

# Myanmar Matters™

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PHOTO — HSDEJONG.NL

## The Young Tiger of the Irrawaddy

Myanmar's sudden reversal of years of diplomatic isolation in 2011 has left leaders and investors around the world scrambling to adjust to the new status quo. As Southeast Asia's second largest country, with vast resources and a history as an agricultural exporter, Myanmar has the clear potential to join the ranks of the boom economies of the 21st century. Avoiding the pitfalls of inequality will require Myanmar to learn from its neighbors' past mistakes and encourage institution-building and transparency from the outset of its integration into global affairs. However, challenges that stem from structural and underlying conditions will not change for some time. Investors would be wise to weigh these obstacles moving forward, but there are also opportunities.

Myanmar's neighbors are well-positioned to continue benefiting as the economy develops, especially China, even as resentment towards the Chinese government remains high. The U.S., Japan and other countries such as Thailand and India have a role to play, as well. There is indeed a calling for leadership from these developed nations in helping Myanmar develop. Even for the US, determined as it is to seek pastures in the East to graze in, there are benefits in developing strong ties and alliances with countries like India who understand the region better and have shared history to fall back on and ongoing experience in doing business. Historical underinvestment in infrastructure and education in Myanmar, along with building

a stable financial system remain as strong challenges holding back growth. Organizations like the IMF can play a role in helping to establish systems that guide social reforms and also build investor confidence in institutions there. An important bellwether will be the country's chairmanship of ASEAN in 2014 and the 2015 national elections, which represent a test of the government's commitment to democracy.



*Aung San Suu Kyi speaks on Asian women as the future*

PHOTO — FLICKR.COM, WWW.WEFORUM.ORG SIKARIN THANACHAIARY

Myanmar's political transition was swift and may yet prove to be lasting, but those seeking to take advantage of concurrent GDP growth will need to be patient as the country's economic and social systems play catch-up. [more ▶](#)

# Managing Compliance

Good governance must surely be a priority for an economy such as Myanmar that is in the process of embracing a plethora of new players seeking to entrench themselves within the warp and weft of socio-economic fabric. Laying down systems and a framework of law is one of the most important and fundamental tasks for defending Myanmar's position and priorities, and



*Ranjit Barthakur,  
Founding Chairman  
Globally Managed  
Services, in Tamu,  
near the Moreh border*

becoming globally compatible at the same time. Myanmar has been the bastion in which British laws have traditionally prevailed. But now it is time for a reassessment to seek to adopt the best legal framework from what is available and relevant. India can be a good reference point, if not an inspiration for Myanmar. India too has been anchored in the old British system. But its laws have evolved in a very intrinsic and customised manner to be contemporary, unbiased and democratic. Myanmar can study and analyze what the legal system of India offers to pick out what it needs to have.

The legislative laws that India has adopted are particularly relevant to ensure the evolution of parliamentary democracy in Myanmar. Myanmar's government also has the onerous responsibility of ensuring that the opening up process does not lead

to any possibility of foreign elements plundering, pillaging or raping of its natural resources. A strong and purposive legal framework would set the rails for systems to prevail in addressing commercial opportunities, the process of fairness and natural justice to be ensured among its people, and the political machinery to be relied upon to deliver balanced progress conducive to the environment.

The government has a duty to protect its people against rights violations,

be they workers, consumers, landholders or indigenous folks. Myanmar may, in the short run, be facing shortages in adequate number of trained lawyers, judges and others who may be entrusted to monitor violations. This is where a skill development program may form part and parcel of an integrated legal reform policy.

At the end of the day, Myanmar's compliance management system should be a two-way street, wherein foreign investors follow strict operating guidelines that are subservient to national objectives, and equally, the country, its government and citizens also stay accountable to the promises made to investors and service their expectations of doing good business, the global way. – *Ranjit Barthakur, Publisher.*

**“A strong and purposive legal framework would set the rails for systems to prevail in addressing commercial opportunities”**

**“Myanmar can study and analyze what the legal system of India offers to pick out what it needs to have.”**

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Free Circulation



# Could Myanmar be the next emerging market miracle?



Workers count Burmese kyat currency at a bank in Rangoon. | PHOTO — INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

In Rangoon's hotel lobbies anticipation is high. Brash Australian miners rub shoulders with hard-nosed American private equity investors. Indonesian infrastructure specialists and Japanese salesmen scout out the terrain. Everyone here is eager to be first out of the starting blocks as the economy of Burma, a previously isolated country, opens up for business.

The opportunities abound, in raw materials such as gems, timber, rubber and gas, but also in catering for a population of 55 million in need of everything from healthcare to smartphones. "I think this is the last virgin market left in the world, the last untapped market," says Vinod Chugani, an American-educated Singaporean. "Twelve years ago, when I was in China, I felt the same rush." Vinod Chugani is here to sell Panasonic's range of multi-line phones, rice cookers and projectors.

"There is a massive race going on. It's intense," he says. "This is one of last frontiers, along with North Korea and to some extent Iran," says Romain Caillaud, who heads the Rangoon office

of Vriens and Partners, advising multinationals entering Burma. Burma also sits at a key geographic junction. "Just look at the map and you'll see the location is strategic, at the crossroad between India, China, Thailand, in the middle of one of the fastest growing regions in the world," he says.

## Piles of cash

After 50 years the generals who governed Burma have stepped back and handed power to a nominally civilian government. They have also begun the first tentative steps in reforming the economy. And they have been rewarded with the suspension of sanctions by the West. But 50 years of isolation from the global economy has taken its toll, above all on the financial system. At the main Rangoon branch of Yoma bank, customers wander in with plastic bags full of bank notes. Their voices are barely audible above the whirring and clicking of mechanical counting machines, lined up like washing machines in a launderette. A dozen staff work their way through the stacks piled high on the tables.

American financial sanctions and a home-grown banking crisis have undermined Burma's banking system, so that now most people simply keep their money in cash.

If you want to buy a car you go to the showroom with a box full of notes.

If you want to buy a house you drive over a car full of money.

## **“The biggest concern is that Burma lacks the human resources to cope with this tidal wave of change at every level.”**

There are a handful of cash machines now in Rangoon, but none that work for foreigners. Credit cards can be used, for a stiff fee, only at a few top-range hotels.

All this may soon change, with the lifting of American financial sanctions.

But the rudimentary banking system is not the only obstacle to doing business.

### **Capacity**

The word on everybody's lips is “capacity”. The biggest concern is that Burma lacks the human resources to cope with this tidal wave of change, at every level from the government administration to secretarial staff.

Peter Thein founded Myanmar Yellow Pages 20 years ago and now also runs a fast-growing market research company.

He says newcomers can get a shock on arrival due to the high price of property and the lack of qualified staff.

“Most of the people with any brains have left,” he says.

Hence, although he has 10,000 potential employees on his recruitment database, he says only 10-15% of them are employable.

“One of the most difficult things is to try to get my staff to think,” he says.

“There's no initiative because the education system has never taught the meaning of thinking.”

