

Frontier

MYANMAR

WE ARE BUILDING A
COMMUNITY BASED ON
INDEPENDENT JOURNALISM
IN MYANMAR. **JOIN US.**

[MEMBERSHIP PRICES AND PACKAGES](#)



Frontier

MYANMAR



JOINING ASIA'S BEST

EXCELLENCE IN HUMAN RIGHTS REPORTING

The Frontier team's investigation into the deaths of six women in northern Shan State was described by SOPA Awards judges as "fine reporting" and an "extremely hard story to unearth and cover, pursued impressively by the reporters under difficult conditions and personal risk".



EXCELLENCE IN OPINION WRITING

Our commentary on the government's handling of the Rakhine State crisis that exposed the flaws in its strategy and advocated for a more constructive approach received an honourable mention from the SOPA judges.



From the entire team at **Frontier Myanmar**, we would like to thank all of those who have supported us on our journey over the past four years, and we reaffirm our commitment to producing independent, unbiased and insightful journalism on the issues that matter most to the country.

www.frontiermyanmar.net

MEMBERSHIPS: THE START OF AN EXCITING JOURNEY

At *Frontier* Myanmar we've embarked on a big change in how we generate revenue from our journalism and how we collaborate with our readers. We're not changing everything – we're trying to make sure we keep all the things that you enjoy about *Frontier*.

But running a newsroom isn't cheap, particularly when you try to cover all corners of the country. At *Frontier*, we've always sought to pay for our reporting through commercial revenue, but the ad-based revenue model that we initially pursued is no longer viable and we need to replace it.

We don't want to put a paywall in place to drive subscriptions, because we believe it's important that we keep our reporting accessible to everyone, regardless of whether they can afford to pay for it.

So we are trying something that has never been done before in Myanmar: we are building a membership programme. We're asking our readers and supporters – people like you – to invest in our journalism by becoming members. And, in what we think is another first for Myanmar, we've designed our mem-

bership package together with our readers, getting their feedback at every step along the way.

So, as a member, you'll not only be supporting high-quality reporting on issues of importance to Myanmar's future, you'll also have access to a range of products – from newsletters and briefings to events and behind the scenes content – that will help you better understand what's going on in Myanmar today.

We hope that our experiment with memberships will benefit not just *Frontier* but other media organisations in Myanmar, by creating a path they too can follow to financial sustainability.

Thanks for supporting independent media.

Thomas Kean
Editor-in-chief, *Frontier*



FRONTIER ME PRICING AND

NON-MEMBERS (FREE)

- Read all of Frontier's print and digital stories for free online (but with delayed access to magazine content)
- Paid entry to our monthly events in Yangon
- Frontier Fridays weekly newsletter with a short round-up of the week's events

SMALL INSTITUTIONS (\$90/MONTH)

- Up to five logins with all the benefits of individual membership (free entry to events, digital edition access, community emails, discounted print subscription), plus the Daily Briefing and Media Monitor

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS (\$8/MONTH)

- Support Frontier's independent journalism
- Monthly 'behind the scenes' community emails
- Free entry to our monthly events in Yangon
- Access to a digital edition of Frontier before the magazine hits the stands (once we launch a new website and web-based app later this year)
- Discounted print subscription

You can also add the following products to your membership:

- **Daily Briefing (\$7/month)**
- **Media Monitor (\$10/month)**
- **A discounted subscription to Frontier's print magazine (\$50/year)**

INSTITUTIONS (\$250/MONTH)

- Up to 20 logins with all the benefits of individual membership (free entry to events, digital edition access, community emails, discounted print subscription), plus the Daily Briefing and Media Monitor
- A 25% discount on advertising and branded content across Frontier's print and digital platforms
- Discounts on bespoke media monitoring and briefing products
- Annual institutional members event
- Option to customise package by adding more than 20 logins, magazine subscriptions, etc

***We offer a 17% discount on all membership packages if you pay for a year upfront**

MEMBERSHIPS: PACKAGES

PRINT MAGAZINE

All members have the option to subscribe to the print magazine at the cost of printing and distribution (\$50 a year). For non-members, the price of a subscription to the print magazine will rise to \$100 a year.

