

President U Thein Sein sends message of felicitations to Ghana

NAY PYI TAW, 6 March—U Thein Sein, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, has sent a message of felicitations to His Excellency Mr. John Dramani Mahama, President of the Republic of Ghana, on the occasion of the Independence Day of the Republic of Ghana, which falls on 6 March 2015.—MNA

Pyithu Hluttaw speaker meets former British Prime Minister

NAY PYI TAW, 5 March—Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw Thura U Shwe Mann received a delegation led by former British Prime Minister Mr. Tony Blair at the hall of Pyithu Hluttaw Building, here, on Thursday. Also present at the call were Chairman of the Pyithu Hluttaw International Relations Committee U Hla Myint Oo and officials of the Pyithu Hluttaw Office.—MNA



Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw Thura U Shwe Mann greets former British Prime Minister Mr. Tony Blair. MNA

The Global New Light of Myanmar – Jason Pomeroy Interview

YANGON, 5 March—The following is the interview given by Professor Jason Pomeroy to the Global New Light of Myanmar. Professor Jason Pomeroy is an eco-architect, urban planner, and Founding Principal of Singapore-based eco-architecture firm, Pomeroy Studio.



Question: What is eco-architecture?

Answer: Eco-architecture, at the most basic level, pays respect to the natural environment. By harnessing the sun, wind and rain, energy consumption is reduced, lowering costs to the consumer, reducing the need for natural resources and preserving the environment. However, our own approach to eco-architecture goes beyond that, by drawing upon the essence of culture and tradition to create a built environment that is sensitive to a society's identity of where they came from; are pleasant places to live, work and play in, and positively impacts peoples' lives.

A key element of our work to create such built environments involves drawing lessons from our

ancestors, and reinterpreting them for the 21st century. One of my earlier projects was the Idea House in Malaysia. I studied in depth the ancient Malay *Kampong Houses*, and how they maximised natural ventilation and light, could expand and contract according to the size of the family and yet were extremely sensitive to the environment. I took lessons from this and applied them to the Idea House, incorporating the latest green ideas and technologies, resulting in Asia's first carbon neutral prototype home. The unique evidence-based approach to sustainable design that we apply to our projects means that the principles employed at the micro-scale of residences can be scalable to the macro scale of cities, and was

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14 striking workers face riot charges following arrest

By Aye Min Soe

YANGON, 5 March—Fourteen striking workers face trial on rioting charges following their arrest during a crackdown by authorities midweek, Police Lt-Col Myint Lwin of Yangon North District Police said Thursday.

No one was injured during the crackdown, according to a police source.

The 14 workers — eight men and six women — face up to two years in prison and fines if convicted under Section 147 of the Punishing for Rioting act.

To disperse the protestors and to detain those who led the unlawful protest and instigated the riots, authorities used men without arms under Penal Code Section 128, while the police provided security to both protestors and the public, Police Lt-Col Myint Lwin told a press conference at Yangon Region Government.

About 90 workers took to the street on Wednesday morning without seeking permission in accordance

with the Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Law, shouting slogans along the No-4 Road in western part of Yangon.

Authorities decided to disperse the strikers after negotiations broke down in the evening.

Sixteen people were arrested at the scene, with two later confirmed as journalists and released, said Police Lt-Col Myint Htway

of Yangon East District Police Force.

The Wednesday protest paralyzed one fourth of the commodity flow into Yangon Region as it blocked the No. 4 Road, said U Zaw Aye Maung, Deputy Chairman of Yangon Region Labour Disputes Arbitration Committee.

Most of the workers facing trial are from two garment factories which are in dispute with their workers for better payment, according to an official of the Labour, Factories and General Labour Law Inspection Department (FGLLID).

A majority of factory workers involved in the strike for better wages are returning to work, and out of 1,200 Costec Garment Factory workers, 927, or

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Garment workers make clothes at Ford Glory Garment Factory in Shwepyitha Industrial Zone.—PHOTO: AYE MIN SOE

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PERSPECTIVES

Friday, 6 March, 2015

Are we moving forward, standing still or going backward?

By Kyaw Thura

Franklin D Roosevelt once brilliantly stated that there are many ways of going forward, but only one way of standing still. With this in mind, we must be mature enough to recognise that some of the obstacles on the path forward play an important role in our progress. No matter what system a government prac-

tises, problems are unavoidable. Other people are ready to judge us no matter what we do in our daily routines, let alone national issues. It is, however, important to have a sense that not all problems are negative and created out of spite. Some difficulties help us move forward, as long as we find ways to tackle them. Trying to avoid inevitable hardship does not help us overcome it. In fact, doing nothing for fear of further obstacles can be worse than standing still, becoming akin to moving backward.

In choosing a path, it is important for one to eventually be able to look back in confidence at the road travelled, knowing that the right direction was taken. Avoiding hard choices is a sign that the person facing them lacks ambition or initiative.

No man is perfected without trials, in the same way that no gem glitters without friction. It

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similarly able to see such ideas come to fruition in Vision Valley Malaysia—an 80,000 acre regional plan that took into account the southerly growth corridor of greater Kuala Lumpur.

Q: What are the main urban challenges that developing nations – such as Myanmar – typically face?