On top of all that, there is the lack of clarity over the rule of law, an intermittent electricity supply, crumbling infrastructure and what Mr Thein calls the practice of paying “tea money” - small bribes to expedite the cumbersome bureaucracy.

### **An Asian tiger?**

So, can Burma grasp the opportunity now unfolding?

Burma's domestic industry - hampered, but also sheltered, by the years of isolation - now faces the chill wind of competition.

At Myint Soe's garment factory on the outskirts of Rangoon, rows of women hunch over sewing machines and irons under neon lights, pressing, folding, hemming, in stifling heat.

This factory used to supply Kmart and Walmart in the United States. After sanctions were imposed two-thirds of the workforce were laid off.

“I think we can restore our contracts which we lost after the sanctions,” says an upbeat Myint Soe. “Foreign investors will bring markets with them and technology.” Clearly, Burma will have to compete primarily on the price of labour.

“We compare with Bangladesh but are lower than Cambodia wages, so we can compete,” says Myint Soe. International business entrepreneur Serge Pun owns property developments across Asia as



*Myanmar garment factory*

PHOTO : WHISPERSFROMBURMA.BLOGSPOT.IN

well as his Burmese investments from banking to golf courses. He is also convinced Burma's future is bright.

“I have no doubt that Myanmar will be a new tiger,” he says. “Burmese people are very entrepreneurial.” But in answer to the question of how long it takes Burma to catch up, Romain Caillaud says: “A very long time.”

“Maybe in 20 years it will be at the level of Vietnam today in terms of infrastructure, telecommunications, financial services.

“Companies that come shouldn't expect to make money quickly.” [more ▶](#)



# India & Myanmar Knowledge Corridor



PHOTO : PARTNERSASIA.ORG/EDUCATION-POLICY-KEY-TO-MYANMAR-FUTUR

Myanmar's educational system is based on the United Kingdom's own system, due to close to a century of British colonial presence in that country.

It is operated by the government's Ministry of Education. The Universities and professional institutes from upper Myanmar and lower Myanmar are run by two separate entities, the Departments of Higher Education (Upper Myanmar and Lower Myanmar), whose office headquarters are based in Yangon and Mandalay respectively.

Today, Myanmar lags behind in educational standards. Once a significant educational force in the region, Myanmar today has well-trained qualified teachers, but few resources, and dated content material and standards.

As the rest of the world increasingly moves towards a knowledge-based economy, Myanmar's growth is being essentially driven essentially by the industrial and service sectors. It therefore needs to catch up, and do so quickly. Whether in terms of student-intake capacity, or skilled teacher mobilisation, or providing modern facilities, curricula and content to students, new models that involve private sector participation should be examined. Another move could be for the government to encourage student exchange programmes with Indian educational institutions and with those of

other partnering institutions.

The development of the North Eastern part of India is integral to India's policy on Myanmar. The North East could be used to enable a knowledge corridor and a transit route to South East Asia, especially with Myanmar. The context for the next phase of an Indo-Myanmar relationship needs to be understood in the backdrop of India's ongoing dialogue with Myanmar, over the past 15 years, which has promoted the concept of an inclusive process of national reconciliation, and transition to democracy.

**“The development of the North Eastern part of India is integral to India's policy on Myanmar.”**

India also attaches significant importance to the role it can play in the area of technology and skill development. While the development of physical infrastructure is very important for Myanmar, it is equally important that there is equal emphasis on investments in the technological as well as the social infrastructure in that country. This is a space where India's own experiments, successes and lessons learnt from failures could prove to be invaluable to Myanmar.

In recent years robust bilateral cooperation has taken place, suitably supported by a number of high-level visits on both sides. Our relations with Myanmar today encompass a

number of important areas like security, trade and investment, energy, capacity-building, health and education, science and technology, as well as infrastructure development.

As these engagements intensify in the future, and we enable more physical connectivity between our two countries through road, rail air and other trade links, we expect to see further momentum in building mutual ties.

– S. Ramadorai



Mr. S. Ramadorai  
Advisor to Prime  
Minister on National Skill  
Development Council.



Green Hill Hotel in Yangon | PHOTO — EMG

## Joint venture with Green Hill Hotel

US-based Best Western, which is one of the world's largest Hotels group, has already agreed to going into a joint venture with the Green Hill Hotel in Myanmar, according to Best Western Hotels Group.

Green Hotel with 189 rooms is located in Tamwe Township, Yangon.

The hotel requirements are rising after increasing the number of tourist arrivals.

For that reason, the group is now looking for their partner and cooperating with a joint venture with Green Hill Hotel.

The group becomes the first US-based hotel in Myanmar's Hotels and Tourism sector.

The group is one of the advance hotels opened 4000 hotels providing 300,000 rooms in over 100 countries.

At present, the group has established the Green Hill hotel as their ninth investment in Myanmar among the ASEAN countries and it will establish the next hotel in Brunei.

The US invested over US\$ 243 million in 15 projects at the end of April, standing at 13th position in the investment of Myanmar.

[more ▶](#)

## Thai Bev takes aim at Myanmar

Thai Beverage Plc (ThaiBev) is seeking a greater presence in Myanmar through its partnership with Fraser and Neave Ltd (F&N), the Singaporean firm acquired earlier this year by the Thai drinks giant. Thapana Sirivadhanabhakdi, ThaiBev's president and chief executive, said the company is also considering importing Myanmar beer into Thailand, where many migrant workers from Myanmar live.

F&N — which was taken over by ThaiBev, led by the Thai billionaire Charoen Sirivadhanabhakdi in a deal worth S\$3.8 billion (327 billion baht) — owns a stake in Myanmar Brewery Ltd.

"Myanmar is the rising star of Asean, the one everyone is looking at, and the market there is similar to Thailand's," Mr Thapana said on the sidelines of last week's Asean Economic Community (AEC) seminar in Bangkok hosted by KPMG Thailand. [more ▶](#)

## ACE to underwrite Insurance in Myanmar

NEW YORK--(BUSINESS WIRE)--The ACE Group announced today that it has received provisional approval from Myanmar's Directorate of Investment and Company Administration to establish a representative office in Myanmar. The company is now completing the registration process with the relevant Myanmar authorities with the intention of opening the office in the city of Yangon later this year. [more ▶](#)





Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz opens the first community store outside the United States on Lang Suan Road on Monday. | PHOTO : BY WISIT THAM-NGERN

## Starbucks, Heineken to enter Myanmar Market

Howard Schultz, Starbucks CEO, said during a visit to Thailand to celebrate the 15th anniversary of its founding in the country, that Myanmar was one of the targetted countries for the firm to expand its business, which includes more shops in China and India.

"Within the next couple of years, I'd say," Mr Schultz said of the plan to enter Myanmar.

The company plans to boost the number of Starbucks stores in China to 1,500 stores by 2015, up from the current 850 stores in 70 cities after enter.

"We've built the kind of business that has garnered a fair amount of trust from multiple constituencies in China," Mr Schultz said. "I think the market is large enough for many people, and I think we have a unique opportunity to maintain our leadership position."

"Success is not an entitlement anywhere in the world," he said.

