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LEI THAR GONE

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The past four months have been trying for all of us – as I'm sure they have been for you as well! Light of Love and Lei Thar Gone fell into a deep «Sleeping Beauty» sleep and this accounts for the shortness of this report. Slowly the «princesses» are emerging from their slumber but the way back to normalcy will be a long and rocky one...unless Prince Charming comes along and kisses them back to instant life - and instantly wins the war against the pandemic too!

Joking aside, I am happy to report, that my health has been stable in the past four months. All cardio-vascular tests at the Pun Hlaing Hospital in Yangon showed good results. For this I am very thankful! Only my herniated disk continues to cause back pain and limits my mobility. But Zoe and my sister Niki are doing a super job taking care of my needs! We are currently staying at my house in Pyin Oo Lwin. I grew up in this scenic hill town in Mandalay Division, founded by the British in 1896. Because of its altitude at 1070m it became the summer capitol of British Burma, allowing the colonial administration to escape the summer heat of Mandalay, which with an elevation of only 21m, was much hotter and very dusty.

I enjoy the cooler weather and especially the beautiful green countryside.



my home in Pyin Oo Lwin, or as I fondly recall it, Maymyo. Here Zoe's rose plantation and Joni, my grand-niece with a basket of freshly cut red roses

Some school facts & figures:

- Reliable information has been difficult to come by. On June 11th we had news that the government planned to open high school classes only during the third week of July.
- During the holiday break, maintenance work was carried out, desks & classrooms were painted, the two classrooms in the old mat building were remodelled as this school year we no longer have a pre-school class.
- The government partially paved the road from the EPC office (Ministry of Electric Power) towards Light of Love and I took over the cost to also pave the branch road leading from the junction to Light of Love. This is an improvement that makes driving much safer, especially during the rainy season.
- The new license for Light of Love was issued, valid until 31. March 2022
- We have to follow many rules for virus protection such as social distancing, masks, face shields, regular taking of students' temperature, hand wash and disinfection systems.
- Two groups of inspectors came four days apart to check on our virus protection safety concept. Many high schools, mostly in remote areas were not eligible to open because they could not implement the rules and regulations.
- On 21 July, with a seven-week delay, the high school students at last returned to Light of Love. Things didn't look as usual though, because the Middle and Primary classes were missing. The students were happy to return, hungry for schooling, but they looked uncomfortable with all the virus protection measures! We hope they will soon get used to these!



- The reopening date for Middle and Primary classes has again been changed. Originally planned for two weeks after High School classes, the latest announcement has set the opening for Middle School for one month later, that is beginning 21 August. Starting date for the primary classes has not yet been announced. It is also unclear, if this drastically shortened school year will count as a fully completed year.
- At High School level we have 22 students
- Our two Myanmar English teachers, Alberta and Margaret returned as of 18 July
- At present, we only have three full time teachers and six part time teachers at school. Besides these staff members we also have two staff in the office and two in the dispensary. One of these is Ma Khaing Khaing. She used to work as a pre-school teacher, now she is in charge of the dispensary.
- Our school kitchen has also reopened and the students receive a freshly cooked meal, same as before the lockdown.
- The four young women who passed the 10th Standard exam last year began English training at La Salle Centre in Yangon. But due to Covid-19 the school was closed and they are back in Yenangyaung and now taking online classes.
- The three young ladies – Cho Cho Nwe, Hnin Htet Htet Naing and Shwe Yamon Poo that already spent a year in Yangon learning English, began their teacher training at PSYE (Pyin Ya San Yae) on 9 January but this school was also forced to close and now they too are taking online classes.
- Results for the 10th Standard exam were announced recently and we are very happy that Mg Moe Min Kyaw, the boy that failed in 2019 because his adoptive mother died just before the exams, has now passed the exam and is hoping to continue his studies at University, majoring in English. Unfortunately, the other 4 boys and 2 girls did not pass the exam. Due to circumstances the result is not unexpected, but it is nevertheless a big disappointment...
- The small French organisation «SOLIDAR'BIRMANIE» has sponsored another new house for one of our needy families. Construction is going on.
- The solar power plant is unfortunately still defective. As stated in the last report, we can use the 5KW produced directly from the panels but for such an expensive installation, this is not an acceptable state of affairs. Two new inverters have been promised for September... meanwhile, we keep hoping!



After the lockdown, the market was moved to the football field to enable social distancing. Shops and restaurants are now mostly open, although a curfew is enforced from midnight to 4am. The compulsory wearing of masks in public places is largely not being followed. However, there are still no known cases of Covid-19 in Yenangyaung and as mentioned in the last report, the hardships incurred by the economic lockdown are far more severe than the ones caused by the virus.



Meanwhile at the Guest House...

- As mentioned, life is slowly returning to Lei Thar Gone. We have health & safety measures in place to protect the well-being of guests as well as staff & family members.
- While Myanmar is opening for domestic travel, international travellers are currently not allowed to enter the country. The borders will remain closed until at least 31 August. Foreigners that reside in Myanmar and are therefore already in the country, are allowed to travel domestically, as long as they abide by the Union and regional rules.
- Lately we have had several foreign guests staying, all of them currently residing in Myanmar and travelling either for business or for brief breaks during frequent Buddhist holidays. Unfortunately, however, cancellations still prevail and all bookings made until the end of October by Travel Agents such as Pegu Travels, Khiri Travels and Les Voyages d'Angele, have been cancelled.
- We have invested time, energy and finances to keep the rooms, the grounds and the pool in top condition as to be ready to welcome foreign guests as soon as they are granted entry to the country. However, we are well aware of the fact that the re-opening of the country will take time, that travellers will not flood the country even when the borders reopen. We are nevertheless motivated to keep the staff well-trained, practice learned processes and acquire new skills so that Lei Thar Gone will remain the frequently praised «home away from home» for many guests.



Nature was not deterred by the pandemic...