



MYANMAR AT THE BOLOGNA INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S BOOK FAIR

For the first time ever **Myanmar** will be participating in the **Bologna International Children's Book Fair**: a historic occasion for the country that has recently begun its democratic journey under the guidance of Aung San Suu Kyi.

Attending the Fair in Bologna will be **Thant Zin Soe**, 29, writer, publisher and illustrator of children's books in Myanmar. His profile reads, "In 2009 I was arrested by the police intelligence service and taken to prison for interrogation. 2009 was the year in which the military government was attempting to transfer power to a civilian government through elections and the generals wanted to improve their reputation abroad. Together with 15 other student activists I was lucky enough to be released. I was prohibited, however, from completing my university studies. Involvement in a pro-democracy political movement at that time was an unforgivable offence for a student so my scholastic career as a final-year art student concluded. However, this was the beginning of my life as a journalist, writer and "volunteer" storyteller. "**Myanmar Storytellers**", the group I am involved with, is made up of young volunteers with the aim of conserving the popular stories of Myanmar and providing a contribution to civic movements in the country through the art of storytelling.

The main aims of the Myanmar Storytellers are: the preservation of popular ancient stories that are at risk of disappearing; the creation of youth networks through the art of storytelling; learning how to share with others through the art of storytelling; healing and educating children from poor communities with the moral ethics of the Myanmar culture.

The objective is to utilize storytelling to help Myanmar to develop and become a society with a blossoming culture".

Participating at the Children's Book Fair Thant Zin will introduce his publications and share his expertise with publishers from other countries. This cultural exchange is one that the "l'Amicizia Italia Birmania Giuseppe Malpeli" Association has been pursuing determinedly, in collaboration with the organizers of the Children's Book Fair.

On his visit to Italy Thant Zin Soe will meet with students of a school from the province of Parma, where he will be telling stories.

This initiative is also set to develop relations between Italy and Myanmar which will be further reinforced by the visit of Aung San Suu Kyi to Rome on the 3rd and 4th April.

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