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Speaker slams 'lying' over reason for ferry sinking

PARLIAMENTARY speaker Thura U Shwe Mann yesterday sharply criticised "lying" explanations of the loss of the ferry *Aung Takon 3* on March 13. The vessel sank off Myebon, Rakhine State, with the loss of at least 63 lives. The search for further victims is continuing.

Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann was reacting to a statement by deputy transport minister U Han Sein, who told MPs that the ferry

sunk after flooding because of bad weather. But hluttaw representatives from Rakhine State dismissed this explanation as "impossible", and that the real cause of the disaster was overloading.

"People with experience of the area, including Rakhine State residents, say it is impossible in this season that bad weather was to blame," Thura U Shwe Mann said. "They do not accept it as an explanation. Nobody can accept

lying or giving the wrong reason."

Eyewitnesses said there were at least 400 passengers jammed aboard the boat, almost double the 214 officially registered, and the decks were loaded with excess cargo. One spoke of desperate attempts by passengers and crew to jettison 80-pound (36.3-kilogram) sacks of lime as the boat started to flood.

Rakhine State Chief Minister U Maung Maung Ohn has also stated

that the cause of the disaster was overcrowding, and the regional government has ordered an official inquiry into the disaster. Meteorologist U Tun Lwin also rejected a March 14 government statement blaming bad weather, saying it was "impossible".

But deputy minister U Han Sein had told the media that the ferry could not have sunk unless there were high waves, even if it was overcrowded. "The craft was overloaded, but there were waves.

There would not have been a problem if there had been no waves," he said.

MPs said the crew of the ferry allowed excessive numbers of unregistered passengers aboard, overloaded the ship with cargo and drank alcohol.

"The crew supplement their low wages by allowing more cargo. They even stack goods in the toilets," said U Tun Aung Kyaw, the MP for Ponnagayun township in Rakhine State. - *Htoo Thant, translation by Thiri Min Htun*

PAGE
10

PHOTO: AFP

The Solar Impulse 2 waits on the runway before taking off at Varanasi Airport in India for Mandalay on March 19. The solar-powered aircraft touched down safely in Mandalay just before 8pm yesterday evening.

The Varanasi-Mandalay flight was the fourth on its round-the-world attempt.



Students activists in hiding

Members of the All Burma Federation of Student Unions are on the run from authorities seeking to detain all activists involved in the Letpadan protests, with one suggesting police plan to "eliminate" the organisation. **NEWS 3**

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Page 2

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THE INSIDER: The local lowdown & best of the web

Is it you?

As you may have noticed, *The Myanmar Times* has gone daily. Since the launch, a Facebook page called The Myanmar Times Daily has been set up, with our articles being posted on a regular basis. It has garnered 9610 likes since the page was launched last week – which is great, except we don't actually know who's doing it. If you know who is managing the page, or if you are the one running it, please get in touch. You've obviously got some spare time on your hands, we like the cut of your jib and there's a job offer on the table.

Black box

In an article posted by *Mizzima* last week (that has since been removed from their site), it was reported that *The Myanmar Post* led the charge in a three-day boycott against the authorities, organised by the Myanmar Journalist Network, by printing a black square rather than a front-page photo.

Mizzima reported that Minister for Information U Ye Htut responded by saying that the government would use state-run media and the internet to report news about government officials' activities. This would obviously constitute a striking departure from form for state media, who usually shy away from reporting on the minutiae of official life. Recent hard-hitting stories from *The Global New Light of Myanmar* include President U Thein Sein felicitating ambassadors on dates of significance for their countries, in-depth coverage of official visits to all manner of factories, as well as on-par-with-Watergate exposés on the release of fingerlings into various bodies of water around the country.

Shadowy online activity from the Ministry of Information

A photo posted by the Ministry of Information on Facebook went viral earlier this week, when people began to notice something was amiss: namely, whatever it was that was casting a shadow over Vice Minister Dr Su Su Hlaing. The image showed her walking in daylight on an airstrip tarmac next to a man who it appeared was holding an umbrella that had been photoshopped out. Whichever image doctor it is the ministry employed made a mistake, removing the brotly but forgetting to 'shop the octagonal shadow (or however many sides umbrellas have) away. The post was soon deleted from the Mol Webportal Facebook page, and it spawned several memes, including



one where a broom was doctored into the photo above Dr Su Su Hlaing's head.

The BBC's Jonah Fisher took to Twitter with the image, receiving suggestions from followers that perhaps it was a "shade drone", or "proof of a UFO". Obviously, the question here has to be, how much does Mol doctor images? Are some ministers actually fat? Do some generals not have flawless skin? Is the ministry creating unrealistic portrayals of women in the media?

Or – and herein lies an only slightly more baffling explanation than photoshopping mundane daily activities of government figures – could it be that Dr Su Su Hlaing is in possession of very specific supernatural powers? I don't know what to believe any more.

Everything Is Illuminati-d: Verdict in on Face of Buddhist Error trial

The verdict came in earlier this week about one of the most high-profile court cases in Myanmar in recent times, which inevitably received a lot of international coverage because of the fact that a foreigner was involved. It turns out that the sentence for making what was admittedly an extraordinarily tone-deaf Facebook post is two-and-a-half years with hard labour. And if you work with someone who takes the decision to make such a post, you'll get the same. Duly noted.

Now, I'll steer clear of writing too much about this because last year when I wrote a brief bit questioning if this is, indeed, the best use of the legal system at the present juncture, and pointing out that the legislative framework that sets the ground for fairly arbitrary arrests is still very

much in place, I received my first-ever hate (e)mail(s). Everyone has seen the picture in question, but I wouldn't dare put it in the paper. What began as an ill-advised ploy to advertise shisha and cut-price "frozen mararitas" has inadvertently raised some important questions about freedom of expression. It's an incredibly touchy subject.

The three sentenced have all announced their intention to appeal the outcome because of the law's stipulation about intent to cause offence.

There's probably no small amount of soul-searching going on at the New Zealand embassy (whose ambassador was reassigned to Ethiopia and the African Union, shipping out just weeks before the sentencing), with some staff hopefully wondering if establishing exactly who had RSVPed in the affirmative to a premiere screening of *The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies* was the best use of their time the day before Phil's first court appearance. I realise in writing this I can probably kiss goodbye to any future invitations to watch the All Blacks at 50th Street, but that is my cross to bear. I'm glad it's not my only passport.

At the time the three were arrested, the DJ who was set to play the club night was going by the moniker of Dhamma Punk, and his promotional artwork (such as that on the offending poster) was full of psychedelic Buddhist imagery. After receiving a lot of hate mail, he has apologised and dropped the name. He's since chosen instead to centre his brand on Illuminati iconography – which may or may not be a good idea (what, you think they're not watching?).

In Brief

Political prisoner savings account (aka Myanmar's jails) well-stocked for pre-election amnesties, says advisor

Special Branch officer unsure if foreigner wearing headphones near Sule is doing so as a subtle act of protest, or is simply listening to music; takes a photo anyway

Next Week

Investigation committee finds police brutality against protestors outside monastery was the result of a simple mix-up: "I thought they said we were in Letpadaung," says senior officer

Municipal authorities in hot pursuit of expat graffiti artist who keeps stencilling "je suis Phil" around the Yaw Min Gyi neighbourhood

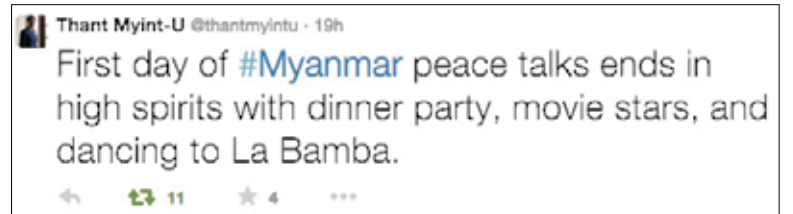
Once was Burma...

Archival material courtesy of Pansodan Gallery

First floor, 286 Pansodan, upper block, Kyauktada township

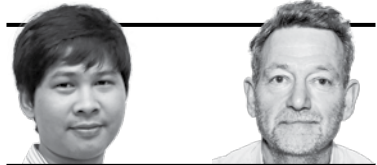


Golden Hammer magazine, June 1, 1971.



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Student activists go into hiding after crackdown



WA LONE GUY DINMORE

DOZENS of activists from the All Burma Federation of Student Unions have gone into hiding after last week's violent crackdown on their anti-education law protests, which police followed up with raids on houses in Yangon.

Ko Aung Nay Paing, a member of the union, which is better known as Ba Ka Tha, said yesterday that police and intelligence agencies were searching for student activists in Yangon, Mandalay and other big cities.

"Nearly 50 of Ba Ka Tha leaders around the country are hiding from police," he said.

He appeared at a press conference organised in Yangon by Fortify Rights, an NGO, to launch a report highlighting how police without warrants are using powers under a law requiring all residents of Myanmar to report the identity of overnight house guests to local government officials to arrest activists.

"I feel that I am being pursued and I have to be very careful in my movements," Ko Aung Nay Paing said.

Police arrested four members of the federation's central committee in a midnight raid on a house in Yangon on March 13. The authorities warned that they intended to round up ringleaders of the student protest movement even while freeing others from prison.

The detentions followed the March 10 crackdown when phalanxes of riot police broke up a protest sit-in by students at a monastery in Letpadan - about 140 kilometres (90 miles) north of Yangon - while trying to complete a march that began in Mandalay in January to put pressure on the government to amend the education law. The authorities said 127 people were arrested, including students, local residents, monks and journalists.

Western embassies condemned the violence and called for the release of those arrested, as the crackdown threatened to erode the substantial political support extended by the US and Europe to President U Thein Sein's reformist government in the run-up to elections this November.

"There are worrying signs of backtracking, and in some areas, backtracking has gained momentum," Yanghee Lee, the UN special rapporteur on Myanmar, told reporters in Geneva on March 18. She said police surveillance and arrests under outdated defamation and national security laws had dealt a "chilling effect" to activism.

The four activists detained in Yangon were taken to Tharyarwady Prison and charged with involvement in



Activists wear bandanas with the ABFSU logo during a protest at Letpadan on March 10, shortly before a police crackdown. Photo: Zarni Phyo

the Letpadan demonstration. Students said Ko Soe Hlaing, a central committee member from upper Myanmar, was also detained although he was not involved in the march.

Ko Myat Thu, a student protest leader, said, "Police will eliminate the Ba Ka Tha organisation. This is what I have heard."

Police Major Win Sein, from Letpadan township, said police would continue to take action against the protesters depending on the results of their investigations. But he declined to give details of how the police would deal with student protesters who had escaped the crackdown, except to say that authorities would act within the law.

'Police will eliminate the Ba Ka Tha organisation. This is what I have heard.'

Ko Myat Thu
Student protest leader

Students in hiding said police and Special Branch agents had searched the houses of their parents and other relatives, tapped their phones and hacked their Facebook accounts. Police seized many mobile telephones from students during the Letpadan operation.

"Authorities have suddenly searched houses at night inspecting guest lists if they have suspicions, acting without a warrant [from a

magistrate]," Ko Myat Thu said.

House-owners were getting worried about having "guests", and the fugitive students were moving from place to place, while not daring to be seen outside, he said.

"We are working and connecting with each other in an underground way," he said.

Many were yesterday refusing to answer phone calls or had switched to new numbers.

The authorities have freed about 30 students recognised as such by the Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Education. Most of the Ba Ka Tha leaders have not been recognised as students because they were involved in the 2007 "saffron" revolution, or had been previously jailed by the military junta or expelled from university. Some are now taking part in distance education, which police say does not entitle them to "student" status for the purposes of release.

The authorities have not taken action against the University Students' Union (Ta Ka Tha) whose members are currently at university. Leaders of Ta Ka Tha took part this week in discussions with the upper house of parliament over amendments to the education law, which they say puts universities and schools under excessive central government control without freedom for student unions. Ta Ka Tha members have called for the release of the Ba Ka Tha detainees, and members of both groups have denied a split.

"Even if the government created dissensions between the student unions," Ko Aung Nay Paing said, "we will fight for democracy in education together."

Call for repeal of law enabling 'midnight' arrests

OLIVER SLOW
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IN the early hours of March 13, three days after police rounded up student protesters in Letpadan, four members of the All Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABFSU) were visiting the house of a friend in Yangon's Ahlone township.

According to a friend, police knocked on the front door asking to see the "guest list" for the house. After searching the house, all five present - including the reporter whose house it was - were arrested and taken to the local police station. The following day, two of the five were released. The other three remain in jail.

Under the pre-2011 military regime, authorities would search private residences under the pretence of checking for unregistered overnight guests in order to harass and detain activists. The timing of the visits has led many to refer to the practice as "midnight inspections".

The Ward or Village-Tract Administration Law was passed in 2012 to replace two laws enacted under British rule in 1907. It requires residents to inform local authorities when visitors spend the night at their homes.

In its report, *Midnight Intrusions: Ending Guest Registration and Household Inspections in Myanmar*, released yesterday, NGO Fortify Rights called on the government to stop searches of homes without a warrant and abolish requirements to register overnight guests.

"Under this law, individuals expressing their right to peaceful assembly by day may be subject to warrantless inspection by night," said Matthew Smith, the group's executive director. "As long as this law remains on the books, authorities are free to use household inspections to target dissenters and

oppress the less advantaged."

Enforcement of the law had been waning under U Thein Sein's quasi-civilian government until the recent student crackdown.

The arrest of student leaders has prompted fresh calls for the provisions to be revoked.

"During the British era, the intention [of the 1907 law] was simple: to prevent independence protests. When Myanmar gained independence in 1948, those laws should have been abolished," said U Ko Ni, a prominent lawyer who attended the launch of the report.

"It doesn't matter that the inspections do not happen as often today. The important thing is that this law is still on the books," he said.

Matthew Bugher, a pro bono researcher with Fortify Rights and a global justice fellow at Harvard Law School, said the provisions violated three rights in international law, the right to privacy, the right to freedom of movement and the right to freedom of association.

"International law allows some limits to be placed on those rights, but these provisions do not even come close to meeting those standards," he said.

U Myat Ko Ko, co-founder of Yangon School of Political Science, said he had been subjected to almost a dozen midnight inspections over the years.

"It hasn't happened [to me] since about 2012, but if a political situation happens, then we are worried about it," he said. "This law should be abandoned. It is an intimidation of the citizens and affects freedom of movement. We want to have private lives in our own country and this practice means that the government is treating its own people like enemies."

While government officials were invited to the launch of the report in Yangon, none attended the event.



A Yangon resident hangs her guest registration documents on the wall of her home. Photo: Spike Johnson

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Slow steps towards ceasefire

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TALKS on ending decades of conflict with a national ceasefire agreement have moved ahead this week but delegates cautioned yesterday in Yangon that no deal could be signed during the current round and it was doubtful that a political dialogue between the government and warring ethnic groups would begin this year.

The Union of Peace Working Committee (UPWC) and the Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT), which is negotiating on behalf of 16 armed groups, started a seventh round of talks on March 17 and aim to

continue discussions until March 22.

Although negotiators said they had reached agreement on almost all points and it might be possible to reach a national ceasefire agreement, U Salai Lian Hmung, member of NCCT, cautioned that an accord would not be signed during this round.

"I want to give you a clear message that NCCT members do not have authority to sign a National ceasefire agreement. Our leaders have the power to sign. Even if we conclude the draft, we have to submit it to our leaders individually. And then an ethnic armed groups conference will decide," he told a press conference yesterday.

U Salai Lian Hmung said it would

probably take another month to sign an NCA, but he did not mention when the various ethnic groups might call a conference to decide.

Intense fighting between government troops and ethnic Chinese rebels continued this week in the Kokang region of northern Shan State, underscoring the precarious security situation along Myanmar's borders. But some delegates said the Kokang conflict was not having a direct impact on the sense of optimism prevailing at the peace talks in Yangon.

Over three days the parties reached agreement over chapter 1 to 4 of a 104-page agenda and continue to discuss chapter 5 relating to the framework

of political dialogue, an important element of a ceasefire deal.

"We have reached agreement on military-related issues," said U Aung Naing Oo of the Myanmar Peace Center. But he said one item, the structure for establishing a Joint Monitoring Committee, needed approval.

Negotiators said they were getting closer to concluding the NCA, and had reached agreement on most points in principle. But important details needed to be hammered out, including establishment of a union peace talks committee, introduction of a federal system, reorganisation of the military in line with federal principles and a framework for political dialogue.

Father Land customers pack out court for owner's trial

TOE WAI AUNG

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VICTIMS of the alleged fraudster U Kyaw Myint, the former owner of Father Land Construction, packed Latha Township Court in downtown Yangon yesterday as the defendant appeared. The case was adjourned to March 26.

The public gallery was crowded with people who had bought future apartments in a construction project on a points system, as well as those who had been evicted from their homes to make room for the building.

U Kyaw Myint faces charges under sections 420 and 468 of the penal code for cheating and inducing delivery of property and forgery for the purpose of cheating. The charges were filed in connection with the construction of a 12-storey building on Pansodan Road in Yangon's Kyauktada township. Prosecutors say U Kyaw Myint forged the signature of the landowner on his application for a construction permit.

After appearing in court last December 2 he was freed on K100 million bail, but then absconded. He turned himself in on January 9, allegedly after transferring some of his assets to others.

He also faces trial in a case opened by Botahtaung police for misusing more than K300 million.

In the case of the Pansodan development, landowner U Soe Myint filed suit



Father Land Construction owner U Kyaw Myint (left) is led into Latha Township Court yesterday. Photo: Zarni Phyo

last September because construction was still incomplete after four years.

Ko Win Khine of North Okkalapa township said he had paid K12 million of K13.5 million owed on an apartment in the Thingangyun Pyi Taw Thar housing project.

"I even went to see U Kyaw Myint while he was in custody, and he told me he would complete the project within six months. But only the foundations have been built so far," he told

The Myanmar Times at yesterday's hearing.

Ko Win Khine also said that many of the people who allege U Kyaw Myint cheated them have had no assistance. "One lawyer wanted to charge K10 million for advice," he said, adding that another Father Land employee had assured him that U Kyaw Myint would pay him back 10 percent of his stake once he had been released from prison. - Translation by Khant Lin Oo

IN BRIEF

Interfaith marriage bill approved

Attempts by opposition MPs to soften a controversial law restricting interfaith marriage failed yesterday, with Union Solidarity and Development Party representatives passing the Buddhist Women's Special Marriage Bill in the Pyithu Hluttaw.

Written and submitted by the Supreme Court, it was approved 268 to 35. Most opposition came from National League for Democracy and ethnic minority representatives, who argued it was discriminatory and violated Myanmar's international human rights obligations.

While 66 amendments were made to the bill, most of those put forward by opposition MPs were rejected.

NLD member U Zay Myint Maung's suggestion to remove a section requiring a woman under 20 to get permission from her parents or a guardian if she wishes to marry was rejected.

Another NLD representative, U Phyo Zayar Thaw, proposed removing a section stating, "Do not destroy or damage or make inferior a place that a wife uses for praying or an object the wife reveres with the intention to insult Buddhism." However, this was also rejected on the recommendation of parliamentary committees.

The bill will now go to the Amyotha Hluttaw for approval.

The Pyithu Hluttaw also passed the Population Control Healthcare Bill but made 12 changes to the version approved by the Amyotha Hluttaw. - Htoo Thant, translation by Thiri Min Htun

NLD to help expelled members get citizenship

YE MON

LUN MIN MANG

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THE National League for Democracy has been forced to expel more than 8000 members who hold associate or temporary citizenship, but says it will help them get full citizenship if they are eligible so they can rejoin the party.

Due to amendments to the Political Parties Registration Law passed in September 2014, parties can no longer accept holders of associate or temporary IDs - better known as white cards - as members.

The Union Election Commission gave all parties until January 9 to submit revised member lists, but as *The Myanmar Times* reported at the time about 10 of 71 registered parties complied by the deadline. Those found to have ineligible members among their ranks face potential deregistration.

NLD spokesperson U Nyan Win said the party had complied with the order by March 9, as it was granted a two-month extension to examine the eligibility of its approximately 3 million members.

He said about 8000 members from 10 states and regions were "halted from being party members", rejecting reports that put the number at 20,000.

"We don't want to use the word 'expel' but action has been taken according to the rules concerning party members who hold white cards. They need to be removed as members. But even if they are excluded from the party, we are still partners," he said.

Another NLD official, U Tun Tun Hein, said the party is helping their former members apply for Citizenship Scrutiny Cards so they can rejoin.

"For now the NLD will maintain these people as 'reserve members'. They will help the NLD in some party tasks but they are not members. They are just partners," he said.

In some areas expelled members have already rejoined. As *The Myanmar Times* reported earlier this month, the NLD office in Mawlamyine assisted 33 former members get ID cards confirming their status through an immigration department fast-track program.

Like the NLD, other parties have been scrambling to comply with the

UEC directive. A spokesperson for the Union Solidarity and Development Party said this week that it had sent updated member lists to the UEC, but declined to have how many members it had expelled.

U Myint Wai, leader of the National Unity Congress Party, said his party had been forced to expel more than 200 members who did not hold the required level of citizenship.

"We have ejected them. Most of them are from Ayeyarwady Region," he said.

The party's membership is mostly Muslim. The change in the law has predominantly affected Muslims, particularly those in Rakhine State who self-identify as Rohingya.

While U Myint Wai said his party had no offices or members in Rakhine, other parties with Rohingya members have had to make substantial changes to their member lists.

"We have expelled more than 1000 members last month. They do not have a national registration card, but they are white-card holders," said U Kyaw Min, chair of the Democracy and Human Rights Party, one of the three parties whose membership is

predominantly Rohingya.

One of the expelled Democracy and Human Rights Party members, U Kyaw Thein, said he was forced to quit three months ago.

"We feel very sad about it. I don't know what to say. I don't know why they don't want us to be members of political parties. I think it is unfair to exclude white-card holders from parties," he said.

UEC official U Hla Maung Cho said the commission had received updated member lists from political parties, but declined to say if all had complied with the order or how many had missed the January 9 deadline.

Legislation enacted by the military regime in early 2010 enabled those holding any form of citizenship, including temporary or associate, to be members of political parties.

However, in 2013 the Rakhine National Party submitted draft changes to parliament, arguing that allowing white-card holders to be party members was unconstitutional.

After protracted debate, the amendments passed in September and were enacted by President U Thein Sein.

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IN BRIEF

Mobile team to raise cancer awareness in delta

To raise awareness of the threat of cancer and encourage people to seek early testing and treatment, a local medical organisation will offer mobile seminars in Ayeyarwady Region's Bogale township. Shwe Yaung Hnin Si Cancer Foundation will launch the seminars from March 22, foundation secretary Dr Moe Aung Kyaw Naing said yesterday.

The seminar will focus on cancers of the breast, cervix and oral cavity, and will offer free screening. The seminar is expected to attract more than 200 participants.

"Cancer is a silent killer. Cases are increasing yearly as a consequence of lifestyle changes," Dr Moe Aung Kyaw Naing said, noting the increase in smoking, eating fast food, barbecues, betel nut use and contact with artificial materials. He said these could cause gastric, liver, colon, uterus, cervix and oral cavity cancers.

"Most cancers can be cured if detected early," he said.

The foundation was established in late 2013 to combat cancer by raising advocacy, with the help of nearly 500 volunteers, including medical professionals. They have conducted similar events in Bago and Waw and helped patients gain access to treatment.

- Cherry Thein

Ticketing upgrades for Circle Line

A computerised ticketing system is being introduced on Yangon's circular railway, initially at 15 of the 55 stations, officials announced yesterday. The new system will be in place before next month's Thingyan water festival.

Ticket prices will not change, said Myanma Railways.

"This will make it easier to buy tickets. Later, we will introduce an e-ticket system. We've started with the busiest stations," said general manager U Htun Aung Thin. The system is being operated by Internet Wallet, which has been working on it for the past two years.

Internet Wallet's general manager, Daw Ni Ni Khin, said, "Passengers select their destination on our audio-visual system, key in the type and number of tickets and pay the same they always did." The ticket counter will be serviced by staff to assist. Passengers wishing to buy tickets via phone can open an account and be billed through it, using a wireless system available at participating stations.

Myanma Railways says about 100,000 passengers use the railway regularly. - Aye Nyein Win

Constitutional change: Still time to clear up the mess?

With the UEC casting doubt on a referendum and six-way talks on hold, the window for change is narrowing

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TIME is running out for an orderly amendment of the 2008 constitution, political observers are concluding. While parliamentary debate on the matter is effectively stalled, the possibility of making an end-run around the process through high-level agreement among the major players does not seem to be advancing.

Parliament initiated the amendment process two years ago, but tangible results have yet to emerge. And following the Thingyan break, November's elections will exert an ever-growing pull on politicians' time and attention.

In principle, the next step is for draft amendments to be approved in parliament before being submitted to a nationwide referendum. The two most contentious provisions of the 2008 charter, written by the former military regime, are the effective ban on the assumption of the presidency by National League for Democracy leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and the cementing of army influence on politics by the allocation of 25 percent of parliamentary seats to the military.

Parliamentary Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann has announced that the referendum will take place in May. But even supposing the enabling legislation were put in place, it is not yet clear what questions the voters would be asked to decide on as long as parliament has not completed its review of the proposed amendments.

Though the 31-member constitutional committee signalled readiness to submit an amendment bill during the current session of the hluttaw, MPs focused instead on the budget and the national education bill.

"I'm wondering why parliament is dragging its feet," U Aye Thar Aung of the Rakhine National Party said yesterday. "If they don't discuss the specifics until May, how can the referendum proceed?"

Despite the speaker's edict, Union Election Commission member U Win



Daw Aung San Suu Kyi speaks during a National League for Democracy ceremony in Yangon on June 7, 2014. Photo: AFP

Ko has said he does not see a May referendum as likely, since the UEC still has to enact the necessary by-laws.

"The Constitutional Tribunal court has decided that allowing white-card holders to vote would be a violation of the constitution," said U Win Ko this week, referring to several hundred thousand people whose citizenship is in question. "So we need to enact rules and regulations related to that decision. Meanwhile, parliament still has to discuss the proposed provisions to be approved. We can hold the referendum only after these processes are complete."

Some parliamentarians are blaming the government for failing to get agreement on the issue outside hluttaw. Last November's decision by Pyithu Hluttaw to approve six-way talks among political leaders to discuss ways of amending the

constitution was designed to jumpstart that process. The talks would bring together President U Thein Sein, Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann, Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker U

'We can't make any change without military votes. That's why we have been asking for [six-way] talks.'

U Aye Maung
Rakhine National Party

Khin Aung Myint, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and U Aye Maung of the Rakhine National Party, who will be representing ethnic minorities.

"We can't make any changes without military votes. That's why we have been asking for these talks before parliament debates them," said U Aye Maung.

If the Big Six cut a deal this month, parliament could still have enough time to meet the speaker's May deadline. Thura U Shwe Mann has indeed put MPs on notice that talks will be held - but nobody has set a date.

On March 16, U Aye Maung said the six leaders were expecting to meet today, on March 20. However, presidential spokesperson U Ye Htut refused to confirm the meeting when asked by reporters in parliament on March 18. "We can't give an exact date for when it will happen," he said.

Air Mandalay returns as charter carrier

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AIR Mandalay, which suspended operations last December, is to resume flying as a charter operator, its CEO announced yesterday.

U Sai Kham Park Hpa told *The Myanmar Times* that the airline had acquired two ERJ-145 aircraft and looked forward to announcing scheduled flights soon.

"We will launch a schedule and details of our future plans soon, but no date has been set yet," he said.

He declined to give further details, saying all would be revealed at a press conference to be held at some point in the future.

When it announced the suspension, Air Mandalay said it expected to resume flights at the end of January. U Sai Kham Park Hpa blamed its failure to meet this deadline on prohibitively high import taxes, and said it was negotiating a tax break

with the government.

He said yesterday the airline had managed to reach a deal with the customs department on taxes for the aircraft, which *The Myanmar Times* understands have been leased rather than purchased.

A Department of Civil Aviation spokesperson said Air Mandalay had ceased operating temporarily in December for lack of replacement aircraft to replace old stock.

The department only allows airlines to use aircraft that are less than 20 years old.

"Now would be a good time to restart as the peak season approaches," the official said, adding that domestic fares were relatively high across the domestic aviation industry because of high equipment, facilities and crew costs.

Myanmar has eight private domestic carriers, as well as the recently rebranded state carrier Myanmar National Airlines.

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KBC requests foreign help for investigation

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THE Kachin Baptist Convention has asked the governments of the United Kingdom and the United States to participate in the investigation of the rape and murder of two female volunteer teachers last January.

KBC spokesperson U La Ma Yaw told *The Myanmar Times* yesterday the KBC had written to the two embassies in Yangon.

"We need help from these countries because the government investigation can't find the truth. We're afraid they will not be able to," he said.

Spokespersons for the two embassies could not be reached for comment by deadline.

The two female volunteers, Maran Lu Ra, 20, and Tangbau Hkwan Nan Tsin, 21, were working for the KBC in Kaung Khar village, northern Shan State, teaching children whose education had been disrupted by persistent fighting. Their murder on January 19 sparked outrage throughout the country and overseas.

The KBC also said no response had been received to a letter it had sent to President U Thein Sein on March 2 urging a thorough and impartial investigation to discover the

truth behind the murders.

A senior member of the government investigation team said its inquiries were continuing, and that they would inform the KBC of any developments.

"The KBC is carrying out its own investigation, and we have been pursuing ours. But we have reached no conclusions," said a police major with the government team.

Initially, suspicion fell on the Tatmadaw, elements of whose 503rd Light Infantry Regiment were stationed in the village on the night of the murders. The KBC said it believed no villagers were involved in the incident, and rejected preliminary DNA findings which the government said did not match any member of the army unit deployed to the village, or any local residents.

KBC secretary the Reverend Samson Hkalam said the convention's investigation committee was still investigating the case, and was also monitoring the government's inquiries. It has previously accused the authorities of pressuring Kaung Khar residents not to provide evidence to investigators.

The Tatmadaw, meanwhile, has threatened legal action against any group that accuses its members of involvement prior to the completion of the investigation.

Voting in Wa, Kokang and Mong La in doubt



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VOTER registration is not being carried out in areas of Shan State deemed to be insecure, and voting may not take place in those areas in November. *The Myanmar Times* has learned that the state election commission has ordered its sub-commissions to omit registration in areas associated with some ethnic armed groups.

U Than Lwin Nyein, deputy director of Shan state election sub-commission, said voter registration would not be able to start in security-sensitive townships in the state "due to instability".

The townships include Laukkai and Kon-kyan in the Kokang Self-Administered Zone, Panwai Mongma, Pangsang, Nahpan and Metman in the Wa Self-Administered Division, and the area around Mong La in Kengtung district that is controlled by the National Democratic Alliance Army.

U Than Lwin Nyein said the commission does not even have offices in

the areas and it would only conduct voter registration if the Union Election Commission specifically instructs it to do so.

"We have reported this to the UEC and asked them to make a decision. The previous election skipped those areas. Only the UEC can decide if the election will be conducted in those areas," he said.

Under section 399(e) of the constitution, the commission has the power to postpone an election in "constituencies where free and fair election cannot be held due to natural disaster or due to local security situation".

In the 2010 election, voting was cancelled altogether in Panghsang, Nahpan, Panwai and Mongma, as well as a number of village-tracts in Metman.

