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Daw Aung San Suu Kyi arrived in Monywa on November 29, the same day as the attack on the protest camps. In the late afternoon she held a rally. Pic: Christopher Davy

Mine protests spark violence

By Soe Than Lynn

THE hluttaw has announced that it will launch an official inquiry into the handling of protestors in Monywa at the Letpadaung Taung copper project, where demonstrators were violently removed from their camps on the morning of November 29.

The crackdown came the same day National League for Democracy (NLD) chairperson Daw Aung San Suu Kyi arrived to speak with residents and local

officials in an attempt to quell tensions.

Demonstrators are opposing the planned expansion of the mine, which is operated jointly by Wanbao Mining, an offshoot of the Chinese arms manufacturer China North Industries Corp (Norinco) and military-owned Union of Myanmar Economic Holdings Ltd (UMEHL).

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi told the media on November 30 that the matter would be resolved quickly and in a manner beneficial to the people.

"I have met the staff of the company concerned. I have also met with officials from UMEHL as well as villagers," said Daw Aung San Suu Kyi

"So I have arranged to include village representatives into the commission the hluttaw will form. After it is formed, we are going to decide on how this project will proceed. We are going to do it peacefully and tenderly as soon as possible. I anticipate all sides will be pleased," she said.

Locals said that they were

pleased that they would be represented in the commission and hopeful for potential reconciliation.

"I believe the commission will do well to help us in these matters," Ma Thwai Thwai Win, who said that she was willing to risk her life protesting the project, told *The Myanmar Times*.

"What Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said is that we should be disciplined and should work systematically. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi promised that she would work her hardest to resolve the matter. She

also guaranteed that the protestors would not be further harmed or jailed. We are satisfied with all of these things," she said.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi met with local authorities along with region and district police majors on the morning of November 30. In the afternoon she met with representatives from four villages in the area.

Though witnesses told *The Myanmar Times* that they had seen seven monks being escorted to Monywa jail and there were also reports of

two missing monks, local authorities told Daw Aung San Suu Kyi that there were no arrests and no plans to arrest anyone involved in the protest.

"It is rumoured that all protestors – children, adults and monks – would be arrested. But when meeting the authorities, they said they didn't have plans to do so and they didn't arrest anyone, either. When demolishing the camps, monks and ordinary

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Anti-Muslim monks: Sri Lanka redux?

Alex Bookbinder

Ashin Mettacara, a 29-year-old monk from Wuntho in Sagaing division, is an excellent example of the young and savvy face of Buddhism in Myanmar today. As zealous about politics and technology as he is the tenets of his religion, Mettacara blogs about political and social issues and runs a religious-themed radio station online called Buddha FM.

Having corresponded with him for many months, I finally had a chance to meet with him at his monastery, and we discussed Myanmar's ethnic politics during a tea-fuelled session lasting the better part of a day.

The conversation was going well until I made the mistake of mentioning the word "Rohingya" in the context of giving all of Myanmar's ethnic and religious minorities a stake in building the country's future.

Attempting to correct me, Mettacara insisted that Islam was a cancer eating away at the fabric of Myanmar's Buddhist society, as he characterised it, and claimed that the Rohingya were outsiders bent on conquering Myanmar for themselves. As he seemed otherwise rational and knowledgeable, I found his remarks a sad reflection on the state of ethnic relations in Myanmar and how acceptable outright hatred of Muslims had become.

What might be most surprising about this exchange was that it did not occur in Myanmar, but in Sri Lanka in early 2009 at the time of the Sri Lankan government's vicious final assault on the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). While the political and demographic realities of Myanmar and Sri Lanka are very different, there are striking similarities between

the ultra-nationalist political culture fostered under Mahinda Rajapaksa's government in Sri Lanka and the xenophobia of virulently anti-Muslim monks in Myanmar.

Cultural diffusion between Sri Lanka and Myanmar has taken place for centuries. At least in part, the recent emergence of ultra-nationalist, anti-Muslim monks on the political scene in Myanmar is the result of this exchange of ideas.

Roughly 300 monks from Myanmar reside in Sri Lanka, the largest such population outside of Myanmar itself, and their presence on the island is far from new. Buddhist practice in Sri Lanka has carried on uninterrupted for longer than anywhere else in the world, but periods of Mahayana influence and repression during the colonial period led to Buddhism's gradual decline by the early 1800s. In the 19th century, Sri Lankan abbots sought to revive the "pure" Theravada schools of the past, and called on Buddhist schools in Myanmar to provide the requisite ordination.

As in Myanmar, Buddhism in Sri Lanka took on a special significance in the struggle against colonial rule. Institutions such as the Young Men's Buddhist Association (YMBA), founded in 1898, were established to counteract the dominance of Christian and colonial power structures, and Buddhists in Myanmar emulated their Sri Lankan counterparts by establishing a branch of the YMBA in Yangon in 1906.

Radical Sri Lankan monks with close ties to the state have been extremely vocal in recent years. Their calls for ethnic and religious purity in Sri Lanka bolster the government's militaristic national-security agenda, and divert attention away

from Rajapaksa's systematic dismantling of Sri Lanka's democratic institutions and constriction of civil liberties since the end of the civil war in 2009.

While the Sangha in Myanmar have always played a role in politics as antagonists or advisors, its activities have always occurred outside of formal political structures. In Sri Lanka, however, members of the clergy formed the National Heritage Party, or JHU, in 2004; its representatives in Parliament – all monks themselves – became part of the ruling coalition in 2007.

Employing rhetoric that should be familiar to anyone paying attention to Rakhine State nowadays, the monks of the JHU were extremely supportive of Rajapaksa's efforts to eradicate the LTTE militarily, and have scuttled propositions for limited autonomy in the predominantly Tamil North and East of the country.

While most Myanmar monks would probably vehemently oppose the notion of forming a political party like the JHU to contest elections, a number of blogger monks influenced by their Sri Lankan counterparts have suggested doing precisely that in recent months.

Sri Lanka's relatively small Muslim population, comprising roughly 10 percent of the population and often caught between the 25-year-long civil war, has also been singled out for ostracization by nationalist monks and their supporters. Last September, monks and their supporters destroyed a Muslim shrine in the ancient royal capital of Anuradhapura; in April of this year, monks led a 2000-strong mob to chase away worshippers partaking in Friday prayers at a mosque in the central city of Dambulla.

The mainstream media in Sri Lanka routinely repeats the myth that Sri Lanka is a "Buddhist Nation" under threat of Islamisation, and, as the tragedy in Rakhine has unfolded, has come out with pieces expressing solidarity with anti-Muslim elements in Myanmar while characterising Myanmar in the same questionable terms.

Sri Lanka's political culture was changed profoundly by the civil war, and notions of religious and ethnic identity – highly politicised and polarised even before the war – took on a distinctly militant character as the war progressed. It is unfortunate that this vitriol has migrated to Myanmar at such a fragile juncture in history.

President U Thein Sein is walking on a tightrope when it comes to the Rohingya issue. While his most recent statement just before Obama's visit on

November 19th suggested that the government would be willing to properly address the problem of Rohingya statelessness, it was only four short months ago that he suggested the Rohingya be deported en masse as a viable solution to ethnic strife in Rakhine. The Rohingya might be thankful, then, that President U Thein Sein is keen to maintain good relations with the West, whereas Rajapaksa was all too happy to cosy up to China and burn diplomatic bridges as the offensive against the LTTE got underway.

As cultural interaction between Sri Lanka and Myanmar has long been a two-way street, President U Thein Sein has, perhaps, been presented with a historic opportunity to influence the state of ethnic relations in both countries. As Obama noted in his address in Yangon, diversity has only served

to strengthen American society; if Myanmar's government is serious about political stability, the *bête noire* of successive military governments, it too must adopt this ethos as its own.

Yet both President U Thein Sein and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi are all too aware that adopting a publically conciliatory tone towards the Rohingya – and Myanmar's Muslim population in general – would not play well at the monastery or in the court of public opinion.

While it may not be politically expedient in the short term, Myanmar's leaders need to take decisive action on the Rohingya issue now in order to ensure long term stability, prosperity, and peace – a lesson that their Sri Lankan counterparts would also be wise to learn.

(Alex Bookbinder is a researcher and political analyst based in Southeast Asia.)



Dear Editor,

A short article recently appeared in the *New Light of Myanmar* decrying the graffiti on the wall of the Zoological Garden (Yangon) as "mindless vandalism tarnishing the image of the city". I must observe, however, that the choice of quote by Leo Tolstoy that has been spray-painted on the zoo wall demonstrates far more wisdom and intelligence on the part of the graffiti artist than an entire decade's worth of banal articles in the state-run press. So if these "vandals" are indeed "mindless", what does that make the clearly less astute editors of *New Light*?

Yours,
Ko Cho Phyo Moe Myo

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Shan call for federal union constitution

By Ei Ei Toe Lwin

SHAN ethnic groups say the country's current constitution has to be replaced by a federal union constitution in order to bring national stability.

Speaking at Yangon's Royal Rose Hotel on November 28, U Hkun Htun Oo, chairman of the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy, said: "I've already told President U Thein Sein and President Obama that if we want a ceasefire and genuine peace, there must be a genuine federal union constitution. That's the only way to relieve tensions between Myanmar and other ethnic groups."

U Hkun Htun Oo was taking part in a three-day workshop on Trust Building for Peace. The 170 participants from Shan national parties, Shan ethnic armed forces and local and foreign-based Shan civil society worked to draw up a plan to send to President U Thein Sein.

"The main point is that to get genuine peace, the government must change its mindset and keep its promises," said U Khun Htun Oo.

Shan ethnic armed



Participants of the Trust Building for Peace conference at the Royal Rose Hotel in Yangon on November 28.

Pic: Boothee

groups said they had signed ceasefire agreements with the government, but fighting continued because of the lack of both local and international observers.

"We agreed to a ceasefire

on January 28 [this year]. The agreement forbade both sides to enter designated zones with weapons. But government troops broke the agreement, so now we're fighting again. We've fought

more than 50 battles. We organised this workshop because we don't trust each other," said Lieutenant-General Sae Htin, patron of the Shan State Progress Party and Shan State

Army.

Genuine peace meant respect for human rights, democracy and ethnic rights, he said.

"The best thing would be to replace the 2008

constitution with a federal system that would promote equity and autonomy," said Lieutenant-General Sae Htin.

The government should not hold separate talks with the 10 ethnic groups that had signed ceasefire agreements, but should hold an inclusive political dialogue, he said.

Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN) said Shan women had suffered violations of their human rights, including sexual abuse.

"Everybody in the country should enjoy equal rights," said Nan Hseng Nong of SWAN.

She said donor organisations should be made aware of the real conditions in conflict zones.

"People are afraid to go home because of land mines. The government should not pretend conditions are normal where ceasefire agreements have been signed. We would like donor countries to go to these places themselves and see the true picture," said Nan Hseng Nong.

Lieutenant-General Sae Htin said his organisation would continue fighting the government in cooperation with other ethnic groups in order to win justice.

Total E&P to boost socio-economic outreach

By Aye Sapay Phyu

MORE development is on the way for villagers in Tanintharyi region as oil and gas companies led by Total E&P plan to extend its assistance program in Yaephyu township.

The company will add eight more villages to those served by its Yadana socio-economic programs next year, said Ms Namita Shah, general manager of Total E&P Myanmar last week.

She said that in the coming years, a total of 33 villages along the coast, near the 63-kilometre gas pipeline to the Thai border, would receive assistance from the program.

"We have been operating in 25

villages, and will add eight more for 2013. We will also increase the budget for socio-economic programs to US\$3.8 million for 2013 from \$3.44 million in 2012," she told local media on November 27.

Yadana socio-economic programs, which have been executed in Kanbauk area, Yaephyu township in Tanintharyi region since 1995, are the result of cooperation between Total and its partners, Unocal, the Petroleum Authority of Thailand Exploration and Production (PTT-EP) and Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE).

Daw Swe Swe Win, head of the socio-economic department of Total E&P Myanmar, said the overall budget invested in the programs from 1995 to 2011

was about \$27.05 million for the areas near the pipeline and other support to national programs.

She said the Yadana project targeted improvements in five areas: community development and communications, health care, education, economy and infrastructure. Local people were involved in carrying out the projects through capacity-building, she said.

Residents of Kanbauk village said they were grateful for the development assistance.

"We have better roads and bridges. The program supported about 75 percent of the development of the area. I really appreciate it. But I think the companies should give priority to local people when they hire, and

their subcontractors should pay fair wages," said retired engineer U Aung Than of Kanbauk on November 27.

Ms Shah said: "We are making a big effort to hire locally, but we do need graduates with degrees in engineering, which limits the scope that we can hire locally. We have recently engaged a woman with a civil engineering diploma in our road maintenance team. With regard to subcontractors, Total has prescribed the minimum they should pay. This is a fair wage that is much higher than that prescribed by local law. We also provide benefits to daily wage earners. We strive to ensure that our subcontractors apply our internal Total rules and remain vigilant on this issue," she said. U Lin Aung, who lives in Mya

Thida quarter, Kanbauk, agreed that the Yadana project benefited the local community, but also wanted electricity to be supplied at a reasonable price.

"The electricity from private generators costs about K650 a unit and is available from 6:30pm to 10:30pm. If we had 24-hour electricity, children could learn how to use computers," he said.

Ms Shah said Total planned to trial solar power in some villages in 2013.

"We have always said we would work with the government in developing an electricity network. I hope next year we will see that. At the same time, we are trying to see if we can do a little more with solar in some households or villages," she said.




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production@myanmartimes.com.mm Head of Production & Press Scrutiny Liaison - U Aung Kyaw Oo (1) Head of Graphic Design - U Tin Zaw Htway

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Mandalay Bureau: No.178, 74th Street, (Bet. 31st & 32nd streets) Chan Aye Thar San Township, Mandalay. Tel: (02) 24450, 24460, 65391, 65392

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A protest leader hold a sign outside the Wanbao company gates on November 28, the day before the attack on the Monywa protest camps. Pic: Christopher Davy

Police apologise for crackdown

By Soe Than Lynn

THE POLICE Force in Sagaing Region issued a formal apology on December 1 to the monks injured in a violent crackdown at Letpadaung Taung copper mine.

Local residents said the apology was the result talks between Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and both regional and district police departments that took place on November 30.

Police began forcibly removing monks who had positioned themselves near the gate of Letpadaung Taung mine during the early morning of November 29. More than 50 monks and 40 villagers were wounded when police used water cannons and incendiary devices to disperse the crowd.

"It is a good practice to make an apology as they have done wrong. But the real individuals responsible, the Ministry of Home Affairs and senior officials who gave the orders should be involved in the apology. The police at the regional level were only following orders," a Monywa resident said.

Protestors that suffered



Police sit behind their riot shields on November 28 nearby one of the protest camps against the Monywa copper project. Before dawn on November 29 they would attack the camps. Pic: Christopher Davy

the most severe injuries were transported to Monywa Hospital for treatment.

"Most monks in less serious condition were treated in the nearest villages. The doctors in Monywa Hospital said that the wounds looked like they were caused by burning plastic falling on the skin," said Ma Aye Net, who was present when the crackdown began.

"At the main gate of Myanmar Wan Pon at 2:30am exactly, the

firefighters sprayed the monks with hoses. Some were sleeping and some sitting. Around 3am, it looked like phosphorous bombs fell into the crowd. We called them 'burning bombs' because they ignited everything they touched. They even burned the soaked robes and blankets. The monks were seriously wounded," she said.

U Okahtta, a monk from Masoeyin Monastery in Mandalay, arrived at the

demonstrations on November 19. He urged for higher level officials to take responsibility for the violence and called for the resignation of President U Thein Sein.

"People and monks were demonstrating in peace without violence. I think the president should prevent the Ministry of Home Affairs from doing this. Demonstrators who are peaceful should be treated with peace. But now the president is so irresponsible. We denounce the president, as well as the Ministry of Home Affairs. They still haven't given up their authoritarian power. If they can't give up their power and pride they shouldn't be the leaders of the people. I want to see them resign," he said.

U Ka Wain Da, the head monk of Monywa's Zawtika monastery, did not attend the apology.

