

M-ZINE+

MYANMAR'S BUSINESS WEEKLY

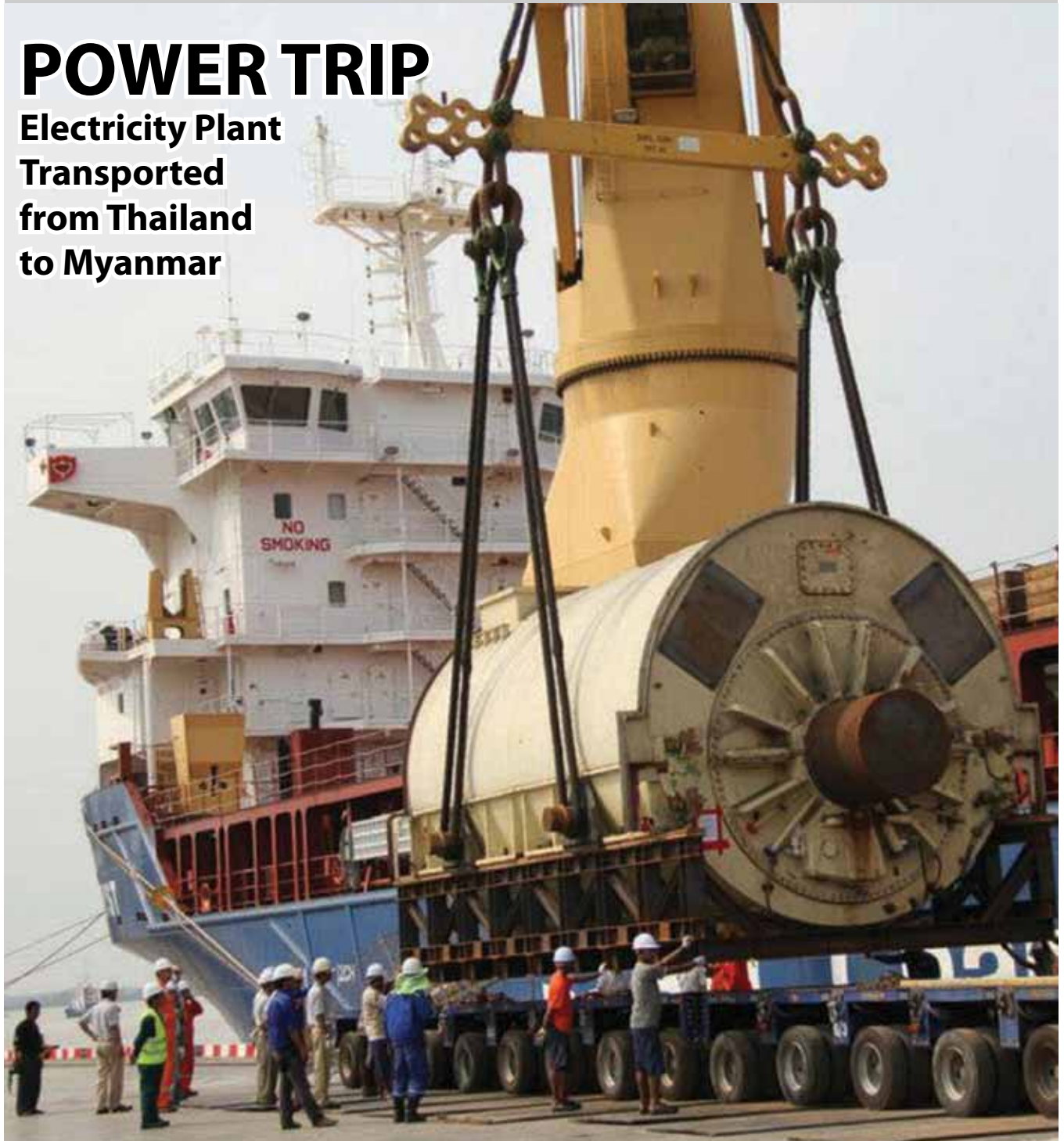
Issue 11, Vol. 2

www.mzineplus.com

March 14, 2013

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Transported
from Thailand
to Myanmar



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Publisher:
 Khin Myo Myint (1690/2012)

M-ZINE+ is owned by Mizzima Media Company Limited and printed by Yaung Sin Offset (05404) in Yangon, Myanmar.

Subscriptions and sales in Myanmar
 Innwa Bookstore Bldg. 246, Room 201/301, Ground Fl. Pansodan St. (Upper Block) Yangon 243216, 389838

Subscriptions and sales are also available from Mizzima Media Co. Ltd. in Yangon.
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The Growing Land Battle

It is hard to ignore the death of a policeman and the injuries to farmers, a dozen of whom landed up in hospital in Maubin Township in the Ayeyarwady Delta at the end of February. For over a week, about 300 farmers had been protesting over the ownership of 500 acres of land in the dirt-poor delta that they claim was taken by the military government in 1996. They said the land was handed over to a livestock company that, instead of using the land, has left it idle.

Myanmar faces a land ownership crisis. It is not immediately apparent because many of the hundreds of land disputes around the country get little significant press coverage – unless somebody gets shot dead or people end up in hospital. It is also not obvious because outside observers might tend to assume that most farmers and villagers own the land they live on. In most cases, they don't. Despite new laws that bring in the concept of private ownership of land, all land is the property of the state and can be nationalised by the state if it deems fit. And here lies the problem.

No country has been immune to struggles over the ownership of land. But most, including Myanmar's neighbours, have some form of certified land tenure that offers security to those who use or farm land. As the Maubin clash and others around the country demonstrate, Myanmar farmers face insecurity because they cannot be sure if they will be kicked off the land that they are cultivating, land that might have been farmed by their family for generations. The danger is the country will see increasing numbers of clashes and protests over land because the Naypyitaw government has a dream of opening up the agricultural sector to foreign investors and big business.

As Nobel prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz

has warned, the battle over land in Myanmar could derail the efforts by the government to reduce poverty. A good two-thirds of the population is involved in the agricultural sector, but this only brings in roughly a third of the country's GDP. But in dealing with the problem, one wonders whether the government recognizes that those working the land should have certain basic rights. President Thein Sein has characterised a substantial proportion of the farmers as illegal tenants occupying land, due largely to expanding population pressure. Because of these "problems," it is hard for the government to allot large areas for investment, he says.

Such an attitude may be a problem in a country where most farmers in effect live in limbo, uncertain about their future, and local companies often have money and connections. The land confiscations that took place during the military era, and the ones likely to come, will be and are a source of tension, even with the offers of nominal compensation that are sometimes made.

There are also the ceasefires with armed minority groups, in place or under discussion, where issues of land rights will have to be addressed. For example, to whose land will refugees and other displaced return to?

As Myanmar opens up, with plans for foreign agro-industry companies to put down roots, more shots could be fired in the battle over land, and the ensuing skirmishes and inevitable bad press coverage may not look pretty to company investors or critics.

Naypyitaw needs to take a serious look at the issue of land ownership and recognize that farmers' rights should not be pushed aside to allow influential businessmen and foreign investors to reap the spoils.

POLITICAL ROUNDUP



SUU KYI FLIES BACK TO YANGON TO GREET TUTU

“She is beautiful and it is wonderful to be here!” exclaimed Archbishop Desmond Tutu after meeting his fellow Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi at her house in Yangon on February 26. The jovial South African archbishop had long proclaimed himself a fan of The Lady. On February 26, he finally had a chance to tell her in person.

“We’re looking forward to when the country is truly free,” he told reporters with Suu Kyi at his side. “And then you see just how much the world admires her – she is a total icon!

“The potential of this country is immense and we want to see that potential fully realized,” he continued. “No ethnic strife or all the problems with people of different faiths.”

UNHCR CALLS FOR REGIONAL RESPONSE TO BOATPEOPLE

The UN’s refugee agency has expressed its concern over the growing number of boatpeople dying in the Bay of Bengal, including members of the Rohingya community fleeing Myanmar or from Bangladesh’s refugee camps and makeshift sites.

“Most are men, but there are also increasing reports of women and children on these often rickety boats making the journey southwards.

We estimate that of the 13,000 people who left on smugglers’ boats in 2012, close to 500 died at sea when their boats broke down or capsized,” said UNHCR spokesman Andrej Mahecic.

FOR MORE NEWS, CHECK MIZZIMA.COM

INDIAN ARMY OFFICER ARRESTED SMUGGLING DRUGS TO MYANMAR

Indian media have reported that a senior Indian army official has been arrested for attempting to smuggle illegal substances across the Myanmar border. Lt-Col Ajay Chaudhary, who works as a press officer for India’s Ministry of Defense, was intercepted by police at Pallel while leading a convoy of cars carrying a large amount of the banned drug pseudo-ephedrine toward the Myanmar border.