CURRENT SUBSCRIBERS

If you were already a print or digital subscriber when we launched the membership programme, you have the option to upgrade for free to our membership programme for the remainder of your subscription. When it's time to renew, you can upgrade and become a member, or go back to subscribing to the magazine at the new rate for non-members.

DIGITAL READER

For those who subscribe to our digital edition, you'll still be able to use our app until our new website launches, when we'll move you across to our new platform.

Gift memberships

You can gift a Frontier membership to an individual or institution.

Donate to Frontier

If you want to support Frontier's independent journalism but don't want to become a member, you can make a one-off or recurring donation. If your donation is equal to or more than the value of one of our membership packages, you can receive the benefits or gift them to someone else.

DAILY BRIEFING

Our Daily Briefing helps you keep on top of the news. Featuring everything you need to know about events shaping Myanmar, it draws on state and private media in English and Myanmar, government websites, company and NGO statements and yes, of course, what's being said on social media.

[View this email in your browser](#)



This Daily Briefing is free for a limited time only before we launch our membership programme. For now we're sending it out for free because we want your suggestions and feedback on how to improve it. If you were forwarded this email, you can join the mailing list [here](#).

We'll continue sending the briefing to you every weekday from now until the membership programme launches, unless you don't want to receive it, in which case you can opt out by replying to this email.

We have soft-launched our Myanmar-language media monitor, which will be free for a limited time until the membership programme launches. If you want to receive it daily in your inbox and help us test it out, [click here](#).

We're still testing this newsletter. Please forgive any mistakes. We're also still fiddling with the design and we'd love your feedback – just reply to this email.

Wednesday, December 4, 2019

Andrew Nachemson and Lun Min Mang

Here's what you need to know today.

1. [Media in trouble: Democracy Today shuts, Mon newspaper struggles](#)
2. [Rohingya youth hold first ever conference in London, as ICJ case divides opinion between overseas and domestic ethnic groups](#)
3. [Speaker strikes insults from the record in constitutional debate](#)
4. [Tatmadaw backs down at Three Pagodas Pass](#)
5. [Murder of female teacher in Chin sparks protests](#)
6. [Briefing, still](#)
7. [What to watch](#)

The end of Democracy Today

Democracy Today newspaper announced its permanent closure yesterday after breaking the news to its staff. An internal memo [released on Facebook](#) said the Myanmar News Network, the paper's publisher, was "losing too much money". Staffers were told on November 30, it said, and would be compensated. MNN is the print

arm of conglomerate Shwe Than Lwin, which is owned by business tycoon U Kyaw Win and is also the broadcaster of [Skynet satellite channels](#). When it launched on March 1, 2014, it inherited staff from the Yangon Times, which was published by Yangon Media Group and closed in February 2014 after suffering heavy financial losses.

Following the dissolution in 2013 of the Ministry of Information's Press Scrutiny and Registration Division, the number of newspapers in Myanmar spiked. But the honeymoon period did not last long, with some papers [shutting down](#) as early as 2014. That same year, Myanmar's telecoms sector was liberalised, enabling Facebook to expand its presence at a fast and countrywide scale, replacing newspapers, journals and magazines as the primary source of news. State-run newspapers continue to compete in the advertising market against privately-owned papers, while running on public funds, creating an uneven playing field. Though Democracy Today's editorial stance was not as independent as some, its closure is an indication of the increasingly hostile commercial nature of the print industry in Myanmar.

An [interview](#) with a Mon newspaper publisher in the Irrawaddy last week also revealed some of the challenges facing smaller outlets in an increasingly digitalised Myanmar. Editor Nai Kasauh Mon said that while his publication, Guiding Star, once had a circulation of 5,000, the advent of smartphones chipped it away to 1,200. Nai Kasauh Mon also said pressure from the Tatmadaw is an ever-present problem, and some of his journalists have been arrested in the past. While changing technology is a challenge for every outlet – and government crackdowns are a fear for most in Myanmar – the Guiding Star faces an additional threat: the death of its language. Fewer and fewer ethnic Mon can read their own language, leading to an audience mostly comprised of ethnic monks. Nai Kasau Mon said unless he can receive outside funding, the newspaper will fold once sales drop below 500.

