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## Dutch queen promotes financial inclusion

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QUEEN Máxima of the Netherlands pushed for greater financial inclusion yesterday, making the case it will be central to making a lasting leap forward for Myanmar and the current generation stands to be the first to benefit.

Speaking at Yangon University's Convocation Hall in her non-monarchical capacity as the UN secretary general's advocate for inclusive development - there was a notable absence of the Dutch national colour orange - she said that while sustainable and inclusive development never happens overnight, there is strong opportunity for Myanmar.

"We also know that by taking the lessons from other countries, you can go faster and evade mistakes made elsewhere," she said.

Myanmar lags behind many of its neighbours in most metrics on financial inclusion - for example, estimates show that only about 5 percent of the population has bank accounts.

While Queen Máxima addressed the public yesterday in speaking on the benefits of greater financial inclusion, industry insiders say she will also bring more specific messages to government officials in meetings this week targeted at funding microfinance and mobile payments.

Queen Máxima was designated in 2009 by the UN secretary general as his special advocate for inclusive finance for development. She was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, worked in the finance industry including for Deutsche Bank, and married future Dutch King Willem-Alexander in 2002.

CONTINUED ON BUSINESS 9

PAGE

9

PHOTO: AUNG HTAY HLAING

Queen Máxima of the Netherlands began a three-day visit to Yangon on March 30 in her role as the UN secretary-general's special advocate for inclusive finance for development. The queen visited a village outside of Yangon during her trip which has included high-level talks with the president and with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

# Ceasefire draft signed in 'historic' agreement

The government and representatives of 16 armed ethnic groups yesterday signed a draft accord aiming to bring six decades of civil war to a close. A final version is expected soon. **NEWS 3**



**WHITE CARD DEADLINE ARRIVES WITH LITTLE SIGN OF WHAT'S NEXT**

NEWS 2



**MALAYSIAN MAN HUNG FOR MURDER OF MEDICAL STUDENTS**

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# Uncertain future for hundreds of thousands as white cards are revoked



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A PRESIDENTIAL order revoking temporary identity papers came into effect last night despite widespread criticism by the international community of the government's move that mostly affects Rohingya Muslims and leaves an estimated 1 million "white card" holders across Myanmar facing an uncertain future.

President U Thein Sein ordered the invalidation of the temporary ID papers on February 11, setting March 31 as the date for their expiry. Holders were given until May 31 to hand in their papers - commonly known as white cards - and undergo a citizen verification process carried out by local authorities to determine their status.

The upper house of parliament had voted on February 2 to approve a presidential proposal that would have allowed white-card holders to vote in a constitutional referendum scheduled



The revocation of white cards stands to affect thousands of people living in IDP camps in Rakhine State. Photo: Yu Yu

full implications of the decision to revoke the temporary papers.

"UNHCR will continue to advocate for the protection of individuals no matter what their citizenship status and for some form of documentation to be given to these people in order for them to enjoy their basic rights and live in a dignified manner," the agency said.

Pierre Péron, spokesperson for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), said in a reference to the government's refusal to accept Rohingya as an ethnic identity in processing citizenship that the UN upholds the right to self-identity.

"We would welcome any process that provides a just and equitable resolution to the citizenship issue in line with international human rights standards," Mr Péron said.

"Many of the 140,000 displaced people and up to 1 million people with undetermined citizenship in Rakhine State are living in dire conditions with limited access to basic services such as healthcare," he said in a statement.

"Restrictions on people's freedom of movement severely compromise their basic rights to food, health, education and livelihood, thus reinforcing their reliance on humanitarian aid."

A senior aid official closely following the issue, who asked not to be named, said the most critical issue for the government to clarify was what kind of document, if any, would be issued when white cards were surrendered. The minimum requirement

would be a document that entitled people to legal residence in Myanmar, he said.

The government said on February 11 that cards would be revoked in a "fair and transparent manner" by local officials, but it has not fully explained what would replace them.

Apart from hundreds of thousands of Rohingya who hold temporary papers, there are also large numbers of ethnic Indian and Chinese white-card holders.

In her March 16 report to the UN Human Rights Council, Yanghee Lee, special rapporteur for Myanmar, said she was concerned about any provision in the government's Rakhine Action Plan that would classify Rohingya as "illegal aliens". The plan has not been made public.

"The expiry at the end of March 2015 of the temporary white cards held by many Rohingyas as identity documentation raises more uncertainties and further increases their vulnerability," Ms Lee said.

The US State Department has also criticised the government's decision to invalidate temporary identity cards. Tom Malinowski, US assistant secretary of state for democracy, human rights and labour, said on February 12 that "invalidating white cards for Rohingya in Burma is counter to the reconciliation in Rakhine and inclusive elections the government says it wants".

White cards were initially issued

from 1993 as a temporary measure pending a process to verify residents' claims to citizenship.

The Ministry of Immigration has given estimates varying from 500,000 to 1 million for the number of white-card holders in Myanmar. Most are in Rakhine, Shan and Kachin states.

Unofficial estimates put the total at 1.5 million. The issue is compounded by large numbers of forged identity papers. Ministry officials were not available for comment yesterday.

Rakhine State's Buddhist majority was angered when the Union Solidarity and Development Party handed out an unknown number of new white cards ahead of the 2010 election, when holders were allowed to vote. The USDP won the elections, which were boycotted by the opposition National League for Democracy (NLD), and took most of the seats representing Rakhine State.

A separate law has forced political parties to expel members who hold associate or temporary citizenship. The move has largely affected the NLD, which says it will help its former members to apply for full citizenship, as well as parties representing Rohingya.

# 140,000

Rohingya living in IDP camps in Rakhine State

for May. But protests largely driven by Buddhist nationalists, monks and parties representing the Buddhist majority in Rakhine State led to a swift government U-turn ordering cards to be revoked.

Uncertainties surrounding the new verification process, which human rights groups fear could lead to widespread denial of citizens' rights, including health and education, have raised tensions in Rakhine State, where communal violence erupted in 2012. Many among the 140,000 Rohingya living in camps the UN describes as "abysmal" say they will refuse to hand in their cards.

The UN refugee agency said yesterday it was still seeking clarification from the authorities to understand the

## Rakhine State prepares to collect expired white cards

U Khin Soe, director of the Rakhine State Immigration Department, says leaders of camps for displaced people have agreed to cooperate with local authorities in collecting expired white cards and starting the citizenship application process.

"We had discussed this with camp administrative officers and representatives. The holders will give back their cards to their respective camp representatives, who will return those white cards to the reception centres opened near the camps," he said.

"In recent weeks we made some education about the deadlines, the processes of withdrawal and application for citizenship by using loud-speakers, pamphlets and vinyl papers in the camps."

The immigration department says there are about 550,000 temporary ID card holders in Rakhine State. Most called themselves "Rohingya", a term the Myanmar government

does not recognise.

Reception centres will be opened close to IDP camps in all townships except four: Marn Aung, Taung Kote, Gwa and Arn.

While many Rohingya have said they will hold on to their cards and refuse to be labelled as Bengali, which could imply that they are illegal immigrants, 65-year-old U Aung Min from the state capital Sittwe told *The Myanmar Times* that he had finally decided to give up the claim to being Rohingya so that his offspring would be recognised by the government.

"I finally decided to surrender the name. For our survival, this will not be very important. I will accept the name Bengali, as the government termed us," he said. "With the name Rohingya, my offspring will not get citizenship if we refuse to deny the name, even if time goes on and I pass away."

After the May 31 deadline for surrendering the temporary documents, the application for citizenship will

begin and the scrutiny board at different levels of townships and states will decide whether to award applicants citizenship or not.

"The parents and grandparents of the white-carded applicants will be carefully checked by the scrutiny board at township levels. They will do so by looking at office records and documents and all other evidence of their history," U Khin Soe said.

"After the township-level boards have checked the applicants, then their findings will be delivered to the central board led by state government's ministers. Citizenship will be given only after these processes are finished by the central board."

U Aung Win said the reason white cards had been given out in the first place was to carry out such a scrutiny.

"Now they are saying they will examine them again," he said. "How many long years will it take to do it again?"

- Lun Min Mang

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# Draft national ceasefire accord signed to end decades of war



EI EI TOE LWIN GUY DINMORE

THE government and representatives of 16 armed ethnic groups yesterday signed a draft ceasefire agreement aimed at ending more than six decades of conflict in some of the world's longest-running civil wars.

President U Thein Sein, whose reformist government sees the agreement as a key step toward holding inclusive parliamentary elections in November, attended the signing ceremony between negotiators for both sides at the Myanmar Peace Center in Yangon, which hosted the talks.

The president said the final agreement would pave the way for political dialogue. The process would take time but will "ensure the peace builders a place in Myanmar's history", he said.

China, which has watched with growing alarm the most recent conflict just across its southwestern border, welcomed the agreement, as did the United States and the United Nations.

The Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT), which signed the draft on behalf of 16 ethnic armed groups, will next take the text to leaders of the groups for their ratification.

U Thein Sein said the nationwide ceasefire agreement (NCA) must "definitely" be signed in April, calling it a "priceless success".

But negotiators for the ethnic armed groups were more cautious, saying they could not guarantee when their leaders would hold a conference to reach agreement, while other ethnic groups outside the negotiating team also had to give their approval.

"We can't say when we can sign the NCA. It depends on the ethnic leaders' conference. The leaders have the power to decide it," said U Naing Han Thar, leader of the NCCT. "This is a provisional agreement ... not a final agreement."

He said that to move forward to political dialogue it was necessary to stop the fighting that was continuing between the government and some groups.

"We cannot say it is a nationwide ceasefire agreement when there has been fighting in some areas. So everyone should understand that we will continue to implement many things," he told a press conference.

Relief and optimism over the signing were tempered by the knowledge that not all ethnic groups were represented at the talks, most notably the United Wa State Army, the Shan State Army-South and the National Democratic Alliance Army, better known as the Mong La group. Ethnic Chinese



President Thein Sein (centre) looks on as Aung Min (left), vice chair of the Union Peace-making Work Committee, shakes hands with Naing Han Tha, a leader of the Nationwide Ceasefire Coordinating Team, after signing a nationwide ceasefire draft agreement at the Myanmar Peace Centre in Yangon on March 31. Photo: AFP

rebels in the Kokang region bordering China, where war erupted in early February, were also absent, and a spokesperson said fighting had continued on March 29.

Despite those misgivings, Vijay Nambiar, UN special adviser for Myanmar, described the ceasefire agreement as "a historic and significant achievement" and a "crucial first stage" toward a dialogue on political and military issues.

"Myanmar is still in a nascent stage of its transition. Today's agreement is a signal that new levels of trust, confidence and cooperation are possible between former enemies and that the seeds of change in Myanmar are beginning to sprout," the UN envoy said.

The US embassy in Yangon characterised the draft as a "potentially historic step".

China's ambassador to Myanmar, Wang Yifan, attended the talks, and a foreign ministry official in Beijing said China hoped the final agreement would be signed as soon as possible "to restore peace and stability to the China-Myanmar borders and the northern part of Myanmar".

The draft agreement followed a speech on Armed Forces Day on

March 27 by Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, commander-in-chief of Defence Services, who called on ethnic armed groups to solve their conflicts with the government through negotiation based on a spirit of brother-

"In implementation of ceasefire and peace processes, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration for security reconciliation are essential," he said, according to a translation of his speech provided by the daily

**'Myanmar is still in a nascent stage of its transition. Today's agreement is a signal that new levels of trust, confidence and cooperation are possible between former enemies and that the seeds of change in Myanmar are beginning to sprout.'**

**Vijay Nambiar**

UN special adviser for Myanmar

hood and trust. He said the Tatmadaw would not tolerate any attempts to turn political disagreements into armed conflict.

The senior general also referred to key issues to be tackled in the next stage of political dialogue.

*Global New Light of Myanmar.*

In order to stop fighting as soon as possible, NCCT members said both sides needed to implement military codes of conduct and form monitoring committees to check on compliance.

The NCCT said it was probable

that the draft could see minor amendments if the non-NCCT members wanted to add or delete certain points.

U Tun Myat Lin, spokesperson for the Myanmar Nationalities Democratic Alliance Army in Kokang, welcomed the signing of the draft accord.

"But we need to check out the final draft of the NCA to see if the contents are compatible with our aims and policies," he said.

U Aung Min, head of the government negotiating team, said the government was ready to adjust the NCA if the NCCT proposed changes.

"We hope there will be no changes over the draft," he said. "We hope we can make the date for signing the NCA when we meet again."

U Aung Min said the government would concentrate first on signing the accord with the 16 groups involved in the negotiations, and then reach out to others. The government has previously rejected a ceasefire proposal offered by the Kokang rebels and imposed martial law in the border region in February.

"Time is running short for us to involve all of them," U Aung Min told reporters. "If we can find time, we'll try to involve the rest."

## Law banning violence against women near completion

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A DRAFT law banning violence against women is nearing completion – and could be a rival to four bills promoted by hard-line Buddhist nationalists that international human rights groups have deemed discriminatory and politically motivated.

Daw May Sabe Phyu, coordinator of the Gender Equality Network (GEN), who has been involved in the drafting of the anti-violence law, says it could make the controversial bills

unnecessary.

"If this law is passed, the four laws [on protection of race and religion] are not needed," she said.

Daw May Sabe Phyu said the government was ignoring women's voices by trying to adopt the four laws, which she says have weaknesses that would be rectified by the National Prevention of Violence against Women bill now being finalised.

"The adoption of the four laws would be very unpleasant for me. Their advocates always say the purpose is to protect women, but in

practice the four laws threaten women's rights," she said.

Against resistance from women's rights activists, the interfaith marriage law and population control law were adopted in February and March.

The National Prevention of Violence against Women bill will be submitted to Pyithu Hluttaw later this year, said Daw May Sabe Phyu.

"The draft is almost complete. We're now discussing the penalty section of the text and will submit the bill to the hluttaw once that is done. We can't say how long the hluttaw might

take to adopt it," she said.

The Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, the Department of Social Welfare, Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation and civil society organisations have been working on the text for the past two years.

"The law aims at preventing all forms of violence. We also need to address the question of public awareness, which took longer," said Daw May Sabe Phyu.

She said it had been difficult at first to engage government departments, but now they were actively involved. "They

are women, and they are interested in writing this law because of their own experiences. Our opinions vary, but our cooperation is okay," she said.

At present, the courts use English Common Law dating back to the colonial era.

Naw Susanna Hla Hla Soe, director of the Karen Women's Empowerment Group, said women had to battle against tradition, cultural discrimination, male domination, lack of access to information and education, and inequalities that had become entrenched by law.

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Archbishop Charles Maung Bo (left) meets Pope Francis at the Vatican on February 14. Photo: AFP

# Myanmar's first cardinal strives to be 'a voice for the voiceless'



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WHEN Catholic Archbishop Charles Maung Bo was appointed cardinal by Pope Francis on February 14, there was a collective sense of pride in Myanmar – similar to 1961 when U Thant was made UN secretary general – that one of the country's sons had been elevated to the pinnacle of the international arena.

During the Vatican ceremony in which Father Charles officially became Myanmar's first cardinal, Pope Francis whispered something in his ear that sounded rather like "go for it." It was a special moment of empowerment that Father Charles says he won't forget.

Pope Francis, who is said to be contemplating a historic visit to Myanmar next year, also whispered that Father Charles was receiving the red robes of a Catholic cardinal – red as in the colour of blood. "You should be ready to give up your life," the pontiff told him.

"I was elated and happy and excited in Rome on February 14," Father Charles told *The Myanmar Times* last week. "I felt a sense of responsibility. The thoughts that came to my mind were my country's situation and the needs of the people. I wanted to make a statement that I had to be a voice for the voiceless. It was a moment of taking responsibility."

Speaking just days after UN special rapporteur Yanghee Lee reported "a growing atmosphere of fear, distrust and hostility" in Myanmar, particularly between the Buddhist majority and Muslims, Father Charles said promotion of interfaith dialogue would be high on his agenda.

He also intends to be as outspoken as ever on the country's failure to tackle crippling poverty.

"First we have to address the issues, obstacles and difficulties that have to be overcome between the ethnic groups and the religions," he said. "Myanmar people in history have been

polite and docile. We need to see the different religious leaders getting together, understanding each other, discussing things and doing something."

"In Myanmar there's very little concept of inter-religious dialogue," he added.

Turning to land rights, the cardinal did not mince his words.

"When cronies have everything and the poor have nothing and lose their lands, and the minorities don't have equal treatment, problems are solved with violence instead of negotiation," he said. "Confrontation doesn't help. Collaboration is better. When you confront people you irritate them."

His primary agenda is the same as that of the Catholic Church itself, he said: service to the poor. "We must

**'The Catholic Church was an early leader to allow mixed marriages. Let us solve our problems, not prolong them.'**

Charles Maung Bo  
Catholic cardinal

give the priority to the poor, the last, the lost and the least. Forty percent of our schools in Myanmar have no proper roofs."

Father Charles said the Catholic Church, which numbers some 800,000 members in Myanmar, should itself be poor and should be constituted for the poor.

"I'm not a politician," he said. "I'm gathering basic data on how to lead, how we could help guide the nation."

