards" of other global institutions in comments before Congress.

The state-run *China Daily* insisted in an editorial that even though the new bank was proposed by and headquartered in Beijing, that "does not mean it is Chinese, or an instrument of Chinese soft power".

It sought to take the moral high ground over the latest developments.

"US obstructionism has been less than effective this time because it has failed to see that Washington and Beijing have no reason to stand against each other on a matter such as this," it added.

- AFP



IN PICTURES

Nintendo's share price rocketed up yesterday more than 21 percent in Tokyo trading on the previous day's news the firm would make a shift to mobile gaming. Photo: AFP

TOKYO

Japan firms heed PM's call to boost salaries

MAJOR firms yesterday announced pay rises for workers after sustained pressure from the government in its attempt to push up prices in long-deflationary Japan.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's drive to get Japan economically ship-shape with a mix of easy money and fiscal largesse has born some fruit since its launch two years ago, in the form of soaring stock prices and a falling currency.

But stagnant salaries have been one of the main missing links in the "virtuous circle" of growth that the premier's signature "Abenomics" plan envisages.

With deals from some of Japan's biggest employers announced March 18 following the annual labour talks - known as *shunto*, or the "spring offensive" - it appeared the prime minister was at least partially getting his way.

The world's biggest automaker Toyota said it would raise employees' pay by an average of 4000 yen (US\$33) a month - about 1.14 percent above current pay.

Toyota employees would also get an average bonus worth 6.8 months of their base wage - a common pay structure in Japan. The firm now expects to book a record 2.13 trillion yen (\$18.1 billion) net profit in the fiscal year to March.

Last year the Corolla and Prius hybrid maker gave the first wage rise in six years.

Japan's second-largest automaker Nissan agreed to give an even bigger raise of 5000 yen a month, and a bonus worth 5.7 months of employees' base wage, the company said.

"We've had thorough discussions on the very difficult challenge of becoming more competitive ... while contributing to sustaining a good economic cycle," Toyota managing officer Tatsuro Ueda told reporters.

Major electronics firms, such as Panasonic and Toshiba, agreed to give a unified wage rise of 3000 yen a month, bigger than last year's 2000 yen.



Former US President Bill Clinton looks at former Japanese Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori (not in photo) as Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (right) introduces him in Tokyo on March 17. Photo: AFP

Pay rises have taken on an extra significance since a sales tax increase in April last year dented the economy's frail recovery.

The rise - Japan's first in 17 years - slammed the brakes on consumer spending, plunging the economy into recession and throwing Mr Abe's growth-boosting program into question.

The plunge in the value of the yen, while helping exporters, reduced spending power at home because it has made imports more expensive.

Official data have shown that Japanese household spending in 2014 declined at its fastest pace in eight years, underscoring how badly clobbered the average person felt.

Observers said the wage settlements looked "promising" but the question now would be whether the thousands of smaller companies that make up a huge chunk of Japan's economy would follow suit.

"It is important to note that the

'first movers' which have announced wage hikes so far do not represent the typical firm," said Marcel Thieli, an economist on Japan at Singapore-based Capital Economics.

"The median base pay hike last year fell well short of the hikes at the 'first movers', and we think that this will remain the case this year."

Under Mr Abe's economic drive, the Bank of Japan has set an inflation target of 2.0pc by next year.

But a growing number of economists have cast doubt on the chances of the BoJ reaching its target without further expanding an already enormous monetary easing scheme, launched two years ago.

"Overall, this year's *shunto* shows that the tight labour market has indeed resulted in a stronger rise in base pay than last year," Mr Thieli said.

"But wage growth will likely still fall short of the levels required to lift inflation towards the Bank of Japan's 2.0pc inflation target." - AFP

ANKARA

Turkey launches gas pipeline to Europe

TURKEY and Azerbaijan on March 17 formally began construction on a new gas pipeline costing \$10 billion which will pump gas from the vast Azerbaijani Shah Deniz 2 field across Anatolia to Turkish and EU consumers.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Azerbaijani counterpart Ilham Aliyev and Georgian President Giorgi Margvelashvili simultaneously pushed three buttons to launch work at the eastern end of the pipeline in the ceremony in the Kars region of eastern Turkey.

"In the name of God!" cried the pious Mr Erdogan as he pushed the button to the booming sound of the theme music from the film *Pirates of the Caribbean* in the televised ceremony.

The EU, whose energy commissioner Maros Sefcovic was at the ceremony, is backing the project as part of its Southern Corridor policy to bring gas from new eastern markets and reduce dependence on Russia for supplies.

The 1850-kilometre (1150-mile) Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline (TANAP) pipeline - which is due to be completed in 2018 - is to link up to the existing South Caucasus Pipeline (SCP) which links Turkey to the Azerbaijani gas fields in the Caspian Sea through Georgia.

The backers of the project expect that the TANAP will then link up with the planned Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) that will bring the gas from western Turkey to Greece, Albania and across the Adriatic to Italy.

The pipelines avoid Armenia, with whom Azerbaijan and Turkey have frozen ties due to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the dispute over the mass killings of Armenians in World War I.

But Mr Erdogan said the pipeline would not only carry Shah Deniz gas to Europe but also "carry peace".

"Oil and natural gas projects are unfortunately associated in the world with conflicts, competitions, fights, wars and exploitation. I believe that this project will be remembered with peace and welfare," he said.

He confirmed the project would cost \$10 billion, far more than when it was originally conceived in 2012.

According to the partnership agreement signed last week, Azerbaijan's state energy firm SOCAR and Turkey's Botas will hold 58 percent and 30pc stakes respectively while British energy giant BP has a 12pc share.

"Without TANAP you cannot get Azerbaijani gas across Turkey," said Laurent Ruseckas, senior adviser in global gas at IHS Energy in London.

"The development of Shah Deniz 2 depends on getting all the pipelines from the Caspian Sea to Italy built and a big part of that is TANAP."

The total investment in Shah Deniz 2, including the cost of the pipeline infrastructure, is \$40-45 billion.

- AFP



UNITED STATES

Capital controls to avoid Greek exit

DUTCH Finance Minister Jeroen Dijsselbloem raised the possibility of using capital controls to prevent Greece from leaving the euro, the most explicit mention of that option to date by a top European policymaker.

Mr Dijsselbloem, who heads the group of euro-area finance ministers, told BNR Nieuwsradio late March 17 that the 2013 Cypriot bailout shows temporarily shutting banks and restricting the flow of capital could stabilise Greece's financial system and allow it to remain part of the currency union.

"It's been explored what should happen if a country gets into deep trouble - that doesn't immediately have to be an exit scenario," he said. For Cyprus, "we had to take radical measures. Banks were closed for a while and capital flows within and out of the country were tied to all kinds of conditions. But you can think of all kinds of scenarios."

Euro-region finance ministers are urging the Greek government to draw up a rigorous plan to fix their economy so the bloc's taxpayers won't balk at further support. The Greeks could run out of cash as early as this month, forcing Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras to decide whether to bow to European demands or strike out alone by abandoning the euro.

'It's been explored what should happen if a country gets into deep trouble - that doesn't immediately have to be an exit scenario.'

Jeroen Dijsselbloem
Dutch Finance Minister

"There is absolutely no discussion of imposing capital controls in Greece," government spokesperson Gabriel Sakellariadis said March 17 on AN1 TV. "Under no circumstances would Greece even accept discussing such an option." Mr Sakellariadis did not immediately respond to requests for comment on Mr Dijsselbloem's remarks.

Greece's parliament was scheduled to begin debating measures to boost liquidity as the cash-strapped country braces for more than 2 billion euros (US\$2.12 billion) in debt payments due tomorrow. Unable to access bailout funding and locked out of capital markets, the government will outline emergency plans that include incentives for tax delinquents to pay up before March 27, when Greece needs money for monthly salaries and pensions. The government is burning through cash while trying to get creditors - euro area member states, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund - to release more of a 240 billion euro bailout.

Euro-area finance ministry officials held a call yesterday to discuss Greece's deteriorating finances, according to two officials.

"It's important to get Greece back on track again," Mr Dijsselbloem said. "Last year, it went remarkably well."

Greek bonds fell, with the yield on the Greek government 10-year bond gaining 5 basis points to 10.83 percent.

- Bloomberg

SEOUL

South Koreans visit the North

A GROUP of 14 South Korean businesspeople yesterday travelled to the Kaesong joint industrial zone for talks with North Korean officials to resolve an escalating row over wages at the park.

Pyongyang last month announced it would raise the basic salary of some 54,000 North Korean workers employed across 125 South Korean firms in the complex as of the end of last year.

The South rejected the idea, citing an existing agreement that any wage rise had to be agreed by a joint committee overseeing the management of the park.

It offered talks to discuss the issue but the North refused, saying it had no need to consult with the South and a "legitimate and normal" right to amend working conditions in Kaesong, which lies in the North just over the border.

"As to the North's unilateral changes to the regulations on wages, we will convey our position without reservations to the North," said Chung Ki-Sup, head of the council of South Korean companies operating at Kaesong.

The companies are in a dilemma as the South Korean government has made it clear that they will be penalised if they yield to pressure from the North.



The group of 14 South Korean businesspeople answer questions. Photo: AFP

The North's proposal would increase the average amount the South pays for each worker - including allowances, welfare and overtime - from US\$155 to \$164 monthly.

Separately, a row over the launch of anti-Pyongyang leaflets from the South has cast a shadow over the park's fate.

The leaflets are scheduled to be sent by propaganda balloon around

March 26 to mark the five-year anniversary of the sinking of a South Korean warship in 2010, with the loss of 46 sailors, which the South blamed on the North.

South Korean activists say they will also sneak copies of satirical Hollywood movie *The Interview* across the border, in defiance of North Korea's repeated threats of retaliation through military means.

Kaesong businessmen say

the North's anger at the planned launches is behind the row over wages. The South insists the activists have a democratic right to send the leaflets, but has appealed for restraint to avoid overly provoking the North.

In October last year North Korean border guards attempted to shoot down some balloons, triggering a brief exchange of heavy machine-gun fire between the two sides.

Local residents living near the launch sites have complained that the activists are putting their lives at risk by making them potential targets for North Korean retaliation.

Kaesong businesspeople apparently downplayed their concerns that there might be a repeat of the 2013 crisis when the North effectively closed down the park for five months following a surge in military tensions.

Many of the firms, manufacturers of low-priced household goods, are still reeling from financial losses from the 2013 shutdown, estimated to be up to \$1 billion.

The zone, a rare symbol of cross-border cooperation, had previously been spared the fallout from eruptions in ties between the two Koreas. - AFP







သမိနစ်လျှင် ၂၅ကျပ်

နှစ်သက်ရာ MPT ဗိုဘိုင်း နံပါတ်(၃)ခု




ပျော်ရွှင်စရာ အထူးအချေးနှုန်းများကို ရယူနိုင်ဖို့ MPT ၏ ဆွေသမာအစီအစဉ်ကို ယခုပင် ဝင်ရောက်လိုက်ကြရအောင်!

ဆွေသမာအစီအစဉ်ကိုရယူရန်

Prepaid သုံးစွဲသူများအတွက်	SWE	ဟုခိုက်၍ 1332 သို့ SMS အမေးပေးပါ။
Postpaid သုံးစွဲသူများအတွက်	POSTSWE	ဟုခိုက်၍ 1332 သို့ SMS အမေးပေးပါ။

နှစ်သက်ရာ MPT ဝန်ဆောင်ခံ ၃ခု စာရင်းသွင်းရန်

Prepaid သုံးစွဲသူများအတွက် **ADD 09XXXXXXX** ဟုခိုက်၍ 1332 သို့ SMS အမေးပေးပါ။

- GSM နှင့် WCDMA အသုံးပြုသူများအတွက်ဖြစ်ပါသည်။
- ဝန်ဆောင်ခံပေးမှုအစီအစဉ်အနေဖြင့် နှစ်သက်ရာ MPT ဗိုဘိုင်းနံပါတ် (၃)ခုကို (၁)မိနစ်လျှင် ၂၅ကျပ်နှုန်းဖြင့် ဝယ်ယူနိုင်ပါသည်။ ပထမဆုံးနံပါတ်ကို စတင်စာရင်းသွင်းသည့်နေ့မှစ၍ စက်ဝိုင်း(၃၀)အတွင်းအသုံးပြုနိုင်ပါသည်။ ၂၀၁၅ ခုနှစ် မတ်လ(၃၀)ရက်မတိုင်မီ စာရင်းပေးသွင်းခြင်းများအတွက်သာ အတည်ပြုပါသည်။



မူရင်း (၂၅)ကျပ်လုံး အမေးပေးနိုင်ပါသည်။

မေးတာရမည့် သတင်းများအား အသေးစိတ်သိရှိလိုပါက

• <http://www.mpt.com.mm>

• <https://facebook.com/mptofficialpage>

World

WORLD EDITOR: Fiona MacGregor

MANILA

US played big role in botched Philippine raid, reports Senate

US forces played a “substantial” role in a botched anti-terrorism raid in the Philippines that left 44 local police commandos dead, according to a Senate report.

