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Buddhists ride motorbikes around Mandalay singing nationalist songs following the funeral of a Buddhist man killed by Muslims attackers on July 4, 2014.



## Govt delays details of staff pay-rise plan

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A DECISION on the draft budget for next year is set to be delayed further, with the government yesterday failing to provide clarification demanded by MPs on planned civil servant salary increases.

Parliamentarians on March 20 called for more detail on wage hikes, such as how much extra each civil servant rank would receive, by March 23. After previously maintaining that it could only reveal the exact figures after the budget bill is approved, the government yesterday said it would submit a detailed payroll by March 25.

"The president replied to the March 20 urgent proposal by letting members of parliament know he cannot submit the payroll increase information today, but will send it after getting approval [from the cabinet] on March 25," said Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann on March 23.

In the upcoming fiscal year, the government has proposed a huge increase in civil servant pay that would see the total wage bill soar above K3 trillion. On March 20, the deputy minister for finance revealed that the government spent almost K2.4 trillion on 1.4 million civil servants and military personnel's salaries.

In February, the International Monetary Fund called the planned salary increases a "financial risk".

The government has yet to clarify where the extra cash for the pay bump will come from, prompting concerns about potential printing of new money and accompanying growing inflation.

- Translation by Thiri Min Htun

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PHOTO: SI THU LWIN

### The Mandalay violence: a hidden hand?

NGO Justice Trust released a report accusing hardliners of orchestrating violence in Mandalay in June 2014, and also detailing how Buddhist and civil society groups in the city came together to head off the threat.

# Secretariat party firestorm

Photos of elaborate birthday party - reportedly for a former general's daughter - inside the historic Secretariat building in downtown Yangon have provoked anger on social media, with accusations it was "disrespectful". **NEWS 3**


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# Mandalay mother mourns a lost son

Verdict for those who instigated last year's unrest brings back painful memories for long-time resident

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ON July 3, 2014, U Soe Min was walking to morning prayers at a nearby mosque when a man with a machete struck him dead with a deep blow to his skull. The 51-year-old Mandalay resident, who ran a bicycle shop, was one of two innocent victims that day of communal violence sparked by reports - later proven to be false - that a Buddhist woman had been raped by two Muslim brothers.

Hours after U Soe Min's killing, his mother Daw Phyu Win, widow Daw Tin Tin Kyaw and two young daughters spoke to *The Myanmar Times* at their home, grief etched into their faces along with disbelief that a man who had such friendly relations with all his neighbours, regardless of their religion, could have met such a fate.



Daw Phyu Win at her home in Mandalay. Photo: Stuart Alan Becker

In late February, eight months after the riots, Daw Phyu Win spoke again - about the family's long history in Mandalay, how they were coping with the loss of her youngest son, and their fears for the future of the city's Muslim community.

Speaking in excellent English - as a young woman she taught English at the city's Catholic Don Bosco School - 79-year-old Daw Phyu Win described how she was born in Mandalay of a family that traces its history back 400 years to Amarapura, a former royal capital just south of where Mandalay sits today. Her ancestors had been servants to the last line of Burmese kings and accompanied the royal family when the court moved to Mandalay.

Reflecting on the communal

violence last July - in which a Buddhist volunteer ambulance worker was also killed - she said it was the worst time of her whole life, even worse than the Japanese wartime occupation.

She thinks Muslim people in Myanmar are going to be safe and secure during the run-up to national elections in November, but she worries what will happen afterward.

"For the time being, there is no problem, but I think in the future they may do bad things again. After the election we don't know what will happen to Muslim people - but right now because of the coming election we are staying nicely," she said.

"I love the Myanmar land and the Myanmar people," she said. "But political people change and there are very good Buddhists, but there are also cruel people who have power.

"Good Buddhists have no power; some bad ones have power. All Muslims are afraid of what may happen after the elections - that we may get trouble again."

Daw Phyu Win said all of her Buddhist neighbours in Mandalay had treated her and her family with great kindness during her whole life - as an undergraduate at Mandalay University, running a middle school with her late husband until it was nationalised under the military rule of Ne Win, and sending her own children to the Don Bosco school even though it was Catholic.

She has vivid memories as a girl living under Japanese occupation, when her family evacuated with others to villages beyond Mandalay Hill, scared of the cruelty of the advancing army.

"When the Japanese came they were very rude and violent. [They] kicked the children. We hated them," she said. She remembers at the age of seven smoking her first cigarette, offered to her by a black American soldier as allied forces retook Burma.

Above all she remembers that everyone took care of each other, regardless of their religion.

She now lives in a property bought by her grandfather in 1916 - an old brick Burmese-style structure that was destroyed in the war and rebuilt by U Soe Min. She has leased out the space her late son used for his bicycle shop, using the income to support herself and U Soe Min's widow and daughters.

Contacted again yesterday by *The Myanmar Times*, Daw Phyu Win declined to comment on last week's sentencing of the woman who filed the fake rape report and four others to 21 years in prison.

"What happened to my son is fate given by God," she said. "We can't change our fate."

## International air links to rise

AIR links between ASEAN member countries are set to increase in number as the region's Open Skies policy takes off, industry leaders heard yesterday.

The policy, also known as the ASEAN Single Aviation Market, came into effect on January 1, and is intended to increase regional trade by allowing airlines from ASEAN member states to fly freely throughout the region.

"It will definitely open a new page in the history of the civil aviation sector in the entire region," U Win Swe Tun, director general of the Department of Civil Aviation, told a press conference at the Myanmar Civil

Aviation Development Conference at the Sedona Hotel in Yangon.

He said the expansion of Yangon and Mandalay international airports, as well as the development of a new airport at Bago, were related to the implementation of the Open Skies policy.

Airline industry analysts say stronger air links will lead to regional growth and development as the market opens up to more competition and lower ticket prices.

The policy aims to remove regulatory limits on the frequency and capacity of flights between international airports across the 10 ASEAN member countries. - *Zaw Win Than*



Riot police patrol the streets of Mandalay on July 4, 2014, after a mob attacked a Muslim cemetery. Photo: Kaung Htet

# 'Hardliners' accused of stoking violence

Report from NGO Justice Trust alleges Mandalay violence was orchestrated



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Last July in Mandalay, four days of religious-infused riots left two bystanders dead, saw at least a dozen injured and tore a rift in the community's Buddhist-Muslim relations. When the dust settled in the country's second-largest city, however, many noted that the violence - which allegedly erupted over rape allegations that have since proven false - appeared more concocted than organic, with a boiling point enflamed by a handful of extremist voices.

Yesterday, nearly a year after the riots broke out - and in same week that five people were convicted of fabricating the allegations that a Muslim man raped a Buddhist woman - US-based rights group Justice Trust revealed the political puppet strings at work behind Mandalay's clashes. Using the 2014 Mandalay riots as a case study, the new report accuses a handful of hardliners of stoking latent religious divides to benefit from the subsequent instability.

"The Mandalay riots were designed to appear as a spontaneous outbreak of mob violence, but in fact were perpetuated by an organised gang of armed men brought in from outside Mandalay to enact a pre-determined script written and stage-managed by hidden hands for political ends," the report says.

Following an eruption of what the report calls "genuine communal antagonism" in Rakhine State in 2012 that saw over 250 people killed, subsequent outbreaks of violence - in Meiktila, Mandalay and Lashio, among others - have occurred across the country in areas that had no history of communal conflict. The report says they follow a similar pattern of events, including rape

allegations, speaking tours by Ashin Wirathu and visits by gangs of fomenting outsiders. They also appear timed to divert attention from other political issues.

"If you're busy thinking about the so-called Muslim threat in Myanmar, you probably won't be worried about the widespread land grabs taking place, resource extractions by multi-national corporations, the upcoming 2015 elections, and much-needed reforms to the constitution," U Thein Win Aung, an analyst from Mandalay, said in the report.

The Mandalay riots occurred shortly after public rallies for a campaign to change a part of the constitution guaranteeing military veto power to any constitution amendments. But while the deadly clashes mostly followed the script, Mandalay's riots didn't go as planned: Observers spotted the pattern at work.

**'The Mandalay riots were designed to appear as a spontaneous outbreak of mob violence.'**

**Justice Trust Report**

"Lots of people recognise that the 969 movement has a history of inciting riots ... and once Wirathu posted the [rape] allegation to Facebook, the local civil groups alerted others to the coming storm," said Roger Normand, executive director of Justice Trust.

Hours before the riots broke out, the Young Buddhists Association presciently countered the Facebook post with one of its own, warning of coming religion or race-based

unrest. Resident monks sought to pacify the situation, and, with the gang of rioting outsiders isolated, the curtain was lifted on the "stage-managed nature of the riots", Justice Trust said.

Mandalay is far from the only orchestrated incident. Myanmar has a long history of military regimes employing the "dual threat of external intervention and internal disintegration" to ensure control, according to the report. Famed examples of such diversions include General Ne Win's anti-Chinese riots in the 1960s to distract from a countrywide rice shortage, and Buddhist-Muslim tensions after democratic mass uprising in 1988.

"Buddhist anti-Muslim actions in Myanmar are not new - they have surfaced periodically in recent decades," said Southeast Asia historian Peter Coclanis.

"Adding to ... historical factors, obviously, are more immediate factors having to do with ethnic scapegoating, the desire to ramp up Buddhist Bamar national feeling [and] short-run political advantage in the run-up to the election."

In January, US assistant secretary of state Tom Malinowski warned that by inflaming radical religious divides Myanmar is stoking the flames of a fire it isn't ready to handle.

"The use of religion in particular, to divide people - whether it is done for political or any other purposes, is incredibly dangerous, particularly in an election year," he said.

However, Mr Normand from Justice Trust said such chaos might be exactly what the crony networks of the "hidden hands" are trying to whip up for their own benefit.

"For some, the minority hardliners, sectarian riots spinning out of control will likely improve their electoral chances, but for those with a vision of long-term good for the country it's very dangerous," he said.

"Once these things are out, they cannot just be pushed back in the bottle."



# Birthday party at Secretariat sparks social media firestorm

Grandson of Ne Win writes of “a strong scent of nostalgia” at party in historic building for Ma Thi Thi Tun – reportedly the daughter of former trade minister U Tun Kyi, who was sacked amid corruption allegations



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A PRIVATE birthday bash held in the grounds of Yangon's famed but ruined Secretariat has kicked up a social media firestorm after U Aye Ne Win, grandson of the former military dictator, posted pictures on Facebook describing “a strong scent of nostalgia” at the party.

Calling his post “A Casual Dinner at One of the Most Official Venues in Town”, U Aye Ne Win wrote on March 22 that it was “such an excellent idea that Ma Thi Thi Tun should host her birthday party on the grounds of this celebrated Victorian structure”.

He said this was “not only because is it the largest courtyard in downtown but also because many guests have fond memories of visiting their fathers and grandfathers when they occupied offices in some of the rooms in this layers of labyrinth”.

The birthday host is reportedly the daughter of former general U Tun Kyi, a minister for commerce in the late 1990s who was sacked for alleged corruption.

Yangon residents expressed outrage that such a historic but decaying site – where independence hero General Aung San and six of his ministers were assassinated in 1947 – should be given over for a private function while closed to the general public.

“This is totally disrespectful. The Secretariat office is not a hotel or restaurant. And this is not a place to make a birthday dinner, regardless of who she is. This building has a lot of history, including the assassination of General Aung San,” Ma Cho, an accountant, told *The Myanmar Times*.

U Ye Htut, information minister, waded into the debate by sharing on Facebook the pictures posted by U Aye Ne Win and wagging an accusatory finger at the Yangon Heritage Trust, a non-profit dedicated to the conservation of the city's heritage buildings.

“YHT should reconsider about this,” the minister wrote.

In response, YHT released a statement clarifying its role regarding the Secretariat, noting it had no control over the site and that



U Aye Ne Win (second left) poses with other guests at the Secretariat on March 21. Photos: Facebook

the government's Myanmar Investment Commission had awarded the complex to the Anawmar art group by tender in 2012 for a museum project.

“Last year the government asked YHT to work on a Conservation Management Plan with the Anawmar company. We have done this. It provides specific guidance especially on the use of the legislative chamber and the cabinet room where national leaders were assassinated. It also makes it clear that public access should be provided. YHT has no control over the site. We have not been part of any decision-making in relation to its tender or leasing,” the statement said.

Daw Moe Moe Lwin, director of YHT, told *The Myanmar Times* that the public's reaction had shown that hosting a private function there was considered “inappropriate”. She said use of the building was the responsibility of Anawmar and urged the company to “deeply consider”

its decision to allow the event.

“The public's attitude towards the Secretariat is really deep, and sensitivity for the building is really high. It can be clearly seen in the public response to that case,” she said.

“For citizens, even the compound cannot be touched, let alone the building.”

She said she appreciated the sentiment behind U Ye Htut's

**‘Sensitivity for the building is really high. It can clearly be seen in the public response.’**

Daw Moe Moe Lwin  
Yangon Heritage Trust

comments, even if they were misdirected.

“People think the maintenance of the old building is the concern of YHT. I appreciated what the minister said on Facebook. We can know the government is also concerned about this.”

U Aye Ne Win – who spent 11 years in prison accused of high treason along with his two brothers and father, and was released in 2013 – wrote in his Facebook post that a “strong scent of nostalgia was very much in the atmosphere this evening at Rangoon's Secretariat where giants of Burmese political society deliberated and decided the country's most important issues”.

Little work has been seen in the vast complex in central Yangon since the tender was awarded. In the last months barbed wire ringing its perimeter has been removed and a spot of gardening has been observed. Anawmar could not be immediately reached for comment.

## IN BRIEF

### NCCT, ethnic parties meet

Representatives from the Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT) met members of an ethnic political party alliance yesterday to explain the peace process. The talks took place after negotiators agreed on March 22 to halt negotiations on a draft ceasefire until March 30.

Twenty-three NCCT members met 17 representatives of the National Brotherhood Federation (NBF), which comprises more than a dozen major ethnic parties.

U Saw Than Myint, one of two deputy leaders of the Federal Union Party, an NBF member, said NCCT members explained where the talks were at.

“We also shared our points of view and suggestions on the peace process,” he said.

U Sai Aik Paung, the leader of Shan Nationalities Democratic Party, said he urged NCCT members to move quickly to sign the ceasefire agreement.

“There is not much time left. If the agreement is not signed during this government's term, then political dialogue cannot be started. If the new government elected at the 2015 general election does not recognise the current peace talks, it will be a great loss,” he said. “That's why I suggested, if possible, the NCA should be signed as fast as we can.”

U Zo Zam, leader of the Chin National Development Party, said he suggested that armed ethnic groups and ethnic political parties meet before political dialogue begins.

“The voices from parties and armed groups should be as one,” he said.

– Lun Min Mang

### Military operations continue in Kachin during peace talks

Government forces continued an offensive in areas controlled by the Kachin Independence Army for a third day yesterday, according to a KIA representative.

U Dong Kha of the KIA/KIO Technical Advisory Team said fighting began in Ma Htet village in Mansi township in Bamaw district on March 21, as negotiators talked peace in Yangon.

He said there had been repeated air strikes.

“They said the reason for the attack is to seize illegal loggers. But they should do this in their controlled areas. They should not have done this in our controlled areas,” he said, adding that one KIA fighter was injured.

“Whenever there are peace talks, there is a government offensive against us,” U Dong Kha said, expressing concern for the safety of the Kachin delegation in Yangon where talks have adjourned for a week.

Government attacks were also reported during the week long peace talks in Yangon by the Ta'aung National Liberation Army in northern Shan State and in the Kokang region bordering China.

A military official said that a statement on the fighting would be released later. – Lun Min Mang

# Seven years on, military retakes land at Pauk factory

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A MILITARY factory that was the subject of a news article that ended with five people being jailed for seven years is at the centre of a fresh controversy, with residents in Magwe Region accusing local government officials of using devious tactics to help the military confiscate thousands of acres of land.

More than 30,000 acres of land in Pauk township was taken by the Ministry of Defence in 2008 for the factory, residents said, under no legal pretext. They said they were given K5000 compensation at the time.

The seizure included 3404.9 acres with legal ownership, as well as tens

of thousands of vacant and forest land. The area encompasses 14 villages across six village tracts.

Now the Pakkoku district administration office has written to residents announcing the legal confiscation of the land and inviting them to object.

However, the notices were handed to the residents on March 18 – six days after the deadline to file an objection passed.

Ko Aung Kyaw, an adviser to the Magwe Farmers Association, told *The Myanmar Times* yesterday that the government had moved to secure military ownership of the land through legal channels due to complaints about the nature of the original confiscation. “Land activists have pointed out

this case to the government so they are trying to use the law to legally seize these lands,” he said, adding that residents sent him the notice through Viber as soon as they received it from their village-tract administration office.

He said the association will meet farmers from the area to decide how best to fight the confiscation, such as by staging public protests or writing letters to senior government officials.

*The Myanmar Times* contacted five officials at the district administration office, including the administrator, but was told none of them could answer questions about the case.

The notice delivered on March 18 said the land was seized under 1894 Land Acquisition Act.

The law states that those whose land is to be confiscated must be given 14 days' advance notice, one month to file an objection, at least two days to move to another site and sufficient compensation.

U Zaw Min, an adviser on land issues to President U Thein Sein, said the military was moving to strengthen its grip on the land because of a government push to return areas confiscated unlawfully or not being used as intended when the confiscation occurred.

The majority of the area in dispute is still farmland, vacant or forested, with a small portion used to develop the factory.

U Zaw Min said that the farmers could still fight the seizure through

legal channels, as the law gives them 30 days from when they receive the notice to file an objection.

In January 2014, weekly news journal *Unity* published an article alleging the factory was being used to make chemical weapons with assistance from China. The military denied the report but asked police to charge four reporters and the publication's chief executive officer under the 1923 State Secrets Act. In July they were sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment with hard labour – a sentence that drew both international and domestic opprobrium. The term was later commuted to seven years on appeal, and the five are waiting on the results of appeals to the Union Supreme Court.



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## 'Death Railway' complex set for 2017 opening

A MUSEUM to commemorate the sufferings and achievements of those who built the Thai-Burma Railway, also known as the Death Railway, is to open within two years. The museum will be built and operated by Talamon, the sole bidder for the project, said company chair U Min Banyar San.

The company estimates it will take two years to build the K3.3 billion museum complex. Profits will be divided 79 percent to the company and 21pc to the Thanbyuzayat City Development Committee, said Minister for

Development Affairs U Toe Toe Aung.

