



The crew of 'Nargis: When Time Stopped Breathing' answer questions at the Wathann Film Festival in Yangon on September 8. Pic: Boothee

# Nargis doc screened in Myanmar for first time

By Nyein Ei Ei Htwe

AMONG the films screened at last week's Wathann Film Festival was a locally produced documentary titled *Nargis: When Time Stopped Breathing*, which, although it was released internationally in 2009, was being shown for the first time in Myanmar.

More than 500 people attended the screening on September 8, the fourth day of the five-day festival that was held at Maha Santi Sukha Buddhist Centre in Tarmwe township, Yangon.

The film was shot almost entirely in the Ayeyarwady delta in the weeks after Cyclone Nargis tore through the region on May 2 and 3, 2008, killing about 140,000 people and destroying the homes of tens of thousands more.

The documentary consisted of interviews with delta residents, mixed with footage of destroyed villages as well as a few clips of the cyclone itself, shot through a window from inside a residence in Yangon.

Most of the people interviewed

in the film told of the hardships they faced during and after the cyclone, including the deaths of loved ones, the loss of homes and property, and the lack of any form of help from the Myanmar government.

Ko Pe Maung Sein, who co-edited the film with The Maw Naing, told the audience at the screening that the film crew wanted to document the "real conditions in the area affected by Nargis" but they faced many challenges in collecting footage.

"We divided into two groups to shoot scenes in the delta. I led one group that followed donors around villages in Bogale township, and my friend The Maw Naing led another group that also took packs of rice and other supplies to hand out to victims," Ko Pe Maung Sein said.

"The most difficult thing was collecting footage in an atmosphere where the government was making announcements that it would punish anyone caught shooting video. So we packed our cameras in plastic bags, and only took them out to shoot when no suspicious or dangerous people were around," he said.

Ko Pe Maung Sein said both groups stayed in the delta for 40 days, and the footage was edited at the end of 2008. Since its release in 2009 *Nargis* has been screened at 16 international film festivals, winning four prizes at festivals in India, Switzerland, France and Nepal.

Ko Thaidhi, who served as a cameraman for the documentary and also helped organise the Wathann Film Festival, said the Yangon screening was the first time the filmmakers used their real names in the credits.

"Even though we have won prizes at international film festivals, we were unable to use our real names in the credits. But now we can screen it legally, which makes me happy. I hope all audiences understand that the film was shot by local Myanmar filmmakers according to our own ideas," he said.

"Our film might be different from others about Myanmar that have been made by foreigners, who have their own ideas. Our film is not meant to criticise or blame anyone, but to show the condition and lives of the cyclone victims," he said.

## Another student leader, another book

By Zon Pann Pwint

FOLLOWING closely in the footsteps of U Min Ko Naing and Ko Ko Gyi, another leader of the 88 Generation Students, Ko Jimmy, launched his book *Lamin Sandar Inle Kantha* (The Moon in Inle Lake) in Yangon on September 6.

the translations to be published in Myanmar because "Dan Brown's books raise a storm of controversy".

Among Ko Jimmy's other accomplishments while incarcerated was reading Roberta Leigh's novel *Savage Aristocrat* (1978) in 1995, which he said he "liked very much" and inspired

While he was in Taunggyi prison he also wrote a collection of politically themed, postmodernist short stories under the pseudonym Pan Pu Lwin Pyin, which was published in Japan.

"In 2007, although writing wasn't officially allowed in prison, officials turned a blind eye to the writing that we were doing," Ko

## MMPO warns of impostor

THE Myanmar Motion Picture Organisation has issued a warning about a bogus film director who is preying on aspiring actors in Yangon.

The organisation's chairperson, U Zin Wine, said that several actors have reported incidents in which the fake director recruits people to appear in his film, and then demands K95,000 as a religious offering, plus K15,000 to buy registration forms from MMPO.

However, once the impostor receives his money, he disappears and shooting on the film never begins.

He has also reportedly told female actors to be "completely without shame" and willing to expose their bodies, and that they should also be ready to meet the "director" at any hour of the day or night.

"This person is not member of MMPO. I've never heard of him. Victims should report the impostor to MMPO so legal action may be taken," U Zin Wine said.

"Actors mustn't trust an unknown director: Be careful about trying to take shortcuts to stardom. MMPO will soon offer acting and production classes, so agreeing to these sorts of terms is unnecessary."

Director U Hein Soe expressed surprise at the scam.

"I never thought such dishonesty could occur in our film industry. I don't understand what he's out to get, whether it's women or money," he said.

— Lwin Mar Htun

## National art show back after six yrs

THE Myanmar Traditional Artists and Artisans Organisation is seeking artwork and handicrafts for a major exhibition to be held in Yangon in January 2013.

The closing date for submissions is September 20.

The secretary of Myanmar Artists and Artisans Organisation (Central), Ni Po U, told *The Myanmar Times* in an interview on September 7 that high-quality submissions that "d