Voting went ahead in the two townships of the Kokang Self-Administered Zone but the introduction of martial law in the area last month following the outbreak of fighting between ethnic Kokang rebels and the Tatmadaw means it is doubtful polling will be held this year.

Nationally, voting was cancelled in 14.27 percent of villages across Kachin, Kayah, Shan and Mon states. The figure was highest in Kayah State, where residents in more than 47pc of villages were unable to vote, according to figures from ALTSEAN Burma.

A spokesperson for the UEC could not be reached for comment yesterday.

Voter registration elsewhere in Shan State got under way last December. "Registration in all the other townships will have begun by the end of March," U Than Lwin Nyein said, and should be complete by the end of May.

Local residents without household member lists or national identification cards would need the support of ward committees to be placed on electoral rolls. "The committees comprise local residents and ward administrative officers who can identify people" lacking the necessary documents so that they can then be registered, he said.

47%

Villages in Kayah State where voting was cancelled in the 2010 election

Political, cultural research centre launched

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A STUDY and research centre devoted to the country's history, culture, society, politics and economics was opened on March 18. The Burma Studies Centre is located at 501 Building D, Anawrahta Housing, Karmarayut township, Yangon.

"The main objectives of our centre are to improve and expand study and research, and to collect and preserve documents and resources of all kinds for research purposes," founder Ye Moe Hein said at the opening.

"Nowadays people discuss politics in the teashop or beer station, but this will be a new venue for them."

Open from 10am to 6pm every day except Monday, the centre offers thousands of books and photos. Initially they can only be read inside the centre and are not for loan.

U Thwin Win, who attended the opening ceremony, said such research centres were only just beginning to emerge. "We need to study the history of our country. This is particularly good for young people interested in politics," he said.

The centre will also publish international studies and research concerning Myanmar. It houses records of the country's music and examples of traditional materials, and will host group discussions.

"Some of our books date back to the 1920s and are very rare and costly, even as valuable as US\$1000 or \$2000. This is material of university standard," he said, adding that the centre would provide an alternative venue to people wishing to discuss politics, or the country's ethnic heritages, and could also offer international links.

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Porn, gambling, extremism: Govt to rein in illegal dishes



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ILLEGALLY imported satellite dishes will be banned because they provide access to pornography, gambling and religious extremism, Minister for Information U Ye Htut has told parliament.

Pyithu Hluttaw representative U Thein Nyunt of Thingangyun township, Yangon Region, told parliament the widespread use of illegal satellites caused legitimate TV channels to lose business, as well as exposing viewers to harmful influences.

Brigadier General Kyaw Zan Myin, the deputy minister for home affairs, said satellite dishes could be imported on the basis of an import licence granted by the Ministry of Commerce. The deputy minister added that the Shan State government had also allowed the import of these satellite dishes, levying 3 percent tax at Tachileik, on the Thai border.

He said that in the event of a complaint from local TV networks he would be prepared to initiate action under the 2012 Import Export Law against those importing dishes illegally.

Speaking on March 18, U Ye Htut said four ministries - information, home affairs, communications and information technology, and commerce - would discuss the possibility of introducing measures in the future television and broadcasting bill.

"The existing draft refers only to broadcasting. But now, people can receive TV channels aired from other countries because of advanced satel-



A satellite dish on the roof of a building in downtown Yangon. Photo: Zarni Phyo

lite technology. We need to consider adjusting the bill so that it covers imported satellite dishes," he said.

Viewers in Myanmar can receive broadcasts from abroad via satellite TV receivers and dishes imported from Thailand, he added.

"The main problem is that they broadcast uncensored channels, including a two-digit lottery channel. And there are extremist channels. We must ban them," U Ye Htut told parliament.

But any move to restrict usage of the dishes is likely to be deeply unpopular. During the 2014 football World Cup, many viewers bought dishes to receive foreign networks because Sky Net, the broadcast rights holder in Myanmar, was unable to meet demand

from new subscribers ahead of the tournament.

Sky Net, owned by conglomerate Shwe Than Lwin, also holds exclusive broadcast rights to most major football leagues, including the English Premier League.

Cost is also a factor for many,

'There are extremist channels. We must ban them.'

U Ye Htut

Minister for Information

with Sky Net's monthly subscription fees ranging from about K10,000 to K20,000, depending on the package. "Those imported satellite dishes can receive football matches and there's no need to pay subscription fees," said Ko Yan Naing from Shwe Pyi Thar township.

Earlier efforts to rein in the use of illegal television connections have also failed. Following the 2007 protests, the government increased the registration fee for satellite dishes from K6000 to K1 million.

While the move was never explained, it was widely considered to be an attempt to stop viewers from watching uncensored news.

- Translation by Thiri Min Htun and Khant Linn Oo

Bus lines warned against fare hikes

BUS companies who soak their customers during the water festival will get hung out to dry, transport authorities say. U Myo Win, deputy head of Yangon Region Supervisory Committee for Motor Vehicles (Highway), also said passengers who are overcharged will be entitled to a refund.

"Passengers need only pay what it says on the ticket. If they are overcharged, they can complain to our office ... and get a refund," he said.

Promising an official announcement later this week with more details, he said the committee would recover refunds from the bus lines concerned and impose penalties later. He said the department was determined to stamp out the tradition of profiteering during festival time.

The transport committee announced in a meeting on March 11 that bus lines must run in conformity with regular prices set by the regional government during the Thingyan holiday from April 11 to 21, a period of intensive travel around the country.

"These are rates officially set by the regional government, and bus lines must not exceed them. We have warned bus lines not to sell tickets through brokers at higher prices," said U Myo Win.

Ma Pyae Pyae said she paid K3000 more per ticket when she booked a trip from Yangon to Natogyi for April 6.

"It usually costs K7000 per person. That's what it said on the ticket," she said. - *Shwegu Thitsar*, translation by Zar Zar Soe

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Two Mon parties abandon merger plan

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NEARLY three years of talks have broken down as two Mon State political parties have failed in their bid to unite. Now the ructions surrounding the breakdown could even result in the formation of a third party, one observer said.

The All Mon Region Democracy Party and the Mon National Party cannot agree to merge, said monk U Gone, a member of the commission formed to bring about the merger.

"It is not good for our people if the two parties cannot unite. We feel pretty sad," he said.

But Mon National Party information officer Naing San Hlaing accused the commission of planning to form a third political party even as it was conducting the merger negotiations.

"There are only three or four monks on the commission. [Other people on the commission] just used them as a stepping stone. I think they were planning this all along," he said.

U Gone said the commission had no such plan.

The AMDP contested the 2010 election and now holds 16 seats in parliament, while the MNP won five seats in the 1990 election as the Mon National League for Democracy. The party was abolished in 1992 and re-emerged as the Mon Democracy Party in 2012. Both parties have announced plans to contest the elections later this year.

The change of name from the Mon Democracy Party to the Mon National Party was a precursor to the hoped-for consolidation of the two organisations.

The change was approved last July, and was one element of a four-point agreement reached by the two parties.

However, following a breakdown in negotiations the commission announced on March 13 that both parties had failed to abide by the agreement and had neglected the wishes of the Mon people.

A spokesperson for the AMDP referred questions on the issue to the MNP.

Naing San Hlaing said the MNP planned to compete in the election later this year.

"The people want the Mon National Party to contest the vote," he said.

Ethnic minority parties in many areas of the country have initiated merger talks, in part due to fears that they will take votes away from each other and enable a non-minority party - the National League for Democracy or the Union Solidarity and Development Party - to win seats in their areas.

However, the process has been far from straightforward, with talks between Shan and Chin parties failing to bring about any union. Only in Rakhine State, where the Rakhine Nationalities Development Party and Arakan League for Democracy formed the Rakhine National Party, has a major merger occurred.

- Translation by Thiri Min Htun

Views

Latest Wirathu attack shows an underlying gender bias

Myanmar's political arena remains male-dominated - but that is no excuse for failing to condemn sexist attacks



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ASHIN Wirathu, Buddhist monk and spreader of hate speech, has been stepping up his attempts to bully the UN special rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar, Yanghee Lee.

Even those who too often keep quiet about his antics blanched when U Wirathu in January referred to Ms Lee - who had recently commented on rights violations against sections of the country's Muslim population - as a "whore".

Some fellow monks were moved to suggest his language wasn't doing the religion any favours, and indeed might even be bringing it into disrepute, but the authorities have chosen not to follow up on complaints.

At the time Ms Lee responded with dignity, highlighting the depressing fact that women working in human rights frequently have to deal with such "sexist intimidation ... when advocating on controversial issues."

This week it emerged that U Wirathu had been at it again, though his name calling was not quite so blatantly sexist. Rather than suggest the international rights expert chooses to supplement her income by exchanging sexual services for money, he elected instead to describe Ms Lee as a "beastly woman".

It would be uplifting to think that the choice of a less overtly sexual insult indicated U Wirathu had learned the error of his misogynistic ways. Alas the content of his Facebook post showed he's not ready to join the HeForShe feminist movement just yet.

On March 17, while addressing the Human Rights Council in Geneva, Ms Lee reported his most recent comments on her.

"Let me inform you of the latest attack against me by the same U Wirathu in response to my report to this Council: 'The beastly woman has done it again. It looks like she hasn't



UN special rapporteur on Myanmar Yanghee Lee speaks during a press conference at Yangon International Airport on July 26, 2014. Photo: AFP

learned a lesson. 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."

The implicit threat of physical violence prompted Ms Lee on March 18 to issue a statement highlighting her expectation that the Myanmar government protect her safety. Unfortunately, this was something it barely managed to do for her predecessor,

The message that uppity women need to be 'taught a lesson' is one as old as sexism itself.

Tomas Quintana, whose convoy was attacked by an angry mob while on a visit to Meiktila in 2013, where he was to examine the impact of religious violence earlier in the year.

That incident highlighted that rights defenders of any gender can, and do, come under attack. But as Ms Lee's case has made clear, gender can provide an extra slipper, as it were, for women to be beaten with.

The message that uppity women need to be "taught a lesson" is one as old as sexism itself.

That U Wirathu should be as sexist as he is prejudiced on matters of race or religion is no surprise. Were it not that he has considerable influence over a large number of followers, it would be tempting not to give his remarks any additional coverage.

But as Ms Lee pointed out this week, it is "disappointing" that the Myanmar government has

not "disassociated itself" from his comments.

Myanmar has some very powerful and outspoken female rights defenders, but few would argue they don't face significant challenges in being taken seriously by the male-dominated establishment, in a country which has by far the lowest number of women in political positions of any country in ASEAN.

Male politicians, the military and monks dominate the public arena. Women who enter that field should be free to do so on even ground, without the risk of being denigrated because of their gender. That they are not is evident, and of detriment to Myanmar's future.

Which is why all those in Myanmar who believe in equal rights ought to condemn the slurs and threat of violence against Ms Lee - regardless of whether they support her views on religious and racial tensions.

Another gender-related story affecting Southeast Asia was Michelle Obama's visit to Japan, where she highlighted the fact that 62 million girls around the world are being denied education - a situation the US First Lady describes as a "crisis".

Ms Obama, who was launching an initiative to help girls attain schooling, was speaking to an audience of women in Tokyo along with Akie Abe, the wife of the Japanese Prime Minister. Ms Abe has supported girls' education projects here in Myanmar.

In reporting this important story, a major international news agency clearly recognised what women around the world really wanted to know.

"It is truly a crisis," said Obama, wearing a bright, floral patterned jacket and skirt" was how the Agence France-Presse correspondent reported it.

With the vital matter of Ms Obama's wardrobe out of the way, the reporter then felt able to address the fact that across the world millions of people simply do not believe that their daughters are as worthy of an education as their sons.

EDITORIAL

Time to scrap public service media law

THE Public Service Media Law drafted and proposed by the Ministry of Information was withdrawn from parliament by the Ministry of Information on March 18.

The law is one of five the ministry plans to write to cover various sectors of the media. The first, the Printing and Publishing Enterprises Law, was approved by parliament last year. Another law on broadcast media has been submitted to parliament. Two more laws, one on libraries and another on movies and films, are yet to be submitted to the legislature.

The reason the ministry gave for withdrawing the law is that it needs to be reviewed and, perhaps, rewritten.

Myanmar's media industry objected to the Public Service Media Law when it was introduced by the ministry about a year ago. The law appears to be an attempt to revive and sustain state-owned media under another disguise. Of particular concern is subsidies for state-run newspapers.

The Myanmar Press Council (Interim) has said it supports public broadcasting but public newspapers have no role in a democratic country. The law would enable 70 percent of the budget for state-owned media outlets to be covered by taxpayer funds. The council has argued this would be a considerable burden on the public.

It would also create unfair competition for independent, private-sector dailies. While a large number of these have launched since private dailies were allowed again in 2013, most are barely keeping their head above water, struggling to survive in a crowded market. Competing with heavily subsidised state-run newspapers could be the final nail in the coffin for many, reducing Myanmar readers' access to independent news.

So, how to proceed from here? The media community has come up with a simple suggestion to overcome the stalemate on the Public Service Media Law: Scrap it completely. All state-owned newspapers should be either privatised or turned into public companies, while public broadcasters can be covered under planned legislation on broadcast media.



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LANDING in Myanmar is a stop of special significance for the pilot of Solar Impulse 2, the solar-powered plane currently on its way around the world.

"For me, it's symbolic," pilot and innovator Bertrand Piccard told *The Myanmar Times* from inside the plane's cockpit yesterday morning, ahead of a landing due late last night.

Mr Piccard has left Varanasi, India, for Mandalay on the fourth leg of the aircraft's shot at circling the earth.

Mr Piccard first touched down in Myanmar 17 years ago on a failed attempt at floating around the world in a balloon. He said the country offered a warm welcome.

"This time I'm coming with Solar Impulse," he said, adding he appreciated the country, people, temples and spirituality of Myanmar.

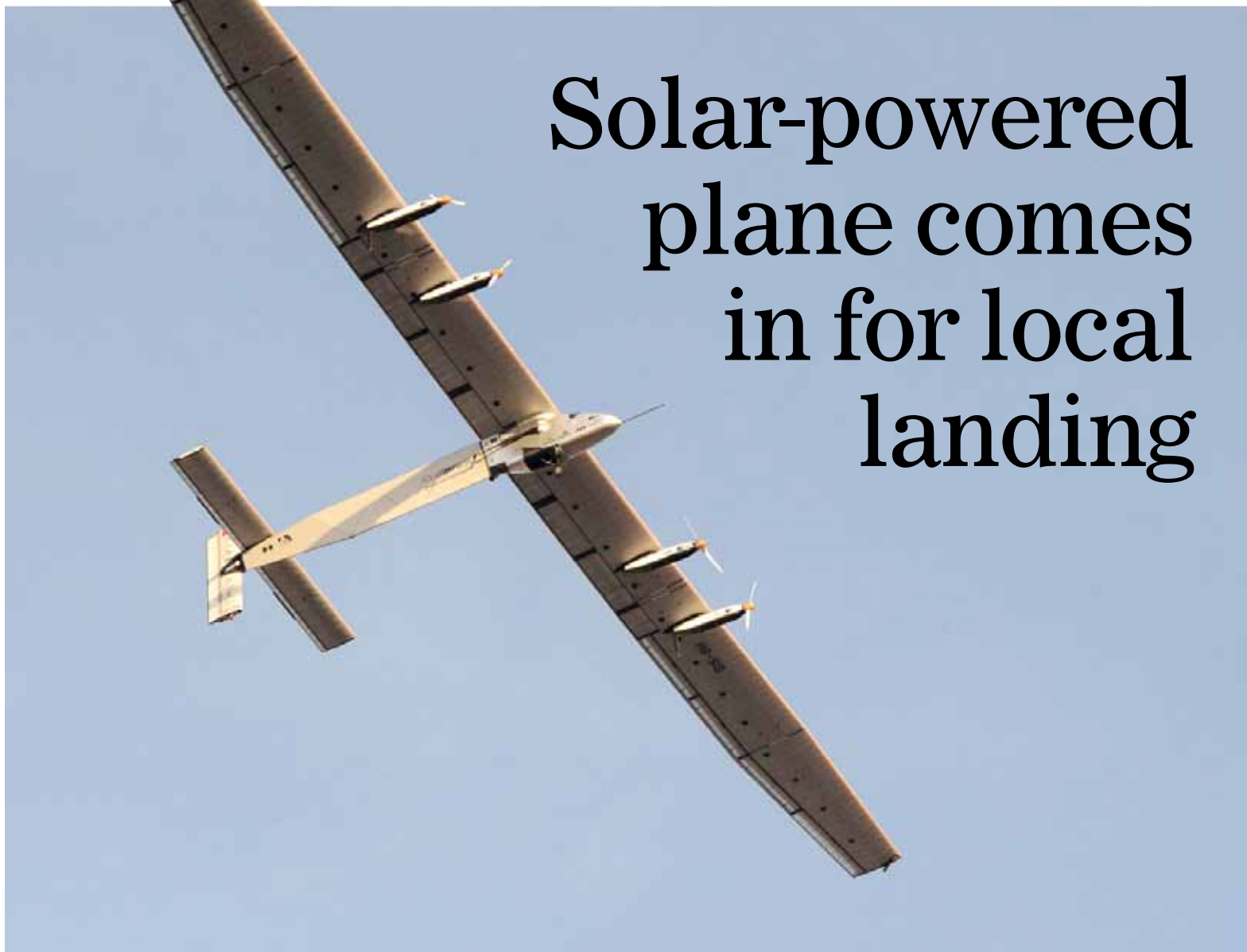
Mr Piccard represents one half of the duo behind Solar Impulse. He will trade off flying the aircraft with his pilot partner André Borschberg.

Though weather delays have set back the plane's schedule - and showed it won't carry hundreds of commercial passengers on transatlantic flights tomorrow - the flight represents a feat of engineering and renewable energy development. Solar Impulse 2 weighs as much as a car and has wings bigger than those of a jumbo jet housing 17,000 solar cells, according to its website.

Mr Piccard said solar power was a source of peace and development, and that boosting renewable energy resources will up the quality of air and water, leading to better quality of life.

"When everyone can have his own energy," Mr Piccard said, "this is a way to have peace."

President U Thein Sein met with Mr Borschberg and Mr Piccard last



Solar Impulse 2, the world's only solar powered aircraft, takes off from the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport in the Indian city of Ahmedabad. Photo: AFP

Solar-powered plane comes in for local landing

year and expressed how important it was for Myanmar to have solar power, Mr Piccard said.

The pilot is to touch down in Mandalay as part of the plane's trip around the world. Upon landing, he said he will thank the Solar Impulse team.

"Then I will say hello to the people of Myanmar," he said.

The trip has also faced some regulatory concerns during its trip, which began in Abu Dhabi earlier this month. The plane's previous stop, in the city of Ahmedabad, was

mired by bureaucratic delays, with Mr Piccard voicing his frustration over tedious paperwork.

Mr Piccard said their flight to Varanasi had been delayed by five days thanks to administrative hurdles the team faced while in Prime Minister

Narendra Modi's home state.

An airport official in Ahmedabad, however, blamed the hold up on Mr Piccard's failure to get his passport stamped when he initially landed for the delay.

- Additional reporting by AFP

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Arbitration bill no panacea for tricky dispute settlements

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ARBITRATION was brought into the spotlight by the high-profile dispute at Myanmar Brewery last year, though the case - like many such local cases - was decided in Singapore.

Efforts are underway to have more disputes settled locally, though experts say this may be a tall order.

Most foreign-local joint ventures have traditionally conducted their arbitration in international courts, reluctant to trust local courts and the legal framework for decisions.

U Myint Lwin, an advocate from U Myint Lwin Law office, said the country is still using 1944 legislation.

An updated arbitration bill was submitted to parliament last month. Firms or partners go to arbitration when other forms of negotiations have failed, as they are reluctant to participate because secret facts become public knowledge and the process can take a long time to unwind.

"When two entities combine with a contract, one of the first things they should consider is what happens if a dispute occurs - how to break up and

depart systematically," he said. Many local businesspeople have minimal knowledge of the issue, he added.

Myanmar signed the New York Arbitration Convention in 2014, joining an agreement on recognition and enforcement of foreign arbitral awards and referrals by a court to arbitration. Notably, it means that foreign decisions must be upheld within Myanmar. While Myanmar has joined the convention and is working on passing a law, most foreign investors operating locally have still opted to use Singapore for arbitration. Hong Kong has also made its pitch as an arbitration destination.

Entrepreneurs say there are still circumstances in which a business may want foreign arbitration. U Than Oo, president of Tag Company, which had a business dispute with military-owned Union of Myanmar Economic Holdings Limited (MEHL), said that if the contract is with a government entity, from a businessperson's perspective, the arbitration should be held in a third country like Singapore. Experts also pointed to Singapore as both a source of investment into Myanmar and a popular country to route investment

through. According to figures from the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration, up to December 2014 Singapore was the third-largest source of foreign investment, after China and Thailand, comprising 15.78 percent of the total.

A former representative from Myanmar Brewery Limited who requested anonymity said Myanmar does not currently have high-enough standards to implement arbitration systems effectively. He pointed to weak knowledge of businesspeople, scarcity of arbitrations and lack of offices, resulting in many businesses relying on Singapore.

Myanmar Brewery's two owners, Fraser and Neave and MEHL, faced off in arbitration last year over an ownership dispute, with the arbitration panel ultimately deciding in favour of MEHL to buy Fraser and Neave's majority stake in the business.

"When the dispute occurred, we went to Singapore for arbitration, as there were not enough lawyers here with experience in business disputes," he said. He added that while Myanmar has become a member of the New York convention, it still needs a government-recognised office.

Local businesses serve up a new take on an old favourite

BUSINESS 10



Looking for the right balance when moving to a new home

PROPERTY 15

Exchange Rates (March 19 close)

Currency	Buying	Selling
Euro	K1089	K1107
Malaysia Ringitt	K307	K308
Singapore Dollar	K774	K779
Thai Baht	K31	K32
US Dollar	K1071	K1074

Responsible Business Center expands scope



KO KO AUNG

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MYANMAR Center for Responsible Business will broaden its scope to begin systematically seeking public feedback about specific grievances regarding companies' operations, as it launches the research phase for its 2015 transparency in Myanmar Enterprises report.

"We want to get more feedback from the public to act as a reality check - for example, has the company been involved in specific land grab cases, or does it mistreat its workers or prevent them from joining a trade union," said Vicky Bowman, director of the centre, at a press conference yesterday.

The centre released its first report on transparency last year, aimed at encouraging transparency in Myanmar business in areas of anti-corruption, organisation transparency, human rights, health, safety and the environment.

Last year it studied 60 websites, finding 25 had no site, and only 10 published significant relevant information. Yet the organisation has a tall order ahead of it - as one economist told *The Myanmar Times*, transparency is the exception in Myanmar business, not the rule.

Myanmar Center for Responsible Business was established in 2013 Yangon-based initiative with funding from the UK, Denmark, Norway, Switzerland, Netherlands and Ireland.

This year, it will research 100 large companies, with the aim of increasing the amount of information in the public sphere and putting in place relevant policies where they do not exist.

The centre will complete its check in June 2015 and publish results in July, with the 100 companies ranked by their transparency. They will be rated based on how the company's official website or social media pages address 35 questions.

Myanmar Center for Responsible Business communications officer U

Phyu Phyu Win said the organisation hopes to hear from people who have been negatively affected by any of these large companies, particularly if the grievances were not satisfactorily solved.

The list of companies being studied will be drawn from the Internal Revenue Department's list of top 1000 commercial taxpayers and 1000 top income taxpayers.

Ms Bowman said many organisations, including government, businesses and NGOs, found last year's report useful.

"For example, foreign companies want to know how their local partners or potential partners rated. It also gave a frame for Myanmar companies to improve on doing business responsibly," she said.

The organisation has also conducted several workshops on issue such as anti-corruption and human rights, aiming to help companies interested in improving their performance in these areas.

'We want to get more feedback from the public to act as a reality check.'

Vicky Bowman
MCRB

Ms Bowman said it is important that Myanmar companies are aware of international standards if they want to improve.

"Since last year's report, a number of them have upgraded the information they publish," she said.

"Transparency is very important," said U Philip, general manager of Union Asia Company.

"Companies should at least be paying tax. But regulations are not the same between one company and another - companies should be doing basic things like allowing annual leave," he said.

Top 3 most transparent local companies in 2014 report		
1	Kanbawza	Banking
2	Parami	Energy
3	Max Myanmar	Conglomerate



Workers leave Hlaing Tharyar industrial zone, which has been touted as one of the country's more successful. Photo: Yu Yu

Yangon authorities join calls to end idle industrial land



MYAT NYEIN AYE

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YANGON authorities have added their voices to calls for an end to the practice of buying industrial zone land and then holding it fallow in the hopes of flipping it for profit.

Genuine investors are often put off by the high costs for industrial land, and deputy industry minister U Myo Aung on March 17 in Nay Pyi Taw pledged authorities would crack down on the speculation.

Yangon speculators in some case are now left holding land that has slumped in value, as buyers desert the market, industry observers say. And now they stand to lose the plots they have failed to develop.

Yangon's Industrial Zone Management Committee of the Department of Human Settlements and Housing Development has asked people who bought land in industrial zones but

who had not conducted any business there as of last December to submit business plans.

The move prompted some owners to put the land on the market, where it languishes, in the absence of anyone willing to buy.

Ko Htun Htun, owner of Phoenix Real Estate Agency, said the investors had been forced to let their land at low prices. "They have to rent it for K2.5 or K3 million instead of the K8-10 million they were anticipating," he told *The Myanmar Times*.

Industrial land can go for about K200 million per acre. But sales have dried up since the end of last year, agents say.

"Most landowners want to sell industrial land, but since the government asked them to account for their idle plots, demand fell off," he said.

The government has established so many industrial zones in the city that the auction price has fallen to under K100 million per acre.

"Investors bought a lot of industrial land when the property market was hot," said Ko Htun Htun, adding

that high levels of investor interest had driven up the price of a small industrial plot from about K8 million to about K20 million.

One observer, who requested anonymity, said, "Whenever the government announced a new industrial zone, middle-level speculators could hardly get a look in. Speculation drove up the price, but now those lots are idle."

Yangon has 29 industrial zones, including about 2400 acres of idle plots, said U Myat Thin Aung, chair of the Yangon industrial zone management committee. "We've received plans in respect of more than 1000 acres, but some of them don't look serious - like an application to build a small warehouse on a large plot. We've received no plans in respect of about 1090 acres."

He said the department now planned to sell those 1090 acres to businesses that would use them after buying the plots back at a reduced price.

Most of the unused plots were outside the Hlaing Tharyar industrial zone, he said.



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SMALL BUSINESS

Biryani trade takes on a new flavour

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HUMBLE biryani is a mainstay at weddings and events, though a number of businesses are expanding their take on the food.

While the spiced mixed-rice dish, originally from India, is popular across the spectrum of followers of local religions, Muslim-owned shops are the traditional purveyors. A number of Buddhist-owned shops are now opening, and several restaurants are also taking biryani upscale.

What is clear is that competition is increasing. Repeat customers are prized, with many returning to their favourite shops for years if the offerings are tasty enough.

New shops, however, are springing up, aiming for a new twist on an old classic.

"There's a lot more competitors now. The business has changed, and declined a little compared to past years - but we still have strong competitors," said Ko Arkar Kyaw, from KSS Group of Companies.

Its Nat Thout Dar Biryani chain is well-known since opening nine years ago. It currently has nine shops in Yangon, and is experimenting with lower cholesterol and healthier foods.



Shwe Myanmar biryani is a new twist on a popular food. Photo: Staff

Ko Arkar Kyaw said it is most important that people trust its quality and service, and particularly the food safety.

The biryani industry is attempting to move to the next level - Ko Arkar Kyaw said Nat Thout Dar Biryani will

soon have a web presence.

Biryani shops often receive significant foot traffic, but most depend on special orders for ceremonies and weddings. Therefore, they tend to do best during wedding season, and weakest when the festive calendar precludes

too many events.

Although there are a number of foods that are suitable for weddings, buyers say biryani is a standout.

Bahan township resident Ko Kyaw Naing Soe said when making an order for his brother's wedding, he wanted to purchase from a Buddhist-owned shop, hence the purchase from Shwe Myanmar.

Shwe Myanmar is one of a number of local shops that have tried to move the food upscale. Foreigners are often reluctant to try the dish at local shops, but will go to more spruced-up locations.

Shwe Myanmar chief executive officer Ma Hnin Thet Kyaw Naing said her store's focus is on showcasing biryani.

"There were a lot of biryani shops in the market when we opened a year ago," she said. "But we've used a new style to start a trend to international standards."

Her shop is open 24 hours, focused on clean and smart decorations, she added.

"Foreigners may come to Myanmar and want to eat biryani, but not know what shop to go to," she said. "Most shops focus on orders [to events like weddings] but not dining, and we want to change the trend."

While Ma Hnin Thet Kyaw Naing's approach is to serve meals inside her restaurant, others are taking a different tact.

Ko Si Thu said he buy biryani based

on his friends' recommendations from a seller who does not have his own shop. The seller is flexible on quantity and price, though, which were attributes Ko Si Thu was looking for to feed his recent wedding guests.

"Our family always orders from him, and we like the taste," he said.

The cook, Ko Ei Soot, lives in South Okkalapa township.

He has been in the business for 20 years, but it still has its ups and downs. Without a storefront presence, he relies entirely on catering orders for events.

"The large number of shops that are opening does not affect our business, because we target different groups of customers," he said. "Our customers like my biryani's taste, and they come to me when the need a large order."



Biryani. Photo: Aung Htay Hlaing

OPINION

Modi's problem may be the banks

IN New Delhi this week, IMF managing director Christine Lagarde joined the chorus of voices pressing India's government to tackle ambitious reforms to land and labour markets. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has so far stopped shy of such big-bang measures, whether because he doesn't think they're necessary to revive growth or because they're politically impossible. But there's one area where the government is going to have to think more daringly if any of its other efforts are to bear fruit: India's ailing banking sector.

On the surface, Indian banks don't look so bad off. The ratio of non-performing loans seems reasonably low at 4 percent - around the same level as France and significantly lower than crisis-stricken Greece (32pc) and Ireland (25pc). The banking system, too, is dominated by state-owned banks, who account for 70pc of all outstanding loans. Fortunately, those are backed by sovereign guarantee.

Unlike Europe, though, India's goal isn't to avoid a banking crisis - it's to achieve double-digit growth. And for that, banks need to feel confident enough to lend. Clearly they don't: Despite two rounds of rate cuts this year, 43 out of 47 major banks including the giant State Bank of India have not cut interest rates. According to central bank data, banks' profitability in March 2014 was at its lowest since 2007. In the 12 months since then, the number of bad loans at the biggest state-owned banks (with the exception of SBI) has only grown. If one counts restructured assets as well - without a modern bankruptcy law, restructured loans usually go unpaid - the ratio of non-performing loans climbs to a more worrying 10pc, about the same as Portugal (10.8pc) and Spain (9.38pc).

In the medium term, the only way to restore banks' health is through a significant infusion of capital. By the central bank's own estimate, India's state-owned banks need at least \$38 billion to meet the Basel III standards

for capital adequacy.