Referring to communal tensions in Rakhine state and the plight of some 140,000 Rohingya Muslims held in camps since the eruption of

violence in 2012, he commented, "We should understand that the Bengali are a stateless people and we should have concern for them on humanitarian grounds. At the same time, we should understand that many of our Myanmar people are not educated and could easily be given to intolerance."

Concerning the controversial race and religion laws being pushed by Buddhist nationalists, he said Myanmar must seek "cohabitation with all races and religions."

"The Catholic Church was an early leader to allow mixed marriages. Let us solve our problems, not prolong them," he urged.

The cardinal expressed surprise that Pope Francis had appointed him and two other Asians as cardinals.

"Traditionally, archbishops were expecting people from America or Italy. Now we have cardinals from Myanmar, Vietnam and Thailand. The pope gives priority to the poor and the least and the last by choosing new and different representatives for the universal church," he said.

Father Charles has long been familiar with the difficulties of crossing religious fault-lines and military frontlines. During his years of service as a priest and bishop in Lashio from 1976 to 1996, he moved easily among the various and opposing groups in northern Shan State.

"The authorities never bothered us," he said. "They never interfered with the appointment of the bishops. We never had any real direct persecution of the church, although we did have some men from Military Intelligence coming to mass on Sundays."

"I've never been questioned by government officials," he added.

"I've been quite outspoken in my sermons regarding the situation of the regime, and yet nobody came to ask me any questions about it. I wish they would have," he laughed.

He said Lashio was a mix of ethnic groups and religions, including Kayin Baptists and the Chin Baptists.

"There were a lot of rebels in my area; it was almost the centre of the [Kachin Independence Army]. Very

seldom would Burmese soldiers come, but all the Burmese soldiers really respected me because they found out I am Burmese and from Shwebo. It was an exciting time and in 1992 we had the Kin Yun Peace Talks. That was the opening for us to enter [the Wa region]," he said.

The Catholic mission in the Wa region started by Father Charles and the Salesian fathers remain there to this day.

Father Charles was born in 1948 in Shwebo district. "[Many people in that area] are descendants of the Portuguese who came to this land 400 years ago," he said. Recalling the peaceful existence between long-established Catholic and Buddhist families in that region, he added, "There were plenty of intermarriages and everybody donated to each other."

Recalling his childhood in a poor family, he said, "My father was a farmer and my mother was a tailor. I was the youngest and naughtiest of five children." His father died when he was two years old and the young Charles and his siblings were sent to a Salesian boarding house in Mandalay where he became inspired by the dedication of the fathers who taught them alongside "street kids and abandoned kids."

At age 12 he moved to Nazareth Aspirantate, a Salesian seminary in Anisakan village near Pyin Oo Lwin.

But in 1965 private schools were nationalised under U Ne Win's regime, and foreign missionaries were expelled in 1967.

Father Charles was ordained as a priest in 1976, first serving in a parish in Shan State. He became bishop of Lashio in 1990.

He said he has received positive signals from the government over his plans to open more private schools.

"From the time of the Burmese kings, the Catholic missionaries have been educating Burmese families. All these years we have been a part of building the nation, and people know it and they treat us with respect," Father Charles said. "With courage, I tell them that if you want to improve education, give us back our nationalised schools."

# US reiterates support for students

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THE United States once again stood behind student protesters in a statement on March 30 calling for the government to immediately release jailed activists.

Directing the remarks to the "events of March 5 and 10" when police and plain-clothed forces brutally cracked down on rallies against the National Education Law, the US State Department requested the "unconditional release of all individuals being detained in the country as a result of exercising their right to peacefully assemble."

Washington, which had released an initial condemnation of the attacks on students on March 11, also called for an "impartial and credible investigation" into the clashes to hold those responsible for the "excessive force" accountable.

In response, a spokesperson for the President's Office said the government has more important things to worry about than the American statement of concern.

"I think nothing about the statement," said spokesperson U Ye Htut. "We have to focus on gaining peace and stability for the people. It is the priority."

The International Federation for Human Rights meanwhile called it "unacceptable" that while students are facing charges, no police have been investigated.

"The brutal crackdown on the student protests was reminiscent of the darkest days of military rule," said Andrea Giorgetta, the head of the federation's Asia desk.

"It showed that despite the narrative of sweeping reforms, nothing has changed in the modus operandi of Myanmar's security forces."

Parents of detained student activists said that while they appreciate the international community's support, they do not expect demands for an impartial and credible investigation to be met.

"None of the government's investigating commissions have produced results that satisfy the people," said Daw Thanda, mother of detained student union leader Ma Phyo Phyo Aung.

A total of 80 demonstrators from the Letpadan education protest, including Ma Phyo Phyo Aung, were each slammed in court on March 25 with five charges that could result in a six-year prison sentence.

Students who were released from jail on bail said they were not given proper food or any medical attention while in detention.

"The police beat and kicked us with their boots so everyone was injured," said Ye Min Aung, who was released on March 24 after two weeks of detention.

"Even after we were arrested we were insulted with rude words while in custody."

# Report on attack against protesters submitted

Commission's findings presented to president but have not been released to public



YE MON

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AN independent Yangon Region parliamentarian has called for the release of a report on the violent dispersal of demonstrators on March 5 by a quasi-official civilian force. The report, compiled by a commission of inquiry headed by Deputy Minister for Home Affairs Brigadier General Kyaw Kyaw Tun, was yesterday submitted directly to President U Thein Sein.

But commission secretary U Saw Tun Aung Myint, who is also Yangon Region minister for Kayin ethnic affairs, told *The Myanmar Times* on March 30 that the commission was worried it might not meet the March 31 deadline set by the president for submission. "We need more time to complete the report," he said, suggesting that the commission might request an extension of the deadline.

The incident under investigation occurred on March 5 when a protest in front of Yangon City Hall calling for the amendment of the controversial National Education Law was

broken up by men in civilian clothes wearing red armbands emblazoned with the word "duty". The group is thought to be Swan Arr Shin, a para-military force previously used by the military regime to crack down on civilian protests. It has also recently attacked striking garment workers.

An official with the Office of the President, U Zaw Htay, admitted on Facebook that the government had organised the civilian force, posting an image of the section of the colonial-era Code of Criminal Procedure that permits it to raise a male civilian force to maintain law and order.

Yesterday U Saw Tun Aung Myint said, "The report was submitted to the president by our commission chairman. We don't have permission

to release the report to the public. This can be done only by the president. Our duty was just to investigate."

The commission was asked to advise on whether the security forces acted properly in dispersing the protesters and whether the authorities responsible acted in line with legal procedures, as well as to propose measures to prevent such cases in the future.

"We interrogated the men wearing the red armbands and other witnesses of the March 5 incident," said U Saw Tun Aung Myint.

It emerged yesterday that three journalists interviewed by the commission had complained that their testimony was not recorded properly.

Ko Nyan Hlaing Lin, editor-in-charge of *Pyithu Khit* (The People's Age), said he only signed his testimony as accurate after asking the commission to rewrite the original account of his testimony. "I checked three times to correct it," he said.

Independent MP Daw Nyo Nyo Thin said the president or the commission should release the report to the public.

"The report isn't top secret," she said. "If it's released, people will know whether the commission is fair or not."

**'We interrogated the men wearing the red armbands and other witnesses of the March 5 incident.'**

**U Saw Tun Aung Myint**  
Commission secretary

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# Hospitals wary of emergency cases

**OLIVER SLOW**  
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DESPITE the adoption last year of a law requiring private hospitals and clinics to treat emergency cases regardless of whether a police report could be involved, many facilities continue to turn away patients in such cases, or are unaware of the new guidelines.

The Emergency Care and Treatment Law enacted last December requires both public and private hospitals to prioritise patients who require emergency care. According to the law, if a private hospital admits a patient in need of emergency care, the hospital must ensure that the patient is stable before transferring them to a public hospital.

This provision is intended to remedy a commonplace practice where private hospitals await a police report before offering treatment to a patient in need of emergency care. The delay can – and has – endangered lives, according to health professionals.

“In the past, if the police were involved in a case – a stabbing, traffic accident or mugging – no one in a private hospital would touch it,” said one foreign doctor, who requested anonymity.

“The patient had to be sent straight to a public hospital, which would then inform the police,” he said.

Confusion still surrounds the issue, according to the doctor, and private hospitals remain reluctant to accept patients involved in police matters and also wary of having to later serve as a witness.

When Spanish tourist Carlos Perez



People walk past the entrance to Yangon General Hospital's emergency room. Photo: Boothee

was attacked in a violent mugging outside Bago at the end of February, he experienced some of the repercussions of the holdover attitudes toward emergency cases.

While Perez was admitted to Yangon General Hospital for initial treatment, according to friends who were with him, he left the hospital without being officially discharged. He was then

rejected by two private hospitals before finally being admitted by a third.

Perez isn't the only patient needing emergency treatment who recently struggled to get care at a private facility. Dr Htoo Maung Ohn, medical director of the Emergency Department at Parami Hospital, recalled a South Korean man who was hit by a car in Yangon.

According to Dr Htoo Maung Ohn, the man was admitted to a public hospital, but was later discharged by his family because of the poor quality of treatment. He was then rejected by some private hospitals before Dr Htoo Maung Ohn was contacted to address the man's serious injuries.

“The new law says that anyone can treat a trauma case. Even if you are a

bystander, you have to take the patient to hospital,” he said.

According to the December law, obstructing a hospital-bound patient is punishable by a US\$100 fine and a year in prison.

“At many hospitals, people might be aware of the law, but they are not ready to treat patients in emergency cases, or they are afraid of being mixed up in a legal case. But hospitals have to act in the best interests of the patient,” he said.

With just three government-run hospitals equipped with emergency rooms and emergency specialists, the public sector also doesn't have the capacity to take all the emergency cases, said Dr Maw Oo, emergency medicine specialist at Yangon General's Emergency Department where about one-quarter of the cases involve police reports.

Dr Maw Oo, who was involved in the emergency care law's drafting process, said that while the law to transition some of the case load to the private sector has been introduced, the by-laws have not yet been enacted to bring the provisions into full force.

Funding also needs to be allocated to implement the law, which promises compensation to those who transfer emergency patients to the hospital.

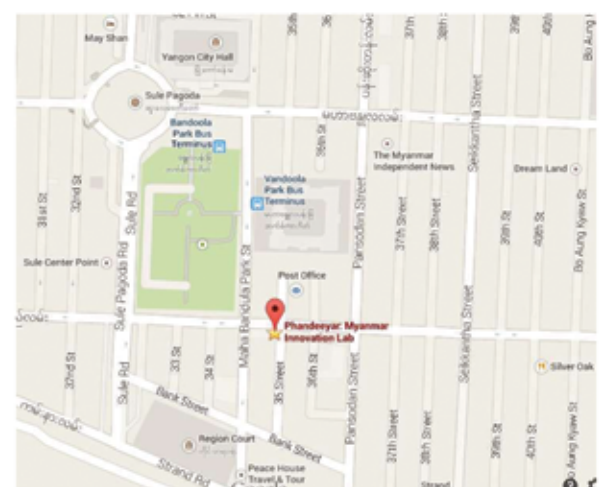
“The law is designed to support the smooth transfer of emergency patients to public and private hospitals,” he said. But he also acknowledged that more work is needed before the legal provisions become common practice and patients urgently needing medical attention don't routinely get turned out in the cold anymore.

## 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



**YANGON:** 6-8 PM, Thursday, April 2, Phandeevar, The Myanmar Innovation Lab, 11th Floor, MAC tower, 561 Merchant Road, Yangon  
**MANDALAY:** 6-8 PM, Tuesday, April 7, Mandalay University Research Center, Mandalay University Campus, Mandalay.

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

# Views

## ‘Protestant Buddhism’ of the West emphasises scientific over monastic

The Western conception of Buddhism differs significantly from the manner in which the religion has been practised for centuries in Asia

PAUL FULLER



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**T**HE modern Western understanding of Buddhism is sometimes in conflict with those forms of Buddhism practised in Asia. There is the expectation that all Buddhists – monks and laypeople – will regularly engage in meditation. For those who practise Buddhism in the West, meditation is an essential element. Buddhism will often be described as a spiritual path, more of a philosophy than a religion. This representation of Buddhism has become so entrenched in the modern Western imagination that it is not usually challenged.

Modern forms of Buddhism popularly practised in the West are not always concerned with important themes prominent in Asian Buddhism. Modern Buddhism lessens the focus on cosmology and the protective value of the Buddha and his teachings. Instead, it emphasises the rational and scientific aspects. The claim is often made that Buddhism is essentially scientific and rational, although the validity of this claim is far from clear. In a sense, our modern understanding of Buddhism is based on what Buddhists say they do, rather than on what they actually do.

The term used to describe this phenomenon is “Protestant Buddhism” because it resembles many of the key features of Protestant Christianity following the bias of many original scholars of Buddhism. This romantic notion has influenced much of our understanding of Buddhism since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The defining characteristic of Protestant Buddhism is the importance given to the laity and the subsequent lessening of the importance of the Sangha, the Buddhist monastics. The laity is given this enhanced importance and this is arguably somewhat different from all previous forms of Buddhism. This movement is then lay in leadership.

Another feature of Protestant Buddhism is a suspicion of hierarchies. By this I mean that it focuses on a supposed egalitarian philosophy in Buddhism. Buddhism, in this understanding, has no religious elites in the Sangha who are closer to Nibbana than other members of Buddhist society. All are of an equal standing on the religious path. In Buddhist culture there is a structure in which the monastic is a field of merit and on the path to Nibbana, and the layperson aspires for a future rebirth in which the life of the monastic might be possible.

As I have said, Buddhism in this modern manifestation is all about meditation. Meditation is the essential practice of the modern Buddhist. However, traditionally lay Buddhists did not meditate. Those who wished to do so became monks, and even then relatively few monks devoted their lives to meditation. In Protestant Buddhism, as pioneers in its description like Richard Gombrich have explained, meditation is learned from a book, not from a teacher.



A monk marks the full moon day of Kason by pouring water on a Buddha image at Shwedagon Pagoda. Photo: AFP

Protestant Buddhism tends toward a type of fundamentalism that is sometimes in conflict with traditional forms of Buddhism. It teaches that Nibbana is a goal that can be achieved in this life, rather than being a distant aspiration. The layperson can strive toward Nibbana and is not dependent on the monastic for either religious instruction or merit.

Also, Protestant Buddhism has the persistent mantra that the Buddha was an ordinary man who overcame all suffering. In conflict with this understanding is the traditional idea that a Buddha is not an ordinary human being. A Buddha lives for countless lives as an animal, a human or a god in order to generate enough merit to be born a person who can become a Buddha.

An interesting feature of Protestant Buddhism is its use of certain symbols that are relatively new in Buddhist history. Notable among these is the so-called Buddhist flag (sometimes called the *sasana* flag). This flag, well known throughout Buddhist Asia, was designed by a Sri Lankan, JR de Silva, and an American, Henry S Olcott, to mark the revival of Buddhism in Ceylon, now Sri Lanka, in 1880. One could say it is an anti-colonial or even an American invention. It was accepted as the international Buddhist flag by the 1952 World Buddhist Congress. The flag itself is an uncomfortable creation, if

I can use these terms, involving many historical, political and religious ideas.

The primary text of Protestant Buddhism is the *Kalama-sutta* with its supposed scientific and empirical advice to rely on “reason” and “logic” in the search for truth and salvation. The text is often described as containing the Buddha’s advice on the superiority of reason and scientific enquiry. However, this is a highly selective reading of the text, which more correctly focuses on the nature of ethical and wholesome actions.

U Nu, the first prime minister of independent Burma, was a devout Buddhist, but his understanding of Buddhism shows many of the trademark themes of “Protestant Buddhism”.

**U Nu explained that many practices, such as making offerings, acquiring merit and performing acts to counteract ill luck, are not important parts of what Buddhism is really about.**

In interviews, U Nu described his understanding of his faith. He explained that many practices, such as making offerings, acquiring merit

and performing acts to counteract ill luck, are not important parts of what Buddhism is really about. For U Nu, the focus of Buddhism is meditation “which will deliver one from all suffering”. U Nu stated that he became a “true Buddhist” only when he learned that “the truths of Buddhism can be tested” as in the selective reading of the *Kalama-sutta*. He stated that the Buddha said, “You must not believe anything that you cannot test yourself.”

In this sense, Buddhism is not based on a set of true doctrines, but a set of theories comparable to scientific theories that can be empirically tested and accepted or rejected. One is a “genuine Buddhist” when one understands Buddhism in this

be practised at home. One need not be a monk to meditate. However, in his private practice it is well known that U Nu practised more devotional forms of Buddhism.

U Nu also argued that anyone can become a Buddha – a version of the “Buddha was an ordinary man” or “the scientific Buddha” idea explored most recently by the American scholar Donald Lopez. Buddhism is reduced to a set of key theories that are comparable to scientific ones, and the Buddha to an ordinary man, not a perfected ethical being.

In some ways, none of these tendencies that are prominent in Protestant Buddhism are surprising. However, one must stress that the rational, scientific, egalitarian version of Buddhism is a recent phenomenon emphasising themes either latent, or more likely unimportant, in traditional forms of Buddhism. At worst, they might be incredibly misleading and perplexing to those observing Buddhism as practised in Asia and lead us to ridicule elements in Asian Buddhism that are not scientific, rational and egalitarian.