"Certainly not in China. You have to earn it, and earn it every day." Starbucks plans to open more stores in India, where it operates 12 shops. It has one outlet in Vietnam.

The company plans to double its size in Thailand to 320 branches within the next five years, he added.

Mr Schultz on Monday announced the opening of the firm's first community store outside the United States in Bangkok.

The first three Starbucks community stores are in its hometown Los Angeles, New York and Texas.

A portion of the revenues earned at the Starbucks store on Lang Suan Road will be directed toward farming communities in northern Thailand that grow coffee for the Seattle-based chain. The money will be directed to the Integrated Tribal Development Programme to support education, health and irrigation projects.

[more ▶](#)

## Transparent Governance in Myanmar's Energy Sector

The text of the following statement was released by His Excellency Union Minister of Energy U Than Htay of Myanmar and Special Envoy and Coordinator for International Energy Affairs Carlos Pascual.

Begin Text: The energy sector plays a vital role in the economies of both our countries. If properly managed, oil and gas revenues can make an important contribution to economic development, and the sector can help supply the electricity needed to grow the economy, including to run businesses, schools, and hospitals. Managing the energy sector transparently and in line with international best practices is an objective of both our governments. Transparency reduces the risk of corruption, and helps citizens to hold their governments accountable for spending natural resource revenues. Transparency also helps companies operate with the free, prior, and informed consent of affected communities, which can improve the operating environment for industry, and help reduce the risk of conflict associate with resource development.

Both our governments also strive to ensure international best practices are used in safety and environmental stewardship in the energy sector. Protecting our citizens and our countries' natural environment are critically important priorities.

[more ▶](#)

## Service centre for BMW cars to be opened in Yangon

A service center and spare parts showroom for BMW cars will be opened in Yangon at the end of September.

The car service center will check BMW cars with computer system and will employ skillful foreign technicians of BMW. The centre will also sell spare parts.

The Taiwan based "Inspiration De Formosa Group" is to open the BMW car service center in Yangon and it has already been permitted as authorized dealer of German based BMW car company. Plans are underway to open the showroom.

"There are a few giant auto companies opening car service centers. Therefore, I have chosen to provide this kind of service as a forerunner. I have planned to open BMWs car service center and spare parts showroom at the end of September. We are discussing about the opening of car showroom by the year end. We have been recognized as authorized dealer for opening car service center," Andrew Li, board of directors of Inspiration De Formosa Group said. A news article on opening of BMW car showroom and its service center was published in Weekly Eleven Journal on May 6, 2013 but BMW Asia Pte Ltd of Singapore informed Eleven Media Group that they object some facts in the report.

The Taiwan based "Inspiration De Formosa Group" is a registered company in Myanmar. [more ▶](#)

## Joint Venture for Garment Industry : Korea and Myanmar

Korean firm Inno Company and the military-owned Union of Myanmar Economic Holding Ltd (UMEHL) have formed a joint venture to run a garment factory in Mingalardon township, Yangon, according to the Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development.

The joint venture named Myanmar Inno International Ltd will operate the garment factory with cutting, making and packing system in Pyinmabin Industrial Zone.

Myanmar Investment Commission approved the business under the foreign investment law on May 10. In fact, this is the third business the commission has approved for UMEHL this year.

[more ▶](#)

## Ngapali Hotel Zone to be expanded

Authorities will expand the Ngapali Hotel Zone this October and allow new hotels to be built by Max Myanmar, Edin, Minzarni and Fortune companies, a seminar held last week was told.

Hotels and Tourism Minister Htay Aung met with hotel operators from the zone at the Amazing Ngapali Resort on May 3 to discuss expansion, beautifying and sanitation work around the beach as well as the construction of new roads for easy access. [more ▶](#)

## Myanmar Microfinance Bank to be launched

Myanmar Microfinance Bank (MMB) offering half the current interest rate for small loans will be launched some time this year, according to the banking communities.

A private bank, MMB will be targeting to low-income households. Interest rate will be less than commercial banks and financing plan will be suitable for low-income borrowers.

The microfinance bank has been permitted to run by the Central Bank of Myanmar and the government. It will offer regular banking services as well," the managing director Pe Myint from the Co-operative Bank (CB) said.

"For the establishment of MMB, the shares are being sold at 100,000 per shares. Bankers are buying the shares. Our bank (CB) is also buying the shares," he added.

Three new banks are preparing to launch in this month. [more ▶](#)





*The Nobel Peace Laureate intervenes for the first time in defense of the Muslim minority: it is a violation of human rights. The opposition leaders challenge President Thein Sein: the desire for change “is not enough”, concrete reforms and equality are needed.*

## Aung San Suu Kyi against Myanmar Minority Policy

Yangon (AsiaNews / Agencies) - Aung San Suu Kyi, the Burmese opposition leader, has strongly criticized the bill recently introduced in Rakhine State, which imposes a family planning program for Rohingya. Accused in the past of failing to defend the Muslim minority, for the first time the Nobel Laureate - on behalf of her party, the National League for Democracy (NLD) - said that if confirmed, the imposed limit of two children is “a flagrant violation of human rights.” She added that she was opposed to the entry into force of the controversial law, introduced at first by the previous military junta and confirmed by the authorities of Rakhine “to contain sectarian violence.”

The measure, which is part of a framework of measures targeted to reign in polygamy and the growth of the minority, will cover the district of Maungdaw, in Rakhine State, which includes the towns of Maungdaw and Buthidaung. Both are located along the border with Bangladesh, in an area inhabited largely by members of the Rohingya Muslim minority, the only ethnic group to which the “two children law” applies.

Speaking at the conclusion of an NLD meeting in Yangon, the “Lady” told reporters she could not confirm if the law was already in force, but added that it was “illegal.” [more ▶](#)



*Thank you for everything that you gave to us, and that you have allowed us to have today, to study books and meet new very good friends. You truly opened a new world to me. I can't stop myself from thinking that all of us, if we didn't have your help, what sort of state we would be in.*  
-Tankee, at age 13

### Burmese Refugees

Using participatory models to empower Shan Burmese refugees living in northwest Thailand, we have been launching initiatives in education, mental and reproductive health, water, and legal rights for over ten years now. The Shan Burmese we work with are stateless, lacking citizenship to any country which puts them in a precarious and unstable situation. Without any government to hold accountable to ensure their human rights, they face constant exploitation. [more ▶](#)

### Myanmar Govt - Peace Talks with Kachin Rebels

MYITKYINA, Myanmar — Myanmar's government and ethnic Kachin rebels have ended three days of peace talks with a tentative deal to de-escalate fighting and continue a political dialogue. The two sides signed a seven-point agreement Thursday in the Kachin state capital, Myitkyina, in an effort to end nearly two years of fighting. [more ▶](#)



President Barack Obama shakes hands with Burma's president, Thein Sein in the Oval Office. Until two years ago the former general was on a US blacklist.

PHOTOGRAPH: SHAWN THEW/EPA

## Myanmar President visits US

Former general Thein Sein became the first Burmese president to visit the White House in almost 50 years on Monday – a visit human rights groups protested was premature, citing alleged ethnic cleansing and civil rights abuses.