Ethnic unity outside the union

Rohingya youth gathered to demand action from the international community, a "landmark" initiative from an activist sector usually dominated by veteran actors. The first ever International Rohingya Youth Conference was held in London from November 29 to December 1 and featured input from other maligned Myanmar ethnic groups. "Young people are united in their calls to end all abuses against Rohingya, and for those responsible to be brought to justice," said U Tun Khin, President of the Burma Rohingya Organisation UK in a press release.

According to the statement, Rohingya were joined by overseas Kachin and Karen activists, who expressed solidarity and accused the Tatmadaw of committing similar crimes against them, and against the Shan and Rakhine minorities. The unity of ethnic groups based overseas stands in stark contrast with domestic attitudes, where Shan, Rakhine, and Kachin groups have all supported the Myanmar government against so-called attacks on Myanmar's reputation.

The Shan State Progress Party-Shan State Army-North yesterday said that it supports Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's plan to defend Myanmar

against genocide accusations at The Hague, a sentiment shared by their sometimes enemy, the Shan State Restoration Council-Shan State Army-South.

The Karen, however, have been the most sympathetic of the groups within Myanmar's fractured borders. In November, the Karen National Union said they "urge the government to uphold and abide by international humanitarian norms and principles", and on Monday the Worldwide Karen Community (which includes domestic organisations) put out a [statement](#) declaring "solidarity with Rohingya people in fight for justice".

In session: a daring deadline

Speaker U T Khun Myat said parliament would try to put the contentious constitutional amendment process behind it before the end of this legislative term in January 2020, but even the most optimistic observers will take that with a grain of salt. Amendments have been deadlocked for years, and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi even seemed to admit in an [October interview](#) that changes were unlikely before the election, although the party later [denied](#) this.

T Khun Myat was forced to begin the session by striking insults from both parties from the record, including a comment from National League for Democracy representative U Win Maung who compared the parliamentary process to the "Nyaungnabin conference" in reference to the [convention](#) where the military originally drafted the 2008 Constitution.

The parties continued to argue yesterday on whether amendments proposed by the military should be debated separately or together with the NLD proposals. Despite the military proposing many of its own amendments, Colonel Khin Maung Naing warned against making too many changes. "Countries with easily changeable charters are unstable," he said, using the US which has only passed 27 amendments in 203 years as an example.

In Brief

Tatmadaw backs down

Fighting between the Tatmadaw and Mon National Liberation Army seems to have ended as quickly as it began, with no clear picture emerging about why it started in the first place. Clashes first broke out last week at the Mon-controlled Three Pagodas Pass, with a new bout of violence on Sunday. Following a meeting Monday with representatives of the Tatmadaw's Southeast Regional Command, no agreement was made, while some 900 ethnic Mon had sought refuge in Thailand, according to [Myanmar Times](#).

The MNLA, a signatory to the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement, has fought more often with the Karen National Liberation Army than the Myanmar military in recent years. Conflicts between the Mon and Karen in the region date back decades, as both groups vied for control of the Three Pagodas Pass border zone, which serves as an important connection to Thailand. The Kayin State Border Guard Force, which absorbed the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army in 2010, was with the Tatmadaw during the recent fighting, and one member of the BGF was [reported killed](#) during clashes on Sunday. Following a meeting late on Monday, the base was returned to the MNLA but the military still reportedly occupies one outpost, [which is expected to be returned](#) today.

Murder sparks protests

The [murder](#) of a female teacher in Chin State brought simmering tensions to a boil, sparking a protest demanding the expulsion of Manipuri armed forces. The armed group has historically sought refuge in Chin from across the Indian border, and now control small pockets of the region. Nearly 30 civil society groups released a statement in conjunction with the protest, demanding government intervention against foreign troops and blaming the Manipuri for the increase in opium farming in the region.