"The monks here in this region are like my sons and I really take care of them. That's why I did not attend the apology, as I will see their hurt in my eyes if I had gone," he said.

Most of the injured monks are students of U Ka Wain Da.

Only about 10 monks, who are the heads of various monasteries in Monywa, attended the apology.

-Translated by Zaw Winn

From page 1

people alike were injured. These injuries are very severe. I personally saw them. This is the reason why it was so appalling," she said.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said that better bilateral relations with China would help to ameliorate the situation in Monywa.

"The People's Republic of China is involved in this project. Honestly, I can say that I don't

see China as a benefactor. It is just our neighbor and our friend. But it is impossible to ignore our neighbours.

"It is not only with China that we need to have a good relationship with, but with all of our neighbours. We cannot simply change the location of our country. We will try to establish a mutual understanding with China and organise for this in the hluttaw."

She added: "As I always say, our country needs to work towards national reconciliation. National reconciliation is not only a goal for our divided ethnic minorities, but also for different organisations and opposing parties as we bridge the gap between the public and our leaders. There is also a gap we need to bridge between the Tatmadaw and the people. We need to work

towards reconciliation so that our country will be strong and develop."

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi called on the media to help achieve national reconciliation.

She said that she relied on journalists to provide the public with fair and balanced information, so that they could come to an informed decision regarding the conflict over the Letpadaung copper project.



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Govt meets activists at land conference

By Bill O'Toole

GOVERNMENT officials and civil society groups came together in Nay Pyi Taw on November 24 and 25 for the first ever *National Dialogue on Land Tenure and Land Use Rights*, a two-day conference aimed at fostering a national debate on land law in Myanmar "that ensures sustainable economic development".

The conference was a collaboration between the Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry, the National Economic and Social Advisory Committee, and the Food Security Working Group, a network of over 100 local and international NGOs working in Myanmar.

The over 200 attendees included union ministers, lawyers, activists and representatives from international NGOs such as the World Bank and USAID.

Tobias Jackson, a senior member of the Land Core Group, said that Myanmar's reform process had provided "a window of opportunity where citizens and civil society can have direct access to the government" that the conference was meant to capitalise on. "This is one of the largest, most serious discussions of land rights that Myanmar has had in 50 years," he added.

The attendees gathered in the massive Myanmar International Convention Centre (MICC) on November 24 where they heard speeches from a wide variety of international experts, including academics from



The National Dialogue on Land Tenure and Land Use Rights. Pics: Than Naing Soe

other ASEAN nations and Mr Saturnino 'Jun' Borrás from the International Institute of Social Studies, who spoke about land grabbing at a conference in Yangon earlier this year.

The speeches mostly concerned the way other countries experiencing similar democratic transitions often mismanaged their land policy at the expense of the rural poor.

"We have an advantage," said U Sein Hla Bo, an economic advisor to President U Thein Sein, who chaired the presentations. "We have developed slower than other nations, we have a chance to learn from their mistakes."

The discussions on the event's second day focused squarely on Myanmar, with

presentations from various government ministries as well as a representative from the Myanmar Legal Aid Network.

the government wishes to encourage foreign investment in Myanmar's natural resources while still empowering small scale

'This is one of the largest, most serious discussions of land rights that Myanmar has had in 50 years'

U Kyo Min, the deputy director of the Forestry Department used the beginning of his presentation to praise the farmland law passed by the huttaw earlier this year, citing the fact that it granted farmers new rights to mortgage, inherit and lease the land they farm.

He went on to say that

land-owners. "We will strike a balance between equality and equity."

Despite the touting of positive reforms, during the day's several question and answer sessions, local activists criticised Myanmar's current laws, as well as the larger push for foreign direct investment, often in very passionate



U Tin Naing Thein, Minister of the Presidential Office.

terms.

U Win Tu, a lawyer from Yangon, told U Kyo Min, "Only public officials understand the laws, the people don't understand." He added, "[The public officials] who understand the laws only abuse them."

During a discussion of the government's resettlement policies, an unnamed member of the People's Diversity Party earned some of the day's biggest laughs when he took to the microphone and said, "Asking a farmer to leave his land is like asking a fish to live in the mountains."

However, the most surprising comment came when U Soe Thein, an advisor to President U Thein Sein seated in the front row, stood before the crowd and openly admitted the government's prior errors.

"Yes, we have made mistakes. We want to listen to the voice of the people... the laws can be revised, the laws are not always right." The admission received hearty applause.

Twice during the question and answer sessions, the chair from the NESAC had to stress the need for order,

but the event organisers said later they were not surprised by the level of passion on display.

In an interview with *The Myanmar Times*, Food Security Working Group chair U Shwe Thein said, "In our earliest discussions, I warned [the government officials] that they would be taking questions from people who may be very angry with them. But I said, 'How else will we all get on the same side?'"

Mr Jackson said that an honest debate was very important to all the organisers including the government, and they had no interest in censoring any group that had legitimate grievances.

U Ko Ko Hlaing, another presidential advisor who chaired a discussion on land tenure, expressed satisfaction with the way the conference.

In an interview in the lobby of the MICC, he said, "This model of discussion is a new thing for our country. We now have the opportunity to give our opinions freely, even in front of Union Ministers. I think it's a taste of democracy."

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Unlikely pair an inspiration to us all

By Kurt Campbell

WASHINGTON – The most unlikely of political partners are driving the astonishing democratic transition in Burma.

One of them is no surprise: Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the inspirational global icon who for recent generations has defined nonviolent struggle against oppression.

The other, President U Thein Sein, is an unassuming former general who rose to the senior ranks of the very military junta seen as responsible for Burma's decades of misery, but then had the courage to steer the country in a new direction.

Neither sought this unusual pairing, but together they represent the most hopeful turn for Burma in half a century.

Burma before World War II served as one of the rice bowls of Asia and its people aspired to the region's best standards of health, education, and prosperity. But the country's darker post-colonial legacies included bitter ethnic divides and an unfortunate role in the centre of the neighbourhood's Cold War intrigue, as the Soviet Union, China and the United States each vied for strategic position and ideological cohorts.

Following a 1962 coup, the military justified the decades of misrule to come by the need to hold the country together with whatever force necessary and resist any form of foreign domination – real or imagined. The generals drove the country to ruin.

By 2009, there were few overt signs of any real change, but President Obama launched a tentative, exploratory effort to woo Burma out of its isolation. On my first visit, in early 2010, I met both Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and General Thein Sein, then the prime minister as well as No. 4 in the ruling junta.

The contrast between the two could not have been greater. I was permitted to meet Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in Rangoon at an old Russian-built hotel, a relic of Burma's Cold War ambivalence. She was delivered to the hotel from her solitary house arrest and we talked for three hours about her hopes for a new Burma. She was predictably inspiring, reflecting a steely determination and optimism that contrasted sharply with the stark setting, and displayed a

thorough grasp of international developments that belied her nearly two decades in isolation under house arrest. She described in detail her daily ritual of listening to the *BBC World Service* and *Voice of America* as a kind of preparation for the role she could then barely imagine – but today is playing. The regime cropped her out of a photo of my visit published in the state-run newspaper.

I met General Thein Sein in Naypyidaw, the remote new capital where the generals had abruptly sequestered themselves a few years earlier.

Largely unresponsive to our offer for a meaningful dialogue, he and his fellow generals showed no sign of willingness to engage with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi or implement any serious reforms. General Thein Sein seemed an unlikely strongman, reserved and mild-mannered in his heavily starched olive-green uniform. But in that first meeting, with his careful military cadence and cautious manner, he gave no indication of any of the ideas of reform that have come to animate his time as president.

This past September, just three short years later, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi stepped off a plane for her first visit to the United States in four decades, this time as a freely elected member of Burma's new parliament. She came both for a victory lap – she was to receive the Congressional Gold Medal, among many other honours – and to do the serious work of encouraging renewed Burmese links to and support from the international community.

During her visit, President U Thein Sein arrived in the United States carrying a similar message, which he would deliver in his address to the United Nations General Assembly, the first by a Burmese head of state in decades, and in an official meeting with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

"The people and government of



President U Thein Sein and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi after their historic meeting in Nay Pyi Taw on August 19 last year. Pic: AFP/MNA

times previously in Burma. Their partnership is an unlikely one, but the symbolism of their encounter in New York was a powerful

presented under a painting of Aung San, Burma's revered independence leader and the father of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

The symbolism of their encounter in New York was a powerful indication of the distance they, and their country, had covered.

Burma have been taking tangible irreversible steps in the democratic transition and reform process," he said. While in New York, he met privately with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, as they had several

indication of the distance they, and their country, had covered.

Their relationship began with a dinner in the spring of 2011 prepared by President U Thein Sein's wife in the couple's modest home and

Warily, tentatively, the two compared shared hopes for the country's rebirth. That first meeting set the stage for the breathtaking changes in Burma following the retirement in 2011

of the junta's geriatric strongman, Senior General Than Shwe.

President U Thein Sein's government has since released hundreds of political prisoners; eased draconian restrictions on speech, assembly and movement; established ceasefires with most insurgent ethnic groups; and launched a wobbly electoral process that eventually allowed Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's once-banned opposition party, the National League for Democracy, to take legislative seats, 22 years after the junta ignored the party's stunning national election victory.

Many explanations have been offered for Burma's sudden opening – from geopolitics to unrelenting global pressure – but I believe the personal experiences of these two remarkable individuals have much to do with it.

The US government and key congressional allies stood resolutely with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and other Burmese freedom fighters through the darkest days of their struggle and she knew we could be counted on to help Burma when the regime finally relented.

U Thein Sein arrived at the need to overturn the old order by a very different path. His role as prime minister and designated face to the outside world brought him to regional capitals that decades earlier appeared as poor cousins to cosmopolitan Yangon but now were thriving hubs of modernity.

Burma's failure must have been manifest and its status as a pariah state, increasingly an embarrassment for many countries in Southeast Asia, would have been painful to defend.

Sustaining reform's momentum will be difficult. Much will depend on getting others to follow the courageous example of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and President U Thein Sein in setting aside bitter enmities and deep distrust for the common good.

Their shared stake in a better future led both leaders to take off a uniform – she the mantle of international sainthood and he the insignia of the military institution that brought him to absolute power. Having done so, they can now meet on equal terms, as citizen and patriot, striving and struggling together for a new Burma. Along the way, they are inspiring us all.

– *Foreign Policy*
(Kurt Campbell is US assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs).

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Lashio Declaration looks to improve national healthcare

By Shwe Yee Saw Myint

GENERAL practitioners have signed the Lashio Declaration urging those in the medical field to take steps to ensure all citizens can access the nation's health care system in a cost effective manner and that it will provide the highest quality of care.

This includes the creation of a general practitioner college for short term study.

The document was signed at the 14th National General Practitioner Conference, held on November 24 to 25 in Lashio, Shan state. The conference was organised by the General Practitioner's Society of the Myanmar Medical Association.

"This is the first time for a declaration such as this and this is a milestone towards achieving our goals," said Dr Myint Oo, secretary committee for Medical Ethics at the General Practitioner's Society in Yangon.

He added, "We aim to improve general practitioner quality. We further affirm that clinical capacity and medical technology is made universally accessible to individuals, families and the community."

The Lashio Declaration calls for urgent and effective action by healthcare leaders, government policy makers, the medical profession and the community of patients to achieve this historic mission, Dr Myint Oo added.

Additionally, the document details the challenges Myanmar faces in healthcare at this time of democratic transition.

Areas of concern include

improving the quality of care while controlling costs, providing patients with a trusted point of contact in accessing the healthcare system, addressing the changing threat of both communicable and non-communicable diseases, creating better post-graduate physician training facilities and supporting specialists' ability to provide care.

"From a cost and quality perspective access to specialists is best coordinated by the referral from well-trained primary care providers. Unnecessary and untimely use of specialist services should be discouraging. We aim to help specialists improve level of care by optimising the quality of referrals," said Dr Myint Oo.

To enhance Myanmar's healthcare system and global reputation, clinical and health system research in primary care must be encouraged and promoted.

While the country has about 30,000 registered doctors, about 20,000 are general practitioners. This is due in large part to a government policy that dictates that doctors who want specialise must complete at least two years of service at a government hospital.

The idea for a general practitioner college was first proposed 12 years ago but was not supported by the government. Participants are hoping to add to the already 400 signatures they have collected on a petition to make the college a reality. Once they reach their goal of 20,000 signatures they hope to present it to President U Thein Sein.

British dig team hunts for buried Spitfires

By Robin Millard

LONDON — A British team preparing to dig for a rumoured hoard of World War II Spitfire planes in Myanmar said last week it would be one of the most fascinating discoveries in aviation archaeology if they were found.

The team believe there could be 36 of the iconic single-seat British fighter aircraft buried in sealed crates up to 10 metres (33 feet) beneath Yangon International Airport, a wartime airfield, with more at two other sites in Myanmar, they said on November 28.

Britain, the former colonial power in what was then Burma, is thought to have buried the brand new planes in 1945 as they were surplus by the time they arrived by sea.

The dig, set to start in early January, has excited military history and aviation enthusiasts around the world.

There are thought to be fewer than 50 airworthy Spitfires left in the world and the digs could potentially double their number if they remain in pristine condition.

"Eyewitnesses talk about 36 being buried in this particular spot, though we do have evidence that there might be more," project leader David Cundall told a briefing at the Imperial War Museum in London.

"They are buried at eight to 10 metres. There's no oxygen down there so we don't think they've corroded.



Project leader David Cundall says more than 36 Spitfire planes may be buried at the site. Pic: AFP

"It's like opening a can of beans at 67 years old: it's not going to be at its best but if you're hungry, you're going to eat it."

The leaders of the expedition admit that the entire project could end up being a wild goose chase, with no physical evidence that the rare Mark XIV Spitfires exist.

Cundall, a farmer and aircraft enthusiast, has been on the chase for the rumoured lost Spitfires for 16 years.

He first heard of the story from another aircraft recoverer and gathered eight eyewitnesses, including US servicemen who dug the holes and Myanmar locals who shifted teak timber to seal the crates in.

"They all pointed to the

same spot", and the same shape of hole, he said.

In a preliminary exploration, a borehole was dug which penetrated a crate and a shape that could be an aeroplane was identified.

Experts determined that there was certainly something metallic at the site and that what is under the surface is not a natural feature.

"We really need to dig it and see what's down there," Cundall said.

Belarus-based strategy game developer Wargaming.net is underwriting the project, estimated at US\$1.6 million at present.

Cundall's share of any planes found will be 30 percent, his agents will have 20pc, while the Myanmar

government will keep 50pc, according to agreements they have signed.

The planes' value is not known but the participants insisted they are not motivated by money.

All Cundall's planes will be coming back to Britain and will hopefully be restored to full working order within three years. He said his understanding was that Myanmar's Spitfires will be put up for sale.

Lead archeologist Andy Brockman said it could be "one of the most fascinating discoveries in aviation archeology", while it would help fill in the picture about the war in southeast Asia and the commitment Britain was prepared to make.

- AFP

NGO plans Sittwe HIV clinic

By Yamon Phu Thit

A MYANMAR NGO will open an HIV/AIDS clinic in Rakhine State to address shortages of anti-retroviral treatment (ART) in the area caused by communal unrest.

The Myanmar Positive Group (MPG) is planning to open a clinic in Sittwe in December, officials from the group said.

MPG is a national network for people living with HIV/AIDS. They will work jointly with Utopia Association, a local Rakhine organisation, U Than Tun, MPG's Rakhine representative told *The Myanmar Times* by phone on November 27. He added that the clinic plans to provide care to both Rakhine and Rohingya.

They aim to help people living with HIV/AIDS in Rakhine State avoid a future shortage of ART and healthcare access during times of conflict due to security concerns.

"Six people living with HIV/AIDS died due to a shortage

of ART during the unrest which started in June," U Than Tun said.

Medicins Sans Frontiers (MSF) -Holland provided healthcare and ART to people living with HIV/AIDS in Rakhine State since 1994, before they were forced to suspend working in the region when unrest flared in June.

More than 300 patients received ART from MSF. However, MSF has been unable to operate freely due to ongoing security concerns and unfounded rumours that the group was aiding the Rohingya during clashes.