Barack Obama, talking to the press alongside Thein Sein, acknowledged the human rights abuses but also praised him for the progress he had made towards democracy in the last two years. In a symbolic moment, Obama became the first US president to talk about Myanmar rather than Burma. The US has long resisted the change, in part because of pressure from opposition groups and human rights organisations who said Myanmar was a name used by the military junta and was not inclusive of all the country's ethnic groupings, unlike Burma.

Earlier, the White House press secretary, Jay Carney, anticipating the use of Myanmar, said it was not a change in policy by the US, which continued to view the name of the country as Burma, and there were no plans to officially adopt Myanmar. But there were times when its use as a courtesy was appropriate in certain settings, Carney said.

The visit underlines the extent to which Burma's status has changed. Two years ago it was still viewed as an international pariah, run by a military junta. Since then, there has been a partial transfer to civilian rule, with opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi being allowed to enter parliament and the release of hundreds of political prisoners.

Obama, anxious to encourage reform and trade, visited Burma in November. It has been one of his few foreign policy successes, courting the country and shifting it away from China's sphere of influence. [more ▶](#)

## China - Myanmar Oil and Gas Pipeline Project

NAYPYIDAW, Myanmar, May 30 (UPI) – China's \$2.5 billion oil and natural gas pipeline in Myanmar will mutually benefit both countries, said Myanmar President Thein Sein. Thein Sein's remarks of support for the project – being built jointly by China National Petroleum Corp. and Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise – followed a meeting with CNPC general manager Liao Yongyuan earlier this week, Chinas' official Xinhua News Agency reports. In what is seen as a gesture to appease opposition to the pipeline, CNPC has donated \$12.5 million for the construction of 45 schools and 24 health clinics and other projects along its route in Myanmar. Liao, in his meeting with Myanmar's president, cited those projects as an example that CNPC has fulfilled its social responsibility in the course of the pipeline construction. [more ▶](#)

## India and Myanmar - Armed Forces Cooperation

The political transition towards a democratic system in Myanmar has acted as a catalyst and provided an opportunity for India to engage its neighbour more intimately. In the recent past, there have been several high level engagements between the political leadership of the two countries; the Indian Prime Minister visited Naypyidaw in April 2012 after a hiatus of nearly 25 years. [more ▶](#)



## Global warming activists turn up the heat on government

As a water shortage hits several townships in Burma's commercial capital and farmers nationwide anxiously await the upcoming rainy season, environmentalists are calling for more government support in the fight against climate change in this country of 60 million people.

While Burma's nominally civilian government has earned international praise for its program of political and economic reforms after decades of military rule, environmentalists say



PHOTOGRAPH: BBC.CO.UK

climate change is a pressing issue that has been pushed to the back burner for too long by the nation's leaders. "The new government is trying to solve poverty and civil war, but unfortunately

climate change has never been well acknowledged by our decision-makers," meteorologist Dr. Tun Lwin said on Saturday in Rangoon at roundtable discussion about global warming in Burma, as temperatures in the country's biggest city soared to 38 degrees Celsius.

Tun Lwin, the founder of Myanmar Climate Change Watch, a private nonprofit that monitors climate change in the country and shares weather information with the public, said global warming had contributed to the water scarcity in Rangoon and droughts farther north.

"If it [climate change] continues, it will continue to have consequences in the coming years," he said. "That's why we're asking for more government support, because we can't handle this issue alone."

The country's monsoon season has also been affected by global warming. Since the late 1970s, Tun Lwin said, Burma has lost about 40 days from the historic average duration of its rainy season, usually about 145 days from May to September.

"The rains come late and leave early," he said, adding that deforestation and excessive logging had also disrupted monsoon patterns. Burma was rated the second-worst country, only behind Bangladesh, among seven Asian countries in a "Global Climate Risk Index" by the climate change watchdog Germanwatch. [more ▶](#)

## Central Myanmar faces water shortage

As temperatures rise, drought has taken hold in much of central Burma, with residents in several villages saying they fear for their health and livelihoods.

"It's very difficult to fetch water. The village's lakes have dried up, so we have to go to the streams and a river, which are quite far away," a resident from Ta Gunn Dine village in Magwe Division's Natmauk Township told The Irrawaddy. "Not only the people, but also our cattle will suffer if we do not get rain in the next few days."

In some parts of Magwe and Mandalay divisions, rain and heavy winds in recent days have improved the situation.

"As rain poured down in the last two days, our village's lake filled up again," said Aung Khin Win. [more ▶](#)

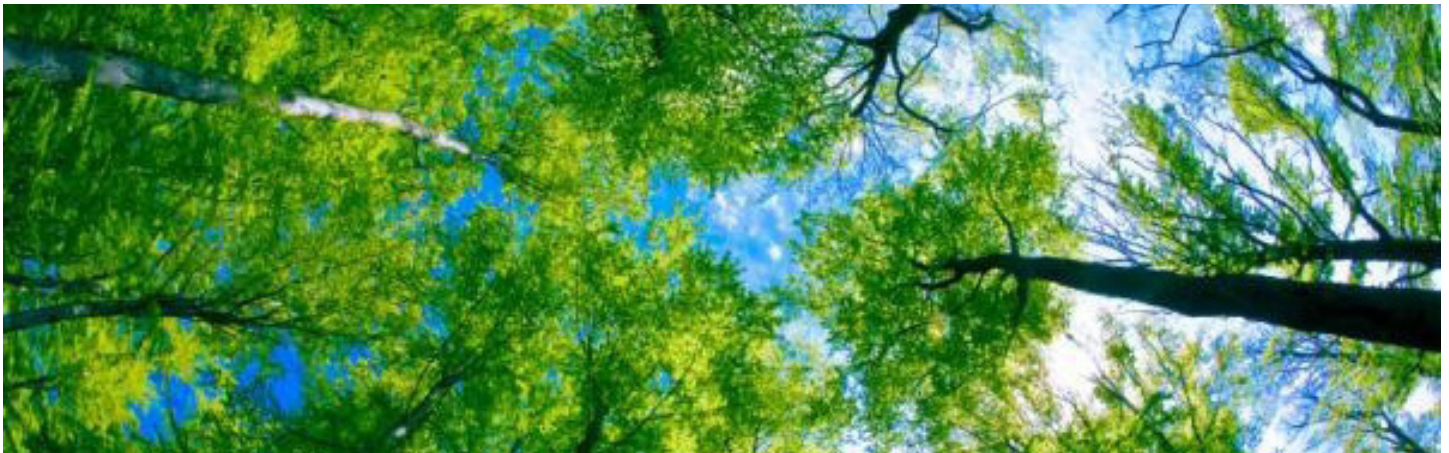
## Italian Thai Dam Project Stopped over Environmental Concerns

Yangon -- The government has reportedly halted a hydropower dam project with Italian-Thai Development Plc in Taninthayi region of lower Myanmar, citing its possible environmental and social impacts.