Myanmar drug cartels reportedly use pseudo-ephedrine to manufacture methamphetamine, which is then sent back to India and Thailand. “The matter is under investigation and strict action will be taken as per the law of the land,” army spokesperson Col. Jagdeep Dahiya told *DNA* in Delhi.

MYANMAR LIFE EXPECTANCY ‘TO INCREASE’

As part of Myanmar’s developing National Health Plan, the government aims to increase the life expectancy of its people to 75-80 by 2031. The life expectancy of Myanmar people was 60-64 as recorded in 2001.

The announcement came from Dr. Tun Zaw, a deputy director at the Ministry of Health, while speaking on the overall improvements needed across Myanmar healthcare at the Myanmar International Trade and Investment Summit at Yangon’s Sedona Hotel on March 4.

“To achieve this, we aim for universal health coverage and to raise awareness of health problems in communities,” he said.

CHINA CONSIDERED USING DRONES ON MYANMAR

Chinese daily *Global Times* has reported that Beijing considered using drones to target Shan drug kingpin Naw Kham in his mountainous stronghold in northeastern Myanmar. The Chinese government reportedly discussed assassinating the drug warlord who was accused of killing 13 Chinese sailors on the Mekong River in October 2011. They decided to capture him instead, the *Global Times* said, although he was subsequently caught and handed over by Laotian authorities in April 2012.

“The potential of this country is immense and we want to see that potential fully realized.”

Archbishop Desmond Tutu



KNU CALLS FOR SENIOR MILITARY OFFICERS AT PEACE TALKS

The Karen National Union (KNU) has requested that Naypyitaw send high-ranking military officers to future talks as part of the peace process between the two sides, according to a report by *Karen News*. An informal meeting was held on February 21 at the Thai-Myanmar border town of Myawaddy where KNU chairman Gen. Saw Mutu Say Poe met with Myanmar Vice-President Sai Mauk Kham.

According to *Karen News* reporter Saw Eh Na, the vice-presidential delegation inspected the Thai-Myanmar Friendship Bridge and the Myawaddy border-trading zone. However, “KNU leaders repeated their position to the government delegation that the KNU would only carry out development projects ... after reaching a concrete ceasefire agreement,” said the report.



KNU's General Saw Mutu Say Poe

MYANMAR-U.S. AGREE ANTI-DRUGS PACT

Myanmar and the United States have taken another step toward closer relations by agreeing to work together on counter-narcotics operations. Speaking to reporters, U.S. Ambassador Derek Mitchell said that the agreement “is another step forward in our overall relationship.”

According to state-run *The New Light of Myanmar*, Mitchell ratified the agreement with Myanmar Foreign Minister Wunna Maung Lwin in Naypyitaw on February 21. Under the agreement, Myanmar and the U.S. will resume a joint opium yield survey in early 2013 before re-establishing “channels of cooperation” on counter-narcotics issues, *The New Light of Myanmar* said, adding that the program would address opium production and trafficking.



YANGON TO GET MASTER PLAN WITH HELP OF JAPAN

The Myanmar government is currently drafting a master plan to develop the city of Yangon to an international standard with the help of the Japan International Cooperation Agency, the state-run newspaper *The New Light of Myanmar* reported on February 25.

“Yangon will be upgraded for emergence of an international level city. In doing so, efforts will be made for supply of electricity, potable water and better transport for the dwellers,” said an official of Yangon City Development Committee to the newspaper.

CANADA WANTS TO HELP MYANMAR IN THE ‘MARCH TOWARD DEMOCRACY’

The head of a Canadian delegation to Myanmar has welcomed the country’s reforms to date but has called for further moves forward, stating that, “Canada is here to help [Myanmar] in the march toward democracy.”

“I see the reforms that have taken place and we are here to continue with that,” said Deepak Obhrai, parliamentary secretary to the Canadian minister of foreign affairs, speaking at the end of his visit on February 22. The delegation met with opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi and speakers of the upper and lower houses during their five-day tour. Obhrai said that it was clear that the Myanmar parliamentarians needed “all the assistance they can get” and that Canada hoped to help establish good practices in areas such as elections and taxes.

ECONOMIC ROUNDUP



Bagan Photo: Xiao Ting Shirley

40% MORE FOREIGNERS VISIT BAGAN IN 2012

The number of foreigners entering the Bagan hotel zone increased by 40 percent in 2012, according to hoteliers in the area. According to Zaw Waik, the secretary of the Bagan Zone of the Myanmar Hoteliers Association, the number of domestic visitors was also up. Among foreign tourists, the highest number of visitors came from Thailand, with China second. French and German visitors are the most common Western visitors to the ancient Buddhist temples.

“Most of the foreign tourists who come to Bagan not only visit the ancient temples, but take an interest in the frescoes,” tour guide Nyi Zaw said. “They also take time to visit artisans selling local handicrafts such as lacquerware and artwork.”

LAND BUSINESS BECOMES BRISK AROUND DAWEI SEZ

Real estate agents in Dawei have said that land prices in Tanintharyi Region are soaring due to increased interest following the implementation of the Dawei Special Economic Zone (SEZ).

“The land business is becoming brisk along with the implementation of the SEZ,” said Soe Thein, a Dawei real estate agent.

FOR MORE NEWS, CHECK MIZZIMA.COM

U.S. ‘DEDICATED’ TO INVESTING IN MYANMAR

The United States-Myanmar Trade and Investment Conference took place on February 25 at the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, with the aim of encouraging bilateral trade between the two countries. Speaking at the opening ceremony of the conference, Jose W. Fernandez, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs said that, “The U.S. government is dedicated to doing everything in its power to encourage and support social and corporate responsibility. We want U.S. companies to invest here [Myanmar] in a social and responsible manner.”

CHINA UNIONPAY CARD LAUNCHES IN YANGON

A ceremony was held in Yangon on February 23 to officially launch China UnionPay (CUP) card services in Myanmar, news agency *Xinhua* reported. CUP is the largest issued bank card in China and is widely accepted around the world. Its services in Myanmar are to be tied to all banks affiliated with Myanmar Payment Union (MPU), which has 17 members, among them: Myanmar Citizen Bank, Myawaddy Bank, Myanmar Oriental Bank, Kanbawza Bank, Cooperative Bank, Asian Green Development Bank, and Myanmar Apex Bank.

MYANMAR ALLOWS LICENSE-FREE IMPORTS, EXPORTS

The Ministry of Commerce has eased laws for local businesspeople by passing a bill that will allow all imports and exports to proceed without licenses as from April 1. “As a first step, 166 import products and 152 export products will be allowed without license from March 1, 2013. By April 1, all import/export products will be allowed without license,” a high-ranking official from the Ministry of Commerce told *Mizzima*.

“It’s good news for merchants,” said Tun Aye, the secretary of the Myanmar Fishery Products Processors and Exporters Association.



Yangon docks

FOREIGN INVESTORS QUEUE UP TO MILK MYANMAR'S DAIRY MARKET

Thailand, Korea, Netherlands and New Zealand have expressed interest in investing in Myanmar's dairy sector, according to the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries. "Many foreign representatives have come to Myanmar to discuss their plans to invest in the dairy sector. Thailand, Korea, Holland and New Zealand are the main contenders," Dr. Aung Gyi, the deputy director general of the Ministry, told *Mizzima*.

Presently, Myanmar has 14 million cows and steers, and some three million buffaloes. "Among the 14 million cattle, about 500,000 are dairy cows," said Dr. Aung Gyi. Most of Myanmar's dairy farms are located in Mandalay and Sagaing Regions.



MON STATE GAS PIPELINE NEARS COMPLETION

The construction of the Kanbauk to Myaing Kalay to Hlawgar gas pipeline is now more than 70 percent complete following delays due to the pipe being built too near the sea and land disputes. "[The project was delayed because] pipes passed across seashores and problems occurred when the tides rose," said an official overseeing the project who wished to remain anonymous. "The old pipes were vulnerable to water pressure and their capacities were reduced so we have replaced those old pipes with high-quality pipes." The new Korean-made pipes are 40 feet in length, 30 inches in diameter, and one inch thick.

The path of the pipeline has been moved so that it now passes only through inland areas, according to the official who explained that although Myanmar has the required technical know-how for the large pipeline construction project, it does not have enough money and cannot provide international-level standard security around the pipeline.

"Myanmar is a highly prospective jurisdiction for hydrocarbons which has lacked substantial investment in recent times due to the prevailing political environment."