Despite multiple attempts to debunk the false information, Rakhine residents will only accept treatment from reliable Rakhine and government associations, not from the MSF, according to Rakhine activists.

The MPG has been discussing their plans with Rakhine associations and plans to meet with the officials from the Rakhine community and local residents before opening the clinic. They

will work with the Rakhine Friendship Association and Wun Let Association, said U Than Tun.

"We are sure the residents will accept the opening of the clinic because the Rakhine nationalities will participate in it," he said.

They plan to open the clinic in Mi Zan ward in Sittwe where MSF tried to open their clinic. The clinic will provide services such as HIV/AIDS testing, ART and healthcare to people living with HIV/AIDS.

U Ba Swe, leader of the Utopia Association said the clinic will be funded by the association but contributions from local donors would be necessary to expand the services.

"We need people who are able to represent and speak for the people living with HIV/AIDS in Rakhine State," he said.

More than 600 people are living with HIV/AIDS in Rakhine State and about 330 patients are receiving ART while 285 patients are waiting to receive the treatment.

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Twins separated after marathon operation

By Hlaing Kyaw Soe

ONE-AND-A-HALF-YEAR-OLD twins who were conjoined at the buttocks and genitals have been separated successfully.

The operation took place at Children's Hospital in Mandalay on November 26. The operation lasted about 12 hours, said the hospital's medical superintendent Dr Aung Kyaw Myint.

"The children were in good health both before and after the operation. They were also healthy this morning except for a mild illness. Because of where they were conjoined, a delicate surgical operation had to be performed. The operation was prolonged mainly because their rectums and genitals had joined," said Dr U Aung Mya, who took part in the operation.

Ten paediatricians and nine anaesthetists operated on the twins. Post-operation care is being given by 27 doctors and 15 nurses, some travelling from Yangon.

Dr U Aung Mya said that extensive pre-operation preparation was a reason for the successful surgery, but also said that further operations would be required to normalize the conditions of the twins.

"They will undergo four or more additional operations. Because they are male, the operations will be more complicated. Urinary tract bypass surgery and colon bypass surgery are needed. Their private parts will also have to be repaired," he said.

— Translated by Thit Lwin



Twins post-surgery. Pic: supplied

Death toll rises in train fire inferno

By Phyo Wai Kyaw

THE death toll from a petrol fire in upper Myanmar's Kanbalu township has risen to about 60, with scores left injured, officials from Kanbalu Hospital said last week.

On November 9 at about 8:50am, six petrol tanks were loaded on to a train cart that departed from Myohanung railway station to Myitkyinar. The train cart was derailed near Chatkyi village in Kanbalu township, Shwebo District, Sagaing Division.

Three petrol tanks fell from the derailed train cart and one tank spilled out into an approximately 600 square-foot hole on a nearby farm. When villagers came to collect the petrol, a sudden fire left 25 dead on the spot and over 90 injured.

"As of November 26, 35 of those injured from the fire died. Therefore, we estimate a total of 60 have died. We've

released 20 patients back home after treatment and transferred 20 others to Mandalay Central Hospital," said Dr Moe Myint Win, head of Kanbalu Hospital on November 27.

"We cannot confirm the exact death toll because

'We cannot confirm the exact death toll because we don't know how many patients have died in Mandalay Central Hospital'

we don't know how many patients have died in Mandalay Central Hospital, however we have heard that some patients have died," he said.

Dr Moe Myint Win said that out of the 20 patients being treated at Kanbalu Hospital, three are in critical condition. These patients are in need of skin graft surgery, which requires long-

term care and significant funding.

The Deputy Minister for Rail Transportation U Thaung Lwin had said the train pulley connected to the derailed cart was faulty and could not keep up with speed of the train during

an interview with MRTV broadcasted on November 18. He said he did not know what caused the petrol fire.

"I have never seen an accident such as this since I started working for the Ministry of Rail Transportation in 1986. The villagers probably did not know that petrol burns easily and does not burn the same way

as diesel. Local authorities had warned the villagers to leave the field before the accident happened. We are so sorry for this unfortunate event," U Thaung Lwin said.

If donors would like to contribute to the victims, they can contact Kanbalu Hospital at 075-27013 and the head of the hospital on 09-47130770.

Bus lines in leadership struggle

By Si Thu Lwin

BUS companies in Myanchan, Mandalay district are lobbying to replace the leadership of their regional bus line association, according to sources in the industry.

The association is meant to set standard fares, provide training and in general protect the interests of the bus lines, but many in the Myanchan bus industry feel the association is falling down on the job.

"We don't like the executives of the association. Though we said we wanted to restructure it with the executives chosen by bus lines, we were not allowed. They said we have to form it with their people. This is not an ideal way. Bus lines want to re-choose it," said Ko Htut Khaing from Ngetni bus line.

Currently, the association's leadership is chosen by the regional government. Present members of the association say they want to elect new leaders because executives misappropriated money and lacked accountability.

With little progress being made, some members are resigning. Other bus lines have completely shunned the association for the same reason.

"We heard that the region level government officials would re-elect them. We are now waiting. Anyhow we are sure that we don't like present executives because of monetary scandal," a member of bus lines association told *The Myanmar Times*.

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Balloons festival celebrates Tazaungdine



A hot air balloon is launched in Pyin Oo Lwin marking Tazaungdine. Pic: Si Thu Lwin

By Si Thu Lwin

THE town of Pyin Oo Lwin marked the Tazaungdine holiday with a record number of entries in its eighth annual hot-air balloon contest, which was held November 25 to 29.

"This year there were about 90 balloons in the contest. The balloons are increasing every year but this year's increase is by far the most significant. Private school boarding houses, companies and governmental departments all entered balloons," U Kyaw Htay, a member of the balloon

contest committee, told *The Myanmar Times*.

This year 45 smaller balloons were launched during the day but the real show began when the sun set.

Twenty-seven *seinnapan* balloons, which have small lanterns attached to them, took to the night sky along with 18 balloons carrying fireworks.

Contestants came from across upper Myanmar. Sintku township, Mattayar township and Thabeikkyin township from the Pyin Oo Lwin district were all represented as was

Mandalay.

Balloon teams eagerly looked forward to this year's contest.

"Because we participate every year, we get excited as Tazaungdine nears. We were very pleased to see the balloon we launched flying into the sky," said one balloon team leader.

K3.5 million was given to the first prize of fireworks balloon category and K2 million to the first prize in the *seinnapan* balloon category.

Prizes were also awarded to photographers in night time and daytime categories.

- Translated by Thit Lwin

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Disabled racers speed to finish line

By Khin Su Wai

A TEAM of 13 disabled racers are riding from Mandalay to Nay Pyi Taw in the spirit of sport, a 322 kilometre (200 mile) ride for which they embarked on November 27.

This is the second event organised for disabled racers by the Shwe Min Thar Foundation. The team is expected to arrive in Nay Pyi Taw on December 3.

"The team is riding to Nay Pyi Taw to take part in a ceremony for International Day of People with Disability on December 3," Ma Aye Nandar Tun, assistant coordinator for the Shwe Min Thar Foundation told *The Myanmar Times*.

Five paramedics are dispatched to the race, she said.

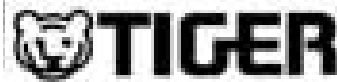
She added that the Shwe Min Thar Foundation hopes that this event will empower the racers both physically and mentally, so that the disabled in Myanmar are encouraged to pursue equal opportunities.



Disables racers en route to Nay Pyi Taw. Pic: supplied

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Development stalled at Myingyan IZ

By Sithu Lwin

INDUSTRIALISTS in Myingyan, a city and district in Myanmar's Mandalay division, say the planned development of Myingyan Industrial Zone is being blocked because the private owners of four key plots will not release them.

Plots 15 to 18 of the zone were earmarked for an electricity substation, a school, a fire station and a clinic, however there is no available land to build on.

"Regional electrical engineering director Daw Aye Aye Min has told us to build a substation for the zone. But we have no land to build it on because some businessmen have monopolised the land set aside for the development," said U Mg Mg Thein, secretary of Myingyan Industrial Zone's Peace and Supervisory Committee.

The Myingyan Industrial Zone includes 20 10,000-square-foot plots. Of these, eight plots are being used as a municipal market, one is apportioned for security, four are built as a Myaelat Yadanar Hall, two plots are developed as a communication office and one plot has been built into a compound for the Union

Solidarity and Development Party (USDP).

The four plots in question (No 15, 16, 17 and 18) are owned by private businessmen U Thant Zaw Lin, U Thein Tun Aung and U Sein Win, while one is owned by No 2 Phatsat Timber.

"The businessmen have been granted ownership over the four plots, and they are excluded from the wishes of the zone's committee and other industrialists. Now the plots have been valued at about K300 million, while the initial price was just K2 million when it was privatised," said U Kyaw Aye, chairman of the Peace and Supervisory Committee.

U Thant Zaw Lin and U Thein Tun Aung have owned the four plots since 2009, according to a letter released by Mandalay Peace and Development Council dated August 9, 2008.

Industrialists in the zone said they have asked President U Thein Sein's office to transfer the four plots back to the Myingyan Industrial Zone.

"We will have a positive result if we can submit a strong proposal to Nay Pyi Taw," said an official from Myingyan administration office. -Translated by Zar Zar Soe



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Stop police violence, says 88 Generation

Ei Ei Toe Lwin

THE 88 Generation Student Group has decried local authorities for using excessive force and taking extrajudicial measures against demonstrators in national protests.

Protestors in Letpadaung who have been angry at the confiscation of thousands of acres of farmland for the expansion of a copper mine and miners from the Moehti Moemi gold mines on a march to Nay Pyi Taw over the resettlement of wages with Myanmar National Prosperity have been especially subject to arrests and violence, the 88 Generation told *The Myanmar Times* last week.

"We want to stop violence against the current demonstrators. Local authorities are violating laws and arresting protestors in a violent way. We condemn these violent actions," said Ko Jim Me, a member of the 88 Generation, at a press conference held at their office on November 26.

"We call on the government



Ethnic students protest at their college in Mandalay earlier this month. Pic: Phyo Wai Kyaw

to stop the authorities from these actions at once, and if not we will point out their violent actions with evidence. We continue to monitor their activities," he added.

Ko Jim Me said that the six Moehti Moemi miners arrested on November 23

in Bago region's Yedashe township were subject to police violence.

"The [Moehti Moemi] protestors were not protesting in a violent way. They requested a permit to protest on Moehti Moemi Hill, but the government rejected it

and gave the reason that there were too many people participating in the protest. The government did not help them facilitate a legal protest," Ko Jim Me said.

According to Ko Htun Myint Aung, a member of the 88 Generation who

investigated the protests in Letpadaung, said that residents there have been repeatedly threatened by the authorities.

"The local authorities in Letpadaung have not solved any of the problems on time. Therefore, the discontent

of the residents grew and problems get worse with time," he said.

Members of the 88 Generation then addressed a protest at Nationality Youth Resource Development Degree College by ethnic students in Mandalay on November 24, who demonstrated after an announcement that their school would be transferred to Sagaing.

"They don't want to move to another place, and they want to stay on their compound. Although the government had already allowed them to stay on their compound before getting a decision from their president, local security forces were posted near the compound," said Kim Jo Me.

"The government should think about these people. They should not think first to solve the problem using weapons, and should give this up if they can.

"Local security forces are damaging the confidence the government is trying to build with the public. In no democracy does the government use violence to solve problems," he said.



Gold miners march in Yedashe township earlier this month. Pic: Pyae Thet Phyo

Protesting gold miners in custody

By Pyae Thet Phyo

PROTESTING gold miners were taken under police guard to a monastery and confined there, their leaders say.

The group of miners, from the Moehti Moemi mines, are marching to Nay Pyi Taw because they are unhappy at what they describe as unfair treatment and broken promises from company Myanmar National Prosperity, which won a tender to mine gold in the area in late 2011.

In June, workers from the hundreds of small mines at Moehti Moemi began protesting after Myanmar National Prosperity allegedly reneged on an earlier verbal agreement to split all gold found in the area 50-50.

On reaching Yeni township on November 27, they were escorted by local authorities to Pinyin Ma Taw monastery,

24 kilometres (15 miles) away, said labour activist U Htay.

"Taungoo police and the director of the Ministry of Mines negotiated with the protestors before the Yedashe hluttaw representative, and then the miners were sent to a monastery, 15 miles away from Yamethin. Along the way they were guarded by police. About 50 police stood guard around the monastery. The only people allowed out were those who wanted to go home," he said.

"We had planned to stay at the Yan Gyi Aung monastery in Yamethin. The monastery at Pinyin Ma Taw was donated by Myanmar National Prosperity, so we didn't feel comfortable there," said Ko Hlaing Myo Aung, a gold miner.

En route to the monastery, the miners were told not to greet or wave to passers-by and were forbidden to sing, he added.

According to an agreement already reached, negotiations will take place between the miners and Myanmar National Prosperity at Yamethin township administration office on December 3.

"Lawyers from our side will also participate in the negotiations. If we don't get a good result, we will negotiate with the Director General of the ministry, and with the minister if necessary," said Ko Hlaing Myo Aung.

The miners are also asking Taungoo police to release protestors imprisoned there since November 23 so they can take part in the talks.

Four leaders of the group and two other members were arrested near Myohla in Bago Region, about 30 kilometres south of the capital, on the old Yangon-Mandalay Highway, on November 23. -Translated by Thiri Min Htun

Auditor General probes 15 ministries over lost or misappropriated funds

By Soe Than Lynn

CORRUPT government employees should be punished, parliamentarians have demanded in a debate on the auditor-general's report.

The report showed that nearly K58.4 billion and US\$233,000 were lost due to misappropriation at 15 ministries. So far, nobody has been charged in the matter.

"One minister said he had issued an oral reprimand and a written warning on the basis of the audit. This is a token punishment, as I see it. Unless more serious action is taken, the eradication of corruption is just an empty slogan," said Ahlone representative U Khaing Maung Yi.

"People have to be accountable for mistakes. Supervisors have to take responsibility for the crimes of their staff. Now that we're on the way to democracy, we cannot allow the actions of executive bodies to hurt the president. Unless there is accountability, how can people trust the government?"

The auditor-general's report says that the money misappropriated had to be refunded by next March.

Though action had been taken against 73 officials from 47 organisations in almost half the total number of ministries, the lenient treatment meted out to them was insufficient to meet President U Thein Sein's goal of 'good governance and clean government', said Kyaukphyu representative U Ba Shein.

"The losses at the 15 ministries are huge. A total of 73 people, ranging from clerks to a managing director, have been punished," he said, adding that auditor-general's report should include recommendations about whether the punishments by ministries correspond to the law.

In second part of the report, it states that more than K10 billion were repaid by the ministries concerned after negotiation with auditor-general, but K40,951.18 and

US\$70,655.01 are outstanding.

Because ministries which are working with private businesses, such as hotels and tourism and livestock and fisheries, wait for repayment of loans from private companies, the outstanding amount is left. However they would collect and repay it to the state before March, 2013.

For the customs department, internal revenue department and Myanmar Economic Bank, no clear-cut clarifications about the punishment have been made. The hluttaw is not satisfied with this, said Pyithu Hluttaw parliamentarian Daw Nan Wah Nu of Konheing constituency.

"These adverse effects have come about due to non-existence of transparency and accountability in the past. There is a striking feature in auditor-general's report: no clarification about punishments in customs department, internal revenue department and Myanmar Economic Bank under the Ministry of Finance and Revenue except two custom officers being reprimanded. In fact, the departments which are mainly collecting revenue like these should be more transparent. It is required to not imply that 'explanation is not needed because money was repaid,'" she said.

When they learned the punishments of the ministries, they found the wording 'The last warning.' This implies that the offenders were reprimanded many times before. However there were no affective punishments; law cannot pardon offenders because of their repayment alone, she said.

"If you skim through the audit report, you will find that most administrative staff has poor moral standards, so this undermines the administrative system.

"Corruption and misuse in the ministries is as a disease that's hard to cure. But we need to have transparency while it is being cured. I want to say that leaders should think of any possible strategies to cure the disease," she told Pyihtaungsu Hluttaw.