The raid, known locally as Oplan Exodus, has plunged President Benigno Aquino’s administration into crisis and jeopardised efforts to end a decades-long Muslim separatist insurgency.

“US personnel played a role in the training before, and monitoring, of the ... operation,” Senator Grace Poe told reporters on March 17 as she released the findings of a committee inquiry into the January 25 raid.

“The committee found that the United States substantially invested in the entirety of Oplan Exodus. It provided equipment, training and intelligence.”

The raid sought to capture or kill two men on the US government’s list of “most wanted terrorists” who were living among Muslim rebels in southern Philippine farming communities.

One of the men, Malaysian national Zulkifli bin Hir who had a US\$5-million bounty on his head, was

reported killed.

But the other, Filipino Abdul Basit Usman, escaped as rebels surrounded the police commandos and killed 44 of them. A police inquiry earlier outlined a multitude of tactical errors that led to the slaughter of the commandos.

The Senate report said Mr Aquino must “bear responsibility” for the deaths.

But it also raised questions about the accountability of the United States, a longtime military ally of the Philippines that has so far declined to outline its role in the operation.

Three unidentified Americans were brought into the local army brigade headquarters during the operation, creating tensions with the Filipino military commander at a crucial time, the Senate report said.

“One of the Americans ordered Maj. Gen. Edmundo Pangilinan to fire the artillery,” the report stated.

“However Pangilinan refused and told him: ‘Do not dictate to me what to do. I am the commander here.’”

Responding to the Senate report, a US government official said, “This operation was planned and executed by

Philippine authorities. We refer you to them for details of the operation.”

The United States provides military training and intelligence to the Philippines in its counter-terrorism efforts.

US forces are not allowed to engage in combat under the terms of an agreement between the allies – a deal Ms Poe said there was no evidence to suggest had been breached.

But, citing US training, equipment and intelligence, she said there were concerns that Washington’s influence on the Philippine National Police (PNP) was too strong.

“This raises a question of whether the PNP leadership would have entered into such a risky and hazardous operation without the support of the United States and the US\$5 million reward offered for Marwan’s capture.”

Mr Aquino’s public support has plummeted to its lowest level since he took office in 2010 because of the botched raid, according to a survey released on March 17.

His public approval ratings fell to 38 percent in the first week of March, from 59 pc last November, polling firm Pulse Asia said.

Mr Aquino’s term ends in the middle of next year and the constitution does not allow him to run for re-election.

But his plunging popularity could weaken his ability to secure congressional support for his most important remaining initiatives, as well as damage the election chances of his hoped-for successor.

Mr Aquino is also hoping to finalise a peace pact with the nation’s biggest rebel group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), and end a conflict that has claimed tens of thousands of lives since the 1970s.

But the raid has left the peace process in jeopardy, with Congress suspending hearings on the proposed law that would implement the pact.

– AFP



Senator Grace Poe displays a copy of a report by the Police Board of Inquiry during a press briefing in Manila on March 17. Photo: AFP

BANGKOK

Two jailed over Bangkok blast

TWO Thai men have been given five-month jail sentences for their involvement in a grenade attack outside a criminal court in Bangkok this month.

Thai authorities said Mahahin Khunthong and Yutthana Yenpinyo, both 34, drove up to the entrance of the capital’s main criminal court and threw an RGD-5 grenade into the car park on the evening of March 7.

No one was injured in the attack, which the pair admitted carrying out, the court said. The men were sentenced on March 17.

The attack was the second small blast to hit Bangkok in as many months after twin pipe bombs detonated outside a busy shopping mall in early February, wounding two people.

Thailand’s military rulers – who installed martial law in May and seized power in a coup – have blamed both attacks on activists linked to the “Red Shirt” movement loyal to ousted premiers Thaksin and Yingluck Shinawatra, something the group has vehemently denied.

Shortly after the first bombing Thailand’s junta chief Prayut Chan-O-Cha spoke out against widespread rumours on social media that the military were behind the blasts to reinforce the need for martial law.

Pressure has been mounting on the junta to lift the controversial restrictions, with an increasing number of opponents saying debate is being stifled just as Thailand needs it most.

National police spokesperson Prawut Thavornsiri said on March 17 a total of 14 people have been arrested over both blasts while three more were wanted for questioning.

The most recent arrest was of Natthatida Meewangpla, a 37-year-old nurse, who had been missing since March 11, when relatives said she was taken away by soldiers without explanation.

“She has been charged with terrorism, collaborating in trying to kill and weapon possession,” Mr Prawut said.

Initially Thailand’s junta denied holding the nurse, a prominent

witness to a bloody 2010 crackdown by the military against Red Shirt protesters in which at least 90 were killed, including a nurse and two foreign journalists.

But on March 17 she was publicly handed over by the military to the police.

Footage broadcast on local news channels showed the pink-haired nurse flashing the three-fingered salute from the *Hunger Games* movies – a symbol of resistance adopted by critics of the junta.

Public Red Shirt resistance to the coup has been muted, with leaders under observation by the military and warned against organising political rallies.

Thailand has been blighted by nearly a decade of political turmoil since billionaire former premier Mr Thaksin shook up the establishment by winning elections with his populist politics.

Parties led by him or his allies have won every election since 2001.

– AFP



IN PICTURES

Photo: AFP

A woman takes a “selfie” next to Cherry Blossom Festival in Gucu

JAKARTA

Families accept ‘s

AN Indonesian whose daughter-in-law is among 56 people unaccounted for following the December crash of an AirAsia plane said yesterday his family had accepted the “sad reality” that her body would never be found.

Rescuers called off the hunt for the remaining passengers on March 17, almost three months after Flight QZ8501 went down in stormy weather as it flew from the Indonesian city of Surabaya to Singapore, killing all 162 people on board.

The crash of the Airbus A320-200 sparked a huge international search, with ships and aircraft from several nations scouring the waters for the plane wreckage and the victims.

In recent weeks the hunt had already been scaled back, with just Indonesia’s civilian search and rescue agency involved and only a small number of new bodies found.

Early yesterday, the last ships

‘Her parents and my family have let her go in peace. We have to accept this sad reality.’

Hadi Widjaja

Relative of Air Aisa crash victims

involved in the search left Pangkalan Bun, the town on Borneo island which had served as a base for the hunt, said agency official SB Supriyadi.

A total of 106 bodies have been recovered, with the last three found at the weekend.

Hadi Widjaja, whose son and daughter-in-law were on the flight, praised rescuers for doing a “good job”.

His son has been found but his daughter-in-law remains missing. He said her family realised it was time to move on.

“Her parents and my family have let her go in peace. We have to accept this sad reality,” he said.

“The rescuers spent three months on this search operation,” he said, adding that his family “really appreciated their work”.

Eka Santoso, whose brother, sister-in-law and their two children were on the plane, said he believed if the search operation was extended, more bodies could be found, but he had accepted the decision to end it.

The body of his brother has been retrieved, but his three other relatives remain missing.

“I have already asked AirAsia and the search and rescue agency to extend the search, but I cannot do more,” said the 53-year-old, adding that he would just have to “accept that they are no longer searching for our loved ones”.

Bambang Soelistyo, head of Indonesia’s search and rescue

Netanyahu claims surprise victory in Israeli election

WORLD 17



Vanuatans think positive despite cyclone damage

WORLD 18



A man wearing a pig mask during the first day of the nearly one month-long festival in Park in northern Shanghai on March 18.

KUALA LUMPUR

Call for Islamic penalties splits fragile opposition

A MALAYSIAN Muslim party yesterday launched a push to implement Islamic criminal punishments such as flogging and amputations in a state it governs, a move that threatens to tear apart the country's opposition.

The Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) is a member of a three-party opposition alliance that nearly wrested national power from Malaysia's six-decade-old ruling regime in 2013 elections.

But PAS's campaign for the Islamic penalties – known as *hudud* – in Kelantan state has brought the alliance to the breaking point just as it struggles to hold together following the jailing last month of its overall leader Anwar Ibrahim.

Malaysian media reports said PAS tabled amendments in the Kelantan state assembly on yesterday, seeking to revise a 1993 law that set out such punishments but which was never enforced as it conflicts with the federal constitution.

The party plans to later submit a bill in the national parliament seeking a federal law change to allow *hudud* in Kelantan, a rural state in northern Malaysia's Islamic heartland.

Hatta Ramli, a moderate PAS member, called the issue the "biggest challenge" yet facing the opposition Pakatan Rakyat (People's Pact) coalition.

"I pray that the differences over the move ... will not end up in a break-up of Pakatan," he said.

PAS officials say *hudud* in Kelantan would apply only to Muslims. Muslims make up around two-thirds of Malaysia's diverse population of about 28 million.

PAS's partners had issued stern

warnings not to proceed with the plan, but have not yet explicitly threatened to expel the party from the coalition.

Malaysia practises a relatively tolerant brand of Islam, but more conservative attitudes have gained support in recent years, driven by intensifying competition between PAS and the ruling United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) for the key Muslim vote.

Bridget Welsh, a Malaysia politics analyst with National Taiwan University, said the *hudud* move reflects a power struggle within PAS between a conservative leadership dominated by *ulama*, or Islamic scholars, and more progressive party factions.

"The *ulama* leadership are using *hudud* as a political weapon to slay their enemies within the party, not to bring about genuine moral governance," she wrote in an opinion piece published yesterday.

The divisions over *hudud* will heighten voter concerns over whether the fractious alliance, and particularly PAS, could be trusted with national government, she added.

The opposition also includes the moderate, multi-racial party of Anwar Ibrahim, and one representing Malaysia's large Chinese minority.

Mr Anwar was jailed last month for five years on a sodomy conviction he says is false, removing the opposition's highest-profile figure.

The UMNO, which controls parliament, has helped stir the opposition discord by expressing support for PAS's move, but it remains unclear whether it would back the required federal law change. – AFP

'Sad reality' as jet hunt ends

agency, said the decision to end the search had been taken after consulting the victims' relatives at a meeting in Surabaya.

"The search should have ended much earlier but out of respect for family members, we extended the operation until we completely ended it yesterday [March 17]," he told

AFP.

The Indonesian National Transportation Safety Committee has so far shed little light on what caused the flight to crash, or what occurred in the moments before the tragedy.

It has reported that the plane climbed rapidly in an area of towering storm clouds before crashing,

and that the co-pilot was at the controls, rather than the more experienced pilot, in the moments before the accident.

The plane's black box flight data recorders have been recovered, and will provide vital clues as investigators seek to figure out what caused the crash. – AFP



Indonesian rescue personnel carry a coffin bearing the recovered body of an AirAsia flight QZ8501 victim onto a plane in Pangkalan Bun airport, southern Borneo island, on March 17. Photo: AFP

SINGAPORE

Founding PM now 'critically ill', says son

SINGAPORE'S founding prime minister Lee Kuan Yew is "critically ill" and his condition is worsening further while on life support in hospital, the government said yesterday.

The 91-year-old, widely credited with transforming Singapore from an economic backwater into one of Asia's wealthiest economies, has been in the intensive care unit at Singapore General Hospital since February 5, receiving treatment for severe pneumonia.

"Mr Lee Kuan Yew remains critically ill in the ICU and has deteriorated further," said a statement from the office of his son, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong.

On March 17 the government said his condition had worsened due to an infection and he was on antibiotics while doctors closely monitored his condition.

The senior Mr Lee has been breathing with the help of "mechanical ventilation", a form of life support, according to previous government statements.

Mr Lee modernised Singapore's economy but rights advocates have criticised the British-trained lawyer for his iron-fisted rule, which has seen political opponents jailed or driven to bankruptcy through costly libel suits.

A longtime fitness buff, Mr Lee has visibly slowed since his wife of 63 years Kwa Geok Choo died in 2010.

Prime Minister Lee posted the latest update on his father on his Facebook page and was immediately inundated with expressions of support, prayers and wishes for the patriarch's recovery.

Many expressed their desire to see the senior Mr Lee live a few months longer to witness the celebration of Singapore's 50th anniversary of independence on August 9, an event known as "SG50".

It gained self-rule from colonial ruler Britain in 1959 and became a republic in 1965 after a brief and stormy union with Malaysia.

"My prayer to Mr Lee Kuan Yew. Hang on. Please be around to celebrate SG50 with the nation," wrote reader Elena Wee Meng Gek.