The government simply doesn't have that kind of money available, given the need to spend on infrastructure while also reducing the fiscal deficit sharply over the next three years. Nearly \$10 billion was pumped into state-owned banks between 2011 and 2014. By contrast, Mr Modi's recently released budget set aside only an additional \$1.2 billion for nine key banks, down from \$2 billion last year.

In the medium term, the only way to restore banks' health is through a significant infusion of capital.

The only way to generate the necessary capital is for the government to sell off or dilute its stakes in state-owned banks. This can't be done in piecemeal fashion. Mr Modi's government has resisted lowering its stake below 52pc in any individual bank. At best divestment on that scale could yield \$14 billion in funds - far short of what's needed to recapitalize the sector.

Sooner or later, the government needs to consider accepting minority stakes in state lenders, or selling them outright to private investors, including foreign banks. This would both generate much-needed cash and help address a major cause of bad loans: political interference and pressure that leads to bad lending decisions. In the most egregious recent example, a consortium of 13 private and state banks led by SBI continued to lend money to Kingfisher Airlines for six years despite the fact the airline never registered a profit. Instead

of cutting their losses, the consortium converted a sixth of their debt to equity by paying an outlandish 61pc premium over the prevailing share price. The airline - owned by Vijay Mallya, a powerful billionaire and member of Parliament - folded shortly thereafter.

Such cases should render the case for privatisation fairly easy to make. Unfortunately, resistance remains strong. Since the global financial crisis, the dominant narrative in India's polity has been that India's conservative approach to the financial sector served the country well. Deep suspicions about the motives and practices of private bankers are deeply entrenched. Also, state-owned banks have powerful labour unions which resist privatisation strongly.

There are other measures the government could take that would stop short of privatisation yet cut down on political interference. Currently, state banks are essentially run like a bureaucracy; employees win spots through competitive exams and usually spend their entire working life in the same institution. Salaries are heavily regulated, even at the top levels. The head of SBI, India's largest bank, earns one-tenth the compensation package of her private-sector counterparts.

The ranks of management could be professionalised and paid accordingly. Boards, too, should be given greater autonomy. Rather than having the Ministry of Finance select members based on political patronage, they could be chosen by an independent panel of experts who would operate at arm's length from the government. If the government follows through on its pledge to introduce a new bankruptcy law, companies would have less leverage to bully banks into "restructuring" loans continuously.

Revived growth would help ease the stress on the banking sector, of course. But such an uptick is unlikely until the banks are fixed. Good arguments can be made for Mr Modi to move slowly on other fronts - just not this one.

- Bloomberg

BRUSSELS

EU to clamp down on firms' tax avoidance

THE EU intensified efforts to fight rampant tax avoidance by multinationals in its first major effort to counter the LuxLeaks scandal that poured embarrassment on commission head Jean-Claude Juncker.

The commission, the EU's powerful executive arm, said its ambitious plan would force the EU's 28 countries to share details of any tax deals agreed with some of the world's biggest multinationals, ending the secrecy that allowed member states to often compete against each other to attract business and investment.

"Tolerance has reached rock-bottom for companies that avoid paying their fair share of taxes, and for the regimes that enable them to do this," said EU economics affairs commissioner Pierre Moscovici in announcing the plan.

"We have to rebuild the link between where companies really make their profits and where they are taxed," he said.

The plan targets so-called tax rulings, secret deals at the heart of the LuxLeaks scandal that revealed last year that some of the world's biggest companies - including Pepsi and Ikea - had lowered their tax rates to as little as 1 percent in secret pacts with tax authorities in Luxembourg.

The revelations, unearthed by a consortium of investigative journalists, were a huge embarrassment to Mr Juncker, the then-newly installed Commission head who presided over the tax pacts for almost 19 years as Luxembourg prime minister.

Under the new regime proposed by the Commission, member states would be forced to reveal tax rulings made with companies to other bloc members automatically every three months.

This transparency, Mr Moscovici said, would deny companies the ability to secretly shift profits and avoid

taxes, at least within the EU.

The plan however did not question the perfectly legal practice of providing tax rulings to companies, Mr Moscovici said, this being the strict responsibility of member states that would have never approved scrapping them.

Critics said the plan was too narrow in scope, and the transparency too limited, to truly address corporate tax avoidance they said occurs on a massive scale.

"Though this tax transparency package is supposed to be a response to the Luxembourg Leaks, it's only addressing a fraction of the problem," said Koen Roovers of the Financial Transparency Coalition in Brussels.



EU Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker attends a parliamentary session last year. Photo: AFP

"Over 150 companies in the leak were associated with the United States, but they will simply be out of bounds under this proposal," he said.

Activists also criticised that the contents of a tax ruling would remain out of the public eye, remaining privileged information for authorities.

- AFP

ABU DHABI

Gates and Bloomberg start anti-tobacco fund

BILLIONAIRE philanthropists Michael Bloomberg and Bill Gates launched a joint fund in Abu Dhabi to help developing countries pass tobacco-control laws in their legal battle with industry giants.

The Anti-Tobacco Trade Litigation Fund, backed by Bloomberg Philanthropies and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, aims "to combat the tobacco industry's use of international trade agreements to threaten and prevent countries from passing strong tobacco-control laws," its creators say.

"We are at a critical moment in the global effort to reduce tobacco use, because the significant gains we have seen are at risk of being undermined by the tobacco industry's use of trade agreements and litigation," said former New York mayor Bloomberg.

"We will stand with nations as they work to protect their populations against the deadly health effects of tobacco use."

The announcement was made on the second day of the 16th World Conference on Tobacco or Health.

The World Health Organization has warned that although smoker numbers are declining in many parts of the world, upward trends in African and Mediterranean countries mean

the global total will not change much during the next decade.

About 80 percent of the world's 1 billion smokers, it says, live in low- and middle-income countries.

On March 18, Mr Bloomberg granted governments and NGOs in Brazil, Nepal, Philippines, Russia, Ukraine and Uruguay his Philanthropies Awards for Global Tobacco Control for "significant strides" they have made in implementing tobacco control policies.

Uruguay was the first country in Latin America to ban smoking in public spaces, a measure it enacted in 2006.

Cigarette packs carry graphic pictures of cancer patients to warn smokers of the dangers, tobacco firms are forbidden from using marketing terms such as "light" or "mild," and cigarette ads are banned from television, radio and newspapers.

The crackdown has prompted industry giant Philip Morris to hit back by suing Uruguay for US\$25 million at the World Bank's International Center for Settlement of Investment Disputes in 2010, alleging that the country had violated treaties by devaluing its trademarks and investments.

- AFP



IN PICTURES

A man walks up a pedestrian bridge lined with drying laundry, hung by people who live under the bridge, in Jakarta yesterday. Indonesia's economy appears headed downward as investors withdraw funds and redirect them back toward more developed markets. *Photo: AFP*

ATHENS

IMF said to name Greece its most unhelpful client in history

INTERNATIONAL Monetary Fund officials told their euro-area colleagues that Greece is the most unhelpful country the organisation has dealt with in its 70-year history, according to two people familiar with the talks.

In a short and bad-tempered conference call on March 15, officials from the IMF, the European Central Bank and the European Commission complained that Greek officials aren't adhering to a bailout extension deal reached in February or cooperating with creditors, said the people, who asked not to be identified because the call was private.

German finance officials said trying to persuade the Greek government to draw up a rigorous economic policy program is like riding a dead horse, the people said, while the IMF team said Greece's attitude to its official creditors was unacceptable. The German Finance Ministry didn't respond to multiple requests seeking comment.

Concern is growing among officials that the recalcitrance of Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras's government may end up forcing Greece out of the euro, as the cash-strapped country

refuses to take the action needed to trigger more financial support. Mr Tsipras is pinning his hopes for a breakthrough on a meeting with ECB President Mario Draghi, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, French President Francois Hollande and European Commission head Jean-Claude Juncker this week in Brussels.

"These are difficult talks," Ms Merkel told her parliamentary group on March 17 about the negotiations with Greece, according to two participants. She said that the outcome of the talks is completely open, according to the two.

The Greek government is seeking a political deal at a European Union summit starting yesterday to unlock funds from the country's 240 billion-euro (US\$254 billion) bailout package, government spokesperson Gabriel Sakellaris said in an interview on Skai TV on March 18.

"After one-and-a-half months of contact, we believe that for there to be a political solution, it is important for the euro-area's big countries to weigh in," Mr Sakellaris said. "We're not downplaying technical

discussions, but we want there to be a framework, and for that we're asking for a political solution." Mr Sakellaris didn't respond to a request for comment on the March 17 conference call.

Euro-region finance ministers are urging Greece to draw up a plan to fix the economy in exchange for emergency loans to keep the country afloat. As Mr Tsipras challenges his creditors to blink first, his government's money is running out, raising the prospect of a cash crunch as early as this month. The country faces more than 2 billion euros in debt payments today, and government salaries and pensions must be at the end of March.

Greece auctioned 1 billion euros in 13-week treasury bills on March 18, and accepted offers for 1.3 billion euros, the maximum amount allowed including non-competitive bids. The country's debt management agency plans to tap another 300 million euros in second-day bids late yesterday. The money will be used to roll over 1.6 billion euros of treasury redemptions due today.

The call with euro-area finance

officials came after the group's chair, Dutch Finance Minister Jeroen Dijsselbloem, said the country could use capital controls to remain in 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," Mr Dijsselbloem told BNR Nieuwsradio. For the 2013 Cypriot bailout, "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."

While technical discussions have begun with Greece over how to implement a euro-area finance ministers' agreement for a four-month extension of Greece's loan, progress so far has been minimal, according to the people involved in the talks. Officials from the institutions monitoring the bailout said during the meeting that Greece is unilaterally pushing measures through parliament that have an unclear fiscal impact and without consulting them, a person familiar said. - Bloomberg

US welcomed in China's infrastructure bank

Chinese deputy finance minister Shi Yaobin has told the German press his country would welcome a US role in a Beijing-backed multinational lender, hours after state media described Washington as "petulant and cynical".

"We would welcome the United States into the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)," Mr Shi told *Handelsblatt* daily in an interview set for publication yesterday.

The United States perceives the AIIB, a US\$50 billion institution, as a threat to the Washington-led World Bank. "The new bank will mainly play a supporting role for other international institutions," Mr Shi said, according to an extract.

"For the AIIB, we want to learn about how these institutions work, and if possible, we'll be able to copy their good example," he said.

"That goes for environmental standards, governance rules and some good purchasing practices," he added. The remarks come after France, Germany and Italy announced their decision on March 17 to become founding members in the AIIB.

Earlier on March 16, Chinese state media gloated over the major European powers' decision to join the bank, while describing the US as "petulant and cynical".

Paris, Rome and Berlin's decision came after London last week announced its own ambitions to join, drawing a rebuke from Washington.

- AFP

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Closing date for applications: **3 April 2015**



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Finding the right balance when moving



TIN YADANAR TUN MYAT NOE OO

SUPERSTITION and business savvy combine together when people move into a new home.

While some live in the same neighbourhoods their entire life, the practice is becoming less common in Yangon as market prices fluctuate and new housing comes online.

Seniors often move to quieter, less expensive housing out of town, while young couples re-locate closer to workplaces or schools - among hundreds of reasons for finding a new abode.

What is important, though, is that it all goes smoothly. There are traditionally good times and bad times of the year to make a move.

Buddhist Lent, from the middle of June to the middle of September, is in particular seen as a poor period to relocate.

"Myanmar people never move during the three Lent months of Waso, Wakaung and Tawtalin," said U Kyaw Soe, owner of Kyaw moving service.

"Many people therefore move just before or just after this period - April and October are the most popular months for moving."

Kyaw moving service sees particularly heavy business in October. It is the month when many leases begin, buyers take up new homes, and married couples find a place of their own.

They are increasingly moving to

Yangon's outskirt regions like North and South Dagon and Hlaingt Tharyar townships, with higher living standards at more affordable prices - even if the commute is tough.

U Yan Aung, real estate agent and manager of Asia Construction, said some of these old superstitions are beginning to subside.

"Nowadays people move to places that are convenient for their job, without thinking of any customs," he said.

"Traffic is terrible, and nobody wants to waste time being stuck in the slow lane," he added.

University students for instance tend to congregate in Kamaryut township, businesspeople like downtown townships, merchants move to Mingalar Taung Nyunt near Mingalar Market and Yuzana Plaza, and garment workers end up in Hlaing Tharyar township near the industrial zones.

Still, it is not easy relocating. The biggest problem is the cost - which can run as high as K300,000 a move if a professional service is hired, according to Yankin-based real estate agent U Aung Myint.

Because of the cost, it is still best to avoid moving too frequently. Still, landlords can leave tenants in the lurch by upping prices or making more demands, while tenants can decide they have had enough of their current home.

Daw Sagawa, a house owner who rents out her home, said tenants avoid taking up the home in the Lent months, often prepaying fees to take up the home after Lent is finished.

Yet for all the trouble around



There's plenty more reasons to move in Yangon as construction and prices soar. Photo: Aung Htay Hlaing

moving to a new home, there are a few who say they enjoy re-locating.

U Thiha, a military officer, said he likes to move every two or three years to see what it is like in a new area.

"I find it very interesting to live in new areas and feel the local pulse in the places I live in," he said.

"I don't have any position on which month to move in and which to avoid - I can shift any time I like. But my wife particularly dislikes

moving during Lent."

U Thiha said that even if he could convince his better half, Lent also coincides with rainy season, making it doubly difficult.

Moving companies certainly appreciate people like U Thiha, who generates them more business.

Yangon people are often forced to pick up stakes to a new house, given the rapid changes in today's property market.

Moving - unless to an exceptionally close property - requires at least a truck and usually a crew of assistants.

Ko Shay Gyi from Toe Tet house moving services said the business is not easy, but the pay is relatively good - when there is work.

In down times, such as Buddhist Lent, Ko Shay Gyi's service finds itself hauling other items, such as iron plates at the harbour and the like.

Toe Tet company has 50 employees as well as links with car rental services, and prides itself on avoiding too much damage.

Yet many Yangonites try to steer clear, reckoning such services are too expensive.


U Than Nyunt, a Tarmwe resident, said in his experience moving services have been lackluster, often failing to pay proper attention to items like cupboards and refrigerators.

Other residents say that while many still rely on family and friends to help out, the trend is toward professional relocation services.


Daw Than Than Sint, a Bahan resident, said previously she would hire a car and workers from among friends in her ward, but now she would like the full professional package.

"I would like full service but I'm having trouble finding it," she said. "There are professional moving services, though they cost K50,000 per trip. If it takes more than one trip, it's another K50,000 - and I have to keep a close watch on my goods."

The whole experience is tiring, and Daw Than Than Sint said she hopes it is easier in the future - as long as it is not during Buddhist Lent.



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World

WORLD EDITOR: Fiona MacGregor

PORT VILA

Aid orgs slammed for 'lack of coordination'

VANUATU has hit out at aid groups swarming the cyclone-ravaged Pacific nation over a lack of coordination, which it said cost precious time getting help to those in need, while warning food will run out in a week.

Relief agencies have been battling 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.

They continue to paint a bleak picture, detailing large-scale property and crop destruction, and an urgent need for clean water, medical supplies, tents, bedding and hygiene kits.

Aid finally reached the badly hit island of Tanna on March 18, five days after Severe Cyclone Pam roared ashore on the night of March 13, but many of the 80 islands that make up Vanuatu remain out of touch and without help.

National disaster committee deputy chair Benjamin Shing said while the country appreciated the aid, the initial response could have been handled better with many groups and NGOs working on their own rather than in cooperation with the government.

"I do apologise but I have to state the facts. We have seen this time and time again," he said at a briefing late on March 18 in the capital Port Vila.

"In nearly every country in the world where they go in they [INGOs] have their own operational systems, they have their own networks and they refuse to conform to government directives.

"We had to spend the first three days trying to get some form of coordination in place. That was much precious time that could have been spent doing the assessments instead."

Oxfam country director in Port Vila Colin Collett van Rooyen denied any disorganisation.

"Our position is that we will continue to work with the government, as we have been, and as we always do, to address the best interests of those in need," he said.

In a situation update, the UN Office for the Coordination of

Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) noted, "Coordination with the ministry of health regarding flights to provinces is critical."

There is also confusion over the death toll. Early reports from UNOCHA announced an unconfirmed 44 dead, which then went to 24 confirmed, only to be revised down again to 11.

The Vanuatu government said in fact only seven people were confirmed dead and that the four others were patients already in hospitals whose deaths were not directly related to the storm.

"The number of confirmed fatalities that we have for Tanna, there are five, for Port Vila there are six, so if you do the maths it's 11," said Mr Shing.

"But technically, there are only seven that are due to the cyclone. Four deaths in the hospital were patients ... They were already sick. Not related to the cyclone - unrelated deaths."

Reconnaissance flights by military aircraft from Australia and France on March 18 "found severe and widespread damage across the larger islands of Tanna, Erromango and Efate", the UN said, but less destruction on the nation's smaller southern islands.

Mr van Rooyen said work was under way yesterday to identify priority areas across the archipelago and get aid to them as soon as possible.

Efforts to ferry relief supplies to Tanna and other islands continued, with Agriculture Minister David Tosul warning the struggling subsistence-based country needed rice, biscuits, seeds, tinned protein and cash to help ship them in.

He said bananas and other fruit trees had been destroyed, leafy vegetables devastated and staple root crops irreparably damaged, with limited supplies of imported food left.

"In short, our agricultural experts estimate that Vanuatu's people will run out of food in less than one week," he said, adding that the government was establishing an emergency food account for financial contributions.

- AFP



IN PICTURES

Photo: AFP

An Indian farmer takes a nap as she takes part in a protest rally Narendra Modi - which they say will harm the country's millions legislation on March 10 passed parliament's lower house, where opposition lawmakers stormed out during voting. It still needs

BANGKOK

Yingluck to be tried

THAILAND'S former premier Yingluck Shinawatra was yesterday ordered to stand trial on charges of negligence over a bungled rice subsidy scheme, in a case that could see her jailed for up to a decade.

The decision is the latest legal move against Ms Yingluck - Thailand's first female prime minister and sister of fugitive ex-premier Thaksin Shinawatra - that could spell the end of her family's political dominance.

The Shinawatras, or parties allied to them, have won every Thai election since 2001.

"The panel [of judges] has decided that this case falls within our authority ... We accept this case," said judge Veeraphol Tangsuwan at Bangkok's Supreme Court, adding that the first hearing will be held on May 19.

Thailand's attorney general filed criminal charges against Ms Yingluck in February, accusing her of "dereliction of duty" in relation to the economically disastrous rice scheme, which paid farmers in the rural Shinawatra heartland twice



Thai Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra. Photo: AFP

the market rate for their crops.

The program cost billions of dollars and inspired the protests that eventually felled Ms Yingluck's elected government and led to May's military coup.

The court's decision comes less

than two months after the retroactive impeachment of the former premier by an assembly appointed by the ruling generals - a move that carries an automatic five-year ban from politics.

Ms Yingluck did not attend the



A mother holds her child at the Tanna Island Airport before being airlifted to Port Vila hospital, on Tanna Island, Vanuatu, on March 18, 2. Photo: AFP

Tunisia vows war on terrorism after tourists slaughtered

WORLD 19



against land reforms proposed by Prime Minister of farmers - in New Delhi on March 18. The new Mr Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party holds a majority, after upper house approval.

for negligence

Bangkok court yesterday, but will be legally obliged to attend the first hearing next month.

The army takeover last year was the latest twist in Thailand's turbulent political landscape, at the heart of which sits Mr Thaksin, who was toppled by a previous coup in 2006 and now lives in self-exile to avoid jail on a corruption charge.

Yet his influence persists in Thai politics, with Shinawatral allied parties drawing the loyalty of the rural north as well as urban working-class voters for their populist policies.

But Mr Thaksin is loathed by

much of the country's royalist elite, which is backed by parts of the military and judiciary, and experts say the impeachment and charges against Ms Yingluck are the latest attempt to extinguish the political prowess of the Shinawatras.

The junta has said it will hold fresh elections in early 2016 once reforms to tackle corruption and curb the power of political parties are codified in a new constitution.

But the draft charter has already raised deep concerns in the kingdom, and critics doubt whether it will bridge Thailand's political divisions. - AFP



Butler business is booming in China

WORLD 22

SEOUL

South Korea, US forces to start massive military landing drill

SOUTH Korea and the United States will launch a massive landing drill next week, the climax of an ongoing joint military exercise which North Korea views as an invasion rehearsal.

The amphibious drill will start March 28 and run until April 1 at the port of Pohang, some 360 kilometres (223 miles) south of Seoul, the US-South Korea Combined Forces Command said in a statement.

It will include some 1000 US Marines, three US amphibious ships and 3000 South Koreans, Yonhap news agency said.

US sailors and marines from the Bonhomme Richard Amphibious Ready Group and the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) based in Okinawa, Japan, are also participating in the drill, known as Ssangyong in South Korea and the Korean Marine

Exchange Program (KMEP) in the United States.

"KMEP is designed to strengthen our interoperability in amphibious operations between the US and ROK [South Korea] Forces, which contributes to the security and stability on the Korean Peninsula as well as the entire Asia-Pacific region", the statement said.

The scale of the drill has been downgraded compared with last year, though it marks the peak of the eight-week Foal Eagle joint US-South Korea military exercise which started on March 2 and is scheduled to end on April 24.

Also beginning early March was the Key Resolve exercise - a computer-simulated command post drill that rehearsed various conflict scenarios and involved around 10,000 South Korean and 8600 US troops.

Last year as the South and the United States were staging the Ssangyong landing drill, South and North Korea exchanged fire near their disputed sea border.

The exchange was triggered by a three-hour North Korean live-fire exercise that dropped shells into South Korean waters, but was limited to untargeted shelling into the sea.

Annual drills always trigger a surge in military tensions between the two Koreas, which remain technically at war because the 1950-53 Korean conflict ended with a ceasefire rather than a peace treaty.

The United States and South Korea insist their joint military exercises are defensive in nature, but North Korea claims that they, especially the landing drill, are designed to rehearse invasion. - AFP

JAKARTA

Bali Nine execution appeal delayed

AN Indonesian court yesterday adjourned the latest legal bid by two Australian drug smugglers to avoid the firing squad, as Jakarta said they will not be executed until appeals filed by several convicts are completed.

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

smuggle heroin out of Indonesia.

Their appeals for presidential clemency, typically a death row convict's final chance of avoiding the firing squad, were recently rejected by Indonesian President Joko Widodo.

They are expected to be executed at the same time as eight other drug convicts, including nationals from France, Brazil, Nigeria, Ghana and the

Philippines, as well as one Indonesian.

The Australians' legal team, in its latest bid to avoid execution, argued against Mr Widodo's decision to reject their pleas for clemency, saying he failed to assess their rehabilitation or give reasons for his decision. The Jakarta State Administrative Court dismissed the bid last month, and the Australians' lawyers are now appealing that decision. - AFP



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ဂျပန်နိုင်ငံသည် အဆင့်အတန်းမြင့်မား၍ ကျန်းမာရေးနှင့် ညီညွတ်သောလူနေမှုပုံစံကြောင့် ကမ္ဘာပေါ်တွင် ယေဘုယျအားဖြင့်ကျန်းကျန်းမာမာနှင့် သက်တမ်းရှည်စွာနေထိုင်နိုင်သော ထိပ်ဆုံးနိုင်ငံတစ်နိုင်ငံအဖြစ် ရပ်တည်လျက်ရှိပါသည်။ ဂျပန်နိုင်ငံ၏ သက်ရှည် - ကျန်းမာခြင်းကဏ္ဍဆိုင်ရာလုပ်ငန်းများပါဝင်ပြသမည့် ဤကုန်စည်ပြပွဲမြန်မာပြည်သူများပိုမိုအသက်ရှည်၍ပိုမိုကျန်းမာစေသည့်ပတ်ဝန်းကျင်တစ်ရပ်တိုးတက်ဖြစ်ပေါ်လာရေးအတွက် ကောင်းစွာအကျိုးပြုမည်ဟုယုံကြည်ပါသည်။

ပြပွဲတွင် အားကစားပစ္စည်းများ၊ကျန်းမာရေးနှင့်ဆိုင်သောဝန်ဆောင်မှုများ၊ ဆေးဆိုင်များ၊ ကျန်းမာရေးညီညွတ်စေသည့်အစားအသောက်များ၊အလှအပဆိုင်ရာပစ္စည်းများ၊ဆေးရုံဆေးခန်းများနှင့် ဆိုင်သောပစ္စည်းများကို ပြသမည်ဖြစ်သည်။ ထို့အပြင် ကျန်းမာရေးပြုစုစောင့်ရှောက်ခြင်း၊ အန္တရာယ်တင်ကြိုကာကွယ်ခြင်း၊ လေ့ကျင့်ခန်းများ၊ ဘောလုံးတော့ - ဖမ်းကစားခြင်းများနှင့်အလှကုန်များအသုံးပြုပုံစံသည် သရုပ်ပြခြင်းများ ပါဝင်မည့်အပြင် ကျန်းမာရေးကုထုံးများ၊ကျန်းမာရေးစီမံခန့်ခွဲမှုများနှင့် အခြားသောအသိပညာ ဗဟုသုတများစွာလည်းပါဝင်မည်ဖြစ်၍ပြသမည့်ကဏ္ဍစုံလင်လှသည့်ကြုံထောင်ကြုံခံအခွင့်အလမ်းတစ်ရပ်ဖြစ်ပါသည်။ မည်သူမဆိုလာရောက် ကြည့်ရှုလေ့လာအားပေးကြပါရန် လှိုက်လှဲပျိုငါ့စွာဖိတ်ကြားအပ်ပါသည်။




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WASHINGTON

US re-thinks peace plan after Netanyahu win

THE US has vowed to continue to push for a Palestinian state, but admitted a hardline campaign stand by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has forced a re-evaluation of its strategy.

Mr Netanyahu's election victory was met coolly by the White House, which left Secretary of State John Kerry the job of phoning the Israeli leader to congratulate him - taking a break from talks on an controversial Iran nuclear deal to do so.

US President Barack Obama will call "in the coming days", the White House said on March 18.

"It was a brief phone call," State Department spokesperson Jen Psaki added, refusing to characterise it as a "warm" conversation amid frosty relations between Mr Netanyahu and the Obama administration.

US officials stressed Washington would not be swayed from its official policy that any Israeli-Palestinian peace deal should result in two states living side-by-side.

In the final days of his campaign, Mr Netanyahu managed to deepen the discord with the Obama administration by pledging there would be no Palestinian state on his watch, and promising to build thousands more

settlements in east Jerusalem.

"It continues to be the view of the president that a two-state solution is the best way to address" tensions with the Palestinians, White House spokesperson Josh Earnest said.

He also castigated Mr Netanyahu's Likud party for sharp rhetoric "that seeks to marginalise Arab-Israeli citizens" after the prime minister urged supporters to the polls, warning, "Arab voters are coming out in droves."

Ms Psaki added, that, "Only a two-state solution that results in a secure Israel alongside a sovereign and independent Palestine can bring lasting peace and stability to both peoples."

"A two-state solution is the only way for the next Israeli government to secure Israel as a Jewish and democratic state," she insisted, highlighting the demographic trend which points to a growing Arab population.

But she acknowledged that, given Mr Netanyahu's campaign pledges, the administration "will be evaluating our approach with regard to how best to achieve a two-state solution".

Although Ms Psaki refused "to pre-judge at this point what that means", speculation is swirling about whether the US may, for example, lift the diplomatic cover it has long given Israel at



Copies of ballot papers and campaign posters for Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud Party lie on the ground in the aftermath of the country's parliamentary elections, early on March 18 in Tel Aviv. Photo: AFP

the UN Security Council, amid unilateral Palestinian moves to seek statehood.

Relations between Israel and its traditionally staunch US ally are at an all-time low, and Mr Netanyahu has a notoriously frosty relationship with Mr Obama.

The Israeli leader's dramatic appearance earlier this month before the US Congress to denounce the emerging nuclear deal with Iran only served to widened the chasm.

Indeed, Mr Obama's Republican rivals were the first American politicians to publicly congratulate Mr Netanyahu.

"Congratulations to Prime Minister Netanyahu on his re-election. He's a

true leader who will continue to keep Israel strong and secure," said Jeb Bush, a probable Republican front-runner in the 2016 presidential race.

Tea Party favorite Senator Ted Cruz also applauded Mr Netanyahu's victory.

"His electoral success is all the more impressive given the powerful forces that tried to undermine him, including, sadly, the full weight of the Obama political team," Mr Cruz wrote.

A new Netanyahu government is unlikely to end the discord with its closest ally however, observers say, although there will be attempts to at least ease the political tensions.

"Netanyahu's comments don't help

his credibility, as he seems to be contradicting his own policy from last year when he was negotiating a two-state solution," Natan Sachs, a fellow in Middle East policy at the Brookings Institution, said.

But he argued that to Mr Netanyahu the statements were "not as clear-cut as they appeared to be from abroad, and I think he's going to try to walk them back somewhat, though that will not be an easy task to do".

A new crisis in relations may be only days away. The deadline for a framework deal with Iran is March 31, and just a day later on April 1 the Palestinians will formally join the International Criminal Court. - AFP

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TUNIS

President vows 'merciless war' against terrorism after deadly attack on tourists

TUNISIA'S president promised to wage a "merciless war against terrorism" after gunmen killed 17 foreign tourists and two Tunisians in a daylight attack in the birthplace of the Arab Spring.

As the international community denounced the March 18 assault on the National Bardo Museum in Tunis, which also left more than 40 people wounded, President Beji Caid Essebsi vowed Tunisia would fight "to our last breath".

"I want the Tunisian people to understand that we are in a war against terrorism and that these savage minorities do not frighten us," said Mr Essebsi, who visited some of the dozens being treated for wounds in a Tunis hospital.

"We will fight them without mercy to our last breath."

The gunmen, dressed in military uniforms, opened fire on the tourists – including visitors from Italy, France, Australia, Colombia, Poland and Spain – as they got off a bus then chased them inside the museum, said Prime Minister Habib Essid.

'I want the Tunisian people to understand we are against terrorism and these savage minorities do not frighten us.'

Beji Caid Essebsi
Tunisian president

A Japanese survivor described how she and her mother were shot in the hail of bullets.

"I was crouching down with my arms over my head, but I was shot in the ear, hand and neck," 35-year-old Noriko Yuki said from her hospital bed in comments aired by Japanese broadcaster NHK.

"My mother beside me was shot

in the neck. Mother couldn't move by herself when the police came over," she added.

Among the dead were five Japanese, four Italians, two Colombians and one each from Australia, France, Poland and Spain, Mr Essid announced on television, in what he said was a definitive toll.

However, differing figures were given by other governments and there was conflicting information over the breakdown, with some of the dead identified as joint nationals.

The nationality of a 16th victim was not given, while the identity of the final fatality had not yet been established.

The Colombian tourists were a mother and child visiting Tunisia on a family holiday, their government said. The father survived the attack.

Police killed two gunmen and the authorities were still hunting for possible accomplices, said the prime minister.

A Tunisian bus driver and a policeman were also reported dead in the attack on the Bardo, famed for its collection of ancient artefacts.

The government announced more than 40 people were wounded, with Health Minister Said Aidi saying they included citizens of France, South Africa, Poland, Italy and Japan.