Australian firm Raisama Energy



AUSTRALIAN ENERGY FIRM STAKES CLAIM IN MYANMAR

Australian firm Raisama Energy announced on February 21 that it is poised to enter the Myanmar market following the signing of a partnership agreement with local company Chinthe Energy Ltd. Raisama said it would source opportunities for oil and gas exploration in Myanmar as part of its policy of extending the firm's networks across the Asia-Pacific where it also has stakes in Indonesia and the Philippines.

"Myanmar is a highly prospective jurisdiction for hydrocarbons which has lacked substantial investment in recent times due to the prevailing political environment," the Australian company said. "Recent steps toward a full democracy and open society have stimulated investor interest."

The firm attributed the "stimulated investor interest" to an easing of sanctions by the U.S.A., but noted that as American companies are still restricted from conducting full business operations in Myanmar, Australian companies are provided the opportunity to "be ahead of the investment curve."

LOCAL JOURNAL ROUNDUP



MBStock

FOREIGN FIRMS INTERESTED IN HIGH-SPEED RAIL PROJECTS

Japanese and Thai companies have sent representatives to Myanmar Railways to discuss possible high-speed rail projects in Myanmar. A spokesman for Myanmar Railways mentioned the Thai-based Hydro firm as one of the companies. The spokesman went on to note that such rail projects are very costly and that things are only at the discussion phase with detailed research and analysis yet to be done. In the meantime, Japan is helping Myanmar reduce running times along the track between Yangon and Mandalay. *Popular News*

CENTRAL BANK ALLOWS FOR BANK BRANCH EXPANSION

Banks will be able to open more branches more quickly as the Central Bank is making things easier, according to Ye Min Oo, a director of the Asian Green Development Bank (AGD). Banks had been compelled to open branches only on land they possessed, forcing them to increase landholdings. Starting in April, however, banks can open branches at shopping malls and on rented property. The AGD director said the Central Bank would allow banking kiosks to open as well, thus allowing Myanmar's banks to more resemble the banks of foreign counterparts. *Eleven Media*



MYANMAR RICE EXPORTERS FACE LOSSES

Rice exporters are suffering due to price differentials. They've already contracted to buy grain at a price that is now US \$20 per ton higher than the global one, which means built-in losses. What's more, exporters have little choice but to continue selling at a loss. One rice trader, Dr Soe Tun, explained that, "The FOB (freight on board) is nearly US \$140 while the local price has become US \$160 per ton."

Rice exporters estimate that the fiscal year's rice export total now stand at 1.2 million tons, and should reach 1.3 million tons by the end of the fiscal year. Last year's Indian exports of 9 million tons led to a glut in the global market, and a decrease in rice prices. Other rice exporting countries are facing a similar situation. *The Yangon Times*

GOLD PRICES DECLINE

According to gold merchants, the price of gold in Yangon continues to fall in line with global price declines. During the first week of February the domestic gold price was 760,000 kyat per tical. Then, the price dropped to 736,000 kyat. Nonetheless, demand for gold accessories is brisk so eventually prices may rise to reflect demand but for now it's a buyers market. *7 Day News Journal*

CB BANK ENCOURAGES INTERNATIONAL CARD USE

Cooperative Bank wants local businesses to make more use of international payments cards, says a bank spokesman. He noted that big international hotels were eager to link up with CB Bank in this regard and that such cards would be very useful at tourist sites and at shops frequented by foreign visitors. Those shops include souvenir, jewelry, mobile and other ones as well as hotels and restaurants. The cards that can currently be used are Visa, MasterCard and CUP. These cards can also link with other banks that are members of the Myanmar Payment Union. *Internet Journal*



POWER TRIP

The Freight Company Transports a Power Plant from Thailand

By Victoria Bruce, Senior Reporter



Big undertaking - Transporting parts of a power plant from Thailand to Myanmar. Photo: The Freight Co

Four nights, one 14-axle hydraulic trailer, 593 packages weighing a total of 1,370 tonnes, and around 80 men working in six-hour shifts.

That's how long it took The Freight Company to transport the first of two 120 megawatt (MW) power stations donated by the Thai government to Myanmar from a Yangon port to its new home at the Ywama project site near Insein prison at the edge of Yangon City.

It's the first of what could be many mega-machinery projects set to boost Myanmar's ailing electricity sector. According to World Bank estimates, only 25 percent of Myanmar's 60 million population has access to electricity and "brown-outs" are becoming increasingly common in the economic capital of Yangon as the summer season heats up.

The hope is that the Thai government's donation of



Bringing the power plant from Thailand was a major logistical feat. Photo: The Freight Co

two 20-year-old gas turbines will ramp up the efficiency at the Ywama power plant, which currently operates at around 80 MW or roughly 80 percent of capacity, and help alleviate electricity shortages for businesses and residences in Yangon.

Patrick Dick from The Freight Co and his local partner, Captain Soe Min Aung, took M-ZINE+ Senior Reporter Victoria Bruce along for the ride one night as the massive convoy made its fourth trek along the 25 kilometre route from the Asia World-operated Hteedan port to the site.

For Mr Dick, the trip is tinged with nostalgia. Some 30 years ago, he was rocking around Yangon's ports on assignment with a European company assisting to build a hydropower dam in northern Myanmar, one of the

country's last large power projects.

Now, he's back again on a power trip, leading The Freight Co's Myanmar play. For him, it is symbolic that the company's first major project is also assisting the power sector.

"I'm very attached to this country and thrilled to have been part of the last major energy project now playing a pivotal role in the first one since Myanmar's re-opening," Mr Dick said.

Capt. Soe Min Aung says the project has great significance for Myanmar's energy sector.

"At the moment, the country needs this kind of power generation. Without the power, we can't progress – it's key for the development of the country," Cpt Soe Min Aung told M-ZINE+.

As the country opens up, Capt. Soe Min Aung expects more private sector energy projects to come online, particularly in gas, coal and hydropower.

As well as accepting handouts, the Myanmar government is also actively inviting foreign investment in the power sector and has plans to build two new power plants near Yangon with foreign partners - a 600 MW coal-fired plant with Japanese J Power Company and another 500 MW gas-fired power plant with South Korea.

Japanese powerhouse Marubeni has taken charge of overhauling an existing thermal plant at the Ywama site, as part of a US \$3.8 million contract awarded by the Myanmar Electric Power Enterprise.

Work commenced in July 2012 and the site is due to go online in April this year, according to the firm.

However experts such as Jared Bissinger, a PhD student studying Myanmar's economy, say the government also needs to revamp its electricity pricing system, eliminate wasteful subsidies and give small consumers better access to power.

"Changing the way Myanmar prices electricity by instituting a progressive pricing system, will increase incentives to invest in power generation and distribution," Mr Bissinger wrote in a recent paper, "Firm Perceptions of Myanmar's Business Climate: Electricity and the Quick Win of Progressive Power Pricing."

Once online, the two 120MW power stations do-

nated by Thailand are expected to alleviate some of Yangon's energy shortages and take the pressure off the city's other power plants, many of which are desperately overdue for refurbishment.

It is uncertain what the trade-off will be for this "gift" from the Thai government, which industry experts estimate to be worth around US \$3million in asset value, plus an extra US \$1 million in shipping and transport fees.

"Thailand likes to give a little and take a lot when it comes to Myanmar," one Bangkok-based consultant told M-ZINE+.

For energy-hungry Thailand, ensuring continued supply of natural gas from neighbouring Myanmar will be top of its priority list, as Myanmar gas imports account for around 30 percent of its neighbour's energy consumption. Just how crucial this energy drip-feed is was recently illustrated by the alarm voiced by the Thai authorities when Total, one of the gas suppliers, said it would need to switch off the supply in April while it carried out maintenance. The authorities said they feared this would lead to power cuts in Bangkok in the hot season.