Netizen Sangeetha Prasad wrote, "I just don't want him to suffer so much! It is really so heart wrenching! If only love could heal!"

Others were resigned that he may not recover.

"No matter what the outcome is, most important is that Mr Lee Kuan Yew does not suffer. My prayers to him," wrote reader Jessie Seah.

The People's Action Party (PAP), which was co-founded by the elder Lee, has been returned to power in every election since 1959 and currently holds 80 of the 87 seats in parliament.. – AFP

DAMASCUS

US drone brought down by Syrian troops

SYRIA'S military shot down a US drone over the coastal province of Latakia, a stronghold of President Bashar al-Assad, state media have said.

The US military confirmed that it had lost communication with an unarmed Predator drone over north-west Syria on March 17 and was looking into the claims it was brought down.

If confirmed, it would be the first time that Syrian forces have attacked a US aircraft since the coalition fighting the Islamic State began raids against the jihadist group in Syria in September.

The claim came as activists said Syrian regime forces had carried out an attack using chlorine gas that killed six people, including three children.

Syrian state news agency SANA reported the apparent downing of a US drone in a breaking news alert.

"Syrian air defences brought down a hostile US surveillance aircraft over north Latakia," it said, without providing further details.

While Syria is not participating in the air strikes against the IS, it has so far refrained from taking action against aircraft involved in the US-led coalition's operations to take out the extremist group.

Damascus has said it was given prior warning before the coalition

began the strikes, and Foreign Minister Walid Muallem said last year that Washington had pledged its raids would not hit the Syrian army.

The strikes in Syria have largely been focused on Aleppo and Raqa provinces, where the Islamic State has strongholds.

But the campaign has also targeted the group elsewhere, and hit positions believed to belong to fighters affiliated with Al-Nusra Front, the feared Syrian wing of I-Qaeda.

IS fighters have been largely absent from the northwestern province of Latakia, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based monitor.

But Al-Nusra fighters are active in the province, which is home to the Assad family's ancestral village and is a bastion of the Alawite sect of Shiite Islam to which the president belongs.

According to the Observatory, the strikes have killed more than 1600 people, most of them jihadists.

Elsewhere in war-ravaged Syria, activists and the Observatory reported at least six people had been killed in an alleged regime gas attack.

The overnight incident in Idlib, in the northwest, prompted outrage from rights group Amnesty International, which said it was further evidence of government "war crimes".

"Three children, their mother and father, and their grandmother

suffocated to death after regime barrel bomb attacks," the Observatory said.

The monitor said doctors in the village of Sarmin, southeast of Idlib city, concluded that the manner of death indicated a gas, possibly chlorine, had emitted from the barrel bombs.

Activists in Sarmin said chlorine gas had been used and posted videos of a chaotic field hospital where disoriented victims coughed and held gas masks over their faces as children cried in the background.

A paramedic said first responders rushed to the scene unprepared.

"This is the first time we've experienced a poison gas attack," Motea Jalal said.

"We grabbed the masks we had. They are for fires, not for gas attacks, but that's what is available."

He said paramedics retrieved the wounded and tried to wash the chemicals from the bodies, adding that more than 100 people were in need of treatment.

The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons said in January it had "confidence" that chlorine gas had been used in attacks on three villages in 2014. It did not assign responsibility, but its report noted that witnesses heard helicopters before the attack, which only government forces possess. —AFP

FRANKFURT

Frankfurt hit by riots ahead of ECB opening

VIOLENT protests broke out in Frankfurt yesterday ahead of the inauguration of the European Central Bank's new headquarters, with cars set on fire, windows smashed and stones thrown by anti-capitalist activists hours before a massive rally.

Already seven police cars have been set alight and at least two officers have been injured, a police spokesperson said.

Water cannons were used to disperse groups of protesters near the security zone erected around the 185-metre (605-foot), 1.3 billion euro (\$1.4 billion) new skyscraper in the east of the city.

The spokesperson described the demonstrators as being "aggressive and violent".

A number of violent incidents had been reported around the city, centred around the new building itself, but also Frankfurt's venerable Alte Oper concert hall and the financial district, she said.

An AFP journalist at the scene said windows had been smashed at the citizens' centre and burning tyres were in the road nearby.

Convoys of police vans sped through the streets of the financial capital with sirens blaring and helicopters hovered overhead.

The ECB was due to officially inaugurate its headquarters at 11am in the presence of central bank president Mario Draghi and around 100 invited guests.

But security was extremely tight

with more than 10,000 anti-austerity demonstrators planning a protest rally.

The ECB already moved into the new building situated on the Main river running through Germany's financial capital late last year.

Given the raging Greek debt crisis, the central bank has decided to keep the inaugural celebrations relatively low-key with just 20 guests from outside the institution.

Marching under the Blockupy banner, groups such as Attac, but also unions, will join in the rally, alongside representatives from Greece's leftist Syriza party, and Miguel Urban of Spain's Podemos.

A special train of 800 activists is arriving from Berlin and 60 buses from 39 different cities across Europe. Despite the early violence, police said they expected most of the protesters to remain peaceful.

"It is one of the biggest deployments ever in the city," a police spokesperson said.

The organisers accused the police and city authorities of "scaremongering" and drawing up an "absurd civil war scenario".

Another spokesperson described the massive police deployment as "a scandal".

But Hannah Eberle for the Interventionistische Linke (Interventionist Left) vowed that demonstrators "will not allow the police to get in their way".

"We're fighting for ... a democratic and social Europe," said Roland Suess of the anti-capitalist group Attac. —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

TEL AVIV

Tough-talking Netanyahu claims election

WITH nearly all the votes counted yesterday in Israel's rollercoaster election, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu looked set for a triumphant return that will likely deepen tensions with the Palestinians and the West.

Centre-left challenger Isaac Herzog conceded defeat yesterday afternoon and said he had congratulated rightwing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on his win.

"A few minutes ago, I spoke with the prime minister and I congratulated him on his achievement and wished him good luck," Mr Herzog said, speaking to Israeli television and radio stations outside his house.

Mr Netanyahu's Likud party was on course for 29 seats in the 120-member parliament with 96 percent of ballots tallied, while his nearest rival the centre-left Zionist Union trailed with 24, public radio said.

The Central Elections Committee website said Likud had garnered just over 23 percent of the vote and the Zionist Union almost 19 pc.

Mr Netanyahu had already claimed victory in the March 17 election and the initial results seemed to ensure him a third straight term, although he will need the backing of

his allies to form a coalition.

He had put security at the forefront of his campaign, arguing he is the only one capable of protecting Israel from an Iranian nuclear threat and vowing never to allow the Palestinians to establish a capital in east Jerusalem.

The Palestinians vowed to step up their diplomatic campaign for statehood.

"It is clear that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will form the next government, so we say clearly that we will go to the International Criminal Court in the Hague and we will speed up, pursue and intensify" all diplomatic efforts, chief negotiator Saeb Erakat said.

Addressing cheering supporters at campaign headquarters in Tel Aviv, Mr Netanyahu said, "Against all odds we achieved a great victory for the Likud. We achieved a great victory for the national camp under the leadership of the Likud. We achieved a great victory for our people of Israel!" "Now we have to build a strong and stable government."

In a late appeal to the far-right ahead of the polls, Mr Netanyahu ruled out the establishment of a Palestinian state if reelected, effectively



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his wife Sara wave to supporters as they react to exit poll figures in Israel's parliamentary elections late on March 17. Photo: AFP

renege on his 2009 endorsement of a two-state solution.

Mr Herzog has repeatedly called for the creation of a Palestinian state alongside Israel.

Mr Netanyahu made a last-minute call on his supporters to go to the polls to counter a high turnout among Arab Israelis.

"The rule of the right-wing is in danger. Arab voters are going to the polls in droves!" he said in a video on Facebook. "Go to the polling stations! Vote Likud!"

Radio stations yesterday reported that the main Arab parties took third place with 14 seats after forming an alliance to challenge the premier.

Likud activists at a temporary headquarters set up in a Tel Aviv convention hall danced in celebration at the late surge.

Likud had been trailing the Zionist Union by up to four seats in surveys in the week leading up to the vote, which was seen as a referendum on his premiership.

Experts said Mr Netanyahu looked like the most likely party leader to be asked by President Reuven Rivlin to form a government after the official results, which are expected in the coming days.

"Netanyahu has done it. He has managed to catch up in the final lap," said Claude Klein, a specialist in

constitutional law at Jerusalem's Hebrew University.

Under Israel's electoral system, the prime minister is not the head of the party that gains the most seats but whoever can build a coalition commanding a majority of at least 61 seats in parliament.

Moshe Kahlon, once a popular minister under Likud, could find himself in the position of kingmaker after exit polls predicted his centre-right Kulanu party won 10 seats.

Some 5.8 million people were eligible to vote, with 25 parties vying for the Knesset.

Turnout was 71.8 pc, up from 67.8 pc in 2013. - 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

Vanuatu Cyclone

MELE, VANUATU

Vanuatuans 'think positive' despite cyclone destruction

NOT long after the roof of Keith and Emma Vatoko's bedroom was torn off by Vanuatu's destructive cyclone, family members and neighbours were already hammering nails into a new makeshift home.

The Vatokos and their village Mele, 2 kilometres (1.2 miles) south of the Pacific nation's capital Port Vila, are struggling to clear water-logged houses after winds of up to 320 kilometres (200 miles) per hour and pounding rain swept through, flooding a nearby river.

The reality for many Vanuatuans is bleak with reports across the island chain of widespread destruction of property and crops, along with water and food shortages, and fears of disease.

But the villagers in Mele are

'Despite what we are facing we still put our heads up high and think positive. That's what makes us strong.'

Emma Vatoko
Vanuatu resident

doing their best to stay positive, typifying the optimistic demeanour that outsiders see as a defining characteristic of the islanders.

"Despite what we are facing, we still put our heads up high and always think positive," Emma Vatoko said as she stood beside her bedroom, which now sits bare of everything except a handwritten poster of The Lord's Prayer on the wall.

"That's what makes us strong."

The 35-year-old lights up when she talks about how the community rallied together after the Category Five storm barreled ashore on the night or March 13. She describes how they are cooking meals for each other and rebuilding damaged homes.

"It's hard for us, but we have to have confidence in ourselves that we can do it," she said.

Vanuatu, which has a population of some 267,000 people living across a string of picture-perfect islands, is famed as a tropical paradise for tourists.

Despite being among the world's poorest nations, it was dubbed the "happiest place on earth" almost a decade ago by British think tank New Economics Foundation for balancing the well-being of its residents with a light environmental footprint.

Lida Chilia, another Mele villager, credits the support of her neighbours as a key reason why she remains op-



Lida Chilia laughs on March 17 in her village Mele, two kilometres south of the Vanuatu capital Port Vila after Cyclone Pam ripped through the island nation. Photo: AFP

timistic. Ms Chilia, 39, said she was frightened as the storm battered her home for hours through the night.

Standing up after meticulously removing coin-sized debris caught between blades of grass, Chilia beamed broadly even as she recalled the ordeal.

"We prayed for several hours. We asked God to protect us," she said.

"We feel sad. But we [neighbours] always sit together, and that makes me happy."

Tom Perry from aid agency CARE Australia said Port Vila residents were dealing with the aftermath "remarkably well", given the circumstances.

But he feared the can-do attitude

avoids addressing some of the issues raised by Cyclone Pam - such as the assumption in the subsistence economy that food is always readily available.

New homes are also being erected using similarly flimsy materials - such as metal sheets that were blown away by the storm - instead of more hardy ones.

"They are [rebuilding] in a way that worries me," Mr Perry said at his office in Port Vila.

"They are resilient people and they want to get on. So they want to start rebuilding houses but they're rebuilding houses that just fell over."

In Mele, Jenny Garae and her friends prepare a basic lunch of

bread and butter for the men toiling over the new corrugated metal house for the Vatokos.

Ms Garae, 18, is helping her family remove the mud congealing on the floor after their home flooded. Yet she too is keen to look on the bright side to the challenging conditions.

"If you look around, houses are made of boards and sheets," Ms Garae said, stressing how villagers are coming together for mutual aid.

"Maybe this is a sign that people should build their house with cement," she added, although many in the poverty-stricken country cannot afford such luxuries, and rely on making do with what they have.

- AFP

TANNA, VANUATU

Cut-off islanders spell out need for aid with signals

AID was due to reach some of cyclone-hit Vanuatu's worst affected islands yesterday but others remained isolated, with flights over the Pacific nation showing desperate villagers spelling out the letter "H" for help.

