



Bangkok Post Learning: *Test Yourself*

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New beauty by Gary Boyle



Photo by Melalin Mahavongtrakul

Read the following story by Melalin Mahavongtrakul from the *Bangkok Post*. Then, answer the questions that follow.

Swe Zin Htet has long dreamed of becoming a beauty queen.

"So when an opportunity presented itself, I decided to give it a shot," said the 20-year-old performing-arts student. Her father, a soldier, and her housewife mother gave their blessing for their daughter's pursuit in the world of beauty pageants.

COVETED CROWN

Last week, Swe Zin Htet brought home another crown when she was announced as the winner of Miss Universe Myanmar 2019. Representing the city of Hpa-an, the capital of Kayin State, she came out on top among 26 contestants in the final round, which was held at Novotel Yangon Max hotel in Yangon.

Onstage, each woman wore colourful bikinis and evening gowns. They walked with confidence and later answered questions to show their wit and viewpoints on different topics as is the format of Miss Universe. To the audience, the sight of a modern beauty contest such as this has gradually become the norm in a country that has only opened its doors to the world in less than a decade.

Then known as Burma, the country debuted on the Miss Universe stage from 1959-61. This was put on hold from 1962, after a coup. For around five decades no Burmese woman was sent to compete in the Miss Universe pageant. It wasn't until 2013 that Miss Universe Myanmar returned to the big stage after half-a-century under the

initiative of Soe Yu Wai, director of Yangon-based Hello Madam media group, who serves as the pageant's national director.

A MODERN COMPETITION

"Today, we also focus on modernising the competition through performance and show. From something more of a traditional style, we are moving towards something more modern, and this can also be seen in our stage design, which incorporates more LED and technology," said Soe Yu Wai via an interpreter.

"We seek women with a healthy body, beautiful mind and Myanmar heart -- one who is honest, polite and carries public conscience," she said.

"I want to open up opportunities for Myanmar girls. I want to see them on the international stage," she simply said. "[Following the local contest,] we see what each of our beauty queens still lacks. They will undergo training in Bangkok or the Philippines. We will improve them before they go onto their respective international stages."

Despite being a relative newcomer on the world stage, Myanmar women are gently making their mark around the globe. Last year, beauty queen Myint Mo May won Face of Beauty International 2018 in India. Two other Myanmar contestants became semi-finalists in World Beauty Queen 2017 and 2018. In perhaps its most recognisable award, Htet Htet Htun won Best National Costume at Miss Universe 2016 when she morphed herself into a traditional puppet, wowing the judges and audience in the Philippines and those watching live around the world.

CULTURE CLUB

"I'd say we're a country to keep an eye on [when it comes to beauty pageants]. We're on the rise," Soe Yu Wai said. Her pageant is privately owned. She said she received no financial support from the government.

While she believes the pageant and her beauty queens are helping people to learn more about Myanmar and its culture, there is nothing concrete yet in terms of the economic or tourism benefits.

Some of the country's past national costumes on the Miss Universe stage have included showcasing ornate traditional theatre and puppet shows. Last year's portrayal was more minimal, with a costume inspired by thanaka, a cosmetic paste made from ground bark that can be seen commonly applied to the faces of women and girls. Looking forward to what the pageant will present this year, it will be interesting to see whether they choose to offer a traditional or more modern interpretation of their culture.

For the answers, find the story online at www.bangkokpost.com/learning

If you have any questions or feedback, please contact the Editor at garyb@bangkokpost.co.th

Section 1: Read through the story and answer the following questions.

1. What title did Swe Zin Htet recently win?
2. When did a Burmese woman first appear in Miss Universe?
3. How many Burmese women were in pageants between 1962 and 2013?
4. Where will Myanmar beauty queens go for training?
5. Who dressed as a puppet in a competition?
6. The Myanmar government supports the pageant. True or false?
7. Myanmar has seen tourism benefits due to the contest. True or false?
8. What paste do women often apply to their faces?

Section 2: Decide whether each of the following words is used as a verb, adjective or adverb.

9. Onstage 10. gradually 11. lacks 12. respective 13. wowing

Section 3: Read the following passage. Then, fill in the blanks with the correct words from the choices given.

Hnin Thway Yu Aung, 23, last year's winner, was at the competition to ...14... her successor, Swe Zin Htet. During a pre-show interview with the Thai press, she said her life has ...15... changed a lot over the year ...16... she's been crowned. ...17... from participating in the Miss Universe competition that was held in Thailand last December, she ...18... a model and an actress. It's a long way her previous job, working in an ...19... shop on the border of Myanmar and Thailand.

- | | | |
|-------------------|---------------|---------------|
| 14. a. crown | b. crowned | c. crowning |
| 15. a. very | b. extremely | c. indeed |
| 16. a. when | b. after | c. since |
| 17. a. As well | b. Aside | c. Also |
| 18. a. has become | b. has became | c. was become |
| 19. a. optical | b. optic | c. optician |

Section 4: Find words that match the following definitions.

20. a competition for women in which their beauty, personal qualities and skills are judged.....
21. the ability to say or write things that are both clever and amusing.....
22. a situation that is usual or expected.....
23. the part of your mind that tells you whether your actions are right or wrong.....
24. the world.....