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Rakhine tourism suffers following violence

But Ngapali bookings remain strong and rest of country unaffected by communal conflict, say travel operators

By Yu Yu Maw

ALTHOUGH hopes of developing tourism in Rakhine State suffered a blow as last month's clashes prompted the cancellation of tour packages in the strife-torn area, the tourist industry has seen few or no ill-effects for the country as a whole.

Travel to Ngapali, for instance, seems to be unaffected. A spokesperson for the Pleasant View Hotel in Ngapali Beach said the hotel was 80 percent booked from November to the first week of January. Most of the guests were foreigners.

However, many travel companies have cancelled planned tours to other parts of the state following an outbreak of fighting in the region in October that led to the deaths of 87 people. More than 200 people have died in fighting between Buddhists and Muslims since June, according to the government.

"There was no official announcement [from the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism]. But everybody knows tourists will not be safe there in this situation, so [companies] cancelled programs," said U Khin Maung Htun, a director of the Myanmar Tourism Federation.

Alternative tours are being offered instead.

U Khin Maung Htun said the violence came shortly after the regional government had requested the federation's help to promote tourism in the area.

He said the federation was asked to draw up plans to promote tourism in Sittwe, Mrauk-Oo, Thandwe (Ngapali), Munaung, Ramree and Kyaukpyu townships. "It will be difficult to develop tourism in this situation but we will carry on when things become stable and we can guarantee safety," he added.

U Soe Myint of Rendez-Vous International Travel said his company was no longer offering a package for Rakhine State, despite frequent requests from tourists.

A spokesman for another tour company said: "It's not easy to ask tourists to visit somewhere else instead of Mrauk-Oo. It's a very popular destination, and we get lots of inquiries about it."

The Ministry of Hotels and Tourism restricted travel to Mrauk-Oo, Sittwe and elsewhere in September, but lifted the restriction in October – just ahead of the latest outbreak of violence.

"[Earlier this month] we started to receive emails from some of our tour operators regarding travel advisories for Rakhine State issued by their governments in Germany, Switzerland and the UK. We keep potential passengers informed of the situation since the



A man walks in front of a temple at Mrauk-Oo. Pic: Douglas Long

ultimate decision-maker is the customer," said U Phyo Wai Yar Zar, managing director of All Asia Exclusive Travel.

"Destination management companies have lost one destination, and it will take at least a year to convince tour operators to feature trips to Rakhine State once the situation has been normalised," he said.

He said some of his clients

who are concerned for their security have cancelled trips to Rakhine State and other areas of Myanmar should be promoted in their place.

"We are now facing a situation to find alternative destinations, but this is quite difficult due to the limited infrastructure, such as hotels and domestic flights," he said. "Usually, Rakhine is a secondary destination and we use it to

balance the load of visitors in the classic destinations (Yangon, Bagan, Mandalay and Inle Lake). Since it is partially shut off, I would say that the situation in Rakhine would not be helpful for us to ease the load in the other destinations. We need to urgently introduce destinations like southern Chin State and Mon State as alternatives."

He said the situation would not cause a drop in national arrival numbers, as only a few thousand tourists visit Sittwe and Mrauk Oo each year.

"This situation is nothing new for the tourism industry of Myanmar ... we should not panic and make too much noise about this situation. On the contrary, we should monitor the situation and give the true facts to clients in a timely manner and put our efforts into resurrecting [Rakhine State as a] destination as soon as it has become normalised," he added.

U Thet Lwin Toh, managing director of Myanmar Voyage Travel and Tours, said the company was concerned that clients, particularly from Russia, would cancel packages that include Ngapali, even though the beach destination has been unaffected by the violence.

"So far we have no cancellations due to the Rakhine situation. But we hope peace is restored there soon," he said.

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Experts warn Yangon on quake risk

By Htar Htar Khin

EARTHQUAKE experts have expressed "deep concern" that many buildings in Yangon might not survive even a small quake. At particular risk are high-rises built between 1990 and 2000, when safety standards were poor, they say.

A survey of damage from the November 11 quake at Shwebo found that buildings there had been soundly constructed, helping to minimise damage and casualties in the 6.8 magnitude event.

However, a total of 26 people were killed in the quake.

But U Soe Thura Tun, the secretary of Myanmar Earthquake Committee (MEC), said "soft-storey" buildings, where the open ground floor was used for parking or commercial premises, were at risk. There are many such buildings in Yangon.

The quake at Shwebo and Thabeikkyin was near the Sagaing fault at the centre of the earthquake zone. Though the standard of construction was generally high, low-rise buildings were at risk because of poor-quality steel in their support columns, or there were too few columns,

he said.

"Many buildings in Yangon have ground floors of the hall type, meant for parking spaces, like the buildings in the quake zone. From an engineering point of view, this is structurally safe. But that kind of soft-storey building can collapse when an earthquake occurs because of lateral forces. This happened to many houses in Shwebo and Thabeikkyin because the open ground floor was used as a grocery shop," said U Soe Thura Tun.

Concrete wall slabs were also likely to fall in the event of a quake, he said. "Another cause of the destruction in Shwebo was the collapse of wall slabs because of insufficient strength," he said.

Thanks to earthquake-resistant measures brought in by the MEC and the Committee for the Quality Control of High-Rise Building Projects (CQHP), buildings of eight storeys and higher in Yangon constructed since 2003 are considered safer. Since 2010, Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC) has mandated earthquake-resistant design in buildings of three storeys and above.

However, he said many buildings in Yangon, both high- and low-rise, were



Villagers recover at a makeshift clinic in Thabeikkyin earlier this month. Pic: Kaung Htet

still at risk and should be checked. "The buildings should be structurally tested and retrofitted as necessary," U Soe Thura Tun said.

He warned that buildings that went up between 1990 and 2000 were a matter of "deep concern".

"That was a boom period for construction. Some of the blocks were built without a structural engineer, or by fake contractors. Most buildings of this type in Yangon are located in Sanchaung and Tarmwe townships. It's time to check their structure and design," he said.

"Column strength can be detected only through specialised testing. But some wall slabs are so weak even hammering a nail into the wall could cause collapse," he said, adding that some Yangon buildings even had cracks caused by the 2004 earthquake in Indonesia. "Even a small quake of magnitude 5 would be quite risky. The need to check is urgent," he said.

"My suggestion is to form third-party organisations with lawyers to supervise the testing to ensure transparency. Their findings

can then be checked by YCDC," he said.

"What we learned [in Shwebo] is that structurally sound buildings can withstand a 6.8 magnitude quake, thus reducing damage and casualties. Another point is the need for earthquake awareness, so people know what to do," he said.

A small quake in Yangon could not be ruled out. "The Sagaing fault produces high-magnitude quakes at long intervals. But the Taikkyi fault in northern Yangon region can create small quakes of about 3

to 4 magnitude, and the Dedaye fault can produce magnitude 6 events. There has already been a small quake at Taikkyi this year," said U Soe Thura Tun.

"Quakes at Taikkyi in 1997-1998 of less than magnitude 5 caused cement slabs to fall from buildings in Sanchaung and Hledan," he added.

He said the Earthquake Committee was compiling a map showing the potential for quakes throughout the country. People concerned about their building could check with a specialist structural engineer and make other preparations. Residents of high-rises built between 1990 and 2000 should pay particular attention to walls, staircases and emergency stairs.

U Lazarus, managing director of Yadanar Shwe Htun Construction in Botahtaung township, said the safety of buildings constructed before 2000 was a major concern. "Blocks that went up between 1988 and 1995 are structurally weak. Construction quality is poor because of the use of low-grade iron rods and poor concrete slabs. These types of buildings are mostly located in Yangon. There is a very high risk of collapse during an earthquake," he said.



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Executive Diary 2013

President U Thein Sein to receive ICG top award

Tim McLaughlin

PRESIDENT U Thein Sein will be presented the International Crisis Group's top award at a ceremony on April 22 in New York City. He will be honoured during the ICG's annual In Pursuit of Peace Award Dinner along with former Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

The award, which is being presented for its eighth year, is given to recognise individuals who are working towards peace and bringing an end to deadly conflict worldwide.

"At a time when so much of the world seems to be headed in the wrong direction, Myanmar and Brazil stand out as clear examples of presidents working for a better path for their people", said Thomas Pickering, chair of the International Crisis Group in a statement released on November 26.

Since making the transition from military to civilian leader in March 2011, President U Thein Sein has enacted rapid and widespread reforms. The steps towards democratisation and economic openness have been lauded by the international community.

"Myanmar has initiated a remarkable and unprecedented set of reforms since President Thein Sein's government took

over in March 2011, including freeing hundreds of political prisoners, liberalising the press and promoting dialogue with the main opposition party," said ICG President Louise Arbour of his short time in office.

Former president Lula of Brazil, who served from 2003 to 2010, is widely recognised as a driving force behind Brazil's social and economic growth that, according to the ICG, was responsible for "taking millions out of poverty."

The awards are the culmination of "an internal process that takes many months" according to Jim Della-Giacoma, South East Asia Project Director at ICG. He added that there was not a singular event that guaranteed President U Thein Sein the honour, but rather his collective efforts since assuming leadership of Myanmar's quasi-civilian government.

"There is no one particular moment, but under his leadership the country has become a very different place than anyone would have imagined two years ago after the flawed November 2010 elections," he said.

While President U Thein Sein and chairperson of the National League for Democracy Daw Aung San Suu Kyi were ranked jointly by *Foreign Policy* as number one in their Top 100 Global Thinkers list on November 26 in



Presidents U Thein Sein and Barack Obama at their historic meeting in Yangon on November 19. Pic: Kaung Htet

what is becoming a trend of dual recognition for reforms, Mr Della-Giacoma said that the group did not consider honouring both.

"President U Thein Sein is being honoured for his leadership in leading the country away from its authoritarian past. Clearly, though, his relationship with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in traversing current and future challenges as Myanmar continues its transition will continue to be of vital importance," Mr Della-Giacoma told *The Myanmar Times* by email.

The award is not without its

detractors who have criticised it as premature. Journalist and author Bertil Lintner and Khin Ohmar, chairperson of the Network for Democracy and Development, both slammed the decision by the ICG in an article published by *Asia Correspondent* for ignoring ongoing ethnic and minority mistreatment and human rights abuses within Myanmar.

"To give him a 'peace prize' is outright stupid and just shows how naive ICG is in its assessments of the situation in Burma," said Mr Lintner in the article.

Mr Della-Giacoma explained that while the award acknowledges the fundamental role that President U Thein Sein has played in the country's transition, the ICG is well aware of the issues that still persist.

"...We will be looking to President Thein Sein and the Myanmar leadership to address these ongoing challenges in a manner that advances, and doesn't hinder, the transition process. Every effort must be made to ensure that Myanmar's ethnic conflicts are brought to a satisfactory end, which recognises the important role all of those groups must have in the country's future," Mr Della-Giacoma said of what needs to be done.

Last week, images of severely burned monks, torched encampments and uniformed military turning water cannons on peaceful protestors at the Monywa copper mine provided an unwanted glimpse back into an authoritarian Myanmar that many had hoped was gone forever.

"As this week's violent break-up of the copper mine protest demonstrates, Myanmar has a long way to go before the vestiges of its recent ugly past have disappeared. But we believe that the President is determined to ensure that they will indeed disappear," said Mr Della-Giacoma.

Dawei SEZ sparks concern amid promises

By Ei Ei Toe Lwin

THE prospect of the development of the port of Dawei, on the Andaman Sea, has attracted significant international and regional attention. The project could turn Dawei into a vital hub for trade and industry in Southeast Asia and beyond. But it has also brought a warning—from residents in neighbouring Thailand who say a similar development has devastated their community and their health.

The projected Dawei Deep Seaport and Special Economic Zone is in Nabule village tract, Ye Phyu township, Tanintharyi Region. The governments of Myanmar and Thailand signed an agreement launching the project on May 19, 2008, granting the Italian-Thai Development company a 75-year concession to develop the area. The initial investment total is estimated at US\$8.6 billion.

The project comprises three phases, to be carried out over a period of about 10 years, from 2010 to 2019.

During this period, the area will be transformed. Now home to rubber plantation workers and fishing communities, it will become a special economic zone comprising a deep-sea port linked by road to Thailand. The proposed plan includes a 160-kilometre long super highway to be constructed from the Thai-Myanmar border to the SEZ. A high-speed railway, electric grid, oil and gas pipelines, a fertiliser and petrochemical plant, a steel mill, and dockyard are also slated for construction.

The SEZ is planned to be 204.51 square kilometres

in total.

Since the signing of the original agreement, progress slowed because of a lack of funds. But President U Thein Sein has agreed with Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra to accelerate the project. On November 7, Vice President U Nyan Tun and Thai Deputy Prime Minister Kittiratt Na-Ranong reaffirmed the plan and announced an acceleration within three or four months.

This process is being closely watched by some on the other side of the Thai border. Sitting under a shady tree in his compound, Mr Loong Noi recounted his bitter experience over 30 years.

"During that time I lost my land and many members of my family," he said. Mr Loong, 71, once lived happily on his extensive farm with the 12 members of his family. That was before the coming of the Mab Ta Phut industrial zone and its petrol-chemical industry in Thailand's Rayong province.

"I continued to plant in my garden but the crops failed because of polluted water and heavy metals. And six members of my family died of cancer," said Mr Loong.

As at Dawei, most of the residents of Mab Ta Phut before the development were engaged in farming and fisheries.

Mab Ta Phut Industrial Estates comprises five major estates, with industries ranging from oil refineries, gas separation plants, petrochemical works, metal foundries and power plants. There are 109 large factories in and around the site.

The developments were supposed to bring higher income and a better life.

However, local residents said their hopes were dashed when the negative impact of the project began to emerge.

"We didn't protest against this project because we didn't receive any information about it," said Mr Udon, 66, a village administrator in Mab Ta Phut.

Within 10 years of the launching of the project, local residents were complaining of the increased incidence of cancer, failing crops and declining fish yields.

"Factories throw their hazardous waste into the sea, into the air and other places. We are afraid of eating seafood caught near the industrial estate," said Mr Udon.

The government health department has confirmed the presence of volatile

at three times the rate of other provinces, but was reluctant to attribute the health problems to the impact of Mab Ta Phut Industrial Estate.

"It is difficult to say all the health problems are caused by this estate. We have to take into account other sources, farmers who overuse fertiliser, or migrants who come to work in the estate, legally or illegally. But it is true that over the past 20 years, cancer rates have risen. Men get lung cancer and women get breast cancer," said Mr Thanmanoon.

"We're addressing the health problems," he said. "The government has budgeted more money for Mab Ta Phut than for other provinces. On the other hand,

is transparency and the circulation of real information about the project," said U Ohn, vice president of the Forest Resources and Environment Development Association (FREDA).

"We may need the special economic zone for the sake of economic development, but at the same time we need to think about the effects on the environment and social welfare. The Foreign Direct Investment Law has been enacted, but the relevant by-laws of the Environmental Law have not. So what laws will prevent irresponsible investment?"

The area around Dawei has already become the focus of intense interest by developers and real estate brokers, which has led to complicated issues with local residents. The SEZ will directly affect 18 villages, comprising 3984 households and 4075 families, accounting for a population of 23,120 who will have to relocate.

"We don't want to move," said Ko Lay Lwin who lives in Nabule village tract.

"We get enough income from the rubber plantation. We don't think this project will create a better life for us. Even if we get reasonable compensation, it will take a long time to stabilise our lives," he added.

U Zaw Aung, a researcher based in Thailand, said both governments should take into account the rights of the local people.

"Local residents were excluded from the mindset of policy makers," he said.

Economic experts said the government would implement SEZs while balancing economic and social needs with the protection of the environment, in cooperation with civil society.

"I continued to plant in my garden but the crops failed because of polluted water and heavy metals."

organic compounds in Mab Ta Phut, as well as the contamination by heavy metals of well and ground water since 1998.

"Now we buy our water," said Ms Patcharee, who lives in Chak Luk Ya, eight kilometres from Mab Ta Phut. "Open well water smells bad. We're even afraid to be out in the rain, because the chemicals in the rainwater cause skin disease," said Ms Patcharee, showing her diseased skin.

Public health expert Mr Thanmanoon Achariyamat, of the Office of Occupational and Environmental Diseases in the province's Health Department, agreed that local residents suffer cancer

government monitoring of violations of environmental law by industry is weak," he added.