Relief agencies are battling tough conditions and logistical challenges

in the sprawling archipelago with a lack of landing strips and deep water ports hampering their efforts to reach distant islands and get a better grip on the full scale of the disaster.

Vanuatu Prime Minister Joe Natuman said "it will be at least a week or two" before the situation becomes

clearer.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs revised its death toll from 24 down to 11 but said it was expected to rise, and aid groups continued to paint a bleak picture, warning of large-scale property destruction and shortages of food and clean water.

The southern islands of Tanna and Erromango bore the full brunt of Severe Cyclone Pam when it barreled in late on March 13, and Oxfam, the UN and CARE Australia said assessments showed widespread devastation with entire villages destroyed.

"In Tanna at Lenakel, the provincial capital, 70 percent of houses are damaged," CARE's Tom Perry said speaking in Vanuatu's capital Port Vila.

The whole township of Waesisi on Tanna's northeast coast was "inundated with water ... and 100 percent damaged".

"There're no buildings standing," he said.

Reconnaissance flights by military aircraft from Australia and France "found severe and widespread damage across the larger islands of Tanna, Erromango and Efate", the UN said.

"Less damage was found on the smaller islands in Vanuatu's southern region, which include Anatom, Aniwa and Futuna."

Aid teams reached Tanna, home to 30,000 people, for the first time on March 17 and more humanitarian

workers were flying in to deliver aid. A ferry full of relief supplies was expected to arrive today.

The aid, from organisations such as Oxfam and the Australian military, includes basic medical supplies, water and sanitation kits and tarpaulins.

Many of the archipelago's 80 islands remain cut off and Oxfam country director in Port Vila, Colin Collett van Rooyen, said flights over some of them saw people signalling for help.

"The aerial assessments of Ambryn island reported large white 'H's marked out on the ground by people signalling for help, and on Tongoa is-

'The aerial assessment of Ambryn island reported large white 'H's marked out on the ground by people signalling for help and on Tonga island people [are] holding up mirrors.'

Colin Collett van Rooyen
Oxfam country director

land people [are] holding up mirrors also signalling for help," he said.

While the death toll was revised down, he said real concerns remained about disease with water contaminated, sanitation equipment destroyed and an increasing lack of food.

A BBC team reached the small island of Moso in the northwest and reported that people had resorted to drinking harmful saltwater, with outside help yet to arrive. Drinking saltwater can lead to dehydration and death.

There are no shops on Moso and crops were destroyed, the broadcaster said, adding that many houses were flattened.

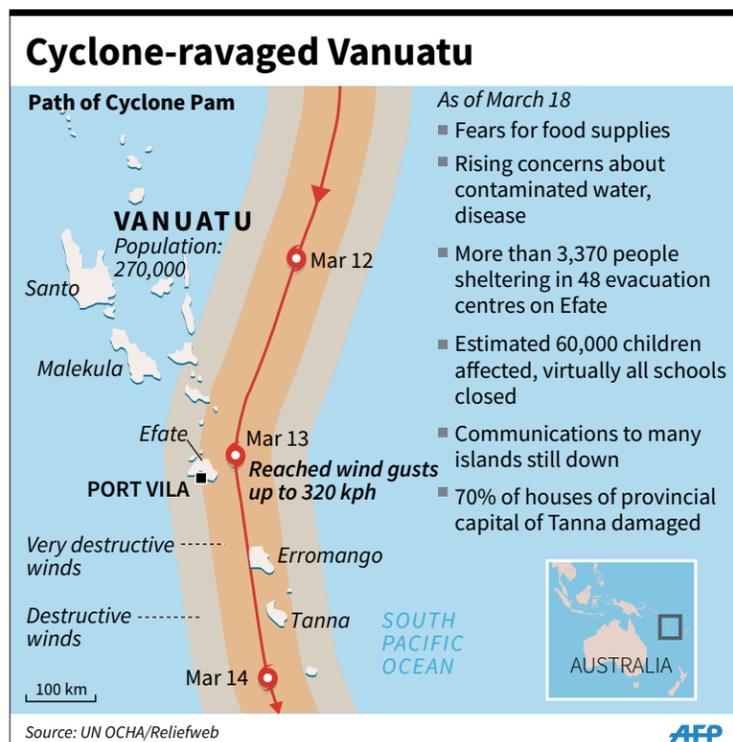
The United Nations said more than 3370 people were sheltering in some 48 evacuation centres on the main island of Efate.

In Port Vila, access to water and electricity was rapidly being restored and Telecoms Sans Frontieres was working to re-establish telecommunication networks in five provincial disaster management centres, which the UN said was a priority.

Stores also began reopening, as people began the task of rebuilding.

Vanuatu is no stranger to cyclones, which are common in the South Pacific, but locals said Pam felt worse than Cyclone Uma in 1987, which killed 30 people.

"Before, it took one to three months to recover," Riby Esau, 60, said. "It'll be longer now." - AFP



MOMBASA

Protests after ivory crime's 'most wanted' bailed in Kenya

THE suspected ringleader of an ivory smuggling gang was granted bail on medical grounds by a Kenyan court yesterday prompting angry protests from conservationists.

Kenyan national Feisal Mohammed Ali, who figured on an Interpol list of the nine most wanted suspects linked to crimes against the environment, was arrested by international police agents in Tanzania in December after fleeing Kenya and extradited to face charges in the port city of Mombasa.

Releasing Mr Ali on a 10 million shilling (US\$108,000) bond, Magistrate Justus Kituku said he did not believe the suspect would try to flee again.

"The court hopes the accused has learnt his lesson," said Mr Kituku. "The world is a global village. You can run but you cannot hide."

The judge's decision came after defence lawyers successfully argued that their client required medical treatment for diabetes that could not be provided while in custody. Mr Kituku ordered Mr Ali to hand over his passport and report to detectives weekly.

He is charged with possession of

and dealing in elephant tusks weighing more than two tonnes - equivalent to at least 114 slaughtered elephants - and worth an estimated \$4.5 million. Prosecutors allege he is a key player in the organised crime network stretching from African parks to Asian markets.

Mr Ali has denied all charges.

The haul was discovered by Kenyan police in June when they raided a car dealership in Mombasa, after which Mr Ali fled to Tanzania.

Conservationists reacted angrily to yesterday's ruling, saying it undermined a case seen as a test of Kenya's willingness and ability to prosecute wildlife crimes.

Paula Kahumbu, chief executive of conservation organisation Wildlife Direct, said the decision to grant bail was "ridiculous".

"The 10 million shilling bond is a fraction of the value of the ivory seized," she said. "This is a very, very bad sign that Kenya's landmark case is being compromised."

"It's very depressing," said Frank Pope of Save the Elephants. "It's a sad day for Kenya when someone accused of orchestrating the killing of some of

the world's most iconic wildlife is allowed to walk free."

He said it now "remained to be seen" whether the laws written on paper will be "carried through in the real world".

A recent five-year study of wildlife cases before Kenyan courts, carried out by Wildlife Direct, found that only 7 percent of those convicted of offences against elephants and rhinos actually went to jail, despite the crimes carrying a maximum 10-year sentence.

Already the Ali case has been mired in controversy after a fleet of vehicles, due to be presented as evidence, disappeared while under police guard.

Save the Elephants estimates an average of 33,000 elephants have been lost across Africa to poachers each year between 2010 and 2012.

Experts say that international criminal gangs control the trade, pushing Africa's elephants towards extinction. A joint UN Environment Programme and Interpol study in 2013 said the illegal trade is worth up to \$188 million. Mr Ali's next hearing is due on March 24. - AFP



Kenyan national Feisal Mohammed Ali stands in the dock at a Mombasa court on December 24, 2014. Photo: AFP

PARIS

Breast is best for IQ, 30-year study reports

PEOPLE breastfed as infants have higher intelligence scores in adulthood, and higher earnings, according to a study published yesterday that tracked the development of 3500 newborns over 30 years.

And, critically, the socioeconomic status of mothers appeared to have little impact on breastfeeding results, according to a paper published by *The Lancet* medical journal.

"The effect of breastfeeding on brain development and child intelligence is well established," lead author Bernardo Lessa Horta of the Federal University of Pelotas in Brazil said in a statement.

What has been less clear, is whether the effects persist into adulthood, and whether a mother's socioeconomic status or education level played a bigger role in the outcome of previous studies than her choice to breastfeed or not.

"Our study provides the first evidence that prolonged breastfeeding not only increases intelligence until at least the age of 30 years but also has an impact both at an individual and societal level by improving educational attainment and earning ability," said Mr Horta.

"What is unique about this study is the fact that, in the population we studied, breastfeeding was not more

common among highly educated, high-income women, but was evenly distributed by social class."

Mr Horta and a team analysed data from another study of children born in Pelotas in 1982.

Information on breastfeeding was compared to IQ test results at the average age of 30 years, as well as the educational achievement and income of 3493 participants.

'Our finding is that predominant breastfeeding is positively related to IQ in adulthood.'

Bernardo Lessa Horta
Federal University of Brazil

"The researchers divided these subjects into five groups based on the length of time they were breastfed as infants, controlling for 10 social and biological variables that might contribute to the IQ increase including family income at birth, parental schooling,

genomic ancestry, maternal smoking during pregnancy, maternal age, birthweight, and delivery type," said the statement.

"While the study showed increased adult intelligence, longer schooling, and higher adult earnings at all duration levels of breastfeeding, the longer a child was breastfed for (up to 12 months), the greater the magnitude of the benefits."

An individual breastfed for at least a year as a baby gained a full four IQ points, had 0.9 years more schooling, and an income of 341 Brazilian Reals (US\$104) higher per month at the age of 30, compared to those breastfed for less than one month, the study found.

"The likely mechanism underlying the beneficial effects of breast milk on intelligence is the presence of long-chain saturated fatty acids (DHAs) found in breast milk, which are essential for brain development," said Mr Horta.

"Our finding that predominant breastfeeding is positively related to IQ in adulthood also suggests that the amount of milk consumed plays a role."

In a comment also carried by *The Lancet*, Erik Mortensen of the University of Copenhagen said the findings had important public health implications. - AFP

BELGRADE

Seven held over Srebrenica massacre

SERBIAN police yesterday arrested seven people suspected of taking part in the 1995 Srebrenica massacre in Bosnia, in which around 8000 Muslim and boys were killed, the war crimes prosecutor's office said.

The seven, identified only by initials, were said to be members of a Bosnian Serb wartime special police unit.

They were suspected of having "committed war crimes against the civilian population" notably at the Kravica warehouse outside Srebrenica where more than 1000 Muslims were

killed in July 1995, the prosecutor said in a statement.

The prosecution is also searching for several more people believed to be in neighbouring countries, the statement said.

After capturing the then-UN-protected enclave on July 11, 1995, Bosnian Serbs summarily executed around 8000 Muslim men and boys in a few days.

The killings were ruled to be genocide by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia

(ICTY) and the UN's top court, the International Court of Justice.

In 2007, four members of the Serbian paramilitary Scorpions unit were sentenced to between five and 20 years each for their part in the atrocity, the worst in Europe since World War II.

Bosnian Serb wartime political and military leaders Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic are currently on trial before the ICTY for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, some related to the Srebrenica massacre. - AFP

TRADEMARK CAUTION

NOTICE is hereby given that **Evonik Degussa GmbH** a company incorporated in GERMANY and having its principal office at Rellinghauser Straße 1-11 45128 ESSEN is the Owner and Sole Proprietor of the following trademark: -

degussa.