A: This is a very exciting time for Myanmar. After five decades of isolation, the country is showing massive potential with a youthful population, huge natural resources, massive investment opportunities and a strategic location between two of the regions emerging economic giants (India and China). Added to this, it has significant renewable energy potential, especially when it comes to hydro and solar power.

However, one characteristic of a rapidly emerging nation is urbanisation. As centres of wealth (i.e. cities) start to grow, they will attract more and more people from the surrounding countryside who are looking for jobs and opportunity. Beginning as a trickle, soon these cities will be receiving hundreds and thousands of migrants a year, all requiring accommodation, food, water and jobs. When a city's infrastructure is planned well, this influx can be managed – and taken advantage of – resulting in a steady supply of jobs, pleasant living and working envi-

ronments, places for recreation and social harmony. However, as has been the case in many developing nations, often cities (especially second and third tier metropolises) are unable to cope with such fast track growth, resulting in poverty, social unrest, pollution, congestion, strained infrastructure and environmental damage.

Myanmar is still in an early stage of growth, and is largely a rural society with low rates of urbanisation (0.8% according to the World Bank). Yet as the country grows richer, its cities will grow – and not just Mandalay and Yangon, but numerous second and third tier cities as well. If managed well, this urbanisation can have profoundly positive consequences for the future of this country, but if not then the effect on the environment, economy and society can be devastating.

Q: What role can eco-architecture play in addressing these challenges?

A: By learning lessons from the past, eco-architecture can help to alleviate many future problems in a number of ways. Firstly, it is more efficient and uses less material, therefore placing less strain on natural resources. I had the privilege of spending quite a few years with one of the leading Japanese construction companies to fully understand the benefits of fast-track, modular construction – and when we consider the impor-

ance of rapid urbanisation in growing economies, a modular approach can be of significant benefit. One technique that we employ is a reinterpretation of ancient Japanese architectural methods that considered the *tatami* (a 2:1 ratio modular component) as a useful construction and planning tool. This technique minimises wasteful cut-off material and increases the speed and ease of construction – thus reducing price and resources. Cities require huge amounts of natural resources – of which there is only a finite amount and are subject to price fluctuations, which can significantly affect poorer nations such as Myanmar. By reducing the need for such resources, urban development and growth can continue at lower economic and environmental cost.

Our ancestors built their dwellings before the advent of electricity resulting in structures that optimised natural light and ventilation, were culturally suited to its inhabitants and were sensitive to the natural environment. For instance, the Chinese *hutongs* incorporated courtyards and alleys that had both social and environmental benefits – maximising natural light and ventilation into the surrounding buildings. The same low energy, passive design concepts can be applied today, both at the micro-scale of a dwelling (such as the Idea House mentioned previously) and the macro-scale of an entire city. This would both reduce energy use through optimising light and ventilation (simply put, there



would be less use for air-conditioning and electric illumination) and improve the liveability of the building and city itself.

Additionally, eco-architecture makes more efficient use of water. Cities are thirsty, requiring huge amounts of water. It is estimated that by 2025, 270 billion cubic meters of water per year will be consumed by the world's cities, with Southeast Asia making up half of this. Serving this demand will eat up increasing amount of municipal budgets in the year's to come. While Myanmar has an abundance of water resources for now, with growing industrialisation there will inevitably come a strain that could put a brake on economic growth. Cities that make efficient use of water, through conservation and recycling, will end up being cheaper to run and place less pressure on national water levels.

Q: Myanmar is still a very rural country. Why is it necessary to invest in eco-architecture now when there are other de-

velopmental priorities?

A: Intelligent, sustainable planning of Myanmar's cities is vital if the country is to avoid the pitfalls of development and urbanisation that many other nations have experienced. Myanmar is in a fortunate position as to be in the very early stages of growth, and so has the time and resources (intellectual and physical) to plan for the future. This has not been lost on the authorities. In December last year, the Chief Minister of Mandalay City, U Ye Myint, announced that they would be prioritising environmental conservation while pursuing urban growth, with the aim of building Mandalay City as a green city. This includes cultural preservation as well as water and energy conservation, with the predicted result of creating a healthy and pleasant environment for its inhabitants.

This forward thinking could result in significant future benefits economically and socially, at little cost. Building along sustainable lines need

should be noted that great works are mostly the result of perseverance rather than strength. In addition, we must acknowledge the era of "one step back, two steps forward" is long over.

We have undergone a series of commotions and upheavals. We are in a situation in which we have to apply new remedies. Otherwise, we will be left with no choice but to expect new evils. The price of inaction is high.

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than 'traditional' methods – rather there can be significant cost savings in the long-run. By simply orientating a building to take advantage of natural light and ventilation, or planting the right kind of vegetation, energy use can be reduced with the savings passed on to the user. One example of this is the B House, designed by Pomeroy Studio (due for completion Q4 2015), which is set to be Singapore's first carbon-negative landed property, not only using zero energy from the grid, but actually producing electricity that can then be sold, creating income-generating opportunities for the inhabitant. Furthermore, this property costs the same as the average home in the same area.

While there are certainly many other priorities occupying the minds of the government and citizens of Myanmar, city planning along sustainable lines can create massive benefits for the future, at little to no extra cost.