Mab Ta Phut's economic importance has outweighed the protests of local residents. But then came the idea of Dawei.

According to the *New York Times* of November 27, 2011, the then Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva said: "There are some industries not suitable to be located in Thailand, which is why we decided to move them to Dawei."

Concerned groups in Myanmar have already begun to focus on the consequences.

"What's important

"Civil society is the strength of the state, not an anti-development group. We need to cooperate with them in the process of implementation," U Set Aung, Deputy Union Minister for National Planning and the Economy told a workshop on Thilawa SEZ in Yangon in late October.

Local residents in Mab Ta Phut said they had heard some industries in the industrial zone there were moving to Dawei.

"We felt sorry when we heard this news. I want to inform and advise the people of Myanmar and of Dawei not to allow any project there without full information. It's not enough just to believe the developer," said Mr Loong. "I hope Dawei won't become a second Mab Ta Phut."

Dawei Development Association (DDA) was set up by local residents to collect information about the project and raise public awareness.

"We expect to come under more pressure to relocate and we will face more difficulties in the negotiation process. The government will have to listen to us, otherwise it won't be democratic," said DDA member Ko Ye Lin Myint.

U Tin Maung Swe, chairman of the Support Group for the Deep Sea Port and Special Economic Zone, said: "People have criticised this project because of the chemical industries and their fears of the effect on the environment and the social structure. We won't accept any investment that could have a negative impact. We want labour-intensive industries that can produce value-added local products. We're always thinking about the public interest."

On the road to recovery

IN DEPTH
with
Tim McLaughlin



A CAR and the open road may evoke images of unbound freedom but the weathered streets of Yangon could hardly be described as open. It's a scene residents will know well: Amid the din of busted mufflers and shrieking horns, taxis jostle for position alongside ancient buses and rickety trishaws. Frequent religious parades add to the stop-start traffic flow, which is quickly becoming one of the city's defining features.

For U Talky, a former political prisoner, the traffic snarls are a vast improvement from the deplorable prisons in which he spent half a decade.

After two stints in jail, totalling five years, he found entrepreneurial inspiration on Yangon's streets, forming the Golden Harp Taxi Network in January.

Before he got behind the wheel, U Talky's full-time occupation was political activist. As he quickly found out, it is a job that in Myanmar can carry serious consequences. He was first arrested in 1990, spending two years in Yangon's Insein Prison before being released.

Undeterred, he returned to his political causes. He was detained again in 2007 in a round-up of activists after the protests in September of that year and was not released until 2010.

After leaving prison, U Talky struggled to find work. Employers were unnerved by his past in political activism and fearful that

even be associated with him could have undesirable repercussions at a time when no one was ever quite sure who might be listening.

"They are very afraid," U Talky said of his potential employers. "They were not accepting of me."

His family helped him get by but life was hard and money short. Then in January, after saving K600,000 (about US\$700), U Talky had enough money to rent a taxi. He soon reconnected with two other former activists who had both spent time in jail, U Bobo and U Shell. The latter spent 14 years in prison, the longest of the three.

The group now drive clients, mostly foreign visitors, around Yangon, to meetings in Nay Pyi Taw and even up to Mandalay. Every month, each driver contributes K15,000 to the Golden Harp Fund, with the aim of building up enough money to extend another loan to a former political prisoner so they can rent a taxi.

"I hope that in 2013 I can add two more taxis and drivers," said U Talky. "These jobs can upgrade the lives of other former political prisoners."

Before last week, there were thought to be almost 300 political prisoners still in jail. Prior to the arrival of United States President Barack Obama, 452 prisoners were freed under an amnesty on November 15, but the release was criticised by rights groups as none were believed to be political prisoners.

Four days later, on the day of Mr Obama's arrival, another 66 prisoners were freed and this time the majority were individuals jailed for political activities,



Former political prisoner U Talky behind the wheel of his taxi last month. Pic: Nyein Maung

including well-known democracy activist U Myint Aye, and members of Military Intelligence.

In September, President U Thein Sein freed 514 prisoners before heading to the US to address the United Nations General assembly. Hundreds of political prisoners regained their freedom in large amnesties in October 2011 and January.

While these steps have been lauded both domestically and abroad, they have resulted in former prisoners, like U Talky, U Bobo and U Shell, hitting the streets with little assistance towards

– and in some cases, hope of – rebuilding the careers and relationships that were put on hold for years.

"Political prisoners are basically confronted with an open prison once they are released. Much of the restrictions former political prisoners face comes from the fact that they are released with criminal records hanging around their neck," said a spokesperson from the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma), or AAPP, a non-profit monitoring group that campaigns on behalf of the prisoners.

The AAPP was formed in March 2000 by former political prisoners and is based in neighbouring Thailand.

"It is as if former political prisoners are being punished twice - first, upon their arrest, and second, upon the restrictions they face when released," the spokesperson added.

Lack of job prospects are compounded by physical and mental health ailments that developed during – and often as a result of – their time in prison.

"The lingering effects of torture, years of isolation,

'Political prisoners are basically confronted with an open prison once they are released.'

and inhumane conditions, do not disappear once a political prisoner is released. Former political prisoners are often plagued with bouts of depression, loneliness, guilt, and other symptoms related to post-traumatic stress disorder,"

the AAPP spokesperson said.

The situation is improving, albeit slowly. AAPP, for example, plans to begin offering counselling to former prisoners with the help of medical professionals from US-based Johns Hopkins University. U Talky speaks of plans to expand Golden Harp to six drivers and set up a shop selling handicrafts and other products made by former political prisoners. But the government has yet to detail any plans to help reintegrate those they imprisoned for political reasons after their release, AAPP said.

"The successful reintegration of former political prisoners into society is an issue of enormous scale – most of former political prisoners are unemployed and living in poverty," the spokesperson said. "The government has chosen to ignore this problem."

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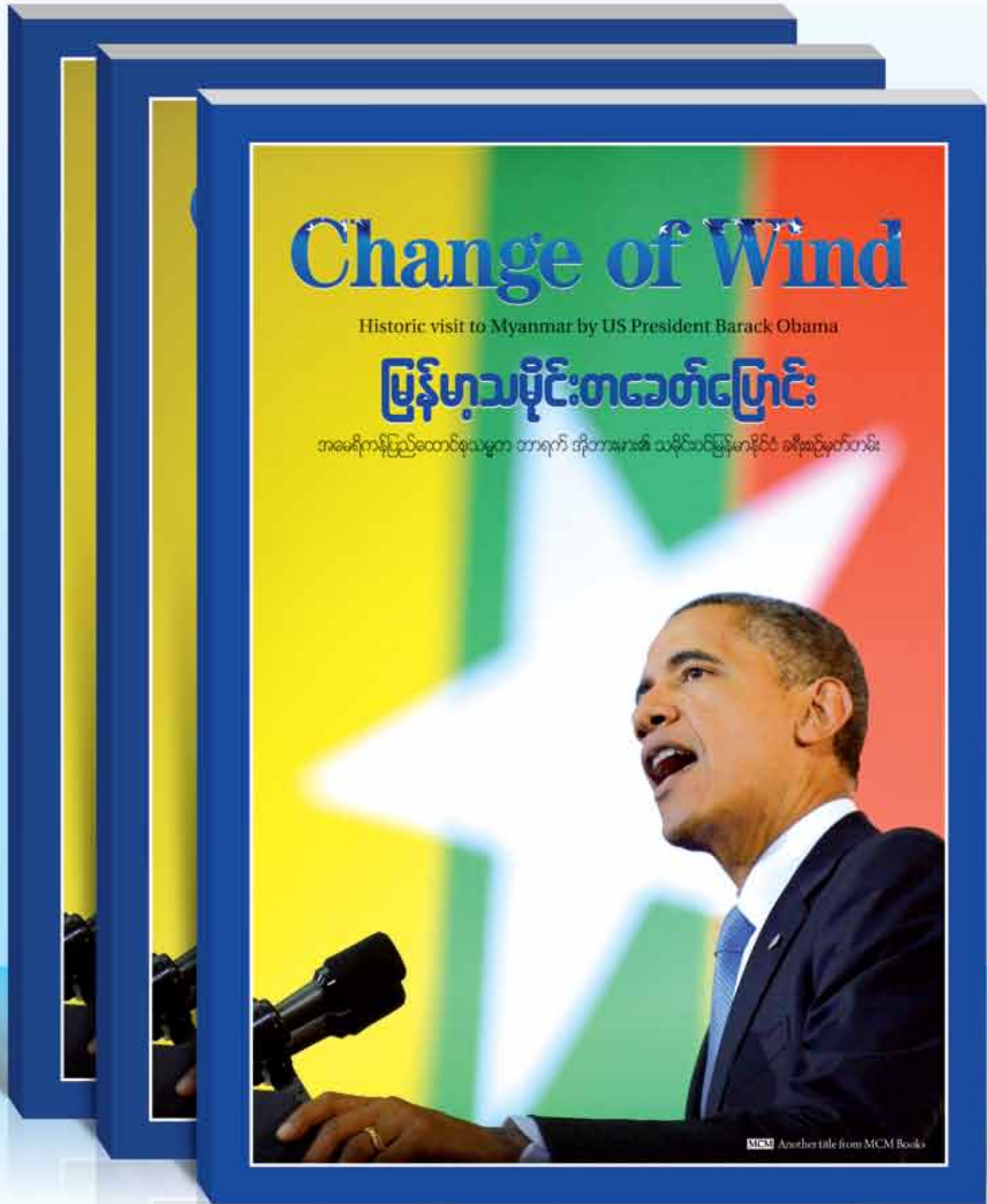
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မြန်မာ့စာပေရွှေဘုံ

More bank cards join payment union

By Aye Thidar Kyaw

HOLDERS of Japanese Credit Bureau and China Union Pay bank cards will be able to use them in Myanmar by early 2013 following the signing of agreements with the Myanmar Banks Association last week.

JCB completed its deal with the association on November 23, and CUP followed suit the next day; both agreements were made at the association's head office in Yankin township in Yangon.

Holder of international bank cards with agreements with either CUP or JCB will be able to use them in the automatic teller machines of the 17 private banks that are members of the Myanmar Payment Union (MPU), a press release on Asia Green Development Bank's (AGD) Facebook page said. Myanmar Payment Union secretary U Ye Min Oo is also a spokesperson for AGD.

Several bankers said that even though Myanmar has mostly relied on a cash economy since the 2003 banking crisis, the sector needs to reform and modernise in order to offer better service to foreigners who will visit for the Southeast Asian Games in December 2013 and the chairing of ASEAN in 2014.

"These cards will be able to be used at wide range of banks under the MPU," said U Mya



Japan Credit Bureau officials address journalists at a ceremony to sign an agreement on the use of its payment system at the Myanmar Banks Association on November 23. Pic: Aye Thidar Kyaw

Than, vice chairman of the MPU's management committee.

After the United States eased its financial sanctions on Myanmar, domestic banks are more easily able to form relationships with international banks, leaving them better able to provide services for foreign visitors, he said.

JCB is a major global payment

brand and a leading credit card issuer in Japan, a company press release says. The company launched its card business in Japan before expanding worldwide in 1981. Its acceptance network includes more than 22 million merchants and more than one million cash advance locations in 190 countries and territories, the press release says.

It added that there is a growing demand for acceptance of payment cards from business visitors and tourists coming to Myanmar, and the bureau anticipates the increasing need for local credit cards to be issued to Myanmar residents due to rapid economic growth and rise in national income.

CUP is an association for China's

banking card industry and operates under the approval of the People's Bank of China. It was launched in 2002, and cards under the union can be used in 104 countries, its website says.

U Ye Min Oo said both payment systems will be in use by February or March.

"We need to make users familiar with the system by the start of the SEA Games," he said, adding that the union will charge a 2- or 3-percent fee for each transaction.

He said providing the services would benefit participating banks in a number of ways.

"The first advantage is that we can sell more of our services and products. The second is that it better promotes our country because when foreigners have come to Myanmar in the past they have had to bring lots of cash and exchange it at counters that do not operate 24 hours a day.

"But cards can be used any time they want," he said.

JCB International's senior vice president Yusuke Matsui said the bureau will cooperate with MPU to run special event in Myanmar over 2013 and 2014, and it plans to provide further services, such as issuing cards and credit cards to Myanmar citizens.

"We are trying to build up these services and discussing what we can do with MPU officials on what are the best solutions," he said.

ADB study puts spotlights Myanmar's energy sector

By Justin Heifetz

MYANMAR has significant potential energy resources but lacks the capital and regulatory framework needed to develop them, an initial assessment by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) shows.

ADB's Energy Sector Initial Assessment, released on November 27, suggests that Myanmar can benefit from oil and gas exploration, as well as harnessing the energy of geothermal and other renewable energy sources.

The assessment shows that the country's largest potential energy resources are hydropower and natural gas.

"Natural gas is Myanmar's

most important source of export earnings and the oil and gas subsector accounts for a third of total foreign direct investment in Myanmar," the assessment says.

"According to the Myanmar Investment Commission, as of September 2011, a total of 60 investment projects had been approved for the oil and gas subsector, totaling US\$13.2 billion," the assessment says.

However, the ADB says that energy development in Myanmar has been limited by a number of factors, including insufficient capital.

"Myanmar's energy sector has suffered from decades of underinvestment, and only one in four people currently have electricity access," said Anthony Jude,

director of the energy division in ADB's Southeast Asia Department.

"As Myanmar continues to open up there is a remarkable opportunity to utilise domestic energy resources to power the country's development, but it's essential that strong, enforceable environmental and social safeguards be firmly in place."

The ADB assessment also cites a lack of qualified personnel, poor legal and regulatory frameworks and a lack of coordination planning among Myanmar's seven energy-related government ministries as an impediment to developing the country's energy sector.

The assessment says that Myanmar's energy sector could benefit from

international investment in medium- and long-term planning; rehabilitation works in power generation, transmission, and distribution; and building gas-fuelled power plants in Yangon.

The assessment further says the construction of a 500KV transmission line from upper Myanmar to Yangon; an integrated, comprehensive plan for hydropower development; and the rehabilitation and upgrading of coal- and gas-fired generation plants, refineries, and natural gas pipelines.

"Clearly, strengthening Myanmar's energy sector is critical to reducing poverty and enhancing the medium- and long-term development

prospects of the country.

"Electrification is an urgent requirement, without which whole areas of the country will be severely hampered in their efforts to advance economically. Social progress also depends on electrification, without which health, education, and other

essential services inevitably suffer," the assessment says.

Myanmar's per capita electricity consumption is among the lowest in Asia. Electrification rates range from 67 percent in Yangon to as little as 16pc in rural areas.

Tata Motors keen to enter car market

BANGKOK – Land Rover vehicles in the hundreds have found their way into Myanmar over the past year as the country has opened up. Jaguar Land Rover's partner for Southeast Asia is laying the groundwork for its first official foray into the territory. Dale Jones, chief executive officer of Guava International said discussions are under way with three potential dealership partners in Myanmar and official sales should begin in 2013.

"Everyone's trying to understand what is the right way to compete, how do you set up business. The market is changing very quickly. We see that as an excellent opportunity," Mr Jones said.

Jaguar Land Rover is owned by Tata Motors Ltd.

Following the recent suspension of Western economic sanctions the country is becoming a magnet for overseas firms.

The government started a "cars for clunkers" system late last year, allowing people to trade in old cars for licences allowing them to buy models built no earlier than 1995. Guava International, which operates Jaguar Land Rover sales and services across more than 60 countries in Europe, Asia and Africa, has seen sales in Thailand this year outperform overall growth in the luxury car sector.

Year-on-year sales of the high-end Range Rover model are up 60 percent compared to an estimated 15 to 20pc growth for the sector overall. With a new Range Rover model for Thailand announced at the motor show on November 28, Guava projects year-on-year sales in 2013 will increase 30pc, meaning total retail sales of between 200 and 250 units.

Jones declined to give a sales target for Myanmar, but he said Vietnam is also a future bright spot for the

luxury sports utility vehicle, despite a slowdown in sales this year.