(Reg: Nos. IV/5455/2002 & IV/2143/2013)

in respect of: - "Chemicals used in industry, science and photography, as well as in agriculture, horticulture and forestry inorganic and organic basis chemicals, organic specialty chemicals, fine chemicals and bio chemicals, oleochemicals and auxiliary chemicals for the oil production, chemical products for civil engineering; fertilizers, growth regulators for plants; chemical products for livestock breeding, vine production, textile and paper industry; enzymes for industrial use; chemical substances for preserving foodstuffs; smell depressants for organic waste and for the implantation into plastics, -textiles and paper; unprocessed artificial resins, unprocessed plastics; manures; fire extinguishing compositions; tempering and soldering preparations; chemical substances for preserving foodstuffs; tanning substances; adhesives used in industry" - Class:1

"Paints, varnishes, lacquers, colour dispersions; coatings for buildings; preservatives against rust and against deterioration of wood; colorants; mordants; raw natural resins; metals in foil and powder form for painters, decorators, printers and artists." - Class: 2

"Bleaching preparations and other substances for laundry use; cleaning, polishing, scouring and abrasive preparations; soaps; perfumery, essential oils, cosmetics, hair lotions; dentifrices" - Class:3

"Rubber, gutta-percha, gum asbestos, mica and goods made from these materials (included in class 17); goods made from plastics as semi-finished products; packing, stopping and insulating materials; flexible pipes (not of metal)." - Class:17

"Coffee, tea, particularly decaffeinated, cocoa, sugar and sweeteners, cereal preparations, ices; yeast; mustard, vinegar, sauces (condiments); spices, mixtures and preparations for the butcher, fat and cookery industries; aroma extracts and preparations thereof; pectine, gelatine, polysaccharides, texturants for the food industry, extracts of natural substances and concentrates for the food and aroma industry (included in class 30)." Class:30

"Fruit drinks and juices; fruit extracts for the food industry; syrups and other preparations for making beverages, hop extracts" - Class: 32

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 **Evonik Degussa GmbH**
P.O. Box No. 26, Yangon.
Phone: 372416

Dated: 19th March, 2015



Known for attention-grabbing dress sense and loitering, the Kingdom's *steav* are widely regarded as little better than gangsters. But the "young bulls" themselves say that they are just misunderstood

Cambodia's style brigade

WILL JACKSON, VANDY MUONG, VANN SERYNCH



Photos: Phnom Penh Post/Charlotte Pert

ABOUT 4pm every afternoon, groups of young people begin to congregate at an empty concrete lot on Koh Pich, aka Diamond Island. As the sun sinks, hundreds arrive via the bridge at the end of Sihanouk Boulevard. They ride around on their motos, chat, smoke and check each other out.

Mostly male, almost all are in their teens and early 20s. Some sit on benches under the mango trees that divide the lot from the road – the small, unripe fruit hanging above caked in dust. More drape themselves over their bikes. Others – particularly couples – loiter on a dirt embankment next to the Mekong.

Meet the *steav*, a much-maligned demographic of Cambodian youth widely considered little better than adolescent gangsters.

According to social researcher Tong Soprach, the term – which is pronounced “stiew” and sometimes translated as “rebel” – started being used as a pejorative referring to teenagers about 15 years ago.

“The word is similar to *bong thom*, or gangsters ... but for younger people, adolescents, about 15 to 20 years old,” Soprach, who also writes a weekly column for the Phnom Penh Post’s Khmer-language edition, said.

Steav rejected traditional values and were thought to be obsessed with material goods – new clothes, motorbikes and mobile phones, he said. They also had a reputation for bad behaviour: gathering in public places, like at the Independence Monument and Koh Pich, to talk, drink and smoke, and skipping school.

At the extreme, they would steal money from their parents and get involved in robberies and bag snatching, fighting and drug taking.

It’s a subculture that fascinates French-Cambodian filmmaker Davy Chou who is making a feature film called *Diamond Island* about young people who work and hang out there.

“The word *steav* originally came from *ko steav*, which is a young cow, a little bull or something,” said Chou, who with his bouffant hairdo has occasionally jokingly been accused of being a *steav* himself. “I think it’s a good image.

“They’re youngsters, this kind of free young people. Not rebels, but kind of showing off and expressing their freedom. A little bigger than life. The opposite of *steav* would be the very polite young guy who draws exactly within the lines of what a young guy should be. But I’m sure they’re sometimes the same people at different times.”

Chou, who is best known for his documentary *Golden Slumbers* about Cambodia’s film industry in the “golden age” of the 1960s and 1970s, said the *steav* reminded him of American youth in the 1950s, a time when the culture there was becoming

less conservative and more free: like James Dean in *Rebel Without a Cause*.

“Everyone had their own motorbike and this feeling of freedom,” Chou said.

At a casting call for Chou’s film last week, singer Nen Tum, who was auditioning for a role as a *steav*, said they were just young people who wanted to have fun.

“The word *steav* is a bit sensitive, it basically means just teenagers, but somehow people just assume that it’s bad. Whenever they hear the world *steav* they think that *steav* are just useless teenagers who love to waste their time doing nothing.”

On Monday afternoon at Koh Pich the young people hanging out at the concrete lot identified themselves as *steav*, but said they were misjudged.

Dara Tola, a 19-year-old university student sitting under one of the mango trees with a group of friends, said not all *steav* were the same.

“They just call anyone who hangs out here *steav*,” he said.

Some *steav* were bad people who didn’t have jobs or money and used drugs and fought with each other, he said. They sometimes drag-raced at the Koh Pich lot. But others were good, normal students or workers.

“Good *steav* just have a good way of dressing and nice hairstyles, like fashionable people,” Tola said. “It doesn’t really matter what they call us as long as we don’t do bad stuff.”

Nearby, a group of young men sat on larger motorbikes. They were reticent to talk until they called their “leader” – who was at a different spot on Koh Pich – and received permission to be interviewed. Even then they were reluctant to have their photos taken.

The group, which has about 30 members in total, meet every afternoon, said Vann Sotheng, a 17-year-old grade-11 student at Beltei International School.

He said they spend their time planning rides out to places like Kirirom Mountain and Kampot, and charity drives to donate money to poor children in the provinces.

Sotheng, wearing a blue shirt open at the collar and tight black jeans, and sitting on a big neon yellow motorbike bought by his parents – a sticker reads: “I love my family” – said he came straight to Koh Pich every day after going home to change out of his uniform.

“The word *steav* is not bad. They just call us that because of the way we look and all the stickers on our motorbikes,” he said.

Chou said *steav* style was influenced by outside trends – like Western movie stars and Korean pop singers – but was distinct to the Kingdom. “I’m not sure if we can find Cambodian *steav* outside of Cambodia,” he said.

“It’s a social type that is very new. It couldn’t happen when nobody had things like big motos before. It’s also linked with this emerging middle class.”

Chou said the classic *steav* look for guys was tight trousers, a colourful shirt with wide lapels and flip-flops or nice sneakers. The girls often wore sexy short pants.

He said the place to go for a “supercool look” was the hairdressers behind Bak Touk High School.

At the Kalip Mode hairdressing salon there on Tuesday, nearly a dozen male hairdressers were busy sharpening up their customers’ already stylish hair. Cambodian-style dance music pounded on the sound system. Most of the customers were teenage boys.

“About three-quarters are male and the rest are lesbians,” said hairdresser Ban Soravorn, 18. “We rarely get any [straight] female customers.”

Soravorn said a *steav* was someone who was “young and fresh, with a good style of fashion that looked cool with a nice haircut.”

“No, I don’t think *steav* is a bad world at all. *Steav* is someone who is cool,” he said.

Appearances were important, he added. “You cannot look like an old-fashioned person; you have to look cool. I have to look good because I want to attract people’s attention, especially girls.”

Reaksmey, a 21-year-old university student, said she considered herself a *steav* because she was different from “normal people who don’t like to try cool and new styles as *steav* do”.

“I know some people think that *steav* are bad people who are young, crazy, wild and like to cause trouble, but, for me, it depends. Not all the *steav* are bad. Some are good people who love to dress up just to make themselves look cool, follow the new trends and be happy about themselves and to attract other people’s attention.

“People shouldn’t judge others just by their appearance.”

She added that she felt comfortable being a lesbian because there were many people like her in the subculture and it was considered normal.

Chou said he wanted to make it clear that *Diamond Island*, which is set to start shooting later this year, wasn’t all about the *steav*.

“The main inspiration of the film is how to catch something about the youth today, in this very specific time of modernisation of Cambodia, in a place that for me is very symbolic of that specific moment, and maybe symbolic of the future of Cambodia,” Chou said.

“It’s an interesting parallel to how this country is and where it’s going.” – *Phnom Penh Post*

Taking the show on the railroad

NANDAR AUNG
nandaraung.mcm@gmail.com

BRAVING the slings and arrows of outraged commuters, a group of talented young actors are taking their show on the road. The railroad, that is. Yangon's circular train line, to be, or not to be, exact.

It's almost 9pm, but the 15 actors, some from the Shakespeare School, in the Laurel Art Academy hall are still rehearsing without the slightest trace of fatigue. The multinational and multitalented group moves as one under the direction of Liam Shea.

"One more time," he commands. They have been rehearsing for two months, Wednesday and Thursday every week, and they still look like they're having lots of fun.

Ko Phoo Pyae Si Thu, an actor from the Laurel Art Academy, said, "It looks so cool. I've performed several times with Liam's group, but I haven't seen such a fun play. It is quite different from the others. It looks like a street performance, but it's much more difficult."

He will depict a street vendor on the train selling fried insects.

Liam Shea, director of the Shakespeare School, Yangon, is no stranger to these actors, veterans together of such works as *Macbeth* and *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

But there will be no daggers suspended in the air, or mischievous imps of the woods in their next gig.

The stories they will act out are based on the real-life stories and experiences of the commuters who use the circular line to get to work.

"As all know, a lot of the projects



Performers rehearse in preparation for their performance on Yangon's circle line train on March 22. Photos: Thiri Lu

of 'My Yangon My Home' were staged downtown. But there's more to Yangon than downtown. We decided to take our plays to the rest of the city," said Shea.

He and the actors went out on the trains to talk to the commuters to get materials to put in the sketches. "I hope it will amuse people," he said.

One of the stories concerns a little girl who used to try to hail the train as if it were a taxi as it passed. When it chugs past, she starts to cry. In a plot development that suggests Alice in Wonderland, she follows a

sprite aboard the train and meets the strangest people.

That play will be performed on Yangon Station platform. The other performances, each lasting 20-30 minutes, will play out in the carriages.

Commuters will see a gullible Western tourist paying silly prices for anything and everything sold by vendors, with no idea what he is buying or what to do with it, and then getting into trouble with the train guard.

All the stories, about reality and fantasy, will come together, brought

to life by the actors, musicians from Myanmar Orchestra, dancers and puppeteers from Htwe Oo Myanmar. "The audiences don't have to see the whole performance. They can always get off. And anyone who wants to see it can get on," said Liam.

The Circle Line performances are part of the Yangon Art and Heritage Festival, "My Yangon My Home". They start at Yangon Station from 10am to 2pm from March 22 and are free. For more information visit www.shakespeareschools.com

Second Myanmar photo festival launches

NANDAR AUNG
nandaraung.mcm@gmail.com

MYANMAR Photographic Society will hold its second photo festival on March 20-22 at the Yangon Gallery. More than 300 photographs, including award-winning pictures from last January's All Myanmar Photo contest, will be on show, together with cameras and accessories.

The festival will also feature a seminar, workshop and talks on photographic technology.

Japanese photographers Koyama and Kana Sonoda will deliver a lecture on March 20 at the Yangon Gallery at People's Park.

On the opening day, members of the society will hold one-hour discussions on wedding photography and photo essays, and on March 21 they will discuss street photography and micro/nature, panoramic and body light painting photography. On March 22, discussion will centre on flash photography, the photo contest, travel photography, and using filters and Photoshop plug-ins.

The talks start at 11am, and are free to attend.

Ko Kyaw Kyaw Win, a member of the society, said, "Professional photographers will deal with several themes in these talks. Participants will also voice their opinions. I'll be speaking on photo essays."

Contest winners will receive their awards on March 22, 4m at the Yangon Gallery, People's Park, Ahlone Road.

Voxpop

Mars One aims to establish a permanent human settlement on Mars. Do you think it is possible?



U Win Kyi, car tyre inflator

"I read that there are living things on Mars. Mars One believes it is possible to live on the planet so they are taking the risk. I don't think it is impossible."



Ma Khin Shwe, Yangon resident

"I think it is possible because the development of science is awesome."



U Soe Naing, security guard

"If the soil and atmosphere of Mars is similar to that of our planet, the project is possible. If the advance of modern science can make water on the Moon, I don't see we couldn't do it on Mars."



Sue Welch, Australian tourist

"We need to get to Mars first before we can start a colony. I just can't imagine how it will work. Do they even know if it will be possible for humans to live there? Will there be water?"



Ko Ye Win, sugarcane juice seller

"It is possible because science is so advanced these days. But I don't think human beings could live long on Mars - it wouldn't be healthy. Humans are not accustomed to life on that planet and it is so different to our planet. Anyway, I think their project is a good one."



Andy Constantaras, engineer

"It's farfetched but anything is possible these days. We went to the moon 50 years ago, after all. If it was a round-trip I'd definitely offer to go, but I wouldn't want to stay for ever. Although at my age I suppose it doesn't matter."

Irish Mars trip finalist casts doubt on project

AN Irish finalist for the audacious Mars One project to start a human colony on the red planet predicted the plan would fall "on its face" on March 17.

Joseph Roche, an astrophysicist at Trinity College Dublin, said the selection process for the one-way trip was deeply inadequate, and that finalists were encouraged to give money to the project.

"My nightmare about it is that people continue to support it and give it money and attention, and it then gets to the point where it inevitably falls on its face," Roche told *Medium* magazine.