In the current religious climate, such preconceived notions about the nature of Buddhism might lead observers to misunderstand the underlying reasons that explain why one can be involved in blasphemy against Buddhist sacred objects.

way, and this is what attracted U Nu to Buddhism. Doctrines are tested in meditation. Further, meditation need not take place in a monastery but can

# Business

## Trade with Thailand strong despite closures, though smuggling persists



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A LOW-INTENSITY conflict in areas of Kayin State has not reduced bilateral trade, with the latest Ministry of Commerce figures showing a recent upsurge in commerce with nearby Thailand.

The trading gates including the Myawaddy crossing are periodically shut by either side. Most recently, *The Bangkok Post* last week said, Myanmar soldiers closed ports on the Moei river in retaliation for tightened oil transport control on the Thai side, though the main bridge crossing remain opened.

The closure lasted only about a day, though, before commerce was restarted.

Previous closures, such as some in 2011, lasted much longer, more severely affecting trade volumes and leading to more complaints from traders.

Ministry of Commerce sources have also said previously that some armed ethnic groups are involved in trade, allowing for transport to cross the border at points they control in return for a fee.

U Khin Zaw Oo, a resident of Myawaddy border town and well-known local writer, said trade seems to be consistent except on the odd occasion the border is closed.

"There are some conflicts and the gates close temporarily, but this hasn't had a large impact on trade so far," he said.

U Khin Zaw Oo added the closing border can be a larger problem for visitors hoping to pass through.

Even with the difficulties, official figures show an increase in cross-border commerce with Thailand.

Ministry of Commerce figures show border trade between the two countries totalled US\$800 million in 2014-15 fiscal year, an increase of about one-third on 2013-14 figures of about \$600 million. Myanmar exports far less than it imports, having shipped \$179 million worth of goods to Thailand in the fiscal year



A car travels through the Myanmar gate at the Myawaddy crossing with Thailand. Photo: Kaung Htet

ending yesterday.

U Win Myint, director of the ministry's Trade Promotion Department, said that while trade is increasing, there is still a large problem with illegal commerce.

"We have found that trade is increasing, but the situation [of illegal trade] is not getting better," said U Win Myint. "We find more illegal trade and some trade participants avoid paying tax."

Ministry of Commerce adviser U Maung Aung said Thailand's official statistics show trade is about nine times larger than Myanmar's statistics show, indicating Myanmar needs to do more to control illegal trade.

There are also 19 official border gates in Thailand, but only four in Myanmar connecting with its eastern neighbor - Myawaddy in Kayin

State, Myeik and Kawthaung in Tanintharyi Region, and Tachileik in Shan State.

There are also a number of unofficial routes between the two countries, as much of the border area is sparsely inhabited - or observed by authorities.

Thousands of tonnes of agricultural products, particularly rubber, are thought to be illegally shipped to Thailand.

In return, unregulated products, including some unsafe foods and drugs, enter without barriers.

"The figures from the two sides are different every year," he said. U Maung Aung added there are plans such as increasing the number of legal border crossings to increase legitimate commerce.

A route to the Thai border will be opened at Phayathonesu in Kay-

in State, while another gate will be opened in Kayah State.

In addition, a new road to the Myawaddy crossing will be opened

**'There are some conflicts and the gates close temporarily, but this hasn't had a large impact on trade so far.'**

U Khin Zaw Oor  
Border-area resident

in the next few months which will significantly decrease transportation time to as little as 45 minutes. It can currently take half a day to make the trip.

"Trade with the Thai border will hopefully increase to be as much as border trade with China after all the plans have finished," he said. China is by far the largest source of overland trade with Myanmar, constituting about 80pc of the total, while Thailand is next at 15pc.

Ministry of Commerce director U Win Myint said the Myawaddy crossing will also be equipped with X-ray machines and scales in a bid to decrease the amount of time it takes to check out cargo. He said it could be decreased to as little as 15 minutes, from the current norm of two to three hours, assuming 650 trucks crossing a day.



The Best Western hotel in Chinatown before its unveiling.  
Photo: Aung Khant

## Best Western opens second property in Yangon near Chinatown

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BEST Western International yesterday opened its hotel near Chinatown, the second Yangon hotel for the Arizona-based brand.

It aims to take advantage of the rising number of international travellers to the country, according to a press release yesterday.

"Myanmar is one the world's most exciting emerging destinations and we are delighted to launch the Best Western Chinatown Hotel," said Ron Pohl, Best Western International's senior vice president

of brand management and member services.

The Best Western Chinatown Hotel is located at the intersection of Anawratha and Lanmadaw Roads in Latha township.

It boasts 91 rooms, including international-standard amenities such as minibars, tea and coffee making facilities, free WiFi, and bathtubs.

"International visitor arrivals to the country are increasing exponentially, and as Myanmar's largest city and economic hub, Yangon is at the very heart of this growth," said Mr Pohl in the release.

"The launch of this exciting hotel will provide travellers with another modern, international accommodation option in the heart of the city."

Best Western was one of the first international hotel groups to enter, and re-enter, Myanmar, after the country opened up to international community.

It launched its Best Western Green Hill Hotel in Yangon in late 2013.

The company has also announced plans for new hotel openings in Mandalay and Nay Pyi Taw in the near future.



## Solar Impulse 2 in China after Mandalay stop

**BUSINESS 10**



## Ben Bernanke joins the blogosphere one year after leaving the Fed

**BUSINESS 12**

### Exchange Rates (March 31 close)

| Currency         | Buying | Selling |
|------------------|--------|---------|
| Euro             | K1132  | K1137   |
| Malaysia Ringgit | K280   | K284    |
| Singapore Dollar | K748   | K752    |
| Thai Baht        | K32    | K33     |
| US Dollar        | K1065  | K1070   |

# Queen promotes financial inclusion

**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1**

In her public speech at Convocation Hall yesterday, she said there are some real-world examples of how financial inclusion improves lives and empowers people. She pointed to bank accounts supporting savings, crop insurance that helps farmers feed their family, secure and affordable payment services, and loans that allow businesses to be started or expanded.

"These simple financial tools work," she said. "By making them part of people's everyday lives, your neighbouring countries have made great and lasting progress. In Asia and around the world, financial services help people provide better lives for their families and themselves."

Some people question the importance of financial inclusion, with people often saying "I have so little money, why do I need financial services?" she said.

"In fact, most of the people I meet are already using financial services – they're just not getting them through a formal provider like a bank, an insurance company or a microfinance institution. Households and businesses in Myanmar are saving, borrowing and sending money informally because that is what is available."

According to the Making Access to Finance Possible (MAP) survey and report released last year, as the country modernises its financial sector to better to serve its economy and people, a growing opportunity to extend financial services of the majority of people has opened up.

"The majority of citizens rely on unregulated providers, often at substantially higher costs than those

offered by regulated providers, or family and friends to meet their need for financial services," the report said.

In a short press conference after her speech, the queen said she would like to see the microfinance sector considered as part of the entire financial sector, though it caters to a specific type of client. "I think microfinance is playing a very important role for a certain point of view but it is still limited and needs to grow, and a lot more other types of financial services need to be developed in the future if we want real financial inclusion in Myanmar," she said.

Government officials have also discussed the importance of financial inclusion.

Speaking yesterday before Queen Máxima, in what he joked was the role of the comedian warming up the crowd before the main actors take the stage, presidential economic adviser U Aung Tun The said it is important to remember that financial inclusion means not only loans but also savings.

He added that without formal financial inclusion, people often end up dealing with loan sharks.

U Aung Tun The also said there is a historical dimension to financial inclusion, pointing to the 1930 Saya San rebellion as being caused by resentment against the money lenders. "We now call them chettiers, who were here lending money at exorbitant interest rates," he said.

He ended on a note claiming that poverty should not be looked at globally, but poverty should be reduced one person at a time.

Still, microfinance, often seen at the fore of financial inclusion, has been slow to develop due partly to



Queen Máxima speaks in Yangon yesterday.  
Photo: Aung Htay Hlaing

government restrictions.

As previously reported by *The Myanmar Times*, institutions and companies at the fore of spreading financial inclusion face a number of restrictions preventing the expansion of their services in the country.

Microfinance institutions (MFIs) face tight constraints on borrowing to fund their operations.

Most MFIs currently operating in Myanmar use their own equity to then lend to small-scale borrowers. However, some have expanded to the point where they would like to borrow more money from local or foreign institutions to then lend to customers.

So far most loans from foreign

sources have not been allowed by authorities, as the Central Bank of Myanmar has denied kyat-denominated loans from foreign sources with interest rates above 10 percent a year. Representatives from several MFIs have told *The Myanmar Times* that the real interest rate on these loans should be around 13 to 15pc, adding it should be up to the market to decide interest rates.

Domestic MFIs can only borrow from state-owned Myanmar Economic Bank and not from commercial institutions or overseas under new rules.

Late last week, U Win Aung, director general of the Financial Regulatory Department, said it is a proper use of

the country's money to provide loans through Myanmar Economic Bank.

He added it is still possible to receive MFI licences, and that ceilings on foreign lending to the domestic MFI industry came from the Central Bank.

"MFIs receiving foreign loans in dollars with interest rates of 8pc and kyat with rates of 10pc is a Central Bank decision," he said.

Mobile payments have also been slower to be introduced than some had hoped. While laws allowing a bank-led model of mobile payments have been passed, the law for a non-bank-led model is still not in place.

Several microfinance industry insiders told *The Myanmar Times* they had been canvassed for their perspectives on the industry in advance of Queen Máxima's visit, with the understanding that some of those points would later be raised with senior officials.

During yesterday's press conference, Queen Máxima said sustainability is key for microfinance, adding it is important MFIs are able to access capital from commercial sources to fund their activities for years.

"Just having one donor loan that lasts for only two years won't be the solution to cover the whole issue," she said. "This is exactly the conversation we are having [on March 30 and March 31] about how to make [sure] the capital for other MFIs and other financial institutions are sustainable."

She added that today she will be attending the unveiling of a roadmap to financial inclusion at an event in Nay Pyi Taw which strongly addresses sustainability, but also ability and affordability.

## SMALL BUSINESS

# Fruit jam makers face challenges to grow exports



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JAM is big business in the domestic market, but exporters are having trouble selling the fruit-based delicacy abroad.

Though the product is popular in Bangladesh and India, the attitude of other potential customers can best be described as sticky.

The industry has no trouble shipping jam out, though there are difficulties with importers, according to exporter Ko Kyaw Hlaing said.

"But some countries won't accept it, even though our products are organic. We can export to Dubai and Saudi Arabia, but their quality demands are high and they require certificates from the Myanmar Medical Association and the Food and Drugs Administration," he said.

While quality is a concern, there are several other hurdles to clear for jam exporters.

Banking transfers also present a difficulty. For lack of direct access to the international banking system, exporters generally use Singapore bank.

"We would have no problem if there was a direct banking system.



A worker prepares fruit jam for export. The business faces a number of challenges, such as rising input prices. Photo: Zarni Phyto

We have to pay Singapore a lot in charges. KBZ can operate internationally, but not in every country," said Ko Kyaw Hlaing. He added that transactions that pass through American banks can still be slow.

"It can take six months working through a lawyer to get my money," he said.

Financing would run smoother for jam businesspeople if they had more options. Yet moving around the money is far from the only problem facing jam exporters.

U Oo Cho, the owner of Swe Myo Mae fruit jams, said often the products are sold to foreign commodities brokers, who then re-label the products

before shipping it further.

"We can sell to foreign commodities brokers, but then our product turns up in America labelled as Thai jam."

Steep rises in input prices have also damaged exporters' options.

"Jam can be made from any fruit, but not every jam sells. We can't make a profit on strawberry jam, for

instance, because it's so expensive," said U Oo Cho.

This is the season for marian, a type of plum also known as maprang, but prices have tripled. Last year it went for K500 a viss (one viss equals 1.6 kg or 3.6 lbs), but it now costs K1500, he said.

U Oo Cho added that many business people preferred to search for new products than to use expensive seasonal fruit.

"Businessmen are creative and they are always experimenting with new products instead of basing products on the seasons in which fruit is expensive," he said.

Traditionally handmade, jam is now increasingly made with machinery, mostly imported from China. The machines are expensive and require a stable electricity supply. "We can get help with loans for new technology, but we would have to give a private bank a quarter of our earnings as collateral," he said.

Most Yangon jam companies buy fruit at Thiri Mingalar Market, which sells fruit from all over the country, rather than contracting directly with fruit farmers.

Because of the nature of the business, predicting supply from year to year is also a constant problem.

"Fruit trees are a long-term investment. They last a long time, and people can't wait," he said.

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Dated: 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015

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Dated: 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015

**CHONGQING****HIGH TECH**

Swiss pilots Andre Borschberg (left) and Bertrand Piccard of Solar Impulse 2 wave to the media after landing in Chongqing airport. Photo: AFP

## Solar plane lands in China after Mandalay

SOLAR Impulse 2 landed yesterday in China, the world's biggest carbon emitter, completing the fifth leg of its landmark global circumnavigation powered solely by the sun.

With pilot Bertrand Piccard at the controls, the revolutionary plane landed in Chongqing airport at 1:35am (1735 GMT Monday) after a 20.5 hour flight from Myanmar, its vast wing-span lit up by rows of lights.

The plane had been expected to make just a brief stop in the southwestern city and quickly travel on to Nanjing, about 270 kilometres (170 miles) from Shanghai, but that was delayed due to weather and safety concerns, with the team now expecting to stay a few days waiting for better conditions for the trip east.

"We are tired but we are still very, very happy to be in Chongqing," said mission engineer Michael Anger on the project's website.

"In China it was demanding, this flight, especially for Bertrand but also for the team preparing two flights in a row and then this afternoon cancelling

the second flight due to bad weather in Nanjing."

Mr Piccard, one of the two Swiss pilots of the solar-powered plane, battled extreme cold as low as -20 degrees Celsius (-4 Fahrenheit) in the cockpit and the general unpredictabilities of flying above the mountainous Chinese provinces of Yunnan and Sichuan.

Flying at high altitude for most of the journey from Mandalay to Chongqing - 28,000 feet at its highest point - Mr Piccard had to use additional oxygen on the 1459-kilometre (907-mile) route.

**'We are tired but we are still very, very happy to be in Chongqing.'**

**Michael Anger**  
Mission engineer

The flight was the most difficult of the trip so far, Raymond Clerc, flight director for Solar Impulse, said on a video interview on the project's website.

On a previous circumnavigation, Mr Piccard passed over China in a specially designed balloon, but only after he flew to Beijing personally to negotiate the trip, and with conditions requiring the balloon to avoid large swathes of the country.

The team behind Solar Impulse 2, which has more than 17,000 solar cells built into its wings, hopes to promote green energy with the circumnavigation attempt.

Ridiculed by the aviation industry when it was first unveiled, the venture has since been hailed around the world, including by UN chief Ban Ki-moon.

The plane's maiden global circumnavigation began in Abu Dhabi and is scheduled to take in 12 stops, with a total flight time of around 25 days spread over five months.

- AFP

**IN PICTURES**

Heavy fog covers buildings in Qingdao, east China's Shandong province. Falls in Chinese housing prices decelerated in March from the previous month, a survey showed on March 31, after authorities loosened mortgage and tax policies as growth in the world's second-largest economy slows. Photo: AFP

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## ATHENS

# Patriotism soothes economic wounds

WITH its dignity battered by six years of "humiliation" at the hands of its international creditors, cash-strapped Greece is turning to folk music and patriotism to restore its injured national pride.

Since taking power in January on a wave of anti-austerity sentiment, Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras has repeatedly hammered home his intention to do whatever is necessary to restore the nation's self respect.

Now, as the country's creditors pressure the government to enact unpopular reforms, analysts say the government is cultivating patriotic feeling at home as a counter-weight.

"With dance and traditional garb, we will show our [EU] peers that our people are united and sovereign," said Panos Kammenos, the leader of the Independent Greeks party, the government's junior coalition partner, ahead of this year's annual Independence Day military parade.

The event on March 25 was accompanied for the first time in decades by folk music and dancing.

"It will send a message abroad that we are a sovereign state whose people, united, demand respect to their national sovereignty," Mr Kammenos added.

The policy has attracted derision in some quarters. "Dignity above all else," centrist *To Vima* weekly sneered in a recent editorial.

Since it cannot be won back through economics and politics, "we take refuge in rhetoric and history," the weekly said.

Analysts, however, say the new policy is a concession to Mr Kammenos, who heads the defence ministry and is known for his chest-thumping on national matters.

He had helped Mr Tsipras cover a two-seat shortage facing the radicals for an absolute 151-seat majority in parliament. In an interview this month, he praised Mr Kammenos' party as a "consistent anti-austerity force".

"There is definitely an unofficial deal between Syriza and ANEL: the former are given a free hand on economic policy while the latter takes precedence on patriotic issues," political scientist Filippa Chatzistavrou said.

In addition to keeping Mr Tsipras' junior coalition partner happy, the patriotic shift also taps into a deep-rooted Greek sentiment of victimisation, according to researcher Elias Dinas.