"We see the forecasts for the next three years continuing to grow significantly," said Jones. "With new products and the economic growth, we see growth surpassing 30pc. Jaguar Land Rover's gaze is focused upon Southeast Asia in general in light of the ASEAN Economic Community due to come into effect at the end of 2015.

"With the elimination of the trade barriers around all ASEAN markets, it will make Jaguar Land Rover look to the region to see if we should be having manufacturing capacity, be taking advantage of this large, single free-trade market," Mr Jones said.

"I can't answer for Jaguar Land Rover, but I know there are studies at this point to understand the market and be able to understand what is the best action to take. I would expect positive things." – Reuters

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FMI plots bright future at AGM

By Aye Thidar Kyaw

FIRST Myanmar Investment Co plans to bolster its finances and expand its projects in the coming year, attendees at the firm's annual general meeting were told on November 22.

Chairman U Theim Wai overviewed the company's activities in the 2011-12 financial year at the meeting, which was held at the National Theatre in Yangon.

He said FMI had investments in six sectors – financial services, automobiles, real estate, agriculture, manufacturing and services – in the year, adding that the company had closed its

Wood Technology Industries in the manufacturing sector.

U Theim Wai said the company's real estate businesses contributed K1.5 billion (about US\$1.77 million) in dividends to the company – about 87 percent of total revenues for the year. He added that the company's agriculture divisions look promising for the coming year.

Meanwhile, SPA Elevators won contracts to install six escalators at the west entrance of Shwedagon Pagoda, plus seven elevators at Star City and Pun Hlaing Golf Estate, which U Theim Wai said the company expects will be a growth sector in years to come.

"The rapid changes in the economic climate underpinned by the political changes is no doubt putting considerable pressure on the need for us to substantially increase our financial capacity in order to take advantage of the opportunities that are emerging," he said.

He said that as part of its medium-term planning, a functioning Myanmar stock exchange will emerge in 2015 and FMI has approximately three years to prepare.

"We have been one of the few companies in the past 20 years to have our own over-the-counter [OTC] trading facilities for our shares, and that has served our

shareholders well. But we will need to elevate that to a higher level when we join the Myanmar stock exchange," he said.

"Therefore, FMI is preparing for this in a serious and orderly manner," he added.

U Theim Wai said the company would pay a dividend of about K1500 a share.

The company also announced that it would participate in some major projects in coming years, including the \$350-million redevelopment of the Grand Mee Ya Hta site in downtown Yangon (see full story on pages 28 and 29).

FMI also signed an agreement with Parksons Department Store group on August 17 that will see the companies open the brand's first store in Yangon on the first four floors of FMI Centre on Bogyoke Aung San Road. The store is expected to open in March next year.

The company also launched FMI Air Charter Company in partnership with SPA Myanmar on September 10, offering air shuttles between Yangon and Nay Pyi Taw, U Theim Wai said.

"For now, it is only an air charter business on one route but we intend to establish our own airline to develop a nationwide air charter business in the coming years," he said. "I am pleased to report that our application for our own chartered airline license has already received approval in principal and I anticipate that we will be operating fully by the next financial year.

"Many of our entities in the group have signed up for the Global Compact program initiated by the United Nations. This program is to encourage businesses to uphold human rights, labour standards, environment and anti-corruption," he said.

Yoma Bank regained its full banking license on August and plans to resume banking facilities soon, he said. Yoma was one of four banks that were accused by money laundering in 2003 and had its license suspended.



FMI announced on August 17 that it had formed an agreement with Parksons Department Store to open a branded outlet at FMI Centre in Yangon. Pic: Yadanar

Thailand to surpass India as top rice shipper

BANGKOK – Thailand is set to overtake India as the world's largest rice exporter as the nation accelerates sales from state stockpiles, adding to record global supplies, according to the International Rice Research Institute.

Shipments from India may drop to as low as 7 million tonnes in the year that began October 1, said Samarendu Mohanty, a senior economist. Exports including the aromatic basmati variety more than tripled to 10.4 million tonnes the previous year, said the US Department of Agriculture. Thailand plans to ship 8.5 million tonnes in 2013 from 7.3 million tonnes this year, according to the Department of Foreign Trade.

Rising Thai supplies may increase competition among Asian producers and pressure prices that have risen 1 percent in Chicago this year. A decline in the staple for half the world may further lower food costs that the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation estimates dropped 0.9pc in October from a six-month high. Global opening stockpiles for 2012-13 will climb to the highest in a decade, the USDA says.

"Thailand has little choice but to release stocks and that will probably lead to lower prices," Concepcion Calpe, a senior economist at the FAO, said from Rome. "There will be growing competition from less important rice-supplying countries, such as Brazil, Russia, Egypt and Australia in the export markets, which will tend to reduce prices in 2013."

Thailand's stockpiles are poised to climb to a record 12.1 million tonnes by the end of 2012-13 from 9.8 million tonnes a year earlier, the USDA estimates. The country will be forced to sell some of the rice it bought from farmers to make space for the new harvest, said Mohanty.

"High stockpiles may force Thailand to sell rice at a cheaper rate in the global market," Mohanty said. "The world market is already flooded with rice and if Thailand sells below cost, that will weaken prices further."

Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra implemented a price-support policy to boost incomes of farmers who helped her Pheu Thai party win an election last year. The government guaranteed as much as 15,000 baht (US\$489) a tonne for unmilled white rice, about 50pc more than local market rates, and 20,000 baht for a higher-quality variety.

India is set to export 7.25 million tonnes in 2012-13 and Thailand will ship 8 million tonnes, USDA data show. Vietnam may sell 7 million tonnes, becoming the third-biggest shipper.

– Bloomberg News

MPT backtracks on mobile internet fees, for now

By Htoo Aung

THE fee structure for mobile phone internet connections will remain in place until the end of December after a backlash against the proposed changes from users, a government said last week.

U Thein Oo, general manager of Myanma Posts and Telecommunications (MPT), said the proposed changes to the fee structure, which had been due to start on December 1, would be pushed back to January and recalculated.

"After holding a press conference [on November 30], we had to report back to our management," he said.

"We will recalculate prices during this month, so the changes will not arrive until next month," he said.

U Htay Win, chief engineer of MPT's Mobile Department, said: "The previous announcement has been cancelled."

MPT had previously announced that a new, three-tiered pricing structure for mobile-based internet usage, replacing the existing scheme that charges users by the minute at either K2 for GSM connections or K4 for WCDMA and CDMA lines.

Mobile-based internet connections have proven highly popular with users – an MPT official said 96 percent of the country's 600,000 internet connections are made via mobile phones.

Ko Kyaw Kyaw, a 28-year-old IT officer, said: "I'm so glad to hear this news because if MPT uses a volume-based fee system, it is going to be more expensive. But we will have to wait and see what pricing system

MPT chooses to use in future," he said.

Under the proposed changes users would have been charged for the amount of bandwidth they used, with additional monthly fee as well as penalties for using more than their allowed bandwidth. Users on Plan A would be charged K2 for every 100KB of bandwidth they use; Plan B users would be limited to 200MB of data for the month, with each 100KB of data used costing K2 and a K1500 monthly fee; and Plan C subscribers would be able to use 1GB of data for K7000 a month, with each 100KB of data costing K2.

Consumers that choose either the second or third plan can register for the service at MPT's Pansodan Road office, its Ahlone office, Shwe Gon Daing Mobile Exchange Office

or the regional head office outside of Yangon. Users who failed to contact MPT would be automatically put onto Plan A.

However, users said they expected costs to increase significantly as a result of the proposed changes. Some had even requested permission from the Yangon Region Police Force to protest against the new fee structure.

U Win Kyaw, a 30-year-old a telecommunication journalist, said if connection speeds were faster the new fee structure would make more sense.

"The mobile internet fee is based on the number of minutes you use but the newly announced system is based on data usage, which is the same as other countries," he said. "But it's going to result in much higher bills for most users."

Hitachi establishes Yangon branch

IN another sign of the interest shown in Myanmar by foreign investors, Hitachi Asia Electronics opened a branch in the FMI Centre in Pabedan township, downtown Yangon, on November 26.

Hitachi have supplied power generation equipment to power plants here since the 1950s and have been

selling refrigerators and other domestic appliances in Myanmar through local distributors for some years, said Mr Satoko Yasunaga of Hitachi Asia in Singapore.

However, the new Yangon branch will not be selling appliances, but gathering information and conducting market research to support Hitachi Group businesses

that have not been operating here. Hitachi Asia operates in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

"As we expect strong demand in the social infrastructure business here, Hitachi decided to set up a base in Myanmar to promote its business," he said. – Aye Thidar Kyaw

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KPMG touches down in Myanmar market

By Stuart Deed

THE opening salvo in the battle between the big four accounting firms to establish, or in some cases re-establish, a presence in Myanmar was fired by KPMG, which hosted a cocktail party at Yangon's Parkroyal Hotel on November 26.

PriceWaterhouseCoopers opened its Yangon office on November 6 but KPMG's office has been open since October 30. The November 26 event, marked by speeches by company officials and the president of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, was laced with amusing airline touches designed to show that the company had touched down in Myanmar.

KPMG global chairman Michael Andrew in his opening speech said it represented an "historic event" for the company.

"We've been looking forward to returning to Myanmar because we see high interest in Myanmar from our global clients," said Mr Andrew. "We enter these high growth markets before our clients to understand the local market and pave the way for them," he added.

"In particular we recognise the strategic importance of Asian markets for our global clients," said Mr Andrew, who oversees KPMG global strategic direction from his base in Hong Kong.

"We are the first of the big four accounting firms to re-establish in Myanmar," he said.

"It is strategically important for us to be the number one or two firm in all the emerging markets, especially in Asia. We have worked to study this particular market and we see enormous potential," he said.

"We see ourselves as having long-term commitment to building capacity and expertise and making Myanmar one of the future growth engines and Asian tigers," Mr Andrew said during his speech.



KPMG global chairman Michael Andrew addresses the company's cocktail party at Parkroyal Hotel in Yangon on November 26. Pic: Yadanar

Mr Andrew said the company would initially seek to promote foreign investment in Myanmar and "act as an interface for our global clients".

"Secondly, we'll build capacity here. What you don't know is that we're the world's largest single employer of university graduates," he said. "We've been ranked number 2 by Universum as the world's most favourable employer, second only to Google. Third, we have great expertise in financial services, government, healthcare, and energy - sectors that Myanmar badly needs help and support in," he added.

Japanese companies also make up a significant portion of Myanmar's foreign business community and have been amongst the first to sign major agreements for infrastructure and energy projects in recent months.

Mr Hideyo Uchiyama, chairman of KPMG Asia Pacific, delivered a special greeting to Japanese clients and guests at the ceremony.

"The infrastructure in Myanmar is still developing,

and there is much work to be done to receive foreign businesses. KPMG will base Japanese certified practicing accountants in Yangon to serve our Japanese clients in Myanmar," he said.

In an interview with *The Myanmar Times* before the opening Mr Andrew said he had been elected chairman of the company largely as a result of his experience in emerging

markets, including Central and Eastern Europe, as well as Indonesia, Vietnam and Mongolia, which would help guide KPMG in Myanmar.

He said there were two pitfalls that might slow Myanmar's economic development.

"The first thing that I'm concerned about is the lack of international banking capacity because when you go back to Central and

Eastern Europe almost the first entities that were allowed into the market were the branches of the big European banks," he said.

"So every time a client arrived there Deutsche Bank, Austrian banks or Swiss banks were basically able to fund the businesses so they could get started. Whereas here they're always saying 'where's the banking capacity? I'd

like to be able to do trade finance. I'd like to be able to borrow some money or swap my currency'," Mr Andrew said.

"The second thing is that it always takes a while for the foreign investment rules to be refined. ... Investors want more certainty around that," he said, clarifying that he was speaking mostly about Western investors.

"Asian investors are more trusting - they tend to rely upon the cultural understanding and relationships, whereas Western investors in particular want the rule of law, they want contractual entitlement, they want to secure about the freehold land they have, the supply contracts they have, the investment certainty from government," he said.

Mr Andrew said taxation was another important consideration.

"Tax is generally the first thing that people normally ask - tax and legal. You can't afford to ruin your reputation in an emerging market doing things that don't conform to the rules," he said.

In a previous story on KPMG we incorrectly stated that the Myanmar office had been open since May. In fact, it has only been open since late October. We apologise for any confusion caused by this error.

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French CFDT union representative Edouard Martin (left), surrounded by workers, speaks to journalists in Florange on November 30. Pic: AFP

ArcelorMittal fights French govt

By Richard Lein

PARIS – A mammoth battle of brinkmanship could leave the world's top world steelmaker ArcelorMittal hobbled and damage France's business climate if the government is forced into following through on its threat to nationalise one of the company's plants.

The showdown between France and Indian-born steel tycoon Lakshmi Mittal could reach a climax at the weekend as a deadline the company set for the government to find a buyer for two outdated blast furnaces expires.

The dispute pits a debt-saddled ArcelorMittal which has been trying adjust to a sagging steel market against a new Socialist government which wants to improve industrial competitiveness but has also vowed to protect jobs as unemployment climbs.

ArcelorMittal announced on October 1 that it plans to permanently close two blast furnaces at its Florange plant in the eastern Lorraine region that the company regards as uneconomic in two months if the government does not find

a buyer.

The French government says it has potential buyers, but only for the entire Florange site which has facilities which ArcelorMittal wants to keep.

The French government has threatened to temporarily nationalise the entire site to protect the 650 jobs on the line in order to sell it on to the buyer, whose identity it has not revealed and which French media have speculated could be Russian.

ArcelorMittal has warned that nationalisation of the plant would cast doubt on the future of all its operations in France, where it employs 20,000 people.

President Francois Hollande himself dangled the threat in talks with the billionaire, ranked 21st in the *Forbes* list of the world's wealthiest people.

Talks were ongoing on November 30. And although no progress was apparent, ArcelorMittal and the government appeared ready to continue talks past the deadline.

Backing down on closing the blast furnaces and cutting staff could prove damaging to ArcelorMittal, which plunged into a quarterly net loss of US\$709 million in the period from July to September on sliding demand from China.

The company said its priority was to reduce its debt, which is expected to rise to \$22 billion by the end of the year, but nevertheless Moody's downgraded the company's credit rating to junk status, which will likely make it more costly for the company to borrow.

The ratings agency warned that asset sales to reduce debt would damage the company's core operations and hurt earnings.

ArcelorMittal has warned the unwanted loss of facilities for higher-end steel products at Florange would impact its operations throughout France.

A nationalisation could prove costly for the government just as it is pushing through over 30 billion euros in spending cuts and tax hikes as it tries to meet EU budget rules.

The government is providing billions in fresh capital to prop up failed French-Belgian bank Dexia and billions in guarantees to carmaker Peugeot's financing arm.

The affair has already chilled the business climate in the country after Industrial Renewal Minister Arnaud Montebourg said Mittal was not welcome in France.

A number of French companies

have announced layoffs, including Peugeot which is slashing 8000 jobs.

The remarks caused outrage in India, where social media networks have been flooded with messages saying Mittal would have been treated differently if he was white.

The self-made steel tycoon faced a hostile welcome from Arcelor executives and French interests during his contested takeover of the company in 2006.

The nationalisation would also throw doubt on the government's seriousness about improving the competitiveness of French industry, although it has announced billions in tax breaks for companies.

The government would also court the risk of plans to sell the site falling through.

Failing to follow through on the threat to nationalise the plant could prove politically costly however.

The government has vowed to protect jobs as the unemployment rate has crept up to 10 percent, and a recent poll showed the French support nationalising Florange by nearly a two-to-one margin.

– AFP

China manufacturing grows for second month

BEIJING – China's manufacturing activity grew in November for the second month in a row, official data showed on December 1, in a further sign of strength in the world's second-biggest economy after a marked slowdown.

The indications of upward momentum were reinforced by a separate survey by British banking giant HSBC that showed growth for the first time in 13 months.

China's purchasing managers' index (PMI) reached 50.6 last month, up from 50.2 in October and 49.8 in September and the highest since hitting 53.3 in April, figures from the National Bureau of Statistics showed.

The PMI is a widely watched barometer of the health of China's economy, and a reading above 50 indicates expansion while anything below points to contraction.