"If I was somehow linked to something that could do damage to the public perception of science, that is my nightmare scenario."

Mars One, a Dutch-based non-profit, has been repeatedly criticised over its plan to colonise Mars from 2024.

Dutch Nobel Physics prize winner Gerard 't Hooft, an early backer of the project, has said that it will far cost more and take longer than planned.

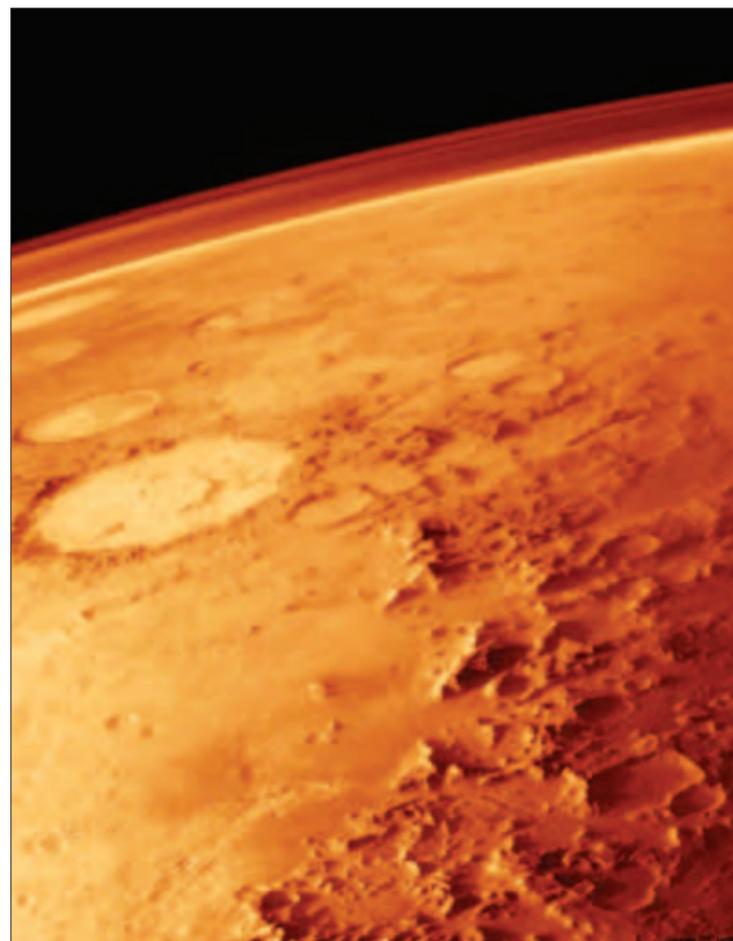
A study by Massachusetts Institute of Technology researchers found that humans would start dying within 68 days on the colony, and a TV deal intended to help fund the project reportedly fell through.

Roche, an assistant professor, said that candidates for the trip were awarded "points" in return for buying Mars One merchandise or donating to the project.

Initial plans for an interview process lasting several days never materialised after candidates signed a non-disclosure agreement, he said.

"I have not met anyone from Mars One in person," Roche said.

"All the info they have collected on me is a crap video I made, an application form that I filled out with



Dutch-based non-profit Mars One aims to establish a permanent human settlement on Mars, sending people every two years from 2024. Photo: Creative Commons

mostly one-word answers ... and then a 10-minute Skype interview."

"That is just not enough info to make a judgement on someone about anything."

The group did not respond to requests for comment on Roche's

claims, but said donations from candidates did not influence the selection process, and that a new TV deal was in place.

Roche did not indicate whether or not he planned to drop out of the project. - *AFP*

ROME

Designer duo hit back at Elton in IVF storm

ITALIAN designers Dolce and Gabbana on March 16 accused Elton John of being authoritarian, ignorant and hypocritical as a celebrity-driven row over IVF babies and gay adoption showed no sign of abating.

John, 67, stirred up a storm when he called for a boycott of the designer label in reaction to an interview in which Domenico Dolce referred to babies conceived through IVF as “synthetic”.

In Instagram comments that have been endorsed by celebrities including Victoria Beckham, Ricky Martin, Sharon Stone, Courtney Love and Martina Navratilova, the gay star accused the Italian duo of “wagging your judgemental little fingers at IVF”.

He added, “Your archaic thinking is out of step with the times, just like your fashions. I shall never wear Dolce and Gabbana ever again. #BoycottDolceGabbana.”

The hashtag was the top trending one on Twitter in Britain on March 16 and in the top three in Italy, with most posts highly critical of the Italian duo.

The designers, who are also gay, claimed it was John who was being judgemental, not them.

Dolce said his comment that IVF was not for him should not have been interpreted as disapproval of anyone else's choices.

“I'm Sicilian and I grew up in a traditional family, made up of a mother, a father and children,” he said in a statement. “This is the reality in which I grew up, but it does not imply that I don't understand different ones. I was talking about my personal view, without judging other people's choices and decisions.”

His business partner Gabbana was so infuriated by John's statement that he posted the comments #fascist and #boycotteltonjohn on the singer's Instagram page before deleting them.

On March 16, he expressed more measured criticism. “I didn't expect this, coming from someone whom I considered, and I stress ‘considered’, an intelligent person like Elton John. I mean, you preach understanding, tolerance and

then you attack others?” he said.

“Is this a democratic or enlightened way of thinking? This is ignorance, because he ignores the fact that others might have a different opinion and that theirs is as worthy of respect as his. It's an authoritarian way of seeing the world: agree with me or, if you don't, I'll attack you,” Gabbana added.

John has two young sons with his husband David Furnish who were conceived through IVF and born thanks to a surrogacy arrangement.

In the original interview, in Italy's *Panorama* magazine, Gabbana said he would have a child tomorrow if he could, while Dolce explained why he did not feel he could go down that road.

“You are born and you have a father and a mother,” Dolce said. “Or at least that's the way it should be, and that's why I'm not convinced by children from chemistry, synthetic babies, uteruses for rent, semen chosen from a catalogue.”

The backlash is causing concern among D&G executives about the impact on the company's global brand and sales as hopes it would blow over quickly begin to look optimistic.

– AFP



British pop superstar Elton John (left) and his now-husband David Furnish arrive for the British Premiere of *Gnomeo and Juliet*, in London's Leicester Square, on January 30, 2011. Photo: AFP/Max Nash

PARIS

Iranian filmmakers defy regime to foreign acclaim

IRANIAN filmmakers, at home and in exile, are breaking free from restrictions – imposed both by their repressive government and by audience expectations – to form a creative wave that is increasingly winning attention internationally.

The 2011 Oscar win for the Iranian movie *A Separation* snapped the focus on what was coming out of the Islamic Republic. But those in the industry emphasise that other notable productions go well beyond regime-approved portrayals of daily Iranian life.

From this year's Berlinale triumph of *Taxi* to a couple of fresh American-made movies including a dark comedy by the maker of the groundbreaking *Persepolis*, and other films hitting screens abroad, the output is challenging Tehran's censors and easy categorisation.

“Iran has strong art and cinema” that will thrive no matter the adversity, exiled Iranian director Mohsen Makhmalbaf said as he presented his latest movie, *The President*, about a Central Asian republic's dictator toppled in a revolution and running for his life.

“There is hope for this cinema, more than for the life of the dictatorship in Iran. There is hope that one day we don't have this regime but we will have a good history of Iranian cinema.”

Taxi by Jafar Panahi, a dissident director living in Tehran who is defying a ban by the government there on making movies for 20 years, is the latest big success. His film, smuggled out of Iran, took top prize at the Berlin film festival last month.

Despite the accolade, *Taxi* won't be shown in Iranian cinemas. But it will certainly be seen anyway by Iran's legions of film fans who pay a dollar or two for bootleg DVDs in a thriving underground market.

That same market will also



Iran's film director Mohsen Makhmalbaf poses on March 10 in Paris, a week before the French release of his last movie *Le President*. Photo: AFP/Loic Venance

offer *The Voices*, a less lofty, more commercial movie by Marjane Satrapi, the Iranian-French director behind the award-winning 2007 black-and-white animation *Persepolis*.

The new film, a macabre comedy starring Ryan Reynolds as a man pushed to murder by his talking pets, has nothing at all to do with her native country. It can be seen as part of a deliberate plan in her evolution to becoming a director first – and not one exclusively associated with stories about Iran.

“What I had to say about Iran, I said at length ... I don't like to redo what I know what to do because I feel like I'm not progressing enough,” Satrapi said.

Still, “Iran is in me, it's my country,” she stressed. Makhmalbaf, who now holds a French passport and lives in Britain, and who has survived what he said were four attempts by Iran's regime to murder him, says that after 10 years in exile, “I don't know where is my homeland ... Little by little I am less Iranian, honestly.”

He, too, adheres to a more universal identity, shaking off

any attempt to pigeonhole him as concentrating on Iran, which he was forced to flee a decade ago.

“I am first a human being, second I am an artist, third I was born in Iran – not the reverse.”

Given the oppression and censorship in Iran, some of the freshest visions starting to emerge about the country come from the post-revolutionary generation born and raised outside their parents' country.

Ana Lily Amirpour, an Iranian-American born in Britain, offers one such movie: a black-and-white “vampire western” about a trendy, bloodsucking Iranian dressed in Islamic garb titled *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night*.

The 2014 film, shot in California but set in an imaginary Iranian town and featuring Farsi dialogue throughout, has been well-received and opened up career horizons for Amirpour.

But her next project will not be Iran-themed. Instead, she said she's making a film – in English this time – that she summed up as a violent “post-cannibalistic love story”. – AFP

Another day, another burrito

DOUGLAS LONG

dlong125@gmail.com

CALL me *un optimista*, but every time I hear about a restaurant in Yangon serving Mexican food, I hope against hope for a complete menu of enchiladas, chile rellenos, tostadas, chimichangas, tamales and chilaquiles.

I excitedly dust off my humongous purple-velvet fine-dining sombrero and make haste to the venue in question, only to be disappointed by the dearth of (from my US perspective) “south of the border” options, which are usually limited to burritos, tacos, quesadillas and sometimes fajitas.

Such was the case with my recent visit to Agora Café and Restaurant, but as usual I made the best of an initially disappointing situation.

Agora is divided into two areas: an inviting café with booth seating on one side, and a spacious dining room with tables on the other. We opted for the latter after a waitress who met us at the door warned that the café was “too hot”.

Climatic considerations aside, the dining room was not especially appealing in its bigness and emptiness.



Photo Caption. Photo: AFP

There were a few paintings – with price tags attached – hanging on the wall and sitting on easels, but it appeared as if someone had lost interest halfway through installing the exhibition and fled the scene.

When it came time to order, we skipped the “Asian” and “Western” sections of the menu and focused on the Mexican fare, starting with a

small order of guacamole and chips (K5000). This turned out to be a better bargain than anticipated: The crunchy chips were made in-house and the guacamole was abundant. When the chips were gone, there was still plenty of deliciously pulverised avocado left over to slather onto the slow-roasted pork burrito (K7500) I ordered as my main course.

The burrito looked rather small when delivered to the table but turned out to be quite filling. The pork was tender and tasty, and the tortilla in which it was wrapped had been grilled to crunchy yet supple perfection. It's no exaggeration to say that there was – cliché alert – a fiesta of impressive proportion every bite.

My dinner *compañero* ordered the steak fajitas (K9000), which came with grilled peppers and onions, and way more meat than could possibly be accommodated by the three tortillas on the plate. She judged the dish to be “pretty good”. I sampled a few pieces of the leftover beef and found it to be credibly succulent, although the flavour was somewhat uneven: Some pieces were very salty, others substantially less so.

For drinks we skipped the café selections and perused the “collection of signature cocktails from Southeast Asia”, which included the Singapore sling, the jungle bird (Malaysia), the krungthep (Thailand) and the pygmy slow lorange (Laos).

We decided to go domestic and ordered a couple of Pegu Clubs (K5000). Mine was pleasingly refreshing, but never having tried a Pegu Club before – I'm a beer guy – I can't say whether it stands as a

Restaurant Review

particularly remarkable exemplar of this particular cocktail.

The next time I dine at Agora, I will likely ignore the waitress's advice and sit in the café, heat or no heat. I will also arrive having already had my high hopes for an expansive Mexican menu ruthlessly obliterated, and can therefore expect to have a better overall experience.