A groundbreaking ceremony was held on March 20 at Wae Yat village in Thanbyuzayat township, Mon State, with Mon State Chief Minister U Ohn Myint, other state government ministers and officials, and company representatives in attendance.

The Thanbyuzayat City Development Committee has permitted the company to occupy the site for 30 years, chair U Htun Myint Kyaw told *The Myanmar Times*.

About 3 hectares (6.61 acres) will

accommodate the museum, a hotel, a shopping mall, a swimming pool, a souvenir shop, a wedding hall, car parking, restaurants and a playground.

"The main reason for building the museum is to show the evils of war," said U Htun Myint Kyaw.

At least 180,000 people died building the 415-kilometre (258-mile) railway, built in 1943 by the occupying Japanese forces as a supply route. The dead predominantly included local workers in what was then Burma and Thailand, as well as Allied prisoners

of war, and many of the Japanese and Korean soldiers who guarded them. The line was nevertheless regarded as a heroic achievement because of the remoteness and difficulty of the terrain, and inspired the film *The Bridge on the River Kwai*.

"This is the right place for the museum because this place is known for the railway all over the world. It will spur development," said U Min Banyar San.

He said the museum would display paintings and items related to the railway. - *Naw Say Phaw Waa*

## Govt changes plan on IDs for migrant workers in Thailand

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MIGRANT workers in Thailand have been given an unexpected grace period, the deputy labour minister announced yesterday. Speaking at a press conference, U Htin Aung said the estimated 645,000 Myanmar workers in Thailand would be able to retain the so-called pink card that entitles them to work for an extra year.

The pink cards issued by the Thai government to Myanmar migrant workers were due to expire next week under an agreement by which the Myanmar government would issue its nationals in the kingdom certificates of identity.

But following a ministerial-level meeting earlier this month, the Thai government agreed to honour the pink cards until April 2016. During the extra year of grace, the workers can register for a work permit and visa. They also have until 2017 to produce their national registration card (NRC) and official household document in order to acquire a passport.

"Migrant workers now have much longer to get a passport," U Myo Aung, director general of the Department of Labour, told reporters. However, undocumented Myanmar workers in Thailand, whose numbers are unknown but are thought to be large, do not appear to benefit from this agreement.

The Myanmar government is also urging Thai employers to allow their Myanmar workers time to go home to make the necessary arrangements.

Deputy minister U Htin Aung said officials were under instructions to issue passports as quickly as possible, perhaps even within one day, to applicants with the necessary documentation.

The government has also succeeded



A Myanmar migrant worker in Chiang Mai holds her young child. Photo: Kaung Htet

in persuading the Thai authorities to extend the grace period for Myanmar migrants working in the fishing industry, where they spend a great deal of time at sea or out of reach of information, said Myo Aung. However, rural workers were not granted any extra time.

"The Thai government agreed to our request only for the fishing-boat workers," said the deputy minister, adding that the Thais would open offices in 22 districts for that purpose.

Though exact figures are unavailable, some observers estimate there may be as many as 3 million Myanmar migrant workers in Thailand, many of them undocumented.

U Ko Tun, a coordinator with the Migrant Workers' Rights Network,

accused the Myanmar government of playing into the Thais' hands out of weakness. He said the pink card extension plan would benefit the Thai government, since the migrants would have to pay about 2500 baht (about

BAHT

2500

Amount migrant workers will have to pay to renew their identification cards

K80,000), plus as much as 10,000 baht (K320,000) to brokers.

He said the Myanmar government should resurrect a 2009 plan for extending the documents of 1.68 million temporary passport holders who, under current rules, have to return home when the passport expires. A similar system led last year to the mass exodus of Cambodian workers, causing a temporary labour shortage in Thailand.

"It would be better for undocumented workers if the Myanmar government could issue them with NRC and household lists so they could get passports and work permits," U Ko Tun told *The Myanmar Times*.

The Thai government has said it will arrest and repatriate undocumented Myanmar migrant workers after 2016.

## Workers to Taiwan unlikely due to 'One-China' policy

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THE Taiwanese government appears to have gotten ahead of itself by announcing a Myanmar migrant worker scheme before Nay Pyi Taw signed off on the program.

Taiwanese officials announced earlier this month that they planned to resolve chronic labour shortages in the manufacturing and agriculture sectors with an influx of Myanmar migrants.

Chinese media quoted the Taiwanese Workforce Development Agency as saying an experimental migrant

scheme could be piloted in Taiwan as early as the end of April. Under the trial, 100 to 200 Myanmar migrants would be brought to Taiwan, the agency said.

But the main industry body, the Myanmar Overseas Employment Agencies Federation, has called the proposal impossible.

"As far as I know, not only the government but also the Ministry of Labour did not endorse sending workers to Taiwan yet because the government follows the One-China principle," said federation general secretary U Kyaw Htin Kyaw.

Last year, the chair of the over-

seas employment agencies signed a memorandum of understanding with Taiwan regarding migrant worker conditions, said a senior member of the federation who asked to remain anonymous due to a lack of authority to speak to the press.

The senior federation member said Taiwan wanted to sign the agreement with the Myanmar government rather than an association, but such an arrangement was impossible due to the One-China principle.

The signed agreement does not guarantee workers will be sent, the official said, also citing an agreement on the sending of domestic workers

that was signed with Hong Kong last year but is yet to commence.

U Khant Zaw, deputy director general of the Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries and Rural Development, confirmed that Taiwan wanted to import workers from Myanmar. He said it might be possible if the government relaxes its stance.

"The Philippines and Vietnam also follow the One-China principle but they have sent workers to Taiwan too," he said.

"So we will push to government to approve sending labourers to Taiwan at the next meeting [at the end of this month]."



# Thingyan no holiday for traffic police

Leave cancelled in a bid to keep roads clear and safe, following seven fatalities during 2014 festival

ALL traffic police have been told to work every day over the water festival holiday in a bid to reduce accidents and congestion. Police Lieutenant Colonel Lin Htut of No 2 Yangon Traffic Police on March 20 warned wayward drivers that they would face arrest.

"We will use alcohol testing equipment to detect drunken drivers and arrest offenders," he said.

Vehicles stripped down and overloaded with revellers will also be targeted, he said.

In last year's holiday period, April 13 to 19, there were 62 traffic accidents in which seven people died and 102 were injured. The accidents were caused by a range of

factors, including careless driving (27 cases), jaywalking (six), passengers' carelessness (three), speeding (eight) and driving without a licence (18 cases).

More than 6000 tickets were handed out and 338 drivers lost their licence. Five vehicles were seized for transporting passengers without a permit, and 45 unlicensed motorcyclists were arrested. A further 100 or so drivers were arrested for driving the wrong way or running red lights.

"There are more than 450,000 vehicles registered in Yangon, and congestion will be worse still if cars come in from other states and regions. We are studying how to avoid congestion on the roads where pandals are concentrated. All leave has been cancelled ... and officers will be working as normal over the break," Pol Lt Col Lin Htut said.

Special measures will be taken to ensure that emergency vehicles can gain access to the scene of an accident despite traffic jams.

"We want everyone to be happy during Thingyan, but that requires discipline," he said. - *Toe Wai Aung, translation by Kyawt Darly Lin*

# 62

Accidents reported in Yangon during water festival in 2014

# More Insein Prison inmates sit matriculation exams this year

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UNDERGOING stricter than usual invigilation, 17 students serving terms in Insein Prison recently sat their matriculation exams. Authorities hope they can better last year's results, when two of seven inmates who sat the exams passed - the first time a prisoner has matriculated.

The prison, routinely described in international media as "notorious", began offering inmates the right to sit exams two years ago.

The exams were held Basic Education Middle School 13 Insein, which is located inside the prison compound. The student prisoners had received coaching from the township's education officer, at the request of the warden.

"I support them as I want the children to pass," said warden U Kyaw Htay, a deputy director in the Department of Corrections. "Being able to sit the exams is a source of hope for them. We treat them as our own children."

The students, all aged under 20, were sent to prison for offences including illicit drug use, adultery and murder.

"If the prisoners are very young, we give them kindergarten textbooks to read. If they can't, we teach them. We let the under-18s study because they have nothing else to do in prison. Seven young people who sat the matriculation exams also took a computer course during the school holiday and learned to type. We're also teaching them Vipassana meditation with



Insein prison matriculants from 2014, Ko Myo Nyunt Oo (left) and Ko Hein Htet. Photo: Shwegu Thitsar

the help of teachers from Damathiri monastery," said U Kyaw Htay.

Insein Prison launched a teaching program for young prisoners in 2010, but matriculation-level classes were not launched until 2012.

There are more than 130 students in the prison, ranging from kindergarten to matriculation level, and the prison authorities are trying to extend

their educational opportunities.

A convict with a Master of Science degree has been assigned as headmaster, and other educated inmates work as teachers according to the curriculum and timetables used in schools. High school teachers and headmasters from local township schools come in on weekends to lend a hand.

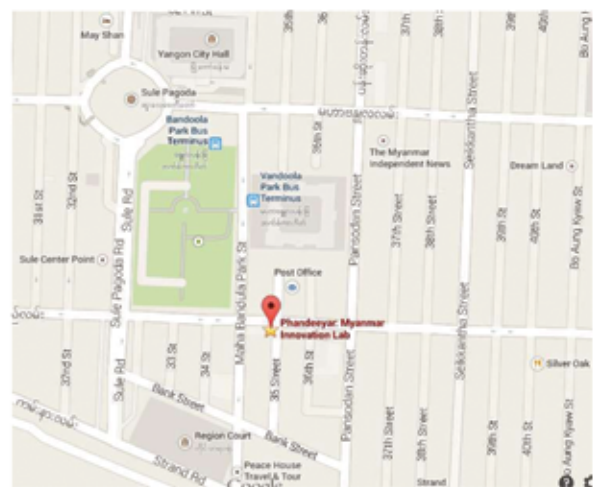
- Translation by Emoon

## You can meet the founder of the Free Software Movement

Harvard graduate, veteran of MIT's Artificial Intelligence lab and president of the Free Software Foundation, **Dr Richard Stallman**, developer of the GNU/Linux free operating system, will speak to educators, students, computer professionals and anyone interested in protection from internet surveillance about the importance of software and internet freedom.



# FREE AS IN FREEDOM



6-8pm, Tuesday, April 2, Phandeeяр, the Myanmar Innovation Lab, 11<sup>th</sup> floor, MAC Tower, 561 Merchant Road, Yangon

Dr Richard Stallman is one of the world's foremost authorities on how people can protect themselves from surveillance on the internet. His arrival in Myanmar is aimed at helping people understand the meaning of FREE Software and how FREE Software can benefit Myanmar people's lives. The event is free of charge and those who would like to donate to covering the cost of Dr Stallman's visit may purchase FSF stickers and other items. A special fundraising dinner will also be offered the following night for those who want to meet Dr Stallman. Interested organisations and individuals may contact Stuart Alan Becker at *The Myanmar Times* at [stuart.becker@gmail.com](mailto:stuart.becker@gmail.com) or by telephone on 09-975027347



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Win Mu Tin, M.A., H.G.P., D.B.L  
for **Sumitomo Corporation**  
P. O. Box 60, Yangon.  
E-mail: makhinkyi.law@mptmail.net.mm  
Dated: 24 March 2015

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P. O. Box 60, Yangon.  
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Dated: 24 March 2015



Coffins containing the bodies of two murdered teachers are put on display at a memorial service in Myitkyina. Photo: Seng Mai

## Britain urges 'credible' govt probe into murders

Responding to calls for it to join an official investigation, embassy says examination of the deaths of two Kachin teachers is a matter for the Kachin people and government



YE MON

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THE British embassy in Yangon has called on the government to ensure a "transparent and credible investigation" into the rape and murder of two Kachin volunteer teachers in January. However, it indicated that it has no plans to participate in the investigation, despite requests from the Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC) for it to do so.

Kristina Kazmi, second secretary at the embassy, told *The Myanmar Times* by email that the investigation into the "tragic" deaths of the two Kachin teachers was a matter for the Kachin people and the relevant authorities.

"The British embassy has raised our deep concern with the Kachin State

government and the Burmese government and has urged a transparent and credible investigation," she said.

As *The Myanmar Times* reported on March 20, the KBC has also called on the United States to participate in the investigation. The US embassy in Yangon did not respond to requests for comment.

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 late on January 19 sparked outrage both at home and abroad. Initially, suspicion fell on the Tatmadaw, elements of whose 503<sup>rd</sup> 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 Reverend Samson Hkalam said a KBC investigation team, which is working in parallel with the official government investigation, would interview members of the 503<sup>rd</sup> Light Infantry Regiment in the coming week.

"We will ask them about the facts from the government's commission and the facts we have got ourselves," said Rev Samson Hkalam, who also leads the KBC investigation.

"The government's commission needs to carry out its duties bravely. The Union government should not put pressure on them to conclude the investigation hastily."

A senior member of the government investigation, who asked not to be named, said the team was not under any pressure from the government. He said the investigation is continuing but declined to comment further.

**HAKA, CHIN STATE**

## Ethnic media organisations eye community radio potential

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COMMUNITY radio is the key to spreading ethnic news rapidly and inexpensively, participants at a recent ethnic media conference were told.

The journalists were describing the difficulties in getting up-to-date news to readers across a large area with slow and inadequate transportation.

Organised by Burma News International, the three-day conference in Haka, Chin State, ended on March 20 and featured about 150 participants.

Myat Noe Zan, an editor with *Rakhine Voice*, which is published in Rakhine language, said the paper had to be printed in Mandalay, which took two days. "By the time our readers get hold of the paper the news is already old. Sometimes nearly all copies are returned. Funding is also a problem," she said.

Sae Reh Soe, chief editor of *Kanara Wadi Times*, said community radio could benefit ethnic publications as well as those in the mainstream. "We don't know much about journalism. We

run our ethnic journals in the hope of keeping our languages alive and maintaining connections with each other, but we need techniques and journalism courses," he said.

Sherry Manri, a broadcaster with community radio in Australia, said that though setting up a community radio was not difficult, sustaining the service over time takes effort.

"Donors can support you with training and funding, but then it's up to the people in each state to work for the radio's success," she said.

"We need to know what our audience wants to know, and radio

**'By the time our readers get hold of the paper the news is already old.'**

**Myat Noe Zan**  
Rakhine Voice editor

executives might not know what that is," she said, stressing the need both for experienced broadcasters and timely news-gathering.

Petra Quiding, a media trainer from FOJO International Media Institute, stressed the importance of building trust with audiences and with news sources. "It's not easy for a community radio station to get an interview with a minister. And to win the audience's trust, our facts and figures have to be right and our news balanced," she said.

Ms Quiding added that community radio was important for quashing false rumours that could cause misunderstanding among communities. She said FOJO could offer training based on her experiences in Scandinavia.

BNI board member U Naing Kassot Mon said forthcoming broadcasting legislation could include provisions to support community radio.

"We hope to broadcast community programs with the support each state government. This is allowed for under the constitution so as to promote ethnic languages, culture and literature," he said.

MYANMARTIMES မြန်မာ့တစ်နေ့စွဲ

**TRADE MARK SECTION**

Call: Chan Tha Oo  
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# Views



Decrepit "cars" made in Myanmar industrial zones that have been handed in for import permits sit in the parking lot at Thanlyin foundry. Photos: Sithu Aung Myint

## Local car production: One gigantic swindle



**SITHU AUNG MYINT**

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THE Road Transport Administration Department – known by the Myanmar acronym Ka Nya Na – announced recently that it would no longer accept for substitution cars made in local industrial zones.

Under the policy, old cars can be handed in for an import permit, which can be used to import a late-model vehicle from abroad.

The RTAD said it had made the decision because vehicles being handed in at the foundry were more like toys than cars – some were completely undriveable.

This raises some questions: Who allowed those vehicles to be substituted, even though they are not fit to be called cars? Which industrial zone made them? Who issued the vehicle registration?

Despite these clear failures every step of the way, the Ministry of Industry and the Ministry of Railway Transportation have refused to discuss these issues further. There have been no reports of legal action being taken.

The Thilawa foundry has already accepted 900 of these vehicles. The chassis is made from hollow pipes, the body from the thinnest hand-beaten steel sheet. There is no dashboard, brake, lever or clutch. The windshield is not even glass – just a sheet of clear plastic.

The headlights have no wiring. Where the lights would be, some bright spark has painted red, yellow and white. An empty palm oil can – Two Lobsters brand, in case you

were wondering – has been commandeered for use as a fuel tank. The engine, at least, went to the foundry to be melted. But how did this so-called car arrive at the foundry in the first place?

The previous military government prohibited most people from importing vehicles in order to enrich senior officials. As a result, cars were exorbitantly expensive. Those who could get their hands on permits benefited immensely. Those who allowed a car to be imported could expect a bribe of up to K100 million.

The government also allowed some entrepreneurs to make vehicles in industrial zones.

Among this cohort, the number who really produced cars – jeeps and light trucks – was minuscule.

Most of them made the cars by importing vehicles illegally and then registering them. Some people registered them as vehicles produced in an industrial zone by simply replacing the exterior.

The numbers of vehicles produced in this way is not insignificant. More than 80,000 have been “produced” in this way. People paid high prices for low-quality vehicles that potentially put their lives at risk.

Recently, a novice monk died after being involved in a road accident. He was travelling in a light truck made in an industrial zone. When these shoddily made cars are involved in a collision, the lower and upper half of the vehicle have a dangerous tendency to separate.

In 2011, the new government announced a program to enable vehicles more than 20 years old to be substituted for an import permit. Initially, industrial zone vehicles were not included in the program. However, later the ministry agreed to accept them.

This is where a major mistake occurred. The new government didn't stop the meaningless production of cars in the industrial zone. Some

businesspeople imported vehicles in containers and then put on wheels and some other pieces in Myanmar, making it look like they were running an assembly plant.

The testing process for a vehicle is not done by just one or two departments. Even in the Ministry of Industry, a vehicle has to be checked by several engineers. There is a driving test to ensure the car works. After being passed by the Ministry of Industry, the vehicles are checked at the RTAD to be registered. This is how the industrial zone vehicles got a licence.

Recently registered cars “produced” in industrial zones were then accepted as old vehicles and sent to the foundry. The owners received an import permit.

Some businesspeople changed the chassis number of the vehicles and registered them many times. They then received many import permits as a result. The foundry then accepts these toy cars in their place.

It costs about K2 million in total for the businesspeople to get a car import permit, which they can resell for about K5-6 million. It was a lucrative venture, facilitated by corruption at each and every level.