Ital-Thai's dam project located near Myeik township was expected to generate at least 800 megawatts of electricity upon completion, but is believed to pose flood risks to the thousands of hectares of farmland in the area.

Environmental and social impact analysis reports suggest the dam project should not continue. [more ▶](#)

## Indo Myan Carbon Sink



PHOTOGRAPH: TREE-NATION.COM

### Developing World's First Natural Carbon Sink at Eastern Himalayan Biodiversity Hotspot

A carbon sink is a natural or manmade reservoir that accumulates and stores carbon containing chemical compounds for an indefinite period.

Consequently, any reservoir can act as a sink for carbon, provided it soaks up more carbon than it emits.

The concept of a carbon sink when coupled with a bio-diversity park would yield a region that helps create an ecological hot spot for various species of flora and fauna and it will also provide a carbon sink owing to the carbon absorptive capacity of the forest.

The proposed Biodiversity Park should fulfill the following requirements:

- Maintain the integrity of the natural processes
- Protect natural landscapes and ecosystems
- Protect outstanding, unique, rare and vulnerable natural features
- Reference points to determine the effects of human activity on the natural environment
- International Cooperation between India and Myanmar which will strengthen ties between both the countries.
- Protect and provide opportunities for scientific research.
- Promote public consultation and community stewardship.
- Biodiversity conservation should benefit specifically households
- Establish local community representatives

### Geographic Location, India

1. Namdapha National Park, Arunachal Pradesh
  2. Fakim Wildlife Sanctuary, Nagaland
- Total Area in India – 1991.42 Sq Km

### Myanmar

1. Indawgyi Lake Wildlife Sanctuary
2. Khakaborazi National Park
3. Pitaung Wildlife Reserve
4. Alaungdaw Kathapa National Park
5. Chatthin Wildlife Sanctuary
6. Hukawng Valley Tiger Reserve
7. Minwun Hill (Taung) Wildlife Sanctuary
8. Tamanthi Wildlife Reserve
9. Mount Victoria National Park

**Total Area in Myanmar** – 33,673.24 Sq Km

**Total Area under the scope of the Proposal** – 35,664.66 Sq Km

### Action Plan:

- Confirmation from both the governments of India and Myanmar to sign off on this proposed Biodiversity Park.
- Develop a GIS Map of the region
- Declare the defined area as World's first contiguous International Natural Carbon Sink Biodiversity Park
- Host a joint meeting of the two forest reserve team to develop a joint cadre to protect and preserve this area.
- Develop the operational and financial structure to manage the park
- Identify key partnerships with governments, local community, private players , etc.. required to make this a success





*Doing the rounds: Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Myanmar President Thein Sein inspect the honor guard at the Presidential Palace on Sunday in Naypyitaw. | AP*

## Japan pledges aid for Myanmar

NAYPYITAW – Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on Sunday pledged ¥91 billion in fresh aid to Myanmar while waiving another ¥190 billion in debt, to support the democratizing Southeast Asian country's growth. During the first visit by a Japanese prime minister in 36 years, Abe and Myanmar President Thein Sein agreed to lay "a new foundation for mutual friendship" by boosting cooperation in economic, political and security areas, as well as interpersonal and cultural exchanges.

Abe called for "jump-starting" bilateral ties, which had been somewhat "frozen" until the country decided to shift from military rule to a democratic government in March 2011, and taking the relationship to a higher level, Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiroshige Seko said.

Unlike its Western allies, Japan maintained trade ties with Myanmar during the military junta's rule, which ended in 2011, saying that taking a hard line on sanctions might push it closer to Beijing. After the summit, the two leaders exchanged notes on Tokyo's waiver of the remaining debt and the provision of some ¥51 billion in fresh loans to help develop Myanmar's infrastructure, as well as up to ¥40 billion in grant and technical assistance in fiscal 2013. [more ▶](#)

## The Buses of Myanmar

With so many travel Myanmar Buses companies plying the same routes at the same time, for the same price with the same kind of travel Myanmar buses. It is rather tricky to make the right choice in Myanmar. Sticking to those with the largest fleet is usually a safe bet: a Myanmar company with travel Myanmar buses only will have little time for technical controls. Some Myanmar buses companies have a big fleet but they alternate old & new Myanmar buses. The good thing about Myanmar old buses is that Myanmar driver had time to develop a close relationship with them: if Myanmar buses brake down, they can usually be fixed. New modern travel Myanmar buses might be technically more challenging in Myanmar. Anyway, you sometimes have no choice as popular Myanmar companies fill up fast. You should always try to reserve as early as possible in Myanmar. Ask your Myanmar GH to call



PHOTO: GUIDEFORMYANMAR.COM

for you. Seats can usually be booked over the phone but you will have to pick up the ticket at least a few hours before departure, which is not too convenient if the Myanmar buses station is far away from the town center. [more ▶](#)



[http://www.freeimageslive.co.uk/free\\_stock\\_image/mandalaypointjpg](http://www.freeimageslive.co.uk/free_stock_image/mandalaypointjpg) |  
PHOTO: SEAQUESTDS

## The Sea Ports of Myanmar

Myanmar has a total of 9 ports in the country. They are in : Yangon, Sittaway (Sittwe), KyaukPhyu, Thandwe, Pathein, Mawlamyine, Dawei, Myeik and Kawthaung cities. These ports are vital in connecting the world's most dynamic economies. A summarized report on Myanmar's industrial development can be found below:

- Thailand is creating a new international trade route by developing ports and industrial complexes in Dawei. Their deep-sea port project will allow 40 million tons of finished goods to be exported yearly. 5 million tons of rice, sugar, corn, tapioca, and other grains will flow through the port every year while 25 million tons of coal will be imported yearly. The port will see 50 million tons of general cargo, 35 million tons of chemical and 36 million tons of crude oil trade.
- China is investing in the KyaukPhyu port to create a logistic route to supply energy. The port has a 480-meter-long quay, a 150-meter-long jetty allowing 5,000-ton vessels to berth, a 29.7 km-long waterway, a 600,000-m3 water storage tank, machine facilities, and construction facilities.
- India is developing the Sittaway (Sittwe) port to connect north-eastern India via the Kaladan River. Land-locked Indian commodities passing through the Sittaway port will be exported to other Southeast Asian nations.

## AIRPORTS IN MYANMAR

**International airports** in Myanmar are based in Yangon and Mandalay. Currently, construction is underway at the Yangon International Airport to further increase its capacity from 2.7 million passengers a year to more than 3.8 million annually. Moreover, some domestic airports in Myanmar will be also be transformed into international airports to serve the growing foreign interest in the country. It is being planned to invest \$4 million into the Dawei Airport to convert it into an international facility. Three domestic companies are currently providing international service: Air Mandalay, Yangon Airways and Myanmar Airways International. The schedule for **domestic flights** is quite limited, but this is the most efficient way to move about such a large country. Myanmar has over 60 airstrips with 46 local airports in every state except in Chin. The government intends to privatize all of these airports to promote future growth.