**'The Greek system of education, which is quite heavily focused on national history, increases the feeling of victimisation.'**

Elias Dinas  
Oxford University

"The Greek system of education, which is quite heavily focused on national history, increases the feeling of victimisation," said Mr Dinas, an associate professor of politics at Oxford University.

Among many here, there is also the feeling that Greeks deserve better owing to the cultural achievements of their forebears in antiquity, Athens University political scientist Dimitris Sotiropoulos said.

Greek public opinion "is responsive to being told that Greece should be treated differently, that it deserves better," he said.

"It is a long-standing trait, stemming from a centuries-old attempt to link modern Greek identity to that of



A man takes a Greek flag from a pole in Athens following a parade. Photo: AFP

antiquity, which is deemed superior," he adds.

Greek history has no shortage of foreign oppressors - from the Ottoman Empire that ruled the land for nearly four centuries to the Germans, Italians and Bulgarians that shared the country between them during World War II, committing several atrocities.

More recently, the Americans were vilified for helping install a brutal seven-year army dictatorship from 1967-1974.

The legacy of Nazi Germany's painful four-year occupation of Greece continues to test relations between Athens and Berlin today.

Mr Tsipras and other senior members of his party have strongly criticised Germany's adherence to austerity, which they say has plunged Europe into a deflationary spiral.

Further straining the climate, Greek newspapers have often depicted Germans as oppressors in Nazi uniform.

One recent cartoon in the Greek ruling party daily *Avgi*, showing German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble discussing what to do with the fat and ashes of Greeks in a reference to the Holocaust, prompted an official complaint from Berlin.

The latest blow came when the country's justice minister said he was

prepared to activate a 15-year-old Supreme Court ruling authorising the seizure of German property in Greece to pay for wartime reparations.

In an effort to calm tempers, Mr Tsipras this week held his first official visit to Berlin for talks with Chancellor Angela Merkel and other senior officials.

The talks made a difference, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said afterward.

"I am pleased that the tone in the German-Greek talks in recent days has clearly changed and clearly improved," Mr Steinmeier said.

- AFP

## WASHINGTON

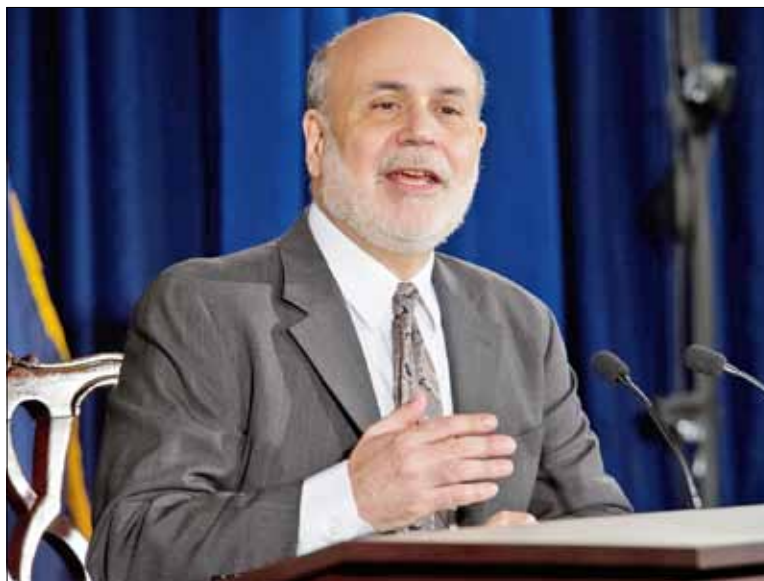
## Ben Bernanke begins blogging

FORMER US Federal Reserve chair Ben Bernanke returned to public debate over economic policy on March 30 with the launch of his own blog, a year after leaving the Fed.

"Now that I'm a civilian again, I can once more comment on economic and financial issues without my words being put under the microscope by Fed watchers," Mr Bernanke said on the blog, hosted by his new home the Brookings Institution, the Washington think tank.

Mr Bernanke, who led the Fed through the worst economic crisis in the country since the 1930s, launched in to a discussion that dogged him in his last years, the impact of ultra-low interest rates on the income of retirees on interest on their savings.

"When I was chairman, more than one legislator accused me and my



Ben Bernanke. Photo: AFP

**'I can once more comment on economic and financial issues without my words being put under the microscope.'**

Ben Bernanke  
Former head of US Federal Reserve

colleagues on the Fed's policy-setting Federal Open Market Committee of "throwing seniors under the bus" by keeping rates low, he said.

But he argued - as he has for many years - that interest rate policy has to address the strength of the economy, and coming out of the Great Recession of 2008-09 required low rates to support growth.

"Ultimately, the best way to improve the returns attainable by savers was to do what the Fed actually did: keep rates low (closer to the low equilibrium rate), so that the economy could recover and more quickly reach

the point of producing healthier investment returns," he argued. Mr Bernanke stressed that his "opinions are my own and do not necessarily reflect the views of my former colleagues at the Fed". But the opening post served as a defence of the policies of his close ally and successor as Fed chair, Janet Yellen, who has kept the benchmark federal funds rate at zero, where Mr Bernanke put it at the end of 2008.

The debate over the low rate "sounds very textbook-y, but failure to understand this point has led to some confused critiques of Fed policy", Mr Bernanke said. - AFP

## TOKYO

## Japan will not join Beijing-backed bank

JAPAN yesterday ruled out any immediate plan to join the Beijing-backed Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), categorically denying a news report that its ambassador to China said Tokyo is likely to take part.

*The Financial Times* reported that Masato Kitera, Tokyo's envoy in Beijing, said in an interview Japan is likely to join the AIIB within a few months, a move that would leave Washington as the only big holdout.

But Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said yesterday the ambassador had not made any such comment and Japan's position on the AIIB had not changed.

"I have been informed that it is not true that Ambassador Kitera made such remarks forecasting [Japan's] participation," Mr Suga told a news conference.

The report comes just before the end-March deadline China has set for participation in the bank as a founding member.

Australia, Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Russia have all said they intend to join the Beijing-headquartered US\$50 billion institution, despite scepticism in Washington and Tokyo. China's neighbour and long-time foe Taiwan said on March 30 it would also make a formal application to join. "Japan is dubious about whether [the AIIB] would be properly governed or whether it

would damage other creditors," Mr Suga said. Japan is a key player in the Asian Development Bank (ADB), which would be a rival.

"Anyway, I think it's impossible for Japan to take part today," the government's top spokesperson said, adding that Tokyo would work together with Washington, its top ally, and other countries to ask Beijing for clarification.

The new multinational lender is seen as a threat to the World Bank and the ADB, two institutions that are heavily influenced by the US and Japan.

Washington has been left increasingly isolated in its opposition to the AIIB, which opponents claim could end up as a Chinese vehicle that has low standards on governance, the environment and social issues.

President Barack Obama's administration has waged an intense but low-profile lobbying campaign against it, but has watched with frustration as allies around the world pile in, with some hoping to curry favour in Beijing and others not wanting to miss out on a lucrative part of the world.

China is expected to foot the bulk of the initial money needed to get the AIIB started, with donations from other members set to increase the size of the overall fund to more than \$100 billion.

- AFP

## FRANKFURT



Gendarmes and investigative teams return on March 30 to Seyne-les-Alpes from the crash site of the Germanwings Airbus A320. Photo: AFP

## \$300 million set aside for Germanwings crash compensation

INSURERS are setting aside US\$300 million (279 million euros) in provisions for the air crash in the French Alps that killed 150 people, a spokesperson for German airline Lufthansa said yesterday.

The sum includes financial compensation for the families of the people who died and the cost of the Airbus A320 jet itself, which belonged to the low-cost carrier Germanwings, a spokesperson for parent company Lufthansa said.

She was confirming a corresponding report in the financial daily *Handelsblatt*.

The current list price of an Airbus A320 jet is \$93.9 million.

According to *Handelsblatt*, the consortium of insurers is headed by German giant Allianz.

When contacted, Allianz was not

immediately prepared to comment.

The Germanwings flight en route from Barcelona to Duesseldorf crashed a week ago.

Investigators evaluating voice recorder data say co-pilot Andreas Lubitz apparently locked his captain out of the cockpit and slammed the plane into the side of a French mountain.

The flight crashed at a speed of 700 kilometres (430 miles) an hour, instantly killing all on board.

On March 30, the director of operations at Germanwings, Oliver Wagner, had said that the company would immediately compensate each family with 50,000 euros (\$54,000).

This sum would not be deducted from any final compensation deal.

— AFP

## THE HAGUE

## Philips sells controlling stake in LED, car lights

DUTCH electronics giant Philips said yesterday it was selling a majority stake in its LED and car lighting arm to a consortium led by China-based GO Scale Capital investment fund in a deal worth US\$2.8 billion.

“Philips [yesterday] announced that it has signed an agreement with a consortium led by GO Scale Capital through which they will acquire an 80.1 percent interest in Philips’ combined LED components and automotive lighting business,” the Amsterdam-based Philips said yesterday.

“Philips expects to receive cash proceeds, before tax and transaction related costs, of approximately US\$2.8 billion (2.5 billion euros),” it said in a statement.

Philips last year announced it would split in two, separating its healthcare-lifestyle arm from its historic lighting section in a move aimed at streamlining the 120-year-old business.

After the sale, to be completed in the third quarter of the year, Philips will retain a 19.9pc share in the business, yesterday’s statement said.

The new company will be named Lumileds, Philips said.

“We are convinced that together with GO Scale Capital, Lumileds can grow further, attract more customers and increase scale as a stand-alone company,” Philips chief executive Frans van Houten said.

BILLION US\$

# 2.8

Value of the stake Philips has sold to a consortium of Chinese investors, according to a statement

Founded in 1891, Netherlands-based Philips employs around 112,000 people worldwide.

GO Scale Capital is a new investment fund sponsored by GSR Ventures and Oak Investment Partners with offices in Beijing, Hong Kong and Silicon Valley. — AFP

## TAIPEI

## Tech giant sees profits rise but shares drop

TAIWAN’S tech giant Hon Hai Precision Industry, a major supplier to Apple, saw its profit rise 22.34 percent in 2014 due to demand for larger-screen iPhones.

But its share price dropped yesterday as analysts fear a slowdown in orders.

The profit boost for Hon Hai – also known as Foxconn – reflects Apple’s booming iPhone sales, which saw the US firm’s quarterly profit rocket to a record US\$18 billion at the end of last year, with its large-screen iPhone models especially popular in China.

Hon Hai is the world’s largest computer components manufacturer and assembles products for Apple – including the iPhone series – as well as Sony and Nokia. Nearly half of Hon Hai’s revenue is generated by orders from Apple.

Its net profit was Tw\$130.5 billion (\$4.2 billion) last year, compared

with Tw\$106.7 billion a year before, while revenue grew 6.6pc to Tw\$4.2 trillion, the company said in a statement late on March 30.

In the three months to December, its profit totalled Tw\$56.7 billion, a spike of 33.09pc from the same period last year when it reported a profit of Tw\$42.6 billion.

But its share prices ended down 2.55pc yesterday, with analysts predicting a slowdown in the face of increased competition from suppliers.

“Its profit was better than expected. Its capability to handle the huge influx of orders from Apple in such a short time enabled it to enjoy a higher margin,” said Vincent Chen of Yuanta Investment Consulting.

But he added, “We remain concerned about the risk of iPhone allocation loss going forward, which may cap its earnings momentum and valuation.”

“How to offset the loss of iPhone orders and keep growing would be a huge challenge to Hon Hai this year.”

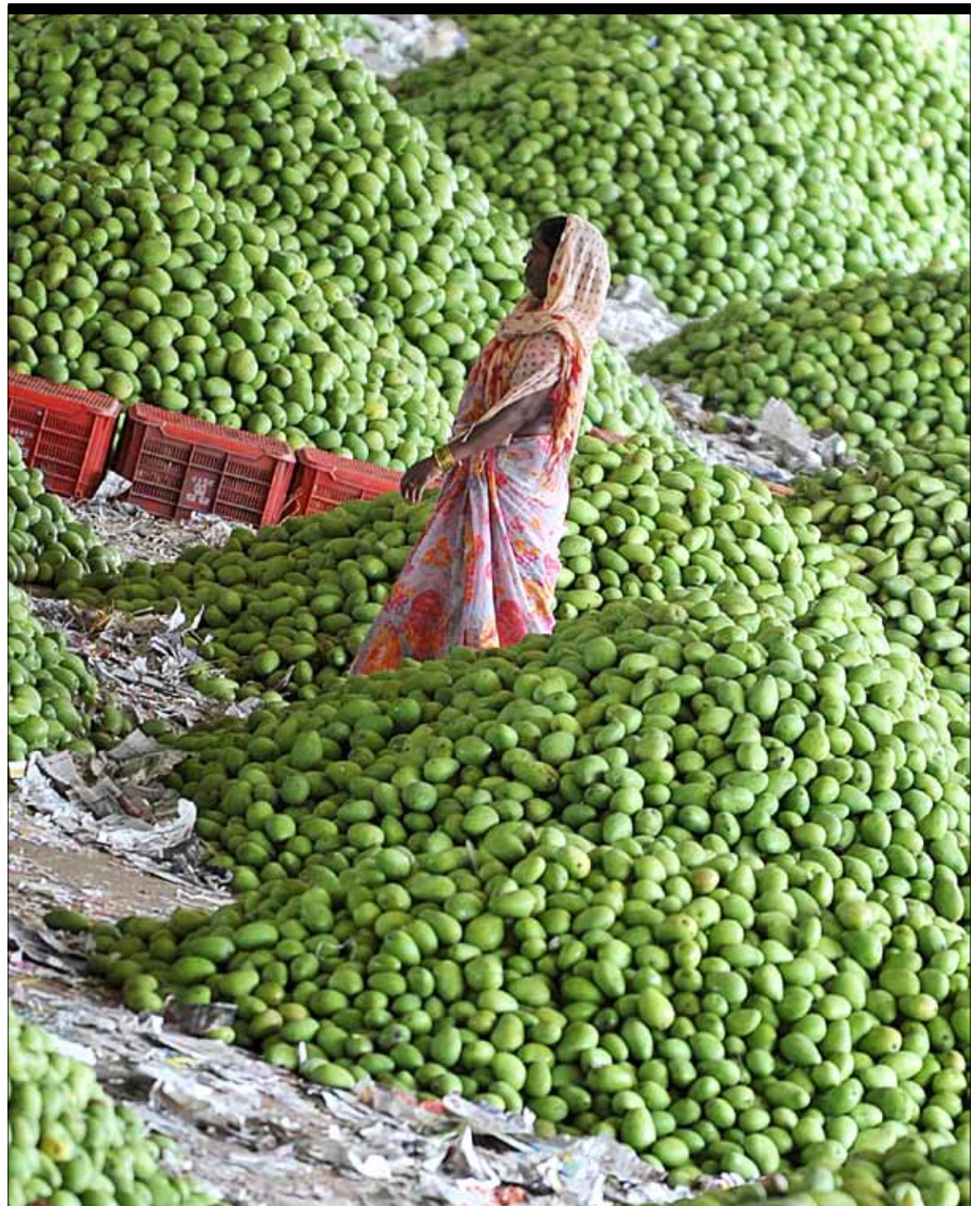
Analysts have predicted a drop in orders for 2015.

Mr Chen estimated that Hon Hai, facing stiff competition from firms like homegrown rival Pegatron, may receive 69pc of iPhone orders this year, down from about 87pc in 2014.

Hon Hai shares were at one point trading down 3.2pc yesterday, the biggest intraday decline since December 1, according to Bloomberg News.

The decrease was on concerns that Apple orders may have peaked, Bloomberg said.

With Apple diversifying its supply chains, Hon Hai has been branching out into other businesses, including providing 4G telecom services in Taiwan and investing in a South Korean information technology services provider. — AFP



## IN PICTURES

Photo: AFP

An Indian labourer walks between piles of mangoes at a fruit market on the outskirts of Hyderabad yesterday.

# World

WORLD EDITOR: Fiona MacGregor

## RANCAEKEK

### Fashion lifts mask on 'toxic trail'

WEARING gas masks and designer dresses, models paraded down a catwalk against a backdrop of polluted, rubbish-strewn paddy fields in central Indonesia, a colourful condemnation of the fashion industry's role in causing environmental devastation.

The women marched up and down in black rubber boots on a runway of wooden planks to dance music, brandishing banners that read "Say no to fashion with a toxic trail".

The show, put on by environmental group Greenpeace and local designers, was aimed at highlighting the destruction caused by textile factories, including many producing clothes for global brands, that have for years been spewing industrial waste into the country's waterways.

"Greenpeace urges the industry to stop polluting the environment

with hazardous chemicals," said the group's campaigner Ahmad Ashov Birry, who organised the event.

"We urge the government to take stern action against the polluters and strengthen regulations related to the management of hazardous chemicals for a toxic-free future."

Last week's show took place at Rancaekek, part of the Citarum River Basin on Java island, which is the heart of the Indonesian textile industry.

The area was named as one of the 10 most polluted places on Earth in 2013 by environmental groups the Blacksmith Institute and Green Cross Switzerland.

The groups found a wide range of toxins - including aluminium and manganese - in the river, which supplies much of the water to the capital Jakarta.