Even though the RTAD no longer accepts the vehicles, they are still being produced. Why would businesses do this when there is no market? Because they can get tax breaks if they are a domestic car producer.

The whole domestic car manufacturing program was a giant swindle by the former military government. As a result, the relevant authorities and their close associates made a lot of money.

It's time to expose this corruption among those who are sticking to the bad old ways. It's time for the government to take some real action against graft.

– Translation by Thiri Min Htun

## End in sight for the nationwide ceasefire



**AUNG NAING OO**

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THEY did it. More critically, they did it together, for Myanmar and her people.

The seventh round of negotiations on the nationwide ceasefire agreement began last week, and after six days of gruelling deliberations from March 17 to 22, negotiators were able to overcome many of the major hurdles.

This is unprecedented. Now after many false leads, detours and long intervals, the end of the ceasefire negotiations is clearly in sight. The road has not been easy. It has been filled with fears, doubts and travesties.

This should not be surprising. The negotiations have gone on for about 18 months. During this time, fighting has erupted too many times, and in its worst moments threatened the whole peace process.

Just organising this seventh round of formal talks has taken six months. Technical teams from both sides had to meet countless times at various locations in Myanmar and Thailand to iron out the differences, and fix a date amid clashing schedules and priorities. Logistical challenges posed major obstacles, even on the eve of the negotiations.

The public perception was one of doubt. It seemed hope was almost lost, and many thought the peace process as good as dead. But both sides persevered. They knew they had no choice but to press on to the difficult issues. Both sides knew this seventh round of talks was going to be the most critical.

Even before they began, some participants believed these talks would be the last before the nationwide ceasefire would be signed. One of the negotiators even said that it would not be possible to organise another round of talks if this week's were unsuccessful.

Naturally, there were genuine fears on both sides, related to both personal and institutional interests and standpoints.

For both sides, though, failure was unthinkable. That was why they reached an informal agreement at the last meeting in Chiang Mai to “grind it out” until the ceasefire was finished. Both sides also pledged to adhere to one of the key ground rules for the talks: “Nothing is agreed until everything is agreed.”

Emphasising the importance of the meeting, the ethnic armed groups' Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT) brought its entire team. The government side was represented by seven Union ministers, three Tatmadaw lieutenant generals and four members of parliament – the largest delegation to date.

In their opening statements, both sides promised to approach the talks constructively. While the first agenda item – reducing tension and potential clashes – could have been a source of conflict, it was overcome as both sides took responsibility for their actions and pledged to take stronger precautions.

However, negotiators faced delays on the ensuing topics, which took up much of the first three days. On the fourth day, there were regular rounds of applause as they got past the thorny issues of security reintegration, and the roadmap and structure of the nationwide ceasefire agreement.

Similarly, the insertion of the word “revolution” in the ceasefire text to emphasise the political role of armed ethnic groups was agreed. This was no laughing matter. It took more than a day for ethnic armed groups to finish discussing the term. Likewise, the government spent no less than half a day deliberating on the word.

Observers commented that the president's meeting with the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO) in Nay Pyi Taw prior to the negotiations in Yangon contributed to the better outcome. It might have been so, but the key point was that both sides wanted to reach a final agreement.

Much of the text up for discussion was in blue (the government's version) and red (from the NCCT). Slowly it became green – the colour used by both sides when they are in near-agreement. By the end, the majority was black – the colour of final agreement.

In some ways, blue and red represent adversarial positions. As they changed to green and finally black, the tone of the negotiations evolved from adversarial to collaborative.

As one delegate pointed out during the deliberations, this is the ultimate indication that the parties are no longer two sides – they are one, working together on a solution.

**Observers commented that the president's meeting with the KIO contributed to the better outcome. It might have been so, but the key point was that both sides wanted to reach a final agreement.**

This all bodes well for the future of Myanmar because the nationwide ceasefire is the first step toward creating a shared and common future.

But for now, given other commitments – including Armed Forces Day on March 27 – both sides will take a break. The talks will resume on March 30.

So far only four points remain unresolved – recruitment of soldiers into armed ethnic groups, the agenda for the political dialogue framework meetings, how ethnic armed groups should be represented during political negotiations, and transitional arrangements during the ceasefire period.

Both sides have taken many breaks to deliberate on those points. Views on the concepts and wording have been exchanged. The last mile should not be difficult.

Peace talks are not just about fear and doubt. They are also about commitment, optimism and hope. These feelings – both positive and negative – alternate at times. But in the end, what we saw in Yangon was the triumph of hope over fear and doubt.

Aung Naing Oo is associate director of the Peace Dialogue Program at the Myanmar Peace Center. The views expressed here are his own.



# Business

## Capital Life pays out for accident

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CAPITAL Life Insurance has made its first insurance payment for loss of life following a death in a car crash.

Daw Tin Shwe's family has received K3 million (US\$2900) after she died in a car crash at 115 Mile rest stop on March 13. The insurance firm transferred the payment to her son U Ye Tint four days later.

Her family received an additional K1.5 million from Mahar Highway Express Line, after the bus collided with the vehicle carrying Daw Tin Shwe, 80.

The payment is the first that Capital Life has made for loss of life, though it has paid out five times for injuries.

Capital Life Insurance principal officer Daw Sie Sie Than said many people had been frightened by the Yar Zar Min accident last year when 14 people died in an accident on the Mandalay-Yangon highway, adding the firm works with about 20 highway bus lines based out of Aung Mingalar Highway bus station.

"Passengers are becoming more willing to buy travel insurance," she said.

Beneficiary U Ye Tint said the process had been relatively smooth, with the hospital providing the necessary certificates, and insurance being paid four days later.

"We know the cost of travel insurance is K300 per person, and we have considered buying other insurance later," he said.

Capital Life is part of the Capital Diamond Star Group conglomerate. It is headquartered in Yangon, with offices in Mandalay and Nay Pyi Taw. It currently offers health insurance, and would like to branch into other forms of insurance if allowed by the government.

— Translation by Zar Zar Soe



### IN PICTURES

Recently built infrastructure on Maday island, Rakhine State. Maday is to be the site of Kyaukphyu SEZ and is the landing point for offshore gas pipelines.

Photo: Naing Wynn Htoon

## Heavyweight Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi prepares its Yangon office for opening



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BANK of Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ could officially open its branch office as soon as next month, as the firm looks to provide financial services to foreign investors, according to the bank's chief executive officer for Asia and Oceania, Go Watanabe.

"We are excited to open the branch as soon as possible, maybe even next month, as preparations have finished and we are waiting for final approval from the Central Bank," he said.

Japanese banks were the big winners in last year's tender. Nine foreign banks were ultimately selected to receive licences, including all three Japan-based banks that entered the race.

Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi has had a representative office in Myanmar since 2006.

Staff training and recruitment is finished, while its IT systems are ready, he said in an interview on the sidelines of yesterday's ASEAN-Myanmar Forum, organised by the Singapore Institute of International Affairs. Mr Watanabe added the purpose of the bank's local operations is to support financial services to foreign companies operating locally, or domestic banks through long or short-term loans in foreign currency.

"At the moment we are not allowed to make a loan to a domestic company in kyat, so we would provide loans to local banks - for example to Co-operative Bank, our strategic local partner, so they can lend to SMEs," he said.

The Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi will not be providing finance to companies in kyat, but it will support its local partners such as the Co-operative Bank in its lending to

local business.

"It is good [to have] cooperation between foreign banks and local industries," he said.

**'We are excited to open the branch as soon as possible ... as preparations have finished and we are waiting for final approval.'**

Go Watanabe

Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ

The bank also plans to provide connectivity between its customers in ASEAN and the rest of the world,

and Myanmar, hoping to grow investment in the coming years.

"One of the big missions is our drive to encourage Japanese [investors] to make more investments, but also [investors in] other countries to make more investments in Myanmar," he said.

The foreign partnerships for Co-operative Bank - which often brands as CB Bank - are still at the early stages, said its managing director U Pe Myint.

It has not held detailed discussion with its foreign partners on areas like interest rates, though the loans will likely not be too cheap, he said.

Authorities have also pointed to strong potential investment levels from Japan.

Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) secretary U Aung Naing Oo said previously that Japan will be the biggest source of foreign investment by the 2015-16 fiscal year. Japanese investment totalled US\$400

million until February 2015, according to MIC's statistics.

However, mainland China is still the largest historical source of foreign direct investment in the country, having received approval to invest \$15 billion in Myanmar since MIC began keeping track, constituting an overall share of 27pc.

Thailand and Singapore are the second- and third-largest sources of investment.

Japanese investment has grown significantly since 2012.

Mr Watanabe said China had invested significantly during the period of economic sanctions.

"Now I think Myanmar has opened the market and country. From now, it is obvious that more investment will come from Japan and increase, even though investment will still continue from China," he said.

He added the low cost of labour and large population is an opportunity for manufacturers and service providers.



Mandalay plans golf improvements with a private tender

**BUSINESS 10**



African economies look to Asia for future success

**BUSINESS 12**

Exchange Rates (March 23 close)		
Currency	Buying	Selling
Euro	K1135	K1140
Malaysia Ringitt	K276	K280
Singapore Dollar	K777	K780
Thai Baht	K31.4	K31.6
US Dollar	K1080	K1085

# U Soe Thane lays out long-term vision

**JEREMY MULLINS**  
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THE economic improvements to the country since the 2011 transition to civilian government are obvious, but reforms must be continued by subsequent governments, according to Coordinating Minister for Economic Development and Minister of the President's Office U Soe Thane.

Although the current course struck by the government has generated improvements in certain areas, progress has been slow in some areas, he said during a keynote speech at yesterday's ASEAN-Myanmar Forum, organised by the Singapore Institute of International Affairs.

"If look from the optimistic point of view, we can definitely witness the positive improvement in the general condition of our people," he said. "However, there still remains a lot of hot issues drawing our attention."

U Soe Than said many of the improvements were obvious. He pointed to the large and growing number of tall new buildings that had taken root in Yangon over the past decade, as well as increase in international products on the street as evidence Myanmar's transition is moving in the right direction.

"Everyone is complaining about the traffic jam in almost all of the city's streets at all times of the day. Why? One main reason is because the number of private vehicles has skyrocketed in the past four or five years," he said.

"Look at the smartphones in the hands of the public. Every other person has his own mobile, some have even three or four ... [because of] the

not so perfect connections throughout the country ... it is very common to see workers at the construction site playing with the smart phone during their short rest time."

In the countryside, roads and electrification is improving, while there are over 50 newspapers and journals for people to choose from, he said.

However, U Soe Thane acknowledged not all the improvements are coming as quickly as many would like. He added that often expectations are too high, while there is often a capacity gap, not only for the government but for all segments of society.

He said it is important that the succeeding government must continue the march toward a democratic society.

"Our government has successfully laid down the necessary foundation ... the next, next governments have to take up and march forward," he said. "From one government to another, the march to democracy has to go on by all means."

"It is very rare that a nation can transform into a democratic one during the tenure of one government. It is indeed a very complicated process and usually takes three or four governments to really capture the democratic goal," he said.

U Soe Thane also said that for economic reform, there must be more focus on private-sector development. He pointed to businesses and businesspeople such as U Sein Maung from First Private Bank, Kanbawza, and prominent entrepreneur Serge Pun as leading examples of enterprise that is only now taking off.

Businesspeople are not satisfied yet, but he said that the economic progress is gradually moving forward.

"Inch by inch, foot by foot, we have to move. We have to try our best," he said. "Every government [transition-



U Soe Thane has something to say. Photo: Aung Htay Laing

ing] from the military to democracy has the same problems."

In a follow-up interview, the minister discussed US investment into the country, which some say has been un-

derwhelming.

U Soe Thane said it is now better than the past three to five years, adding that the amount is not important, but the fact that any at all is coming

is a positive sign, as there is a political angle.

He added that there is growth in exports to other markets like China, India and Europe.

U Soe Thane also discussed the garment industry, which has been affected by recent strikes. He claimed employee capacity is currently low, so workers must not reach too high with their demands.

**'Our government has successfully laid down the necessary foundation ... the next, next governments have to take up and march forward.'**

**U Soe Thane**  
Minister of the President's Office

"The workers want to get salary at the level of ASEAN standard, but their skill is low," he said. U Soe Thane gave an example where Thai workers may produce 10 shirts a day, but in Myanmar workers produce much less.

"We have a lack of skilled workers ... we need more awareness from the people," he said. If the owners are able to generate more income, than workers will receive higher salaries, but if demands are too high, then factories will close and head elsewhere.

"We need time," he said.

# First national export strategy coming this week

**CATHERINE TRAUTWEIN** **NOE NOE AUNG**

After years of planning, the Myanmar government will unveil the country's first national export strategy on March 25 in Nay Pyi Taw.

The five-year plan comes primarily from the Ministry of Commerce - which aims to equalise Myanmar's imports and exports, as the former currently outweigh the latter - with help from the World Trade Organisation and UN joint agency International Trade Centre and both private and public sector players.

The blueprint seeks to boost yield and value-addition in beans, pulses and oilseeds, fisheries, forestry products, textiles and garments, rice, rubber and tourism, and also to introduce order around exports where it is lacking.

The strategy endeavours to exercise control over flighty sellers in Myanmar and cement procedures around the export process, according to Ministry of Commerce trade promotion department director general U Win Myint.

"Here, if a few merchants get a great price on corn, all merchants are interested to grow corn. If someone

says sesame, everybody tries to plant sesame. This is not good, [it is] reckless," he said at a March 23 press event.

"We want to make a professional form for our farmers. This is why [the strategy] comes out," he added.

Myanmar doesn't have an exportation plan or data on products.

"We want to sell our products, but we don't have a system, we don't know how the business is going and we have no data," he said.

The National Export Strategy will fill this void with information. U Win Myint said according to the plan, books will be written for each export product with "accurate data, histories, everything a person who would like to import our products needs to know". The Ministry of Commerce will also put this information online via a new website.

The director general also discussed the local rubber industry in depth, which of late has been plagued by

**'We want to sell our products, but we don't have a system.'**

**U Win Myint**  
Ministry of Commerce official

problems around product quality and productivity.

The strategy will rely partly on fighting inferior quality products through a quality certification system. U Win Myint also discussed a Japanese government-funded laboratory in Hlegu would also work to test and boost rubber quality.

And at the March 23 press event, U Win Myint spoke about a Japanese government-funded laboratory in Hlegu boosting rubber quality.

On average, Myanmar produces 770 kilograms (1697 pounds) of rubber per hectare per year, while other countries provide between 1500kg and 1700kg of rubber per hectare per year, according to Myanmar Rubber Planters and Producers Association advisor U Hla Myint.

U Hla Myint said his organisation had played a key role in constructing the national export strategy for rubber, and that the plan would confront the industry's issues.

"If you want to implement growth on a country-wide scale, without regulations and laws your efforts will be useless," he said.

Though the national export strategy provides guidelines, U Win Myint said it won't inhibit players.

"It will not restrict farmers or brokers by saying dos and don'ts," he said. "We just aim it to be a systematic form by following the strategy."



Rubber sheets stand to dry Photo: Staff



# YCDC's \$10m toilet and toll-gate tender



MYAT  
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YANGON City Development Committee has finished its annual tenders for private companies to run 37 businesses under its Departments of Revenue and Markets, such as toll gates and public toilets.

The 37 separate tenders have generated about K9.97 billion (US\$9.65 million) in income for city coffers, with the winning companies set to take over the businesses on April 1 for the 2015-16 financial year.

U Nay Win, deputy director of YCDC's Department of Engineering (Building), said the tenders run annually.

BILLION KYAT

# 9.97

Revenue generated by YCDC's tender for private companies to run 37 projects



Revenues from the YCDC tender are slated to go into the city budget. Photo: Ko Taik

"This year we have received more revenue than last year, by about 10 percent," he said yesterday.

The businesses include toll gates on certain roads, entrance gates on the road to Yangon, and charges for public toilets located in specific

markets - including Pazundaung, Insein, Hledan, San Pya and Kabar Aye markets, and the poultry markets, as well as markets in Hlaing Tharyar and Shwe Pyi Thar townships.

YCDC also intended to auction off 29 items declared redundant, though only sold 21 - it had also intended to generate K62.1 million through the sale, but actually received K88.8 million for

the items.

The leased properties have become a part of YCDC's annual budget.

U Nay Win said the revenues from leasing out the properties for one year are included in YCDC's annual budgeting. "We have already forecasted the amount we would receive in to this year's budget, as it is

something we did last year as well," he said.

U Nay Win added the revenues are put into YCDC's general budget, in areas such as road construction and improving water supply.

"YCDC's budget is increased for infrastructure departments, because they are doing more work. Last year, so many roads were paved and

water supply extended, needing more money," he said.

Other areas of spending growth include budgets for civil servant housing, low cost housing and renovations of government office space.

Some of the roads receiving rebuilds are Bayinnaung, Mingalardon, Waizayandar, Thanthumar and Kayay Pin.

## MANDALAY

# MCDC pursues private tenders for Yetagun Taung golf course

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A THIRD Mandalay-area golf course will be run by a private company following a tender from Mandalay City Development Committee.

The Yetagun Taung golf course has been put out to tender in Mandalay-based state press, though will require a number of upgrades and it is still dogged by land grabbing allegations.

Committee member U Tun Kyi said the tender will be finalised within a month, adding planned upgrades at the site include a hotel and a park for children.

Yet the site has remained controversial among local residents due to a land seizure controversy. Farmers held a press conference in August 2014 claiming they had never received compensation for 600 acres which were seized in 1999.

There are three 18-hole golf courses in Mandalay. Two of them are owned by MCDC, including Yetagun Taung and another called Shwe Man Taung, which sits on land at the foot of Mandalay Hill. Shwe Man Taung has been operated under a Build-Operate-Transfer lease since 1999, opening in 2000.

A third golf club, Shwe Sar Yan, is

owned by the military and has been run privately on BOT terms for a decade.

A company official, Ko Kaung Lwin Htoo, said that last year the lease was renewed for another 70 years. He added that golf is rapidly becoming a popular sport in Mandalay, with the golf club constantly upgrading.

"We have built hotels at the golf club. Now it's 16 rooms, four rooms in each structure and a total of four structures," he said. "We plan to eventually have 100 rooms at the club."

Fees are relatively cheap, and the club regularly holds competitions to keep up interest, he said.



A worker lays out turf at a Yangon golf course. Photo: Staff

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# Coal study under way in Tanintharyi

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A FEASIBILITY study is under way on a US\$2.5 billion power plant to be located in Myeik township, Tanintharyi Region, according to Akira Sude, overseas power project department manager from Marubeni Corporation of Japan.