Briefer, still

- In its latest head-scratching [decision](#), the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission has said it won't investigate abuses carried out by the Tatmadaw against ethnic Rakhine, unless the Ministry of Defense finds the soldiers guilty first. Rakhine lawmakers, who submitted the request six months ago, said the answer is not "satisfactory".
- UNICEF [announced](#) a new partnership with the International Legal Foundation to tackle Myanmar's notoriously harsh treatment of so-called child criminals. The program will aim to increase access to legal aid and promote alternatives to detention.
- During a trip to the Pa-O Self-Administered Zone in southern Shan State, commander-in-chief Min Aung Hlaing reportedly floated the idea of [establishing tea and coffee plantations](#) and building a processing hub in the region. The plan for further business expansion follows a recent request by UN special rapporteur Ms Yanghee Lee for the international community to sanction businesses operated by the military.
- The deputy head of a local agriculture management department has been [sued](#) by the Anti-Corruption Commission for allegedly demanding K5 million worth of bribes from farmers who were trying to reclaim their land after it was temporarily confiscated by the Tatmadaw. If guilty, U Win Aung could face 10 years in prison.
- The Mon State chief minister has [told media that work is going ahead](#) with a deep-sea port at Kalagote Island, which will be a transit point for cargo heading to Mawlamyine, Myawaddy and Mae Sot in Thailand, in line with a nationwide [industrial policy](#) released in early 2016.
- The World Monument Fund has asked the Mandalay regional government to [post security staff](#) at the Shwe Nan Daw Kyaung monastery to prevent tourists from littering, smoking and climbing up the monastery walls.

What to watch

The Kachin State People's Party will hold its first [conference](#) in January to elect its executive committee in preparation for next year's election. The KSPP is a merger between three smaller Kachin parties. The emergence of stronger, larger ethnic parties across the country should be of concern to the NLD, who might see seats chipped away by more consolidated ethnic opposition.

The Ministry of Commerce will discuss the planned new online trademark system during a seminar this week. The Trademark law, which was published January 2019, has not been enforced by an accompanying presidential order. Now, DFDL says it has reason to believe a "soft opening" of two planned intellectual property offices, one in Yangon and one in the capital, will take place in the "near future". According to the DFDL legal alert, trademarks are currently filed manually under the authority of the Ministry of Agriculture.

Frontier Myanmar is an award-winning independent magazine based in Yangon. Visit our website [here](#).

We will be launching a membership programme later this year. If you want to receive updates ahead of the launch, sign up [here](#).



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You're receiving this email because you're as excited as we are about being a part of the Frontier membership community.

MEDIA MONITOR

Our Myanmar-language media monitor features the front page headlines from the country's best-selling newspapers, plus translations of the most interesting stories.

[View this email in your browser](#)



Wednesday, December 4, 2019

Making news today:

The exploitation of workers on fishing rafts is back in the news, this time because a young man who worked on one for 10 months alleges he was swindled. Meanwhile two teachers at a school in Yangon are facing charges over the alleged abuse of an autistic boy after CCTV footage of him being assaulted went viral on social media. The home of an Amyotha Hluttaw MP at Tamu on the border with India has been targeted in a grenade attack, sugar traders who export to China are sour after the sweet stuff was not included in its import quotas. There's been a show of support at a Yangon court for garment factory workers, and in Kachin State's Putao Township many rocks are being turned over to meet demand in China for an edible species of insect.

7Day Daily

Young man who worked on fishing raft opens a lawsuit against five people after being swindled out of his salary

A lawsuit against five people accused of swindling a man who was contracted to work on a fishing raft off Ayeyarwady Region's Pyapon Township has been opened at Thaug Gyi police station in Yangon Region's Hlaing Tharyar Township, police said.

Police Lieutenant Than Soe from Thaug Gyi police station said the man, Maung Nyi Thway, from Ingapu Township, Ayeyarwady, was promised by a broker that he would be paid K1.6 million for working eight months.

However, after being made to work on a fishing raft for 10 months, Nyi Thway was expecting to receive only K800,000, but alleges that the money was taken by one of the brokers who arranged his job.

Nyi Thway said his salary was paid by the owner of the fishing raft to a broker, who refused to hand over the money.