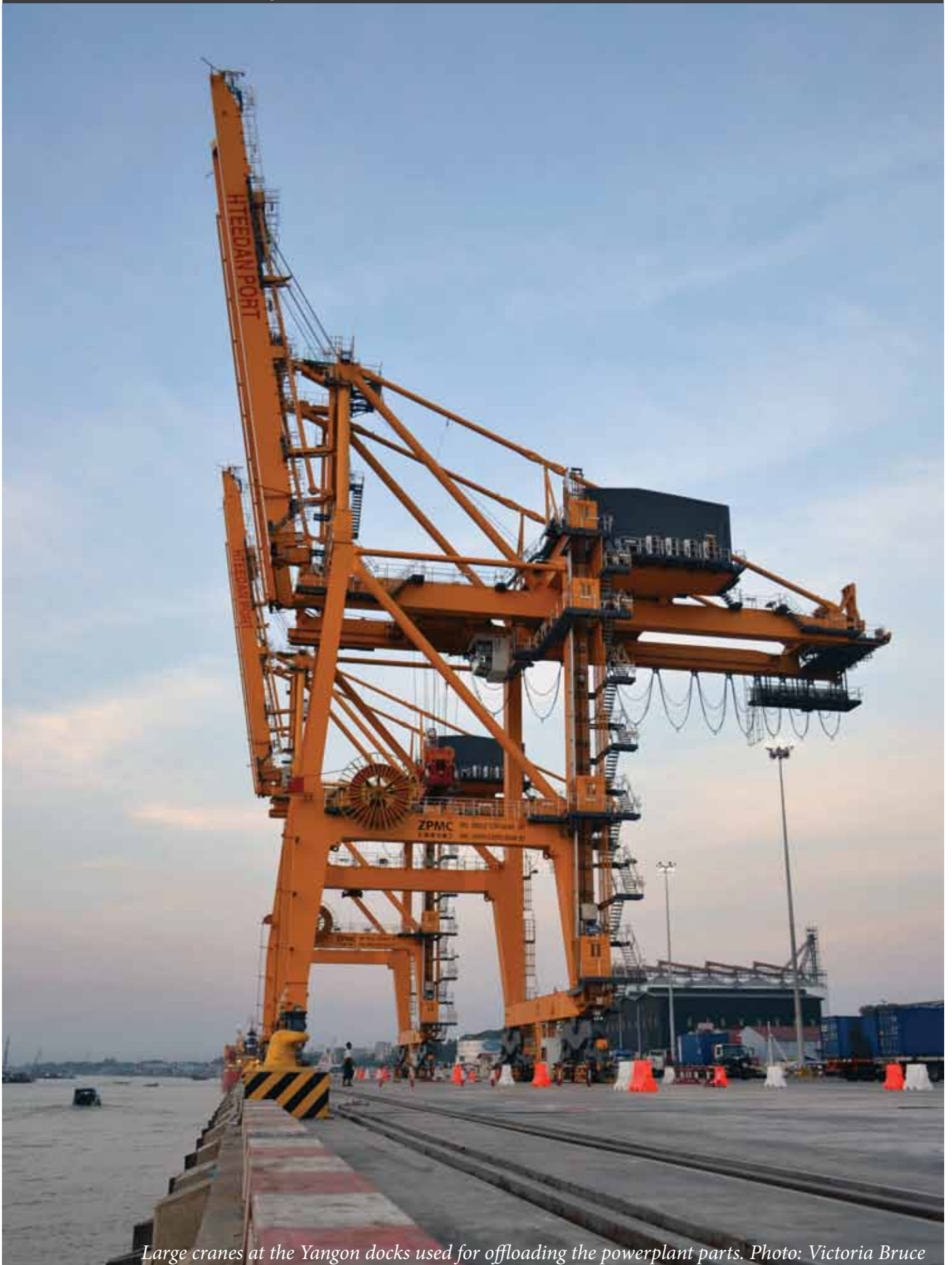
For Mr Dick, more electricity projects in Myanmar means more demand for heavy transport services such as his freight forwarding firm.

The Swiss-born businessman's relationship with Myanmar started when he spent one year living and

THAILAND ENERGY DRIP-FEED THREATENED?

Just how crucial this energy drip-feed is was recently illustrated by the alarm voiced by the Thai authorities when Total, one of the gas suppliers, said it would need to switch off the supply in April while it carried out maintenance. The authorities said they feared this would lead to power cuts in Bangkok in the hot season.





Large cranes at the Yangon docks used for offloading the powerplant parts. Photo: Victoria Bruce



A police motorcycle escorts one of the heavy loads. Photo: The Freight Co

working inside then regime-controlled Burma, receiving ships from Europe with hydropower station equipment and making the long trek to upcountry project sites.

Thirty years later, his project is on a slightly smaller scale and made easier with the advent of new technology and equipment.

Gone are the days of sagging, wooden flatbed Bedford trucks and in their place, Mr Dick has one of his favourite toys – a multi-axle hydraulic trailer, worth around US \$1 million and capable of lugging hundreds of tonnes of equipment over rugged roads.

Tonight, he's at the head of a massive convoy of truck and trailer, loaded high with a 70 tonne start-up unit for the Mitsubishi-manufactured gas turbine destined for the Ywama power plant site.

It's a mammoth task. Mr Dick and Capt. Soe Min Aung lead the way, armed with flashing red light sticks to direct traffic. Close behind them is a support truck full of Myanmar workers wielding long bamboo poles stopping every 50 metres or so for the workers to lift

up the low-hanging cables so the truck's 6.5-metre-high load can pass safely underneath.

Mr Dick's team of 12 Thai heavy transport specialists smile down from their various perches astride the hydraulic trailer and appear to take it all in their stride. They've done this before, and Mr Dick says they'll be joining him to help train up more local staff once The Freight Co Myanmar gains traction.

He expects his core business in the Southeast Asian country to consist of transport and logistics support for heavy industry such as petroleum, mining, energy and infrastructure projects. Demand could also come from cement projects and bottling plants as well.

"I expect 99 percent of our partners to be private sector in the future," he says.

This current project is one of two giant gas turbines handed over by the Energy Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT) to the Myanmar Electric Power Enterprise (MEPE).

Thai multidisciplinary engineering firm STFE Company picked up the contract for the installation,

engineering, commissioning and transportation of the turbine from MEPE, and in turn contracted a consortium, including Mr Dick's The Freight Co, business partner Capt. Soe Min Aung's Injynn Development company and Thai heavy trucking company Silamas Transport, to take charge of the cargo transportation from Yangon to Ywama.

The first of the two gas turbines is expected to go online in September 2013, and the second unit, which is scheduled to arrive in Yangon this March, should go online in November, government sources said.

While Mr Dick says this particular job has only a "low to medium contract value," he says the publicity surrounding this job is invaluable.

"We expect this to be a door opener and now it's up to us," he says.

He hopes that pulling off this project within such a tight timeframe will pave the way for future contracts.

"We still have to go and market, and we hope the word spreads, but we won't sit and rest on our laurels," he said.

"We have to go and meet the client, shake hands and introduce the company - but I think we couldn't have any better reference," he said, as he watched the mammoth transporter roll by.

At the moment, his main competition in the freight forwarding industry are Singaporean freight and logistics companies, since few Myanmar firms have the same scale of financial resources or technology.

"They [Singapore] are regionally active because of oil and gas being a hub in Singapore, and they also have a transport hub there, starting from barges, landing craft, trucks, trains and everything," he says.

"Malaysian and Thai companies aren't as pushy at going abroad," Mr Dick says.

Some of the challenges he expects his future clients to come up against include battling for unloading space in Yangon's bustling port zones and dealing with accumulated transportation costs.

The Thai government's turbine gift picked up an additional US \$150,000 in extra port costs because the ship carrying it had to shift between the smaller Bo Aung Kyaw Port to the larger container terminal at the Asia World Port.

Mr Dick puts the extra costs down to lack of forward planning and says the main issue was finding a port facility to accommodate the weight and size of the cargo.

Four massive pieces – the starter unit, turbine, generator and transformer weighing between 70 and 220 tonnes each – could only be unloaded on the docks of the heavy duty Asia World Port, which didn't have space



The 14-axle heavy trailer used in the operation. Photo: The



Workers at the docks. Photo: Kyawt Thiri Nyunt

to accommodate the remaining 400 or more pieces of bulky equipment, so these were unloaded upriver at the smaller Bo Aung Kyaw Port facility.

Mr Dick's advice to potential clients is to take their time and prepare early to avoid extra costs.

"Consult an expert with your challenge and give them the time to come up with a proper logistics solution," he said.



Freight Co

Patrick Dick, right, oversees the operation. Photo. Kyawt Thiri Nyunt



“Seventy percent of Myanmar’s current gas production is exported to Thailand,” Htin Aung , deputy minister of energy, told M-ZINE+.