The facility could ultimately be between 1800 and 2000 megawatts when it is completed, he said.

Marubeni, as well as Global Power Synergy Public Company, which is an affiliate of PTT, as well as EGAT International, Sri Synergy, local firm Ayeyar Hintha and Myanmar's Ministry of Electric Power previously signed a memorandum

of understanding in Nay Pyi Taw on the plant.

Mr Suda said the partners aim to complete the feasibility study by July.

"We will then submit the report to the government, and if we can proceed with the project, then there will be more detailed discussions with the Myanmar government," he said.

The exact location of the project still has not been determined.

Local residences protested the project at a meeting with township administration officials in May last year, claiming to be worried about the environmental impact of the plant.

Mr Suda said the companies are

aware of the concerns of the local residents, but believes that using the latest technology could limit the environmental impact.

"We really have a close connection with the local community there and we have to explain more details of the project plan to local residence," he said.

The firm has invited some members of civil society to Japan to see technology that allows for better coal power.

Officials from Myanmar's Ministry of Electric Power have told *The Myanmar Times* that the government is currently reluctant to proceed with building coal plants due to social and environmental concerns.





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AMSTERDAM	851	2,740
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MASHIKO, JAPAN

# Jobs slow to pick up from yen's drop

CROWS circle around the tract of cleared land that was once Hoya Cororation's Pentax camera plant. All that's left is a sign directing employees to a dormitory and gymnasium, both pulled down years ago when a strong yen was driving manufacturers abroad.

This was once part of Japan's industrial heartland, a place that shows little sign of benefiting from Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's success in weakening the currency and battling deflation. While a 36 percent tumble in the yen has stoked record profits at big exporters like Toyota, the jobs lost here have yet to return.

Mashiko is in Tochigi, one of the prefectures around Tokyo that churned out the world's gadgets and technology before Japan's bubble burst in the 1990s and China gradually took over the mantle of production. The region is littered with abandoned or downsized plants, some from companies that are still global brands, like consumer electronics giants Panasonic and Sony. Most of the blight stems from the hundreds of smaller suppliers that make up the lion's share of Japan's manufacturing.

"We haven't heard of any major cases of manufacturers coming back here because of a weaker yen," said Ryutaro Magome, a researcher at the Ashigin Research Institute, unit of the Ashikaga Bank in Tochigi. "When you think about the cost of recreating what's gone and the yen's current level, it makes sense for them to keep production abroad."

Tochigi shows the scale of the task facing Abe as he tries to get companies to boost wages and employment and bring back the days of consumer-driven inflation. The number of factory jobs in the prefecture remains more than 10pc below the level in 2008, when the collapse of Lehman Brothers Holdings sparked a global recession.

"A weaker yen is sending benefits to major exporters, but Tochigi doesn't have many big companies and the impact hasn't reached the smaller guys,"

said Takao Watanabe, who works in the planning department of the Tochigi Bank.

Prolonged bouts of yen strength became a feature of the two decades of Japan's economic stagnation before Mr Abe took office for a second time in 2012. The prime minister championed a reflation program and installed monetary expansionists at the central bank who sent the yen tumbling. The currency has fallen 36pc against the dollar since September 26, 2012, when Mr Abe became the leader of the Liberal Democratic Party.

The policy succeeded in ending trenchant deflation, revived demand for credit and sent the stock market surging, lifting household assets to a record. While still less than the pace of inflation, wages have risen for an 11<sup>th</sup> consecutive month in January.

Some big manufacturers are reacting. Panasonic, air-conditioner maker Daikin Industries and Sharp, which cut TV output in Tochigi, said they may bring some work back to Japan, while Canon and Nissan said they plan to boost domestic output.

Yet many companies are reluctant to boost investment in a home market where the population is declining and workers are ageing. Industrial output remains below a 2007 peak, and the most recent gross domestic product report showed capital spending dropped for a third straight quarter.

Down the road from the razed Hoya camera factory in Mashiko, Yuichi Ojima runs an auto-inspection and repair shop that's been in business for more than 40 years. He recalls the days when houses were built for workers at the plant and their families. For him, a weaker yen means more expensive imported parts. The mention of Abenomics, the universal label of Mr Abe's economic plan, brings only a hollow laugh from the mechanic.

"I've never heard around here that Abenomics is helping the economy,"



A closed restaurant in Utsunomiya, Tochigi Prefecture, Japan. Photo: Bloomberg

said Mr Ojima, 43, who has worked at the shop for about 20 years. "It's set up to benefit only big companies. It has nothing to do with us."

Even Mashiko's mayor, Tomoyuki Ohtsuka, is not counting on Mr Abe to revive his town's fortunes. "There's no future for regions that are just counting on the benefits of Abenomics," he said in his office.

Part of the problem is that, even if Mr Abe manages to invigorate the economy, Japan's shrinking and ageing population is sapping sales, reducing the incentive for companies to expand domestic production.

Fifty minutes' drive from Mashiko, in the industrial parks around the prefecture's capital of Utsunomiya,

the situation is just as bleak. An old, three-story Panasonic semiconductor plant stands idle, air ducts and power lines dangling from the ceiling above a concrete floor.

Panasonic left in 2010, part of a consolidation that the company said was to increase efficiency. The company shut a fax-machine plant in the city in June 2009 and the semiconductor factory followed in September 2010. It said in its earning statement for that quarter that it was cutting costs to counter the effects of the strong yen.

Sites that do find a new owner are often from advanced industries or service-based enterprises that employ few workers. More than 1000 factories have closed in Tochigi since 2008 with

the loss of more than 22,000 jobs as of the end of 2013. In this industrial prefecture, factories still accounted for a quarter of all jobs in 2012, compared with 17 percent nationwide.

Shigeru Oshima, who works at a labour exchange in Utsunomiya, said he is sceptical that much production will come back. "We have former factory sites that used to employ hundreds of people being cleared or used as warehouses."

In Mashiko, a corner of the old Hoya site gives a hint as to one possible future for Japan's manufacturers. While the cameras have gone, this part of the company's business is expanding: artificial bones for the nation's growing ranks of elderly. — Bloomberg

## Unprecedented sugar rush sweeps the world



Sugar cane is harvested at the Usina da Mata Ethanol, Sugar and Energy facility in Valparaíso, Brazil, last year. Photo: Bloomberg

THE world has never been so awash in sugar.

Just as cane harvests expand in India and Thailand, farmers in Brazil, the world's largest producer, are ramping up exports to take advantage of a tumble in the exchange rate that has swelled their profit margins. And crops that were hurt by drought last year have been revived by rain. Global output is set to exceed demand for a fifth straight year, leaving the biggest stockpiles on record, the International Sugar Organisation said.

All of that sugar signals global prices, already down 50 percent in three years, are poised to fall further,

cutting costs for buyers like Krispy Kreme Donuts and Mondelez International, the maker of Cadbury chocolates and Oreos. New York sugar futures probably will slide 6.2pc by July to US\$0.1202 a pound, the lowest since January 2009, a Bloomberg survey of nine analysts showed.

"The fundamentals are absolutely bearish," said Donald Selkin, who helps manage about \$3 billion of assets as chief market strategist at National Securities in New York. "Supplies are very extensive. The good growing season and the weak currency in Brazil are also making their exports more attractive."

Global production in the year end-

ing September 30 will exceed demand by 620,000 tonnes, leaving record stockpiles of 79.89 million tonnes, or almost enough to supply the world's top seven consuming countries, data from the London-based sugar organisation show. India, the second-largest producer, will have the biggest harvest in three years at 26 million tonnes, a Bloomberg survey showed. A Thai industry group estimated cane output rose 6.1pc this season.

In Brazil, which supplies one-fifth of the world's sugar, the incentive to sell more overseas has increased in the past few months, as budget deficits and a stalled economy sent the real plunging to the lowest in almost

11 years against the dollar. In the week ended March 11, domestic cargoes waiting to be shipped jumped 33pc from a week earlier, according to Recife, Brazil-based Williams Servicos Maritimos Ltda.

Two decades of uninterrupted consumption growth and four years of slumping prices may leave less supply than forecast. In Europe, people ate on average 37.1 kilograms (81.8 pounds) of sugar in 2013, up from 35.1kg in 2011, while Americans consumed 32.5kg, up from 31kg, the sugar organisation estimates. The global average is 23kg.

Rather than expanding reserves, the world will see a production defi-

cit in the current season of 2 million tonnes, growing to 4 million next year, Societe Generale said in February.

"By the end of June, the market will be shifting from surplus to a more balanced, small-deficit situation," which should boost prices, said Bruno Lima, a risk-management consultant for INTL FCStone in Campinas, Brazil. "China has been and should continue to be a hungry buyer."

The government of Brazil, where half the cane harvest is used to make ethanol for cars, mandated increased use of the fuel, leaving less to make sugar. Vehicles must use fuel with 27pc ethanol, up from 25pc, Energy Minister Eduardo Braga said March 4.

Food makers may not see much benefit in the United States, where the government limits sugar imports. Domestic futures, which trade at a premium to the world price, are up 9.7pc from a year ago. Mondelez raised prices to cover higher costs for cocoa, milk and sugar. While sugar was "modestly favourable for us" in 2014, the benefit was "overwhelmingly offset" by cocoa, dairy and packaging costs, said Michael Mitchell, a Mondelez spokesperson.

More sugar is on the way. India, the second-largest producer, has approved subsidies for exports of as much as 1.4 million tonnes of raw sugar to help mills pay debt to farmers.

Brazil's Center South, the main growing region, may crush as much as 585 million tonnes of cane in the year that starts April 1, up 2.6pc from a year earlier, industry consultant JOB Economia e Planejamento said. Agroconsult, based in Florianopolis, Brazil, projects an even bigger cane crush. — Bloomberg



## ABIDJAN, IVORY COAST

# African growth little help to population

ACROSS Africa, where many nations show high economic growth rates with little benefit to their populations, the notion of social and economic "emergence" is taking hold as a remedy for perennial pessimism.

The term has become a buzzword among international donors and African politicians who take it to mean a fairer distribution of wealth and other measures that benefit society at large.

About 30 countries on the continent have signed up to the doctrine, according to the United Nations. Ivory Coast's President Alassane Ouattara, who hosted a regional conference on the theme this week, has grabbed on to the promise of economic emergence as he plans to seek re-election in October.

Emergence, modelled on the success of the "baby tigers" of Asia - Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam - as well as Brazil, Chile and Colombia in South America, is presented as the opposite of a capitalist and dehumanised economic vision.

"For me, the goal of emergence is not GDP growth per se: it is the pursuit of greater human health and happiness so that each one of us can fulfill

our potential and participate fully in our societies," said Helen Clark, administrator for the UN Development Program.

Ivory Coast, the world's leading cocoa producer, barely four years ago came out of a political and military crisis after a bloody decade. It has since achieved an annual growth rate of 9.0 percent and is due to be an "emerging" economy by 2020, Mr Ouattara told the conference, though the Ivorian opposition considers that goal far-fetched.

Leaders elsewhere in Africa are less ambitious but equally determined. Chad was aiming to emerge in 2020 but has revised the date to 2030, like Togo. More cautiously, Senegal's rulers are looking to 2035 to attain key goals.

"In addition to being strong and sustainable, the growth that leads us to emerge should generate jobs, force down unemployment and reduce social inequalities," Senegalese President Macky Sall said during the forum.

The UN's Clark envisaged that "by 2050, an 'emergent Africa' would have tripled Africa's share of global GDP, enabled 1.4 billion Africans to join the



Ivorian president Alassane Ouattara (left) speaks with former Ivorian president Henri Konan Bedie (centre) and Egyptian Prime Minister Ibrahim Mahlab. Photo: AFP

middle class, and reduced tenfold the number of people living in extreme poverty. These are exciting prospects."

Investment in health and education and reducing inequalities between cities and the countryside and between men and women, along with diversifying the economy and appropriate infrastructure projects, are among means cited by experts to reach emergent targets.

On a continent where 300 million inhabitants were considered middle-class citizens by the African Development Bank (ADB) in 2011, out of an overall population of around 1 billion, "Afro-pessimism is now giving way to optimism," said Ivory Coast's Planning Minister Albert Toikeusse Mabri.

"The African narrative has changed. Just a while ago, Africa was a place which was exceptional, but for negative reasons. It was a place

where there was no growth, no law," said ADB vice-president Steve Kayizzi-Mugerwa.

"People would say, 'Yeah, that's Africa,' where there was war, quick death, no accountability," he said, before adding how things have changed.

"We can no longer blame it on geography, we can no longer blame it on disease, we can no longer blame it on the colonial legacy, because many people have emerged," the ADB official said, though conflict rages in Somalia, South Sudan and parts of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

South Africa, Botswana, Mozambique, Kenya and, more recently, Ivory Coast have sparked a more positive outlook on the continent, impressing the financial community with their success in development terms.

"Emergence is a bet on the future," declared UNDP regional director Ab-

doulaye Mar Dieye.

The ideas discussed at the conference mean that "economic growth without social benefits isn't inevitable," said Makhtar Diop, vice-president of the World Bank for Africa, adding that the "redistribution of wealth" was vital for "social wellbeing".

However, participants pointed out that emergent development is hampered by undue dependence on a single resource, like Nigeria and Angola which rely on their oil exports. Massive corruption and a lack of economic integration are also barriers to success.

Capital flight costs Africa between US\$60 billion and \$100 billion dollars a year, said Mr Dieye of the UNDP. "With good governance, you see what could be injected back into African economies."

- AFP



Workers check, cut and polish diamonds at a diamond cutting and polishing company during the tour by Ghanaian President John Dramani Mahama in Botswana. Photo: AFP

## PHNOM PENH

## Beeline snapped up by Viettel

CAMBODIAN telecom giant Metfone has acquired Beeline, the nation's fourth-largest mobile operator, according to an announcement on Beeline's website.

Beeline will transfer its assets and certain licences to the Vietnamese military-owned Metfone for an undisclosed amount. Metfone is the Cambodian brand of Viettel, which had been in talks to join Myanmar's Yatanarpon Teleport in starting a fourth operator in Myanmar.

Sotelco Ltd, which owns the Beeline brand, will cease all its mobile operations as well as cancel all subscriptions with consumers, according to the company statement, which said the official date of buy-out was on March 11. The release goes on to say that Beeline subscribers will automatically be transferred to Metfone's network, but customers will have to switch over their Beeline SIM cards.

"As such, from the 24<sup>th</sup> March, Beeline subscribers should stop topping-up via Beeline scratch cards, change to Metfone's SIM cards and top-up via Metfone's scratch cards at Metfone's stores nationwide," the release read.

Subscribers who have purchased scratch cards will have to use them before March 24, after which they will no longer be valid, and distributors have been directed to contact Beeline about SIM cards and scratch cards sold but still not used.

Anthony Galliano, CEO of corporate finance and business consultancy firm Cambodian Investment Management, said the deal will be beneficial to both parties, with Metfone expected to benefit from the acquired assets, namely frequency, towers and licenses. He said the added subscribers are only a small part of the transaction.

"I think if you look at the deal it is not about subscribers. It is about the assets that Metfone acquires," said.

Mr Galliano added that Beeline subscribers should benefit from Metfone's extended coverage and network, and also high-value services, like 4G data access. Whereas, Metfone would be able to increase the quality of its services, given that added frequency and hardware will improve its capacity.

However, getting all Beeline subscribers to change their SIM cards could turn out to be an inconvenience,

**'It is not the greatest thing for customers to have to switch their SIM cards.'**

**Anthony Galliano**  
CEO, Cambodian Investment Management

he said. "It is not the greatest thing for customers to have to switch their SIM cards."

According to a July 2014 from telecommunications research company BuddeComm, Beeline had a peak subscriber base of 1.1 million in 2012, which fell to below 600,000 six months later. At the end of 2013, that figure had further dropped to fewer than half a million subscribers.

In 2013, Cambodian tycoon Hout Vanthan acquired a 90 percent stake in Beeline from Russian mobile operator Vimplecom, increasing his 10pc holding in the company to full ownership. Metfone, who is owned by Viettel (Cambodia), a Vietnamese military-owned telco firm, received its licence in 2006 and began mobile operations only in 2009. As of 2013, the market leader had 9.7 million subscribers, with under a million of them using its 3G services.

Metfone officials declined to comment on the buy-out and a branch manager at Beeline's sales office said she wasn't in a position to comment on the sale.

According to BuddeComm's subscriber figures for 2013, Metfone will increase its lead over second-placed Smart Axiata, which had 5.3 million subscribers. CamGSM-owned MobiTel, is close behind Smart with 4.2 million subscribers in 2013.

- The Phnom Penh Post

## PHNOM PENH

## Cambodia's rice lobby faces Italian concerns

A VISITING delegation from the European Union met with the Cambodia Rice Federation yesterday to discuss concerns raised by Italian rice producers, who say duty-free Cambodian rice imports are undercutting the Italian market.

Sok Puthyuth, president of the Cambodia Rice Federation, said late last week that the purpose of the meeting was for the delegation to have a greater understanding of Cambodia's rice industry, to better inform their discussions with Italian producers.

"We clarified that Cambodian rice exports to Europe are largely only fragrant rice, so it does not affect the [Italian] farmers," he said. Mr Puthyuth said that Italian rice farmers produce largely a white rice variety that did not compete with Cambodia's fragrant rice.

"The European delegation appears to understand our actual situation, and they should continue to support us on trade facilitation for further growth," he said. In the past, Italy has petitioned the EU to remove Cambodian rice from the Everything But Arms scheme, which grants duty-free access to the EU, citing increasing competition from the Kingdom.

The Italians said an increased rice import quota from Cambodia had contributed to Italian prices dipping below

their production costs.

Leaked excerpts from a dossier from the Italian rice industry claimed that the special status granted to Cambodia had triggered a 22 percent decline in annual rice plantings in Italy. An Italian collective of rice farmers conducted protests last year in the country's largest rice-growing regions.

According to the rice industry website Oryza, the Italians had requested the EU to include a new clause that would end the EU's zero-tariff rice imports from Cambodia.

Cambodia is now the second-largest rice exporter to countries in the EU according to the Cambodia Rice Federation. The country shipped close to 400,000 tonnes of rice last year, and thanks largely to Everything But Arms, 66pc went to the EU.

Song Saran, president of rice exporter Amru Rice Cambodia, said that, to date, Everything But Arms had made a significant contribution to Cambodia's rice industry, but there was still much more to be achieved under the favourable export status.