The attack appeared to be the worst on foreigners in Tunisia since an Al-Qaeda suicide bombing of a synagogue killed 14 Germans, two French and five Tunisians on the island of Djerba in 2002.

It sparked outrage, with hundreds of people gathering later in a major thoroughfare of the capital, singing the national anthem and shouting slogans against the attackers, labelling them terrorists.

The assault also drew strong condemnation from world leaders, who vowed support for Tunisia.

US Secretary of State John Kerry denounced the "wanton violence" while British Prime Minister David Cameron said he was "appalled" by the attack and French President Francois Hollande expressed "solidarity" with the country.

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon slammed the "deplorable" and "heinous" act and conveyed

his "deepest sympathies" to the families of the victims.

Meanwhile the UN Security Council stressed that "no terrorist attack can reverse the path of Tunisia towards democracy".

There was no initial claim of responsibility, but Tunisia has struggled to tackle a rise in attacks from Islamist extremists.

Interior ministry spokesperson Mohamed Ali Aroui told reporters "two or more terrorists armed with Kalashnikovs" had targeted the museum, where about 100 tourists had been inside.

"Anti-terrorist units" had entered the museum and, about four hours after the incident began, declared that "the operation is over".

Museum employee Dhouha Belhaj Alaya said she heard "intense gunfire" around noon.

"My co-workers were screaming, 'Run! Run! Shots are being fired!'" she said. "We escaped out the back door with co-workers and some tourists."

French tourist Fabienne recounted

how she and others hid in one of the museum's galleries along with their guide.

"We couldn't see anything, but there must have been a lot of them. We were afraid that, at any moment, they would come kill us," she said.

Work was suspended at nearby parliament during the attack.

"There was enormous panic," lawmaker Sayida Ounissi wrote on Twitter, saying hearings on Tunisia's anti-terrorism law were taking place at the time.

Mr Essid said there was a "possibility" that the gunmen could have accomplices, and that authorities were "conducting extensive search operations to identify the two or three terrorists who possibly participated in the operation".

Tunisia has seen an upsurge in Islamist extremism since the 2011 revolution that ousted longtime strongman Zine El Abidine Ben Ali.

Dozens of police and military personnel have been killed or wounded in attacks blamed on Islamist militants.

An army offensive against the jihadists, who are linked to al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, has been under way since 2012 but the ground and air campaign has failed to eliminate them.

The country is also fighting against the radicalisation of Muslim youth. Authorities say as many as 3000 Tunisians have gone to Iraq, Syria and neighbouring Libya to fight in jihadist ranks, including with the Islamic State group.

Some 500 jihadists are believed to have since returned home.

Mr Essebsi said the "top priority" for the government, which took office last month after Tunisia's first free elections, is "providing security and the battle against terrorism".

Tunisia kicked off the Arab Spring and has taken pride in forming a democratic government and achieving stability – in marked contrast to neighbours such as Egypt and Libya.

It is hoping to rebuild its once-burgeoning tourism industry, which is struggling to recover from the effects of the revolution. — AFP

KUALA LUMPUR

State backs stoning and punishment amputation

A MALAYSIAN state governed by an opposition Muslim party passed a law yesterday mandating tough Islamic criminal punishments, a move that threatens to break up a fractious opposition alliance.

The state assembly of Kelantan, which is controlled by the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS), unanimously passed penalties including amputations for theft and stoning to death for adultery, according to Malaysian media reports.

The Islamic criminal code, known as *hudud*, cannot be implemented as Muslim-majority Malaysia's federal constitution forbids it. PAS conservatives plan to submit a bill in parliament to change that, but its chances of passage are uncertain.

But the push for *hudud* in the conservative northern state has already severely strained relations with PAS's two moderate national coalition partners, who say it violates an agreed policy framework.

The Democratic Action Party

(DAP), which represents the diverse country's large ethnic Chinese minority and strongly opposes *hudud*, has said it will meet next week to consider its future in the alliance.

"PAS has openly demonstrated that they cannot be trusted," Gobind Singh Deo, a DAP parliamentarian, said in a statement yesterday.

"It is therefore now untenable for us to remain in any relationship with PAS."

The three-party opposition alliance took 51 percent of votes cast in 2013 national elections, though it failed to win parliament from Malaysia's 58-year-old regime due to the way seats are apportioned.

The opposition coalition also includes the moderate, multi-racial People's Justice Party.

Despite its electoral gains, the seven-year-old bloc's cohesiveness has long been questioned due to the deep ideological gap between PAS and its allies.

— AFP



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IN PICTURES

Photo: AFP

A man looks through a window of a building with a banner depicting a Russian tank on it during celebrations in Sevastopol, on March 18, to mark one year since Russia's President Vladimir Putin signed off on the annexation of Crimea in a epochal shift that ruptured ties with Ukraine and the West.

SYDNEY

'Mutiny on the Bounty' island loses self-rule

A REMOTE Pacific island whose residents are descendants of the swashbuckling British sailors and Tahitian women immortalised in the *Mutiny on the Bounty* movies is set to lose its right to self-rule.

Norfolk Island, 1500 kilometres (900 miles) east of the Australian coast and settled by the ancestors of Fletcher Christian and other *Bounty* mutineers in 1856, has governed itself since 1979.

But it is effectively bankrupt and Canberra yesterday said it would introduce legislation next week to scrap the Australian territory's parliament.

If it passes, the island's legislative assembly will be temporarily replaced by an advisory council, before local government elections in 2016.

Personal and business tax will be introduced from July 2016, and residents will in return be able to access social security and healthcare benefits and services enjoyed by other Australians.

Australia's assistant regional development minister Jamie Briggs said the changes were long overdue and it was not sustainable to ask a community of just 1800 to deliver local, state and federal services.

He said the infrastructure on Norfolk Island was run down, the health system not up to standard and laws were out of date.

"The community overwhelmingly supports reform and is of the view that the current governance arrangements are not suitable," he said, adding that Norfolk Island was effectively in administration and reliant on Australian bailouts.

"It is diabolical - it is quite concerning that it's been left for so long," he said.

Norfolk Island Chief Minister Lisle Snell said it was unfair to impose such a decision on the tiny outcrop, just 8 kilometres long by 5 kilometres wide (5 miles by 3 miles) and perched on steep cliffs above crashing surf.

"Norfolk Islanders will lose

their identity; they will lose their way of life," Mr Snell told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

Most of the core population are descendants of the mutineers who set Captain William Bligh adrift from British warship the *Bounty* when they famously fell in love with the South Seas, and its women, in 1789.

The mutiny gained such a romantic gloss that chief mutineer Christian has been portrayed by a series of Hollywood heartthrobs over the years, including Errol Flynn, Clark Gable, Marlon Brando and Mel Gibson.

Christian and eight other mutineers first made their home on Pitcairn Island with a group of Tahitian women, but their descendants moved nearly 6000 kilometres to Norfolk Island in 1856 when Pitcairn became too small for them.

Queen Victoria granted them the right to settle in the abandoned former penal colony.

- AFP

STOCKHOLM

At least two die in Swedish bar shooting

TWO men were killed and more than a dozen wounded after several gunmen armed with automatic weapons opened fire in a pub in the Swedish city of Gothenburg late on March 18, police said yesterday.

Customers inside the bar were watching football on television when the attack took place.

"Several attackers opened fire with automatic weapons," police said in a statement.

"Two men aged 20 to 25 were killed. Ten to 15 people were shot and wounded in varying degrees," police said, adding that the death toll is expected to rise.

The gunmen fled the scene by car and police were yesterday still hunting for them. The shootings are believed to be gang-related.

An eyewitness told tabloid *Aftonbladet* that two people entered the pub in the Gothenburg suburb of Biskopsgaarden in western Sweden armed with weapons that looked like Kalashnikovs and started shooting.

"We can't rule out that it's gang-related. We've had problems for some time with gang crime in this area," police spokesperson Ulla Brehm said.

"We were sitting watching the football game when the shooters

came in," the witness said.

Another witness said the shootings were over quickly.

"I didn't have time to think what was happening. Then I saw that my friend was bleeding. I tried to stop the flow of blood as well as I could with my hands," said one man.

Sweden and neighbouring Denmark have a longstanding problem with criminal gangs, including Hells Angels, Bandidos and several immigrant groups which battle for control of the country's drug trade.

There have been dozens of gang-related shootings in Gothenburg in recent years, many of them in the Biskopsgaarden area, a housing estate with a large immigrant population and high unemployment, but fatalities are relatively rare.

A man was shot dead in an apartment in the area in May last year and two others died in suspected gang-related shootings during an uptick in violence in late 2013.

In January a man was shot in the leg close to the scene of the March 18 shooting.

"It's frightening. Things happen nearly every day here but this looks like something extra," one local resident told newspaper *Aftonbladet*. - AFP

BANGKOK

Thai bomb suspects were tortured, lawyers report

Four Thai men arrested for their alleged involvement in two small bombings in Bangkok say they were tortured in military custody, their lawyer said yesterday.

The men are among more than a dozen people who have been arrested in the last two weeks - accused of planning and carrying out the attacks in junta-ruled Thailand.

"[One] man was electrocuted on his abdomen and his thigh while the other three men had their chests stomped on and were punched and slapped in the head," said Anon Nampa from Thai Lawyers for Human Rights, a local rights organisation representing the men.

Many of those detained have also been accused of having links to the opposition Red Shirt movement loyal to ousted premiers Thaksin and Yingluck Shinawatra, something the group has vehemently denied.

On March 7 a hand grenade was thrown into the car park of Bangkok's Criminal Court while in early February a twin pipe bomb exploded outside a busy shopping centre wounding two people.

The four men have all been charged with attempted murder and weapon possession.

Mr Anon said that one of his colleagues met one of the accused, Sansern Sriounruen, who described

being given electric shocks during his interrogation and showed angry bruises on his abdomen and thigh.

A junta spokesperson rejected claims that the men had been mistreated.

"We are confident that there is no reason for the authorities to use force or threats," Colonel Winthai Suvaree said.

Among those arrested for their alleged involvement in the attacks is nurse Natthatida Meewangpla, a prominent witness to a bloody 2010 crackdown by the military against Red Shirt protesters, in which at least 90 were killed, including a different nurse and two foreign

journalists.

The 37-year-old went missing for six days after she was taken by soldiers from her home on March 11. She only reappeared publicly when she was handed over to police custody March 17.

Her lawyer Winyat Chatmontree said that military interrogators threatened Ms Natthatida with lese majeste charges unless she cooperated with them.

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

Rights groups say basic freedoms

have fallen off a cliff since last May's military takeover, following the ousting of Ms Yingluck's democratically elected government, and that draconian lese majeste legislation is increasingly being used as a tool to stifle political opposition.

Under martial law, political gatherings of more than five people are banned, criticism of the junta is outlawed and civilians can be tried in military courts for national security or lese majeste offences.

On March 17 two men were handed five-month jail sentences for their alleged involvement in the recent grenade attack.

- AFP

TOKYO

Two decades on, gas attacks still baffle Japan

AS Japan prepared to mark the 20th anniversary of a fatal nerve gas attack on Tokyo's subway, experts have said the horrifying case still leaves more questions than answers about what motivated the killings.

Thirteen people died and 6000 were sickened after the apocalyptic Aum Supreme Truth cult released Nazi-developed sarin in five subway trains during co-ordinated rush-hour attacks on March 20, 1995.

Despite a plethora of trials over the last two decades that have put 13 people, including cult leader Shoko Asahara, on death row, the reasons behind the shocking episode remain unclear.

Particularly baffling is the fact that those responsible for the cult's worst crimes were some of Japan's best and brightest scientists and doctors who had graduated from the country's top universities.

The high-profile trials could have been "an opportunity for Japan to share insights with the world as it fights terrorism, by fully understanding what happened with Aum, not just dealing with the crimes and charges at hand," said Kimiaki Nishida, a social psychology professor at Ritsso University.

At a time when the world is grappling with a rise in extremism, in particular the self-styled Islamic State (IS) group - which brutally executed two Japanese hostages this year - understanding exactly what happened and why is more important than ever, he said.

"I see that similar types of young

people are getting sucked in [to IS] today," Mr Nishida added.

"They are looking for a place where they are highly valued, feel that they are needed and are praised for being useful to others."

Japan had watched with a nervous fascination as Aum germinated and expanded in the 1980s and 1990s.

The half-blind mystic, Asahara, now 60, was a guest on television shows, where he was treated with a mixture of awe and curiosity.

His blend of Buddhist and Hindu dogma, liberally sprinkled with visions of the apocalypse, attracted more than 10,000 followers at its height.

Believers were told that Asahara was a saviour who could wash the world of its sins as it rolled toward its unavoidable end.

Asahara became obsessed with the idea his enemies would attack him and secretly ordered followers to produce sarin at what was later discovered to be a sophisticated chemical weapons laboratory.

In what some believe was an attempt to divert the authorities that Asahara thought were closing in on his base in the foothills of Mount Fuji, he sent five teams of two people to attack the Tokyo subway, which is used by millions of daily commuters in the sprawling metropolis.

Five adherents - among them a senior medical doctor and several high-flying physicists - dumped packages of sarin on busy trains, puncturing them with sharpened umbrella tips, before being driven away from

a pre-determined station by their co-conspirators.

The nerve gas, so toxic that a single drop can kill a person, evaporated over the following minutes as thousands of unwitting commuters got on and off each train.

Staff and passengers were among the dead. Many of those sickened only realised what had happened as their symptoms worsened throughout the day and news broadcasts began piecing events together.

Aum was never officially disbanded. It went bankrupt because of the massive damage payments it was forced to make to victims of its crimes.

Former members have continued under different groupings with new names, now collectively numbering roughly 1650 people.

Some justify Asahara's murderous orders as instructions to help his followers achieve enlightenment, according to the Public Security Intelligence Agency, which monitors cults.

The sect's continued existence, albeit closely surveilled and in a different guise, worries those affected by the 1995 attack.

"The successor groups are still operating, and there is no telling what Aum followers will do," said Shizue Takahashi, whose subway-worker husband died in the attack.

Cultists who carried out the sarin attack are among those giving evidence in what is expected to be the final court case related to the subway gassing, after the 2012 arrest of the final fugitive.

Still, it prompts more questions



Riot policemen wearing gas masks don anti-chemical gloves before raiding a commune of religious cult the Aum Supreme Truth in Kamikuishiki village, 100 kilometres west of Tokyo on March 24, 1995. Photo: AFP

than answers, said Yuji Nakamura, a lawyer who has dealt with a number of Aum cases.

"We are seeing death-row inmates ... speak before our eyes. They are very articulate, bright and polite. Some of them behave almost like monks," Mr Nakamura said.

As the world reels from the latest murderous attack on a soft target - the killing of 19 people in a Tunisian museum, at least three of them Japanese - understanding what makes people susceptible to extremist groups is increasingly important, said academic Mr Nishida.

"[Aum] cult members did not hold grudges against their victims. Rather,

they murdered and caused harm for what they believed were just reasons," he said.

"Orders came from an absolutist figure - the guru - who was [perceived to be] beyond human, who they believed could not make mistakes. They thought it would be wrong to question what he commanded."

When the final legal chapter closes and the death sentences are carried out, Japan will lose an opportunity to explain what drives seemingly normal people to these extremes.

"Did we have the kinds of trials that did that? Did we fully understand [the cultists'] hearts and minds?" said Mr Nishida. - AFP

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CHENGDU

Butler business booming in China

HANDS sheathed in white gloves, Alvin Hu's dream of serving as butler to China's growing ranks of super-rich faced an unlikely challenge: a dinner plate piled high with multicoloured toy bricks.

China's only foreign-run butler school opened last year, riding the coat-tails of increasing demand for the trappings of European-style old money in the Communist-ruled country, even as its economic boom slows.

Students at the International Butler Academy are drilled daily on everything from ironing perfect creases into tablecloths, polishing silverware, and the correct cutlery to accompany an eight-course banquet.

"In the whole world there are more and more rich people. And especially in China, they want someone to take care of the smaller things," said Mr Hu, one of dozens of students who have enrolled in the school's six-week courses, which cost 40,000 yuan (US\$6500).

In an exercise designed to test the steadiness of his hand, Mr Hu steered a platter of plastic toys representing food towards his seated Swiss instructor, who furrowed his brow as plastic balls standing in for dinner careened in front of him.

"Thank you," the instructor said, after Mr Hu used a silver knife and spoon to ferry an oversized brick onto his plate.

A butler can typically expect to earn 20,000 yuan (\$3200) a month, according to Mr Hu, making the course a worthwhile investment.

China is home to more than a million people with assets above \$1.6

million, according to wealth publisher Hurun, with numbers expected to swell in coming years.

The country's elite have employed servants for centuries – with some, such as the eunuchs of the Imperial court, enjoying high status and power of their own – but screen representations of British-style butlers have lent them a new aura of luxury.

"In the last few years the demand for butlers has become bigger and bigger. So it's logical for us to have teachers here," said Thomas Kaufmann, head instructor at the school. "It's easier to train a Chinese [person] in the butler trade than it is to train a Western butler in Chinese language and culture."

Butlers have a long history in Western books and films, from Jules Verne's *Passepartout* and PG Wodehouse's *Jeeves* to Alfred from the *Batman* movie franchise, but it is popular television show *Downton Abbey's* Carson who has stoked appetites in China.

"Downton Abbey is so famous here in China, that's the standard we are measured at," said Mr Kaufmann.

The Academy, in the southwestern city of Chengdu, is Dutch-run but partly backed by a Chinese real-estate firm, reflecting the growing number of Chinese housing developments offering butler services to potential homeowners as the property market becomes tougher.

A short stroll away, a billboard for a new housing estate shows a grinning man in a suit and bow tie, promising to bring "the elegance of British butlering service into everyday life."

Pu Yan, a spokesperson for developer Langji Real Estate, said, "We provide a butler for each private villa. Our customers have been very happy."

Shi Chunming, a founder of rival Chinese firm Sinobutler, said he had recently signed "several cooperation agreements with real-estate firms."

An index of new home prices in 100 major cities fell for eight consecutive months last year, but the downturn has proved a surprising boon for the school, according to Mr Kaufmann.

"Now that selling apartments has



A butler in training puts on white gloves at China's only foreign-run butler school in Chengdu, Sichuan province, on January 23. Photo: AFP

become more challenging, companies have to provide more services for the tenants, who are also demanding more," he said. "That's actually pretty good for us."

But the phenomenon has been accompanied by cases of fly-by-night butlers, who are trained to serve in property developers' showrooms to lure customers, in instances of false advertising.

"Once the sales office is closed, the butlers disappear," he said.

The school is based in a villa decked out to resemble the kind of luxury home students hope to work in after graduation.

Each morning's classes start with a round of dusting, cleaning and polishing, and the positioning of a water-jug can provoke ferocious debate, while a butter-knife laid a centimetre out of place can lead to failure.

Students laying a banquet table crouched and squinted to gauge the precise spacing of rows of forks, whipping out rulers to make sure the distances were correct.

But not to Mr Kaufmann's exacting standards. "How can you put cutlery down like this?" he demanded. "Why? Are you not listening? You did not measure. You have to measure!"

Chinese student Chrissy Yan – butlering is no longer a male preserve – said the training "can be hard, especially the table-laying", as cutlery rattled in the background.

But her ambitions were undaunted. "I want to lead a team of Chinese butlers which will be known worldwide, and asked to travel the world," she said.

Once employed, butlers' duties include more mundane tasks such as "fetching groceries, walking the dog,

organising cleaning staff, polishing furniture and shoes", said Mr Kaufmann.

Like most of the students, Mr Hu is young. However, he spent several years butlering for the likes of US casino magnate Steve Wynn, where he said his tasks included wiping fingerprints from his boss' mobile phone and picking out his favourite variety of chocolate from assortment packs.

"You need to think and take care of every single detail," he said.

But serving the rich is a pleasure, he insisted, and believes a certificate from the school will improve his prospects.

"Now butlers don't only serve wealthy families, but also multinational bosses. These people are successful. To make these kind of people feel relaxed and happy, I get a sense of achievement." – AFP

'I want to lead a team of Chinese butlers which will be known worldwide.'

Chrissy Yan
Student butler

TOKYO

'Crisis' in girls education: Michelle Obama

MICHELLE Obama spoke yesterday of a "crisis" gripping the world as she launched an initiative to help get girls into education, on the second day of her trip to Japan.

The US first lady told an audience of women in Tokyo that 62 million girls around the world were being denied the right to go to school.

"It is truly a crisis," said Ms Obama.

"We often focus on the economic barriers girls face – school fees or uniforms, or how they live miles from the nearest school and have no safe transportation, or how the school in their community doesn't have bathroom facilities for girls.

"But we all know that the problem here isn't just about infrastructure and resources. It's also about attitudes and beliefs. It's about whether fathers – and mothers think their daughters are as worthy of an education as their sons.

Ms Obama, who arrived in Tokyo on March 18 without her husband President Barack Obama, said both Japan and the United States were big donors in the Let Girls Learn initiative, which aims to help young women in developing countries.



US First Lady Michelle Obama (right) shares a laugh with some school girls as she attends the Japan-US Joint Girls Education Event at the Iikura Guest House in Tokyo on March 19. Photo: AFP

She was speaking alongside Akie Abe, the wife of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, and Caroline Kennedy, the daughter of President John F Kennedy and the current American ambassador to Japan.

US officials said on March 18

they were investigating threats made against Ms Kennedy, after a man reportedly telephoned the US embassy saying he would kill her.

Later in the day, Ms Obama was due to meet the prime minister, as well as Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko at the Imperial

Palace.

Today she is expected to visit tourist hotspot Kyoto, where she was due to go to the 1200-year-old Kiyomizu Buddhist temple, a stunning wooden structure set in the hills around Japan's ancient capital, as well as a similarly-aged Shinto shrine.

She is due to fly to Cambodia, one of the first 11 countries the initiative will be operating in, on this afternoon from Osaka.

Ms Obama's visit comes ahead of the Japanese premier's planned visit to Washington in late April.

Japanese media have reported that Mr Abe is expected to make a speech on the US-Japan relationship before a joint session of the US Congress.

If the speech is realised, it would be the first time a Japanese premier has addressed Congress since 1961 when Prime Minister Hayato Ikeda spoke before the House of Representatives.

Mr Abe's grandfather, former Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi, who was arrested, but never charged, for war crimes, addressed Congress in 1957.

Mr Obama visited Japan in April last year. – AFP

WASHINGTON

Nairobi mall suspect killed in Somalia

A DRONE strike in Somalia last week killed a senior al-Shabab figure linked to the notorious 2013 attack on the Westgate mall in Nairobi, the US military has said.

The US drone raid on March 12 struck a vehicle carrying Adan Garar, who was "a key operative responsible for coordinating al-Shabab's external operations" and was "connected" to the Westgate massacre, the Pentagon said in a statement. The strike was carried out in the vicinity of Diinsoor in Somalia and "resulted in the death of Garar", the US military said on March 18.

Kenyan officials had told media shortly after the strike that Garar had been killed, but the Pentagon was not ready to publicly confirm his death until this week.

Garar was overseeing operations that "target US persons and other Western interests in order to further al-Qaeda's goals and objectives" and posed a "major threat to the region and the international community", the Pentagon said.

"His death has dealt another significant blow to the Shebab terrorist organisation in Somalia." – AFP

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UNION MISSION, Computer Troubleshooting & Repair, Windows OS Installation, Anti Virus & Software Installation, Office & Internet Cafe Network Contracts, Wireless Networking Setup, Router & CPE Configuration, Server Installation & Configuration, CCTV System solutions & Installation service. Ph: 09-2527-06 016

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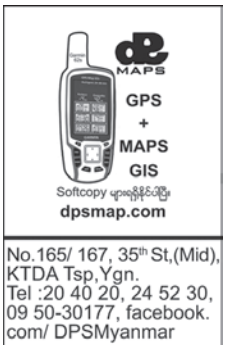
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MYANMAR Access Int'l Co., Ltd provides the following services. ISO Implementation Programme, HR Development Programme, Hospitality Management Programme, Project Management Programme, English Training Programme. Ph: 09-731-18749, 09-732-40764 or email: zinninpon@gmail.com, kaungsanthu1994@gmail.com

For Rent



No. 165/ 167, 35th St, (Mid), KTD A Tsp, Ygn. Tel: 20 40 20, 24 52 30, 09 50-30177, facebook.com/ DPSMyanmar

CARS, (Expert use only). Mid size wagon. Now only 350,000 kyats per month with deposit for long term. company ID required. Call 09 730 33776.

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Language

ENGLISH for professional purpose is the need of principle of written English. Writing ought to

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AN EXPERIENCED Chinese (Mandarin) teacher here in Yangon, Myanmar. I have over 6 years teaching in Singapore. Please do not hesitate to contact me for an evaluation. I'm a professional teacher who will help you improve your speaking, reading and writing skills. I use Singaporean text books and Chinese speaking/conversation books for teaching speaking, reading and writing in Mandarin. I'm available Monday-Sunday with a flexible schedule. I also teaching Myanmar language to all Foreigner. Elizabeth Bao Shi :09-516-2988, also SMS.

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ARTBASIC, Perspective, Interior Design, Exterior Design & Colour Theory. Learn Art 5 months to be a professional architect. Only 2 months for Special classes. Home tuition also available. New Vision Art Gallery and Center, No 132 lift no: 4 Bagaya Rd, Sanchaung, Shann Lann Bus top, Ph: 09-2542-57911



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Public Notices

PHYSICS TUTOR needed for Year 12 International School student. Ph: 09- 502-2834

COMMUNITY Partners International, Yangon office relocated to the following address- No. (12/B), Hnin Si Lane, Parami Road, Chaw dwin gone, Yankin Township, Yangon, Myanmar. Ph: + 95 1 657909

Property

Sell / Rent

KAMAYUT, Diamond Condo, Pyay Rd, 1600 sqft, 1MBR, 2BR, 3A/C, f.f, 4300 Lakhs & 35 lakhs, Call owner: 09-518-8320

Housing for Rent

VERY NICE CONDO ROOM Thiri Avenue, Taw Win Stre-et, 9 mile. Mayangone. 1350-sq ft, 2 master bed room, 1 bed room, Living room, shrine, dining room, kitchen, Varandah 4th Floor, Lift, own car park, security and waste management. Fully Furnished. only for Foreigners, one year basic contract. Phone- 09-5000-621, 01-200581

(1)**7 MILE**, single house, 2 RC, 2MBR, 1SR, fully furnished, USD 4500. (2) 8 Mile, single house, 2 RC, 2MBR, 1SR, fully furnished USD 7000. (3) Near Russian Embassy, 2 RC, 2MBR, 1SR, fully furnished USD 15000. Ph: 09-2527-03331

(1)**BO YAR NYUNT** St, 2500 sqft, 1MBR, 2SR, fully furnished USD 3000. (2) Near United Living Mall, 1500sqft, 1MBR, 2SR, USD 1500 (3) Shwe Ohn Pin housing, 1500 sqft, 1MBR, 2SR, no furniture. USD 1500. (4) 8 Mile, Prom condo, 2500sqft, 1MBR, 2SR, fully furnished, USD 4000. (5) Near China Embassy, Golden rose condo, 2500 sqft, 2MBR, 1SR, fully furnished USD 4000. (6) Chanthar Gone Young condo, 2500 sqft, 1MBR, 2SR, USD 2500. (7) University Avenue Rd, Takatho Yeikmon Condo, 1250 Sqft, 1MBR, 2SR, fully furnished, 2500 USD. Ph: 09-2527-03331.

BOTATAUNG, 46th St, 6 Flr, 25' x 60', 1500 sqft, 3 Bedrooms, 2 toilets, 3 A/C & fully furnitures. US\$ 700 or kyat 750,000/ month. Ph: 09-514-2988.

HLAING THAR YAR, Punhlaing Golf Estate, Lake view condo(C), 702, 2255 sqft, 2 Bed Rooms + 1MBR, fully furnished, direct ph line + extation line, (2) Lake view condo(C), 802, 4176 sqft, 3 Bed Rooms + 1MBR, fully furnished, direct ph line + extation line, Negotiable. Ph: 09-730-26390 (Nilar Win Maung) 09-254311756 (Aung Lwin)

BAHAN, Near Chatrium Hotel, Po Sein Rd, 2 RC house, 3 rooms with toilet, 3 AC, 2 Cable phones, internet available, wide car parking. US\$ 2300 per month. Please contact :09-7944-40510, 09-312-87827.

CONDOTEL, Condo with hotel services: (1) 1850 sqft 1MBR, 1SR @ Bahan. 2800US\$/month. (2) 1750sqft 2MBR, 2SR @ Tamwe. 2800US\$/month. (3) 1650 sqft 1MBR, 2SR @ Tamwe. 2800US\$/ month. (4) 1650 sqft 1MBR, 2SR @ Mayangon. 4000US\$/ month.

(1)**NEAR 50 ST**, 1200 sqft, 1MBR, 1SR, fully furnished. USD 1200. (2) Near Park Royal Hotel, 1850 sqft, 2MBR, 1SR, fully furnished USD 3200. (3) Near Park Royal Hotel, 1875 sqft, Hall type, 1 1/2 storey, G flr, good for open shop, USD 5800. (4) Near United Living Mall, 1200 sqft, 2MBR,

fully furniture USD 1500. (5) Pearl Condo, 1800 sqft, 2MBR, 1SR, fully furniture, USD 2500. (6) 7 Mile, U Kyaw Hla St, 3 RC, Hally type, good for office, USD 4000. (7) New University Avenue Rd, Ag Da Kong condo 1200 sqft, 1MBR, 1SR, fully furniture USD 2500. (8) New University Avenue St, 1800 sqft, 2MBR, 1SR, fully furniture USD 2500. (9) Minda Ma condo, 2200 sqft, 3MBR, fully furniture, USD 5000. Ph: 09-2527-0 3331.

RETAIL Shop Space Available, 250 sqft. Heavy foot traffic. Suitable for takeaway, beauty saloon and fashion shops. Bahan Township. Prominent Center. Ph: 09-4303-0 288. Email: slee888@gmail.com

OFFICE SPACE Downtown, Modern office space at an affordable price. 1,356 sqft, so would be large enough for staff and to facilitate a meeting room and a kitchen. Located on the 11th floor it has 24 hours security and a back-up generator. Price- \$3,500. Ph: 09- 314-91678.

BAHAN Condo: Conveniently located in Pearl condo, a 20 minute drive from downtown or from the airport. There are many shops and restaurants in the building and the property can be used for both commercial and residential purposes. It has 2 master bedrooms, one single bedroom with one common bath and has 1,550 Sqft of living space with a great view. Price: \$2,600. Ph: 09-314- 91678

BAHAN Affordable Single family home : off Sayasan Rd, in residential area, it is completely remodeled recently in western style. 3MBR, 2SR, 4 bathrooms total with A/C in every room. It has a nice lawn with space large enough for 7-8 car parking. Home size is about 3500 sqft, land size is about 7,000 sqft Price- \$3,500. Ph : 09 2543 82482.

BAHAN, Near Chatrium hotel, Po Sein Rd, 2 RC house, 3 Rooms with toilet, 3 AC, Cable phone, wide car prking, US\$ 2150 per month. Ph: 09-794440510, 09-312-87827.

PABEDAN, 3rd Flr, 27th St (Middle), 25'x50' (Lift), 2SR, 1MBR, 2 aircon, 7 Lakhs. Ph: 09-510-4881, 09-730-73226.