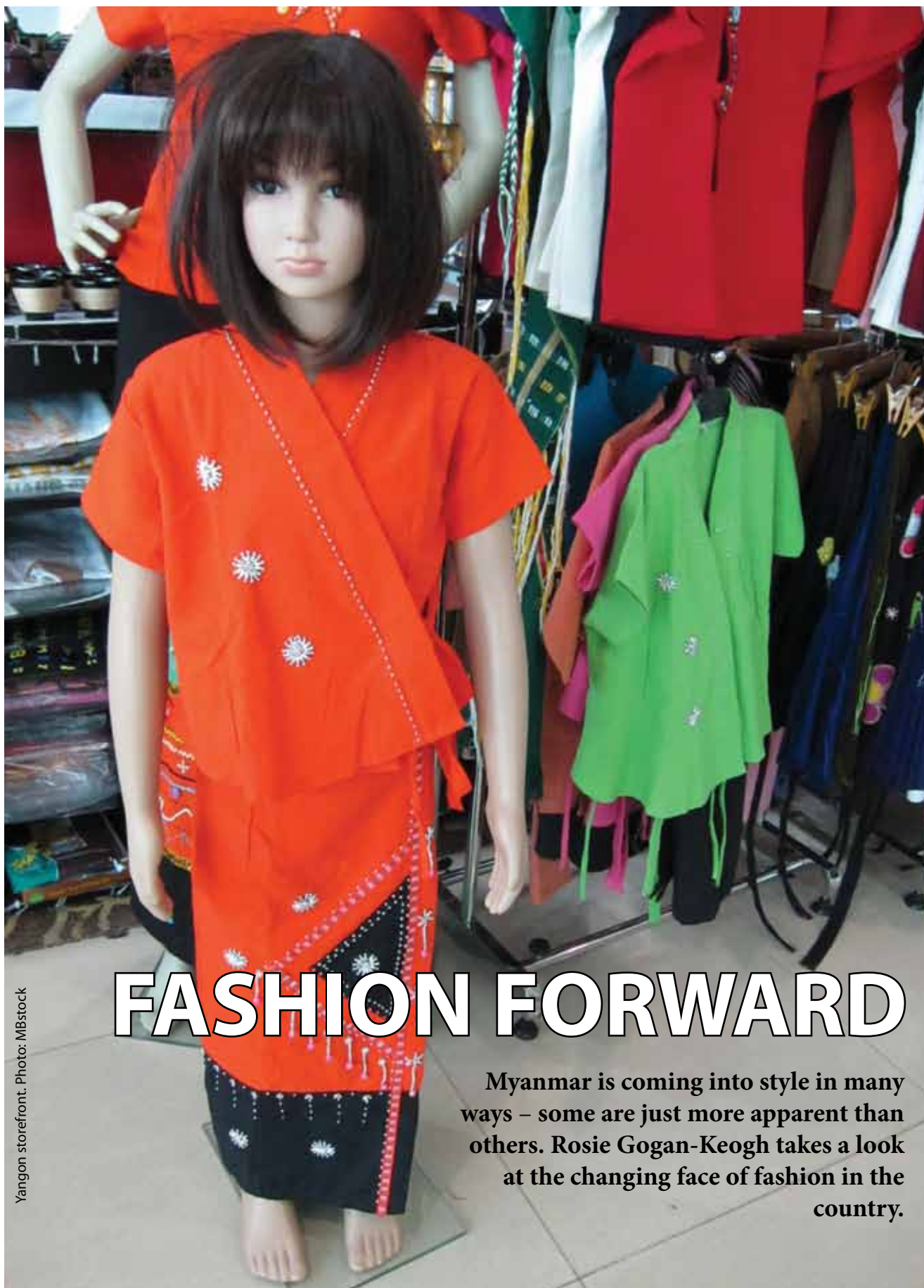
Deputy Minister of Energy Htin Aung. Photo: Kyawt Thiri Nyunt

Mr Dick says his team and local partner Capt. Soe Min Aung moved heaven and earth over the past three weeks to ensure everything ran smoothly once the cargo arrived at the ports.

To move the 1,370 tonnes of cargo from the ports to the site meant they had to get approval from Myanmar’s police, railways and customs ministries, plus coordinate with the City of Yangon’s electricity supply

board to ensure power was momentarily switched off to the routes their trucks passed through, to minimize danger of electrocution or damage to overhead cables.

And over four long nights, in between the shouts from the work crew, blazing sirens from the lone police motorcycle escort and the honking of horns from impatient drivers, the monstrous quarry rolled through Yangon to reach its new home at Ywama.



Yangon storefront. Photo: MBstock

FASHION FORWARD

Myanmar is coming into style in many ways – some are just more apparent than others. Rosie Gogan-Keogh takes a look at the changing face of fashion in the country.

Tourists landing in Yangon's international airport for the first time often comment on how they are instantly transported into a different world upon being greeted by men in collarless white shirts and checkered longyi, and women with flowing skirts and faces painted with thanaka, a yellow paste ground from sandalwood. Traditional clothing and cosmetics like these are still worn in Myanmar in a way that counterpart styles have long since disappeared from Western clothing rails and are fast becoming a distant memory in other Asian countries. But, a short drive through the country's biggest city shows that modernity is striking the people here in every fashion.

Traditional dress is not cheap. A longyi costs an average of 70,000 kyat (US \$80), a far distant price from the cost of mass-market high street fashion, but it will last a lifetime. With the over-production of cotton ravaging the world and people spending a huge amount of their incomes to keep up with passing trends, what will happen when more people stop wearing long-lasting, durable clothes, such as tailored silks, and instead wear 'disposable' t-shirts and jeans?

Pop culture is on the rise in Myanmar. With the growing ease of Internet access, Myanmar people are being exposed to more international tastes and trends.

Just a year ago, it was rare to see people wearing jeans or skirts above the knee; now there are places like Junction Square, one of Yangon's newest and largest shopping centers, that could be anywhere in Asia. K-Pop abounds: from the music piped from the stores, to the short sequined dresses and graphic print t-shirts on display at the local boutiques. On the mall's second level, traditional styles seem secreted away and rolls of vibrantly, colorful fabrics are piled in shops waiting to be tailored into longyi.

Subcultures are emerging too: Myanmar's second annual international graffiti exhibition was held in February this year. In a disused warehouse and surrounding lot, Yangon youths blended in with their fellow Southeast Asian artists in skater shoes, baggy jean shorts and asymmetrical haircuts. Their hip hop-playing friends looked on at their live graffiti demonstration in equally trendy garb.

For many of the country's ethnic groups, modifications to their traditional clothes can be seen in colours and materials to their traditional clothes, but dress simply represents a large part of their identity that they are not prepared to give up.

Shortly after sanctions were lifted by the U.S. in 2012, representatives from global brands such as Gap,



MIX OF STYLES
Model at a recent
fashion show stands
with visitors

Hugo Boss and Marks and Spencer were reported to have visited the Southeast Asian nation to scope out opportunities to bring made-in-Myanmar products back west. And this is not an entirely one-way exchange international fashion brands are also opening their eyes to Myanmar people as customers and not just producers.

Giordano, a Hong Kong-owned discount high street store, has operated in the country for some time. According to the chain's website it now has 96 stores across the country and has become a relatively affordable go-to for many fashion-forward Myanmar youths. Franchise-chain Bossini recently launched here, while Spanish Mango announced recession-defying growth last year, part of their success due to exploring emerging markets, such as Pakistan and Myanmar. The fashion retail giant opened its first stores in Yangon in August 2012 and fellow Spanish brand Zara are rumored to be following suit.

"Mango, which is a pioneer in the fashion industry, has seen a good opportunity to enter," said Cristina Salvaldo Esposito, the company's spokesperson for the region. "Mango's objective, is to adapt to the demands of each market at any time without forgetting the company's concept."

Brands like Mango have to adapt their collections for various regions, of course "The designers reinterpret the trends and adapt them to the lifestyle and dress sense of customers all over the world in order to dress the urban and modern woman of each country we operate in and meet her daily needs," says Salvaldo.

"There is also a special collection for warm countries in which the materials and composition of their designs are characterised for

being lightweight and cool."

But even with modifications like this, what effect will the influx of westernization have on this country's traditions? "The impact for international fashion brands would be access to another market eager for fashionable items," says Hazel Clark, a professor in the MA Fashion Studies Program and Research Chair of Fashion at Parsons The New School for Design in New York. "For Myanmar itself, it could result in a devaluation of local craft skills and traditions - at least in the

local market, where presumably there is a desire to look more 'modern' and fashionable."

The challenge will be to preserve and honour traditional silks, which may, in the process of the development of the country, mean aiming more at the export market and consumers outside of the country, continues Clark.

There are some who are trying to develop Myanmar's homegrown fashion industry. The country's first international fashion show was held in November 2012. It was or-



Models wait on the sidelines of a recent fashion show

ganized by John Lwin who returned to his native Myanmar in the mid-1990s following a stint modeling in Singapore; he now runs a local model and talent agency.

“Myanmar fashion is now very much improving,” he muses. “Now young people are starting to wear jeans, but compared to music it’s still got a long way to go. Fashion still has a very small market, not everyone is interested.” He believes that media play a big part and that fashion magazines need to improve so they can educate people.

“Music also has to support fashion. Overseas everything is linked but in Myanmar it’s totally different. Myanmar singers don’t care about it.”

At London’s Victoria & Albert Museum, the evolution of world fashion is documented with the help of fashion curator Oriole Cullen, who has been keeping an eye on the developing trends in Myanmar. “Watching from afar, we are excited to see how the future of fashion in Myanmar develops,” she said.