Cambodian rice producers were battling to compete with their neighbouring countries, and had made little impact on the competitiveness of EU farmers, Mr Saran added.

- The Phnom Penh Post



# World

WORLD EDITOR: Fiona MacGregor

## SEOUL

### 'The Interview' DVD drop postponed after N Korean retaliation threat

SOUTH Korean activists yesterday postponed plans to send thousands of copies of the Hollywood movie *The Interview* to North Korea, following criticism from Seoul and dire warnings of military reprisals from Pyongyang.

The activists had previously announced they would use giant balloons to launch 500,000 anti-North leaflets and 10,000 DVDs of the comedy – about a fictional CIA plot to assassinate North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un – across the border on or around March 26.

The date marks the anniversary of the 2010 sinking of a South Korean naval corvette, the *Cheonan*, that Seoul blamed on a North Korean submarine.

North Korea has labelled *The Interview* a “wanton act of terror”. It was accused by the FBI of being behind a devastating cyber attack last November on Sony Pictures, the studio behind the Seth Rogen movie.

On March 22 the North Korean military said it would respond to the activists’ operation by shooting down any balloons using “all the firepower strike means” of frontline border

units.

Any military response from South Korea would then “entail double and treble merciless retaliatory strikes”, the Korean People’s Army said in a statement.

The activist behind the planned launch, Park Sang-Hak, said a decision had been made to postpone the event.

**‘If there is no reply from North Korea we will push again for the launch of leaflets and DVDs.’**

**Park Sang-Hak**  
Activist

Although he declined to provide a specific reason, Mr Park has come under increasing pressure from the South Korean authorities to cancel. He also suggested the

postponement was not indefinite and conditional on North Korea apologising for sinking the *Cheonan*.

“If there is no reply from North Korea, we will push again for the launch of leaflets and DVDs,” he said.

The North has always denied any involvement in the *Cheonan* incident, in which 46 South Korean seamen died, and Mr Park’s condition appeared more of a face-saving exercise than a genuine ultimatum.

South Korea insists the activists have a democratic right to release the balloons, but has appealed for restraint to avoid overly provoking the North and endangering residents near the launch sites.

Last week the South’s Unification Ministry suggested the authorities might step in to prevent Mr Park’s DVD launch, saying “necessary measures” should be taken to protect local residents from any North Korean retaliation.

Last October North Korea border guards attempted to shoot down some balloons, triggering a brief exchange of heavy machine-gun fire between the two sides. – AFP



## COLOMBO

### Sri Lanka’s new leader heads to China

THE president of Sri Lanka will travel to Beijing this week for talks with China’s leadership, seeking to smooth ruffled feathers after scuttling Chinese-funded projects and seeking stronger ties with regional rival India.

Maithripala Sirisena swept to power in January, ending a decade of rule by Mahinda Rajapakse, whose close alliance with Beijing had irked the island’s traditional close ally India.

Mr Sirisena has moved to wind back Beijing’s influence, which became the strategically located island’s biggest foreign financier and enjoyed significant political and even military influence under Mr Rajapakse.

Mr Sirisena has unnerved China by suspending a US\$1.4 billion “port city” project in Colombo that India considered a security risk, and ordering a review of other Beijing-financed projects and loans amid allegations of corruption.

Experts say the president will be seeking a divorce of sorts from China during the three-day state visit

starting on March 25, while trying not to upset the economic giant.

Mr Sirisena will hold talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping along with other members of the leadership, Colombo said.

“The former government allowed China a free run in Sri Lanka,” Sri Lankan political commentator Victor Ivan said. “President Sirisena wants to maintain a normal relationship that will not irritate India.”

The visit is about “bringing balance in Sri Lanka’s engagement with two Asian rivals”, P Sahadevan, professor of South Asian studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi, said.

Mr Sirisena made India rather than China his first foreign trip after winning the January elections, seeking to rebuild ties with Delhi damaged by tensions over Beijing’s influence on the island.

Delhi was reportedly furious after Chinese submarines were allowed to dock at Colombo port last year when Mr Rajapakse was still in power.

Beijing has been accused of seeking to develop facilities around the Indian Ocean in a “string of pearls” strategy to counter the rise of rival India and secure its own economic interests.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Sri Lanka and other Indian Ocean nations earlier this month in a bid to counter that influence, and reassert Delhi’s traditional role in the region.

Sri Lanka Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera, who visited Beijing a month after Mr Sirisena came to power, has said the new administration will not allow Chinese submarines in Colombo.

Colombo is also seeking to renegotiate huge loans given by China for projects at rates as high as 8 percent, Sri Lanka Finance Minister Ravi Karunanayake told reporters recently.

China had emerged as Sri Lanka’s biggest single financier, accounting for about 40 percent of some \$2.03 billion in foreign money spent on infrastructure projects in 2013, according to the latest Central Bank of Sri Lanka report.

China was also one of the few countries to defend Sri Lanka’s human rights record under Mr Rajapakse, who angered Western nations for refusing to cooperate with an international probe into allegations of war crimes on the island.

In contrast, the new government has won support from the West for its attempts at reconciliation between ethnic minority Tamils and majority Sinhalese, as well as moves to ensure accountability for crimes committed during the separatist war.

With Western backing and support from Delhi, the government has secured more time to address allegations that troops under Mr Rajapakse’s command killed up to 40,000 Tamil civilians while defeating Tamil rebels in the finale of the war that ended in 2009.

– AFP

## SINGAPORE

### Singaporeans m

A NATION plunged into mourning and world leaders united in tribute yesterday after the death of Lee Kuan Yew, the iron-fisted politician who forged Singapore into a prosperous city-state out of unpromising beginnings.

His son, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, issued a statement before dawn announcing the passing of his 91-year-old father at the Singapore General Hospital following a long illness.

He declared seven days of national mourning until the former leader is cremated on March 29.

“He fought for our independence, built a nation where there was none and made us proud to be Singaporeans. We won’t see another like him,” the prime minister said in an emotional televised address.

Mr Lee’s remains will first be taken to the Istana state complex for a two-day private family wake before lying in state at Parliament House.

Singaporeans, some teary-eyed, flocked to the Istana to leave personal tributes and sign a condolence board.

US President Barack Obama led world leaders in hailing Mr Lee, who turned a small territory lacking its own natural resources into a world player in finance, trading and shipping – all the while with a heavy political grip that was long derided by rights campaigners.

“He was a true giant of history who will be remembered for generations to come as the father of modern Singapore and as one of the great strategists of Asian affairs,” Mr Obama said in a statement.

China lauded Mr Lee’s “historic

contributions” to their relationship after the Communist leadership embarked on dramatic economic reforms from 1978.

President Xi Jinping said Mr Lee was “widely respected by the international community as a strategist and a statesman”.

Tributes also came in from a host of international leaders including UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the prime ministers of Malaysia, Britain, Japan and Australia.

Mr Lee, whose health rapidly deteriorated after his wife of 63 years, Kwa Geok Choo, died in 2010, was in hospital for nearly seven weeks with severe pneumonia.

Two years before he died, Mr Lee revealed that he had signed an advance medical directive instructing doctors not to use any life-sustaining treatment if he could not be resuscitated.

He served as prime minister from 1959, when colonial ruler Britain granted self-rule, to 1990, leading Singapore to independence in 1965 after a brief and stormy union with Malaysia.

Singapore now has one of the world’s highest per capita incomes and its residents enjoy near-universal home ownership, low crime rates and first-class infrastructure.

The opposition Workers’ Party, whose leaders were among those harried for years by Mr Lee under his authoritarian rule, joined the rest of the nation of 5.5 million people in mourning him.

“His contributions to Singapore will be remembered for generations to come,” it said in a statement.

On the diplomatic front, Mr



Sri Lanka’s President Maithripala Sirisena (left) confers the honorary military rank of field marshal on defeated presidential candidate Sarath Fonseka (right) on March 22 in the capital Colombo. Photo: AFP



## Afghan women turn out to bury lynching victim

WORLD 16



## Biker gang lends muscle to Putin's cause

WORLD 18



### IN PICTURES

Photo: AFP

Indonesia's President Joko Widodo (left) shakes hands with Japanese Empress Michiko (right), while Emperor Akihito (second from right) shakes hands with Indonesian First Lady Iriana (behind left), upon their arrival at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo on March 23.

### JAKARTA

## Anti-terror police arrest five men over IS links

INDONESIAN anti-terror police have arrested five men who allegedly arranged for a group of mostly women and children to try and enter Syria to join the Islamic State (IS) group, an official said.

The 11 children, four women and one man, detained in the Turkish border town of Gaziantep, are the latest reported example of Indonesians heading to battlegrounds in the Middle East.

Fears have been growing about the influence of IS in Indonesia, which is the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation and has long struggled with Islamic militancy. Hundreds of Indonesians are feared to have joined the jihadists.

In a series of raids in and around Jakarta at the weekend, elite anti-terror police rounded up the five men, who are suspected of helping the 16 people who were recently caught.

The men are accused of involvement in "coaching, guidance, and recruitment of sympathisers of IS to depart to Iraq and Syria ... and the collection and distribution of funds for the activities of IS volunteers in Indonesia", said national police

spokesperson Rikwanto, who goes by one name, late on March 22.

Four were charged specifically with helping arrange documents for the group to depart for Turkey, as well as previously helping another 21 Indonesians who went to join IS.

One of the suspects faced a separate charge of urging people to join IS on his website, as well as creating and uploading a video online of children being trained by the jihadists.

Police did not name any of the suspects. They also confiscated items including nine mobile phones, 8 million rupiah (US\$600) and \$5300 in US dollars.

The 16 recently arrested are still in detention in Turkey.

Jakarta has already banned support for IS, which controls vast swathes of territory in Iraq and Syria, although experts have called on authorities to take further steps to stop the flow of fighters.

Indonesia has waged a crackdown on Islamic militant groups for more than a decade following attacks on Western targets, including the 2002 Bali bombings that killed 202 people.

- AFP

# mourn death of founder

Lee's counsel was often sought by Western leaders, particularly on China, which he identified early as a driver of world economic growth, as well as more volatile neighbours in Southeast Asia.

Singapore-based political analyst Derek da Cunha said, "Lee Kuan Yew gave Singapore an international profile completely disproportionate to the country's size."

But the Cambridge-educated lawyer was also criticised for jailing political opponents and driving his critics to self-imposed exile or financial ruin as a result of costly libel suits.

Singapore strictly controls freedom of speech and assembly. While it has become more liberal in recent years, it still uses corporal punishment and ranks 150<sup>th</sup> in the annual press freedom ranking of Reporters Without Borders - below Russia and Zimbabwe among others.

Phil Robertson, deputy Asia director of Human Rights Watch, acknowledged Mr Lee's economic legacy but said, "It also came at a significant cost for human rights."

He said it may now be time for a national "conversation" on greater political liberalisation.

Mr Lee stepped down in 1990 in favour of his deputy Goh Chok Tong, who in turn handed the reins to the former leader's eldest son Lee Hsien Loong in 2004.

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

Mr Lee retired from advisory roles in government in 2011 after

the PAP suffered its worst poll result since it came to power, getting only 60 percent of votes cast amid public anger over a large influx of immigrants, the rising cost of living, urban congestion and insufficient supply of public housing.

In his last book *One Man's View of the World*, published in 2013, Lee looked back at his remarkable career and concluded, "As for me, I have done what I had wanted to, to the best of my ability. I am satisfied."

- AFP

### Lee Kuan Yew

Iron-fisted former premier of Singapore

#### Key dates

1955 Gets elected to Legislative Assembly

1959 Becomes prime minister after Britain grants Singapore self-rule

1963 Leads Singapore into a merger with Malaysia

1965 Singapore is evicted from Malaysian federation

Singapore becomes an independent nation

1990 Steps down as PM

1990 Serves as government senior minister in advisory position

Mar 23 2015 Dies aged 91



Lee Kuan Yew in 2008  
Photo: Roslan Rahman

Under his premiership:

► Singapore widely hailed as model for development

► Courted foreign capital, used foreign labour to plug manpower gap

► Promoted "nanny state" that hectorated public about spitting on the streets or failing to flush public toilets

► Criticised for his iron-fisted rule, forcing several politicians into bankruptcy or exile

AFP

## United Nations Nations Unies

BUREAU DE LA COORDINATION DES AFFAIRES HUMANITAIRES

OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS

### UNOCHA MYANMAR

#### VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

(UNOCHA/YGN/2015/008)

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) is seeking the applications from dynamic and highly motivated Myanmar nationals for the following vacancy. Detailed terms of reference/ requirements for vacancy can be requested at the UNOCHA Office. The position below is Fixed Term Appointment for 1 year with possibility of extension.

(1) **Grants Management Officer** (NOA, 1 position)

**Duty station: Yangon**

#### Requirements

- Advanced university degree (Master's degree or equivalent) in political science, social science, public administration, project management, international studies, economics, development studies, accounting or a related field. A first-level university degree in combination with two additional years of qualifying experience may be accepted in lieu of the advanced university degree.
- Minimum two (2) years of relevant work experience in areas of project management, monitoring and evaluation, budget management, and/or administration-financing.
- Experience in monitoring, reporting and/or evaluation of humanitarian projects;
- Experience in humanitarian emergencies is desirable.
- Knowledge of institutional mandates, policies and guidelines pertaining to humanitarian assistance is desirable.
- Experience with a UN agency and or an international Non-Governmental Organization is a distinct advantage.
- Knowledge of the institutions of the UN system and of NGOs is desirable.
- Excellent oral and written command of English and Myanmar language is required.
- Knowledge of other local languages an asset.

Candidates should clearly indicate the Vacancy Number and Post Title in their applications, and should submit them together with complete duly filled UN-P11 form, bio-data stating personal details, academic qualification and work experience, copies of educational credentials, and a recent passport sized photograph. Applications should be addressed to:

**Admin and HR Unit, UNOCHA Myanmar  
Room (211), No (5), Kanbawza Street, Shwe Taung Kyar (2) Ward,  
Bahan Township, Yangon, Myanmar (In front of Pearl Condo)**

**Closing Date: Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> April, 2015 (COB)**

**Email: htunn@un.org**

Only short-listed candidates will be notified. Interviews will be competency based.



## KABUL

# Women defy tradition to bury lynch victim

HUNDREDS of people attended the burial of an Afghan woman who was beaten to death and set on fire by a mob for allegedly burning a copy of the Koran.

Authorities announced the suspension of 13 police officers as well as multiple arrests over the lynching, which took place in full view of several police officers and sparked widespread condemnation at home and abroad.

The body of Farkhunda, 27, who was lynched on March 19 by an angry crowd in central Kabul, was carried to the graveyard by women activists amid crowds of men in a rare act of protest in a male-dominated society.

The crowd, shouting "Allah o Akbar" (God is greatest), demanded the government bring the killers to justice.

"This is a crime against this family, a crime against a sister and a crime against humanity," said Bari Salam, a human rights activist.

"All those involved and all those who supported her killing should be brought to justice," he said.

The United Nations said Farkhunda, who was known by only one name, had "suffered mental illness for many years".

But her father told the media his daughter had a diploma in Islamic studies and could recite the Koran by heart. He insisted she was not involved in burning the Muslim holy book.

Farkhunda's brother Najeebullah Malikzada supported his father's claim.

"Farkhunda was a deeply religious girl. She used to recite the holy Koran and pray five times a day," he told the crowd.

Footage of the attack on social media shows a number of uniformed police watching the crowd as they beat her to death, burn her body and then dump it into a river.

"This brutal act once again shows the incompetence of the police force," Mariam Mustafawi, one of those at the burial, said.

"Today our police force is unable to enforce the rule of law. How can they protect us against the enemy?"

President Ashraf Ghani condemned the killing as "heinous" and ordered a commission to investigate the incident.

He said police, who play a crucial part in the war against Taliban insurgents, were not well-trained to contain such incidents.

"Almost 90 percent of the duties of the police today are focused on fighting, which is not their constitutional role. It is not their legal role," Mr Ghani told reporters.

"Focusing on civilian capabilities, on enforcement of the rule of law, is key to us."

In a statement on March 22, the interior ministry said 13 police officers were suspended, including the police chief responsible for the area.

Police separately said they arrest-



Female Afghan civil society activists on March 22 in central Kabul carry the coffin of Farkhunda, 27, who was lynched to death by an angry mob. Photo: AFP

ed 21 people, including eight police officers.

"I will question the police ... We have started our inquiry. Even if I get killed, I won't let any of her perpetrators get away with it," said

General Zahir Zahir, the head of criminal investigation at the interior ministry.

Allegations of Koran burnings have sparked incidents before in the deeply conservative religious nation.

In 2012 the revelation that copies of the Koran had been burnt at the US-run Bagram prison sparked five days of violent anti-US riots and attacks across the country, in which 30 people died. — AFP

## MONROVIA

## Measles epidemic could dwarf Ebola deaths

THE people of Monrovia's Peace Island ghetto, refugees of civil war who found themselves suddenly overwhelmed and outmanoeuvred by the deadly Ebola epidemic, are used to life under siege.

Yet with Liberia emerging from the worst outbreak in history a year to the day since Ebola was first identified in west Africa, the slum-dwellers are facing an even deadlier threat - the measles virus.

Experts say Liberia and its neighbours Guinea and Sierra Leone are ripe for an outbreak that could infect hundreds of thousands, dwarfing the carnage wrought by Ebola.

Death once again stalks impoverished communities like Peace Island, a cramped spit of land surrounded by swamp where 30,000 people sought refuge behind the abandoned Ministry of Defence after Liberia's 1989-2003 civil wars.

By mid-March, coastal Liberia is already mercilessly hot and healthcare workers sweat as they pass through the slum in a mini-truck, calling out to mothers via a loud-speaker to bring out their babies.

"I am happy to have the opportunity to bring my child for the measles vaccine because in this community children are dying," Marie Bassa, 32, said after climbing down from the vehicle with her nine-month-old baby.

The government said on March 20 a woman in Monrovia had tested positive for Ebola, but the case was the first in the country for more than a month and officials said they were not concerned that it would lead to a wider outbreak.

Despite the setback, Liberia is considered to be well on the road to recovery from an outbreak that brought the country to its knees, claiming more than 4000 of the 10,000 lives lost across west Africa.

One consequence of the crisis has been a dramatic drop in

measles vaccinations, with overburdened hospitals unable to keep up, leaving millions of children potentially at risk, experts suggest.

Medical aid agency Doctors Without Borders - known by its French initials MSF - believes that of Monrovia's myriad slums, Peace Island faces the greatest risk.