In Rancaekek alone, more than 1200 hectares (3000 acres) of paddy fields have been polluted, according to Greenpeace.

The show was part of a Greenpeace campaign called Detox, which has been running since 2011 and is aimed at getting well-known brands to ensure that their suppliers do not release hazardous chemicals into the environment.

Big names such as Spain's Zara and Germany's Adidas have committed to the campaign.

Rivers and crops have been poisoned by pollution across the vast Indonesian archipelago by a wide range of industries, from manufacturing to mining.

More than 100 million Indonesians, out of a population of 250 million, have no access to safe water, according to Greenpeace. - AFP



Indonesian models wearing gas masks prepare for a fashion show in a polluted river basin in Rancaekek district near Citarum river located in western Java island on March 22. Photo: AFP

## KUALA LUMPUR

### Malaysian man to hang over UK medical student murders in Borneo

A MALAYSIAN court convicted and sentenced a local fishmonger to death yesterday for the murder of two British medical students last year, his defence lawyer said.

Zulkipli Abdullah, 24, was found guilty of stabbing to death Neil Dalton and Aidan Brunger in the city of Kuching last August after an argument in a bar.

"He was found guilty. The judge accepted the testimonies of the prosecution witnesses," Mr Zulkipli's lawyer Anthony Tai said.

The two victims, both 22 years old, were students from Britain's Newcastle University who were on a six-week work placement with a local hospital in the city, located in Borneo island's Sarawak state.

Police have said the two students were found dead on the morning of August 6 following an argument with

several local men that began in a Kuching bar.

Five Malaysian men were later arrested but only Mr Zulkipli was charged.

Police had said earlier that the four others would not face charges but would appear as prosecution

**'He was found guilty. The judge accepted the testimonies of the prosecution witnesses.'**

**Anthony Tai**  
Lawyer for the accused

witnesses.

Mr Zulkipli faces death by hanging.

Mr Tai said the case would be appealed.

During the trial, Mr Zulkipli had said he was involved in a fight with the British students but denied killing them, according to Malaysian media reports.

Violent crime against tourists and expatriates is generally rare in the Muslim-majority Southeast Asian country. But some recent incidents have sullied that image.

Malaysian police in June last year found the body of a 34-year-old British tourist on the resort island of Tioman. The case is still being investigated.

A month later, a court sentenced to death a Malaysian shopkeeper for the killing of a French female tourist in 2011, also on Tioman.

- AFP



## IN PICTURES

Photo: AFP

Japanese gay couple Hiroko Masuhara ward said it would issue "partnership" ward office in Tokyo on March 31. The that gay couples often have difficulty re- visiting loved ones because they do not

## BANGKOK

### Thailand admit to improve avia

THAI authorities have said they would use special powers under junta rule to "urgently" improve airline safety as several carriers face bans on new international flights following concerns raised by a UN aviation agency.

The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), a United Nations body, recently reported "significant safety concerns" to Thailand's Department of Civil Aviation (DCA) after an audit earlier in the year.

In response Japan last week blocked new flights from Thailand in a move affecting charter services by budget carriers Thai AirAsia X and NokScoot as well as Asia Atlantic Airlines, the DCA said, adding existing flights would not be impacted.

Flag carrier Thai Airways has also been hit, saying in a statement on its Facebook page on March 28 that two charter flights scheduled for Japan next month had been affected.

At a press conference on March 30 junta chief and premier Prayut Chan-O-Cha told reporters he would use section 44 of the interim constitution, imposed after

he seized power from an elected government last May and which gives him absolute powers over legislative, executive and judicial decisions, to expedite safety improvements.

"We have to accept that we are losing revenue from this, I am serious about solving the problem," he said.

In what appears to be a growing fallout of the ICAO decision a transport ministry official, deputy permanent secretary Voradej Harnprasert, told reporters that airlines including Thai Airways

**'[They] asked us to improve our systems. I understand we have to improve urgently.'**

**Prajin Juntong**  
Thai transport minister  
Prajin Juntong

## Alps crash co-pilot previously declared suicidal

WORLD 17



(left) and Koyuki Higashi smile as Tokyo's Shibuya certificates to homosexual partners at the Shibuya municipality heard from local residents and workers entering apartments and are stopped by hospitals from have officially recognised family relationships.

## ts 'urgent' need tion safety

and Nok Air may also face a potential ban on new flights from Seoul and Beijing. It was not immediately possible to confirm these bans.

Mr Prayut also said that he had raised the aviation safety issue with the Japanese prime minister and the South Korean president on the sidelines of the funeral of Singapore's founding father Lee Kuan Yew on March 29.

The UN body has flagged several safety concerns including Thai aviation department personnel failing to meet international standards and a lack of full aviation regulations, Transport Minister Prajin Juntong told the press conference.

"The audit revealed some concerns relating to air operator certification procedures," ICAO spokesperson Anthony Philbin said, stressing that ICAO audits review the capability of civil aviation authorities to monitor and manage operational aviation safety.

Thai authorities have set up two new committees to tackle the concerns and will send teams to South Korea, China, Australia and Germany to discuss the issues following a trip to Japan late last week, Mr Prajin added.

Earlier in the day the minister had said Thailand was warned about its aviation management after an earlier ICAO audit in 2005. "[They] asked us to improve our systems. I understand we have to improve urgently."

In its statement released last week the DCA had said it would provide new training for staff and increase airline inspections as part of its overhaul.

Section 44 has been under the spotlight in Thailand in recent days after Mr Prayut on March 28 said he was considering lifting martial law, imposed two days before May's coup, and replacing it with an order under this controversial portion of the interim charter.

Several local rights groups have urged the junta chief to rethink the plans, issuing a joint statement maintaining their call to lift martial law but saying the impact of invoking the new order would be "much worse".

Under martial law Thailand's generals have banned political gatherings of more than five people, outlawed criticism of the ruling regime and tried civilians in military courts. — AFP



## App aims to bridge growing language gap between Koreans

WORLD 18

### PHNOM PENH

## Reporter tells trial of UK academic's slaying by Khmer Rouge in 1978

RETIRED American journalist Richard Dudman has recounted details of the attack on his travelling party during a 1978 trip to Cambodia, which left a British academic dead.

Mr Dudman, 96, told the Khmer Rouge tribunal he narrowly dodged being shot before finding British academic Malcolm Caldwell gunned down in his room.

The former *St Louis Post-Dispatch* Washington bureau chief, was among the first Western writers to visit Cambodia during Pol Pot's reign, arriving in December 1978 with Marxist scholar Mr Caldwell and fellow American journalist Elizabeth Becker, then of the *Washington Post*, who testified as a tribunal expert in February.

The trio, invited by Democratic Kampuchea leaders, was given a tightly controlled tour of the country before being afforded rare interviews with Pol Pot on their last night in Phnom Penh, just weeks before Vietnam toppled the regime.

Considered a friend of the regime, Mr Caldwell, 47, was murdered hours after his own private meeting with "brother number one" in circumstances still shrouded in mystery.

Testifying yesterday as a witness via video link from the United States, Mr Dudman, who spent 40 days as a captive of the Viet Cong in 1971 and reported from the region

a dozen times during the Vietnam War, recalled being woken by gunshots and running to Mr Caldwell's room.

"I discussed with him what we thought was going on and we decided that we didn't know and we'd stay in our rooms and hope that it all blew over," he recalled.

**'A young man came, heavily armed ... I ducked inside my room and stood to one side and then there were some more shots came through the door.'**

**Richard Dudman**  
Retired journalist

"I started back, but then a young man came, heavily armed ... At some point he pointed his pistol at me and fired a shot and missed me, but I ducked inside my room, slammed the door and stood to one side, and then there were some

shots that came through the door."

Hearing more shots, Mr Dudman waited two hours behind his bed before Cambodian diplomat Tioung Prasith arrived and revealed Mr Caldwell's fate.

"[Mr Caldwell] was lying, obviously dead, with a gaping wound in his chest; he was inside the room, but on the threshold ... appeared to be the same young man who threatened me, and he was dead, too, in a pool of blood."

Noting the "many theories", Mr Dudman - whose journalism career spanned more than three decades and included the Cuban revolution, the Watergate scandal and the assassination of US President John F Kennedy - said he didn't know why, or by whom, the group was targeted.

Mr Dudman recalled, during their meeting, Pol Pot repeatedly stated Vietnam would invade but the United States would help Cambodia win.

Confronted with Ms Becker's criticism of his dispatches, which were less critical of the Khmer Rouge than hers, Mr Dudman said he had remained sceptical and reported what he had seen.

However, he said he had changed his opinion from that expressed in a 1990 *New York Times* op-ed questioning whether Pol Pot was a mass murderer. He said he now believes the evidence supported mass murder. — *Phnom Penh Post*

### KUALA LUMPUR

## Journalists join up to 100 arrested over sedition as tensions mount

MALAYSIAN police arrested a prominent publisher and a website editor for sedition yesterday, the latest targets in a mounting tally of detentions that is being compared to an infamous 1987 political crackdown.

Ho Kay Tat, head of The Edge media group, was arrested along with Jahabar Sadiq, chief editor of The Malaysian Insider news portal which is owned by The Edge, the portal said.

That followed the arrest of scores of people in recent days on sedition charges or for assembly violations related to a series of anti-government protests sparked by the February jailing of opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim.

Senior opposition figure Lim Kit Siang estimated yesterday that more than 100 people had been detained over the past week.

Three Malaysian Insider editors had been arrested on March 30 over a recent news report involving the nation's nine ceremonial sultans.

The Edge, however, has also earned the government's anger for a series of reports on the murky dealings of a government-owned investment company whose board is chaired by Prime Minister Najib Razak - including questions over the whereabouts of huge sums of missing money.

In a statement published by The Malaysian Insider before his arrest, Mr Jahabar said the police actions "appear to go beyond just our

reportage" on the story concerning the sultans.

"The Malaysian Insider will continue to report without fear or favour despite these arrests. It is business as usual," he said.

The ruling coalition - in power since independence in 1957 - launched a crackdown on freedom of expression and other civil liberties following a poor showing in 2013 elections.

The current wave of arrests adds to scores of opposition politicians, academics and activists already nabbed over the past year on sedition and other charges. Nearly all were released pending court proceedings.

Mr Najib's government also jailed Mr Anwar on sodomy charges that have been widely criticised, including by the United States and international rights groups.

Mr Anwar was jailed in February for five years on charges he sodomised a former male aide in 2008.

He says the case was fabricated by the government to halt recent opposition successes.

Mr Najib's office did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the crackdown.

National police chief Khalid Abu Bakar confirmed the journalists' arrests in a Twitter posting, warning, "There will be no tolerance for any seditious activity."

Police said the arrests stem from the Malaysian Insider's report last

week that a council of the Muslim-majority country's nine ceremonial state sultans had opposed an Islamic opposition party's proposal for tough sharia criminal punishments such as amputating the hands of thieves.

The portal said the sultan's council denied the report's claim.

It is not clear how the report could be considered seditious, but Malaysia has strict rules against insulting the sultans.

Senior opposition figure Mr Lim called the spate of arrests a "reign of white terror" evoking "Operation Lalang", the 1987 arrests of 106 activists, opposition politicians, intellectuals and others, widely seen as a bid to curb regime critics.

"The question can be legitimately asked whether the country is seeing a replay of the Ops Lalang dragnet," Mr Lim said in a statement.

Mr Lim spent 17 months in detention without being charged over Operation Lalang. Historians say the episode marked a key acceleration of authoritarian rule in the country.

The journalists' arrests were roundly denounced by press groups.

Malaysia's Center for Independent Journalism and the Southeast Asian Press Alliance, in a joint statement, called them "an assault on media freedom and an act of intimidation" by authorities.

Sedition is punishable by up to three years in jail.

— AFP

## ABUJA

# Opposition leads Nigeria poll, but final results too close to call, says president

NIGERIAN opposition leader Muhammadu Buhari held a lead of more than 2 million votes yesterday in the country's general election, but with President Goodluck Jonathan's strongholds yet to report, the final result was too close to call.

By late afternoon just over half of Nigeria's states had declared returns in the vote pitting Mr Jonathan against former military ruler Mr Buhari in the closest election ever in Nigeria, Africa's most populous country and biggest economy.

Mr Buhari is making his fourth run at the presidency. His prospects this time have been buoyed by frustration over endemic corruption, criticism over Mr Jonathan's handling of Boko Haram's six-year Islamist uprising and a better-organised opposition.

Mr Buhari built his early lead in northern states dominated by the mainly Muslim, Hausa-Fulani ethnic group of which he is a member.

Mr Jonathan is however expected to run up huge margins in his home area, the southern, oil-producing Niger Delta, which could offset his losses in the north.

By late afternoon, Mr Buhari and his All Progressives Congress (APC) had won 10 states, with Mr Jonathan, of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) taking eight plus the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja.

A winner was expected to be declared by late yesterday.

The PDP, which has controlled the presidency since the end of military rule in 1999, said the early returns were no cause for concern.

"The [PDP] is unperturbed by the results of the elections so far," spokesperson Olisa Metuh said in a statement.



A car passes a campaign billboard for incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan in a street in Port Harcourt, Nigeria, on March 30. Photo: AFP

"The results from [PDP] strongholds will overwhelm those from the [north] and give it a clean and clear victory at the end of the day," he added.

But Mr Buhari may be encouraged by tallies from two northern states, where he stretched his lead over Mr Jonathan compared with four years ago.

In Kano, the 72-year-old defeated Mr Jonathan by nearly 1.7 million votes after besting the president by roughly 1 million in 2011.

And in Kaduna, where the two ran neck-and-neck in 2011, Mr Buhari

won by 650,000 votes.

Heavily populated Rivers state in the Niger Delta and the economic capital Lagos were among the key areas yet to declare.

International observers gave broadly positive reactions to the conduct of the vote, despite late delivery of election materials and technical glitches with new voter authentication devices.

Nigeria's Transition Monitoring Group, which had observers across the country, said, "These issues did not systematically disadvantage any candidate or party."

The PDP and the APC on March 29 traded allegations of vote rigging and other irregularities, raising the possibility of a legal challenge to the results.

Violence has often flared in previous Nigerian votes after the winner is announced and the United States and Britain warned against any "interference" with the count.

"So far, we have seen no evidence of systemic manipulation of the process," US Secretary of State John Kerry and British foreign minister Philip Hammond said in a joint statement. "But there are disturbing

indications that the collation process - where the votes are finally counted - may be subject to deliberate political interference."

Kayode Idowu, spokesperson for the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), said there was "no evidence of political interference".

Kaduna, one of the areas worst-affected by violence four years ago when some 1000 people were killed in post-election clashes, was yesterday said to be calm.

Awwal Abdullahi Aliyu, president of the Northern People Unity and Reconciliation Union, warned that places such as Kaduna remained a powderkeg and could "catch fire", particularly if electoral fraud is suspected in any ruling party victory.

Some 2000 women protesting against the conduct of the elections were teargassed as they tried to converge on the local electoral commission offices in the southern oil city of Port Harcourt.

The protest over alleged vote rigging by the PDP and a counter-protest demanding the results hold forced the Rivers state government to impose an overnight curfew.

The winning presidential candidate needs not just the most votes but at least 25 percent support in two-thirds of Nigeria's 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory to avoid a run-off.

Voting was pushed into an unscheduled second day on March 29 after failures in controversial new technology designed to read biometric identity cards to combat electoral fraud.

Among those affected by the technical hitches was the president himself. - AFP

## MOSCOW

## Iran 'chances high': Lavrov

RUSSIAN Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said yesterday he was planning to take part in marathon talks aimed at curtailing Iran's nuclear program, adding that chances of a deal were significant.

"Indeed I am planning to return and take part in the final part of the ministerial meeting of the six powers," Mr Lavrov told reporters in Moscow.

Moscow had said earlier that Mr Lavrov, who participated in the talks on March 30, would only return if there was a realistic chance of a deal.

Yesterday, Mr Lavrov struck a sanguine note. "The prospects of this round of talks are not bad, even good I would say," said Mr Lavrov, speaking alongside Vanuatu's foreign minister Sato Kilman.

"Chances are high," he added.

"They are probably not absolute

on and there is never absolute certainty in anything."

"But these chances are quite realistic if none of the participants at the talks raise the stakes at the last moment in the hope of winning something extra at the end of the final act instead of seeking to maintain the balance of interests."

Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov, speaking to journalists, confirmed that Russia's top diplomat would arrive "early [yesterday] afternoon".

Earlier in the day negotiators from major powers kicked off a final scheduled day of talks aimed at securing the outline of a potentially historic nuclear deal with Iran.

The meeting in Lausanne, Switzerland included foreign ministers from the US, China, Britain, France and Germany. - AFP



Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov waits for a P5+1 meeting at the Beau Rivage Palace Hotel March 28, in Lausanne, Switzerland. Photo: AFP

## MOSCOW

## IS executes at least 30 civilians in Hama

THE extremist Islamic State group yesterday executed at least 30 civilians, including two children, in a raid on a regime-held village in Syria's central province of Hama, a monitor said.