Police said the five people charged over the case include a broker named as Mae Gyi, who has been arrested. The other four suspects against whom charges have been laid are another broker,

and three brokers' assistants.

They have been charged under sections 25 and 32 of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law.

7Day Daily

Lawsuit opened against two teachers from New World Therapeutic Training Center for assaulting autistic child

A lawsuit was opened against two teachers from the New World Therapeutic Training Center in Yangon Region's North Dagon Township on December 2 for allegedly beating a ten-year-old boy with autism.

Dr Khant Khant Win Shwe, the mother of the mute boy said she discovered that the teachers had beaten her son when she checked CCTV footage from the centre after finding a bruise on his face on October 30.

Khant Khant Win Shwe opened the lawsuit at North Dagon police station on October 31 under section 103(a) of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Law.

Social media users called for the teachers to be severely punished after video footage of the incident went viral on December 2.

Khant Khant Win Shwe said the teachers have been granted bail and the management of the training centre has promised to sack them.

The case was the first to be opened by a parent against teachers at such a centre, said U Nay Myo Naing, chair of the Myanmar Autism Association.

Attempts by 7Day Daily to get comment from the training centre and North Dagon police station were unsuccessful.

Daily Eleven

Grenade thrown into house of Amyotha Hluttaw MP in Tamu, Sagaing Region town on border with India

A person riding a motorbike threw a grenade into the house of Amyotha Hluttaw MP U Maung Maung Let (National League for Democracy, Sagaing-9) in Tamu, on the border with India, at about 7pm yesterday.

The chair of the NLD in Tamu, U Myint Zaw, a brother-in-law of Maung Maung Let, said the MP was in Nay Pyi Taw at the time of the incident. He said the grenade did not explode and no one was hurt.

Myint Zaw said the grenade did not explode despite the pin being removed. It was found about three feet from the grenade.

He said officers from a nearby Tatmadaw base had taken the grenade, which was made in China. "The 2020 [election] is getting near; there are various attacks and this is a threat," Myint Zaw said.

Myawady (military)

China's import quota does not include sugar, local sugar traders face difficulties

The import quota set by China for 2020 does not include sugar, which will create difficulties for Myanmar traders in sugar and related products, said U Win Htay, vice chair of Myanmar Sugar & Cane Related Products Association.

“Currently, we do not see any prospect that China will buy sugar from us [in 2020],” Win Htay said. He said traders have to follow the procedures and instructions of China’s ministry of commerce. He suggested that if traders wanted to export to China they should contact its state-owned enterprises, which are responsible for setting 70 percent of its import quotas.

The Voice Daily

Four workers from Natural Garment and an activist appear in court, as 50 colleagues show support

More than 50 workers were at Dagon Township court on December 3 to show support for fellow workers at the second hearing of charges against them for gathering outside the Yangon Region government compound because they wanted to meet chief minister U Phyo Min Thein.

The hearing against the four Natural Garment factory workers and an activist under section 19 of the Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Law was postponed until December 12 because of the non-appearance of the plaintiff.

“So much for going there to seek the chief minister’s help; their problems were not solved and they face legal action, which is unfair. That is why we are here to support them,” said Ma Mya Mya Thein, who was one of the 50 workers at the court.

She denied that the gathering outside the government compound from November 6 to 8 was a protest.

The four workers and the activist were charged at Dagon Township police station on November 7.

“We were not protesting and should not have been charged under the peaceful procession law; we were there to meet the chief minister to report on our employee-employer discussions with him,” said Ko Kyaw Myo Htike, one of the four workers.

The maximum penalty for breaching the law is three months’ imprisonment and a fine of K30,000.

Daily Eleven

Buyers from China pay big prices for edible insects known as stone bugs found in Kachin State’s Putao Township, number of bug hunters rises

High prices paid by buyers from China for edible insects known as stone bugs has resulted in an influx of bug hunters in Kachin State’s Putao Township.

The market for the seasonal insects has expanded in recent years. The hunting season begins in early November when it is easier to catch them along the Mali Kha river and other waterways with stone banks. The insects are found under rocks or are caught in nets.