"We did a survey and we found out that measles is becoming a serious threat to the Peace Island community ... So we decided to launch this campaign in response," MSF vaccination supervisor Denis Besdevant said.

MSF's initial target is to get 700 children aged nine months to five years into its makeshift community vaccination centre, says Mr Besdevant, adding that 250 infants were seen on the first day of the campaign last week.

Aid workers say convincing mothers, already deeply suspicious of Western healthcare, to hand over their children is one of the biggest challenges they face.

"It is not an easy task. Most of the people are saying that the government is trying to bring Ebola back and that is why they are talking about a measles vaccine," MSF's Alfred Godfrey explains.

"We take our own time to explain to them that the sickness that is killing the kids after Ebola is measles. Some of them agree but others don't."

Measles causes fever and a rash, and complications can include pneumonia, fatal brain swelling, blindness and hearing loss.

Outbreaks often follow humanitarian crises, as vaccination rates decline because of violence, fear of infection and health systems that are overwhelmed with casualties.

The west African Ebola outbreak has infected around 25,000 people. Some 852 of those cases have been healthcare workers, 492 of whom have died.

Researchers estimate that measles immunisations in the region - typically ranging between 60 and 80 percent of children - had fallen by 75 percent because of the Ebola crisis.

As a result, 100,000 more children could get measles, in addition to the 127,000 cases already anticipated among children who have not been vaccinated in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia.

Researchers forecast that on top of the 7000 measles deaths that the countries would normally anticipate, up to 16,000 additional children could die from measles thanks to Ebola-related disruptions to healthcare.

Many mothers in Peace Island

have refused help, Mr Godfrey said, but MSF is slowly changing minds by using the mothers of vaccinated children to persuade the others.

Rita Kpepka, 46, said around 10 children in her part of the slum had recently died of measles, many wrongly thought to have been struck down by Ebola.

"First I was afraid. My friend encouraged me to come. She explained to me that it is the real measles vaccine they are giving here, not an Ebola vaccine," said Ms Kpepka, who has a three-year-old.

"I am happy because my kid took the vaccine and she is OK."

— AFP

### Measles

A preventable highly contagious respiratory disease caused by a virus

#### Infection

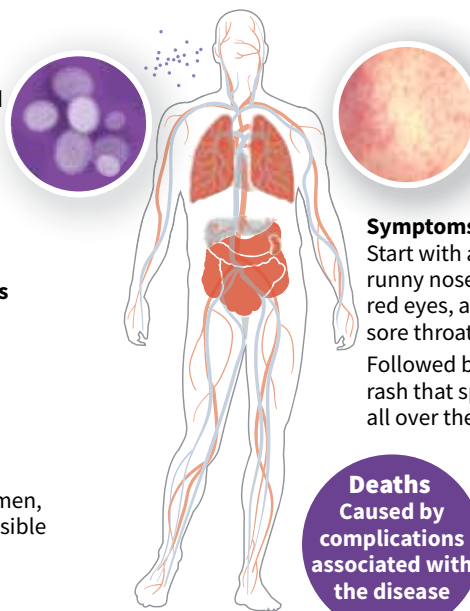
Virus spreads through the air through coughing and sneezing

#### Complications

Include:

- Blindness
- Encephalitis
- Diarrhoea
- Pneumonia

Severe risk to pregnant women, including possible miscarriage



#### Symptoms

Start with a fever, runny nose, cough, red eyes, and sore throat  
Followed by a rash that spreads all over the body

Deaths Caused by complications associated with the disease

Sources: CDC/WHO/History of vaccines.com

AFP

## NEW DELHI

## Hindu group attacks cathedral in central India

INDIAN police said yesterday they have arrested six people after Hindu fundamentalists were shown vandalising a cathedral in central India, the latest reported attack on Christian establishments in the Hindu-majority country.

CCTV footage showed a group of men smashing plant pots, breaking down doors and shattering windows in the grounds of the cathedral in Madhya Pradesh state on March 20.

The right-wing Hindu Dharma Sena group had accused the church of converting around 200 people from local tribal groups to Christianity, although it denies causing any damage to church property.

"We arrested six men last night in connection with the vandalism. We are trying to identify more people ... There may be more arrests," HC Mishra, a senior state police official, said by telephone.

Religious conversions are highly controversial in India, a secular country where religious freedom is considered a fundamental right. Critics say Hindu headline groups have become emboldened since the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won power in India last year.

The latest attack comes at a time of heightened sensitivity over religious freedom in India, where churches and a Christian school have been attacked in recent months.

Masked men on March 21 attacked a church in Mumbai, capital of western Maharashtra state, which like Madhya Pradesh is ruled by the BJP.

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi last month pledged to crack down on religious violence and ensure freedom of worship for all faiths. — AFP



## BEIRUT

# IS attacks aim to offset 'caliphate' defeats

BY launching attacks in Yemen and Tunisia, the Islamic State group aims to demonstrate its ability to expand in order to divert attention from setbacks in Syria and Iraq, experts have said.

"Expansion is their strategy," and the first IS attacks in Yemen and Tunisia allow it to appear omnipresent, said JM Berger, analyst and co-author of *"ISIS: the State of Terror"*.

"Creating the perception of strength is a key part of IS's recruiting and propaganda goals," Mr Berger said.

After announcing its self-styled "caliphate" in 2014, "IS has made formal ventures into Egypt, Algeria, Nigeria, Libya, Tunisia, and now Yemen as part of its effort to broaden its reach around the region," he said.

On March 18, IS claimed responsibility for an attack on the National

Bardo Museum in the Tunisian capital in which 20 tourists and one police officer were killed.

It was the group's first attack in Tunisia, which despite isolated Islamist violence since 2011 had largely been spared the chaos of the aftermath of the Arab Spring.

Just two days later, its suicide bombers struck in Yemen, killing 142 people in mosques in a country already on the brink of civil war and where IS's jihadist rival, al-Qaeda, is well-established.

According to Mathieu Guidere, professor of Islamic studies at the University of Toulouse in France, such attacks aim to show that IS is "capable of striking anywhere and at any time, as it has supporters everywhere, ready to die in order to achieve its objectives".

"These attacks are simultaneously a show of force and a message to the international community that IS has become a global player," he said.

But after lightning IS offensives in Iraq and Syria, accompanied by shocking footage of its atrocities, experts say the image of invincibility that IS tries so hard to project is starting to fade.

In northern Iraq, IS has been chased out of a number of areas over the past few months and Tikrit, one of its major bastions, is under major assault by Iraqi armed forces.

In northeast Syria, the group suffered a resounding setback when Kurdish forces supported by US air strikes

pushed it out of Kobane and several surrounding areas on the border with Turkey.

For the first time, Kurdish fighters have begun advancing on the Islamic State group's main stronghold in the northern Syrian province of Raqa. IS jihadists have also been beaten back by rebel forces outside Damascus and by regime forces to the east in Deir Ezzor.

These defeats have cost the jihadists more than just territory. The battles have killed thousands of IS fighters, and air strikes have targeted lucrative oilfields that had been an important source of its funding.

Now, under pressure from the West, Turkey is tightening control of its border in a bid to stem the flow of jihadists into Syria.

Ankara says it has detained and deported hundreds of potential fighters.

Faced with these setbacks, IS launched spectacular attacks in Tunisia and Yemen to cast its "caliphate" in a more favourable light.

"There's certainly a sense that they are compensating for the defeats they suffered in Iraq and Syria," said Thomas Pierret, an expert in contemporary Islam at the University of Edinburgh.

"If there is an expansion, it's of IS's terrorist activities more than IS's caliphate," he said.

Mr Pierret said the deadly attacks represented IS attempts to offset the fact that "it has no real territorial

**'There is certainly a sense that they are compensating for the defeats they suffered in Iraq and Syria.'**

**Thomas Pierret**  
University of Edinburgh



Tunisian President Beji Caid Essebsi (centre) lays a wreath on March 22 at the entrance of the National Bardo Museum in Tunis. Photo: AFP

presence" in either Tunisia or Yemen.

"To assert itself, IS has no other option than trying to create a media storm in Tunisia by attacking foreign tourists," Mr Pierret said.

In Yemen, the group is "trying to religiously outdo al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula" by attacking Huthi Shiite establishments, he said.

Analysts say it is too early to determine the level of coordination between

those who carried out the Tunisia and Yemen attacks and the IS leadership.

The attackers in Tunisia may have been trained in Libya, as Tunisia said, but other attacks could be locally planned and carried out, Mr Berger said.

What is certain, he said, is that IS is focused on showing signs of expansion beyond Iraq and Syria and "on providing a new headline every week". - AFP

## PARIS

## Right-wing alliance fends off National Front in local elections

FRANCE'S right-wing parties, led by former president Nicolas Sarkozy, appeared to have edged out the far-right National Front to take first place in local elections held on March 22.

A range of polling firms put a conservative alliance, including Mr Sarkozy's opposition UMP, in the lead after the first round of the elections with between 29.7 and 32.5 percent of the vote.

The results put a damper on the recent run of victories for the anti-EU and anti-immigration National Front (FN) led by Marine Le Pen, which had dominated the airwaves during the campaign.

The FN topped opinion polls going into the vote and appeared to be capitalising on France's stagnant economy.

The initial results showed it taking the lead in the March 22 vote in 43 out of 101 "departments", which have power over local issues such as school and welfare budgets.

The party's best results "are concentrated in the southeast, particularly in the cities and near the cities it runs", said political scientist Jean-Yves Camus.

That put it ahead of the ruling Socialist Party of President Francois Hollande, whose failure to address double-digit unemployment has seen him haemorrhage support since he took charge in 2012.

The Socialists took between 19.7 and 24 pc, but a range of other left-wing parties took up to 7.7 pc more, according to pollsters.

The mainstream parties will be able to call on smaller allies when voters return for run-off elections on March 29, while the FN will struggle to find allies.

"There will be no local or national deal with the leaders of the FN," declared Mr Sarkozy immediately after the initial figures were released.

The mainstream parties have closed ranks in recent weeks against the FN.

"Tonight, the far-right, even if it is too high, is not the leading political party in France," said Socialist Prime Minister Manuel Valls.

He called on voters to back either the left or right in next week's second-round run-offs to keep the far right from power.

The FN went into the elections polling around 30pc and neck-and-neck with Mr Sarkozy's right-wing alliance of the Union for a Popular Movement and the Union of Democrats and Independents (UDI).

Ms Le Pen returned to a common theme of her campaign after the results were announced, saying the mainstream parties were conspiring in a campaign of "hate" against her party.

She remained bullish about the initial results, pointing to the fact they were higher than the party's victorious tally in last year's European polls.

"This massive vote for the National Front that is taking root in election after election shows that the French

want to rediscover their freedom," she said.

"Send home those who have brought France to her knees, and bring a new political generation to power."

Despite weaker results on March 22, the FN has still enjoyed a run of strong results in recent votes, coming first in the European elections last year and winning control of 11 town halls.

Ms Le Pen is hoping this momentum will carry forward to a successful run at the presidency in 2017.

Earlier this week, she declared her party would "invade the Elysee [presidential palace]".

Her party has capitalised on anger over France's lacklustre economy, as well as the politically explosive issues of immigration and the integration of Islam into French society after the Paris terrorist attacks.

But it has also benefited from Mr Hollande's disastrous popularity figures. - AFP



French far-right Front National (FN) president Marine Le Pen delivers a speech following the announcement of results for the first round of the French departementales elections on March 22 in Nanterre. Photo: AFP

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Dated: 24 March 2015



## LUGANSK, UKRAINE

# Putin's bikers lend muscle to rebel cause

DRESSED in leathers and camouflage, motorbike gang leader Vitali waves at two charred Ukrainian tank turrets decorating the entrance to his club as he recounts how his group has fought alongside pro-Russian rebels.

"My love for my homeland, for my territory, is my life," he explains as he stands outside his headquarters in separatist bastion Lugansk.

The biker - also known by his nickname "Prosecutor" - is boss of the east Ukraine branch of the Night Wolves motorcycle gang, a collection of Kremlin-loving toughs originally created in Russia that boasts close ties to President Vladimir Putin.

"I'm a Night Wolf, not a rebel," claims the 35-year-old former soldier.

"I'm just defending my homeland," he adds, explaining that his men often work "behind enemy lines".

The leader and a dozen other members of the eastern Ukrainian offshoot of the club have been fighting with the separatists since the conflict with Kiev forces erupted nearly one year ago.

Vitali says the shattered tanks were destroyed by his men during a battle with government troops in Khryashchuvate, a village close to Lugansk that now lies largely in ruins.

Most of the club members - united

by their passion for motorcycles, their love of the "Fatherland" and the Orthodox faith - hail from the Donbass region in Ukraine's east. But others have been drawn to the area from Russia and other former Soviet states to defend what they call "the Russian world".

"Wherever there are difficulties, we are the first to appear. This was the case in the Crimea," explains Oleg "Golova", who travelled from his native Belarus to the peninsula shortly before it was annexed by Russia last March.

"Everything could have exploded just as quickly and just as tragically as in the Donbass," he adds. "We were the first defenders of the Crimea. Even President Putin recognised that."

The Kremlin strongman has not been shy of showing his support for the biker gang, having previously lauded their patriotism and ridden with them on a Harley-Davidson.

He is often photographed alongside its founder and leader in Russia, Alexander Zaldostanov, who goes by the nickname of "Khirurg" (the surgeon). Last week, they both spoke on stage at a rally in Moscow celebrating Crimea's annexation.

"We were fighting here when there were no rebel forces. From Khryashchuvate to Novosvitlivka, to Lugansk



Members of the Donbass Night Wolves motorbike club, including local president Vitali "Prokuror" (second from left), pose at the club's base in Lugansk on March 17. Photo: AFP

airport. We were fighting practically with sticks!" says Roman "Volk", or the wolf, the man in charge of the club's military operations.

Three Night Wolves have died since the beginning of the conflict with the Ukrainian army, members say. Their portraits now adorn the club's common room, surrounded by a wolf skin and icons.

With February's Minsk truce generally holding, the bikers have been tasked with providing safety for public events organised by the rebels and with distributing humanitarian aid.

But in the club's sleeping quarters, Kalashnikovs still sit at the end of members' beds.

"We are ready for anything. We do not believe in the cease-fire," says Vitali, a dagger at his hip.

Close to the common room, a gym has been transformed into a hangar, where around 20 motorcycles and classic cars are surrounded by Russian flags. The collection includes vehicles from the bomb-destroyed Lugansk car museum, taken by the Wolves to protect them from looters.

Following the example of its Russian branches, the club aims to promote the "patriotic education of society and youth" by organising and financing various projects "to unite the Russian world".

"The Soviet Union collapsed and

the Soviet identity disappeared, but the people remained united by the Russian identity," says Oleg "Golova".

"Being Russian is not a nationality, it is a state of mind," he adds, pointing to a large metal emblem created by the gang's leader Khirurg, which he says represents the "best of Russian history".

It combines the double-headed eagle, a Tsarist symbol readopted by modern Russia, and the wheat sheaf beneath a red star from the Soviet crest.

This standard is destined to one day look down on all cities forming the "Russian world", according to the biker. The one stored in the hangar is set for Lugansk. - AFP

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WASHINGTON

# Hardline Republican Cruz confirms will run for US President

US Senator Ted Cruz from the hardline Republican right confirmed yesterday he will run for president in 2016, the first major candidate to officially declare a bid in the next race for the White House.

The announcement fires the starting gun on the Republican race, already expected to be a crowded contest.

"I'm running for president and I hope to earn your support!" he posted on Twitter early yesterday.

The 44-year-old Tea Party favorite has been Senator in Texas since 2012, and is a long-time critic of US President Barack Obama's administration.

He has raised hackles in his own party in recent years when he helped push the US government into shut-down over budget fights, and for opposing Republican leaders on a series of issues.

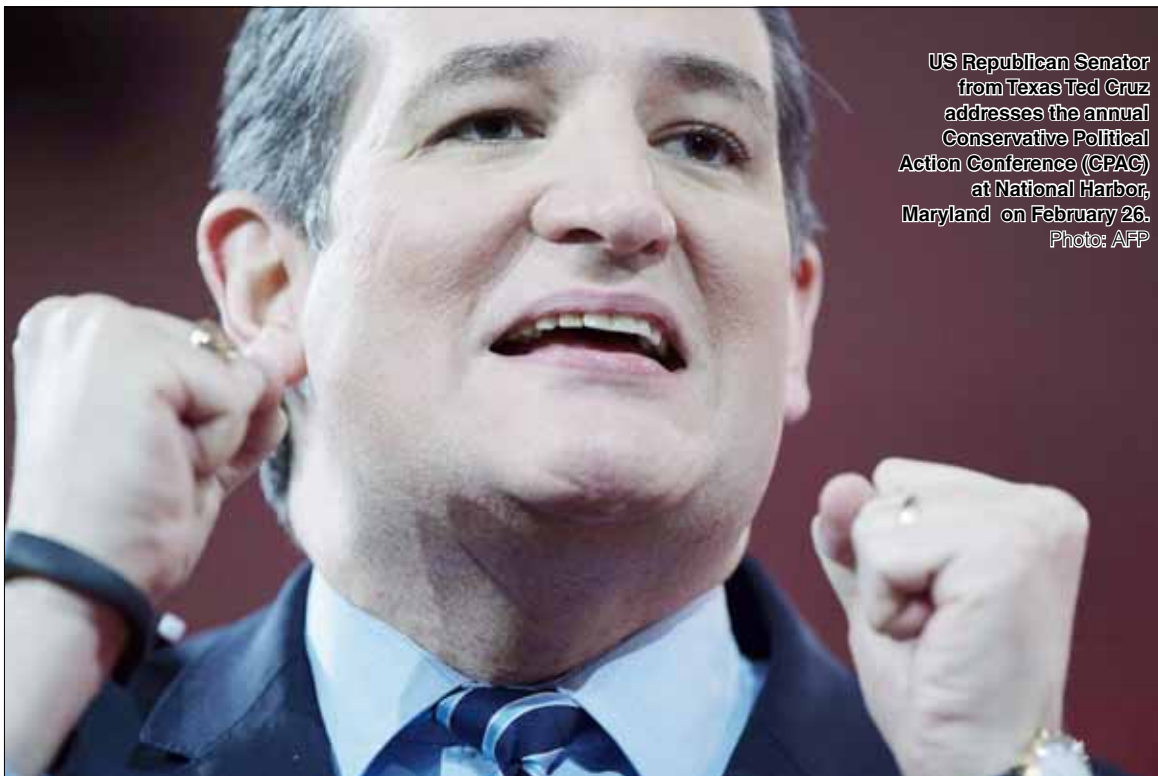
In a 30-second video posted on Twitter, Mr Cruz said it was time to "restore" America, and called on young conservatives to support him.