The improved data eased recent months' worries of a "hard landing", said IHS senior China economist Alistair Thornton, though he cautioned that risks remained and reforms were needed for long-term growth.

"The fears surrounding that sharp hard landing have been largely averted," he said, while also singling out as dangers an unstable property market and the debt crisis in Europe, a key trade partner for China.

The November figure came in below the 50.8 median forecast of 10 economists surveyed by *Dow Jones Newswires*.

Still, *Dow Jones* said, the official reading "adds to recent signs of a rebound" and "is likely to further boost market confidence in the Chinese economic outlook for the rest of the year".

Separately, the HSBC said on November 22 that its preliminary PMI reached 50.4 in November, up from a final 49.5 in October and 47.9 in September.

HSBC is set to release its final November PMI data on December 3.

China's manufacturing sector suffered this year given the broader slump in the economy, which has been hit by weaker demand for Chinese products in the crucial markets of Europe and the United States.

The country's economic growth hit a more than three-year low of 7.4 percent in the third quarter from July to September.

But recent data have fuelled optimism that the worst is over. Exports, industrial production, retail sales and fixed asset investment – a key gauge of infrastructure spending – have all shown improvement.

Premier Wen Jiabao and Commerce Minister Chen Deming have both said in recent months that they expect China to achieve its targeted 2012 growth rate of 7.5pc despite the impact of the global

slowdown.

The rosier outlook comes as China concluded an overhaul of the ruling Communist Party's top leadership in mid-November.

Vice President Xi Jinping took charge of the party from President Hu Jintao, whom he is also expected to replace as president in March.

China cut interest rates twice this year and decreased the amount of funds banks must keep in reserve three times since December last year to encourage lending.

It has avoided the type of major initiatives it took after the 2008-09 global financial crisis, including a government-driven stimulus package worth about half a trillion dollars.

But it faces mounting pressure to restructure its economy to ensure long-term growth, such as reducing its reliance on investment and boosting domestic consumption.

"Whilst things are stabilised in the short term – that means maybe six months, a year even, we don't expect there to be any dramatic slowdown – the bigger picture remains that the Chinese economy is slowing," said Thornton.

"I think the focus now has been pushed out to assessing how China's going to deal with reform." – AFP



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India quarterly growth slows to 5.3pc

By Penny MacRae

NEW DELHI – India's economic growth eased to 5.3 percent in the July-September quarter, extending a slowdown since the start of the year, data showed on November 30, but analysts said a "modest recovery" could be looming.

The once-booming economy has been hit by high interest rates, Europe's debt crisis which has slowed exports and sluggish investment caused by domestic and overseas concerns about stagnant policy-making and corruption.

While the growth rate

for the second quarter to September was in line with most market expectations, it was weaker than the 5.5pc growth in the April-to-June quarter and well down from 6.7pc expansion a year ago.

Manufacturing performed badly during the quarter, growing by a scant 0.8pc from a year earlier. Services such as hotels and transport grew 5.5pc while finance and property activities jumped by 9.4pc.

But analysts saw a silver lining in falling global oil prices, growing domestic demand as incomes rise and the government's reforms to open up sectors such as retail and aviation to more foreign investment.

"The conditions for a modest economic recovery are now in place," said Credit Suisse Robert Prior-Wandesforde, citing expectations of easing interest rates and the government's recent reform blitz to liberalise the economy.

And C Rangarajan, head of Congress Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's economic advisory council, expressed confidence that growth "in the second half [of the fiscal year] should be better".

"The overall growth rate for the economy could be between 5.5 and 6.0pc for the full year," to March 2013, he told CNBC TV-18 news.

Goldman Sachs economist Tushar Poddar also saw "an improving outlook" and last week upgraded Indian shares in expectation of a pick-up in growth and easing inflation that would give the central bank more room to cut rates.

India's benchmark 30-share Sensex stock index has risen 11.15pc from September to November, led by optimism over reforms and overseas fund inflows.

On November 30, it climbed almost 1pc to 19,323.52 points its highest level since April 2011.

India's growth numbers come as economists say the slowdown in neighbouring China may also be bottoming out.

China reported last month third-quarter growth of 7.4pc, its weakest performance since the global financial crisis, but other data suggested recovery may around the corner.

However, despite the optimism about India's recovery prospects, some analysts sounded a note of caution.

Jyoti Narasimhan, economist at IHS Global Insight research group, said India's reform needs may be "greater than its political system's capacity to deliver at the moment", referring to political turmoil that has gripped parliament.

"Policy implementation uncertainty remains a key risk," she said.

The government is also unable to stimulate the economy with public spending and is under pressure to cut a widening budget deficit and avert a downgrade of its sovereign debt to "junk" status by global credit ratings agencies.

While 5.3pc growth would be the envy of much of the world, it's not enough for India, which needs close to double-digit expansion as it seeks to reduce crushing poverty.

"For us, 8pc growth is not an aspiration but a necessity. India cannot afford to grow below 8pc," Finance Minister P Chidambaram said last weekend. - AFP

Visa to host mobile payments conference

VISA Incorporated will host the nation's first mobile and electronic payments conference in Nay Pyi Taw on December 11, the company announced last week.

The event will showcase the potential benefits that a viable electronic payments system can have on Myanmar's economy. The conference will also provide a deeper look at a variety of mobile payments-related topics, including mobile regulations, branchless banking, mobile acceptance; it will also compare the

different mobile payments business models in use around the world.

The conference will also provide attendees with hands-on live demonstrations of different mobile technologies available in the global marketplace.

Visa will be bringing in a range of leading experts in the mobile payments industry who will be providing case studies and demonstrations, and who will be available for one-on-one questioning throughout the day. - Staff Writer

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SPA, Yoma Strategic unveil 'landmark' project for Yangon

By Stuart Deed

THE former Ministry of Railways head office and the surrounding 10 acres in Yangon will be transformed into a US\$350-million mixed use "landmark" project, a spokesperson for the company planning the project said last week.

Serge Pun and Associates (SPA), in conjunction with Singapore-listed Yoma Strategic Holdings, announced on November 20 that it would redevelop the company's 10-acre plot, which houses FMI Centre, Grand Mee Ya Hta Hotel and a heritage-listed building, into a 2-million-square-foot mixed-use residential, commercial, retail and hospitality project at the heart of Yangon's central business district.

Cyrus Pun, SPA group's director responsible for real estate development, told *The Myanmar Times* on November 28 that the Grand Mee Ya Hta Hotel would be demolished, while the former Burma Railways Headquarters building would be restored and developed into a 5-star hotel that will form the centrepiece of the project.

"It's a great location and will become a landmark of

Yangon when it's completed," Mr Pun said, adding that the company is in the process of seeking Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) approval for the project.

"We are blessed with a fantastic location - we are right by Bogyoke Market where we can get the most traffic, we have an historical building on site - it's one of the 180-odd heritage listed sites in Yangon under the Heritage Trust, and I'd say it's one of the more prominent ones," he said.

Assuming Yoma Strategic's shareholders approve the proposed transaction the project will be owned by MIC-approved Meeyahta International Hotel Limited (MIHL), a joint venture between SPA as the Myanmar partner and Yoma Strategic as the foreign partner, which announced its intention on November 19 to buy an 80 percent interest in MIHL with the associated rights to participate in the development of the 10-acre site, a Yoma Strategic press release dated November 20 said.

Yoma will pay \$81.28 million for the shares in MIHL, the release added.

When completed, the project will include two office buildings, two serviced

apartment towers, two hotels and one retail mall. The expected cost of the project is about \$350 million, he said, adding that the company is in discussions with Myanmar Investment Commission to obtain approval for the development and seek an extension of the land lease, which is set to expire in 15 years but has the possibility of extension, to 70 years.

"We're applying for the extension of the land lease. You have to understand that in a project of this scale, of this investment size, the remaining term of the lease will not be long enough for me to justify this sort of money," Mr Pun said.

"This is an existing site, project and investment that we have, we are just applying for a revision and renewal of the terms of the land lease because we already own the land site. ... What we're doing is going back to the government and saying that we're going to upsize our investment. Given all the foreign investment interest in Myanmar now, we do see the economy likely to grow very rapidly and quite frankly this city is in short supply of all types of real estate.

"Without sufficient office space, hotel and accommodation it will be



An artist's impression of the finished Meeyahta development in downtown Yangon. Pic: SPA

harder for foreign investors to come in and operate. The government acknowledges that this is an issue and they're very keen to promote growth in high-quality real estate. So far in our meetings with the authorities they've all been very supportive of this project. They want us to start as soon as possible. They want to give their full support to help out with all the procedures and processes," he said.

While the company has developed artist renderings of the project Mr Pun, who is the son of SPA, FMI Holdings and Yoma Strategic Holdings chairman Serge Pun, said it will take about 12 months to complete the design process, with the first buildings to be finished about three years later.

Funding for the project will be generated by Yoma Strategic, which issued a notice to the Singapore Stock Exchange on November 20 to announce it had completed a private placement exercise to raise S\$101 million of equity by selling 192,853,000 new shares.

"The interest on our stock is more than what we can give. There's no shortage of interest from investors to come in and fund Yoma for all its opportunities in Myanmar," Mr Pun said, adding that the share issue is not intended solely for the Yangon project.

He said Yoma raised about S\$101 million in cash in the placement, some of which will be contributed to the project. He added that one of the two serviced apartment towers will be sold to generate cashflow to

help fund the project.

Mr Pun said the first building would not be delivered for about four years.

"The design of the project will take a year to complete so we're looking at the end of 2013 to start construction. And the first part of the site will probably open three years from then, so we're looking at a four-year timeframe before the first part can be delivered to the market," he said.

Mr Pun said he could not disclose the names of the construction contractors the

'The design of the project will take a year to complete so we're looking at the end of 2013 to start construction.'

company is working with but said internationally renowned architectural firm Aedas, which planned Marina Bay Sands in Singapore, is handling the design. He added that Meinhardt will be the structure, civil engineering and M&E consultant.

"The team we've gotten on board so far are very much at the top of the game. These are all big internationally reputable firms. If you were doing a high-profile project in Singapore or Hong Kong you'd be using these types of people as well," Mr Pun

said.

The new buildings will be built around the former Burma Railways Headquarters, which will be refurbished and made into a 5-star hotel, Mr Pun said.

"We need to understand that this is an important asset for us, albeit one that is a small part of the project - the heritage building is about 10,000 square metres, while the whole development will be over 180,000 square metres or so.

"However, it will be the focal point. In terms of the traffic, the ingress and egress are designed so that you see as much of the frontal facade of the historic building as possible. And the high-rises will be built surrounding this historical building with enough spacing so as to give the full view and yet not be overly imposing or detract from the vista," he said.

Mr Pun added that the company is still waiting for specific guidelines from the Yangon Heritage Trust regarding preserving and conserving heritage buildings.

"I think we're in the position where we can contribute to this process as well as set some kind of precedence for conservation. We're bringing in specialists to see how we can best conserve it. It's a sensitive issue because there's always the contention between balancing how to make it functional and at the same time preserve as much as possible the historical elements of the building," he said.

He added that the company expected the building to be



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The successful applicant will provide support and advice to the HR Manager in areas such as recruitment, conditions of service, training, salary, leave management, etc. The Embassy is seeking an exceptionally well organised individual, a multi tasker who can work under pressure, demonstrates initiative and takes pride in their work.

The application form, selection criteria and duty statement can be obtained from the Australian Embassy, 88 Strand Road, or the Australian Embassy website at: <http://www.burma.embassy.gov.au/rang/home.html>.

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Qualifications and Experience

The appointee should have the following qualifications and experience:

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finished within four years but added, "with restoration of historical buildings you never know how complicated it can be until you actually start it and then run into problems.

"It's a very complex process – we'll find problems as we go along. ... We have this plan to deliver it within the four-year timeframe and if everything goes smoothly it may well be completed

before then," he said. However, the project also necessitates the demolition of the Grand Mee Ya Hta building, which Mr Pun said would cost the company about \$1 million a year in

lost revenues. "We had quite a lot of debate over this – it was not an easy decision to take given that it's still a relatively new building. There's a lot of sentimental

value as well ... but we came to the decision after thinking long and hard that the project would ultimately be a lot better if we take the pain at the beginning and knock it down.

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Palestinians celebrate in the West Bank city of Ramallah after the General Assembly voted to recognise Palestine as a non-member state. Pic: AFP

Palestinians jubilant after UN 'birth certificate' vote

UNITED NATIONS—The UN General Assembly voted overwhelmingly on November 29 to make Palestine a non-member state, inflicting a major diplomatic defeat on the United States and Israel.

The victory for president Mahmud Abbas triggered scenes of joy in the occupied West Bank where thousands celebrated with bursts of gunfire and cheers in the city of Ramallah.

Abbas claimed what he called a UN "birth certificate" for a Palestinian state and got the backing of 138 countries in the 193 member assembly. Nine voted against and 41 abstained while five did not participate.

The vote lifts the Palestinian Authority from an observer entity to a "non-member observer state" on a par with the Vatican.

Palestine has no vote on the General Assembly but is able to join UN agencies and potentially the International Criminal Court, where it could ask for an investigation of Israeli actions.

The Palestinian leadership says it wants to use the vote as a launchpad for renewed direct talks with Israel, which have been frozen for more than two years.

Abbas told the assembly the resolution was "the last chance to save the two-state solution."

In a 22-minute speech laced with references to Israel's operation against Gaza and its Hamas rulers last month, Abbas said time for an accord is running out. "The rope of patience is shortening and hope is withering."

Afterwards, he said the vote had been "historic."

"Tomorrow we begin the real war," Abbas said at a celebration reception. "We have a long road and difficult road ahead of us. I don't want to spoil our victory tonight but the road ahead is still difficult."

The United States and Israel condemned the vote, which US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton called "counterproductive."

US ambassador Susan Rice sternly told the General Assembly that the resolution would be "an obstacle to peace" because it would not lead to a return to direct talks between the Israelis and Palestinians.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu slammed Abbas. "The world watched a defamatory and venomous speech that was full of mendacious propaganda," his office said.

Abbas was warned earlier by UN leader Ban Ki-moon that the Middle East peace process is on "life support" and that both Netanyahu and Abbas must take action to revive talks.

The vote could give a boost to Abbas who faces a mounting challenge from Hamas after the Israeli offensive on Gaza, diplomats said.

Hamas welcomed the vote, calling it a "victory."

Britain and Germany, which abstained, believe the Palestinians should have waited until after US President Barack Obama installed his new administration and Israel held elections before making its UN bid.

France, which voted in favour of the resolution, called on both sides to respond through the resumption of talks "and not through reprisals which will only play the game of the extremists," he added.

The Palestinian Authority and UN agencies that accept Palestinian participation could lose hundreds of millions of dollars in financing because of the vote.

Washington has warned Abbas he risks losing about US\$200 million in aid, which is blocked in the US Congress. — AFP

UK inquiry urges new media laws

LONDON — A British inquiry called on November 29 for a tougher watchdog underpinned by new laws to curb the country's press in a damning verdict that sets up Prime Minister David Cameron for a political battle.



Brian Leveson...codes of conduct ignored. Pic: AFP

Senior judge Brian Leveson, who led an eight-month inquiry sparked by the phone-hacking scandal at Rupert Murdoch's *News of the World* tabloid, said there should be an independent self-regulatory body, underpinned by legislation.

But Cameron voiced concerns about any statutory change, putting him on a collision course with his junior coalition partners the Liberal Democrats, the Labour opposition and many hacking victims.

Lord Justice Leveson said in his report that the British newspaper industry had for decades "wreaked havoc with the lives of innocent people" and ignored the codes that it had itself set up.

freedom of the British press. "I have some serious concerns and misgivings on this recommendation," he said.

"We will have crossed the rubicon of writing elements of press regulation into the law of the land... we should think very, very carefully before crossing this line."

Liberal Democrat Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg, taking the unusual step of making a separate statement after Cameron's, said that he backed Leveson's call for new legislation.

He said that while the press served the country

Opposition Labour leader Ed Miliband also said

"I have some serious concerns."

"very well for the vast majority of the time", its behaviour "at times, can only be described as outrageous."

The prime minister commissioned the Leveson Inquiry in July 2011 in the wake of a report alleging that the *News of the World* hacked the voicemails of murdered schoolgirl Milly Dowler as well as the revelation that dozens of public figures had had their phones hacked.