Agora Café and Restaurant

Agora Café and Restaurant
84 Kanbe Road, Yankin township, Yangon

Restaurant Rating
★★★★★

Food	7
Beverage	8
Service	7
Value	7
X-Factor	6

THE REGION'S MOST RECOGNISED
AND RESPECTED REAL ESTATE EVENT
IS COMING TO MYANMAR

PROPERTY REPORT

WWW.PROPERTY-REPORT.COM

PRESENTS

MYANMAR PROPERTY AWARDS 2015

CELEBRATE THE BEST IN THE COUNTRY'S
PROPERTY INDUSTRY AT
THE MYANMAR PROPERTY AWARDS
CEREMONY AND GALA DINNER
ON 17 JUNE AT SULE SHANGRI-LA, YANGON

SUPER EARLY BIRD TICKETS ARE NOW AVAILABLE
FOR THE EXCLUSIVE, BLACK-TIE EVENT AT

ASIAPROPERTYAWARDS.COM

JUDGING SUPERVISED BY:



CO-SPONSORS:



SUPPORTING ASSOCIATION:



ORGANISED BY:



MEDIA PARTNERS:



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	

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 503	Daily	19:05	23:20

KUALA LUMPUR TO YANGON			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
AK 504	Daily	6:55	8:00
MH 740	Daily	10:05	11:15
8M 502	1,2,3,5,6	12:30	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

- Day
- 1 = Monday
- 2 = Tuesday
- 3 = Wednesday
- 4 = Thursday
- 5 = Friday
- 6 = Saturday
- 7 = Sunday

FOOTBALL

Joy as rock-bottom Bhutan pull off World Cup shock

CHEERING fans poured onto the streets of Thimphu on March 17 as Bhutan, the world's lowest-ranked football team, pulled off a major shock to reach the second round of World Cup qualifiers.

Joyous supporters banged drums and chanted "Now we're not the worst team!" after the tiny Himalayan nation, rock-bottom at 209th in the FIFA rankings, stunned Sri Lanka 3-1 on aggregate.

The "Ronaldo of Bhutan", Chenchu Gyeltshen, struck twice in the 2-1 win at a packed Changlimithang Stadium, a week after Chokey Nima's men beat Sri Lanka 1-0 in Colombo.

Gyeltshen opened the scoring on five minutes and he was mobbed by his teammates when he coolly struck the winner in the 90th minute, sealing Bhutan's progression.

Although Sri Lanka are only ranked 174th, Bhutan, attempting to qualify for a World Cup for the first time, were such outsiders that ex-Sri Lanka skipper Ashok Nawgalage even questioned the point of playing the tie.

But in the event it was the Bhutanese - given the afternoon off by Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay to support the national team - who were celebrating a memorable win.

Bhutan, better known for its Gross National Happiness Index and archery, will now take its place among 40 Asian teams in the group qualifying stage starting in June.

Although Bhutan's chances of reaching the 2018 World Cup in Russia remain extremely small, they have provided the first upset at the start of a global qualifying campaign.

It was not the only fairytale result as East Timor, one of the world's youngest and poorest nations, sent Mongolia crashing out 5-1 on aggregate in chilly Ulan Bator.

Sleeping giant India made it through thanks to a 0-0 draw with Nepal in Kathmandu, following last week's 2-0 victory in the east Indian city of Guwahati.

But Pakistan's home leg against Yemen in Lahore was postponed and shifted to an as-yet-unnamed neutral venue after a deadly Taliban attack on churches in the city.

The move was another blow to sport in Pakistan, who trail 3-1 from the first leg, after a 2009 attack in Lahore put tours by international cricket teams on hold.

Elsewhere Taiwan fought back from 1-0 down in the first leg to beat Brunei 2-0 away thanks to goals from Wang Ruei and Chu En-le either side of half-time.

French-born Thierry Bin scored for Cambodia in a 1-1 away draw with Macau, which was enough to seal their progression 4-1 on aggregate.

Asia's lowest-ranked teams were playing home and away to reach the group stage, kicking off a marathon, worldwide qualifying campaign for the next World Cup. - AFP



Bhutanese footballer Chenchu Gyeltshen (right) scores a goal past Sri Lanka's goalkeeper during their 2018 FIFA World Cup Preliminary Round qualifying match in Thimphu on March 17. Photo: AFP

India  0 - 0  Nepal	Cambodia  1 - 1  Macau
India won 2-0 on aggregate	Cambodia won 4-1 on aggregate
Yemen  Postponed  Pakistan	Chinese Taipei  2 - 0  Brunei
Yemen leading 3-1 on aggregate	Chinese Taipei won 2-1 on aggregate
Timor-Leste  1 - 0  Mongolia	Sri Lanka  1 - 2  Bhutan
Timor-Leste won 5-1 on aggregate	Bhutan won 3-1 on aggregate

SKIING

Alpine championships go to the wire

THE fight for the overall men and women's titles will go down to the wire at the season-ending March 18-22 World Cup alpine skiing finals in Meribel.

In the men's events, Austrian Marcel Hirscher leads Norwegian Kjetil Jansrud by 164 points, with races to come in the downhill, super-G, giant slalom and slalom at the French resort that hosted the 1992 Olympic ski program.

The skiers have been the stand-out performers of the season, having both already snaffled a crystal globe for topping standings in two individual disciplines.

Hirscher, who claimed super combined gold and giant slalom silver at February's world championships, took the giant slalom crown from American Ted Ligety.

Jansrud was left disappointed to have come away from Beaver Creek with only a super combined silver, but continued that Norwegian love affair with the super-G by claiming the globe in emphatic style.

The women's overall title comes down to a straight fight between Austrian Anna Fenninger and Slovenian rival Tina Maze.

Fenninger claimed world super-G and giant slalom golds and downhill silver in February while Maze won downhill and super combined golds and a silver in the super-G, the two dominant forces across those disciplines and sure to guarantee a thrilling battle.

Aside the overall titles, other crystal globes up for grabs are the men's slalom, with Germany's Felix Neureuther heading Hirscher by 55 points, and downhill, with Jansrud 20 points ahead of Austrian Hannes Reichelt.

"It's not possible to win the overall globe if you're skiing badly in one discipline - you have to have two really good disciplines," said Hirscher.

"If I had to choose, I would say I prefer retaining the big globe compared to winning back the



US skier Marco Sullivan competes in the Men's downhill at the FIS Alpine Skiing World Cup finals in Meribel on March 18. Photo: AFP

giant slalom one, definitely. But it is also really nice to have the GS globe.

"It gives me extra power for the next races so I hope the two can go hand in hand."

In the women's events - which like the men's races feature only the top 25 in each category, there's all to play for, with American Lindsey Vonn leading the super-G and downhill standings, by 8 and 35 points respectively from Fenninger.

"It's going to be a close fight in downhill and super-G, so I will really have to ski my best at the

Finals in Meribel. Hopefully I can get two titles," said Vonn.

Fenninger is in pole for the giant slalom, 86pts ahead of teammate Eva-Maria Brem, while it would take a major upset for Sweden's Frida Hansdotter to claim the slalom globe from in-form American world champion Mikael Shiffrin.

"I feel confident in my skiing now. But for the big globe I have to wait for Tina to make mistakes I think," Fenninger said.

"I think it will be tight until the end and I don't know if I can make it or not."

CYCLING

Armstrong Tour ride plans 'disrespectful': cycling chief

WORLD cycling chief Brian Cookson on March 17 hit out at drugs cheat Lance Armstrong's plans to ride this year's Tour de France route for charity, branding them "completely disrespectful".

Armstrong, stripped of his seven Tour titles for doping offences, has signed up to take part in the event, organised by former England football player Geoff Thomas.

The fundraising mission will see cyclists ride the route of the Tour one day ahead of the peloton, but Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI) president Cookson wants Armstrong to reconsider.

"I'm sure that Geoff Thomas means well, but frankly, I think that's completely inappropriate and disrespectful to the Tour, disrespectful to the current riders, and disrespectful to the UCI and the anti-doping community," Cookson told the Sport Industry Breakfast Club in London.

"I think Lance would be well-advised not to take part in that."

Armstrong was banned for life from competing in cycling and triathlon by the United States Anti-Doping Agency in August 2012 and Cookson said the Texan's charitable motives did not make his stunt more palatable.

"I've heard that reason rolled out throughout Lance A's career as well," Cookson added.

"I'm not critical of people trying to raise funds for charity, let's be clear. But I think maybe Lance could find a better way of continuing his fundraising efforts than this."

"Lance Armstrong can ride his bike around France as often as he likes. It's got nothing to do with me or the UCI." - AFP

IN BRIEF

Football
Sunderland to review Johnson suspension

Premier League strugglers Sunderland announced yesterday that they are reviewing their suspension of winger Adam Johnson following his arrest on suspicion of sexual activity with an under-age girl.

The 27-year-old England international, arrested two weeks ago, had his bail extended by five weeks on March 17 and does not need to report back to police until April 23.

In response, Sunderland released a statement saying, "Following the police decision, the club will be reviewing its position."

The announcement came a day after the club appointed Dick Advocaat as manager following the dismissal of Gus Poyet.

'Shut up!' Balotelli tells critics

Liverpool striker Mario Balotelli hit out at his detractors in an angry video published on his Instagram account late on March 17, telling them, "Shut up!"

Speaking directly to camera in the short clip, he says, "Do you know me? Did you ever talk to me, personally? Do you know what I've been through in my life? You just saw me play football on the pitch, so man, shut up!"

An accompanying caption read: "For those with an easy judge (sic) without knowing s*** about others. Good night #idowhatiwant-remember!"

The 24-year-old Italy international may have been responding to criticism of his performances since arriving at Anfield from AC Milan in a US\$23.5 million deal last August.

Balotelli has scored only four goals in 20 appearances in all competitions and has found the net only once in the Premier League.

Formula One
No 2015 German Grand Prix, says Hockenheim boss

The boss of the Hockenheim circuit has insisted there will not be a German Grand Prix held there in 2015 despite a Formula One race currently scheduled to be held in Germany from July 17-19.

Georg Seiler, boss of the Hockenheim track, told German daily *Bild* they will not be ready to host the race in time.

"We have no hope any more of having a Formula One race here," he said.

"The time in which to organise a race has expired, otherwise the quality of the event would have suffered."

Hockenheim hosted last year's German Grand Prix, but is supposed to alternate each year with the Nuerburgring, which has new owners and no contract for 2015.

Formula 1 magnate Bernie Ecclestone said in January that Hockenheim would again host this year's race as the only viable alternative to Nuerburgring in Germany.

The official 2015 calendar does not yet specify a venue for the race. - AFP

Cricket
Australia call up Steve Waugh for words of wisdom

Australia have called up former captain Steve Waugh for advice as they prepare for the World Cup quarter-final against Pakistan at the Adelaide Oval tomorrow.

Waugh, 49, a veteran of four World Cups and part of the winning squad twice in 1987 and as captain in 1999, had a dinner meeting with the entire squad on March 17 and was also present at the nets yesterday.

"It was good to sit down over dinner with him and just chat about cricket and World Cups," opening batsman Aaron Finch said.

"He's obviously captained a winning one and played in another one as well. There are not many better-credentialed players to talk to about it. Guys just threw a few questions at him." - AFP

TENNIS

Federer, Nadal power through in straight sets

FOUR-TIME champ Roger Federer avenged his only loss of the season and world No 3 Rafael Nadal avoided another early exit on March 17 at the WTA and ATP Indian Wells tournament.

It was in January that Andreas Seppi shocked Federer in the third round of the Australian Open but the Swiss star got his payback winning 6-3, 6-4 in 82 minutes on centre court.

It was Federer's only loss and it snapped his streak of 11 straight semi-final appearances at the Aussie Open.

"It was good to play him right away again and erase it from the memory," said Federer. "This was one of those matches where I was happy to get through and happy it was over."

Federer moves through to the round of 16 to play American Jack Sock, who beat Spain's Roberto Bautista-Agut 3-6, 6-3, 6-2.

Three-time champion Nadal avoided a second straight early exit from Indian Wells with a 6-4, 6-2 victory over Donald Young.

Nadal will square off against France's Gilles Simon for a berth in the quarter-finals.

Last year, Nadal was eliminated in the third round by Alexandr Dolgoplov 7-6, 6-4. It was his earliest exit in the California desert tournament since 2004.

"Last year was 2014 and we are in 2015. Every year is different," Nadal said. "I played a lot of good tournaments here with good results."

"I feel very comfortable. I happy to be in the fourth round."

Nadal hit just one ace and made three double faults but he broke Young six times in the 80-minute match on centre court.

He hopes to improve his serve in the next round against Simon.



Rafael Nadal of Spain lunges in his match against Donald Young of the USA during day nine of the BNP Paribas Open tennis at the Indian Wells Tennis Garden on March 17. Photo: AFP

"It's true that I had a few mistakes with my serve," he said. "But then with a positive attitude in the next game, I was able to have breaks."

"I did what I had to do to get through, winning in straight sets. I need to serve a little bit better tomorrow."