"It's a time for truth, a time to rise to the challenge, just as Americans have always done," he said in the video.

"I believe in America and her people, and I believe we can stand up and restore our promise.

"It's going to take a new generation of courageous conservatives to make America great again and I'm ready to stand with you to lead the fight."

Mr Cruz's advisors told US media he will aim to raise between US\$40 million and \$50 million for his campaign, and will rely on support from his ultra-conservative and libertarian Tea Party base that voted him in as senator in 2012.



US Republican Senator from Texas Ted Cruz addresses the annual Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) at National Harbor, Maryland on February 26. Photo: AFP

Though the first to officially declare his presidential bid, other Republicans, including former Florida governor Jeb Bush, Wisconsin governor Scott Walker and Senators Rand Paul and Marco Rubio have signaled they too could join the race.

Retired neurosurgeon Ben Carson and former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee are also potential candidates seeking the populist conservative vote.

At the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) last month, Mr Cruz told the crowd that, "2016 looks like it's going to be a crowded race."

On his website, Mr Cruz is described as "a passionate fighter for limited government, economic growth and the Constitution."

A CPAC straw poll conducted in February put Mr Cruz in third place as the party's pick for president, behind

Kentucky Senator Paul and Wisconsin governor Walker.

Bush, the son and brother of former presidents, came in fifth.

Mr Cruz's forthright conservatism and uncompromising positions have often earned him condemnation from leading figures within the Republican establishment.

John McCain, the 2008 Republican presidential candidate, once derided Mr Cruz and two other Tea Party law-

makers as "wacko birds on the right".

"I don't work for the party bosses in Washington. I work for the people of Texas. And I fight for them," Mr Cruz said in a 2013 interview.

A Texas-raised, Harvard-educated lawyer with a Cuban father and an American mother, Mr Cruz was born in Canada.

He was entitled to US citizenship at birth - nevertheless his foreign birthplace could become a point of contention during his campaign for president, a job restricted to natural-born citizens.

Mr Cruz joined George W. Bush's legal team to argue the 2000 Florida presidential recount. He later served under Mr Bush in the Justice Department and the US Federal Trade commission.

In 2003 he returned to Texas and was appointed solicitor general, where he served for five years.

Mr Cruz ran for Senate in 2011 with support from the Tea Party - anti-government, anti-tax, and pro-life and pro-gun conservatives who thrive in politically conservative Texas.

He defeated the establishment Republican party candidate, then steamrolled his Democratic opponent in the 2012 election.

Mr Cruz may have a Hispanic last name and enjoyed plenty of support in Hispanic-heavy Texas when he was elected, but he is a staunch opponent of immigration reform. He responded to Mr Obama's executive action on immigration by urging fellow lawmakers to do all they could to block the measure, branding it "an illegal amnesty". - AFP

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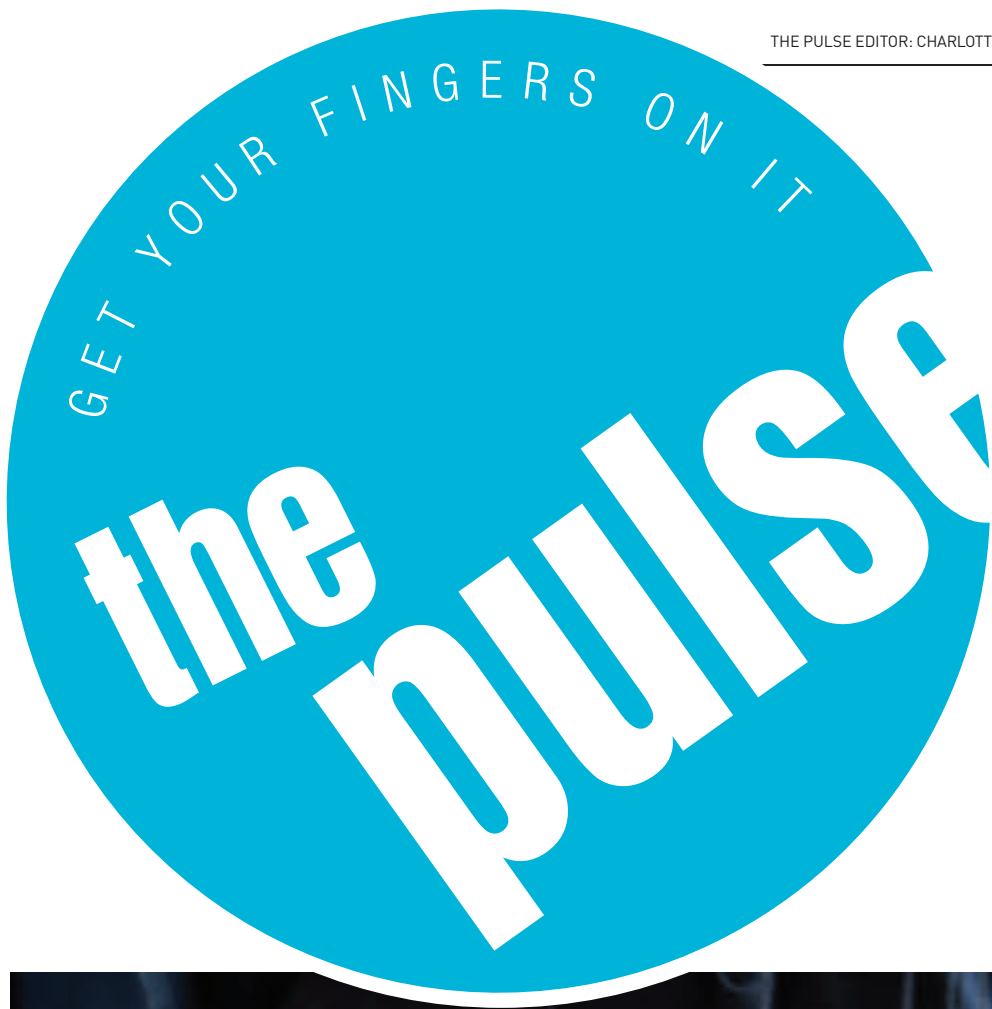
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# Art festi comes f



**Performers  
join commuters  
on a journey  
through the  
looking glass**



# val ull circle



NANDAR AUNG

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**D**AZZLED commuters happily lent their ears, and eyes, to an unlooked-for display of theatrical fireworks on the normally staid Yangon circle line on March 22. "I haven't seen such a big show in my life, especially here," said 28-year-old Ko Thein Soe. "I didn't think they could do this on the train."

But the skits and the characters were in fact taken from life, the result of interviews carried out by cast members with commuters to assemble a series of sketches familiar to any strap-hanger, with extra humour thrown in.

Here are the Tom-and-Jerry chase scenes in which vendors outwit exasperated train guards as they peddle bananas, flowers, birds and those tasty fried insects. And there is the bemused Western tourist (with Richard Clarke as gullibility incarnate) getting down with the 'hood, braving the airless carriage for experience's sake and paying for his dubious K50 snack with handfuls of K1000 notes.

Liam Shea, theatre director with the Yangon Shakespeare School, had tuned up his young veteran players to the sticking-place of perfection at relentless rehearsals in the Laurel Art Academy studio. They were sent out to amuse, entertain and astound, and so they did.

"Stories of the Circle Line" reflected back the daily grind of the commuter with a technicolour patina of wit. If the players were holding up a mirror to the audience, it was a distorting one.

The performance played out between 10am and 2pm, starting on the platform of Yangon Railway Station, and occupying several carriages as they clacked and jolted through Kyeemyindaing, Insein and Paywetsikkon

stations, with a musical accompaniment of classics performed by the Orchestra from Myanmar and Sebastian See Schierenburg.

In a touch of whimsy, one act featured an Alice through the Looking Glass figure who tried to hail the train as if it was a taxi, and follows the spirit Zawgyi aboard the passing carriages, sweeping the real passengers with her.

In the first carriage, the Htwe Oo Puppet Theatre performed with their marionettes without a break for the delight of children expecting just another dull, hot, nerve-jangling ride.

The second carriage was enlivened by a troupe of young actors from Laurel Performing Arts School (plus Mr Clarke), acting out their cat-and-mouse routines. Highlight: the encounter between the tourist and the train guard demanding his ticket. Driven to paroxysms of wrath by the clueless foreigner, the conductor turned referee and tried to send him off with yellow and red cards.

Conceived as a part of the *My Yangon My Home* expo, "Stories of the Circle Line" concluded on Sunday. But the memories could well live on in the minds of commuters now primed to expect something less banal than the clackety-clack of ancient rolling stock on bumpy rails, and endless and multiple unexplained stops between stations.

Who knows what inspiration impressionable young passengers might draw from this jolt of magic, or by what alchemy they might decide that art, theatre and music should form a larger part of their lives, and that the mundane drudgery of getting themselves to the workplace might one day offer something more than mere tedium?



Photos: Zarni Phyo



# Celebrated art festival draws to a close

**CHARLOTTE ROSE**  
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**T**HE Yangon Art and Heritage Festival, *My Yangon, My Home*, concluded on March 22 with an evening of performance art at the British Club led by former political prisoner and artist Htein Lin.

The festival – organised by and supported by the British Embassy and curated by artists Diana

Valarezo, Htein Lin and José Abad Lorente – saw events such as urban photography displays, heritage walking tours and exhibitions in private homes as part of the project *La Casa: Contemporary Art in Domestic Spaces* across the city. A highlight of the festival, which started on March 1, was the March 22 performance by the Shakespeare Schools theatre group on the circle line train.

Speaking at the event, British ambassador Andrew Patrick said he



Performance artist Htein Lin performs at the closing ceremony of the My Yangon, My Home festival at the British Club on March 22. Photos: Zarni Phyo

hoped the festival would become an annual event.

“The best thing about this festival is that it has reached out to people in this country who wouldn’t normally see art,” he said.

The winners of Myanmar Deitta’s “Inside my home” photography exhibition were also announced at the closing ceremony, with *Myanmar Times* photographer Zarni Phyo awarded first prize for his black and white photographs.

“I’m so happy – this is the first award I have ever won,” said Zarni Phyo, who was awarded US\$500 in prize money. “I was really hoping I’d be in the top five, but I didn’t think I’d win,” he added.

Matt Grace, director of

Myanmar Deitta, said the winning photographs “evoked a certain feeling and emotion of Yangon”.

“When you look at Zarni Phyo’s photographs you just know it is Yangon. It couldn’t be anywhere else. And that’s what we were looking for when we launched this competition,” he said.

The shortlisted photographs in the competition were exhibited on the Pansodan overpass across Strand Road for the duration of the festival.

“On the first day of the festival we were putting up the winning photographs over the [Pansodan] bridge and as people crossed the bridge they were all stopping to look at them,” said Grace. “For me,

that was the best thing about this festival: We were able to have an immediate impact on people who would never come to my gallery.”

The evening’s challenging performance art pieces – one of which involved a watermelon being filled with cement – were a memorable end to the festival, though it left some confused.

“It’s a bit weird – I don’t really get it,” commented one guest at the closing ceremony, though he added, “I suppose at least it’s different.”

But guest’s reactions to the festival were overwhelmingly positive.

“The circle line thing was great,” said one. “We never see stuff like that in Yangon.”



This and other photographs by *Myanmar Times* photographer Zarni Phyo were awarded first prize in Myanmar Deitta’s “Inside my home” photo competition. Photo: Zarni Phyo



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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	



# 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
AI 236	2	13:10	14:10
AI 234	1,5	14:05	15:05

GAYA TO YANGON			
Flights	Days	Dep	Arr
AI 235	2	9:10	12:10
8M 602	1,3,5,6	12:50	16:00
AI 233	5	15:00	18:00

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
M 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
M 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



## OLYMPICS

# Uphill race for China's winter

**S**TRUGGLING for balance on the snow, 10-year-old Gu Yutong is at the forefront of China's efforts to lift its winter sports pedigree as it seeks to host the 2022 Winter Olympics.

"I really like skiing, because all young people like to try new sports," said Gu, wearing rainbow-rimmed ski goggles and holding a Chinese flag as her classmates played in the snow behind her.

An International Olympic Committee team visits Beijing this week to assess its bid to host the Games ahead of a July vote that the Chinese capital - which hosted the spectacular 2008 summer Games - is the favourite to win.

Beijing's only challenger in the Olympic race is the Kazakhstan city of Almaty after a string of European candidates withdrew.

But Chinese officials are concerned that their lack of a winter sports tradition might hamper their chances.

The "300 Million People Winter Sports Plan" has been launched in response, to "enhance the public acquaintance about and participation in winter sports", according to the official Xinhua news agency.

"I didn't know how to ski before, but I learnt how to do it over the past few days and I had a great time," said Gu, who is from Yanqing, the county slated to host the alpine skiing portion of the Games.

Participation in skiing remains relatively low, with only 5 percent of people from Beijing - by far the biggest city with nearby slopes - having tried the sport, according to the *People's Daily* newspaper.

Ice hockey is another sport to be



A skier at Yunding Ski Field in Chongli, near Zhangjiakou, in China's Hebei Province. An IOC team visits Beijing this week to assess its bid to host the 2022 Winter Olympic Games ahead of a July vote. Photo: AFP

given a boost. Schools have been given funding to rent commercial rinks, the *China Daily* newspaper reported, adding a "record" 96 teams involving 1500 children had registered with a local Beijing league.

If China does host the winter Games, authorities will also have to contend with far shorter slopes than in the European Alps or North America's Rocky Mountains, much lower annual snowfall, and a fraction of the resorts.

Questions have been also been raised over transportation within the bid area - which stretches over 200 kilometres (125 miles) - as well as

Beijing's notorious pollution and China's lack of top class winter sports infrastructure.

A new high-speed train system is already under construction to slash travel times between key Olympic sites, while officials have promised to confront pollution and build stunning facilities.

In the past two decades, China has established itself as a powerhouse in mainstream sports such as swimming.

But ahead of last year's Sochi Games vice sports minister Yang Shuan acknowledged that it was only a "medium" ranked country in winter

sports.

It won a respectable three gold medals at the last winter Games in Russia, following its "historic breakthrough" with five in Vancouver in 2010 - albeit in a few niche events, notably speed skating.

A third of the 98 events at Sochi are not played competitively in China, Yang lamented, and the country has virtually no bobsleigh infrastructure, let alone a national team.

As well as pushing numbers, the drive to encourage winter sports is also an attempt to breed a new generation of top-level talent.

Previously, officials tried to "create" star athletes in sports where there is little history in China by plucking them from activities the country dominates.

Freestyle skier Han Xiaopeng, the first man to win a Chinese winter Games gold, and upcoming snowboarder Zhang Yiwei had both excelled at gymnastics before they were introduced to the slopes.

Four years after short track speed skater Yang Yang won China's first women's gold in 2002, Han clinched China's landmark men's gold at Turin, a victory helped in no small part by the training of Canadian Dustin Wilson.

Top Chinese skiers look set to continue enjoying the services of foreign coaches.

Ma Shi, who runs a ski school in Zhangjiakou, around 200 kilometres north of Beijing, where the nordic and freestyle skiing events would be held, said: "We are sending our athletes for training in foreign countries such as New Zealand, Austria and United States.

"Once we have the advanced training methods introduced from the foreign countries we will be able to improve to their level and challenge their monopoly," he added.

But foreign coaches themselves doubt whether such goals can be fulfilled in time for 2022.

"Most Chinese skiers see winter sports as a new fashion," said Italian Martina Merlet, who spent six years in China as the first foreign ski coach accredited by the country.

"Once they get to the resorts they might not find what is necessary to transform curiosity into a passion and lifestyle," she cautioned. - AFP

## FOOTBALL

## U22s fail to convince in final Olympic warm-up game

KYAW ZIN HLAING

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THE National U22 team completed their Olympic qualifying preparation on March 22 with a 1-1 draw against the Malaysian U22 side at Thuwunna Stadium, Yangon.

Myanmar skipper Nay Lin Htun opened the scoring in the 18<sup>th</sup> minute but the Young White Angels let their opposition back into the game in the 32<sup>nd</sup> minute through a Shafiq Shaharudil goal from midfield.

The game got scrappy in the closing minutes as Myanmar won a penalty in the 83<sup>rd</sup> minute, that Nay Lin Htun failed to convert. Then in the 90<sup>th</sup> minute both Malaysia striker Adam Nor Azlin and Myanmar defender Phyo Ko Ko Their received their marching orders.

The performance left some fans heading to social media to discuss what a shame it is that the U20 side - who beat Malaysia U22 3-0 on March 19 - could not represent Myanmar in the Olympic and AFC U23 qualifiers that begin on March 27 or June's Southeast Asian Games.

Instead the younger side, under the leadership of German coach Gerd Ziese, left Yangon airport on March 22, heading for their European tour designed to prepare them for the FIFA U20 World Cup that will commence in New Zealand on May 30, when they play the United States.

Even Malaysian coach Mohamed Razip Ismail agreed with the sentiment.

"I'm satisfied with this result. Both Myanmar U20 and U22 played



Myanmar's U22 captain Nay Lin Htun challenges on goal. Photo: MFF/Facebook

in an attacking manner but the U20 delivered more than the U22. The older side is weaker in attack and taking their opportunities," he told press after the game.

He added that he expected both Myanmar and Malaysia would need to up their games before the AFC U23 Championship qualifiers that effectively act as the first round of qualifying for the 2016 Rio Olympics.

Myanmar coach U Kyi Lwin complained of the lack of time to prepare for his series of international friendly matches that saw Yadanarbon FC and Ayeyawady United players leave their club sides for their AFC Cup games to travel to Japan for a 9-0 defeat on March 11. The squad then travelled to Thailand for a training camp and 1-0

defeat on March 18.

"We will try our best despite the lack of time to prepare. These international friendlies have improved the experience of our side and we will continue in our efforts to qualify for the AFC U23 Championship.

After the qualifiers - held from March 27 to 31 in Taiwan - U Kyi Lwin said his side will return to their training camp to prepare for the SEA Games.

All the AFC U23 Qualification tournaments will run concurrently but each group will be hosted in a different nation. Myanmar will feature in Group F alongside hosts Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong and Australia. The group winners and the five out of 10 best runners-up will qualify for the finals in Qatar, where the top three sides will qualify for Rio.