## IMPORT CARGO TO BE PRIVATIZED

Yangon International Airport's authorities are planning to allow privatization of import cargo services. The Public Service Capacity Assessment Committee made the decision to privatize the services after inspecting the airport. The Ministry of Finance and Revenue and Ministry of Transport are also negotiating the making of privatization for the import services.



# People Profile

Myanmar is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world, the outcome of three mass migrations from Central Asia and Tibet. Myanmar's 60,280,000-person population is divided into 135 officially recognized ethnic groups. These 135 ethnic groups are subsets of 8 major national ethnic races grouped by region as opposed to language or actual ethnicity.

**Bamar** are the ethnic majority in Myanmar. They make up 68% of the total population and dominate both the government and the military. Because they drastically outnumber every other ethnic race in the country, their language (Burmese) is the official language. The Bamar live in the central plains near the Irrawaddy and Sittang rivers.

**Shan** are Myanmar's second largest ethnic race, live in the river valleys of the Shan plateau and most survive on their farming abilities. While most members of this race are Theravada Buddhists, the Shan State is home to a number of ethnic groups that practice Christianity. It is also rich in natural resources, such as silver, lead, gold, tungsten, rubies, sapphires and teak.

**Kayin or the Karen**, are the third largest ethnic race in Myanmar and live in tribal mountain villages as well as along the Myanmar-Thailand border. The majority of Kayin are Theravada Buddhists, while approximately 15% are Christian.

**Rakhine or Arakenese** people live along Myanmar's western coast. They are very closely related to the majority Bamar race differing only slightly in language. Though not a subset of the Rakhine people, the Muslim Rohingya people of Indo-Aryan race reside in Rakhine state.

**Mon** are Myanmar's earliest settlers of the Ayeyarwaddy delta, Mon state, and Karen state. The Mon were vital in shaping the culture of modern Myanmar. Their script became a part of the Burmese language, and, perhaps most importantly, they brought Theravada Buddhism to both Myanmar and Thailand.

**Kachin** can be found in northern Myanmar. They are subsistence farmers practicing rotational cultivation of hill rice. This race is known for its expertise in fighting, herbal healing and jungle survival.

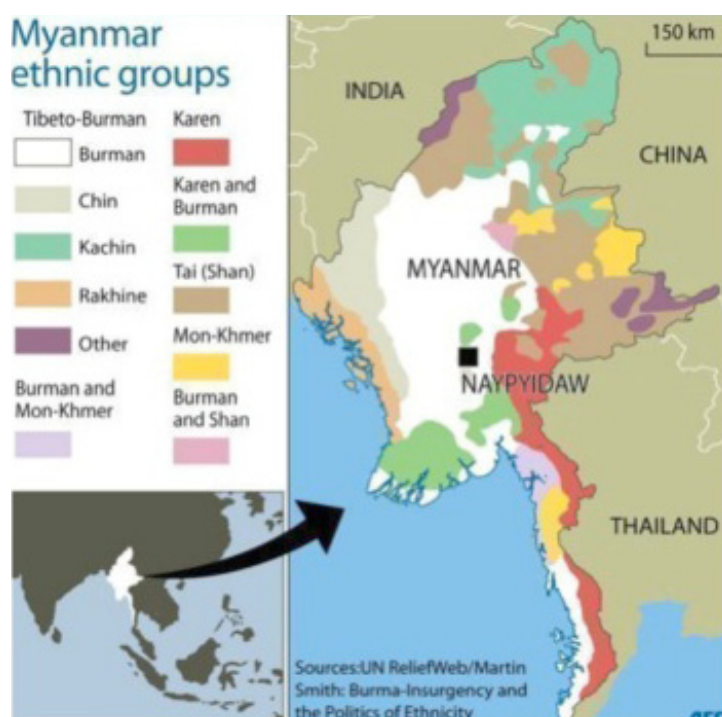
The entire race is said to share a common ancestor in Madai, a man they worshipped as a god. Today, as a result of American missionaries, most of the Kachin people are Christians.

**Kayah** live in the Karenni state, which was independent until the British colonization of Myanmar in 1886. The Karenni, or the Kayah, are a subset of the Kayin people. The Kayah themselves include nine different ethnic subsets. One

subset of the Kayah, the Padaung tribe living on the Myanmar-Thailand border, are famous for the neck rings worn by the women of this group.

**Chin** people inhabit both the Chin and Rakhine state on the Myanmar-India border. They arrived in Myanmar late in the 9th century A.D. Chin villages were once self-governed municipalities run by chiefs and councils of elders. Missionaries managed to convert about 80% of these people to Christianity, but many still practice traditional tribal beliefs and Theravada Buddhism.

Many unrecognized ethnic groups still exist. The Burmese Chinese and the Panthay are two of these groups. Together they make up 3% of Myanmar's population while Burmese Indians make up 2%.





Solar projects in Myanmar will help the country meet electricity demand in rural communities | PHOTO : POWER-TECHNOLOGY.COM

## World's third largest Solar Plant to be set up

Myanmar has not always had the greatest of reputations, but Thailand-based company Green Earth Power (GEP) have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the country's Ministry of Electric Power to construct a \$275 million solar power plant in the city of Minbu in the Magway region, close to the capital of Nay Pyi Taw.

The 210 MW power plant is claimed to be the "world's third largest solar plant" and is expected to be finished within 18 months. To be developed in three phases — 50 MW, 70 MW, and 90 MW — 70% of the cost will be paid through loans while the remaining financing will come from equity. Paul Bernard Yang, president and chairman of GEP, told the Bangkok Post the company is expected to sign a power purchase agreement with the Ministry within the next 90 days.

"We are also in negotiations for a second MoU, [for a plant that] could be in Mandalay or Yangon, and to have capacity of more than 200 MW," said Yang. "The second MoU with the Ministry of Electric Power is expected to be finalised this year."

Development of renewable energy anywhere in the world is big news, especially on such a large scale. The appeal of such a project only grows once you consider that not only is Myanmar not one of the stereotypical nations to develop renewable energy, but that the country currently only provides electricity to 26% of the country, while only 4% of rural areas have access to power. [more ▶](#)

## Myanmar communications gets boost from Japan

Myanmar's notoriously under developed communications infrastructure is to get a boost following the signing of a contract between three Japanese companies— Sumitomo Corporation, NTT Communications and NEC Corporation— and the Ministry of Communications last week. In a statement released on Tuesday, Sumitomo and NEC announced that they would be supporting Myanmar's "emergency communications network improvement plan" by building a high speed optical

**"The cables will provide more than 1.5 million fixed-telephone lines."**

cable to link the country's biggest cities.

The cables will enhance the cities' internet connectivity, as well as provide more than 1.5 million fixed-telephone lines when they are completed at the end of 2013.

The project has been made possible by a grant of 1.71 billion yen (US\$16.6 million) provided by the Japan International Cooperation Agency to assist in Myanmar's communications' network development last December. Japan has made no secret of its bid to be the champion of Myanmar's development on the international scene.