BAHAN, (1) Pearl Condo New Bld. 1600sqft, 1MBR, 2SR, f.f, 25 Lakhs. (2) New University Ave Rd, 2 Flr, 40' x 60', 3MBR, 5A/C, Ph. f.f, 25 Lakhs. (3) Yankin Centre, 1705 sqft, 1MBR, 2SR, Ph. 4A/C, f.f, 15 Lakhs (5) New University Ave Lane, 2Flr, 22'x55', 1MBR, 1SR, f.f, 15 Lakhs, Maureen: 09-518-8320.

OFFICE SUITES for Lease, Pearl Centre, Bahan Township, Kabar Aye Pagoda Road. 500-10,000 sqft available at affordable rates. Contact: 09 430 30 288 slee888@gmail.com

BRAND NEW 3 bedroom Condominium on Strand Rd with beautiful Pagoda view. All rooms with brand new aircons. International standard renovation, high quality

marble & teak timber floor. Partial/ fully furnished. Monthly rental US\$2,900. (2). New 4 bedroom condominium 2000 sqft near Parkroyal Hotel for rent. Top quality renovation -6 Brand new aircons, beautiful marble floor, all bedroom high quality teak wood flooring. Partial/fully furnished. US\$4000. Please call 09-4210-50471 or email yangonproperties@gmail.com for viewing.

CONDO, Near University avenue st & Yankin center, 1200 sqft, 1MBR, 2SR, fully furniture, USD 2500. Near Chatrium hotel, 1200 sqft, 1MBR, 2SR, fully furniture, USD 1500. Good for office and coffee shop, 1200 sqft, G flr, hall type, inside 3 flat, USD 1800. Kandawgyi Condo, 1250sqft, 1MBR, 2SR, fully furniture, facing to Kandawgyi view. USD 2500. Driving from Sedona Hotel 10 minutes, Chan dar gon young condo, swimming pool, Gem, 5 stories, free car park, 1250 sqft, 1MBR, 2SR, fully furniture, USD 1600. No need agent, Ph: 09-250 270 3331.

SANCHAUNG, 5th Floor, Tha Yett Taw St, 12.5' x 50', Hall Type. Other Inclusive: Sunshade & Iron Bars on all windows & doors. Negotiable price: Ks 550 Lakhs. Ph: 09-500-2313

OFFICE SPACE TO LET 3100 sqm available over 5 floors in a 12-storey building with car park, restaurant, multi function hall and apartments. Please contact - Ph: 0 9 - 2 5 2 3 - 5 9 3 5 5 . Email : office-mm@uniteammarine.com, web: www.facebook.com/officespaceyangon

Housing for Sale

EAST DAGON, VIP 11 quarter, 40' x 60', Gayan, 550 Lakhs. Negotiable, Ph: 01-500064, 09-4480-03146.

(1)**BAHAN**, 483, Ayeyekthar Condo (2-B), Ayeyekthar 2nd St, New University Ave., 2000 sqft, 2nd flr, 2MBR, Kitchen Room, Living room, Fully decorated, Tile/ Parquet flooring, Own meter, Own generator/Motor, Utilities fully equipped, Own car parking. Price 4950 lakhs. (2) Sanchaung, 39, Zayayathukha St, 4th Flr, 625 sqft, Hall type, Tile/ Parquet flooring, 450 Lakhs. Tel: 09-513-5533, 09-510-3053, 09-2505-74308.

TAUNG GYI, Bayar Phyu Quarter, 50' x 55', 150 lakhs, Negotiable, Ph: 01-500064, 09-4480-03146

LUXURY CONDO, Between Mahabandoola Rd & Merchant St, Nawarat Condo, Big car parking, Lift 5 no, security - Satellite TV System, firesafety, gym, Spa Room; Function Room, Library, Coffee Lounge, 1450 sqft, Ph : 09-519-7133, 09-517-3086

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Employment

UN Position

THE UNITED Nations Office on Drugs & Crime (UNODC) is seeking for Myanmar nationals: **National Project Coordinator** (Drug abuse prevention and treatment of drug dependence) - SC-8, UNODC Country Office - 1 Post in Yangon : Bachelor Degree or Advanced university degree (Master's or equivalent) in health, human or social sciences (public health, psychology, medicine, social work, education) or related studies is desirable. For Bachelor Degree holders, 2 years of professional experience in drug demand reduction is preferable. For Master Degree holders, relevant experience with less than 2 years. Experience in public health, psychology or related area of work, especially in operational, administrative or development field relating to prevention of drug use (especially family based) & treatment of drug dependence. Operational demand reduction policy and background, & programme management experience (with UN or other int'l organizations) will be an asset. Fluency in English. Proficiency in current office software applications. Application must include a cover letter, current CV, P11 form, copies of relevant academic qualification certificates, & a recent photo to UNODC, 11A, Maylikha Rd, Yangone, Yangon. (or) C/O UNDP, POBox (650), Yangon, Email: fo.myanmar@unodc.org or Jacqueline.peegyaw@unodc.org Closing date: 31 March 2015.

THE UNITED Nations World Food Programme, is seeking (1)**Senior Finance Assistant** GS-7, Yangon. For more information, please visit to <http://www.themimu.info/jobs-for-myanmar-nationals>. Please email the applications with UN P-11 to wfpmyanmar.vacancy@wfp.org COB 20 March 2015.

THE UNITED Nations World Food Programme, is seeking (1)**Field Monitor Assistant** SC-3, Pang Kham. For more information, please visit to <http://www.themimu.info/jobs-for-myanmar-nationals>. Please email the applications with UN P-11 to wfpmyanmar.vacancy@wfp.org COB 27 March 2015.

Ingo Position

TERRE des hommes Italia is seeking **Driver** (Kaw Hmu) : Valid driving license. Minimum 1 year previous experience as car driver. Please submit application with completed information about current job & expected salary including CV, photo, references by email or by postal service to the Terre des Hommes Italia Country Office: TDH Italia Country Office: 48, Shwe Hinn Thar St, II Ward, Hlaing Yangon. Tel: 01-654604, Email: hr.tdhit.mya@gmail.com, Closing date: 31.3.2015.

(1) **LOGISTICS Development Officer** (NayPyiTaw) 1 Post. Please send application letter, CV & related documents to Myanmar Red Cross Society (Head Office) Yazatingaha Rd, Dekkhinathiri, Nay Pyi Taw. Ormrcshrrcruitment@gmail.com www.myanmarredcrosssociety.org

(1) **BRANCH PROJECT Officer** (Myitkyina) 1 Post (2)**Program Coordinator** (NayPyiTaw / Yangon) 1 Post. Please send application letter, CV & related documents to Myanmar Red Cross Society (Head Office) Yazatingaha Rd, Dekkhinathiri, Nay Pyi Taw. Ormrcshrrcruitment@gmail.com www.myanmarredcrosssociety.org

Coordinator (Nay Pyi Taw / Yangon) 1 Post (3)**Program Assistant** (Myitkyina) 1 Post (4)**Program Support Officer** (NayPyiTaw / Yangon) 1 Post. Please send application letter, CV & related documents to Myanmar Red Cross Society (Head Office) Yazatingaha Rd, Dekkhinathiri, Nay Pyi Taw. Ormrcshrrcruitment@gmail.com www.myanmarredcrosssociety.org

(1) **BRANCH PROJECT Officer** (Myitkyina) 1 Post (2)**Program Coordinator** (Nay Pyi Taw / Yangon) 1 Post (3)**Program Assistant** (Myitkyina) 1 Post (4)**Program Support Officer** (Nay Pyi Taw / Yangon) 1 Post. Please send application letter, CV & related documents to Myanmar Red Cross Society (Head Office) Yazatingaha Rd, Dekkhinathiri, Nay Pyi Taw. Ormrcshrrcruitment@gmail.com www.myanmarredcrosssociety.org

(1) **ADMIN ASSISTANT** (Malaria) 1 Post Taunggyi. Please send application letter, CV & related documents to Myanmar Red Cross Society (Head Office) Yazatingaha Rd, Dekkhinathiri, Nay Pyi Taw. Ormrcshrrcruitment@gmail.com www.myanmarredcrosssociety.org

NAY PYI TAW (1)**WASH Coordinator** 1 Post (2)**WASH Hardware Specialist** 1 Post (3)**Project Coordinator** (CPP) 1 Post (4)**Clerk** (1) (NPT/Ygn) 3 Posts Maikai Tsp (Southern Shan) (5)**Field Supervisor** (Malaria) 1 Post. Taunggyi (6)**Admin Assistant** (Malaria) 1 Post. Please send application letter, CV & related documents to Myanmar Red Cross Society (Head Office) Yazatingaha Rd, Dekkhinathiri, Nay Pyi Taw. Ormrcshrrcruitment@gmail.com www.myanmarredcrosssociety.org

(1) **ENGINEER** (Consultant for Renovation Health Facilities Assessment) 2 Posts (Mindat/Matupichin state). Please send application letter, CV & related documents to Myanmar Red Cross Society (Head Office) Yazatingaha Rd, Dekkhinathiri, Nay Pyi Taw. Ormrcshrrcruitment@gmail.com www.myanmarredcrosssociety.org

Local Positions

FONDAZIONE Terre des hommes Italia (TDH Italia) is seeking **Assistant Area Coordinator** (Based in Natmawk). Requirements: University degree in related field, preferably in agriculture. Minimum 1 years previous experience with INGOS. Effective language in English and Myanmar. Fully computer literate in MS Office Package. Candidates should submit their application with completed information about current job and expected salary incl. CV, photo, references by e-mail or by postal service to the Terre des Hommes Italia Country Office: TDH Italia country Office: 48, Shwe Hinn Thar Street, 11 Ward, Hlaing Township, Yangon. Tel: 01-654604, E-mail: hr.tdhit.mya@gmail.com, Deadline: 31-3-2015.

ZWARE GROUP is seeking (1)**Marketing Manager** - M/F 1 post (2)**Project Coordinator** (Interior) - M/F 1 post

(3)**Project Coordinator** (Civil Structure) - M/F 2 posts (4)**Admin Assistant** - M/F 2 posts (5)**Civil Engineer** - M/F 2 posts (6)**Office Secretary** - M/F 1 post (7)**Assistant HR Manager** - M/F 1 post (8)**Marketing Assistant** - M/F 3 posts (9)**Office Staff** - M/F 2 posts (10)**Senior Quantity Surveyor** (Head of QS) - M/F 1 post (11)**Project Coordinator** - M/F 1 post (12)**Sales Engineer** - M/F 1 post (13)**Driver** - M 1 post (14)**General Helper** - M 1 post (15)**Store Keeper** - M/F 2 posts. Please submit CV, photo with necessary documents to 440, Waizayandar St, Corner of Thitsar Traffic point, South Okkalarpa. Ph : 01-565911, 01-8551294. Email: recruitment@zwaregroup.com

JAPFA COMFEED Myanmar Pte Ltd is seeking (1)**Senior Accountant** : B.Com (or) CPA, Age under 50, Have knowledge & experience on tax & regulation of Myanmar, (2)**Accountant** : B.Com (or) LCCI level 3, 3 years experience, Computer literate & accounting knowledge (3)**Chief Finance** : B.Com, 4 years experience, Knowledge & experience on cash & finance, Knowledge on banking system. (4)**Office staff** : Any graduate, Computer literate (Microsoft office), (5)**Driver** : 3 years experience in driving, can drive for ferry/foreigner, English literate. Contact 01-652536, 652544, or submit CV to 37, Kabaaye Pagoda Rd, Inya lake Hotel Compound, East Wing.

INT'L Accounting & Law firm is seeking (1) **Junior Associates**, LL. B or LL. M - F 3 posts. (2)**CPAs** - F 2 posts. (3) **Accountants**, B.Com, Level II, Level III - F 3 posts. (4) **Receptionist & Secretary** - F 2 post. For all posts: Ages between 22 and 35, Fluent in English, Excellent negotiation & communication skills, Computer skills. Please submit CV to alex.hwang@polaris.com.mm

MYANMAR ACCESS International Co., Ltd is seeking **Marketing Executive** : Must have at least 2 year experience in the Marketing field, Age 25 years and above. Must be able to speak and write English. Must be able to use Ms& Power point, Well organized and result-oriented. Contact us- zinminpon@gmail.com, sunandar91072@gmail.com. Ph:09-2530-62042, 09-732-40764.

CONSTRUCTION company is urgently seeking for **Office staffs** - 3 posts : Male or Female, Age between 25-35, Any Graduate/ Degree Holder, Minimum (2-3) years working experience, for the materials in construction field, computer skills, internet, email, Able to speak Myanmar & Chinese OR Myanmar & English. please contact 09-430 31 641

WE ARE seeking **Experience Teacher** : Yanagon English centre run by ex-pats requires teachers with skills in delivering corporate training. Contact think in English @ 09-4250-26102, for ph interview.

ASIA PLAZA HOTEL is seeking (1)**Sale & Marketing Manager** - M/F 1 post (2)**Assistant FO Manager** - M/F 1 post, (3)**Sale & Marketing Executive** - M/F 2 posts (4)**FO Supervisor** - M/F 2 posts (5)**F & B Manager** - M/F 1 post (6)**Chief Accountant** - M/F 1 post (7)**G.S.O** (Guest Service Officer) - M/F 1 post. Please submit CV, photo, expect salary, certificate & other necessary documents to 277, Bogyoke St, Kyauktada. Ph: 01-391070, 391071.

KH HOTEL Yangon is currently seeking self motivated, dedicated and potential candidates for the following posts; (1)**Sale & Marketing Manager** - M/F 2 posts : University graduate, Excellent English communication skill, written & spoken, 3 years experience in relate field, Good personality. (2)**M&E Technicians** - M 3 Posts : Must have related certificates or Diploma or B.Tech, 2 years experience in hospitality industry. Must work shift duty. Interested candidates, please submit CV with relevant documents to KH Hotel : 28, 7 Miles,

Pyay Rd, Mayangone, Yangon. Ph: 01-652989, 01-653358, 01-653359. **WE**, Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom Myanmar Office, are looking for **one Programme Manager, one Media Officer and one Programme Assistant**. If you are interested, please visit our website at <http://www.fnfasia.org/gallery/fmfmyanmar/> or contact Biak-Hlei.Sung@fnst.org. The application forms will be accepted only until 22nd March, 2015.

KELVIN CHIA Yangon Ltd* is a foreign legal consultancy firm. We invite motivated and committed individuals who are able to work as: **Account cum Administrative Assistant** : Good written and spoken communication skills in English. Must be well-organized, meticulous, have initiative & execute instructions promptly. Accounting background & experience preferred. Interested applicants are invited to send their full resume together with a recent photograph to ppo@kcyangon.com we regret that only shortlisted candidates will be notified. **COMPANIES** who are looking for Singapore telecommunications, Computers, Computer networks and Electronic products. Please drop me an email, message or contact me.

skills, experience for customer service, Graduated, Good English communication, Age 28 ~ 35, Sign in 2 years contract, (2)**Sales** - F 2 posts in Yangon : Basic knowledge of English & understanding skill, Any graduate, Age 18 ~ 30, For all posts : Expesience in cosmetic field/service filed, Salary negotiable, Please send resume with supporting documents to sabaephyu26@gmail.com

TRAVEL companies is looking for **Senior travel assistant cum authorized tourist guide**, with three foreign languages, may please contact to 09-301-99028.

MYANMAR TRAVEL is seeking 3 **Tour Operation & Reservation** (Myanmar Citizen only) : 1 year experience as Tour Operator for the inbound travel company. Fluency in English both speaking & writing. Possess computer proficiency: Microsoft office, Excel. Interested person send CV (with photo attached) to Ma Nway Nway Eai, Country Manager, Email: resal@myanmartravel.com, Ph: 09-430-74201.

MYANMAR FOOD Co., Ltd is seeking (1). **Brand manager** (2). **HR assistant** - M/F 1 post (3). **Store Keeper** - M/F (4). **Service Provider** - M/F 2 posts (5). **Customer Service Executive** (Hostess) M/F 2 posts (6). **Admin Executive** - M/F 1 post (7). **Quality Control** - M/F 1 post (8). **Service Engineer** - M 1 post . Plesse submit to Myanmar Food Co., Ltd., hr: 09-730-99383, mfft. hr@gmail.com

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FOOTBALL

Ayeyawady confident

MATT ROEBUCK

AYEYAWADY United coach Marjan Sekulovski told a press conference that he believes his team is now in a strong position to reach the round of 16 in this year's AFC Cup.

His comments came after his side's away-from-home 3-0 victory over the Maldives' New Radiant SC at the National Football Stadium in Male on March 18.

"It's not easy to win games at the [Maldives] National Stadium and we achieved that with very hard work from almost all the players," said the Macedonian coach.

Before the game Sekulovski said he would use past experience of the Maldives' hot and humid conditions in planning his tactical approach.

"When I last took an Ayeyawady team to the Maldives we attacked too much in the first half. We played very well but at half-time the players were lying on the dressing room floor begging to be substituted."

Ayeyawady opened the scoring in the 35th minute through a close-range header from Edison Fonseca close-range header. They then soaked up the pressure in the second half before Riste Naumov - who once played for New Radiant's Maldivian rivals Maziya Sports and Recreation finished twice to improve the team's goal difference in Group H.

Persib Bandung of Indonesia top the group with seven points from three games but Sekulovski has previously admitted he believes he is fighting for second place with New Radiant and Lao Toyota FC.

United - undefeated and in second place - have only played one match at home and will now host the Maldivians in four weeks' time and the Laotians in late April. Both sides will arrive in Myanmar needing to chase the game.

"With this win we are very close to the second round of the tournament," said Sekulovski.

New Radiant coach Amir Alagic seemed to agree, "I will use the youngsters in the upcoming matches



Edison Fonseca celebrates his goal. Photo: Ayeyawady United/Facebook

and we will still try to get good results. We don't have anything to lose now."

Myanmar's other representatives in the second-tier continental competition; Mandalay's Yadanarbon FC conjured up a 2-0 win against the

Philippines Global FC to keep their hopes of progression alive.

The teams looked more organised at the back than in their previous home AFC Cup tie, the 3-2 defeat to Malaysia's Pahang FA. But the team still struggled with a lack of firepower upfront, as they created at least a dozen clear chances to score.

"I'm happy to give the home supporters something to cheer about. This three points means every team in the group still has the potential to proceed to the next stage," said Yadanarbon coach Kyi Naing.

"We went for the win today, with all-out attack. Although my side worked hard they still struggled to make the most of their chances.

"I must find the best way to solve this lack of killer instinct."

The Mandalay side will now travel to the Philippines for the return fixture during Thingyan.

"Of course the New Year is fun but for us it is more important to focus on our match, win and bring joy to the people of Mandalay," said captain Thiha Si Thu after the game.

AUSTRALIAN RULES

Battle of the Birds



Star City Sports Oval, March 21, 3pm

MATT ROEBUCK

THE Myanmar Fighting Cocks will face the Cambodia Eagles on March 21, in an international test match that will open Yangon's newest community sports facility the Star City Sports Oval.

The Fighting Cocks are Myanmar's representatives to AFL Asia, the body that governs the sport of Australian Rules Football across the region.

Though teams are generally established by expat Australians the game has started to attract the attention of local athletes. The Cambodian team will be subsidising a handful of Cambodian nationals to visit Myanmar and represent their country overseas.

"It's great that the Cambodian side are doing this. We've also been able to contribute a little toward hosting the guys and maybe in the future we'll be able to take Myanmar nationals to one of the major championships," said the Fighting Cocks club president Henry Cox.

Cox says one of the club's aims is to see a Myanmar player represent the IndoChina Bulldogs: a representative side of nationals from Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam.

"We're hoping to see up to four Myanmar nationals take the field for us this week, a reasonable achievement in only our second home game and something we'll endeavour to improve on."

"Star City has helped us provide free buses to the ground, which we hope will bring in more of a crowd and maybe encourage a few more potential players to step forward," added Cox.

The first bounce, or match start, is at 3pm.

"We are excited to host the AFL this weekend," said John Farrel, Star City's sports and recreation manager.

"Star City is looking to forge a community in Thanlyin and recreation is high on our priorities."

OLYMPICS

Hamburg lays out plans for a 'sustainable' games

HAMBURG is set to launch its bid to host the 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games with the city's mayor promising "a compact, sustainable" games.

The German Olympic Sports Confederation (DSOB) announced on March 16 that Hamburg is their candidate, ahead of a rival bid by Berlin.

The decision to back Hamburg must still be rubber-stamped at the DSOB's Extraordinary General Meeting in Frankfurt on March 21.

There will also be a local referendum to be won in Hamburg before the bid can progress.

A recent poll suggested that 64 percent of Hamburg's 1.7 million population would welcome the Olympics being held in their city.

"Anyone who thinks the referendum is a foregone conclusion is guaranteed to be wrong. There is still much

work to be done," said DSOB president Alfons Hoermann.

"Things must be clearly and transparently communicated, also in terms of finances.

"How much it will cost has not yet been answered and Hamburg must deal with that now."

Hamburg's Mayor Olaf Scholz is promising "a compact, sustainable games that are free from any gigantism and will be an excellent fit in the urban development".

The plans involve converting an area in the city's port into an Olympic Park with a stadium for 70,000 spectators adjacent to the Athleten Village which would become a new district after the games.

Cruise liners would be moored in the city's port to provide extra hotel rooms. - AFP

AMERICAN FOOTBALL

With abuse case dismissed Hardy becomes a Cowboy

THE Dallas Cowboys on March 18 signed free-agent defensive end Greg Hardy, whose 2014 NFL season was cut short because of a domestic violence case that was eventually dismissed.

In the Cowboys' statement announcing the one-year deal, owner Jerry Jones acknowledged that the team thought long and hard about Hardy, who could still face further punishment by the league.

"We have spent a great deal of time over the last two days in meeting with Greg directly and gaining a solid understanding of what he is all about as a person and as a football player," Jones said.

"A thorough background review of him, involving many elements of our organisation, has been ongoing for the last few weeks.

"We know that Greg's status

remains under review by the National Football League."

In February, prosecutors in North Carolina, where Hardy played for the Panthers, dismissed domestic violence charges against him, saying his accuser had not cooperated in the case.

Mecklenburg County district attorney Andrew Murray said he understands that Hardy and his accuser had reached a civil settlement and she had intentionally made herself unavailable.

Hardy had been convicted by a judge last July of assaulting and threatening the woman but he appealed to have a jury hear the case.

When prosecutors could not move ahead, the prior conviction was considered overturned.

He must be reinstated by the league to play for the Cowboys. - AFP



Lindsey Vonn screams with delight after crossing the line to secure yet another crystal globe. Photo: AFP

SKIING

Vonn equals Stenmark record with 19th globe

AMERICAN speed queen Lindsey Vonn equalled Ingemar Stenmark's record of 19 crystal globes when she scorched to victory in the super-G at the season-ending World Cup finals on March 19.

Fresh from claiming the 18th globe of her glittering career in the downhill event on March 18, Vonn went into the super-G with just an eight-point advantage over Austrian starlet Anna Fenninger.

Fenninger started with bib number 15, timing a leading 1min 08.19sec down the 1.7km-long Roc de Fer course to pile the pressure on.

Vonn had it all to do, four runners later, in softening snow conditions in brilliant sunshine.

And the 30-year-old American made no mistake for her fifth super-G globe - after also winning 2009-12 - clocking 1:07.70 for an emphatic victory, a record 67th for women on the World Cup circuit.

It was also Vonn's fifth downhill-super-G double in World Cup standings, and the first time since the 2011/12 season. No other woman has achieved this feat more than three times.

Slovenian Tina Maze completed the podium, third at 0.80sec, her 60 points taking her to 1421pts in the race against Fenninger for the overall title.

Fenninger stretched her lead over Maze to 32 points, with the slalom and giant slalom scheduled for the weekend.

- AFP

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Sport

Ayeyawady eye a place in continental final 16



SPORT 26

FOOTBALL

U20s start the long road to New Zealand

AFTER a convincing 3-0 victory over an older Malaysian side, Myanmar's U20 will head for Europe in preparations for the FIFA U20 World Cup that begins on May 30 in New Zealand.

Gerd Ziese's U20 side will now - should all logistical requirements be sorted - travel to Serbia on March 23 to play two games. They will then move onto Macedonia and Albania for a week to meet a Macedonian national league "B" team and an Albanian team that features several Serie A players among its ranks, the German coach told *The Myanmar Times*.

Next they will travel to Germany, from April 7 to 18, where their native coach has arranged training at a top-class facility in Duisburg near Dusseldorf. During their time there, they will face two U19 Bundesliga sides, MSV Duisberg and Wuppertaler SV.

The final leg of their European tour will be a trip to Slovenia to face their U21 side and the B team for UEFA Champions League side Maribor.

The coach says they will then return to Myanmar where they hope to host an invitational tournament before heading to a two-week training camp in Australia on May 14.

Myanmar will face the United States in their first World Cup game on May 30 in Whangarei, New Zealand. They will also face hosts New Zealand and the Ukraine in the competition's Group A.

The U20s side qualified for the competition by reaching the semi-final stages of the continental AFC U19 Championship that was hosted in Nay Pyi Taw and Yangon last year.

The U20s victory over the Malaysian U22 side sets a high bar for Myanmar's U22 side who will also face the Young Tigers on March 22 as part of their own preparation for the Olympic qualifiers and the SEA Games.

Thailand U22	1 - 0	Myanmar U22
Thai-Japanese Stadium, Bangkok - March 18		

Myanmar U20	3 - 0	Malaysia U22
Thuwunna Youth Training Centre, Yangon - March 19		

FOOTBALL

Cosmos to Cuba in Football diplomacy

THE New York Cosmos will play Cuba in a "historic" football friendly on June 2 in Havana, the US team announced this week, hoping to break down decades-old political barriers through sport.

The Cosmos - a second-level squad boasting the former Real Madrid captain Raul - will make the first visit to Cuba by a US professional sports team since 1999, when Major League Baseball's Baltimore Orioles played an exhibition there.

The trip comes after US President Barack Obama's announcement in December that Washington would seek to normalise relations with communist Cuba after five decades in the deep freeze.

"I for one have always believed in the power of sport to bring people together and to bring down barriers. We hope we can inspire others," Cosmos chair Seamus O'Brien said.

"We are therefore honoured to be the first professional team in sports to visit Cuba since President Obama's historic opening of diplomatic relations."

The Cosmos roster is a far cry from its 1970s heyday boasting Pele and Franz Beckenbauer. The team come off a 2-2 draw in Hong Kong last month against a South China squad - that are currently facing Mandalay's Yadanarbon FC in the AFC Cup - and a 1-0 loss last weekend to club side FAS in El Salvador.

Charles Rangel, a US House Democrat from New York, said cultural exchanges and friendships the Cosmos and Cubans build will be invaluable.

"This is historic, not just for you sports fans but for those who are



Cosmos coach Giovanni Savarese (left) presents a ball to Cuban coach Walter Benitez at a publicity event. Photo: AFP

looking ahead to see what kind of world we are leaving for our children and grandchildren," Rangel said.

Regional football governing body CONCACAF and the US State Department opened discussions between the club and Cuban authorities. Talks were staged in January at Jamaica.

"We hope that our match will be an important step forward in growing the popularity of the global game in Cuba and improving relations between the two nations," O'Brien said.

Cosmos coach Giovanni Savarese

will use the match to help his team during a bye week in its US league season while the Cubans will be preparing for the Gold Cup continental tournament in July.

"We're definitely excited for this opportunity. It's a historic moment," Savarese said. "It will be a great match to bring people together."

O'Brien said the logistics of the trip, such as visas and transportation, remain in discussion.

"It's a work in progress," he said. "A lot of moving parts. And government

departments are working very hard."

Cuban coach Walter Benitez said there is great excitement in Havana for the match.

"When they informed me the possibility existed to play the Cosmos, I jumped at the chance to play a club with such history and prestige," Benitez said.

Savarese added that the match will remain about sport and not political rivalries and ideologies, saying, "The most important thing is soccer."

- AFP

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CONTENTS

Topshot



A visitor peers into US artist John Baldessari's "Beethoven's Trumpet (With Ear) Opus #133" at the Art Basel Fair in Hong Kong on March 15. Art Basel, Hong Kong's biggest art fair, opened its doors with thousands of visitors expected for a citywide canvas of creativity and commerce.

Photo: AFP/Anthony Wallace

FEATURE



12-13

Park yourself
The National Races Village whitewashes the ethnic heritage it claims to celebrate. But it does make for a pleasant bike ride

FEATURE



14-15

Treading a path between Yangon's past and present
Walking tours reveal the city's hidden history

TRAVEL FEATURE



16-17

Havana from on high
The city's secret rooftop communities await their next adaptation

5

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

From drunken hobo to Buddhist monk

6

FOOD & DRINK

La Taverna Mediterranean Bistro reviewed

8

HEALTHY & BEAUTY

Ancient techniques for restoring balance of mind and body

9

STYLE

Scouring the streets for Yangon's chic-est street-stylers

10

FAMILY

Home away from home for Yangon's elderly

11

HOME & GARDEN

Yangon's parks fail to satisfy those seeking open spaces

18

TRAVEL SCHEDULES

Domestic and international flight times

19

FICTION

Chronicles of Bei Ka Street

20

PUZZLERS

Comics, crosswords and predictions

24

SOCIALITE

Fabulous photos from the biggest bashes around town

26

WHAT'S ON

Your weekly guide to events in Yangon

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Watch your mouth

Tom Hanks mouthing along to Carly Rae Jepsen's "I Really Like You" is far from an anomaly, as Winona Ryder, Chevy Chase and Daniel Radcliffe have proved

BY JOHNNY DEE

TOM Hanks has become the latest in a long line of movie stars to appear in a music video. It's a tradition that goes back to the early 1980s, when Donald Sutherland acted up a storm opposite a young Kate Bush in "Cloudbusting".

The following decade, Johnny Depp would regularly make room in his schedule to appear in any music video if he could stand in the background playing a guitar. Recently, Danny DeVito (One Direction's "Everybody Wants to Steal My Girl") and Shia LaBeouf (Sia's "Human Heart") have set their acting skills to pop music, with questionable results.

Tom Hanks's performance in Carly Rae Jepsen's "I Really Like You" is on another level, because not only does he suffer the possible indignities of dancing (alongside Justin Bieber, no less), but he also lip-synchs the whole song. As anyone who grew up watching *Top of the Pops* knows, miming is fraught with possible humiliation and even trained actors can fail at the task (James Franco, we're looking at you). And so here are our eight other favourite videos with Hollywood lip-synchers.

Elton John: "I Want Love" (starring Robert Downey Jr)
If not for this video, there would be no Iron Man – or at least no Iron Man starring Robert Downey Jr. In 2001, he was deemed the

untrustworthiest man in Hollywood thanks to his drugs convictions, but our Elt gave him a gig, paving the way for a reborn career and destroying all chances of a sequel to *Weird Science*. Thanks, Elton.

Paul Simon: "You Can Call Me Al" (starring Chevy Chase)

Possibly missing tall friend Art Garfunkel, Paul Simon teamed up with Saturday Night Live legend Chevy Chase in the mid-1980s. From the second the pair walk through the door, it's a big guy-little guy comedy classic up there with Abbott and Costello, *Twins* and the year Mick Fleetwood and Samantha Fox messed up the Brit awards.