IS "executed at least 30 people, including women and children, by burning, beheading, and firing on them" in the village of Mabujeh, said Rami Abdel Rahman, director of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

Syrian state television said government forces had "blocked a terrorist attack" on the village, but did not report any casualties.

Mabujeh, east of the provincial capital Hama, has a population of Sunni Muslims as well as Alawites and Ismailis, minority sects that are offshoots of Shiite Islam.

IS has regularly targeted minority sects in Syria, especially Shiite Muslims it accuses of apostasy, as well as Sunnis who it alleges have

violated its interpretation of the religion.

Mabujeh lies near a vital road that serves as the regime's only link between the central province of Homs and the northern province of Aleppo.

IS militants have repeatedly tried to sever the route.

In late March, the extremist group killed 83 regime soldiers in the region in a bid to gain control over the road. - AFP

## SANAA

## 'Heaviest' raids rock Yemen capital

EXPLOSIONS lit up the sky above the Yemeni capital as Arab coalition warplanes pounded rebel positions in the heaviest raids yet of the six-day-old Saudi-led operation, witnesses said yesterday.

Huge blasts were heard overnight in Sanaa when coalition forces hit a missile depot belonging to the renegade Republican Guard, which is loyal to former strongman Ali Abdullah Saleh.

"Sanaa lived through a day of terror due to the continuous bombing from early on March 30 until this morning," said Assem al-Sabri, a 28-year-old resident.

"We couldn't sleep from the sounds of explosions," he said.

The missile depot blast rocked a

southwestern district of Sanaa and flames billowing from the site were seen by residents across most of the city.

"The bombing was the heaviest I have ever heard in my life. The explosions lit up the skies of Sanaa," said another resident, 30-year-old Amr al-Amrani.

Early yesterday, air strikes targeted two camps held by Iran-backed Shiite Huthi rebels and allied Republican Guard soldiers in the southern town of Daleh.

Columns of smoke rose from the area, witnesses said.

Coalition warplanes also raided an air base belonging to a Republican Guard brigade in the southwestern city of Taez, witnesses there said.

For the first time since the coalition operation began, warplanes also bombed renegade troops in the Shiite-populated city of Dhammar, a stronghold of the Huthi rebels south of Sanaa.

They also hit another arms depot north of the capital, according to witnesses.

An air strike killed dozens of people at a camp for displaced people in northwest Yemen on March 30, with the two sides trading blame over the incident.

The Saudi-led coalition has vowed to keep up the raids until the rebels abandon their insurrection against President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi, who has fled to Riyadh.

- AFP



## DUESSELDORF

# Alps crash co-pilot formerly suicidal

THE co-pilot believed to have deliberately crashed a Germanwings plane into the French Alps was classified as suicidal "several years ago" but had appeared more stable of late, German prosecutors have said.

As investigators in both countries tried to zero in on a potential motive, it emerged that the first officer, Andreas Lubitz, was receiving treatment from neurologists and psychiatrists who had signed him off sick from work a number of times.

However doctors had recently found no sign he intended to hurt himself or others, said Ralf Herrenbrueck, spokesperson for the prosecutor's office in the western city of Duesseldorf, on March 30.

Meanwhile investigators sifting through the wreckage and hundreds of body parts in the French Alps were forced to resume the hunt on foot as bad weather hampered helicopter flights.

"The teams will get to the site via the path that is already in existence," said Yves Naffrechoux from the local mountain police.

Authorities are hoping to identify more DNA from the 150 people who died, as well as locate the jet's second black box that should provide more clues as to the circumstances of the tragedy.

Forensic teams have isolated almost 80 distinct DNA strands from the shattered aircraft and have described the grim task as "unprecedented" given the tricky mountain terrain and the speed at which the plane smashed into the rock.

Investigators evaluating voice recorder data say co-pilot Mr Lubitz allegedly locked his captain out of the cockpit and slammed the plane into a French mountainside on March 24.

The flight, en route to Duesseldorf from Barcelona, crashed at a speed of 700 kilometres (430 miles) an hour, instantly killing all on board.

Fending off an international media frenzy, Mr Herrenbrueck, of the Duesseldorf prosecutor's office, criticised conjecture about Mr Lubitz's alleged motives and said German authorities would not take part in "speculation".

Mr Herrenbrueck said, based on the evaluation of medical documents and the testimony of people who knew the co-pilot, there was still no indication that he had told anyone of his plans or left behind a suicide note.

"Nor have particular circumstances been identified in his personal or professional environment to offer verifiable evidence about a possible motive," he said.

Medical files did not point to any "organic disorder", Mr Herrenbrueck said.

But he added that Mr Lubitz underwent psychotherapy several years ago, before he became a pilot in 2013, "for a long period due to diagnosed suicidal tendencies".

However it said his doctors had found nothing recently that could have pointed to the events of last week.

Media reports have emerged that the 27-year-old was taking medication for severe depression and was being treated for problems with his vision, possibly for a potentially career-ending detached retina.

Authorities say the working conditions at the inhospitable crash site have hugely slowed their progress.

Not a single body is intact, said Patrick Tournon, deputy director of the police's criminal research institute.

"We have slopes of 40 to 60 degrees, falling rocks, and ground that tends to crumble," he said.

"Some things have to be done by abseiling. Since safety is key, the recovery process is a bit slow, which is a great regret."

Between 400 and 600 body parts



Gendarmes and investigative teams speak with psychologists after returning on March 30 to Seyne-les-Alpes from the crash site of the Germanwings Airbus A320. Photo: AFP

were being examined, Mr Tournon said.

Authorities are hoping to build a more sturdy road to the crash site - both to ease access for forensic experts and for families who want to see where their loved ones perished.

A bulldozer and several specialised machines were already working away at the site to bolster the road access.

The director of operations at Germanwings, Oliver Wagner, told reporters that 325 grieving relatives had so far made the trip to the village of Seyne-les-Alpes, close to the crash site.

"The majority has been German and Spanish families but we've also had

people from Mexico, Japan, Colombia, Venezuela or Argentina," he said.

Mr Wagner said Germanwings and parent company Lufthansa had 90 people on the ground to care for the families, including around a dozen psychological counsellors.

He reiterated that the company had announced it would immediately compensate each family with 50,000 euros (US\$54,000).

This sum would not be deducted from any final compensation deal, he said.

On the evening of March 30, an

ecumenical prayer service in memory of the 150 crash victims drew hundreds of diplomats and believers to the German church in Rome, Santa Maria dell'Anima.

Since the first details emerged of the circumstances of the crash, numerous airlines have ordered two airline crew to be present on the flight deck at all times.

Also on March 30, Mexico became the latest country to impose on its airlines the so-called "rule of two", which is standard in the United States. - AFP

## FORT MEADE

## One dead after NSA ram-raid

US police opened fire and one suspect died after two men dressed in women's clothing tried to ram their car onto the grounds of the National Security Agency outside Washington on March 30.

One police officer and a second suspect were hurt in the incident, said the National Security Agency's director for strategic communications, Jonathan Freed.

It was not immediately clear whether the suspects were shot or wounded when their car crashed into a police security vehicle.

A US official confirmed reports the men were wearing women's clothing.

An FBI spokesperson said the incident at Fort Meade, the electronic eavesdropping agency's super-secure base in suburban Maryland, was not believed to be "related to terrorism".

Officials said the drama was quickly contained and NSA headquarters staff were not at risk, but it will inevitably recall similar recent security incidents at federal sites.

According to Mr Freed, a vehicle carrying two individuals was directed to turn back after it made an unauthorised attempt to enter the base.

Instead, the car accelerated toward an NSA vehicle blocking the road. Police opened fire, but the car crashed into the security truck.

"One of the unauthorised vehicle's occupants died on the scene. The cause of death has not been determined," Mr Freed said, in a statement.

"One NSA police officer was injured and taken to a local hospital.

The incident was contained to the vehicle control point."

The FBI has taken charge of the investigation and the White House said President Barack Obama had been briefed on the situation.

News footage from helicopters showed the crash-damaged police vehicle and a civilian vehicle outside a main gate, and an injured person being transferred to an ambulance.

**'The shooting scene is contained and we do not believe it is related to terrorism.'**

Amy Thoreson  
FBI spokesperson

The FBI said it has opened an investigation, joining other law enforcement agencies and deploying agents to the scene to gather evidence and interview witnesses.

"The shooting scene is contained and we do not believe it is related to terrorism," said Amy Thoreson, a spokesperson for the FBI's Baltimore office.

"We are working with the US attorney's office in Maryland to determine if federal charges are warranted," she said.

About 11,000 military personnel and 29,000 civilians work at Fort Meade, which also houses the headquarters of the US Cyber Command and other military units.

Fort Meade said all personnel and residents on the base were safe.

Security at US federal installations has been under scrutiny in recent months after a number of incidents, including one in which a troubled veteran wielding a knife vaulted a fence and sprinted into the White House.

In another incident, a private civilian drone crashed into the grounds of the executive mansion, leading authorities to ban their use within the capital.

Most of the incidents have proved minor, but in September 2013, a lone gunman stormed a naval command centre in the Washington Navy Yard and killed 12 people before he was in turn slain by police.

The NSA specialises in code breaking and electronic surveillance, operating a global network of satellite surveillance, land listening stations and online data collection.

It has been the focus of intense controversy since mid-2013, when former contractor Edward Snowden revealed the huge scope of its eavesdropping in a leak to the media.

Washington has denounced Mr Snowden's document dump and subsequent flight to Russia, but Mr Obama's administration has agreed to reform some of the rules governing data interception.

- AFP

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Dated: 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015

SEOUL

# Korean app bridges growing language gap

A NEW smartphone app developed in Seoul aims to help North Korean refugees overcome one of the biggest challenges they face in adjusting to life in South Korea - speaking Korean.

Seven decades of almost total separation have engineered a radical split in the once common language of the two Koreas.

For North Korean defectors who risk their lives escaping to the South via China, this linguistic divergence represents a sizeable barrier in their struggle to assimilate when even something as simple as buying an ice cream requires a new vocabulary.

The two Koreas still share the same writing system, known as Hangeul - a phonetic alphabet developed in the 15<sup>th</sup> century to replace Chinese characters.

So a North Korean refugee would have no trouble reading the transliteration *Ah-ee-sir-ker-rim* that South Koreans use for "ice cream" - but he or she would not necessarily have any idea what the term meant or referred to.

And that's where the Univoca app comes in.

Developed by Seoul's top advertising firm, Cheil Worldwide, the app offers translations of 3600 key words

culled from South Korean high school textbooks as well as everyday slang expressions.

Tapping in the Hangeul for "ice cream" brings up the word *oh-reum-boseung-yi* (literally "coated ice"), as ice cream is known in North Korea.

Created as a part of the company's social outreach program, the free app has been downloaded more than 1500 times since its launch in mid-March, said Choi Jae-Young, the Cheil manager in charge of the project.

"We were looking for ways to help socially marginalised people suffering from communication problems ... and realised young North Korean defectors have this big language barrier when studying at school," Mr Choi said.

A group of North Korean defectors, including student volunteers and professionals like former school teachers, helped in the task of identifying and translating common South Korean words that may perplex the young refugees.

One of them, 22-year-old college student Noelle Kim, said working on the project had brought back strong memories of her own linguistic struggles when she arrived in Seoul five



An instructor demonstrates a Korean language mobile phone app to a group North Korean defectors in an undated handout photo released on March 26 by Cheil Worldwide. Photo: AFP

years ago.

"Even asking for directions on the street was difficult because I couldn't understand all the words people were using in the answer," Ms Kim said.

"And I just felt too ashamed to admit it and ask what those words meant," she added.

Experts estimate such differences now extend to one-third of the words spoken on the streets of Seoul and Pyongyang, and up to two-thirds in business and official settings.

Particularly baffling to new North Korean arrivals are the large number of English words that have been phonetically incorporated into the South Korean lexicon.

Where a South Korean would comfortably refer to a "penalty kick" in football, in the North they use a completely different Korean word meaning "11-metre punishment".

The difficulties are even more pronounced for young refugees who have to cope with the sort of rapidly changing youth slang common to most countries.

"For North Korean teen defectors, who are more sensitive to cultural differences, the language issue is considered a first priority to solve when settling down in South Korea," Cheil said in a statement.

According to the Ministry of Education, the number of North Korean

student defectors - meaning those of elementary, junior or high school age - rose from 966 in 2008 to 2183 last year.

The growing language divide between the two Koreas is a source of official concern on both sides, as witnessed by an on-and-off, 25-year joint effort to produce a unified Korean language dictionary.

Chief editor Han Young-Un, who took a group of South Korean linguists and lexicographers to Pyongyang to work on the dictionary last November, believes the Korean usage split risks becoming as big a barrier to eventual North-South unification as the heavily militarised border dividing the peninsula. -AFP

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DHAKA

# Four charged over latest blogger machete murder in Bangladesh

POLICE in Bangladesh yesterday filed criminal cases against two Islamic students and two others for the machete murder of a blogger accused of mocking Islam, the second such attack in recent weeks.

Washiqur Rahman was hacked to death near his home on the morning of March 30 in Dhaka, less than two months after the murder of an American atheist blogger triggered international outrage.

Police Inspector Mohammad Salahuddin said three knife-wielding attackers killed the 27-year-old because they believed he had "defamed Islam" in the mainly Muslim country through writings on social media.

Police lodged preliminary murder charges against two students of madrassas who were arrested at the scene, along with the third who fled and is still on the run, another officer said.

An alleged planner of the attack was also charged and is now under investigation after the students named him during police questioning, said deputy commissioner Biplob Kumar Sarker.

"A case was filed against the four

people accusing them of the murder of the blogger," Mr Sarker said.

Officially secular Bangladesh has seen a rise in Islamism in recent years.

**'A case was filed against the four people accusing them of the murder of the blogger.'**

**Biplob Kumar Sarker**  
Deputy police commissioner

Bloggers and other writers along with secular activists held a rally and candlelight vigil against the murder late on March 30 at Dhaka University, the country's secular bastion.

The European Union, Bangladesh's main trade partner, condemned the "vile aggression" and called for freedom of expression.

Mr Rahman wrote a 52-episode

series for an anti-religion satirical site called Dhormockery.com, according to the London-based International Humanist and Ethical Union.

The pieces mock aspects of Islam, and fellow bloggers said Mr Rahman did not believe in any organised religion.

The killing bears strong similarities to the murder of Avijit Roy, an American blogger of Bangladeshi origin who was hacked to death with machetes in Dhaka in February.

His death sparked uproar, with hundreds of secular activists holding protests for days to demand justice.

One of the two arrested over the latest murder had been studying at a top madrassa in the port city of Chittagong, headed by hardline Islamist group Hefazat-e-Islam.

The group was behind massive protests against secular bloggers in 2013 that left nearly 50 people dead. Police cracked down on the thousands of hardliners who poured into Dhaka to protest and demand the execution of bloggers, accusing them of defaming Islam.

- AFP



IN PICTURES

Photo: AFP

Residents watch a rhino run along a road in Hetauda, some 40 kilometres southwest of Kathmandu, Nepal, on March 30. The creature escaped from a wildlife reserve 20km away and ran through the town, terrifying commuters as its rampage left one dead and six injured, police said.

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# A bloody good show

Vienna stripped bare in shocking art retrospective

PHILIPPE SCHWAB



'Actionism broke away from traditional values. But it remains art. It is well-thought-out, has a precise form and references'

### Eva Badura-Triska,

Curator, *My Body is the Event*

Vienna's famed "Actionists", whose avant-garde movement may be the most radical in contemporary art, are the focus of a new exhibition in their home city. Photos: AFP/Joe Klamar



**A**s artists, they pushed the limits, bathing in blood, mud and urine. Vienna's famed "Actionists", whose avant garde movement may be the most radical in contemporary art, are the focus of a new exhibition in their home city.

The movement emerged in the 1960s as part of the new performance-based art, which broke with the confines of traditional painting and used the body as both surface and site of art-making.

"Vienna Actionism" shied away from little – and sometimes landed the artists in jail.

"They sought a direct confrontation with reality, both physical and psychological, to limits that were very difficult to tolerate," said Eva Badura-Triska, curator of *My Body is the Event* at Vienna's Museum of Modern Art (Mumok).

The movement's main members were Otto Muehl, Hermann Nitsch, Guenter Brus and Rudolf Schwarzkogler, who skinned animal carcasses, tied up human bodies or mixed them up with viscus, gore or mud.

Muehl, in particular, created a series of "still lifes" with body parts sticking out through planks, giving the impression of a dismembered corpse.

Brus once crisscrossed Vienna with his body painted white and bisected by a jagged black line before being arrested by the police. His other performances involved scatology or

verged on pornography.

"Actionism broke away from traditional values. But it remains art. It is well-thought-out, has a precise form and references," said Badura-Triska. "It's an extension of the field of painting, even though it is one of the most radical.

"They overturned the rules by considering as aesthetic things which were deemed ugly according to social norms," the curator added, conceding that the exhibition would be difficult to hold in certain countries.

The city of Sigmund Freud and other radical thinkers, Vienna already saw taboos broken in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when artists like Gustav Klimt, Oskar Kokoschka and Egon Schiele shocked the world with sexually explicit artworks.

If the Vienna "Actionists" follow this spirit, a source for their non-conformity was also World War II, said Badura-Triska.