“What made [Fashion Week at Junction Square] truly unique for us was the designers who managed to draw on their heritage and incorporate elements of traditional dress and textiles into contemporary garments. With so many fashion weeks happening around the world, a unique point such as this helps to define a design aesthetic.”

Tatee, a local Yangon designer, garnered a reputation for his simple take on Myanmar fashion in the late-1990s. His cotton-wear proved immensely popular with the city’s small ex-pat population, however following the imposition of sanctions, business suffered and he branched out into running his own design school.

The Tatee Design School now offers distance-learning courses in various areas of fashion design at 200,000 kyat per course - a cheap way for provincial people to get the tools to set up their own businesses, he says. “It is cheap for them to buy a couple of sewing machines and earn as much as they would by migrating to a town to work in an office,” he says.

Another Yangon designer, Mya Pwint Phyu, is the owner of an upmarket boutique in Yangon called Ladies’ Heart Fashion. She studied at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York and when she returned to Yangon six months ago to continue designing for her company, she immediately noticed the changes in the industry.

“There are a lot of brands for people to choose from and it is very good for Myanmar,” she says, however, she is hopeful that Myanmar can create and export its own blend of style.

One of her professors in New York told her: “see all, but never copy”—this is a lesson she has taken back and it is her dream that local designers learn how to create



Models on the catwalk in Yangon



Well-dressed Yangonites having a street snack. Photo: MBstock

their own stamp and “think about our own culture.” “Everything I want to make, I make myself,” she says, “We have so many own styles and so many resources to promote and share internationally.”

For now, the international vision of Myanmar’s style remains succinct. Aung San Suu Kyi may be the country’s icon of democracy—with her subtle, traditional dress sense, always with a flower in her hair, she is the poster lady of Myanmar. When questioned

by reporters, she refuses to comment on her attire; she simply says that she wears whatever is most convenient.

However she chooses her clothes, she represents a timeless elegance and an idyllic vision of this country; one which makes her a vivid symbol for both Myanmar’s past and future and many say her fashion icon status has inspired a younger generation of Myanmar women to re-embrace their national dress.

YOUR GUIDE TO MYANMAR

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economy,
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and
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M-ZINE+

MYANMAR'S BUSINESS WEEKLY

Issue 26a, Vol. 1

www.mzineplus.com

JUNE 28, 2012



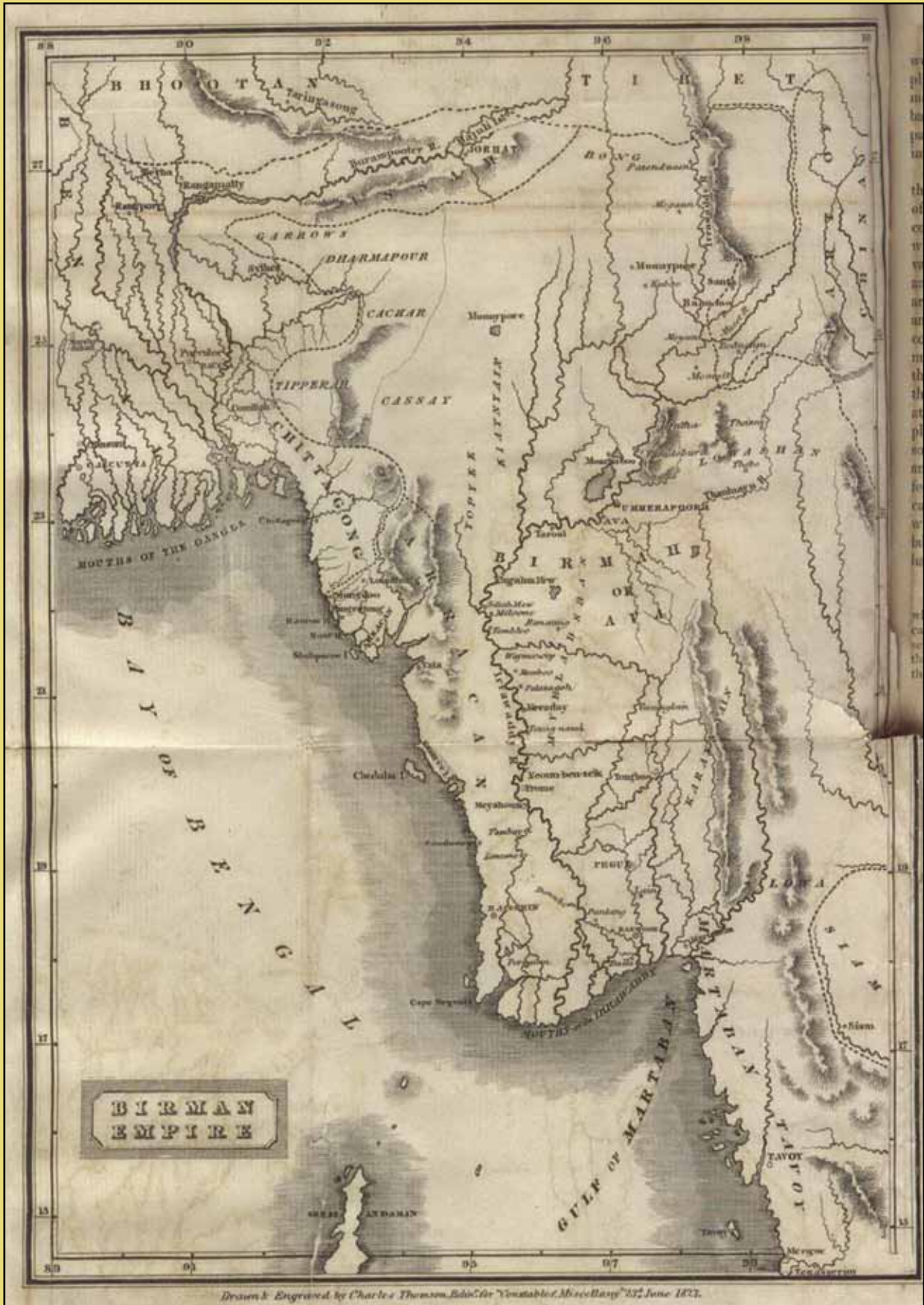
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MAPPING THE FUTURE

By Ko Ko Gyi

It can seem all too easy these days – using maps that is. Hiking in the woods and traversing a few mountain crests? No problem. Just grab your GPS and head out; the eyes in the sky will tell you how to avoid those dead end canyons or sheer cliffs. Driving from Boston to New York and want to know how to get there, and maybe avoid traffic jams? Well, you could get, for example, a TomTom electronic map navigation system that will both show you and tell you how. You can even set the voice that guides you to be that of Roger Moore (James Bond), Darth Vader, or, if you are truly don't care what other people think, those of Bert and Ernie from Sesame Street. And if you have Apple's iPhone, it's voice assistant Siri will pick you up and take you to where you want to go. However, at least one New Yorker has thought the technology was not up to snuff and is suing Siri – oops we mean Apple – for not getting him to local stores properly.

Maps have had a very long history. Palaeolithic painters may have charted the heavens on cave walls. Babylonians made representations of the world on clay tablets. Later mapmakers added not just lines on paper (or papyrus) but their perspectives on the world, on power, and on what was known or just guessed at. “Here be dragons” or “terra incognita” were just two terms for showing limits, though not one must add for those who lived in the hinterlands amongst the purported dragons. If one doubts the political messages maps can send, think of the regional furore over maps depicted in the new Chinese passports that parts of the Indian Himalayas are now in the People's Republic.

Cartography has had a decided effect on modern Myanmar history. When the British assumed control of

the remnants of the previous Myanmar royal state, they set out to map and define its borders with neighbouring Siam, now Thailand. The Thais did not make the process any easier and, according to researcher Thongchai Winichakul in *Siam Mapped*, responded in an offhand manner by suggesting the British "... enquire from the old inhabitants ... what they know respecting the contiguous territories, and what they point out be the boundaries between English

around the same time. These maps may be the oldest Myanmar maps currently in existence though historical references suggest maps had been made previously.

One Myanmar king in the early 19th century hired a British ship owner to make a map of the king's dominion along with that of nearby political entities such as Cochin China, Siam and India. After Myanmar won its independence, many of the nation's old indigenous maps were

detail, can aid policymakers in assigning resources, show demographic trends, enhance the speed and effectiveness of development projects and do so much more.

They do far more than show where borders begin and end (though in dealing with land rights their importance is vast) or show people how to get from X to Y (but think about what tourists would have to do without them).