Rufus Wainwright: "Out of the Game" (starring Helena Bonham Carter)

While it's slightly confusing to see her a) without Johnny Depp in close proximity; and b) in a contemporary setting, there is little doubt that no one can play a frustrated librarian quite like Helena Bonham Carter.

Jon Spencer Blues Explosion: "Talk About the Blues" (starring Winona Ryder)

John C Reilly on drums is an added bonus, but Winona Ryder steals the show with her turn channelling the lip-curling Elvis antics of Mr Spencer.

Slow Club: "Beginners" (starring Daniel Radcliffe)

Radcliffe's entire post-*Potter* career has been about trying to

make us see him as something other than a boy wizard. Hence he's been naked with a horse, sprouted horns and, here, voiced the words of Slow Club's Rebecca Taylor while appearing convincingly uppity and drunk. Nice – but it'd be better if Dobbie was in it too.

Ed Sheeran: "Lego House" (starring Rupert Grint)

Grint's entire post-*Potter* career has been about trying to make us remember that he still exists, hence him appearing in anything at all, including this video with his twin, Ed Sheeran. Apparently they still share hoodies.

Kanye West: "Can't Tell Me Nothing" (starring Zach Galifianakis)

The only thing funnier than Zach Galifianakis grinding on a tractor is, erm, Morrissey grinding the gears on a tractor. For added comedy delight, there is also the erotic vision of Will (Bonnie "Prince" Billy) Oldham in red shorts (although it might be George from *George and Mildred*). These are things you cannot unsee, so take care. Kanye's videos have been a bit more serious since this one.

Jamie T: "Sheila" (starring Bob Hoskins)

Bob Hoskins was a great man full of warmth, salt-of-the-earth humility and self-deprecating humour. How do we know this? Because of the way he mimes the words "fickle way to tickle on my young man's ting", possibly. **W**

- The Guardian



Artists from New Zero have been working with ethnic artisans to revamp their craft designs for the exhibition at Goethe Villa. Photos: Supplied

Traditional crafts get a contemporary twist

BY ZON PANN PWINT

AN exhibition of contemporary crafts, titled "From Craft to Art", will be held at Goethe Villa from March 21 to 25.

On display will be about 300 newly designed handmade craft items, featuring gold embroidery, puppets, wood and stone carvings, lacquer ware, silver, pottery, bamboo and woven textiles, created by around 50 artisans from Mandalay, Myitkyina and Inle Lake. The exhibition will be attended by about 15 of the participating craftspeople.

The exhibition – which is being organised by the British Council, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, the Embassy of Switzerland and the New Zero art space – will celebrate the completion of a community-based art development project, in which artists from New Zero developed the concept and design of the crafts created by the skilled artisans. "For decades, ethnic artisans have

been bound by tradition and use the old designs they have learnt from generation to generation. The quality of the crafts is low, and the designs lack originality," said Ma Hay Mann Oo, program manager of the exhibition.

The project took place over eight months, starting last July. Surveys were conducted in six regions – Inle Lake, Mandalay, Myitkyina, Paung, Dawei, Tetaim and Kalay – and workshops were held in Inle, Mandalay and Myitkyina, followed by a two-week long program of workshops in Yangon led by a Canadian trainer.

"The artists worked together with the ethnic artisans to develop their craft designs and look at new ways of approaching contemporary crafts without totally departing from tradition," Ma Hay Mann Oo said.

The aim of the project is not only to produce quality crafts but also to build on the emerging craft market.

"From Craft to Art" will be open to the public from March 21 to 25 at Goethe Villa, 8 Ko Min Ko Chin Road, Bahan township. **W**

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From drunken hobo to Buddhist monk

Filmmaker brings the 'Dharma Bum' back to life

BY CHARLOTTE ROSE

YOU probably haven't heard of Laurence Carroll, the free-thinking, alcoholic Irish hobo born in Dublin in the 1800s, who travelled across the globe to Myanmar, gave up drinking, shaved his head and became the world's first Western Buddhist monk.

If so, you won't be the only one. The story of U Dhammaloka, as Carroll came to be known, was unearthed only a few years ago by a group of professors. Now, filmmaker Ian Lawton hopes to bring

this fascinating story to life through a feature-length animated documentary.

The Dharma Bum will trace Dhammaloka's footsteps across the world from Ireland to a remote forest monastery in Myanmar, where he denounced his Catholic upbringing and spent 13 years training to be a monk. In making the film, Lawton – director of film production company Reasonably Shorts – said he hopes to provide audiences worldwide with the “missing link” in the origin story of Western Buddhism. “I want to bring

Dhammaloka out of obscurity and into public awareness, where he deserves to be,” he said. “He is too important a figure to be known only by academics and religious studies experts. He is not only important to Irish history and the history of Myanmar, but also to the rest of the world. His story deserves to be told.”

Standing up to the British colonialists who were expanding across Southeast Asia at the time, researchers say Dhammaloka was under constant police surveillance until his conviction for sedition. After travelling the world under multiple aliases and faking his own death, Dhammaloka mysteriously disappeared.

“He is up there with Martin Luther King or Lenny Bruce and others who stood up for what they believed in, despite the odds,” said Lawton, who has won awards for several of his short films. “I feel we could all learn from Dhammaloka's story. His transformation from alcoholic hobo to activist monk is remarkable and inspiring and should be celebrated.”

The story of *The Dharma Bum* was discovered by academics Brian Bocking, professor of the study of religions at University College Cork, and professor Alicia Turner, editor of the *Journal of Burma Studies*. Both have given their consent for Lawton to create the film based on their research.

“The film is as much about their detective work as it is about Dhammaloka,” Lawton said. “I find it fascinating that they would manage to piece together his story from the tiniest pieces of evidence. This man travelled



Conceptual artwork for *The Dharma Bum*. Photo: Supplied

in a time before passports, was constantly changing his name and even faked his own death.”

Lawton, a former animator, said his decision to tell Dhammaloka's story through animation was based on the fact that no actual footage of the man exists.

“There is only one photograph of him where he is posed with his alms bowl after his ordination. There is no other visual record of him in existence. Traditional hand-drawn animation is unfortunately becoming a thing of the past, so it feels right to be bringing Dhammaloka back to life using a dying art,” he said.

Lawton and his team, which includes well-known animator Paul Bolger and Irish musician Mumbli' Deaf Ro, are seeking funding

for the film through the world's first Buddhist crowd-funding system, dana.io. Crowd-funding, the practice of funding a project by raising monetary contributions from a large number of people via the internet, not only helps to raise funds but also “raises awareness about the project and builds an audience for a film yet to be made”, said Lawton, who has successfully funded past projects this way.

The Myanmar Times asked Lawton whether he thought the film's title, taken from Jack Kerouac's well-known 1958 novel *The Dharma Bums*, might prompt a response from the Kerouac estate.

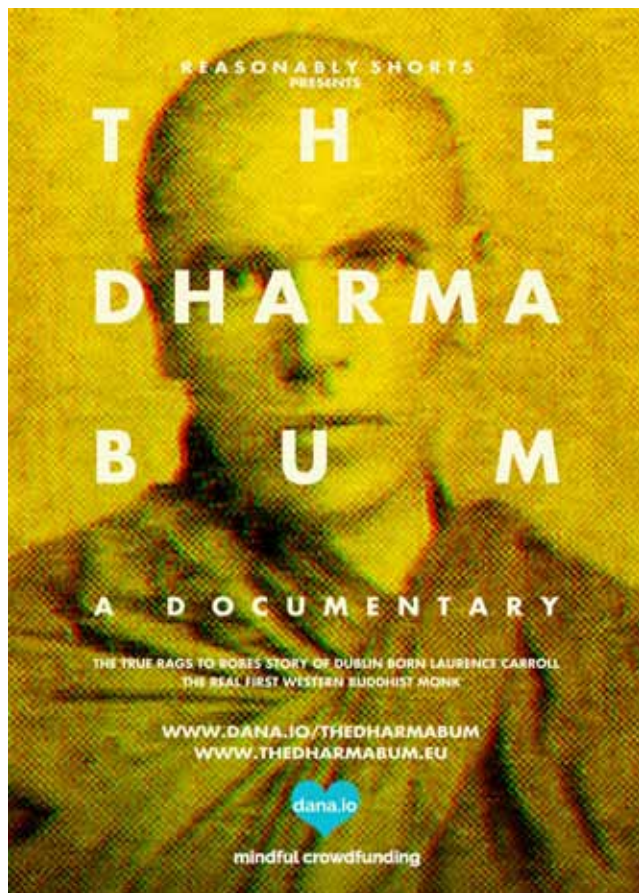
“We do not expect any repercussions for using his 70-year-old title. Many films and organisations have used book titles and song titles in

various iterations over the years,” he said. “In the case of my film it is used in a respectful loving homage to his writing,” he added.

Lawton says he is looking forward to bringing Dhammaloka back to Myanmar, where his transformation from drunken hobo to activist monk began.

“Our Facebook page has received almost 3000 “likes” and 90 percent of those are from people in Myanmar,” he said. “I look forward to being able to bring the film there and screen it in cinemas.”

For more information about *The Dharma Bum*, or to make a contribution to the project, visit www.thedharmabum.eu.





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COOKING WITH PHYO

Easy cooking, Chinese style

LAST week I found myself having to prepare dinner for guests at short notice and, with some quick thinking, I managed to knock up a meal with a barbecue roasted chicken from the supermarket. With the left-over chicken, I decided to create some Asian dishes. When I was younger, my mum used to make stir fries or one-pot dishes using left-over chicken, which is where I got the idea for this easy Chinese-inspired stew.

This week, I was also excited to find fresh shiitake mushrooms in Promart. The thick texture and strong aroma of shiitake mushrooms make them great for spicy dishes like this mushroom stir-fry. Quick to prepare, this is a great option for vegetarian guests.

BBQ chicken and leek stew

- 6 servings
- 1/2 barbecue roasted chicken
- 2 leeks
- 1 teaspoon "Massel" chicken

- stock powder (dissolved in 1 cup water)
- 1 1/4 teaspoons ground white pepper
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 teaspoon sesame oil

Slice the white parts of the leeks and set aside. Prepare the chicken stock.

Add the vegetable oil and sesame oil to a wok and heat over a medium heat. When the oil is hot (bubbles should form around the tip of a wooden spatula when dipped), add the sliced leeks to the wok and fry for a few minutes until they become translucent. Add the chicken and white pepper, and pour over the chicken stock. Cover the wok with a lid and leave to simmer for 5 minutes.

Garnish with a splash of sesame oil and serve with rice.

Spicy shiitake stir-fry with salted soy beans

- 6 servings
- 120g fresh shiitake mushrooms

- 3 onions
- 1 tablespoon salted soy beans
- 1 tablespoon garlic chilli paste
- 1 1/4 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2 teaspoons sesame oil

Roughly chop the onions. Slice the mushrooms thinly. Add the vegetable oil and sesame oil to a wok and heat over a medium heat. When the oil is hot (if it is hot enough, bubbles should form around the tip of a wooden spatula when dipped) add the onions and fry until they become translucent. Next, add the mushrooms and fry for 2-3 minutes, stirring continuously, until the mushrooms are soft. Add the chilli paste and salted soy beans to the wok and fry for a further 2 minutes. (If you are a fan of salted soy beans, try adding an additional 1/4 tablespoon. Or if you like your food spicy, add an extra 1/2 tablespoon of chilli paste.)

Ensure all the ingredients are mixed well before serving. Serve with rice. **W**

La Taverna Mediterranean

BY CHARLOTTE ROSE

EVER since an embarrassing incident during a Middle Eastern Studies class at university, in which I unwittingly confused a Gaza-based terror group with a Middle Eastern chickpea dip, I haven't had much of an appetite for Mediterranean food. But if, unlike me, you know your shawarma from your Dharma, and your babaganoush from your babushkas, then you're no doubt rejoicing at the news of Yangon's newest Mediterranean restaurant opening.

Located next to the Yangon International Hotel, La Taverna specialises in Mediterranean and Middle Eastern



La Taverna's lick-the-bowl-good shawarma-topped hummus (K6000), chickpea



cuisines. With an extensive menu that includes a range of salads (K6500-7000), cold and hot mezzes (K3500-7000) and mains (K7000-14,000), it offers a wide range of carnivorous and vegetarian options in a bright and cosy interior.

Things at *The Myanmar Times* have been busy recently with the launch of our new daily paper, so I had a Heart Attack: a radioactive looking cocktail (K7000) which, I was assured upon ordering, would be "very strong and very delicious". They were at least right on the first one. A special mention must go to the staff - in particular the charming Alvin - who, upon seeing my horrified grimace, promptly offered to replace the kryptonite green drink with a white wine (K7000) - a more prudent choice.

Cardiac arrest averted, I turned my attention to the food. Until now, good hummus has been the holy grail of Yangon's Middle Eastern food lovers, but thanks to

fundamentalists can now sleep soundly. Continuing the meat theme, I also opted for the Moroccan cigars (K5000) - rolled beef-filled crisps served with a spicy dip - which, whilst unlikely to excite, make for a satisfying appetiser.

Sadly, my Lebanese chicken shawarma (K9000) was on the dry side and a tad pricey. But this was promptly forgotten by the time desert arrived. La Taverna's impressive desert menu is worth the visit alone: The breezy outdoor terrace would be an excellent place



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330 Ahlone Road (next to Yangon International Hotel), Dagon

Restaurant Rating: ★★★★★

Food	7
Beverage	6
Service	9
Value	5
X-factor	8

to relax with a coffee (K3500) and a slice of cake – they even project Charlie Chaplin movies on the wall. The tiramisu (K4500) in particular comes highly recommended.

With a wide selection of tasty – though, tiramisu aside, not awe-inspiring – dishes, an intimate, cosy atmosphere and excellent service, La Taverna is a welcome addition to Yangon's culinary landscape. **W**

ZHIZIE Wu has come a long way since he first sipped – or rather chugged – a glass of wine. Back then it was mixed with soda.

Now, after two years in the French city of Bordeaux, the 23-year-old Chinese student can distinguish different varieties of grapes just by swirling a glass under his nose.

Wu is part of a young crop of Chinese flocking to the southwestern region, France's largest wine-growing area, to train for careers in the wine trade – a burgeoning industry in China.

"Ten years ago, it was novel for a Chinese person to work in wine. Today, it is a sector like any other, ripe for business," said Laurent Bergeruc, director of INSEEC business school known for its wine and spirits program.

The number of Chinese students at INSEEC has grown so steadily in the last decade that Bergeruc now has to turn applicants away.

In INSEEC's wine marketing division alone, 13 percent of the students are Chinese.

In some other schools, the percentage is vastly higher. At Wu's school, Cafá, a private establishment that trains for the hospitality sector, Chinese students make up 48 percent of the "sommelier" division that prepares students to become wine consultants.

The changing demographic reflects the evolving global wine market.

In 2013, China surpassed France to become the world's top consumer of red wine – a 136pc increase in only five years, according to Vinexpo, the industry group that hosts the world's largest wine and spirits fair.

China is now the world's



"There are stories that the Chinese add coke to their wine and drink it like that"

Difan Guo, student

BORDEAUX

Ripe for business

Chinese students learn the wine trade



Chinese students of oenology visit a wine producer in Bordeaux, western France, on November 18. **Photo: AFP/Jean Pierre Muller**

fifth-largest consumer of wines in general, after France, Italy, the United States and Germany.

"I have discovered that it takes 500 years to produce a good wine," said Wu, who juggles his studies with work at a well-known restaurant that offers Chinese cuisine with Bordeaux wines.

His classmate, 23-year-old Zhize Zhou, admitted that he "had tasted wine from Argentina and Australia in China, but not French wine which is too expensive".

Yet he dropped biology for wine studies, saying enrolment in a Bordeaux school is now a sign of prestige back home.

"There are always stories, that the Chinese add coke to their wine and drink it like that," said INSEEC student Difan Guo, 25.

"It's true," he laughed, "I even did that when I was young. But now we are more serious, that's to say that

people want to really understand wine."

Not all comes easy, like the notion of "terroir", the term for the unique characteristics a certain region imparts to food or wine and is the basis of France's strict Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée (AOC) wine classification system.

"It is very surprising," said Difan Guo, who also interns in a local wine shop. "Chateaux that are close to each other can produce wines that are very different."

Initially the Chinese students were affluent, even super-rich, but like Difan Guo more and more hold down jobs to finance their stays, with costs running from US\$4300 to \$22,400 for tuition alone.

And with the Bordeaux vineyards among the first to target the Chinese market, students see a diploma here as an open door to jobs.

They are solicited by both sides

– not only by Bordeaux exporters seeking to understand the Chinese market but also by Chinese firms that have increasingly invested in the area, where they now own about 100 vineyards, according to the Interprofessional Council of Bordeaux Wines (CIVB).

The Chateau Valandraud, which produces a Premiere Grand Cru classe Saint-Emilion, has two full-time Chinese employees.

"This allows us, without using English, to understand the intricacies of negotiations with these clients," said owner Jean-Luc Thunevin who has seen his sales take off in China.

The Chateau des Tourtes in Bordeaux's Blaye district hires two Chinese interns a year to "facilitate communication" and organise trips to China.

Even the wine schools are tapping the Chinese market.

Yuchen Zhou, a 28-year-old from Beijing, first came to Bordeaux to obtain a master's degree in finance but she was seduced by the wine industry, landing a job with Cafá to help it open a Beijing unit.

China's consumer patterns are also changing. Whereas the early customers were well-heeled and seeking prestigious crus, the country's emerging middle class has acquired a growing taste for the tittle and wants value for money.

"The last time I was back at my parents' our neighbour asked me to give my opinion on the wines he had in his cellar," said Zu, while Wu said these new wine drinkers want "accountability on prices".

Wine sales were hurt by an anti-corruption drive over the last two years in which Beijing has clamped down on lavish banquets and expensive bottles of wine as gifts, said Vinexpo chief Guillaume Deglise.

But he forecast that China's wine market would return to growth in 2015 and keep expanding rapidly.

"We expect 37 million adults to come to drinking age in China within the next five years. This is actually more than the entire population of Canada," he said at a Vinexpo fair in Hong Kong this month.

France is currently the leading supplier of imported wines to China, with 14.5 million cases in 2013, followed by Australia with 4.1 million cases. **W** – AFP

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Ancient techniques for restoring the balance of mind and body

BY RACHNA SACHASINH

CURIIOUS why some people can eat a large meal with no effort, while others eat only morsels? Why some are quick, restless and energetic, and others are slow and graceful? Why stress immobilises some, while others seem to exist carefree and unperturbed?

Ayurveda, believed to be the world's oldest traditional healing system, categorises people into three distinct *doshas* – or body types – which may help answer some of these questions.

Each person is a unique blend of the three *doshas*, with one often being dominant, and each person's body type is a combination of physical, mental and behavioural traits. Ayurvedic treatments cater to your specific *dosha*, and following the regimen in all aspects of your life promises good health and mental well-being.

First documented in India's

ancient Vedic texts more 5000 years ago, the basic tenets of Ayurveda remain unchanged even today. Ayurveda comes from the Sanskrit words for life (*ayur*) and knowledge (*veda*), and it encompasses all the factors in a person's life that impact health.

According to Ayurvedic principles, physical ailments and illness stem from an imbalance of the mind and body, which arises when the body is unable to regulate or release waste efficiently. Ayurveda restores balance through a comprehensive range of physical and nutritional therapies that are grounded in meditation and the use of natural herbs and spices.

While Ayurveda has been practised informally in much of India, it took a backseat for much of the 20th century when modern medicine made astounding strides in fighting illness.

Dr VS Valiathan – a cardiac surgeon and national research professor at Manipal University

in Karnataka, India, who is currently examining Ayurveda's potential application to biomedical research – said via email that modern medicine revolutionised patient care in the 1900s with the introduction of antibiotics and vaccines to treat and prevent infectious diseases.


“While infectious diseases were brought under control and life expectancy increased above 60 years, chronic non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, coronary artery disease, cancer, allergic conditions, muscular-skeletal disorders and neuro-degenerative diseases became the dominant problems in patient care,” he said.

Where modern medicine excels at treatment, it lags considerably in preventive care. Healing systems such as Ayurveda offer eating, exercise and meditation regimens that can prevent conditions such as heart disease and diabetes, which result from dietary and lifestyle choices.

“It is comprehensive and covers every aspect of life: diet, sleep, physical activity, oral care, seasonal adjustment,” said Dr Valiathan.

In the past three decades, Ayurveda has spurred a multi-billion dollar industry. Pharmaceutical companies and research hospitals are exploring ways to use Ayurvedic knowledge to combat cancer, obesity and diabetes. Ayurveda-branded companies produce a range of herbal supplements and cosmetics, and treatment centres and spas occupy a niche in tourism, blending holidays with active healing.

Many of the Ayurveda-based herbal supplements on the market are not regulated by national health agencies. Because they can include lead, mercury and arsenic, health experts caution against self-prescribing herbal supplements without proper medical supervision.

One does not have to spend much or go too far to benefit from Ayurveda. The herbs and spices used in Ayurvedic cooking and health remedies are found in most home kitchens, and can be incorporated quite simply. Spices such as ginger, turmeric, cumin, coriander, cardamom and garlic are used liberally for flavour and for pharmacological benefits. 

Know your dosha

Each individual is governed by his or her constitution or *prakriti*, which is the ability of the body to regulate normal physical processes such as digestion, circulation and elimination. Your constitution's ability to do this is influenced by your *dosha*. Once Ayurvedic practitioners determine your *dosha*, they are able to prescribe proper foods and activities that will help you maintain good health.

Vata: Governed by air and space, Vata are lean with bony, protruding joints, and dark, dry skin. They tend to move rapidly and have sensitive and creative natures.

Pitta: Governed by fire and water, Pitta have muscular and well-developed bodies with fair, moist skin that burns easily. They exhibit a steady gait and a focused, precise mind.

Kapha: Governed by water and earth, Kapha are broad and thick with oily, pale skin. They are deep thinkers with a steady, forgiving and honourable disposition.

Sama or Tridosha: A balance of all three types.

Jump start your Ayurvedic practice

These common spices are already present in most pantries and can be used liberally in cooking or as a garnish.

Clove: Antiseptic and anti-inflammatory, good for asthma and toothaches; clove paste mixed with salt and water is a common remedy for headaches.

Coriander: Regulates digestion; ideal for all *dosha* types, coriander promotes assimilation of other herbs and spices.

Cumin: Enhances digestion; its antiseptic qualities help regulate the liver and pancreas.

Ginger: Excellent for digestion, nausea and respiratory ailments; use in cooking, fresh juice blends and tea infusions

Pennywort: Reduces anxiety and tension.

Turmeric: Touted for its antiseptic, anti-inflammatory and anti-oxidant properties; invigorates the metabolism and helps reduce fatty deposits.

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Japanese clothes but few Japanese models at Tokyo Fashion Week

TOKYO Fashion Week has long been a platform for edgy Japanese designers – but perhaps more remarkable is just how few Japanese models grace its catwalks.

Tall, white and often blonde young women dominate the runway, with a foreign look that is now commonplace in Japanese magazines, shows and advertisements.

“It’s kind of odd,” said 24-year-old Rika Tatsuno, one of the few Japanese models appearing on the Tokyo catwalks, where she reckons she is in an Asian minority of about 10 to 15 percent.

“Definitely we would like to see more Japanese models.”

A lack of racially diverse catwalks is



A model displays a creation by Japanese designer Yasutoshi Ezumi at Tokyo Fashion Week on March 18. Photo: AFP/Toru Yamanaka

by no means unique to Tokyo, which is vying to compete on the global fashion stage. But its lack of Japanese faces is striking.

In Japan, fashion is divided into *wafuku*, or traditional Japanese clothing, and *yofuku*, which literally means “Western-style clothing” and is now everyday wear.

While Japanese models are usually chosen to showcase the former, such as kimonos by celebrated designer Jotaro Saito, they have limited opportunities in the latter category – even when the Western-style clothes are Japanese

creations that will mostly find domestic buyers.

“It’s natural. If I was designing traditional Japanese clothes I would pick Japanese models,” said young designer Hiroki Uemura of the byU brand, who made his debut at Tokyo this week.

He described his collection as an adult version of the hugely popular *kawaii* style – the Japanese word for cute or adorable – but one also influenced by the “mismatched” look of British actress and singer Jane Birkin in her youth.

“I want to show the ‘made in Japan’ aspect, but the Japanese are attracted to Europe and foreign countries, so in order to promote this brand’s image I use foreign models,” he said.

Kali Myronenko, a 20-year-old from Ukraine, first appeared on the Tokyo runway when she was 17 and is now based in the city, where the insatiable appetite for her looks gives her a regular stream of work.

“Japanese people like this idea of being cute-looking, young, so many Japanese people wear contact lenses with the blue eyes,” she said.

“You don’t want to be how you are because you see yourself everyday in the mirror,” she said.

In Japan that yearning to be different has, as in other Asian countries, led to a robust market for skin-whitening creams, while dyed-blond hair is not an uncommon sight in the corridors of fashion week, held in Tokyo’s trendy Shibuya district.

In pursuit of their ideal look, Tokyo agents nowadays choose many of their models from Eastern Europe or Russia, according to fashion week casting director Bobbie Tanabe.

He said they were given attractive contracts with flights, apartments and drivers, meaning they cost about twice as much to hire as local models.

“Maybe using Japanese models can be too realistic for (Japanese designers),” he added.

Ukrainian Myronenko said she would “love” to work alongside more Japanese models in Tokyo, where she finds the job more enjoyable than at shows such as Paris Fashion Week.

“I think it’s just the Japanese way that I love, how they treat other people no matter who you are, famous or not famous.” **W** – AFP

STREET STYLE

Ma Ar Wai, 20, is top of the crops, although she may want to re-think that career in lion taming



Representing the gents, laid-back style comes easy to expert poser Ar Kar Win Zaw.

THE weather might be hotting up, but there’s no excuse not to look good this season. We’ve scoured the streets for Yangon’s chic-est street stylers to give you some inspiration. From bright and breezy blouses to cute vintage style playsuits, these trend-setters are scoring some serious style points.

Nan Tit, 36, knows an oversized handbag is the key to chic street styling.

Turning a few heads on the streets of Yangon, Ei Ei Han, 20, ticks all the boxes with this vintage style playsuit.

We got a major case of bag envy when we saw Ma Thein Gi’s transparent Charles and Keith handbag.

If the Paris catwalks are anything to go by, red is set to be the new black next season. But Yonn Yonn, 22, decides to stick with both just in case.

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Dated: 20 March 2015

Home away from home for Yangon's elderly



Elderly visitors rock the karaoke mic at the Day Care Centre for the Aged in Yangon. Photo: Thiri Lu

BY ZON PANN PWINT

SHIFTING economic and social trends have changed the way families look after their elderly members. In the past, an older man or woman would go to live in a home for the aged only if they had no surviving children. But now, as rising prices and job opportunities for women both enable and require both parents to work, many older people spend their days in an empty house, making the option of moving to a care home more attractive.

Widower U Tun Hla, 84, a retired officer, spends his days at the local Day Care Centre for the Aged in Dagon township in Yangon. His son drops him off in the morning and picks him up in the evening. The time in between he spends chatting and laughing with other old people, or reading newspapers.

Though exact figures for the age breakdown of the population will have to await the release of detailed census figures, the Department of Social Welfare says that the elderly population is growing.

"Grown children have to work and can't provide enough parental care, leaving the elderly feeling lonesome," said Dr Kay Thi Kyaw, assistant director of the department. "Even when there are adult family members who stay at home, some elderly don't have a good relationship with them," she said.

Concerned about news stories of abandoned old people, people are taking action.

Sitting at a desk at the entrance of Day Care Centre for the Aged, U Tun Hla helps elderly visitors sign the register while the staff prepare their lunch. He feels confident that he can still play an active part.

U Tun Hla is one of 70 elderly people who visit the Day Care Centre for the Aged on weekdays since the centre was established by the Department of Social Welfare last November. He has six sons, of whom two have already passed away. He and his wife lived near the

house of one of his sons in Dagon township. When his wife passed away, he grew lonelier and lonelier.

"My son often had me to stay with his family, but I couldn't stay there permanently. They look after me but I worry that I am a burden to them and that they might begrudge my staying longer," he said.

Instead, his son regularly visits his house, and his daughter-in-law delivers meals.

"As I grow older, I fear they might think I'm not as smart as them, especially my grandsons. I can't give them guidance. They don't listen to my advice and sometimes they talk back. I can't bear it. I feel powerless," he said.

But his son doesn't want him moping around alone at home all day, and suggested he spend his days at the centre.

"I'm very happy here. We sit ruminating about adulthood experiences, laugh and read newspapers," said U Tun Hla, who started coming to the centre earlier this month and now spends every weekday there.

The Day Care Centre for the Aged provides a prayer room, a karaoke room and a large parlour for conversation.

Since last November, about 111 elderly people from 25 townships have visited the centre. They have families but don't want to stay at home while their children go out to work.

The centre serves coffee, tea or Ovaltine and cookies three times a day, as well as lunch. Every day, Dr Kay Thi Kyaw drops by to chat and offers advice.

"Some of them are content with their lives; some like to complain. Some want to do everything by the book, while some are quarrelsome. And some thought life was pointless when they first came," she said. They don't think that way for long.

"If grandparents, parents and children live in the same house, adult children respect and look after their own parents, and so train their children to take care of them when they grow old."

The longer babies breastfeed, the more they achieve in life

A study of 6000 babies finds those who breastfed were more intelligent and earned higher wages

BY SARAH BOSELEY

BREASTFED babies are more likely to turn into well-educated and higher-earning adults, according to a major long-term study.

Researchers in Brazil have followed nearly 6000 babies from birth for the past three decades, enabling them for the first time to get an idea of the long-term effects of breastfeeding. Nearly 3500 of them, now 30-year-old adults, accepted an invitation to be interviewed and sit IQ tests for the purpose of the study. Those who had been breastfed proved to be more intelligent, had spent longer at school and earned more than those who had not been. And the longer they were breastfed as a baby, the better they tended to be doing.

It is already known that breastfeeding can increase a child's IQ by a small amount. The question that Dr Bernardo Lessa Horta from the Federal University of Pelotas in Brazil wanted to answer was whether this translated into greater intelligence and better prospects as an adult.

"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," he said.

It is not just the age of the participants that makes this study unusual. Horta says it is free of the major complication of most breastfeeding studies because, when it began in 1982, it was not just the more affluent and educated mothers who breastfed in Brazil. Breastfeeding was not limited to one socioeconomic group. It was, he says, evenly distributed across the social classes. So the higher achievers at the age of 30 did not come from better-off homes.

Nonetheless, in analysing their results, now published in the *Lancet Global Health* journal, they took account of family income at birth, parental schooling, genomic ancestry, maternal smoking during pregnancy, maternal age, birth weight and type of delivery to try to avoid any of those factors skewing the results.

They found that all the breastfed babies had greater intelligence as measured by a standard IQ test, had spent more years in education and had higher earnings. But the longer

they had been breastfed, the greater the benefits. Children who had been breastfed for 12 months had an IQ that was four points higher than those breastfed for less than a month, had nearly a year's more schooling and earned about one-third more than the average income level.

Horta acknowledged he could not completely rule out the possibility mothers who breastfed helped their babies' development in other ways. "Some people say it is not the effect of breastfeeding but it is the mothers who breastfeed who are different in their motivation or their ability to stimulate the kids," he said.