## LEGAL SERVICES IN MYANMAR



PHOTO : GLOBALNEWS.CA

Economic Laws Practice, Advocates & Solicitors (“ELP”) is an advisory, litigation and transactional law firm having offices in Mumbai, New Delhi, Ahmedabad, Pune and Bengaluru. With 19 partners and over 90 lawyers and professionals, ELP consistently provides high quality and commercially relevant legal advice by combining specialist legal skills and industry experience. Clients benefit from ELP’s in depth understanding of the applicable laws and policy framework. ELP has over the years successfully represented interests of various industry associations before the concerned authorities. With the growth of the Myanmar economy and evolution of its legal system, ELP would be effectively and efficiently assisting various organizations in relation to the following practice areas:

### **1. Corporate & Commercial, Private Equity & Venture Capital, Capital Markets & Securities law**

- Advising clients on structuring of transactions, in line with applicable laws.
- Reviewing, drafting, negotiating and executing transaction documents.
- Advising and assisting in relation to regulatory

approvals.

- Advising clients in relation to issues concerning protection of intellectual property rights.
- Advising clients in relation to foreign investment and exchange control issues.
- Assisting in relation to day-to-day corporate commercial matters, including issues relating to company law, employment law and land related matters.
- Advising and assisting clients on securities law related issues.
- Providing transaction related assistance such as legal and tax due diligence, capital structuring and repatriation, entry and exit strategies, advice on foreign direct investment, company law and other applicable regulations.
- Assisting in regulatory filing and regulatory compliance, reporting and ongoing monitoring issues and governance.

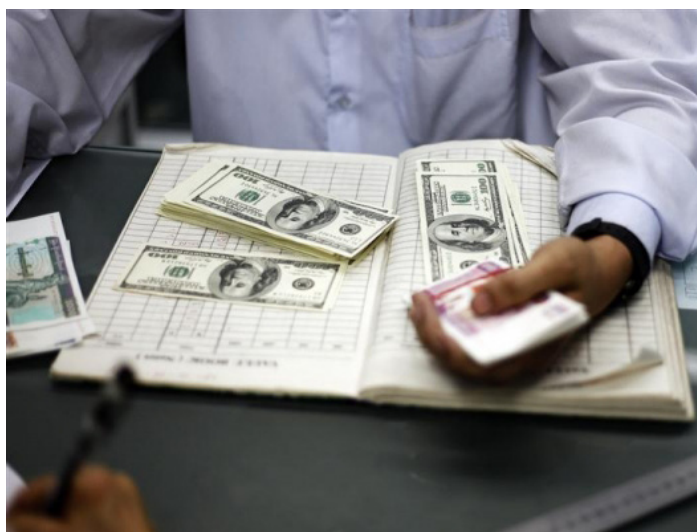
### **2. Competition Law and Policy**

- Delivering result-oriented solutions to its clientele, both national and international and advising sovereign governments on competition policy issues.

- Providing clients with practical and effective guidance on the competition and regulatory aspects of acquisitions, mergers and joint ventures.

### 3. Banking and Finance

- Regulatory and structuring advice.
- Drafting and negotiating various financing documents such as fund and non fund facility agreements, common terms agreements and inter creditor-agreements.
- Drafting and negotiating various security and ancillary transaction documents.
- Issuing transaction closing legal opinions on the Indian law documents and capacity of Indian parties.
- Advising Indian banks in setting up representative offices.



A man counts US dollars and Myanmar kyats at a money changer in Yangon March 21, 2012.

PHOTO : REUTERS, IVCPOST.COM

### 4. Litigation and Dispute Resolution

- Offering comprehensive litigation support services with expertise in various sectors such as taxation, energy, construction, infrastructure, international trade, government contracts, admiralty, insurance, and product liability.
- Representing clients in proceedings before various arbitration forums such as the ICC, LCIA, LCIA India, SIAC, LMAA, GAFTA, KLRCA, etc. and in Ad-hoc proceedings around the world.
- Anticipating, preventing, and minimizing exposure of clients to potential disputes thereby significantly reducing costs and increasing operational efficiency.

### 5. Taxation (including direct tax, indirect tax and transfer pricing)

- International tax advisory, with specific focus on handling of cross border tax / withholding tax issues, transfer pricing, etc.
- Domestic tax advisory services which include advising corporations in relation to tax efficient structures.
- Comprehensive litigation support in relation to taxation issues.

### 6. Government Initiative / Policy Formulation

- Representing industry bodies before the relevant government authorities for policy formulation, specifically in relation to taxation issues.

### 7. Infrastructure (including real estate & construction, hospitality & leisure)

- Providing comprehensive legal solutions covering all areas of an infrastructure project, from the inception of a project through award of the project, financial close, design, investment, construction, operation and management.
- Drafting and negotiating transactional documentation which would include bidding documents, concession agreements, joint venture agreements, shareholders agreements, etc.
- Due diligence reviews, covering transactional, financial, environmental, tax and compliance related issues.

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## Myanmar Conferences and Trade Shows Calendar

**Date: 13 - 15 June 2013**

### Trade Shows

#### Global engineering Myanmar

**Location: Tatmadaw Hall, Yangon**

This event will be designed to emphasize on the advances made in the field of engineering equipments. The exhibitors of Global engineering Myanmar will include distributors and manufacturers. Construction materials and equipment, air conditioning systems, heating systems, refrigeration systems, lighting, building management systems, professional services and fittings, green and alternative energy, eco products, water technology, pumps and valves and waste management, oil and gas products are some of the products and services that will be exhibited in the event. This event will offer networking opportunity to the participants that will help them in earning high profits for their business on international level.

**Date: 17 - 19-Jun-2013**

### Conferences

#### 2nd Myanmar Oil & Gas Summit 2013

**Location: Yangon**

Following political reform and the ending of international sanctions, Myanmar has become a highly attractive destination for investment from the international oil & gas industry. The Myanmar Oil & Gas Summit 2013 is a unique event that will

unite international oil & gas companies for a two day strategic conference that will examine developments, strategies and opportunities with Myanmar's fast-evolving oil & gas markets.

**Date: 19 - 21-Jun-2013**

### Conferences

#### Investment & Technology Summit 2013

**Location: Yangon / Myanmar**

This All-Myanmar Summit is organised with the support of the Myanmar Rice Federation and many other agricultural associations in and outside Myanmar. Buyers, sellers, brokers, farm owners, bankers, insurers, region & township farming leaders can meet with the world's top agro traders, investors and agricultural experts.

**Date: 04 - 05 July 2013**

### Trade Shows

#### Myanmar Phar-Med Expo

**Location: UMFCICs Building, Yangon**

It is a global exhibition that is intended to promote the medical and pharmaceutical industry of the world. It is a business event that will generate progressive development in the various respective fields of health and medical management sector. This trade show will ensure the development of national health and hospital industry and Ambulatory health care

services. General health administration will find its way to enhance their standard of public services.

Myanmar Phar Med Expo will help in building network among other industries and leading medical professionals. Commercial advancement and global reputation will be ensured through this popular health and wellness exhibition on better and healthy lifestyle.