And, importantly, cartography is in the midst of a digital revolution that allows for maps and datasets to be combined at relatively low cost in engaging and very effective ways. Anyone with, for example, a full copy (and some training) of the ArcGIS software package by ESRI, a New York-based firm can produce a map that would make any royal cartographer from the ancient world inscribing details upon parchment – were they alive today – green with envy.

In early 2011, there was an article in the Yangon press, in which an ex-Ministry of Mines official complained that the country's geological map was outdated, the last one having been compiled by an Indian resident in Yangon way back in the 1930s. The Ministry of Mines did make a detailed geological map in 2008

Maps, accompanied by detail, can aid policymakers in assigning resources, show demographic trends, enhance the speed and effectiveness of development projects and do so much more.

and Siamese possessions." One town in Kayah State, the British were told, belonged to no one and some others in the north were, without much worry, accepted as owing multiple allegiances to Thai, Shan and Lao authorities.

This is not to say that the people in Myanmar (or Thailand for that matter) didn't have maps of their own and appreciate them. At least from 1795 British visitors and residents such as Francis Hamilton, Henry Burney and the well-known author and gazetteer James George Scott collected indigenous maps.

According to noted geography scholar, Joseph E. Schwartzberg, writing in Book 2 of *The History of Cartography*, (chapter 16: Cartography in Southeast Asia):

"Burma also appears to have had officially sanctioned maps serving a variety of purposes—military, engineering, cadastral, and so forth in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries." There were Myanmar maps showing invasion routes into Manipur in the 1750s and military maps concerned with the campaigns against Siam

collected by the Burmese Historical Commission for safekeeping and preservation.

Mapping the route ahead

Historical cartography is a very interesting subject and an insight into how we see the world. But, what should be of concern to policymakers in a country like Myanmar is what today's needs are and some of them are certainly cartographic.

Every country needs good maps, which accompanied by



so there might have been some confusion or questions about quality. In any event, demands from potential investors in the mining, energy and natural resources sectors for clear and highly detailed maps will only grow in the coming years, especially as there are parts of the country still to be fully surveyed for potential mineral and other resources.

In terms of developing and opening up the country, there is the need for a variety of cartographic players. No doubt the government, via its ministries and agencies, will be active in finding solutions to attract investment in key sectors. However, there is ample scope for private firms, NGOs and other interested parties. And two very interesting cartographic services are already hard at work – one a private firm and the other a non-profit.

Design Printing Services

Over on 35th Street in downtown Yangon, there's a small office above the ground floor of a non-descript building. A sign outside lets you know it's the office of Design Printing Services (DPS), whose chairman is Aye Min Oo and general manager is Myint Myint Maw. Many visitors to Myanmar have never heard of this company,



DPS office, Yangon. Photo: MBstock

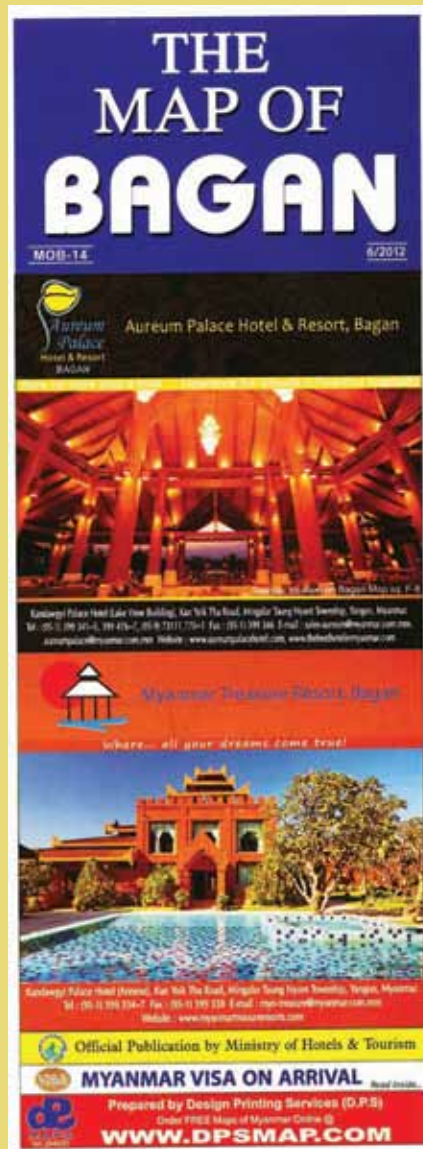


Myint Myint Maw, DPS office, Yangon

but will find themselves using maps made by them. DPS makes tourist maps of Yangon, Bagan and Myanmar. These attractive maps are covered with advertising but are given out free.

“We established this printing business line in 1994,” said Myint Myint Maw. “When the military leaders started their tourism promotion initiative, the ‘Visit Myanmar Year’ in 1996, the company started a mapping service business to aid tourists who were visiting the country,” he said. “In the early days, we firstly produced small and portable products, our ‘Tourist Maps for Myanmar, Yangon, Mandalay, and Bagan’ to help those visitors.”

From there, the company moved on to what has become a heftier product and an invaluable resource, especially if you are living and working in Yangon – the bilingual Map of Yangon. In its current 4th edition (published by the Yangon City Development Corporation but designed by DPS) it runs to 318 pages (180 of them are maps) and retails for 7,500 kyat. You need never get lost again in Myanmar's bustling largest urban centre. Just so you really know where you are, many of the maps mix a traditional, if simple, cartographic style with images from what appears to be Google Earth, though actually they resulted from the acquisition of satellite photos from the Indian National



Tourist aids from DPS ... and they're free

Satellite System. When it first came out, the printing run was 10,000 and the price was 4,000 kyat each.

DPS continued making its tourist maps – a good move as the tourist arrival numbers have been rising and look to accelerate in the near future. In these maps, the company makes sure to highlight where colonial buildings (in the case of Yangon) and other historical sites are.

In its early days as a going concern, DPS didn't face too many challenges of a technical nature. "However, we were faced with specific challenges as to how to deal with practical business models involved in publishing map guide books, distributing map pamphlets, and making digital copies," Aye Min Oo told M-ZINE+.

What takes up company time is the need to gauge the level of customer satisfaction, which in other terms means market response. As for maps produced for the government, like township ones, different demands are made in terms of required detail.

In the tourist maps the advertising supports the printing and distribution, so care is needed to get the adverts done right. At first, it was mainly hotels and tour companies that advertised but now more souvenir and gem shops are placing ads. As both map and advertising information can change, the company works to update the maps on a regular basis, Myint Myint Maw says. In the beginning, the maps were produced and distributed on a yearly basis, but demand has bumped that up to 4



times a year. And if the demand increases further the company aims to ramp up production and pump them out on a weekly basis.

Myint Myint Maw added that if any private companies, such as banks, manufacturers, project site developers and businesses doing work with foreign investors have need of specialized mapping products, DPS can help with tailor-made products that will be done well and done quickly. The company’s client list includes ESRI, JICA, Loi Hein Co. Ltd, Myanmar Brewery Ltd, and the U.S. Embassy.

All this work has meant expansion. The company started out with 10 employees but now has 40. Among those employees are a full-time GIS specialist and three full time mapping surveyors who help develop and update the company’s mapping products.

Myanmar Information Marketing Unit (MIMU)

The need for maps and map-making extends well beyond the commercial sphere though there is certainly scope for the two sectors to work together. As a country badly in need of development, and at times – think Cyclone Nargis – desperately in need of quick solutions and emergency relief, the non-profit sector has a large role to play in mapping out Myanmar’s future. There’s already an organization on the ground and working hard – the Myanmar Information Marketing Unit, or MIMU for short. The office is currently located inside the Inya Hotel on Inya Lake, though given rising rates and rents in the hotel sector, it may relocate in the near future.

Ms Shon Campbell, MIMU’s manager, said the Myanmar Information Management Unit (MIMU) is a

service provided through the United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator’s Office to support the coordination and efficiency of humanitarian and development activities in Myanmar. “The Unit has been gathering, compiling and sharing data and information from various sources on all sectors countrywide since it was established in 2007. The MIMU also supports the use of standards that enable sharing of information and better information management. The MIMU users include UN agencies, international and Myanmar non-governmental organizations, government departments and counterparts, donor governments, and researchers.”

Anyone who visits the MIMU website (www.themimu.info) cannot fail to be impressed by the wealth of maps and other publications available for free at the site. The maps and publications cover geographical units (state, region, village), sectors (disaster-risk reduction, food security, environment), and organization/project activities. There are pdf files for easy viewing and use, as well as “shape” files for use in software programs like ArcGIS.

According to Ms Campbell, the website currently attracts over 11,000 unique visitors a month, 80 percent of whom are from Myanmar. In parts of the country where Internet accessibility is problematic, MIMU sends out material on CDs every month to the tune of 1,000 a year.