World number one Serena Williams woke up after a slow start to battle past American compatriot Sloane Stephens in three sets to reach the quarter-finals.

The 19-time Grand Slam winner defeated a dogged Stephens 6-7 (3/7), 6-2, 6-2 as her emotional return from a 14-year Indian Wells boycott gathers pace.

Williams, 33, said it was good to

play a two-hour match because she needs to step up her game if she is going to advance deeper into the draw.

"I still am trying to find my bearings," she said. "I have been off a little this week."

"I just had to stay focused and use the experience of a three-set match."

Williams, who blasted 14 aces and broke Stephens six times in the two-hour, six-minute match, faces Timea Bacsinszky of Switzerland next.

The two former Fed Cup teammates have a colourful history after Stephens, 21, upset Williams in the quarter-finals of the 2013 Australian Open in three sets.

That win ended Williams'

20-match winning streak and the two haven't been chummy since then.

Sixth-seeded Canadian Eugenie Bouchard was upset by qualifier Lesia Tsurenko, who rallied for a 6-7 (5/7), 7-5, 6-4 victory.

In other matches, defending champ Flavia Pennetta eliminated second-seeded Maria Sharapova of Russia 3-6, 6-3, 6-2 and third seed Simona Halep, of Romania, defeated Karolina Pliskova 6-4, 6-4.

On the men's side, Canadian sixth seed Milos Raonic hammered Dolgoplov 7-6 (7/2), 6-4, Czech Tomas Berdych rolled over American Steve Johnson 6-4, 6-2 and Simon took care of Michael Berrer, of Germany, 6-2, 7-5. - AFP

MOUNTAIN BIKING

'Epic' mountain bike racing tests the toughest

WHEN a former Springbok rugby captain describes a cycle race as tougher than a Test match, you know the Cape Epic deserves its title as the "Tour de France of mountain biking".

"It's a lot more gruelling," John Smit, who led South Africa to the 2007 World Cup, said shortly after finishing the first stage of the race this week.

"A Test match is 80 minutes of hard, physical pain. This is pain stretched out over eight days so it's similar - but longer," he said.

Smit - along with more than a thousand other riders - had just completed a 113-kilometre (70-mile) ride through the rugged mountains of South Africa's Western Cape.

The March 16 ride was Stage 1 of the seven stage race, which covers a total of 739 kilometres of torturous trails and 16,000 metres of climbing.

If it is so tough, why do it at the age of 36 after having proved yourself on the rugby field?

"It's a challenge," said Smit, a former front-row forward, looking as grimy and exhausted as he would have been after having taken on the likes of the All Blacks.

"You've got to do something. I stopped for about two months after I retired [in 2011] and it was the worst thing ever.

"So I found a bicycle, got fit and now I look for these tough things to do."

It's a sentiment shared by many of the 1200 men and women in two-rider teams tackling the 12th annual Cape Epic, widely regarded as the best mountain bike race in the world.

Among them are leading international riders, including world champions and Olympic medallists.

Tipped to win among a star-studded field this year are Swiss Christoph Sauser and Czech Jaroslav Kulhavy of Team Investec-Songo-Specialized.

But while they and other top professional riders fight it out for the lead, streaming through the mountains behind them is a colourful crew of tough and skilled amateurs in pursuit of their own triumphs of guts and glory in what is also known as the Untamed African MTB Race.

Advertising agency executive Russell Lund, 42, and his tennis coach partner Piet Calitz, 40, described the torments of the steep and rocky course as they loaded up on pasta after finishing the first stage.

Lund fell - he shows a bloodied shin - and Calitz had a time-consuming puncture, but they were in good spirits as they tried to work out why

they were doing it.

"That's a very good question," said Lund. "I guess you really feel once you are here that it's a week out of your regular life - you almost feel like a pro for a week."

Like Smit, they brushed aside their age, pointing out that the entry fee of 60,000 rand (nearly US\$5000) was prohibitive for young amateur riders without sponsorship.

So why not spend the money on a good holiday?

"I know, it's absolute lunacy," said Lund. "Someone should pay you to do it."

"But it's an enormous challenge and it was on my bucket list."

"Also, there's something about a mountain bike race - if it's a nice track and it's pretty, even after 120

'This is pain stretched out over eight days so it's similar - but longer.'

John Smit

Former South African Rugby captain

kilometres you'll find two guys smiling and singing.

"You won't see that in a marathon runner."

The fees go toward a sophisticated logistics operation which sees a travelling race village follow the riders, pitching more than 2000 tents at each stage and serving thousands of meals a day.

The total prize money, at 1.6 million rand (nearly \$130,000) is the highest in world mountain biking, but that is not on the minds of most of the riders.

The first stage began and ended at the Oak Valley wine estate in the Elgin Valley, some 70 kilometres from Cape Town in the scenic Overberg region.

The local wines were available in refreshment tents, but not surprisingly the bartenders were among the least busy support staff as the top athletes tended their bodies and their bikes after a hard day on the road.

Lund, however, dismissed the idea that a celebratory drink was out of the question for amateur riders.

"I'll have a beer tonight and Piet will have several. I encourage him - the more he drinks the faster he goes," said Lund. - AFP

Sport

Cycling chief slams Armstrong's Tour plans

SPORT 26

CRICKET

No choke: South Africa down Sri Lanka to reach semis

SOUTH Africa stormed into the World Cup semi-finals yesterday with a nine-wicket rout of Sri Lanka which brought the curtain down on the ODI careers of Kumar Sangakkara and Mahela Jayawardene.

Off-spinner JP Duminy (3-29) took a hat-trick and leg-spinner Imran Tahir claimed 4-26 as South Africa, who had never before won a World Cup knockout match, set up a clash against either New Zealand or West Indies for a place in the March 29 final.

Chasing just 134 to win, the Proteas reached their target in the 18th over with opener Quinton de Kock making an undefeated 78.

Sangakkara, in his last one-day international appearance, top-scored for Sri Lanka with 45 as his record-breaking run of four successive ODI hundreds came to an end. Together with Lahiru Thirimanne (41) he put on 65 for the third wicket.

Fellow veteran Jayawardene, who now quits all international cricket, made only four before he became one of Tahir's victims as 1996 champions Sri Lanka lost their last six wickets for just 19 runs.

South Africa skipper AB de Villiers, who lost the toss, said he feels his team can now go on and win an elusive first World Cup.

"I'm quietly confident. I'm always a positive kind of guy - I always believe in big things," he said.

Sri Lanka captain Angelo Mathews admitted his team suffered severe stagefright.

"A score of 130 was not much. There were no demons on this track. But we didn't bat well. Maybe it was nerves. We didn't go for our shots and it's easily our



Sri Lanka's Tharindu Kaushal dives in a failed catch attempt during the 2015 Cricket World Cup quarter-final match between South Africa and Sri Lanka in Sydney on March 18. Photo: AFP

worst performance we have done in the World Cup and it happened to be in the quarter-final," he said.

Duminy said he was shocked to have become the first South African to take a World Cup hat-trick.

"I've never got close to a hat-trick so I'm pretty pleased with that

performance. It was mainly about keeping the runs down," said Duminy, who dismissed Mathews and then, at the start of his next over, got rid of Kulasekara and Tharindu Kaushal LBW for a golden duck on his one-day debut.

After Kyle Abbott and Dale Steyn sent back openers Kusal Perera and

Tillakaratne Dilshan, it was the turn of Pakistan-born spinner Tahir to strike, dismissing Thirimanne and Jayawardene.

Man-of-the-match Tahir also got rid of Thisara Perera (0) before wrapping up proceedings with the wicket of Lasith Malinga. - AFP

Sri Lankan great Kumar Sangakkara said he was confident about the future of the side after he bowed out of one-day internationals with a World Cup quarter-final defeat by South Africa.

Sangakkara, who will continue in Test cricket, had always planned to bring down the curtain on his one-day career after the World Cup.

But there was no fairytale finish for either Sangakkara or fellow batsman Mahela Jayawardene, for whom this was a last Sri Lanka match in any format, as the two veterans - both runners-up at the 2007 and 2011 World Cups - were denied the chance to play in a third straight final.

"I think the team is in great hands. Angelo Mathews has been such an impressive leader right throughout," said Sangakkara.

"I think Tillakaratne Dilshan might be playing a few more seasons for Sri Lanka, and we've had Lahiru Thirimanne [who made a fluent 41 yesterday] who's really made great strides.

"Every single time he plays he looks more and more impressive."

"I think if you take some of the younger players, if I can compare myself to them at the same age, I think these guys are quite a way ahead of where I was, and that's quite exciting when you really look at it because that means they've got so much more left to learn and a lot more to give to Sri Lanka," Sangakkara said.

"I have no fear about the future of Sri Lankan cricket."

FOOTBALL

Yadanarbon clinch 2-0 win against Global

MATT ROEBUCK

matt.d.roebuck@gmail.com

YADANARBON FC kept their hopes of qualifying for the knockout stages of the AFC Cup alive on March 18 with a 2-0 win over Philippines' Global FC at Mandalay's Mandalay Thiri Stadium.

Yadanarbon's win came from the side's third Group G match, with the draw set to get a lot tougher for the Myanmar National League champions: the only home game left to play comes against Group G favourites South China.

Djedje Djawa opened the scoring on 52 minutes after Yadanarbon had previously wasted a host of opportunities. Local player Win Htay Kyaw doubled the advantage with the last kick of the game to boost Yadanarbon's goal difference in what might prove vital to the team's chances of progression.

Yadanarbon dominated the first-half but was unable to finish effectively despite a dozen good chances. Global played the game on the counter-attack, a tactic that at times looked in danger of succeeding. However, as the second half continued, the visitors, with the option of only one out-field substitute on the bench, started to tire in the 38C heat and Yadanarbon finally capitalised.

But the hosts had shown intent from the start as a long ball in the opening seconds caused trouble in the Global FC box and saw keeper Florencio Junior falling awkwardly as he dealt with the danger.

Yadanarbon continued to attack, initially down the right through Thet Naing, with Tin Win Aung acting as playmaker to send the winger down the flank and deliver a number of crosses that were ultimately wasted.

On the 17th minute, a Thet Naing run saw him drive into the box and tee up a shot for Ivorian Djawa on the edge of the 6-yard box, a close range opportunity that was deflected off a Global defender.

Global then gave a glimpse of the threat they could pose in the 20th minute, when a zigzag run from Mark Hartmann eventuated in a through ball that his teammates were unable to meet.

Moments later Yadanarbon should again have found themselves in the lead when Tin Win Aung and Djawa combined to get in behind the visitor's defence. Djawa crossed the ball agonisingly close to the goal line only for Zin Min Tun to narrowly miss his strike.

Global continued to wait for the counter-attack and Yadanarbon continued to waste

opportunities with Djawa visibly frustrated at his and his team's lack of finishing.

Nevertheless, the home team continued to attack, knowing a win was the only acceptable result for them in this game. Nigerian centre-back Happiness Okpechi even got in on the attack, looking dangerous as he charged from deep in his own half in the 28th minute until the big man was hacked to the floor 30 yards out.

Global's closest opportunity to scoring came in the 39th minute when a shot from Dennis Villanueva on the left, just outside the penalty box, found the outstretched defensive boot of Djawa, who nearly achieved in his own goal what he had as yet failed to do in the opposition's half.

As the half drew to a close, Yadanarbon's effort was summed up when Tin Win Aung found space on the break in the centre of the field. He advanced up the pitch holding up the ball for his compatriots to run ahead of him. Yan Paing got free and was played into the box unchallenged by a Global defender before he shot tamely and failed to challenge the keeper.

A Global counter early in the second half nearly paid dividends when a series of ricocheted kicks found Villanueva with the ball only

feet from the goal-line but he was ultimately challenged and defeated by keeper Thiha Si Thu.

Djawa's drought finally came to an end when in the 52nd minute a series of passes resulted in a low cross in the box that the hard-working Ivorian could not fail to put into the back of the net.

As the game approached the hour mark, the visitors looked keener to develop their own attacking opportunities with Hartmann threatening from long-range at 63 minutes.

In the 79th minute Ye Ko Oo seemed to pass the majority of the Global team in crossing the field from left to right but as he made his way to the back post, the player narrowed the angle so much that the Global shotstopper was able to stand up and block the goal.

Yadanarbon continued to waste its chances and nearly paid the price when a long range effort from Villanueva forced a juggled save from Thiha Si Thu.

But as the match closed out, the final kick of the game came from the young local strike substitute Win Htay Kyaw who claimed a goal from inches out after Si Thu Aung attacked down the left flank on the counter-attack and forced a deflected shot past the keeper that ended on the boot of the young sub.