**Date: 12 - 15 July 2013**

### Trade Shows

#### Electricals Motor

#### Machinery Auto Parts Fair

**Location: Tatmadaw Hall, Yangon**

The primary objective of this international trade show is to make the technical and professional experts related to electrical, motors machinery and auto parts manufacturing industry aware of the latest techniques which are badly needed for making this sector more advanced. Manufacturers, Suppliers, Engineers from all over the world related to this field will attend this event and will get a scope to gather useful information.

Electricals Motor Machinery Auto Parts Fair is a must attend event for the like Business Owners, Distributors, Retailers, Government Agencies and Professionals.

## World Economic Forum

**Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar, 5-7 June 2013**  
**Courageous Transformation for Inclusion and Integration**

The programmes related to issues on Myanmar are listed below :

**5th June 2013 | 09.15 - 10.30**

The Business Mandate in Myanmar

Dimensions to be addressed:

- Exploring the role of anti-corruption and transparency in promoting competitiveness, growth and public trust
- Implementing business practices to reward a long-term mindset
- Empowering the bottom of the pyramid by scaling indigenous solutions

**5th June 2013 | 11.00 - 12.15**

Myanmar: What Future?

As Myanmar undergoes democratic reform and economic liberalization, what are the opportunities and challenges ahead?

- Furthering political reforms to transition to full democracy
- Supporting the rights of minorities and culture of dissent
- Building sustainable markets and financial systems

This session was developed in partnership with the BBC.

**6th June 2013 | 15.15 - 16.30**

The Long-term View

As Myanmar undergoes rapid political and economic reforms, how can it balance the inflow of foreign interests with domestic capacity-building?

Dimensions to be addressed:

- Strengthening governance institutions and civil society
- Enabling an environment for entrepreneurship
- Improving employability of workforce
- Prioritizing the environment and sustainable practices

This session was developed in partnership with CNBC.

**6th June 2013 | 16.45 - 18.00**

Moving from a Cash to a Banked Economy. With less than one-fifth of Myanmar's population using formal financial services, how can

the country build the foundations of an inclusive and robust financial system?

Dimensions to be addressed:

- Deepening and broadening access to capital and financial services
- Addressing risks and fighting corruption
- Providing incentives for low-income bank accounts

**7th June 2013 | 11.00 - 12.15**

Thinking Ahead with Young Global Leaders - Inclusive Development

In these times of great possibility for Myanmar, it is crucial that government, civil society, media and business leaders come together to ensure the country's inclusive development. Young Global Leaders give four short talks on the importance of inclusive development in Myanmar.

**7th June 2013 | 12.15 - 13.15**

Meet Myanmar Parliamentarians

Join this informal lunch to meet with members of the National Assembly of Myanmar.

**7th June 2013 | 13.45 - 15.00**

Taking Myanmar to Work

As Myanmar opens up to new business and investment, what steps are needed to match the demand for skilled workers and foster innovation?

Dimensions to be addressed:

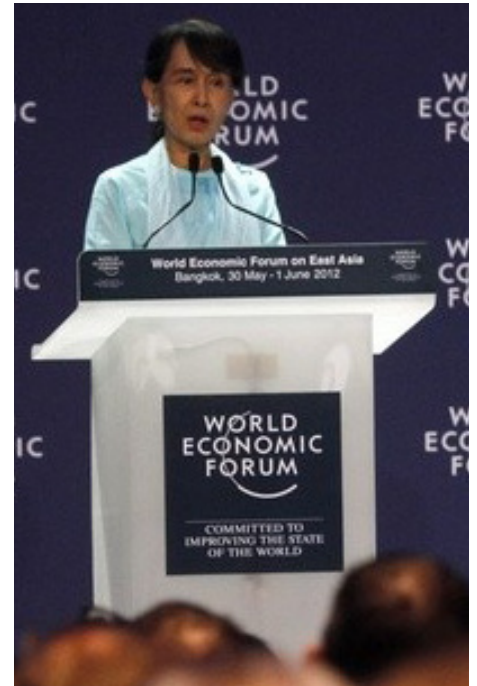
- Engaging with interactive technology and online education
- Promoting multiple tracks of success through vocational courses
- Creating strong incentives for on-the-job training

This session was developed in partnership with NHK

**7th June 2013 | 15.15 - 15.45**

A Special Conversation

Join a special conversation with U Thein Sein, President of Myanmar, who will share his perspectives on Myanmar's transformation.



*Aung San Suu Kyi speaks during the "One-on-One Conversation with a Leader" event as part of the World Economic Forum on East Asia in Bangkok on 1 June 2012.*

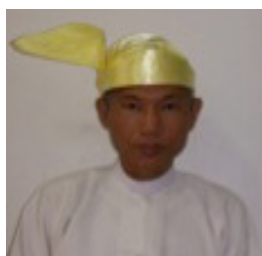
PHOTO : DVB.NO

## Gems Expo

Myanmar is hosting for the first time the International Gems Expo-2013 at the Convention Center in Yangon. Over 40 companies from local and abroad, including the US, Germany, Spain, Italy Cambodia have put their gems, jewellery items and equipment in making finished gems products on display at the expo, which lasts four days starting from May 9.

The foreign Companies exchanged technical views with the local entrepreneurs. The local gems companies are also displaying Myanmar's mineral resources such as ruby, sapphire, emerald, pearl and gold, including value-added gems products at the expo.





**KyawSwe Tint**  
Consulate General  
of the Republic of the  
Union of Myanmar,  
Kolkata

Barthakur, founder of Globally Managed Services, to publish such newsletters regularly. I wish him all the best in his endeavours.

It is my pleasure to learn that Globally Managed Services will continue to publish Myanmar Matters newsletter to promote greater understanding between the people and trade relations of the two countries. The first issue of the Myanmar Matters newsletter was informative and impressive. Therefore, I am confident that the forthcoming issue will be even better. I hope the newsletter can inspire Indian businessmen to understand Myanmar and the prospects of doing business in the country. I am pleased to encourage Mr. Ranjit



**Y.K. Sailas Thangal**  
Charge d Affaires a.i  
Embassy of India,  
Yangon.

I would like to congratulate the entire team of Globally Managed Services (GMS) and its founder Shri Ranjit Barthakur for bringing out an in-depth informative newsletter titled "Myanmar Matters", not only to celebrate the historic bonds that India and Myanmar share but also to further strengthen the bilateral relations and fraternity between the people of India and Myanmar.

India and Myanmar are linked not only by geography, but also by the shared historic, cultural, religious and economic ties. Today,

as Myanmar stands at the threshold of political and economic transition to a democratic system and market economy, our relations are set to move to a higher plane, acquiring new depth and substance. This has also provided us an opportunity to work together as equal partners to revive the ancient links and rediscover the immense possibilities of cooperation that exist between our two Countries.

My best wishes to GMS for their endeavour which, I am sure, will be a medium for people to enrich themselves in realms of India-Myanmar relations.

Editor's note: The article by Dr. V.S.Seshadri in our April-May issue appeared originally in *The Hindu*. We are grateful for his permission. [more ▶](#)



*The Launch of Myanmar Matters, Delhi April 25, 2013*

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