But, he said, there is evidence from other studies of the nutritional value of mother's milk, rich in long-chain polyunsaturated acids that are essential for brain growth. Some studies have suggested babies with a particular genotype are more likely to get the IQ benefit from breastfeeding than others. Horta and colleagues are now looking to see whether that applies in their cohort.

Exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months is recommended by the World Health Organization. Horta said babies who had been breastfed for six months got most of the benefits enjoyed by those who were fed for longer. "Mothers should breastfeed for as long as possible," he said, but he recognised that extended breastfeeding is not always easy for women.

Dr Colin Michie, chair of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health's nutrition committee, said, "It's widely known that breastfed babies are better protected against chest and ear infections, are at less risk of sudden infant death and are less likely to become obese, but it's interesting to see the benefits of breastfeeding for a prolonged period of time not only benefit the baby in the early years, but also translate into increased intelligence and improved earning ability later in life."

"It is important to note that breastfeeding is one of many factors that can contribute to a child's outcomes. However, this study emphasises the need for continued and enhanced breastfeeding promotion so expectant mothers are aware of the benefits of breastfeeding. Furthermore, once mothers have given birth, we must ensure they are properly supported to continue breastfeeding for as long as they are able to." - *The Guardian*

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Un-fun zones

Yangon's parks fail to satisfy those seeking clean and open spaces

BY NYEIN EI EI HTWE

IN these hot and hazy days of summer, in the heart of a big city bustling with traffic and the roar and clatter of new construction on every street, people are turning their attention to parks. Even young people are getting nostalgic about the placid pleasures of the old Yangon Zoo or People's Park, the way they used to be.

The new Yangon of busy, crowded public open spaces increasingly fails to satisfy. And international travel may broaden the mind, but it also encourages comparisons and raises questions about the way things are done back home.

Po Po, a 20-year-old accountant from South Okkalapa township, said the park in her neighbourhood is mainly a square of dust. "It says on the sign it's a park, but it's empty all day, even of plants. Then boys play football there in the evenings," she said.

Swings and slides do wonders in releasing stress, even for a 20-year-old, but you have to go to People's Park now to enjoy them, and even there you have to pay, she said.

They used to have them in Yangon Zoo a few years ago, but then the zoo went private and the public amenities were taken away.

"I often visit People's Park so I can

play and relax, but it's expensive," said Po Po, adding that the entrance fee of K1000 for a few minutes of fun is why so few children use the facility.

Mee Mee, 23, moved to Yangon from Bogale township, Ayeyarwady Region, to work in a travel agency, and thought the city parks should be of a higher standard. Last year, on a trip to Beijing, she was astonished to find its public spaces a mass of flowers. "Why can't Yangon be like that?" she asked herself.

"They had a large projector screening pop music in the centre of the park, and all the paths were paved in beautiful marble. It made me sad to think of my favourite park in Yangon," said Mee Mee, who thinks parks are more important than ever as the city grows more polluted.

But she has almost given up visiting parks here at all, finding them much too crowded.

"I can't relax. It's always so crowded and noisy - it just gets me annoyed to be so hemmed in by other people," she said.

She added that she missed the old Yangon Zoo of her childhood days, which declined when the animals were moved to Nay Pyi Taw Zoo.

"They stopped upgrading it when the animals left. There are very few visitors now because it's dirty. All we want is proper seating and clean grass to sit on," she said.



Strange things are afoot in Mahabandoola Park in downtown Yangon. Photo: Yu Yu

Su Myat Noe, 25, who has studied in Singapore, said she and her friends have taken to meeting at each other's homes because the parks here have grown so unwelcoming. "If the parks offered a clean and satisfying environment, people might be prepared to pay an entrance fee. But not if there's nowhere clean to sit," she said.

Sometimes Su Myat Noe likes to visit Kandawgyi Park. She said young people needed public spaces in which they could relax, and which could also educate them, like an aquarium or a wildlife park like Hlawga, located about 30 kilometres (20 miles) north of the city.

"But now there are rats running around in the parks and visitors have to worry about bird droppings and bad smells," she said.

Su Myat Noe wants small parks and gardens to be located in polluted areas like downtown and in industrial zones because working people have no opportunity to relax in a natural environment.

"Another thing is that food stalls in parks are too expensive and not very appetising. Park food costs too much and puts visitors off," she said.

For 22-year-old Mone Naing Phoo, parks are no place to avoid the stress generated by her company job and her social life. She prefers to meet her

friends at bevtvtvcer stations.

"After losing my phone in a park while I was sitting down, I don't feel safe. There isn't enough security. And anyway, by the time I get out of the office, the parks are closed. So I drink," she said.

She does like Botahtaung jetty but doesn't care to stay there too late in the evening. "There are so many people working on the ships, waiting for ferries back and forth. It doesn't feel very safe," she said.

What these young women want is clear enough: clean, welcoming parks with room and peace to relax, with no rats, and with space where they can enjoy some recreation. **W**



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Photos: Wade Guyitt



Park your

WADE GUYITT

IN 1998, British author Julian Barnes published a novel called *England, England*, in which a megalomaniac tycoon buys up the entire Isle of Wight, evicts the residents and turns the whole thing into a theme park. From the Royal Family to Robin Hood, from a model of Stonehenge to a replica White Cliffs of Dover, the park re-creates England for tourists who don't want the trouble of travelling the whole of England: You can do the country in a day and still have time for tea. Actually, having tea is an essential stop, one of 100 attractions calculated to best evoke Englishness.

The fictional England catches on and assumes a life of its own. The Merry Men start thieving; the smugglers begin smuggling. Meanwhile, mainland England, no longer top draw, falls into decline. The simulation of England becomes more lifelike than its reality.

The Union National Races Village – 30 to 40 minutes east of downtown Yangon – is Myanmar's attempt to replicate its national character in a similar way. In place of the Isle of Wight, we have southeastern Thaketa township, 111 acres fronting the Bago River just past the bridge to Thanlyin.

The park – for it feels more like a park than a village – manifests the approved official narrative of eight large ethnic groups living side by side, all equal in their love for “Union spirit”. Of course, this story leaves out how these eight groups came to be yoked together in the first place, and whether the arrangement makes them happy.

The village instead presents an open-air display of perpetual idealised tradition, with artefacts, buildings and clothing to represent each of the major ethnic groupings.

Walking through eight different traditional houses, visitors get the chance to compare and contrast (thatch! shingles! windows! no windows!). Rooms are mostly bare, but maps, labels and pictures, as well as traditional handcrafted objects such as cooking equipment and implements, are arranged to give an idea of how each would look if occupied.

This is awkward, as families do not, in fact, eat, sleep or live inside the houses of the National Races Village. But caretakers do reside in small buildings on the replica compounds and guard them overnight.

During the day they tend to chores, eat meals, check hand phones next to antique looms, et cetera. Also on site are small shops of drinks, snacks, clothes and knick-knacks, each ostensibly connected to the respective area. If every home in Myanmar were like these, there would be an adjoining souvenir shack in the corner of every property.

What they don't do – or didn't, on our visit – is interpret or explain. We were left to get on with that by ourselves. Question number one being: Why does the Bamar house seem so much vaster than the rest?

The village fathers

The National Races Village initiative was put into motion back in 1995, when the military junta sought to boost its image by declaring 1996 as Visit Myanmar Year. Then-Minister for Progress of Border Areas and National Races and Development Affairs Lt-Gen Maung Thint outlined a bold vision for a new model village: “Complete traditional implements” would be gathered; “about three persons who are proficient in spoken English” would “explain the traditions, customs and culture of the national races”; and “video features” and

“pamphlets” and “postcards” would be distributed.

Four companies wished to invest, the state-run *New Light of Myanmar* reported January 10, 1995, and a stake-driving ceremony was held April 25. The Pyidaungsu Ayeyeiknyein was under way.

But Visit Myanmar Year came and went. It wasn't until late 2002 that then-Border Areas Minister Col Thein Nyunt arrived to cut a ribbon “carried by Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Chin, Bamar, Mon, Rakhine and Shan national belles”, as the *New Light* put it on December 29.

What took so long? In a speech at the ceremony, Col Thein Nyunt reviewed the rocky – or should it be swampy? – history of the project. It turned out the site was, at best, only 17 feet (5.2 metres) above sea-level, and that 40 percent of the allotted area was flooded at high tide. Gardens were ungrowable, buildings unfoundationable; the interested companies bowed out.

In August 2000, 10 acres for a “Myanma traditional handicraft village” were handed over to Fair Trade Co Ltd. The Border Areas Ministry then took charge of the rest and, with a great deal more optimism and foresight than was ever applied to actual border areas, hatched a plan to transform it into a utopian people's paradise within two years.



No one who has spent time in traditional houses would get much from these replicas. Nor, I imagine, would those who live in them still.

To keep out the Bago River and help drain Thaketa township during monsoon, a vast artificial floodplain was introduced: 31,487 feet of canals, with four sluice gates. A total of 25 lakes were dug, with room for 35 million gallons of rain water. As the Bago River is salty, the lakes could be filled by fresh water to water the greenery. By opening day, the *New Light* reported, there were “7598 perennial trees, 5245 shade trees, 45,760 flowery plants and 7 acres of mangrove forest”.

It also boasted 29,007 feet of road. A 300 KVA transformer was installed and seven artesian wells were dug. In addition to small-scale replicas of landmarks such as Kyaiktiyo Pagoda, Mount Zwegabin and Mrauk-U, “national race carpenters” recruited by literature and culture committees designed and constructed housing in styles traditional to their areas. When Secretary-1 General Khin Nyunt suggested upgrading village roads to concrete and cultivating local crops, the initiatives were taken up with aplomb.

That such infrastructure – drainage, all-weather roadworks, reliable water supply, electricity – was lacking in almost all areas of the country the project represents was beside the point. All groups at the opening day party “cordially conversed” among themselves – a triumph of Union spirit indeed, given that civil wars were ongoing – and the dignitaries were taken on a whirlwind pan-national tour, involving singing, dancing, eating and prize-giving. The copy was, at last, better than the original.

But is it? What, exactly, hath Border Areas wrought?



Self

The National Races Village whitewashes the ethnic heritage it claims to celebrate. But it does make for a pleasant bike ride

A place to play

Online review site Tripadvisor shows the experience garners more favourable scores than not. It's often part of package-tour itineraries for foreign visitors. Friends of friends count it among the highlights of Yangon.

And from a certain point of view, this could be so. After passing beneath the enormous gate (K500 for locals; K3000 for foreigners; K500 camera fee), head left to the bicycle parking lot (K500 to rent, plus K500 per hour of use). The alternate options are walking, hiring a horse-and-buggy, or snagging a seat in an oversized golf cart. But it's a big place to see on foot, and a bike lets you pedal about at your leisure. It's a joyous experience to navigate well-paved roads (thanks, Secretary-1!) with no one trying to run you off - though the golf carts do claim right-of-way. The breeze is breezy, the sun is sunny, the flowers are flowery. The landscaping is top-notch and ongoing, and the site seems to do good business as a family park.

There's a children's play area with climbing equipment, and charming gardens shaped like turtles and so forth, plus a herd of elephant statues frozen mid-wander. There's a bird enclosure and a rabbit warren and a deer pen. There's even a soft-shell crab farm - less of a visual treat. The views from the tower near the park entrance are worth the 100-step climb. Now that People's Park is encrusted with a shopping mall, this is a good option for your next picnic.

It also provides a much-needed spot for young couples to canoodle. Climbing a hill for a better angle of the undersized replica of Chin State's famous heart-shaped Rih Lake, I accidentally intruded on a different heart-related scene: two lovebirds, who were, shall we say, employing an umbrella in an area that was already well-shaded. But that can happen anywhere, and we didn't spy anything overly ardent.

The high point of my visit was one of the miniature landmarks: Hkakaborazi. True, it was as much like a real mountain as the wading-pool-like pond evoked Rih Lake. But as I watched from a distance, a child and a mother climbed it, and, with the stairs hidden from my view, the perspective brought my imagination to life. They seemed, for a time, to be conquering a snow-white ridge in tropical heat. I hope that's how the kid felt too.

A village without villagers

What soured our joy were the ever-mounting feelings of hollowness as we progressed through the traditional houses. Like the crocodiles snoozing in the zoo enclosure, the employees themselves seemed to be sharing the same space as us but occupying different worlds. *Lonely Planet* says locals refer to it as "the people's zoo", and I was relieved not to have this feeling - some accents seemed non-Bamar, but we left sceptical that those working in each compound actually belonged to its respective ethnic group. But having staff of any background willing to answer questions and enliven what we were seeing would have been of benefit. Indeed, it was often difficult to tell employees from visitors. Copious small signs labelled everything while explaining nothing. They ranged from the helpful - "leather shield" - to the obvious - "hanging lantern" - to the confounding - "treasure room" (above a door locked with a brand-new padlock) - to the moderately Orwellian ("keep your compound clean", perhaps aimed at the supposed residents rather than us).

The most disappointing were houses representing areas we had actually visited. On a past trip to

northern Chin State, for example, we had been taught that many houses have a barrier in the doorway, nearly shin-high, that one needs to step over when going in and out. While annoying for residents, the barrier symbolically prevents enemies from entering. Such beliefs date back generations, centuries: They show how values become encoded in physical form, which then shapes perceptions and actions in turn. This is what culture is.

It was neat to see the Chin replica house had this raised step. But no sign explained it; no staff member was around to point it out. And without that, this piece of culture had essentially died. Think of the second-generation descendants who do not understand the meaning of what their parents have taught; by the time their children are grown, those habits will be out of memory and lost forever. To most Village visitors, the step, however faithfully recreated, would be just wood.

At the entry to each compound were life-sized images of people in traditional dress, the kind with holes where the faces go so visitors can stand behind and pose for photos. This works well for cartoons, but for still-vibrant peoples it was a bit eerie. As we moved from house to house, we felt we were being greeted by ghost villagers - flat, faceless, soulless simulations. Which, in a way, we were.

So what's the verdict?

As a junta-era engineering initiative, the National Races Museum is impressive. Whether it should have been done at all is up to you.

As a park, it's A-plus, by Myanmar standards. Bring the kids.

As a museum, it's a failing grade. But the infrastructure is there for something great. The well-curated artefacts could be a window into a different world, if a bit more thought were put into conveying their meanings to the public.

As a distillation of Union spirit, it seems more a way to nod at diversity and capitalise on it. Tourists may leave satisfied; those unable to visit remote areas may learn much if they are lucky enough to bring a knowledgeable guide. But no one who has spent time in traditional houses would get much from these replicas. Nor, I imagine, would those who live in them still. To condense the fascinating, diverse, contradictory peoples who populate Myanmar into an entertaining, informative, accessible experience for the public is a tall order, and kudos to anyone who tries. But given the long history of systemic underdevelopment and abuse suffered by ethnic minorities - often under the direction of the very junta that thought up the National Races Village in the first place - the kitsch starts to feel insulting after a while.

And as a village? In 1787, in Crimea, governor Grigory Potemkin allegedly built false communities, facades, along a riverbank, so the visiting Empress Catherine II would see them from a distance and think the area more developed than it was. His men populated them as she passed by, then afterward disassembled and moved them along to her next stop.

Perhaps, for Visit Myanmar Year, the junta hoped a Potemkin village might be just the thing: that tourists would see the National Races Village, where things were nice, and skip the rest of the country, where the roads weren't so solid, the water not so flowing, the electricity not so connected, the Union not so united.

At least locals have some green space to stroll around in. And, for that matter, not a bad place to work. Nicer streets than the rest of Yangon, at least. **W**



Treading a path between Yangon's past and present



BY KIM WALDEN

THEY are not old, as the world measures old, though some of them have been allowed to crumble into gentle decrepitude. Downtown Yangon's colonial buildings are in many senses treasure houses, not least because so many of them now are occupied by thrusting young banks. Others stand, as buildings do, as mute testimony to another age while very much a part of this one.

Though far from Athens or Rome, many sport Corinthian columns, domes, cupolas, pediments, and Doric or Ionian accoutrements.

And brick and stone that they are, they come alive when their stories are told, just as those who gather to listen suddenly look at them with new eyes.

Yangon has spared, or left to wither on the vine, more colonial-era structures than any other Southeast Asian capital, albeit hardly in a spirit of conservation. That conservation is needed now is the proposition of the Yangon Heritage Trust, organiser of the walking tour that has brought me and like-minded others onto the sultry streets.

The city, as Yangon Heritage Trust's walking tour aims to show, neither began nor ended with colonialism.

"Global City: Yangon's Past, Present and Future", a small exhibition in the YHT's single room, breathes a sense of the cosmopolitan, East-meets-West cultural melange that the evocation of "Rangoon" might have inspired in 1960s-era London or New York. Here are the faded colonial maps depicting a smaller, simpler, but still-recognisable town; there a photo of a traditionally dressed woman with a beehive hairdo that would not have raised eyebrows in a swinging Carnaby Street boutique, or a Bleecker Street cafe.

Gazing down from the window, our tour group of six is shown the domed building that in colonial times housed the offices of the accountant general, and is now the criminal court. Next door stands the Chartered Bank, a temple in art-deco that, daringly for 1941, was built with an underground car park.

"It's now a government bank," Mr No, our guide, informs us.

So is the building next door.

It turns out that quite a lot of Yangon's heritage buildings have been repurposed as government buildings in general and banks in particular. From a passing glance at their exteriors, the connoisseur of administration can calculate how much of each departmental budget is allocated to maintenance.

We meander on, drifting through the Sofaer building, lined with its original 1901 tiles. Once a department store that sold Egyptian cigars, Viennese coffee and a bookshop haunted by the inevitable Eric Blair, it now houses the Lokanat Art Gallery.

"What a *great* space," coos an American already inside as we enter to inspect the art.

"Not the original wall, see?" our guide comments, knocking the hollow plaster.

From the window outside the gallery, our attention is drawn to the Rander house, built in the 1930s by Indian traders. We exit by the back stairs onto 37th Street. "I know where we are!" cries one of our group, pointing at the Japanese restaurant next door. Sushi sauced with history tastes just as sweet.

We then wind by the Burma Translation Society building and the Ascott and Co building (now a government bank) and fall back toward Strand Road. At the corner of Seikkantha we're warned not to take photos of the next building we'll be shown: "It's occupied by the secret service. They're very sensitive." OK. We won't tell anyone.

We stop in at the Strand Hotel for a brief rundown of its illustrious past and to view artworks, and are invited to guess the number of strings on the most complex traditional puppet on display. Yes, Timothy, it is 60.

Opposite, on the waterfront made busy by cranes that connect with the quiet of the sky, stands the Navy Club, once famous for having its own swimming pool. Now it's a government bank.

On the way to the storied Secretariat building we compare three buildings from different ages – colonial, post-war and 1990s – arrayed next to each other on Bo Aung Kyaw Street; doff our hats to the Armenian Church (opposite the Good Time Hotel); and inspect a dilapidated building that YHT wants to renovate.

On Bogale Zay Street, with the Secretariat building looming in the distance, we stop to hear the story of Pablo Neruda's time in Yangon. The hot-blooded Chilean poet-diplomat, renowned for his erotic verse, found his Burmese lover's temper so scalding that he fled the country and her jealousy. Packing a sack of rice and a record player, she tracked him down and sat outside his house cooking, playing their favourite songs and menacing any woman who entered.

"That's why I'm still single," says our Mr No.

These are the anecdotes and this is Yangon, its history hidden in plain sight in the bricks and marble of workaday buildings that were here before any of us and might well be here after we are gone, clothed in a new set of stories yet to be told.

The Yangon Heritage Trust is working with the Yangon City Development Committee to regenerate the former capital, protecting both the heritage buildings and the communities that live in and among them. Perhaps the tour might have told us more about the YHT itself.

By the time we arrive at the Secretariat building the sun



Photos: Kim Walden



has already set, and we are left both exhausted and unsatisfied as when any good thing comes to an end. Two hours is not enough to convey much of a heritage like this.

The next day, the free walking tour offered by Studio Yangon, led by Angela, attracted a much bigger polyglot crowd of 25 people. It started at the dawn of Yangon's history, Sule Pagoda, and allowed more time for stories along the way.

Over the next two hours, Angela's tales – brief if sometimes tall – brought these surroundings to life in a different way. The extra two minutes at each stop gave her time to spin tales around the buildings. Outside what was once the Bombay-Burmese Trading Co offices, she even had the time to give us a potted history of the third Anglo-Burmese War, tying it to the British lust for teak. An outbreak of anthrax among the elephants extracting the hardwood could send shivers through the stock markets of the Great Powers.

At the banks I visited the day before, we heard about the impenetrable German-built vault of Lloyds that the occupying Japanese had no end of trouble to crack. Banks with less sturdy safes kept their money out of the hands of the imperial invaders by tossing it into the river.

Angela has a full-time job, but leads at least one tour a week. What is it about walking people around the city for free (donations accepted) that she enjoys?

"I like the stories." 

Yangon Heritage Tours (US\$30) take place on Wednesdays and Saturdays at 10am and 4pm. Find details at yangonheritagetrust.org/tours. Free Yangon Walks are offered on Mondays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays at 4pm. See their Facebook page for updated information.



Photos: Zarni Phyo



The hot-blooded Chilean poet-diplomat Pablo Neruda, renowned for his erotic verse, found his Burmese lover's temper so scalding that he fled the country and her jealousy.



An Old Havana rooftop offers expansive views of the deep-blue Straits of Florida. Photo: Washington Post/Sarah L Voisin

Havana from on high

The city's secret rooftop communities await their next adaptation

BY NICK MIROFF

YOU can't see the secret world of Havana's rooftops from the street. But get high enough and look out across the skyline and it's there: a whole other city in the air.

It's a hidden village of makeshift apartments, chicken coops and tiny vegetable gardens, where boys in flip-flops fly homemade kites and shirtless men play dominoes in the sea breeze, with drying laundry flapping around them.

Street-level Havana can be noisy and smelly, but rooftop Havana is bathed in sunlight and flushed clean by the ocean air. It's beyond the reach of prying eyes, a place for romantic trysts or some much-needed solitude.

"Cubans are nosy, man," said Yordan Alonso, 25, father of three, part-time barber, part-time bicycle taxi driver and lifelong roof-dweller four stories above San Ignacio street in Old Havana. "Up here, nobody bothers you," he said.

Alonso's building is a half-block from the city's Plaza Vieja (Old Plaza), at the unmarked border between cheerful, tourist Havana and crumbling, crumbling Havana, into which visitors rarely stray. This part of the city waits more impatiently than any, maybe, for the day the US tourists and investors come rushing back, to catch it before it falls down.

Never has that day seemed closer for Cubans such as Alonso, with the United States and Cuba mending relations.

Built from concrete blocks set on the roof of a ruined colonial-era building, his tiny apartment looks out over the Old Havana skyline to the deep-blue Straits of Florida beyond. Ships and barges eased in and out of the Bay of Havana past the 18th-century San Carlos de la Cabaña citadel, one of the largest Spanish colonial fortresses in the Americas.

The population has surged to 2.1 million since Fidel Castro's 1959 Revolution, but the housing supply has not kept pace. The communist government consistently falls short of construction goals, and the big, ugly apartment blocks it put up in the Soviet era couldn't absorb all the growth.

In overcrowded Central Havana and in the historic quarter, the shortage of places to live, play and find much-needed privacy pushed the city upward, spilling onto the rooftops.

The technical term for it is "parasitic architecture". The Cuban government doesn't encourage the practice, but in the city's oldest and most dilapidated neighbourhoods, longtime roof-dwelling families like Alonso's were usually allowed to stay. The parasites became permanent.

Cuba is like that – built for one thing and adapted to another. Beat-up Studebakers run on Soviet jeep engines. Restaurants occupy old mansions. Boatless fisherman float baited hooks out to sea on homemade buoys of condoms, puffed up like big balloons.

Many of the grand homes of Old Havana were designed for one family, with a business on the ground floor and space for multiple generations and servants' quarters on the upper levels. Now they are crowded tenements, in varying stages of decay.

Alonso's building has 36 apartments, including his own and the four others on the roof. His wife's family settled there more than 20 years ago after their tenement in another part of the city buckled in a storm.

Bundled electrical wires and phone lines run up the main staircase and spider-web from there. Outside each apartment is an old oil drum or plastic tank for storing water piped up by electrical pumps. Most residents' front doors are open to their neighbours to catch the breeze and gossip, letting their dachshunds and Chihuahuas come and go, their droppings left drying in the stairwell.

From the street, itinerant vendors walk up the worn marble stairs to ply the corridors, hawking pastries and chorizo sausage, probably pinched from government stockrooms.

A rickety wooden ladder continues to the roof where Alonso and his family live. Their neighbour, Josue Gutierrez, keeps his pigeons there.

There are pigeon coops on almost every *azotea* (rooftop) in the neighbourhood, most of them improvised out of rebar and green plastic roofing panels.

Gutierrez, 22, has one of the best, built by his father who raised him on this rooftop, tending pigeons, and has since moved away.

Gutierrez gets up at 4am each morning to go fishing when the weather's good, motoring a few miles out with a friend to troll for tuna or snapper. He tends his pigeons at dusk, changing their water and feeding them with the chickpeas he gets through the government's ration system.

"Yo, Baldy!" Gutierrez shouted to a friend at



Yordan Alonso, 25, lives in small rooftop Havana apartment. Children Estefani Serrano, 5 (left), and Yordan J Alonso, 2, play in the small home as a picture of their mother, Maryolis Monteagudo, 25, hangs on the wall. Photo: Washington Post/Sarah L Voisin

another pigeon coop on the roof of neighbouring building, about 100 metres (330 feet) away, on a recent afternoon. Baldy did not notice. "He can't hear me," Gutierrez said. "Too much wind."

There were pigeon-keepers on seemingly every rooftop. Gutierrez said his entire neighbourhood is "a battlefield"; everyone is trying to trap each other's birds. Gutierrez had rigged the rooftop with little snares fashioned out of fishing line to cinch around a bird's ankle as soon as it lands.

In the United States, Gutierrez said, pigeon-keepers prefer messenger birds. In Cuba, the hobby is built around raising birds that venture out to attract others to their roost, where they can be captured for their owner's collection. It's called "stealing pigeons".

It is a game of seduction, and one of Gutierrez's birds, El Azul de la Grua, "The Blue One on the Crane", is Old Havana's avian Casanova.

El Azul is called that because the only place he likes to roost is on the idled construction crane, a block from Gutierrez's building, hanging over a half-built tourist hotel.

Gutierrez lifted El Azul from his coop and released him into the air with an upward toss. The bird flew in a wide looping arc, past the crane and out over the tourist heart of Old Havana, before circling back to the coop.



Josue Gutierrez, 22, releases one of his pigeons into the air. Photo: Washington Post/Sarah L. Voisin



"Cubans are nosy, man. Up here, nobody bothers you."

Yordan Alonso
Lifelong Havana roof-dweller

El Azul once stole 82 pigeons for Gutierrez in a 14-month span. Gutierrez kept some and sold the others. The least valuable are popular with practitioners of Santeria – an Afro-Caribbean religion combining Yoruban traditions with Roman Catholicism – and they meet their demise on the altars of Elegua, Oshun and other Afro-Cuban deities with a purported appetite for pigeon blood.


The birds are just a hobby for Gutierrez, he said. He loses money on them. Unlike Alonso, he doesn't even like being up on the rooftop above the city. "I don't waste my time watching people," he said. "I'd rather be down there with my PlayStation."

When he and Alonso were growing up on this roof, they would climb down to run free in the Plaza Vieja, one of the main squares in Old Havana, back when it was in ruins. Now it's a major destination for foreign tourists. At the new cafe on the corner, a Cuban band played "Hey Jude" in English.

The renovated Old Plaza has tapas bars, a spa, even a Benetton store. But the police don't let the neighbourhood kids play baseball there anymore or run shirtless, Alonso said. "It's like a museum now," he said. Even the fountain at the centre of the plaza is fenced off.

Surely more tourists were on the way, Alonso said, given the thaw between Havana and Washington. The rough-worn Havana he grew up in, and its rooftop world, might not survive it. Maybe that was a good thing.

"Sometimes I think we should move so my kids have more room to play," Alonso said, looking out across the city as big cloud banks moved in from the north.

"But where else am I going to get a view like this? What's it worth?" he asked. "Someday, a millionaire is going to come and want to buy it." 