Speaking at length about the role MIMU plays, Ms Campbell said: “The MIMU mapping services are used in many different ways: for example; we are working together with government ministries to map the locations of government-supported health and education facilities across the country, and the MIMU mapping data has also been used in preparation for the forthcoming census.

“Non-governmental organizations often use the MIMU resources as a support to their networking and coordination with others, as well as for planning and reporting,” she says. The MIMU provides a Central Information Hub for data, information and maps relevant to humanitarian and development sectors for the whole country.

“Information products support analysis and planning, coordination, and identification of trends and humanitarian risks. These include the MIMU ‘who, what, where’ information (3W database) which describes ‘who’ (which agency) is doing ‘what.’

“Another MIMU database tracks available information on 177 social and economic indicators at Union, State and Region, and Township levels to help agencies and donors in their planning. This includes data from many sources such as the government’s health and education management information systems and recent countrywide surveys and reports.

“Currently, 124 agencies updated their information in this tool, which covers almost 100 different types of activities conducted across the country.

The MIMU meeting schedule keeps individuals informed of when meetings and events are taking place, and our contact lists keep up-to-date contact details of agencies and their offices.

“The MIMU is supported by the Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department of the European Commission (ECHO), and by the Swiss Agency for

Development and Cooperation. These donors allow the MIMU to provide its services free-of-charge to those engaged in humanitarian and development activities across the country.”

MIMU is also helping the public sector in other ways. It “... provides technical and training support to staff of many agencies and government departments in Geographic Information Systems, GPS, database management and development, data collection and assessments.”

Of course, despite the technological advances and the digital revolution that allows quicker and more creative data management and map-making, challenges still abound.

“We are unable to accurately map the location of as many as 18,000 villages across the country due to the lack of GPS coordinates to begin,” Ms Campbell said. “Some areas are better mapped than others – over 90 percent of villages can be mapped in Mandalay, Chin, Sagaing and Magway, whereas this number drops to 50 percent or less in Kachin and parts of Shan State.”

The organization says it is trying to rectify the situation by working with other agencies and with government departments to get GOS coordinates for the unmapped locations as well as verify names as village name duplication in Myanmar can cause confusion for cartographers.

Looking forward, Ms Campbell said there was a need for the planned 2014 census to be carried out and done well. A well-done census would allow for better planning and allocation for resources by development and other agencies.

As she says, there is a need to have a coordinated approach across all the map providers in the country that uses the same standards and enabling better data exchange between those who gather and use information so datasets from different sources can be combined and better use the resources that are available.



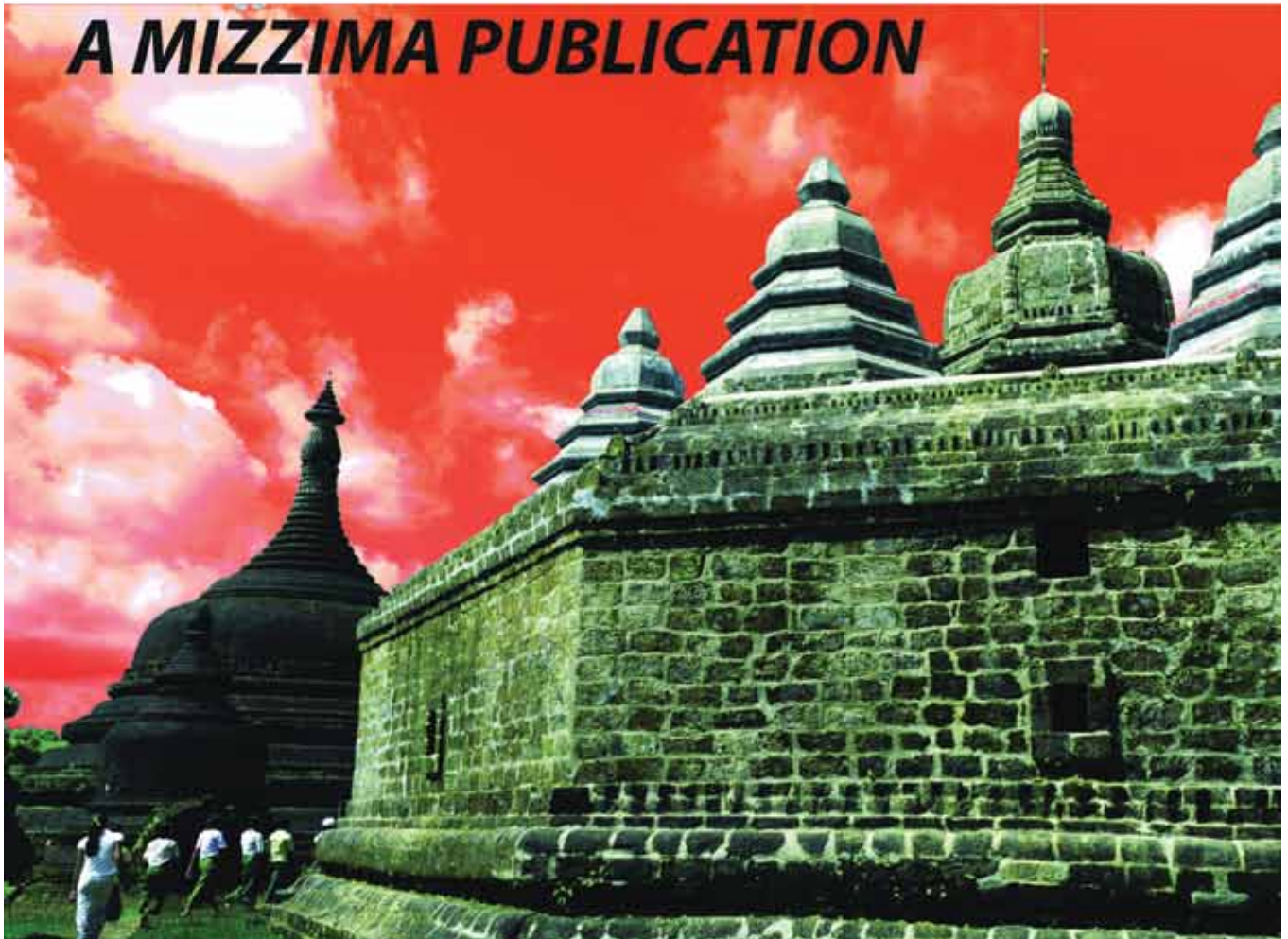


Above and below: Inside the MIMU Office. Photos: MBstock



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STATISTICAL INFORMATION

KYAT EXCHANGE RATES

	THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	WEEKLY CHANGE
US DOLLAR	860	858	-0.2
SINGAPORE DOLLAR	690	688	-0.3
EURO	1116	1134	1.61
UK POUND	1295	1307	0.93
JAPANESE YEN	9.1	9.1	0
THAI BAHT	28.9	28.9	0
AUSTRALIAN DOLLAR	874	881	0.8
CHINESE YUAN	136	137	0.74
MALAYSIAN RINGGIT	272	273	0.37
INDIAN RUPEE	15	15	0
BANGLADESH TAKA	10	10	0
GOLD (1 TICAL) ⁸	743600	736000	-1.0

WEEKLY QUOTE

DEVELOPING TOURISM

“We need the assistance of investors, organizers, business partners and practitioners to come and see the opportunities that we have, so that we can start working together for our mutual benefit”

Minister of Hotels and Tourism, commenting on how the tourism sector can be developed

WEEKLY EXTRA

THIS MONTH IN HISTORY

Japanese forces capture Rangoon, Burma

March 8, 1942

WEEKLY COMMODITY INDEX

	THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	WEEKLY CHANGE		THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	WEEKLY CHANGE
FOOD				PULSES⁴			
RICE (EMATA) ¹	750	750	0	MATPE	14900	14200	4.93
PEANUT OIL ²	4000	4600	-13.04	GREEN MUNG BEANS	20000	18900	5.82
PALM OIL ²	1446	1550	-6.71	WHOLE CHICK PEAS	17300	16300	6.13
VEGETABLES³				INDUSTRIALS⁵			
ONIONS	600	700	-14.28	RUBBER (RSS-1)	2644800	2644800	0
POTATOES	700	700	0	FLAT BAR STEEL ⁶	600000	600000	0
GARLIC	2000	2000	0	STEEL PLATE ⁷	750000	750000	0

1. kyat per pyi

2. kyat per pyi

3. kyat per pyi

Note: Weekly change is in percentages

4. kyat per basket

5. kyat per ton

6. 6x50 9x100

7. 12x5x10

8. 1 tical equals 0.576 ounces

Source: Ministry of Commerce



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