



PRESS RELEASE

U.S. EMBASSY RANGOON

110 University Avenue, Kamayut Township, Rangoon, Burma

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U.S. Embassy Celebrates Independence Day and Demonstrates Commitment to Mandalay

Reaffirming the U.S. commitment to the bilateral relationship, Ambassador Mitchell invited community leaders, government officials, academics, and civil society actors to celebrate the United States' Independence Day at the Jefferson Center on June 21. The Jefferson Center boasts 5,000 members and provides information resources, educational programs, and networking opportunities for the Mandalay community and others. This is the first Independence Day event hosted by a U.S. ambassador in Mandalay in nearly 30 years. During his remarks, Ambassador Mitchell said:

"I'm honored to be the first U.S. ambassador to host an Independence Day event at our Jefferson Center in Mandalay. The Center, once the U.S. consulate, remains a symbol of our ties with the people of Upper Myanmar. More broadly, the event tonight is also a testament to the United States' historic friendship with this country."

Earlier in the day, in a discussion on civic engagement at the first Youth Forum hosted at the Jefferson Center, the Ambassador and the participants spoke about the role of the country's youth in promoting democracy, gender equality, and freedom of expression. The Ambassador highlighted President Obama's flagship Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI), which brings together young leaders from the region to tackle their century's greatest challenges, as a valuable opportunity to contribute to their communities.

Following the Youth Forum, Ambassador Mitchell launched the Institute for Political and Civic Engagement (iPACE), which provides citizens interested in civic engagement with the tools they need to effectively participate in the country's public discourse and debate. iPACE courses include training in constitutional frameworks, effective advocacy, and community organizing. The first workshop was titled "Pluralism & Human Rights: Forces for Democratic Advancement."

"Your work – the work of civil society – plays a critical role in any democratic society; it holds everyone accountable to their actions, it defines and pursues the common good, it is composed of and reflects the will of the people, it pursues equity, justice, and human rights for all, and it reflects and upholds the dignity of all people," stressed Ambassador Mitchell.

iPACE arrives in Mandalay following its successful launch at the American Center in Yangon. Over the past two years, iPACE has trained nearly 400 participants from 21 different political parties and 196 different civil society institutions representing all 14 states and divisions of Myanmar.

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