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LEI THAR GONE
 Guest House

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Dear friends,

More than four months have passed since my last report in April. As you all know from international news sources, the situation in Myanmar has deteriorated since then and reached a low point on September 7th, when the headlines declared: **«Myanmar’s Shadow Govt Declares War on Military Regime»**

The past four months have been an extreme roller-coaster ride - not only emotionally - for the entire population! Frightening, life threatening attacks, confusing disinformation, ever-changing regulations, outrageous injustice, constant lack of basic goods, collapse of civic services, banks and public transport (to name only a few). And in stark contrast to all this, everyday life has somehow had to go on – and did go on. For me a hopeful sign of the determination and resilience of the Myanmar people!

Birthdays were celebrated...



Here Julian, Lyon’s son celebrating his 5th birthday on September 1st

Babies &



My «Myanmar daughter» Khaing Mi Mi San became «aunt»

projects were born...

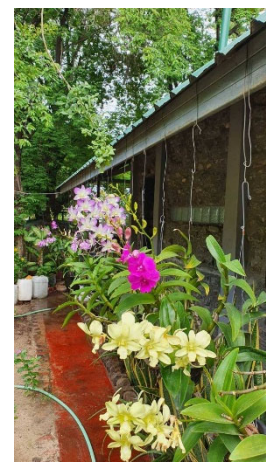


Tracy, Zoe’s sister, is launching a Rose Petal Wine, made from Zoe’s 2’400 roses in Pyin Oo Lwin

But life has been extremely challenging! Freedom lost and the fear of informers ever present.

Thankfully, I have been able to call Lyon, Zoe and Eric relatively often in the past few months and from their accounts I can piece together some information, that I would like to share with you.

- In the last report, I mentioned that Ko Zaw Min Thun had been diagnosed with liver cancer. I am very sad to let you know that he passed away at the end of May. He leaves a wife and two small children. We are all inconsolably sad!
- Basic supplies are not only rare, but inflation is extremely high. The exchange rate for US\$1 to Myanmar Kyats is now 2'000 (compared to 1'365 in March 2020)
- There have been price increases across the board: Paracetamol went from 500 Kyats to 5'000 Kyats, rice has increased steadily - the declaration of war on September 7th resulted in an immediate increase of 2'000 Kyats per bag, petrol increased from 350 Kyats/Litre to 1'350 Kyats. And because of the pandemic, a 10 kg tank of oxygen cost US\$500.
- After the coup, mobile data and wireless broadband internet were shut down, only a few with fibre cable remained online. Wi-Fi became available again on May 6th, mobile data remains instable. Since the declaration of war, there have been rumours, about a blanket shutdown, but thankfully, as of today, this has not happened.
- On July 11th Zoe wrote to me: «here is such a depressing situation. Covid cases are out of control. There is no proper management system, not enough oxygen, Govt hospitals are still closed and the majority of doctors are still on strike.»
- June 1st is always the official beginning of the new school year. The Government ordered all schools, including Light of Love, to reopen. The order was met with protests from teachers and students and many teachers refused to go to work for the Junta. Since then, over 125'000 teachers have been suspended. Under the threat of license withdrawal, Eric and Zoe decided to reopen LOL, but limited to Grades 9 & 10. As in many other schools nationwide, only a few students came. Some stayed away out of protest, others out of fear of explosions and bombings. Of the 22 students enrolled in the two grades, only 7 attended classes.
- Only five weeks later, on July 9th, the Government ordered all schools, including private and monastic, to reclose in an effort to curb the spread of Covid-19. The «temporary closing» has lasted until now... On September 10th the Government announced another 2-week extension of closure until the 24th.
- Government and private offices were also ordered to close from 17 – 25 July, these restrictions have also been extended.
- Unfortunately, Lyon was diagnosed with Covid and in isolation for 21 days. He was quite ill, with high fever and typical coughing. He lost his appetite and with it 7kg in two weeks.
- The financial sector remains chaotic. In July the withdrawal amount for foundations was reduced from 100 lakhs per month to 40 lakhs (from US\$5000 to US\$2000/month using the current exchange rate)
- Several times all withdrawals were stopped completely – for us here in Switzerland a totally unimaginable situation... On September 4th Zoe wrote that she had some «good news»: CB Bank again allowing the withdrawal of 5 lakhs (US\$250) per account, but only twice a month. From KBZ no withdrawals have been possible. What to say?!?
- Travelling within Myanmar is also a real challenge! The required papers daunting. A drive from Yenangyaung to Yangon involves passing at least six checkpoints. Paying the soldiers 3'500 – 5'000 per stop will get you through in an acceptable amount of time without them raiding your luggage, is what Lyon told me.... corruption flourishes!
- In principle, Lei Thar Gone Guest House is open. The problem is – there are no guests! The pool is blue, the grass green and the flowers abundant... There is only one word for the situation: heart-breaking!



Unfortunately, there is another heart-breaking situation that I would like to share with you:

Eric's health. As you know, he has faced many health issues in the past and it is remarkable how strong and resilient he has always been, never giving up no matter how challenging the situation!

In August, he was hospitalised in Yangon because of an open wound on his foot, which due to bad circulation wasn't healing properly. The doctors decided that the only remedy was to amputate two toes. The operation was performed but was not successful. The wound didn't heal, on the contrary, blood poisoning was imminent. For this reason, the doctors decided to amputate Eric's leg below the knee. Surgery was performed on August 14th and Eric spent 12 days in the hospital, his personal guardian angel Zoe at his side day and night! Eric was discharged on August 23rd and on the 25th he celebrated his 76th birthday! Amazing! On September 7th he returned to the hospital and the stiches were removed. The doctor told Zoe that the wound was healing even better than expected!

Eric is still very weak but is confident that God will carry him through this «tribulation.» (as he calls it)

Any messages you would like to send Eric, are best sent to Zoe on the encrypted Signal App. Her number is: +95 9 430 71609

Take care and stay safe!
Best regards,
Therese



Eric in Pyin Oo Lwin on 22nd May
with his grand-niece Yoeni (who is a talented baker and made the “European looking” bread rolls)

This report was compiled and written by Therese, on behalf of Eric, Zoe & Lyon