

A wink from one in pink

By Mark Angeles

The young Buddhist nun saw me raise my camera to my eye and gave me a quick wink before she disappeared into a ramshackle home in Yangon to ask for alms.

While they are almost always serious and reverent, some of the young ones cannot help but be happy and playful. The Buddhist nuns in Yangon range from about nine years of age to approximately 90, according to the latest available census.

There are reportedly about 30,000 nuns in Myanmar, one of the largest concentrations in the world. They stand out in their pink habits, in contrast to the dark saffron robes of monks. They are not as well-supported as the monks, so virtually all of them rely on alms for their meals and daily existence.

The main reason for their lower status is that they are not allowed to be fully ordained. According to Buddhist history, the lineage of Theravada bhikkhunis (fully ordained female Buddhist monastics) died in 456 CE, and thus full ordination is almost impossible. The Buddhist nuns in Myanmar are known as thila shin (possessors of morality).

The ceremony that initiates women into the female religious order gives them a religious status equal to that of a pious laywomen who abides by sabbatical vows.

Nevertheless, some nunneries in Myanmar report that enrollment of young nuns is on the rise.



Young Buddhist nuns requesting provision on Za Lun Street in Sanchaung. Nuns in Myanmar range in age from 9 to 90. PHOTO: MARK ANGELES

Siemens deepens investments in Myanmar

FROM PAGES 5-7

Q. In addition to the energy sector, does Siemens have any other investment in Myanmar? If so, we would like to know what they are.

A. Of course, due to the huge need for power the energy sector is one of the focus sectors of Myanmar and Siemens. However, Siemens is a global powerhouse with expertise in energy, electricity and digitalisation. Our portfolio covers power generation, energy management including transmission and distribution, process industries and drives, mobility and transportation systems, building technologies and digitalisation. This broad portfolio is unique in the world and together with our customers, we develop solutions for the country's challenges.

With our local partners we have competent channels for distribution of our portfolio. This is one channel to investment. Of course the Kanbauk project is a lighthouse project for Siemens and Myanmar, and it is therefore the most important project we are working on at this time.

Q. Are there any other companies which Siemens plans to cooperate for mutual benefits? May we know of any other projects to be implemented?

A. For Siemens, partnership with local companies is a key enabler of growth and is one of our major business goals. Currently, Siemens has forged partnerships with more than 14 local companies. They cover a wide range of different technologies like automation, hardware for transmission and distribution system, meters and switches, fire suppression systems, building technologies and drives, and last but not least medical equipment for hospitals and laboratories.

The next further step is for example the collaboration which has been established with our partner KMN. KMN manufactures through license of Siemens complete medium-voltage switchgear systems called SIMO-PRIME. Being a licensed partner, they have to meet our highest quality standards in the same way as all other factories in the world. German quality, made in Myanmar. Regular audits are established to ensure the required

quality.

Co-operation and collaboration with local partners is beneficial for all parties. The local partners benefit from knowledge sharing and being trained. The train-the-trainer approach enables our partners to train their staff and staff of their customers. This keeps costs low and enhances the knowledge base of our partners, enabling them to create value add for our customers. Capacity building is one of the key needs in Myanmar and collaborating with local organisations is the first measure to increase knowledge and skills and create value for our customers.

Q. Other projects?

A. What Siemens can offer more from being a trusted partner for Myanmar is digitalisation. As the world becomes increasingly connected with digitalization is a major trend in this changing world, organisations in the public and private sectors need to embrace digitalisation.

This mega-trend is having an impact all over the world, including Myanmar. It doesn't stop at borders and whoever ignores it will finally be left

behind.

How crucial digitalisation is can easily be seen from the benefits it creates. Digitalisation can help business enterprises and the public to become more efficient, sustainable and secure. It promises lower costs, improves production quality, flexibility and efficiency as well as shorten response times to customers and market demand.

The German industry and Siemens has long been amongst the leaders of digitalisation and particularly, the wide-ranging Siemens Digital Portfolio offers enhancements to the entire value chain of customers. i.e. from engineering and design via production and operation up to maintenance and service. Siemens digital portfolio can help organisations to digitally adapt and enhance legacy systems and identify where digital technologies can help increase efficiency, sustainability and security.

Digitalisation is all around and it will also enter Myanmar. The future will show how this subject will drive Myanmar but with Siemens at its side, the country can be well positioned to benefit from it.