## FOOTBALL

## Platini unchallenged for UEFA presidential position

MICHEL Platini will today be elected to a third term as head of European governing body UEFA, putting him on course to add master sports powerbroker to his status as a football legend.

The 59-year-old, who led France to the European Championship in 1984, is certain to be elected at the UEFA Congress in Vienna as no one from the 54 national federations has dared challenge him.

First elected as UEFA president in 2007, the former Juventus star and winner of three Ballon d'Or titles was returned by acclamation in 2011 and is embarking on a third term with one eye on the leadership of world football.

Platini decided against challenging Sepp Blatter for the FIFA presidency in May. But he is backing the three candidates battling the 79-year veteran.

"I feel very happy [at UEFA]. Perhaps it isn't my time at the moment to go to FIFA. We will see one day if I will go," Platini said last week.

But he welcomed the challenge to Blatter by FIFA vice-president Prince Ali Bin Al Hussein from Jordan, Dutch football federation president Michael van Praag and former Portugal international Luis Figo as "an opportunity to open a debate for democratic reasons."

"FIFA needs new ideas, new programs," Platini added.

In eight years leading UEFA, Platini has reinforced the stature of the Champions League, now one of the world's most valuable sports brands. UEFA says the current tournament will bring in 1.34 billion euros (US\$1.45 billion).

He has also attacked profligate clubs, insisting that they cannot spend

more than they earn under UEFA's Financial Fair Play rules. Offenders face tough sanctions as Manchester City and Paris Saint-Germain have already discovered.

The European Championship for countries is also being reformed.

Euro 2020 will be played in 13 cities in 13 different countries. A Nations League, which offers qualification for the European Championship finals, will from 2018 replace most of the friendlies played by European countries that get little attention.

But the Frenchman has faced criticism, particularly over the award of the 2022 World Cup to Qatar.

Platini was one of the first to publicly reveal that he was one of the FIFA executive members who voted for Qatar at the controversial 2010 meeting.

He says it was to show that football's most important tournament should not be limited to Europe. Allegations of corruption have been made against Qatar's bid, but none against the UEFA leader.

And Platini has been one of the most outspoken calling for the publication of a FIFA inquiry report by former US federal prosecutor Michael Garcia.

UEFA has changed dramatically from the times of Platini's predecessor, Lennart Johansson of Sweden, according to most of its top officials.

"Now UEFA has an 'executive' president who is in the office every day, who gets involved in management. Before him the president had his office in Sweden and it was his number two who followed daily affairs," said one official with experience of both eras. - AFP



## SKIING

# Austrian joy on World Cup slopes

**A**NNA Fenninger ensured double Austrian joy on March 22 after pipping Tina Maze to defend her overall World Cup title to mirror teammate Marcel Hirscher's feat for the men's crystal globe.

While Hirscher had been guaranteed the overall title by default on March 21 after closest rival Kjetil Jansrud of Norway opted out of racing the slalom, there was no such luxury for Fenninger.

Maze had gone into the last event of the World Cup finals with a narrow 18-point lead over Fenninger.

But the Austrian pulled out all the stops in bad visibility down the Roc de Fer piste to win the giant slalom in an aggregate time of 2min 26.91sec, 0.38sec ahead of teammate Eva-Maria Brem, with Maze in third at 0.46sec.

The result saw Fenninger not only leapfrog Maze to the top of the overall standings with a 22-point advantage, but also claim the smaller globe for the discipline's best performer over a thrilling season.

"It's fantastic," beamed the 25-year-old Fenninger. "The battle is until the end, the last race."

"It was hard to stay focused on the skiing because there was so much pressure. I'm happy to stand here as winner. It was a good season and I'm happy about all my races."

Fenninger added of Maze, "She was great. She was fighting so hard and I've never had such a big fight with any athlete."

"In the end she lost the overall by such a small margin. I have to



Austria's Anna Fenninger skis a gate on her way to securing the women's overall alpine skiing World Cup title. Photo: AFP

congratulate her. It was a great season and she had a lot of pressure too."

Fenninger's success came hot on the heels of Hirscher, who had gone into the men's slalom 55 points adrift of Germany's Felix Neureuther.

The German, however, made a

costly mistake on the first leg to allow Hirscher a way in for a third slalom globe.

After finishing third in the first leg, Hirscher produced a near-faultless second run to power to victory in a combined time of 1min 33.53sec to

finish atop the slalom standings on 614 points, Neureuther netting only 22pts for his 12<sup>th</sup>-placed finish to stand second, 23pts adrift.

"It was definitely a tough situation. I am really sorry for Felix as he was so close to his first globe. But you know,

it's part of our sport," Hirscher said.

"I am super happy, because before the race I was in a very unusual position. Normally I didn't stand a chance but the victory made it possible and I'm thrilled."

Hirscher added, "There was no pressure. There is only an opportunity you have when you are in my situation and it's to try to give it 100 percent, ski as fast as you can."

"No tactics. If everything works well it's perfect and if I skied out it would have been okay as well. It's not the end of the world."

Jansrud, who picked up both downhill and super-G crystal globes earlier in the week, said his decision not to race the slalom was the correct one.

"I didn't want any fuss about the overall yesterday. Marcel still had a shot at the slalom title and I thought it would be good to let him focus on it. It just seemed fair," the Norwegian said.

"We all knew that gaining 60 points on Marcel in slalom would be an impossible task for me so I decided to not ski."

"When you don't ski you can't be on the start list so my coach pulled me off the board last night and made it official. It's all good by me."

Jansrud, 29, said his two globes had made it a "great season" for him.

"I don't feel like I am losing out on the overall. I had a good fight," he said.

"Instead of putting all my focus on not winning the overall I'll put it on being really happy with what I have achieved. It has been an amazing ride this season." - AFP

## CRICKET

## At war in the Garden of Eden

FOUR years after it was meant to happen, two of the world's most bitter sporting rivals - New Zealand and South Africa - will face off in a World Cup semi-final at Eden Park.

"When South Africa plays New Zealand, consider your country at war," legendary Springbok Boy Louw once said.

His focus was rugby, but the passion will be no less in today's cricket showdown at Eden Park which serves as New Zealand's rugby and cricket fortress.

During the Rugby World Cup in 2011, the All Blacks and Springboks were expected to meet in a semi-final at Eden Park, but Australia did not follow the script and knocked the South Africans out in the quarters.

But there is no spoiler in the Cricket World Cup and the battle for a place in the final is set.

Eden Park has been the scene of some magnificent battles between New Zealand and South Africa over the years but rarely has one intoxicated the nation with such magnitude as this semi-final.

There have been calls in the news media for a public holiday so the nation can stop and watch.

Although New Zealand and South Africa have both held rugby's ultimate trophy neither has made a cricket World Cup final, further spicing up a match already fuelled by memories of a bitter quarter-final at Dhaka in the 2011 tournament.

Such is the passion generated in New Zealand by their cricketers' unbeaten run through the tournament that they have been elevated in the public eye from second-best to be on a par with the reigning rugby world champion All Blacks.

"I've never been compared to an All Black," a stunned Trent Boult, the leading wicket-taker in the tournament, exclaimed.



Martin Guptill celebrates his double ton against the West Indies. Photo: AFP

According to Kane Williamson there is only one difference in the intensity of New Zealand's rivalry with South Africa in cricket and rugby.

"We've never tackled them on the cricket field," he quipped.

There may have been no tackling in the 2011 quarter-final but there were eyeball-to-eyeball confrontations which boiled over with New Zealand's verbal spray targeted at Faf du Plessis when AB de Villiers was run out.

Du Plessis shoved Kyle Mills, who had brought drinks on to the field, de Villiers returned to support his teammate and eventually the umpires had to separate them.

There are six survivors from that New Zealand squad and seven in the South African squad who will reappear at Eden Park, including de Plessis who has relished the prospect of a rematch.

"This time it will be the other way around. We'll be the team that's on top, and we can do the same to them," he said ahead of the World Cup.

While South Africa started the World Cup justifiably as one of the tournament favourites, despite also wearing the chokers tag from past failures, New Zealand were rated underdogs.

But that has turned around after South Africa lost to India and Pakistan in pool play while New Zealand captured the imagination of the tournament with an unbeaten run to their seventh semi-final, drawing packed stadiums wherever they have played.

When Tim Southee ripped apart England with 7-33, Wellington's Westpac Stadium echoed with unprecedented chants of "Sou-thee, Sou-thee" which became "Mar-tin Gup-till" when the New Zealand opener smacked his record double century against the West Indies.

South Africa meanwhile were made to feel most unwelcome by the crowd when they turned up in Auckland to play Pakistan who won extreme support from a supposedly neutral New Zealand horde.

South Africa lost that match by 29 runs while New Zealand's one previous World Cup outing at Eden Park was their cliffhanger one-wicket win over Australia.

South Africa have won 36 of the completed 56 ODIs between the two but the record at Eden Park is an even 3-3.

New Zealand holds the edge 4-2 in the six times they have clashed at the World Cup including a 49-run win in the spiteful Dhaka quarter-final. - AFP

## RUGBY UNION

## Murray backs Ireland to make World Cup impact

IRELAND scrum half Conor Murray says his side's Six Nations triumph shows they are ready to make a major impact at the World Cup.

Joe Schmidt's team retained the Six Nations title for the first time since 1949 with a 40-10 victory over Scotland in Edinburgh on March 21.

England fell short of the required points-difference total to overhaul Ireland, despite a 55-35 victory over France, ensuring the trophy stays in Dublin.

British and Irish Lions ace Murray has been impressed by Schmidt's no-nonsense approach in overhauling Ireland's game-plan and he backed the Kiwi head coach to ensure his squad are even more finely tuned by the time the World Cup starts later this year.

"We are at a good level anyway, but I still think we can improve quite a lot," Murray said.

"Every game through the Six Nations there have been things we have been frustrated with and we haven't executed quite as well as we wanted to, but overall we are very satisfied with the way we have handled this championship."

"It's exciting that we can improve and with a World Cup

coming up it's a great position to be in."

Ireland will be gunning to top Pool D ahead of the likes of France in the World Cup, to tee up a likely quarter-final against Argentina.

Schmidt's analytical and relentless approach has raised hopes among Ireland players that they can pass the last-eight stage for the first time at a World Cup and Munster star Murray is confident they will do just that.

"Right now we are going to relax and enjoy what we have done, but when it comes to going back to camp and we gather again we will be looking forward to a World Cup and that is really exciting for us," Murray said.

"Constantly through the Six Nations we have performed well, we have played well, but there have been a few areas where we know we can do better."

"That is quite exciting for us as a team with back-to-back championships now."

"We know we can get better and push on. Joe is a world-class coach and there is no secret there."

"The way he has the group organised, it is player-driven as well."

"We take on board what he says and we really believe what he gives us and we have huge belief in the squad at the moment." - AFP



Irish captain Paul O'Connell lifts the Six Nations trophy. Photo: AFP



# Sport

## Myanmar U22 side fail to match younger counterparts

SPORT 26



### SEA GAMES

# A new federation has formed for 2015 SEA Games

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**M**YANMAR will send a Netball team to the 28<sup>th</sup> Southeast Asian Games in Singapore despite no structures for the sport existing in the country until last year.

Although the majority of the national squad has a background in basketball, Myanmar will not enter a team in the women's basketball competition at the SEA Games.

"Our team is formed from basketball and volleyball athletes because netball is a sport with many similarities to basketball. We have collected the tallest and strongest athletes," Daw May Thet Soe, an official of the Myanmar Netball Federation, told *The Myanmar Times*.

Netball - a game played at the elite level only by women - features seven players and is predominantly played in Commonwealth nations. It has only featured once at the SEA games, in the 2001 in Malaysia.

Daw May Thet Soe said the team does not have medal expectations for these games.

"Our team and federation were founded last year to compete in the upcoming SEA Games.

"We cannot hope to medal because our team has only recently been brought together, while Singapore and Malaysia are far stronger. Our first



Myanmar's newest national squad pose with Nila, the mascot of the 2015 SEA Games. Photo: Myanmar Netball Federation

target will be to develop international experience," she added.

What the team are developing experience for is unsure, as apart from when the Games are hosted by the Commonwealth nations of Singapore and Malaysia, netball is unlikely to feature.

The newly formed national side attended the 2014 Asian Netball Championships in Singapore last September where they finished ninth of 10 sides, only avoiding the wooden spoon thanks to their 61-26 victory over Southeast Asian rivals Vietnam.

Myanmar lost all four of their

group games including an 87-20 defeat at the hands of Malaysia and a crushing 11-109 loss to Sri Lanka. Myanmar did not face Singapore but did come up against the only other Southeast Asian side at the tournament when they lost 78-25 to Brunei.

"We derived much experience from

this competition and that will support our campaign at the 2015 SEA Games," added Daw May Thet Soe.

This is not the first time that Myanmar has looked to transferable skills to create a team from nothing. For the 2013 SEA Games hosted in Myanmar, the Myanmar Hockey Federation created a women's squad from footballers.

The team matched the men's achievements - in another sport popular in the Commonwealth - as both won bronze behind Malaysia and Singapore.

Myanmar's female athletes often have full-time positions within departments of the Ministry of Home Affairs, such as police or border control. They then become full-time athletes in preparation for events.

Due to budget constraints however the Myanmar Hockey Federation is unable to send a women's team to this year's Games.

"We plan to pull together a new team next year," U Lu Lu Htaw, vice president of the MHF told *The Myanmar Times*, as he confirmed that those athletes that medaled at the last games are no longer in the sport.

The Myanmar netball team received training from Singaporean coaches for three days last May. Since then two local coaches are in charge of 13-deep squad that will be cut to just eight, Daw May Thet Soe said.

## SEA GAMES SHORTS



### MALAYSIA

#### Squash

There was a shock for senior squad member Mohd Hannan Tarmidi when he was beaten by 18-year-old Mohd Syafiq Kamal, a national reserve player in the final selection trials for the SEA Games competition.

Syafiq claimed the final berth in the squad that is expected to dominate this year's tournament, the only resistance expected being from the hosts Singapore.

"It was just one match and I knew that I had to win to earn the berth. I managed to play my best without any pressure," said Syafiq in Malaysia's *The Star*, fresh from his part in Malaysia's win at last month's Asian Junior Team Championships.

"Although I'm happy to make the SEA Games team, I still need to improve a lot more. Right now, the main focus is to work on my techniques and game plan," he added.

The Squash Racquets Association of Malaysia is reportedly targeting four golds from the five events to be contested at the Singapore Games.

They will compete in the men's and women's singles and team events, but will give other nations a chance to top

the podium by not entering the jumbo doubles event - played on an oversized court.

#### Archery

The National Association of Archery Malaysia will confirm their squad to the SEA Games before April 1.

*Bernama* reported the association's president as saying the athlete's performance at the Bangkok Open that finished on March 22 would be weighed into their decision.

Mohd Yazid Yahya added that the performance of the team's reserve archers and younger athletes had been very promising over the nation's recent National Archery Championship and that too would be factored into their squad selection.

Lau Jiun Sien, 23, won four gold medals at the national championships and was just one of several young athletes to cause a stir.

#### Netball

Netball is unlikely to feature at the 2017 Kuala Lumpur SEA Games if the Malaysian national side does not return from Singapore with a gold medal, reports *The Borneo Post*.

The chances will be very slim for netball to be listed in the 2017 SEA Games in Kuala Lumpur if the national squad does not return with the gold medal at the biennial meet in Singapore in June.

"The SEA Games this time is a very important championship to the Malaysian Netball Association. If they still fail,

I am very worried this will make it difficult for [them] to justify the need and importance of netball to be contested at the 2017 SEA Games," National Sports Council director-general Datuk Ahmad Shapawi Ismail told reporters.

### CAMBODIA

#### Taekwondo

Sam Seavmey, winner of Cambodia's first-ever Asian Games gold medal at the 2014 event, will not be competing at the 2015 SEA Games, reports *The Phnom Penh Post*.

Her decision was made in order to focus on qualification for the Rio 2016 Olympics as the regional competition will not include her preferred weight category.

In order to compete she would have had to lose 5 kilograms (11 pounds) in three months, while maintaining her required fight strength.

### VIETNAM

#### Wushu

Vietnam have set a target of bringing home three Wushu gold medals from Singapore reports Xinhua, two less than their achievement at the 2013 Games.

The lower target does not represent a lower ambition though, as Le Manh Ha, head of the Vietnamese Wushu, explained.

The 2015 Games will not include san-

shu (combat) events for female athletes, a discipline that Vietnam secured two golds from in 2013.

### SINGAPORE

#### Sailing

The Fish and Co Youth Sailing Championships on March 21 acted as a qualification event for the city-state's sailors, reported Channel News Asia.

Boys Loh Jia Yi and Matthew Scott Lau and girls Yukie Yokoyama and Samantha Neubronner met the qualifying criteria for the June Games and won their respective International 420 class competition.

Bernie Chin, gold medalist from the 2014 Youth Olympic Games also sailed his way to a victory in the Laser Radial class.

#### Swimming

Head coach Sergio Lopez expected the times of his swimmers at the Singapore National Age-Group Championships to be faster, reported *Today* on March 23.

He still was reported as saying the general performance was "very good" overall. They included four national records broken at the senior level, including Quah Zheng Wen's time of 25.52 seconds in the men's 50m backstroke, improving on his previous mark of 25.68.

Lopez - who became head coach in January - told *Today* that he believed there to be room for improvement and

that he had perhaps been guilty of not pushing his new team hard enough.

#### Football

The 3-1 defeat of the national U23 side to Cambodia on March 19 has led to raised voices at the Football Association of Singapore executive council, reported *The New Paper*.

The Football Association of Singapore came together for a meeting, where the progress of's side was one of the topics on the agenda.

"That [raised voices] was about the game, and you know how passions can run high," Zainudin Nordin, FAS president, told *The New Paper*.

The president gave a vote of confidence to the now under-pressure coach Aide Iskandar.

"We do believe Aide can do the job, but let's not talk about the gold medal. We just want to get to the final, and do our best," said Zainudin.

#### Water Skiing

Mark Leong, the 16-year-old prodigy, broke his own Southeast Asian and national record in the men's slalom event at the Indonesian Open on March 22, reported Channel News Asia.

"My target is to bring home the gold. My eyes are on the prize. I'll be training my hardest for the SEA Games. I feel that since I'm 16, there's so much more room for improvement and that I've so many more years to better myself with," said Leong, who has suspended his studies for a year to focus on the SEA Games.