Bug hunter Ko Tan Shin Phone said prices were better than last year and the insects were fetching from K7,000 to K10,000 for one nosibu [a traditional measurement equal to 390 grammes]. Small bugs fetch the best prices and can sell for up to K130,000 a viss [1.6 kilogrammes]

“Locals can’t eat them because they are too expensive; they are exported to China,” he said.

In the past, locals ate the insects by pounding them together with chilli.

The front page headlines:

The Mirror Daily (state)

1. Vice President U Henry Van Thio addresses 2019 International Day of Persons with Disabilities event in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday
2. Hong Kong company to invest US\$500 million in power generation and supply projects in Yangon and Kyaukphyu
3. MPs debate reports of Joint Committee on Scrutinizing the Constitution [Pyidaungsu Hluttaw]
4. Statements of Special Region-4 (Mongla) and Myanmar Interfaith Dialogue Group on Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s decision to contest lawsuit brought by Gambia at International Court of Justice.

Myawady (military)

1. Events marking International Day of Persons with Disabilities held in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday
2. More coaches for railbus engine train from Japan to arrive in December
3. Number of matriculation exam applicants in Myanmar exceeds 970,000 this year
4. US-based cruise boat, Seven Seas Voyager, leaves for Thailand
5. China’s import quota does not include sugar, Myanmar sugar traders face difficulties
6. New airport in Falam, Chin State, due to open next June
7. Myanmar Investment Commission approves within a week six projects expected to create more than 3,000 jobs

7Day Daily (private)

1. Priority will be given to amend constitution in current parliamentary session, says Pyidaungsu Hluttaw speaker
2. Myanmar gets its first gold medal in Arnis [Philippine martial arts] at SEA Games in Philippines
3. Case opened against five people after man from Ingapu Township, Ayeyarwady Region, who worked on fishing raft for 10 months was not paid
4. Myanmar Earthquake Committee patron says in interview she worries what would happen in Yangon if a Sagaing fault tremor shook the Bago area
5. Lawsuit opened [at North Dagon police station] against two teachers at New World Therapeutic Training Centre accused of assaulting an autistic child
6. Denko Trading is nation’s highest commercial taxpayer, paying more than K40 billion this year
7. Prison truck hits roadside tree in Mandalay Region, eleven people hurt

Plus translations of all the headlines from Daily Eleven, The Standard Time Daily and The Voice

Here at the media monitor we try to pick stories that will give you an insight into coverage by Myanmar-language newspapers.

We hope it will give you a deeper understanding of local outlets - what their interests are, what type of stories they cover, and how they report.

Disclaimer

Each item is a translation and may contain inaccuracies. Our own explanations of headlines and stories are shown in parenthesis.

OUT OF THE COMFORT ZONE

Frontier publisher and chief executive officer
U Sonny Swe



U Sonny Swe is a veteran of Myanmar's media industry, having co-founded the *Myanmar Times* together with Mr Ross Dunkley in 2000. At the time, it was the only privately owned newspaper in the country with foreign investment.

In 2005, Sonny Swe was sentenced to 14 years' imprisonment for breaching Myanmar's censorship laws, and forced to sell his shares in the *Myanmar Times*.

He was released in 2013, the year after the government abolished pre-publication censorship for print media. He returned briefly to the *Myanmar Times* before joining *Mizzima*. In 2015, he left and established *Frontier Myanmar* together with Ms Sylvia Saw McKaige shortly before that year's general election.

Where did the idea for *Frontier* come from?

The moment I got out of prison I wanted to be a publisher again. That's always been my dream. I believed very strongly

ly that this country needed a high-quality publication and I thought that *Frontier* could be a window into the country.

But this was 2015 – why a print magazine?

I'm a very print-focused guy, that's my background. Back then I didn't know much about digital, so my aim was always a print magazine. Also, there wasn't a good, in-depth magazine on Myanmar. A lot of people were doing daily newspapers and I thought there was room for a long-form magazine.

Did you have bigger ambitions than a magazine?