They lived "in a country where, unlike Germany, the Nazi past was pushed away, literally hidden in bourgeois normality, which helps explain their extreme reaction.

"In this respect, 'Actionism' had a cathartic effect. It allowed suppressed drives to be released in controlled fashion, in the context of artistic experience," the curator said.

Video artist Valie Export brought feminism to the movement, creating a sub-movement titled Feminist Actionism. "Just as action aims at achieving the unity of actor and material, perception and action, subject and object," writes Export in her

manifesto, "Feminist Actionism seeks to transform the object of male natural history, the material 'woman', subjugated and enslaved by the male creator, into an independent actor and creator, subject of her own history."

The exhibition compares the Vienna movement with other developments in performance-based and action art, featuring a wide range of international artists from Yoko Ono to Marina Abramovic.

The movement at times took a heavy toll. During a filmed performance which also featured her husband, a nude and bound Ana Brus had a nervous breakdown.

Guenter Brus, who publicly urinated, defecated and cut himself with a razor blade, held his last live performance in 1970 in which he appeared nude and drank his own urine.

But Hermann Nitsch, 76, is still performing and has at least three museums devoted to his work in Austria and in Naples, Italy.

Otto Muehl died in 2013 at the age of 87 after being sentenced to seven years in jail on charges of sexual offences with minors and rapes committed in a commune he had founded.

The movement, which was little known in the 1960s, received a boost two decades later with a series of exhibitions in Cologne, Vienna, Paris and Los Angeles. The exhibition at the Mumok runs through August 23.

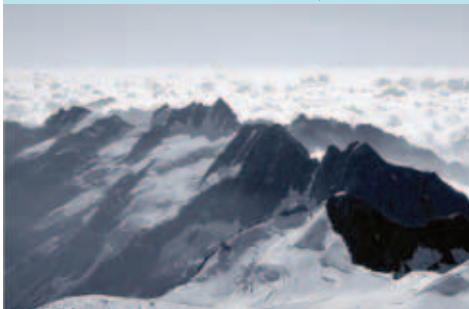
– AFP



# Hidden gems of Europe just waiting to be discovered

Think you've "done" Europe? Think again with our list of ten stunning destinations far off the beaten track

## Gran Paradiso, Italy



A summit panorama of Gran Paradiso, Italy. Photo: Wikimedia Commons

It may be one of the oldest protected areas in the Alps, but the wild lakes and mountains of Gran Paradiso national park often get overlooked by tourists, who are more likely to visit northern Italy's more popular destinations: the lakes of Como, Maggiore and Garda.

In the summer, visitors can hike up the mountains, taking in stunning views, and in winter clip on the skis for cross-country touring. The Orco, Soana and Cogne valleys are great areas to explore, as are villages of traditional stone-built houses.

There's a wide range of accommodation in the area – with plenty for those who don't fancy camping – and the park authority also offers a guide service.

## Ordesa, Spain



A glacial waterfall in the Ordesa Valley, Spain. Photo: Gustavo Naharro

Spain's oldest national park offers some of the best hiking in the Pyrenees yet it is little-known beyond the Spanish border. "It's amazing it is not better known among British walkers," says Phil James, a British mountain guide based

in the area, who runs Hike Pyrenees, offering guided and self-guided holidays. "It's one of the most spectacular areas in Europe. If it was the Alps, it would be teeming with Brits."

Famed for its three kilometre-deep glacial valleys, all coming to a head at the 3,355m Monte Perdido, it has trails for all levels, including paths along "sajas", natural ledges in the limestone – some just a metre wide. Most walks start at the Pradera, an information point in the Ordesa valley, where there is a car park, and where shuttle buses from nearby Torla drop walkers. Late June and early July are the best months to see the park's abundant flora.

## Oulanka, Finland



A footbridge along one of the many trails in Oulanka, Finland. Photo: Timo Newton-Syms

In Lapland near the Finnish-Russian border, Oulanka national park looks stunning all year round. The Karhunkierros trail that runs through it is Finland's most popular hiking route; the full 80km trail can take up to seven days to complete – through forests and over rivers on wooden footbridges. You can, however, stay overnight, for free, in the log huts dotted along the way. There are also canoeing routes through the rapids of the Oulankajoki river, as well as more easy-going, family-friendly routes to take downstream.

Established in 1956, the park is known for its reindeer and its diverse mix of natural features and rare plants. The pink-and-white calypso orchid, the emblem of the park, is scarcely seen elsewhere, but is common in Oulanka.

## Peneda-Gerês, Portugal



A natural paradise awaits at Peneda-Gerês, Portugal. Photo: Álvaro Pérez Vilarinho

Wild Garrano ponies trot about freely in this national park in northern Portugal, and you can even arrange to hop on the back of a domesticated one for a tour through its oak forests and sierras.

As well as being an area of natural beauty it has compelling remains of human occupation: A Roman road winds through the park, marked with 2000-year-old milestones.

Serra do Gerês is the park's most popular settlement, where you'll find pools to swim in. It's also worth noting the date of your visit: Every Friday 13<sup>th</sup>, the village of Montalegre, just beyond the park's eastern border, enjoys the Noite das Bruxas, a street party fuelled by queimada, a local liqueur drunk with honey.

## Triglav, Slovenia

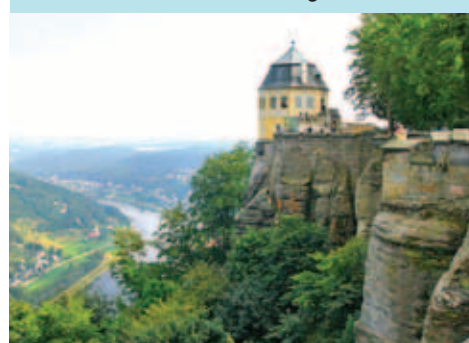


Hiking the national part in Triglav, Slovenia. Photo: Srdjan Marincic

Slovenia's only national park, Triglav is a beautiful alpine expanse filling the north-western corner of the country. Although it's easy to explore from the resort of Bled, you'll get a better sense of its tranquility if you stay within it. Lake Bohinj may not have a church on an island in the middle of it as Bled does, but it is far quieter and it is easy to find a snug place to stay.

From there you can go on hikes, bike rides, canoe trips or just paddle in the clear water that reflects the peaks surrounding it. Taking the trails up to the top of the steep forested hills overlooking Bohinj will reward you with breathtaking views.

## Saxon Switzerland, Germany



View of the Königstein Fortress in Saxon Switzerland, Saxony, Germany. Photo: Nikater

Dramatic and unusual landscapes fill this region in eastern Germany (not Switzerland), which has more than 700 summits for rock climbers and hundreds of kilometres of marked hiking trails.

The park's prime attraction has to be the Bastei, a rock formation towering 194 metres above the river Elbe. The 112km Malerweg trail is a well-trodden route, through a landscape famed for inspiring painters and artists.

The park also extends into the Czech Republic. This section, called Bohemian Switzerland, has its own geographical oddity in the form of the Pravčická brána, Europe's largest natural sandstone arch.

## Sarek, Sweden



Reindeer grazing in Sarek, Sweden. Photo: Oskar Karlin

Things you won't find in Sarek: marked trails, cabins, cafes, other people. Things you will find: about 100 glaciers, six of Sweden's highest summits and white-water rapids.

Sarek consists of 2000 sq km of untouched natural habitat, making it a natural playground for experienced adventurers. Still, it's possible to join a trekking tour in order to have an experienced guide for your trip across one of Europe's last wildernesses.

## Kalkalpen, Austria

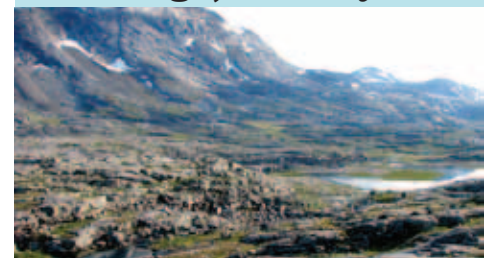


A stunning rock precipice in the Kalkalpen national park, Austria. Photo: Tigerente

Four-fifths of Kalkalpen national park is given over to forest, forming the largest forested region in central Europe. Cutting through the dense trees are rivers, canyons and gorges, popular with rock climbers as well as cyclists, walkers and skiers.

Despite its striking natural beauty – which you can absorb in all its panoramic glory from the 21-metre Wurbauerkogel viewing tower near the town of Windischgarsten – the park is relatively unknown. The park authority offers guided tours from rangers who can take you into the heart of the forest and help you spot some of its wildlife, ranging from pygmy owls to black grouse and their elaborate courtship ritual.

## Rago, Norway



A valley at the top of the world: Rago, Norway. Photo: Fukejs

Even the non-national park bits of the Nordland region of Norway are spectacular: Flying or sailing into Bodø airport takes you along the dark, jagged edge of the country's coastline, but Rago itself is a particularly impressive sight to behold. Rugged rock formations, boulders and steep mountains jut out of the often other-worldly landscape.

One of the highlights is the Litlverivassforsen waterfall, which tumbles off the edge of Litlverivatnet lake. There are trails to follow, as well as cabins to pitch up in at night, and nearby Sjunghatten and Junkerdal national parks are also within easy reach for those who want to explore further.

## Port-Cros, France



Vivacious Port-Cros in France. Photo: Wikimedia Commons

Port-Cros is the smallest of the three Iles d'Or off the Côte d'Azur. Just 1 kilometre wide and 3 long, its hilly, wild terrain is crossed by signed trails and its ridges provide fantastic views of the sparkling sea. Its protected status extends 600 metres around the coast so the clear waters are rich in protected marine life – snorkellers can even follow an underwater trail.

Car and bike-free Port-Cros is accessed by ferry from the Giens peninsula, as are its sister islands, Porquerolles, and Levant, the latter said to be the birthplace of European nudism. The Giens peninsula is extremely popular among French tourists – who descend on the many campsites and holiday villages in July and August – but off the British radar. The nearest city is Hyères, famed for its gardens and palm trees. – AFP

# K-pop sensation 4Minute set to rock Myanmar



Photo: Facebook

**NANDAR AUNG**  
nandaraung.mcm@gmail.com

**T**HE countdown has begun. Fans of the South Korean girl group 4Minute are looking ahead to 4/4, that is, April 4, when the girls come to Yangon.

The big event, which will not be broadcast live, takes place at Myanmar Event Park, Myaynigone, starting at 7pm.

The five girls - Jihyum, Gayoon, Jiyoon, Hyuna and Sohyun - will be performing their first show in Myanmar.

Andaman Investment and Management Company and VQ Entertainment are organising the gig, which is sponsored by Yum Yum Noodles.

Tickets are available from the Taw Win Centre, Thamada Cinema, Dagon Centre 2, Nay Pyi Taw Cinema, Shae Saung Cinema, San Pya Cineplex, and Monument Books and

Toys. Entry to the VIP enclosures will cost you K600,000 or K200,000, and admission to party zones A, B and C will cost K65,000, K45,000 and K25,000 respectively.

The group was founded in 2009 in South Korea by Cube Entertainment and has produced seven solo music series. Their latest "mini album" *Crazy*, uploaded on February 2015, reached number one in the World Albums list on March 21.

For more information visit [www.facebook.com/4minuteygn](http://www.facebook.com/4minuteygn)

## Getting to the core of 'An apple a day'

PROVIDING a semblance of closure for those amongst us with childhood "eat your fruit"-induced trauma, new research says an apple a day won't keep the doctor away. "Evidence does not support that an apple a day keeps the doctor away," concludes a study published in *JAMA Internal Medicine*.

Challenging the ancient doctrine that fruit is good for you, researchers compared the frequency of doctor visits of daily vs non-daily apple eaters. After adjusting for sociodemographic and health characteristics, researchers

found that daily apple intake had no effect on your number of doctor visits, overnight hospital stays or mental health appointments.

Incidentally, daily apple eaters were more likely to have higher educational attainment, to be from a racial or ethnic minority, and were less likely to smoke.

But don't throw out the fruit bowl just yet. "The small fraction of ... adults who eat an apple a day do appear to use fewer prescription medications," said researchers. - Tom Barton

## What's on

### TODAY

Mojito Night, The Lab, 70A Shwegonedaing Rd, Bahan. 5:30-10pm

Girls night out. Mojo Bar, 135 Inya Road, Bahan. 8pm

Jazz music and dinner. Rendez-Vous restaurant and bar, Institut Francais, 340 Pyay Road. 7:30-9:30pm

### TOMORROW

Folk on Fire with LN'R band. Mojo Bar, 135 Inya Road, Bahan. 9:30pm

"Burma: An enchanted spirit" photo exhibition and book launch featuring American photographer David Heath.

Gallery 65, 65 Yaw Min Gyi Road (behind

Got an event?  
List it in What's On!  
[whatsonmt@gmail.com](mailto:whatsonmt@gmail.com)

Parkroyal Hotel), Dagon. 10am-6pm  
"Brothers Grimm Spectaculathon" - A Comedy by Don Zolidis, presented by Theatre Z. ISM (International School Of Myanmar), W-22, Mya KanThar Main Road, 5<sup>th</sup> Quarter, Hlaing. K5000 prebooked tickets / K7000 at the door. 6:30-9pm

"Free as in freedom" - Lecture by legend of the free software movement Dr Richard Stallman on the place of technology in our lives. Phandeeay, 11<sup>th</sup> Floor, "Mac Tower" Building, 561 Merchant Road. 6pm



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A 10% discount is offered to all meeting organisers confirming events by end of March 2015.

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## GOLF

# Woods out of world top 100

**F**ORMER number one Tiger Woods has dropped out of the world top 100 for the first time in his career as he continues his battle against injuries and loss of form.

The 14-time major winner, who first broke into the top 100 when he turned pro in 1996, has fallen to 104<sup>th</sup> from 96<sup>th</sup> in the latest rankings issued after the weekend's tournaments.

The 39-year-old American has spent a cumulative record 683 weeks as world number one and was last in that position in May 2014, when he was replaced by Australian Adam Scott.

Since then, a succession of injuries and swing problems have bedevilled him and are threatening to derail the rest of his career.

Just last January Woods posted an 82 in the Phoenix Open - his worst round as a professional - that saw him drop outside the top 50 in the world rankings for the first time in more than three years.

Since then his downward slide has continued resulting in him failing to qualify for last month's WGC-Cadillac Championship, an event he had captured seven times.

When Woods turned professional in September 1996 at the Greater Milwaukee Open he was ranked 433<sup>rd</sup> in the world.

He then jumped from world number 221 to 75 five tournaments later in breaking through for a maiden pro career win at the 1996 Las Vegas Invitational, the first of his 79 PGA Tour titles.

Woods first took the world number one spot in finishing 19<sup>th</sup> in the 1997 US



The once-dominant Tiger, now under pressure, drops to his knees and begs for the ball to drop. Photo: Robyn Beck

Open at Congressional in Maryland.

He has not played since a sore back forced him to withdraw mid-round from the Farmers Insurance Open at Torrey Pines in early February.

He then announced he would take an open-ended break from competition to get his game in shape.

He has said he is "hopeful" of teeing it up at Augusta National when the Masters starts on April 9, but his chances of doing that are looking increasingly dim.

Woods has won the Masters four

times, but has never donned a green jacket without first winning a tournament earlier that season.

His latest fall in the rankings is only another indication that the era of his domination in the sport appears to be at an end. In June his position as the face of the game on EA Sports' PGA Tour video game will come to an end.

The "Rory McIlroy PGA Tour" will now feature the 25-year-old from Northern Ireland on its cover.

Current world number one, Rory

McIlroy has been top of the rankings since August 3, 2014, and his accumulated total stands at 73 weeks after having reached the pinnacle of the sport on four previous occasions.

The Northern Irishman leads Sweden's Henrik Stenson who is 3.19 points back in number two while Americans Bubba Watson and Jordan Spieth are three and four with Australian Jason Day completing the top five. McIlroy is attempting to win the green jacket for the first time and complete his set of winning all four Majors. - AFP

## SWIMMING

## Hackett comeback gathers steam

OLYMPIC swimming great Grant Hackett takes another step in his comeback following a troubled spell in retirement at the Australian swimming championships starting April 3, and is relaxed about his chances.

The 34-year-old walked away from the sport in 2008 after winning the 1500m freestyle at both the 2000 and 2004 Olympics, and claiming four world titles in the event. He won silver in the event at the 2008 Olympics.

But his life later ran into problems, with a messy divorce from singer-songwriter wife Candice Alley and allegations he smashed up his Melbourne apartment.

Last year the former 1500m world record-holder underwent rehab in the United States after seeking help for an addiction to sleeping pills.

He is now back under his old coach Denis Cotterell and will line up on the blocks at the national championships in Sydney.

Hackett told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation the upheaval in his personal life led him back to the pool, but he was a different swimmer the second time around.

"I don't have expectations like I did before and I sort of reserve the right to pull out at any time," he said.

Hackett added that the championships would allow him to gauge his place among the country's elite swimmers.

"Whilst I am enjoying it I will continue to do it but if I don't enjoy it, I can pull out at any time because it's not like I have set up any grand vision of this big comeback," he said.

"I want to just enjoy swimming and



hopefully swim fast."