– The Washington Post



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DOMESTIC FLIGHT SCHEDULES

YANGON TO MANDALAY

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
Y5 775	Daily	6:00	7:10
W9 515	1	6:00	7:25
YH 909	Daily	6:00	7:40
YH 917	Daily	6:10	8:30
YJ 891	Daily	6:00	8:05
YJ 811	3	6:30	7:55
K7 282	Daily	6:00	8:10
W9 201	Daily	7:00	8:25
YH 835	1,7	7:00	8:40
YH 831	4,6	7:00	8:40
W9201	1	7:00	8:25
7Y 131	Daily	7:15	9:20
K7 266	Daily	8:00	10:05
8M 6603	4	9:00	10:10
YJ 751	5	10:45	14:50
YJ 211	5,7	11:00	12:25
YJ 601	6	11:00	12:25
YJ 201	1,2,3,4	11:00	12:25
YH 911	2	11:00	12:40
YJ 761	1,2,4	11:00	12:55
YJ 233	6	11:00	12:55
YH 729	2,4,6	11:00	14:00
YH 737	3,5,7	11:15	13:25
YH 727	1	11:15	13:25
W9 251	2,5	11:30	12:55
7Y 941	1,3,4,6	11:45	13:10
7Y 841	2,5	11:45	13:10
7Y 943	7	11:45	13:10
K7 822	4,7	12:30	16:55
YJ 151/W9 7151	1	13:00	16:45
K7 622	1,3,5,7	13:00	14:25
K7 226	2,4,6	13:30	14:55
7Y 241	Daily	14:30	16:25
YH 731	Daily	14:30	16:40
Y5 234	Daily	15:20	16:30
W9 211	4	15:30	16:55

YANGON TO NYAUNG U

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
K7 282	Daily	6:00	7:20
YJ 891	Daily	6:00	7:20
YH 909	Daily	6:00	8:25
YH 917	Daily	6:10	7:45
YJ 141	1	6:20	7:40
YJ 881	7	6:30	7:50
YJ 881	1,2,4,5	6:45	8:05
YJ 801	6	7:00	8:20
K7 242	Daily	7:00	8:20
7Y 131	Daily	7:15	8:35
7Y 121	1	8:20	9:40
K7 264	Daily	14:30	16:40
7Y 241	Daily	14:30	17:10
YH 731	1,2,3,4,5,7	14:30	17:25
W9 129	1,3,6	15:30	17:35
W9 211	4	15:30	17:40
W9 129	1	15:30	17:35

YANGON TO MYITKYINA

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
YH 829	5	7:00	9:40
YH 835	1,7	7:00	10:05
YH 831	4,6	7:00	10:05
YH 826	3	7:00	10:05
YJ 201	1,2,3,4	11:00	13:50
YJ 233	6	11:00	16:05
W9 251	2,5	11:30	14:25
7Y 841	5	11:45	14:35
K7 622	1,3,5,7	13:00	15:55
YJ 151 / W9 7151	1	13:00	16:45

MANDALAY TO YANGON

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
YH 910	Daily	7:40	9:45
Y5 233	Daily	7:50	9:00
YJ 811	3	8:10	10:05
YJ 891	Daily	8:20	10:15
K7 283	Daily	8:25	11:30
YH 918	Daily	8:30	10:45
W9 201	Daily	8:40	10:35
7Y 132	Daily	9:35	11:30
K7 267	Daily	10:20	12:25
YH 830	5	11:05	14:55
YH 836	1,7	13:20	14:45
YH 832	4,6	13:20	14:45
YJ 212	7	15:00	16:25
YJ 212	5	15:00	17:05
YJ 752	5	15:05	16:30
YH 912	2	15:30	17:25
YJ 202	1,2,3,4	15:30	16:55
YJ 762	4	15:50	17:00
YJ 602	6	16:25	17:35
YJ 762	1,2	16:35	18:00
YH 732	6	16:40	18:05
7Y 242	Daily	16:40	18:45
YH 732	1,2,3,4,5,7	16:40	18:45
YH 728	1	16:45	18:10
W9 152/W97152	1	17:05	18:30
Y5 776	Daily	17:10	18:20
W9 211	4	17:10	19:15
K7 823	2,4,7	17:10	18:35
8M 6604	4	17:20	18:30
K7 227	2,4,6	17:20	18:45
8M 903	1,2,4,5,7	17:20	18:30
YH 738	3,5,7	17:25	18:50
K7 623	1,3,5,7	17:40	19:05
YH 730	2,4,6	17:45	19:10
YJ 234	6	17:45	19:10
W9 252	2,5	18:15	19:40

NYAUNG U TO YANGON

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
YJ 891	Daily	7:35	10:15
YH 918	Daily	7:45	10:45
YJ 141 / W9 7141	1	7:55	10:55
YJ 881	7	8:05	10:10
YJ 881	1,2,4,5	8:20	10:25
YH 910	Daily	8:25	9:45
YH 835	6	8:35	9:55
K7 242	Daily	8:35	11:45
7Y 131	Daily	8:50	11:30
7Y 121	Daily	9:55	14:10
K7 283	Daily	10:10	11:30
K7 265	Daily	16:55	18:15
7Y 242	Daily	17:25	18:45
W9 129	1,3,6	17:50	19:10
YH 732	1,2,3,4,5,6	17:25	18:45

MYITKYINA TO YANGON

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
YH 832	4,6	11:55	14:45
YH 836	1,7	11:55	14:45
YH 827	3	11:55	14:45
YH 830	5	12:30	14:55
YJ 202	1,2,3,4	14:05	16:55
YJ 152 / W9 7152	1	15:35	18:30
K7 623	1,3,5,7	16:10	19:05
YJ 234	6	16:20	19:10
W9 252	2,5	16:45	19:40

YANGON TO HEHO

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
YJ 891	Daily	6:00	8:50
K7 282	Daily	6:00	9:00
YH 917	Daily	6:10	9:35
YJ 141/W9 7141	1	6:20	8:35
YJ 811	3	6:30	8:40
YJ 881	7	6:30	8:45
YJ 881	1,2,4,5	6:45	9:00
K7 242	Daily	7:00	9:15
YJ 201	1	7:00	9:10
7Y 131	Daily	7:15	10:05
K7 266	Daily	8:00	9:15
7Y 121	Daily	8:20	10:35
Y5 649	Daily	10:30	12:45
YH 505	1,2,3,4,5,6	10:30	11:55
YJ 751	3,7	10:30	11:40
YJ 751	5	10:45	11:55
YJ 761	1,2,4	11:00	12:10
YJ 233	6	11:00	12:10
YH 727	1	11:15	12:40
YH 737	3,5,7	11:15	12:40
7Y 941	1,2,4,6	11:45	13:55
K7 828	1,3,5	12:30	13:45
K7 822	2,4,7	12:30	13:45
K7 264	Daily	14:30	15:45
7Y 241	Daily	14:30	15:40
YH 731	Daily	14:30	15:55
W9 129	1,3,6	15:30	16:40

YANGON TO MYEIK

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
Y5 325	1,5	6:45	8:15
7Y 531	1,5	7:00	8:38
K7 319	2,4,6	7:00	9:05
Y5 325	2	15:30	17:00

YANGON TO SITTWE

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
W9 309	1,3,6	11:30	12:55
K7 422	Daily	13:00	14:55

YANGON TO THANDWE

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
YJ 141/W9 7141	1	6:20	9:50
K7 242	Daily	7:00	10:35
YH 505	1,2,3,4,5,6	10:30	13:10
W9 309	1,3,6	11:30	13:50
7Y 122	Daily	12:15	13:05
K7 422	Daily	13:00	13:35
Y5 421	1,3,4,6	15:45	16:40

YANGON TO DAWEI

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
K7 319	2,4,6	7:00	8:10
7Y 531	1,5	7:00	7:48

YANGON TO LASHIO

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
YJ 751	5	10:45	13:00
YJ 751	3,7	10:30	12:45
YH 729	2,4,6	11:00	13:00
7Y 741	1,5	11:30	13:18
K7 828	1,3,5	12:30	14:50

YANGON TO PUTAO

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
YH 831	6,4	7:00	11:00
YH 826	3	7:00	11:00
YH 835	7,1	7:00	11:00
W9 251	2,5	11:30	15:25

HEHO TO YANGON

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
YJ 141 / W9 7141	1	8:50	10:55
YJ 811	3	8:55	10:05
YJ 881	7	9:00	10:10
YJ 891	Daily	9:05	10:15
K7 283	Daily	9:15	11:30
YJ 881	1,2,4,5	9:15	10:25
W9 201	Daily	9:25	10:35
K7 243	Daily	9:30	11:45
YH 918	Daily	9:35	10:45
7Y 132	Daily	10:20	11:30
7Y 121	Daily	10:50	14:10
K7 267	Daily	11:10	12:25
YH 506	1,2,3,4,5,6	11:55	14:00
YJ 752	5	14:20	16:30
YJ 762	4	15:50	17:00
YJ 762	1,2	15:50	18:00
7Y 241	Daily	15:55	18:45
YH 732	1,2,3,4,5,6	15:55	18:45
K7 829	1,3,5	16:10	17:25
YH 728	1	16:00	18:10
YJ 602	6	16:25	17:35
K7 264	Daily	16:30	18:15
YH 738	3,5,7	16:40	18:50
YJ 752	3,7	16:45	17:55
W9 129	1,3,6	16:55	19:10

MYEIK TO YANGON

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
Y5 326	1,5	8:35	10:05
7Y 532	1,5	10:45	12:18
K7 320	2,4,6	11:30	13:35
Y5 326	2	17:15	18:45

SITTWE TO YANGON

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
W9 309	1,3,6	13:10	14:55
K7 423	Daily	15:10	16:30

THANDWE TO YANGON

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
YJ 141/W9 7141	1	10:05	10:55
K7 243	Daily	10:50	11:45
YH 506	1,2,3,4,5,6	13:10	14:00
7Y 122	Daily	13:20	14:10
W9 309	1,3,6	14:05	14:55
K7 422	Daily	14:10	16:30
Y5 422	1,3,4,6	16:55	17:50

DAWEI TO YANGON

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
K7 320	2,4,6	12:25	13:35
7Y 532	1,5	11:30	12:18

LASHIO TO YANGON

Flight	Days	Dep	Arr
YJ 752	5	13:15	16:30
K7 829	1,3	15:05	15:55
K7 829	5	15:05	17:25
YJ 752	3,7	15:40	17:55
7Y 742	1,5	16:00	17:48
YH 730	2,4,6	16:45	19:10

PUTAO TO YANGON

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

Universal Crossword

Edited by Timothy E. Parker

ALL SET! By Bernie Adams

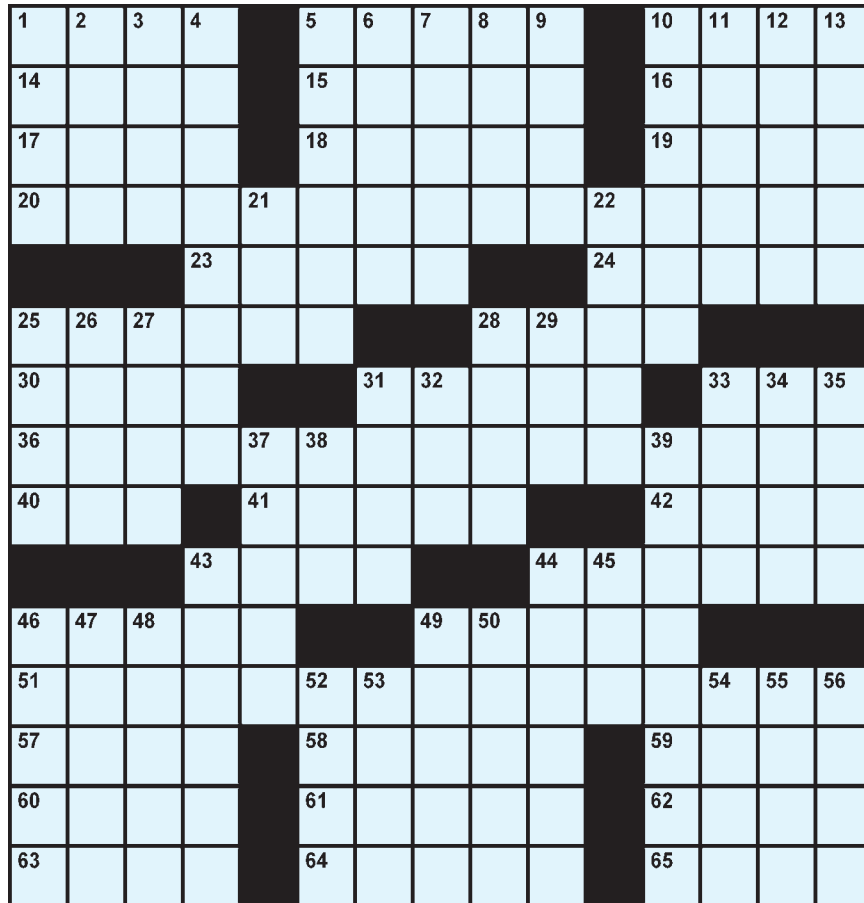
ACROSS

- 1 Shredded cabbage
- 5 Like the hosts of morning shows
- 10 Snail's pace
- 14 Spelling of TV
- 15 Like Bo-Peep's charges
- 16 Hit the bottle hard
- 17 Nutmeg covering
- 18 Article of faith
- 19 Ancient
- 20 Game
- 23 Conquers
- 24 Edict of the tsar
- 25 Peanut butter choice
- 28 Schoolmarm's stereotypical hairdos
- 30 Hawaiian native dance
- 31 ___-cotta
- 33 Anita Brookner's "Hotel du ___"
- 36 "That's enough!"
- 40 Vote of support
- 41 Singer's asset
- 42 Dec. holiday
- 43 Bricklayers' equipment
- 44 Had a nightmare
- 46 Hoglike mammal
- 49 Adapted to dry climates
- 51 "Just say the word!"
- 57 Bone-dry
- 58 Khan men?
- 59 Blockhead
- 60 Coal site
- 61 French romance
- 62 Boat in "Jaws"
- 63 Hammer part
- 64 Rash-causing viruses
- 65 Some bread loaves

- 6 Big social gathering
- 7 Cocktail garnishes
- 8 Was absolutely sure
- 9 Abominable Snowman
- 10 Pursues
- 11 Sayings of Jesus
- 12 Parts, as a curtain
- 13 Cheese chunk
- 21 Despite all that
- 22 Pertaining to the moon
- 25 Open carriage
- 26 Stubborn beast

- 27 Spicy stew
- 28 Highlands hillside
- 29 Hyperlinked item, often
- 31 What we have here
- 32 The last word in lists, sometimes
- 33 Tibetan VIP
- 34 First family member
- 35 Dermatologist's concern
- 37 Key material?
- 38 Word with "speed" or "send"
- 39 Estate overseer
- 43 Concealed

- 44 Things that tumble
- 45 Start of three John Wayne films
- 46 Lady's dog
- 47 Cliffside dwelling
- 48 He wrote "Common Sense"
- 49 Canon competitor
- 50 Provide, as with a quality
- 52 Sound of a hard smack
- 53 ___ erectus
- 54 With a twist?
- 55 Post-wedding fling?
- 56 Certain Greek letters



DOWN

- 1 Lead on the silver screen
- 2 Accumulated facts and beliefs
- 3 Diva's delivery
- 4 Tusked beast
- 5 Burned-wood byproduct

DILBERT

BY SCOTT ADAMS



PEANUTS

BY CHARLES SCHULZ



CALVIN AND HOBBS

BY BILL WATTERSON



SUDOKU PACIFIC

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains every digit from 1 to 9 inclusively.



3/19

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

WONDERWORD

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD. The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

DEFINED BENEFIT PENSION PLANS

Solution: 7 letters



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3/16

Amount, Ancillary, Assets, Business, Early, Earnings, Employer, Funds, Grow, Invest, Joint, Lump, Month, Multiply, Paid, Pass, Pay, Percentage, Plan, Portfolio, Predetermined, Rates, Receive, Retire, Return, Risk, Salary, Save, Sector, Security, Sponsor, Spouse, Statements, Sums, Survivor, Tax, Tenure, Types, Value, Wages, Withdraw, Work, Year

To purchase WONDERWORD books, visit www.WonderWordBooks.com, or call 1-800-642-6480.

PUZZLE SOLUTIONS



WEEKLY PREDICTIONS

MARCH 20-26

AUNG MYIN KYAW

4th Floor, 113, Thmain Bayan Road, Tarmwe township, Yangon.
Tel: 09-731-35632, Email: williameastel@gmail.com



AQUARIUS | Jan 20 – Feb 18

Everyone is a moon who has a dark side that they will never show to anybody. All of us do a better job of pointing a finger than of admitting our faults. You should demand of yourself that you act more humanely. You must reckon with your own character flaws and work mightily toward making positive changes.



GEMINI | May 21 – June 20

Aspire to a quiet mind to love yourself better and let go of distractions. As Blaise Pascal said, most of the evils of life arise from people being unable to sit still in a room. Remind yourself to hush and to breathe away anxiety at all times. Let your emotional needs and wants flow in a healthy process of attaining your big dream.



LIBRA | Sept 23 – Oct 22

A photograph is a secret about a secret. A truth known before the time and beyond the time is worthless. Luck occurs when preparation meets opportunity; you must be ready to make your move at the right time and with great courage. Also understand that preparing well to face your challenges can overcome deficits caused by emotional problems.



PISCES | Feb 19 – March 20

People might ask for criticism, but what they are really seeking is praise. Still, you can gain emotional value from fair and unfair criticism, useful and pointless criticism, and sympathetic and mean criticism. Understand that some sort of protective covering is necessary. Face risky encounters in the world with confidence and a minimum of defensiveness.



CANCER | June 21 – July 22

It is better to be hated for what you are than loved for what you are not. Know that certain defects are necessary for the existence of individuality. Pull the plug on self-defeating behaviour and turn on the power of self-esteem. Your financial progress is getting better, and you can enjoy life without any stress.



SCORPIO | Oct 23 – Nov 21

A stark choice must be balanced with the results of the future and the changes of the unexpected. Taking the time to understand the reasons behind recent conflicts in your social relations will help you develop a new, positive outlook that will increase your compatibility with others. Romance will require time and diligence to develop.



ARIES | Mar 21 – Apr 19

Every human being is both disciplined and undisciplined. You have to control yourself to enjoy freedom, and you must take big risks for positive change to occur. Guide your own life by making every effort toward self-discipline. Make sure your dreams fuel your optimism and your playful imagination. Try to be better than your hopes and aspirations.



LEO | July 23 – Aug 22

Trust and the perception of fairness are essential to the leader-follower relationship. Promises should be made only on the most personal basis. Manufacture a shutdown system as your own means of giving your brain a rest. Maintain a fine balance in personal relationships. Know that working on a problem without thinking about the balance of beauty is wrong.



SAGITTARIUS | Nov 22 – Dec 21

Ability is of little account without opportunity. Attain more knowledge about the value of a clean conscience. Criticism is both futile and dangerous, and sometimes it can wound a man's pride as well as hurt his sense of importance. Fresh hope will provide new energy to achieve your desires. The heart should be harmonious all the time.



TAURUS | Apr 20 – May 20

Very few people have greatness thrust upon them. Excellence means sweating, paying attention, correcting mistakes and gaining skills. Wake up and work harder, fear and doubt less, and better focus on what is rich and important. Excellence cannot happen by accident: You must be instrumental in earning your own distinctions.



VIRGO | Aug 23 – Sept 22

You have to trust your instincts to believe in intuition. Become more intuitive, and act more frequently on those gut feelings. Relying on your instincts will allow you to negotiate the world with more wisdom. Any strong endeavour that gives you a sense of joy is the greatest thing in life. Allow love to rise in you. Open your heart and let life pour in.



CAPRICORN | Dec 22 – Jan 19

It is time to wipe away the dust of doubt, selfishness and self-bondage. Get absorbed in a new pattern of thinking that uplifts you. Avoid speaking too much about yourself or your future plans. You should try to develop a strong, positive auto-suggestion mechanism. The quest for love requires careful steps to discover true beauty.

Idol

Furniture

No. G-03, Blk B, Bo Myat Tun Tower,
Bo Myat Tun Street, Botahtaung Tsp, Yangon Myanmar.
Ph: 09-2500 66185, 2500 66186 **E-mail:** sales.idolfurniture@gmail.com

QUICK GUIDE

Fax 951-254158
 Email: classified.mcm@gmail.com
 www.mmtimes.com

The Essentials

EMBASSIES

Australia 88, Strand Road, Yangon. Tel : 251810, 251797, 251798.

Bangladesh 11-B, Than Lwin Road, Yangon. Tel: 515275, 526144, email: bdootygn@mptmail.net.mm

Brazil 56, Pyay Road, 6th mile, Hlaing Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 507225, 507251. email: Administ.yangon@itamaraty.gov.br.

Brunei 17, Kanbawza Avenue, Golden Velly (1), Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 566985, 503978. email: bruneiemb@bruneiemb.com.mm

Cambodia 25 (3B/4B), New University Avenue Road, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 549609, 540964. email: RECYANGON@mptmail.net.mm

Canada 9th Floor, Centerpoint Towers, 65 Sule Pagoda Road, Yangon. Tel : 01-384805, Fax :01 384806. Email : yngon@international.gc.ca

China 1, Pyidaungsu Yeiktha Road, Yangon. Tel: 221280, 221281.

Denmark No.7, Pyi Thu St, Pyay Rd, 7 Miles, Mayangone Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 01 - 9669520 - 17.

Egypt 81, Pyidaungsu Yeiktha Road, Yangon. Tel: 222886, 222887. Egyptembassy86@gmail.com

France 102, Pyidaungsu Yeiktha Road, Yangon. Tel: 212178, 212520, email: ambaf rance. rangoun@diplomatie.fr

Germany 9, Bogyoke Aung San Museum Road, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 548951, 548952, email: info@rangun. diplo.de

India 545-547, Merchant St, Yangon. Tel: 391219, 388412, email:indiaembassy@mptmail.net.mm

Indonesia 100, Pyidaungsu Yeiktha Rd, Yangon. Tel: 254465, 254469, email: kukygn@indonesia.com.mm

Israel 15, Khabaung Street, Hlaing Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 515115, fax: 515116, email: info@yangon.mfa.gov.il

Italy 3, Inya Myaing Road, Golden Valley, Yangon. Tel: 527100, 527101, fax: 514565, email: ambyang.mail@esteri.it

Japan 100, Natmauk Rd, Yangon. Tel: 549644-8, 540399, 540400, 540411, 545988, fax: 549643

Kuwait 62-B, Shwe Taung Kyar St, Bahan Tsp. Tel : 01-230-9542, 230-9543. Fax : 01-230-5836.

Laos A-1, Diplomatic Quarters, Tawwin Road, Dagon Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 222482, Fax: 227446, email: Laoembcab@mptmail.net.mm

Malaysia 82, Pyidaungsu Yeiktha Road, Yangon. Tel: 220248, 220249, email: mwkyangon@mptmail.net.mm

Nepal 16, Natmauk Yeiktha, Yangon. Tel: 545880, 557168, fax: 549803, email: nepemb@mptmail.net.mm

Norway No.7, Pyi Thu St, Pyay Rd, 7 Miles, Mayangone Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 01 - 9669520 - 17 Fax - 01- 9669516

New Zealand No. 43/C, Inya Myaing Rd, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 01-2306046-9 Fax : 01-2305805

Netherlands No. 43/C, Inya Myaing Rd, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel : 01-2305805

North Korea 77C, Shin Saw Pu Rd, Sanchaung Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 512642, 510205

Pakistan A-4, diplomatic Quarters, Pyay Rd, Yangon. Tel: 222881 (Chancery Exchange)

Philippines 7, Gandamar St, Yankin Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 558149-151, Email: p.e.yangon@gmail.com

Saudi Arabia No.6/S, Inya Yeiktha St, 10th Qtr, Mayangone Tsp, Yangon. Tel: (951) 652-344, 652-344, Fax: (951) 657-983

Russia 38, Sagawa Rd, Yangon. Tel: 241955, 254161,

Serbia No. 114-A, Inya Rd, P.O.Box No. 943, Yangon. Tel: 515282, 515283, email: serbemb@yangon.net.mm

Singapore 238, Dhamazedi Road, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 559001, email: singemb_ygn@sgmfa.gov.sg

South Korea 97 University Avenue, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 527142-4, 515190, fax: 513286, email: myanmar@mofat.go.kr

Sri Lanka 34 Taw Win Rd, Yangon. Tel: 222812,

Switzerland No 11, Kabauang Lane, 5 1/2 mile, Pyay Rd, Hlaing Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 534754, 507089.

Thailand 94 Pyay Rd, Dagon Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 226721, 226728, 226824

Turkey 19AB, Kan Yeik Thar St, Mayangone Tsp, Yangon. Tel : 662992, Fax : 661365

United Kingdom 80 Strand Rd, Yangon. Tel: 370867, 380322, 371852, 371853, 256438,

United States of America 110, University Avenue, Kamayut Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 536509, 535756, Fax: 650306

Vietnam Bldg-72, Thanlwin Rd, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 511305

UNITED NATIONS

ILO Liaison 1-A, Kanbae (Thitsar Rd), Yankin Tsp, Tel : 01-566538, 566539

IOM 318 (A) Ahlone Rd, Dagon Tsp, Yangon. Tel - 01-210588, 09 73236679, 0973236680, Email- iomyangon@iom.int

UNAIDS 137/1, Thaw Wun Rd, Kamayut Tsp. Tel : 534498, 504832

UNDCP 11-A, Malikha St, Mayangone tsp. Tel: 666903, 664539.

UNDP 6, Natmauk Rd, Bahan tel: 542910-19. fax: 292739.

UNFPA 6, Natmauk Rd, Bahan tsp. tel: 546029.

UNHCR 287, Pyay Rd, Sanchaung tsp. Tel: 524022, 524024.

UNIAP Rm: 1202, 12 Fl, Traders Hotel. Tel: 254852, 254853.

UNIC 6, Natmauk St., Bahan, tel: 52910-19

UNICEF 14-15 Flr, Traders Hotel. P.O. Box 1435, Kyauktada. Tel: 375527-32, unicef.yangon@unicef.org.

UNODC 11-A, Malikha Rd., Ward 7, Mayangone. tel: 01-9666903, 9660556, 9660538, 9660398. email: fo.myanmar@unodc.org

UNOPS 120/0, Pyi Thu Lane, 7 Miles, Mayangone Tsp. Tel: 951-657281-7. Fax: 657279.

UNRC 6, Natmauk Rd, P.O. Box 650, TMWE Tel: 542911-19, 292637 (Resident Coordinator),

WFP 5 Kan Baw Za St, Shwe Taung Kyar, (Golden Valley), Bahan Tsp. Tel : 2305971-6

WHO No. 2, Pyay Rd, 7 Mile, Mayangone Tsp, Tel : 650405-6, 650416, 654386-90.

ASEAN Coordinating Of. for the ASEAN Humanitarian Task Force, 79, Taw Win st, Dagon Tsp. Tel: 225258.

FAO Myanma Agriculture Service Insein Rd, Insein. tel: 641672, 641673.

General Listing

ACCOMMODATION-HOTELS



Asia Plaza Hotel

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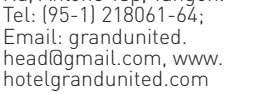
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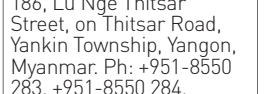
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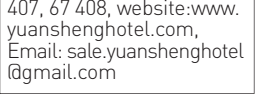
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A blooming good bash

Guests gathered to celebrate the launch of Magnolia Artistic Florist at the Western Park Royal on March 11.

Ko Si Thu & Ma Soe Sandar Lwin



Thazin Aung, Keeleylo, James, Mausi Biham



Telly addicts rejoice

Guests celebrated the launch of TV channel 5 Plus on March 11.

Ni Ni Win, Hay Mar Khin, Yin Nan, Su Hnin Wai



Khin Mon Kha



Pyae Phyo Thein and Yin Nyein



Nathalie

Wining and dining at Katana

Guests enjoyed a tippie or two at Katana Wine bar's "women & wine" gala night on March 14.



Martin Eklvnd and Kyi Sin Aung



Aeint Myat Chel and Khine Lin



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What's on



Events

FRIDAY 20

MUSIC

Aaron Gallegos Trio. Blending diverse influences from Flamenco, jazz and world music. Gekko, 535 Merchant Road **7pm**

Acoustic music show. Off The Beaten Track Cafe, Kandawgyi Park (near children's playground), Mingalar Taung Nyunt **7-9:30pm**

ART

2nd All Myanmar Photo Contest Exhibition and Myanmar Photo Festival. Yangon Gallery, People's Park, Ahlone Road, Dagon **10am-4pm**

NIGHTLIFE

French Love Friday open air party. Institut Francais, 340 Pyay Road, Sanchaung **8pm**

The Yangon Vibe. Mojo Bar, 135 Inya Road, Bahan **10pm**

MISC

Creative Breakfast event with the theme "INK". For entrepreneurs, creators and anyone with curious minds. Free breakfast and coffee. Phandeeyar, 11th floor, Mac Tower Building, 561 Merchant Road **7:30-9am**

SATURDAY 21

MUSIC

Live Music. Kokine Bar & Restaurant (near Kokine swimming club) **6-11pm**

MISC

Creative Weekend Art Workshop for Kids. Agora Café, 84 Kanbe Main Road (opposite Yankin Children's Hospital), Yankin **9am-3pm**

World Poetry Day. Judson Hall, Yangon University Campus, corner of Pyay Road and University Avenue Road. **All day**

"La Casa: Contemporary Art in Domestic Spaces" guided tour [see www.

yangonartandheritage.com for more information] **4-7pm**

ART

"The Mee Ya Hta Building". Solo exhibition by UK artist Kate Bowen (until March 22). Gallery 65, 65 Yaw Min Gyi Road, Dagon **10am-6pm**

SUNDAY 22

MUSIC

Close Up Couple music concert. Featuring Hlwan Paing, Snare, Jouk Jack, Nine One, G-Tone (Cyclone), Ye Yint Aung, Yone Lay, Wai La, Htet Yan, Shwe Htoo, X-Box, Ni Ni Khin Zaw, Misandi and Bobby Soxer. Tickets cost K7500 and can be purchased at Bo Bo Music Production, City Mart and Ocean Supermarkets, Orange Supermarket, 1876, Mann Thiri, Nobody, Fashion Star, RUN YGN, Genius, OMG and Sprints Fashion Shop, Kandawgyi Park (Myaw Zin Island) **5-11pm**

MISC

Stories on the Circle Train. Circle Line performance by Shakespeare Schools as part of the Yangon Art and Heritage Festival. Yangon Railway Station **10-2pm** [see page 27]

Salsa beginners workshop. Club 5, Parkroyal Hotel, 33 Alan Pya Pagoda Road, Yaw Min Gyi, Dagon **5:30-7pm**

"La Casa: Contemporary Art in Domestic Spaces" guided tour [see www. yangonartandheritage.com for more information] **4-7pm**

MONDAY 23

MUSIC

Monday Blues. Mojo Bar, 135 Inya Road, Bahan **9:30pm**

MISC

Trivia night. Free beer pitcher for round winners and winning team gets a K30,000 bar tab. 50th Street Bar, 50th Street (lower block) **8pm**

TUESDAY 24

ART

"Tuesday snippets." Gallery conversation and drinks. Pansodan Gallery, 289 Pansodan Street, Kyauktada **7pm-late**

MISC

Standup Yangon International comedy showcase. Featuring Brian Aylward from Canada and Aidan Killian from Ireland. 50th Street Bar, 50th Street (lower block) **8pm**

WEDNESDAY 25

NIGHTLIFE

Mojito Night, The Lab, 70A Shwegonedaga Rd, Bahan, **5:30-10pm**

Girls night out. Mojo Bar, 135 Inya Road, Bahan **8pm**

MUSIC

Jazz music and dinner. Rendez-Vous restaurant and bar, Institut Francais, Pyay Road **7:30-9:30pm**

THURSDAY 26

MUSIC

Folk on Fire with LNR band. Mojo Bar, 135 Inya Road, Bahan **9:30pm**

MISC

Yangon Lifestyle Furniture Fair. Tatmadaw Hall, U Wisara Road, Dagon **9am-5pm**

Film

March 20-26

Start times at Mingalar (1, 2). Top Royal, Shae Shaung (1, 2) and Nay Pyi Taw cinemas are **10am, 12:30pm, 3:30pm, 6:30pm and 9:30pm**.

Start times at Junction Square and Junction Maw Tin are **9:30am, 12:30pm, 3:30pm and 6:30pm daily and 9:30am, 12:30pm, 3:30pm, 6:30pm and 9:30pm on Friday and Saturday**.

Start times at Mingalar San Pya are **10am, 12:30pm, 3:30pm, 6:30pm and 9:30pm**.

Nay Pyi Taw Cinema, near Sule Pagoda *Cinderella*. Directed by Kenneth Branagh. British romantic fantasy.

Exists. Directed by Eduardo Sanchez. Horror film.

Gangnam Blues. Directed by Yooha. South Korean action film.

Mingalar Cinema 2, at Dagon Center 2, Myaynigone

Cinderella. Shae Shaung Cinema, Sule Pagoda Road, Kyauktada

Insurgent. Directed by Robert Schwentke. American science-fiction film.

Snow Girl and the Dark Crystal. Directed by Peter Pau and Zhao Tianyu. Chinese-Hong Kong 3D fantasy-adventure film.

Junction Square Cineplex, Kamaryut

Cinderella. Dragon Blade. Directed by Daniel Lee. Hong Kong historical action film.

Junction Mawtin, Lanmadaw

Cinderella. Mingalar San Pya Cineplex, Phone Gyi Street and Anawrahta, Lanmadaw

Cinderella.

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WHAT'S ON PICK OF THE WEEK

Stories on the circle train

BY NANDAR AUNG

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 true life stories and experiences of the commuters who use the circular line to get to work.

"As all know, a lot of the projects 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



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

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. **W**

The Circle Line performances are part of the Yangon Art and Heritage Festival, "My Yangon My Home". They start at Yangon Railway Station from 10am to 2pm from March 22 and are free.

For more information visit www.shakespeareschools.com

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