Basically, I wanted to have the best newsroom and set up a media empire. Previously I was thinking about radio, about a TV channel, but because of the internet it's a different game now four years later. The general ambition is still the same – to be the best media organisation in the country – but to get there we are using new techniques, we can't use the old techniques.



The past four years have been a challenge, with a lot of ups and downs for Frontier, Myanmar's media industry, and the country. What's been the biggest lesson for you as publisher of Frontier?

Embrace technology. The trend has changed now. The old-school, ad-based revenue model doesn't work any more and we need to find different revenue streams. At first I hated technology because it definitely makes life difficult for publishers. But then I realised that instead of complaining about technology, we needed to embrace it and find ways to make it work for us.

For example, we're working with Google through the Google News Initiative to solve this problem. Most online advertising dollars are now going to Facebook and Google. If we just had the mindset that we hated Google because of that, and didn't even apply, it would have been different. We're working in a more collaborative way now with a whole range of organisa-

tions, whether it's on training, new initiatives or products, or investigative stories.

And the proudest moment?

Every time we can see one of our stories has an impact, whether it's encouraging the government to change their policy or something else, that is something special. And when we win awards – that's also pretty cool!

A lot of people say, 'How can you write the way you do? Why doesn't the government take action against Frontier?' What's your response?

It takes a lot of effort to get to this level. The most important thing is that we don't misuse our platform to attack individuals or institutions unfairly. We always write with a good intention and proper fact checking. I think the readers can see that, and I think the government sees that.

Why are memberships the future for Frontier?

This is a trend around the world – it's not like we're coming up with this on our own. The idea is to generate more revenue from readers while still making sure our content is freely available, even for people who can't afford to pay for it. To make it work, it's important to build a community of people who believe in what we do and think it's important. We believe we have enough loyal readers but engaging with them is a new approach for us. Now we're listening to what they want, rather than just giving them what we think they'll want.

The biggest challenge will be changing the mindset of everyone at Frontier – we need to make time for members, to listen to them. Our membership team is already doing that, but we need to make sure everyone within the company shares the same mindset as well. We can't say for sure memberships are going to be successful for Frontier. But what I like about it is that we're crafting these tailor-made products and experiences for our readers and that's a beautiful thing. It's very different for us, it's out of our comfort zone, but I think that's good – even if it's very challenging.

Should other media in Myanmar focus on memberships?

It depends on the type of content that they're doing. I think there are about four or five different media organisations that would potentially be suited to a membership model. It has to be high-quality, unique content. These days, anyone can set up a Facebook page and be a publisher. You need to distinguish yourself from everyone else that's out there, you can't expect people to pay for memberships if you're just doing the same old thing. So for Frontier, what makes us unique is our in-depth reporting.

Why does independent media matter for Myanmar?

Myanmar is very unique. Private media development wasn't that deeply rooted and has been difficult to sustain. Most publications are being bought or influenced by businesspeople or other interests. It's very important for us to have a free hand and report the way we see fit – it's very important for this country's democratic transition.

MEMBERSHIPS 101: HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Why is Frontier building a membership programme?

We are launching memberships to ensure the long-term survival of Frontier and to build a community around people who care about independent journalism in Myanmar.

What will that look like?

We will build the community by creating opportunities (both online and in real life) for our members to collaborate and engage with us. We've developed new products for our members, such as a daily briefing on Myanmar, a monitoring service of Myanmar-language media, and we'll be developing more in the coming months – such as a 2020 election product.

So I can still read your online news for free?

As well as the new products we've launched, members will soon have priority access to magazine content online. We'll still put everything online for free a week or two after it's published in print and goes out to members. But who wants to wait that long?

This all sounds pretty ambitious. How did you fund the launch?

Good question. We applied for and won a small grant from the Google News Initiative Innovation Challenge. But the success of the project will depend on you. We hope that with your support and advice, we can build a membership package that helps us to secure our financial independence. That will mean we can keep reporting freely on the topics that matter most – both to our readers, and to Myanmar's future.

Sounds great, I want to know more. Who should I ask?

We'd love to hear from you! Please get in touch at members@frontiermyanmar.net.