Despite the 1500m being the event where he enjoyed huge success, his comeback has focused on the 200m and 400m freestyle.

Hackett said swimming competitively in the 1500m again was currently out of his reach.

"If I really want to continue with this and if I look to going all the way to the Olympic trials next year ... it's just really too short a time frame," he said.

"For the time that I've actually had out of the sport and the fitness and the base work that actually needs to be done for a race like that, it would just be too difficult."

Cotterell said retirement had not diminished Hackett's work ethic.

"He trains like he used to and that's as hard as anyone can possibly go," Cotterell told the national broadcaster.

- AFP

## AUSTRALIAN RULES

## Players cleared of doping, but questions linger

THIRTY-FOUR Australian Football League players accused of using a banned supplement were cleared by a tribunal yesterday, although officials at the country's anti-doping watchdog insist there has been wrongdoing.

The AFL said the decision was unanimous after the matter was referred to it by the Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority last year, following a lengthy investigation which sent shockwaves through the sport.

The past and present players from Melbourne-based Essendon allegedly used a prohibited substance thought to aid recovery from injury during the 2012 season.

"The tribunal was comfortably satisfied that the substance Thymosin Beta-4 was at the relevant time a prohibited substance under the (anti-doping) code," tribunal chairman David Jones said in a statement.

"The tribunal was not comfortably satisfied that any player was administered Thymosin Beta-4. The Tribunal was not comfortably satisfied that any player violated clause 11.2 of the AFL Anti-Doping Code."

The tribunal has yet to rule on any alleged violations by former Essendon sports scientist Stephen Dank, accused of being the architect of the supplements program at the club but who has denied any wrongdoing.

The drugs supplement scandal saw the top Australian side in 2013 hit by the AFL with the biggest fine in the sport's history - A\$2.0 million (US\$1.8million) - and coach James Hird banned for 12 months for bringing the game into disrepute.

The sanctions followed a six-month

investigation by ASADA, which included more than 13,000 documents, into Essendon's 2011-2012 supplement program.

It found that Essendon either allowed players to be given substances that were prohibited by the AFL Anti-Doping Code and the World Anti-Doping Code, or that the club was unable to determine whether players were administered prohibited substances.

ASADA chief executive Ben McDevitt acknowledged the March 31 decision but insisted there had been wrongdoing.

**'What happened at Essendon in 2012 was ... absolutely and utterly disgraceful,'**

**Ben McDevitt**  
ASADA chief executive

"What happened at Essendon in 2012 was, in my opinion, absolutely and utterly disgraceful," he said.

"It was not a supplements program but an injection regime and the players and the fans were so poorly let down by the club."

ASADA has 21 days to appeal.

- AFP

## Tiger Woods career timeline

**August 1996:** Turns pro after an outstanding amateur career and is named as the PGA Rookie of the Year.

**April 1997:** Wins the first of 14 majors at the Masters, becoming at 21 the youngest-ever winner at Augusta National. Two months later he takes the world number one spot for the first time.

**June 2000:** Wins US Open at Pebble Beach by a record 15 strokes and then becomes the fifth player in history to complete the career Grand Slam by winning the British Open by eight strokes at St Andrews.

**April 2001:** Wins his second Masters title and completes the "Tiger Slam" as the first golfer to be reigning champion of all four majors simultaneously.

**April 2002:** Successfully defends his Masters crown and in June goes on to win his second US Open at Bethpage Black. That makes him the youngest golfer in history to win seven majors.

**September 2004:** After failing to win another major in 2003 and 2004 Vijay Singh replaces him as world number one after a record run of 264 weeks on top.

**April 2005:** Woods emerges from his "slump" to win a fourth Masters, defeating Chris DiMarco in a playoff. He then wins a second British Open by five strokes at St Andrews, It is his 10<sup>th</sup> major title and he joins Jack Nicklaus in being the only players to win all four major tournaments at least twice.

**May 2006:** His father and guiding force Earl dies at 74, but the following month Woods wins his third British Open and 11<sup>th</sup> major at Hoylake.

**June 2008:** Two months after knee surgery wins the US Open for his 14<sup>th</sup>, and to date last, major at Torrey Pines, defeating Rocco Mediate in a sudden-death playoff. He promptly announces that he needs more knee surgery and takes the rest of the season off.

**February 2009:** Nine months later he returns to action, but in November of that year a car accident outside his Florida home unearths a series of marital infidelities that wrecks his marriage. Takes an "indefinite break from professional golf" to get his life back together.

**April 2010:** Returns to action at the Masters where he finishes fourth but the injuries mount over the course of the year and his ranking starts to tumble.

**March 2013:** Woods regains his form in 2012 and the following year his eighth win in the Arnold Palmer Invitational sees him regain the world number one spot.

**March 2014:** After a slow start to 2014, Woods injures himself during the Honda Classic and he subsequently skips the Masters for the first time to undergo back surgery. Loses world number one spot to Adam Scott in May.

**February 2015:** Struggles to get his season going and after pulling out injured from a tournament at Torrey Pines says he will take another break from competition to try and get his game back in shape.

**March 2015:** Falls out of the world top 100. - AFP

GOLF

# China drives 66 golf courses into the rough

**C**HINA'S Communist rulers have turned against the exclusive sport of golf with the government saying nearly 70 "illegal" courses have been closed, seemingly enforcing a decade-old ban for the first time.

The announcement by the Ministry of Land and Resources comes amid a high-profile anti-graft campaign spearheaded by President Xi Jinping, which has seen crackdowns on banquets, lavish gift-giving and other official excesses.

The ruling Communist Party has long had an ambivalent relationship with golf, which is a lucrative opportunity for local authorities and a favoured pastime of some officials, but is also closely associated with wealth and Western elites.

"Presently, local governments have shut down a number of illegally-built golf courses, and preliminary results have been achieved in clean-up and rectification work," read the announcement on the ministry's website late March 30.

Three of the 66 "illegal" golf courses listed by the ministry are in Beijing. Eight are in the eastern province of Shandong, while the southern and southwestern provinces of Guangdong and Yunnan are home to six each.

Even the tropical island province

of Hainan - considered the capital of the sport in China - has not been spared, with three unsanctioned courses shut down, according to the statement.

It did not give a timeframe for the closures.

With an eye on containing public anger over China's widening wealth gap, authorities in recent years have issued bans on an assortment of "extravagances", such as private clubs - often frequented by officials - in historic buildings and parks.

But such orders are often flouted. Government officials keen on joining golf clubs often do so under false names, wary of being perceived as corrupt or out-of-touch, according to Dan Washburn, author of *The Forbidden Game: Golf and the Chinese Dream*.

Washburn pointed out on Twitter that the announcement of the closures came days after news that US star Tiger Woods was to be paid US\$16.5 million to redesign a course in the capital. "What a country!" he added.

Central authorities ordered a nationwide moratorium on new golf courses in 2004, but development continued as revenue-minded local officials went their own way, even offering tax breaks for operators of new courses in places such as Hainan.

The number of courses in China has flourished, from fewer than 200 at the time of the ban to more than 600 at present, according to the official Xinhua news agency.

China is even home to the world's largest golf resort - the Mission Hills Golf Club in the southern industrial hub of Shenzhen, which borders Hong Kong. The 20-square-kilometre (7.7 sq mile) complex was founded in 1994 and currently boasts 12 18-hole courses.

As China's golf facilities have multiplied, so too has the Asian giant's clout on the professional golf stage.

Last November the World Golf Championships-HSBC Champions, a tournament known as "Asia's Major", teed off in Shanghai with 40 of the world's top 50 players present for the second consecutive year.

The \$8.5 million event is now the largest tournament in the world outside the US and the British Open.

The land resources ministry did not give reasons for the facilities' closure, but water and environmental concerns were cited among the factors that drove the 2004 ban.

A spokesperson for the China Golf Association, which is supervised by the sports ministry, said she could not comment on the latest move. - AFP



IN PICTURES

Photo: AFP

The Ministry of Defence team (red) defeated team 16/1(A) in the 4TV Cup at the Myanmar Sepak Takraw Federation courts.

FOOTBALL

## Cameroon great dismisses ASEAN teams as 'nonentities'

CAMEROON scraped a 3-2 friendly international win on March 30 over Thailand - a team World Cup legend Roger Milla dismissed as "football nonentities".

It took an 88th-minute match-winner from defender Ngweni Ndassi Kadang to salvage pride for the four-time African champions in Bangkok after they trailed by two goals.

Although 93 places below Cameroon in the world rankings, the Thai 'War Elephants' rocked the 'Indomitable Lions' when Prakit Deeprom's score and Aurelien Chedjou's own-goal gave Thailand a 2-0 lead.

Benjamin Moukandjo pulled one goal back before half-time and Clinton N'Jie equalised from a penalty with 13 minutes left.

Victory completed a two-win Asian tour for Cameroon after a 1-0 success in Indonesia - ranked even lower than Thailand - last week.

Milla, whose goals and corner-flag

dance celebrations lit up the 1990 World Cup in Italy where Cameroon became the first African quarter-finalists, was furious about the tour.

"Confronting Indonesia and Thailand is a humiliation for Cameroon," Milla told the domestic media.

"How can a country like Cameroon pick such football nonentities to play international friendly matches against?"

"I do not know why the national association organised friendly games against them - maybe they need some funds.

"It is a shame as we do not need friendly games against such teams."

Milla, brought out of semi-retirement on the Indian Ocean island of Reunion to play in Italy, said Thailand and Indonesia were not good enough opposition for Cameroon.

"Our national team would gain more by playing Cameroonian clubs," he said.

- AFP

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PREVIEW အစီအစဉ်ကို ရန်ကုန်မြို့ (ပန်းဆိုးတန်း နှင့် လှည်းတန်း) ၊  
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ကြိုတင်စာရင်းပေးသွင်းချိန်တွင် စရံငွေ(၅၀၀၀၀)ကျပ်  
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# Sport

## Tiger topples out of top 100

SPORT 26



### SEA GAMES SHORTS

### CYCLING

# Road-race to Mandalay



### VIETNAM

#### Tennis

Ly Hoang Nam, who has seen recent success on the international junior tennis circuit and risen to 34<sup>th</sup> in the International Tennis Federation's junior rankings, will lead Vietnam's charge to secure their first event medal in the SEA Games singles events, reports Xinhua.

The last time tennis featured was at the 2011 Indonesia Games when the Vietnamese tennis players won three bronzes in the women's team, men's doubles and women's doubles events.

The Vietnam Tennis Federation also believe Nguyen Hoang Thien, who has impressed in this year's Davis Cup matchups, could break the country's duck.

### INDONESIA

#### Badminton

Indonesia are intent on causing trouble in the doubles, as they target gold in both the men's and mixed doubles an official of the Indonesian Badminton Association told Xinhua.

"By seeing more stable performance at the men's doubles and the mixed doubles, we put a realistic target," said Rexy Mainaky, head of coaching and achievement.

Indonesia also have their eyes on silver in the men's and women's team events and women's doubles, and target bronze in the singles' competitions.

But after the resignation from the national team of Tommy Sugianto and Simon Santoso, the two remaining senior players on the national team, will mean the burden of this target will fall on the shoulders of the nation's young shuttlers, reports the *Jakarta Post*.

The *Post* reported that Tommy resigned late last year, explaining that "he no longer felt comfortable" training at the national training camp, while Simon handed in his notice earlier this month unhappy in being the only senior player with the men's singles team.

"We will still be open for them [the resigned senior players] to participate, but now it's time to put our trust in the young players who trained with us," Rexy Mainaky told reporters last week.

According to the newly appointed men's singles coach, Hendri Saputra, the performances of Firman, Jonatan and Ihsan, who are all under 20, in the last few tournaments have been quite promising. However, he said he restrained himself from setting them excessively ambitious targets.

"This year I won't burden them with any title to win. I will only focus on strengthening their techniques, improving their national and international experiences, and building their physiques," said Hendri.

- Matt Roebuck



Nyan Linn Htet (006) and Kyaw Htet Aung lead a group of cyclists on the Mandalay Hill climb.  
Photo: Douglas Long

### DOUGLAS LONG

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**C**OMPETITIVE cycling in Myanmar took a step forward last weekend when the third leg of the inaugural Cycle and Make a Difference Charity Series hosted the country's first-ever nighttime mountain bike race.

Held on March 27 - as part of a three-day cycling competition that also included a road race on March 28 and a cross-country mountain bike event on the final day - the event was described as a "milestone for the local cycling scene" by Khin Maung Win, owner of Myan Shwe Pyi Tractors, the series sponsor.

"I think the cyclists found it rewarding. Riders came from all over Myanmar to compete. It was quite amazing to see them all here," he added.

The winner of each event is given a K1 million certificate to donate to a charitable organisation that works in a community in the vicinity of the

race course.

The night race, which started at 7pm at the Nature's Life Sporting Ground near the base of Yankin Hill, consisted of 10 laps of a fast 5-kilometre (3-mile) course, contested by relay teams made up of three to five riders each. The rules stipulated that no rider could do more than two consecutive laps before handing off to a teammate. Fourteen teams participated.

The winning team of Sai Aung Hlaing Sae, Aung Naing Tun and Sunny Aye, representing the Mandalay Free Riders cycling club, finished in front of a screaming crowd with a time of 2h 4m 47s, just 18 seconds ahead of a three-man team from Nay Pyi Taw.

The 50km road race on March 28 started with a quick cruise around Mandalay Palace before diverting northward onto a tough circuit that included three leg-curdling ascents of Mandalay Hill. The tattered field of 45 riders then faced a long, flat stretch to the finish line in an industrial zone southeast of the city.

The race was won by 37-year-

old Min Min Han from Mandalay in time of 1h 24m 5s, with Chit Ko Ko, 21, trailing in second place by 11 seconds.

Min Min Han - who also managed third place in the over-26 age group in the cross-country mountain bike race on March 29, despite having to dismount to squeeze past a truck that briefly blocked the course - was modest about his accomplishments.

"It was a good weekend for me," he said.

The cross-country mountain bike race - five laps of the same 5km circuit used for the night relay - was taken out by Zaw Win Ko with a time of 59m 10s. He bested his nearest competitor, Sai Aung Hlaing Sae, by 8 seconds. More than 50 cyclists participated in the race.

The women's road and cross-country races were both won handily by 21-year-old Tin Win Kyi, a triathlete currently residing at the Youth Training Centre in Nay Pyi Taw.

"The mountain bike course was okay. It wasn't too tough for me," she said, "but the end of the road course

had too much traffic. I had to ride carefully."

June's Singapore SEA Games have come too early for the youngster who has only recently joined the sporting academy, but on the basis of this performance she will be one to watch for the future when the 2017 Games roll around.

The series consists events held every two months in different locations around Myanmar. The first event took place in Yangon last November and the second in Nay Pyi Taw in January. The fourth round is tentatively scheduled to be held in Taunggyi, Shan State, in late May or early June.

Jeff Parry, an Australian cycling guru who lives in Yangon and who participated in the night relay and cross-country races, described the weekend as a "very well-organised carnival of cycling".

"The mountain bike course was a nice, well-chosen track with a bit of everything," he said. "I'm already looking forward to the next event in Taunggyi."

### FOOTBALL

# Young White Angels' Olympic hopes teeter

### MATT ROEBUCK

A LATE Kaung Sat Naing consolation goal was unlikely to console many as Myanmar's hopes of qualification for the Asian U23 Championships and the Rio 2016 Olympics were on the rocks last night after a despairing 5-1 defeat at the hands of Australia.

A draw would have probably been enough to see the Young White Angels go through as one of the five best second-place teams from the 10 qualification groups and a narrow defeat would have still left them with a decent shot. But after this heavy drubbing, the nation's chances of proceeding to next January's



tournament in Qatar were hanging by a thread.

Myanmar - with a +4 goal difference - were sitting 5<sup>th</sup> best of the second-place teams heading into yesterday's game, trailing Indonesia, Yemen, Uzbekistan and Thailand but like Myanmar many of those sides

had yet to play the top-placed team in their group.

Vietnam sat 9<sup>th</sup> but after a 7-0 victory over Macau in their final match they had improved their goal difference to +6 as Myanmar's goals for and against now stand equal.

Myanmar's slim remaining hope rested predominantly on Thailand losing by six goals at home in their final Group G game against the North Koreans in a game to be played on March 31 after the print deadline.

Myanmar was sunk by a hat-trick from Newcastle Jets winger Andrew Hoole and two from Perth Glory forward Jamie Maclaren. Kaung Sat Naing scored Myanmar's sole

contribution to the scoreline in the 79<sup>th</sup> minute.

The Australian squad also included Fulham's Ryan Williams, son of former Yangon United manager Eric Williams, who appeared in the game as a late substitute.

| AFC U23 Qualifying, March 31                              |       |         | National Stadium, Taiwan |
|---|-------|---------|--------------------------|
| Australia   | 5 - 1 | Myanmar |                          |
| Hoole 10' 68' 70', Maclaren 13', 57', Kaung Sat Naing 78' |       |         |                          |

| Int. Friendly, March 30                   |       |         | Delta Stadium, Indonesia |
|---|-------|---------|--------------------------|
| Indonesia                                 | 2 - 1 | Myanmar |                          |
| Maitimo 61', Gonzales 74', David Htan 87' |       |         |                          |