Murdoch was forced to close the 168-year-old newspaper over the scandal.

Victims of phone hacking and press harassment welcomed the inquiry's findings and called on Cameron to implement them in full.

But Cameron told parliament that while he backed the creation of a new newspaper regulator, he feared that bringing in new laws risked curbing the

Leveson's proposals, which are likely to go to a vote in the House of Commons, should be implemented.

Parliament will debate Leveson's recommendations on December 3.

The British press currently regulates itself through the Press Complaints Commission, a body staffed by editors. Its critics say it is toothless.

Leveson said in his report that a new watchdog would have independent members, except for one editor. It would have the power to fine offenders up to £1 million (US\$1.6 million) and to order the publication of apologies and corrections.

Those powers would be backed by new laws, he said. He summed up his plans as "independent regulation of the press organised by the press, with a statutory verification process". — AFP



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Graffiti in Mohamed Mahmud Street at Cairo's Tahrir Square, where tens of thousands of protesters gathered on November 30 to condemn a draft constitution criticised for undermining basic freedoms. Pic: AFP

Anger in Egypt as panel backs draft constitution

CAIRO – An Egyptian panel boycotted by Christians and liberals adopted a draft constitution on November 30 with an Islamist bent that activists say restricts freedom of speech and religion and limits women's rights.

Chairman of the Islamist-dominated Constituent Assembly Hossam el-Ghiriani said the draft law, approved after a marathon session through the night, would be sent to President Mohamed Morsi and a referendum would be held within two weeks.

The opposition, which has held daily protests since Morsi assumed broad powers in a decree on November 22, accuses the president and allies in the constituent assembly

of railroading the charter through for a quick referendum. The rushed adoption of the 234 articles of the draft basic law is certain to heighten tension on the streets where there is already anger over Morsi's power grab.

The constitution will replace the one suspended after president Hosni Mubarak's overthrow in early 2011.

Christians have objected to an article that seeks to narrow the meaning of "the principles of Islamic law" to the tenets of Sunni Muslim jurisprudence.

Heba Morayef, Human Rights Watch Egypt director, said some of the draft articles on freedom of expression and religion resemble a "penal code."

Particularly worrisome was the limitation of religious freedom to followers of Abrahamic religions (Christianity, Islam and Judaism), Morayef said, which would exclude minorities such as Bahais that have been persecuted in Egypt.

Morsi's decree, described by the opposition as dictatorial, stripped courts of the right to annul the controversial constituent assembly ahead of an expected court ruling on December 2.

It shields Morsi's decisions from review by the judiciary, which he and his movement believe retains Mubarak-era appointees who are opposed to the Islamists.

The top Cassation Court has suspended work in

protest at the decree, which will expire once the constitution is ratified.

Morsi and his supporters argue that delaying the constitution, which would be followed by parliamentary elections to replace the Islamist-dominated house dissolved by a court earlier this year, would delay democratic transition.

In a pre-recorded interview broadcast on November 29, Morsi repeated that the new powers he had assumed were temporary. "This is an exceptional stage; we are in a transitional phase," Morsi told state television. "This constitutional declaration is temporary, and it will end once the people have approved the constitution."

– AFP

Missile strikes a 'turning point' for Syrian rebels

TOURMANIN, Syria – In less than 24 hours last week, rebels used surface-to-air missiles to strike down two aircraft in northern Syria, marking a turning point in their war with forces of President Bashar al-Assad.

Since the end of July, the Syrian regime has used fighter jets to try to suppress a growing insurgency. The air force has frequently bombarded rebel-held areas throughout the country, causing high casualties.

But on the morning of November 28, rebels shot down a warplane in the northern province of Aleppo, an AFP reporter said.

The previous day insurgents had downed an army helicopter for the first time.

"It's a turning point," said Riad Kahwaji, expert at the Institute for Near East and Gulf Military Analysis (INEGMA).

"If the Syrian air force starts losing several aircraft every day, that will be a significant turning point because the regime will lose its superiority and will no longer be able to use its main means of delivering strong fire power effectively," Kahwaji told AFP.

The jet fell on an olive grove a kilometre (less than a mile) away from the village of Tourmanin, north of the embattled city of Aleppo.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a watchdog that relies on a network of activists and medics on the ground, confirmed that the jet had been brought down with a missile.

The two pilots in the plane ejected before the crash,

with one of them captured immediately after making a parachute landing, witnesses said. The fate of the second pilot is unknown.

The jet was the second government aircraft to have been shot down by rebels using missiles in less than 24 hours.

In the same area on November 27, insurgents downed the army helicopter with a ground-to-air missile, in what the Observatory said had the potential to change the balance of military power in the 20-month old conflict.

Little more than a week earlier, the rebels seized tanks, armoured vehicles, artillery, 120-mm mortars and rocket launchers when they captured the military's sprawling Base 46, about 12 kilometres (eight miles) west of Aleppo.

Rebel Commander General Ahmed

Faj told AFP on November 23 that the rebels also seized surface-to-air missiles from the base.

"If the rebels have a significant arsenal of surface-to-air missiles, like the well-known Stingers that decimated Russian helicopters and jets in Afghanistan, Assad's army will lose part of its control of the sky," said Syria expert Fabrice Balanche.

"Rebel-held areas will become safe and insurgents will be able to go on the offensive without fearing the aerial threat."

"It's a red line the rebels and their supporters have crossed," Balanche said.

"Now the Russians will certainly give the Syrians more sophisticated equipment." – AFP

'It's a red line the rebels... have crossed.'

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The Obama machine mobilises to tackle 'fiscal cliff' impasse

Analysis by Stephen Collinson

WASHINGTON – So much for the misty eyed, pre-election nostalgia over President Barack Obama's last campaign.

A few weeks on, the re-elected US leader is dusting off just retired retail politics skills, hoping to outflank Republicans over the "fiscal cliff" – an impasse over tax hikes and spending cuts that threatens to trigger a recession.

The president is pushing to extend income tax cuts due to expire on January 1 for middle class Americans – but to allow rates for the rich to rise, an approach fervently opposed by Republicans in Congress.

The president's political machine, with its millions of supporters linked by social media, has been mobilised with an email explaining Obama's approach to the crisis.

But Obama's sworn Republican foes have reacted sourly as the rivals wage their first key clash since the election, which could have an enormous impact on the way power shakes down in Washington during his second term.

"Rather than sitting down with lawmakers of both parties and working out an agreement, he's back out on the campaign trail,

presumably with the same old talking points we're all familiar with," said Senate Republican minority leader Mitch McConnell.

"Look: we already know the president is a very good campaigner. What we don't know is whether he has the leadership qualities necessary to lead his party to a bipartisan agreement on a big issue like this."

The White House, more

'We already know the president is a very good campaigner.'

used to charges that Obama as president has been negligent in stroking various interest groups in pursuit of passing legislation, dismisses charges of grubby political manoeuvring.

"This is not about politics," White House spokesman Jay Carney insisted, arguing that although Obama will never face voters again, he was right to engage people on a crucial issue.

"I think it's very important to continue that conversation with the American people, both for the president, and for members of Congress."

If there is no compromise, tax cuts enacted by former

president George W. Bush would expire at the end of the year, and taxes on all Americans would rise, in a fresh shock for the fragile US and global economies.

The year-end deadline is the result of legislation passed when Republicans and Democrats failed to reach a previous long-term deficit and budget deal and was meant to concentrate minds of lawmakers and spur compromise.

Obama campaigned on a platform of raising taxes on individuals who make more than US\$200,000 a year and families that earn more than \$250,000, as a way of raising extra revenue to tame the deficit.

Republicans insist that raising taxes on the wealthy would be counter-productive, would hurt small business owners and would slow economic growth and dampen job creation.

The parties are also feuding about where to cut spending, with some Republicans opposed to any trimming of the military budget and Democrats guarding social safety net entitlement programs.

So far, there seems little concrete progress, in what seems to be a period of posturing and political brinkmanship before the year-end deadline enforces serious bargaining in December.

– AFP



Leg restraints in an interview room at the detention centre at the US Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba. Pic: AFP

Closing Guantanamo no risk to security: senator

WASHINGTON – The United States can close its detention centre at the US naval base in Guantanamo, Cuba without risking the nation's security, the head of the US Senate's Intelligence Committee said on November 28.

Senator Dianne Feinstein made her case while displaying a copy of a new report by the Government Accountability Office on the suitability of US prisons to house the remaining 166 detainees in custody at Guantanamo.

"This report demonstrates that if the political will exists, we could finally close Guantanamo without imperiling our national security," Feinstein said.

"The GAO report makes clear that numerous prisons exist inside the United States – operated by both the Department of Defense and the Department of Justice – capable of holding the 166 detainees who remain at Guantanamo in an environment that meets the security requirements."

Indeed there are already many inmates convicted of terrorism serving time at facilities inside the United States, she said.

"To say that high-risk detainees cannot be held securely in a maximum security prison is just plain wrong," Feinstein said.

"The United States already holds 373 individuals convicted of terrorism in 98 facilities across the country.

"As far as I know, there hasn't been a single security problem reported in any of these cases," she said.

"This fact outweighs not only the high cost of maintaining Guantanamo – which costs more than \$114 million a year – but also provides the same degree of security without the criticism of operating a military prison in an isolated location."

President Barack Obama came under considerable criticism for not following through on his pledge to close the Guantanamo prison facility in his first term as he had pledged. – AFP

Briefs

UN court acquits Kosovo three

PRISTINA – Kosovo's former prime minister Ramush Haradinaj arrived in Pristina on November 29 to a jubilant welcome after a UN court cleared him of war crimes charges relating to the 1990s war of independence.

The Hague-based International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia had earlier the same day cleared the former military commander and two of his former guerrilla comrades, closing a case that has lasted seven years.

Serbia reacted furiously after the verdict, accusing the tribunal of bias against Serbs.

Syria cut off from internet

WASHINGTON – Syria has been cut off from the internet, technology companies which monitor web traffic reported on November 29.

US officials blamed Assad for the shutdown as he cracks down on rebels in the war-ravaged country.

"Obviously, we condemn this latest assault on the Syrian people's ability to express themselves and communicate with each other and it just, again, speaks to the kind of desperation of the regime as it tries to cling to power," State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland said.

Manning tells of suicidal thoughts

FORT MEADE, Maryland – WikiLeaks suspect Bradley Manning admitted contemplating suicide as he took the stand on November 29 for the first time at a pre-trial hearing.

The US Army private, who faces possible life imprisonment over his alleged document dump to the secret-spilling WikiLeaks website, said he "started to fall apart" not long after being detained in May 2010.

During three hours of testimony, Manning, 24, told of severe restrictions he endured in his pre-trial confinement in Kuwait and then at a brig in Quantico, Virginia.

Strauss-Kahn to settle out of court

NEW YORK – Disgraced former IMF chief Dominique Strauss-Kahn, 63, will settle out of court with a Manhattan maid who accused him of sexual assault, ending a sordid 18-month legal saga, the *New York Times* reported on November 30.

Quoting unidentified sources "with knowledge of the matter," it said the French politician and the hotel maid, Nafissatou Diallo, have "quietly reached an agreement to settle" her lawsuit. "No settlement had yet been signed," the newspaper said. – AFP

Servicewomen fight for right to combat role

LOS ANGELES – Four US servicewomen, including two who won Purple Hearts in Afghanistan, sued the Pentagon on November 27 over its policy barring women from ground combat.

Backed by rights watchdog the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), they slammed the policy as an "injustice to the women ... who continue to put their lives on the line for their country."

Women are still barred from ground combat units, although female troops have found themselves in combat anyway during the past decade in Afghanistan and Iraq, with more than 140 killed on the battlefield.

In February, the Pentagon announced incremental changes that will allow women to serve in more than 14,000 jobs, mostly in the Army and Marine Corps, that had previously been closed to female service members.

But the overall prohibition against women in ground combat remains, denying women the chance to join infantry and armour units as well as special forces. – AFP

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Dated: 3 December, 2012

Study explores journalism in the post-industrial age

WASHINGTON – Bloggers, “crowdsourcing” and computer-generated articles are making contributions to the news media, but they cannot replace professional journalists in investigating and reporting important news.

That is the message of a major study released last week by Columbia University’s Tow Center for Digital Journalism, titled “Post-Industrial Journalism.”

The authors of the report said technology has led to an explosion in the amount of information available, with economic shifts which are affecting journalism in both negative and positive ways.

But in certain kinds of reporting, professional journalists cannot be replaced by machines or crowdsourcing, the study said.

It is not journalism’s best moment if much key work were taken over by amateurs or done by machine, the study said.

“What is of great moment is reporting on important and true stories that can change society.”

The role of the journalist “as truth-teller, sense-maker, explainer – cannot be reduced

to a replaceable input... we need a cadre of full-time workers who report the things someone somewhere doesn’t want reported,” the authors said.

But because of the changes to the media, the report said the advertising-supported model of newspaper and broadcast journalism may never be the same and this means news “has to become cheaper to produce.”

“There is no way to preserve or restore the shape of journalism as it has been practiced for the past 50 years,” said authors C.W. Anderson, Emily Bell and Clay Shirky.

They said the changes have led to “a reduction in the quality of news in the United States,” and added: “We are convinced that journalism in this country will get worse before it gets better, and, in some places (principally midsize and small cities with no daily paper) it will get markedly worse.”

The report argued that social media, blogs and “crowdsourcing” can have a positive influence by generating content not available in the past.

The authors note that the first reports on the raid killing Osama bin Laden came from

a Pakistan IT consultant who tweeted what he saw, and that social media provided a more complete view of the Japan 2011 earthquake and tsunami than any individual journalist could provide.

They also conclude that tech startups like Palantir, Kaggle and Narrative Science which produce news stories from raw data through algorithms are also useful and can free up professional journalists for other tasks.

The study said news reporting has always been “subsidised” in some manner, usually by advertising and that a shift to online news with lower revenues has led to a search for a new model.

“The American public has never paid full freight for the news gathering done in our name. It has always been underwritten by sources other than the readers, listeners or viewers,” the report said.

To make the economics work, the authors suggest flexibility: “Income can come from advertisers, sponsors, users, donors, patrons or philanthropies; cost reductions can come from partnerships, outsourcing, crowdsourcing or automation. There is no one answer.”

– AFP

Military abuses trial begins in Argentina

BUENOS AIRES – A trial involving almost 800 cases of human rights abuses during Argentina’s 1976-1983 military junta began on November 28, chronicling the use of torture and murder during the dictatorship.

The trial in Buenos Aires, “was, is and will be the largest trial of crimes against humanity” in Argentina, said rights lawyer Rodolfo Yanzon.

The trial, on 789 documented abuse cases, is the largest in the South American nation since 2003. It is being held in a packed Buenos Aires courtroom, presided over by Judge Daniel Obligado.

The trial is expected to take about two years and may call as many as 900 witnesses.

Among the accused are, for the first times, men who piloted “death flights” on which abducted leftists opposing the regime, or thought to oppose it, were tossed alive into the Rio de la Plata, in the belief they would be killed without a trace.

Some 30,000 people were kidnapped, tortured and killed in what became known

as Argentina’s “Dirty War,” according to rights groups. Victims included Montonero guerrillas, labour union leaders, students, leftist sympathisers and in some instance, their relatives and friends.

The trial is part of an effort to probe torture and crimes against humanity committed at a notorious ESMA Naval Mechanics School. Only a fraction of the estimated 5000 regime opponents survived being sent to ESMA.

Among the cases on trial

turned him in when Poch told stories from his days in the Argentine navy.

Other defendants include former navy captain Alfredo Astiz, the “Blonde Angel of Death,” who allegedly helped kidnap four members of the Mothers rights group, including its founder Azucena Villaflor, as well as Duquet and Alice Domon, another French nun who is still missing.

An Argentine court sentenced Astiz to life in prison for torture, murder and rights abuses in October 2011.

Pro-junta civilians will also be on trial, including former finance minister Juan Alemann, who

allegedly witnessed the torture of a man suspected of trying to murder him.

A blanket pardon for dictatorship crimes was overturned in 2003, paving the way for lawsuits.

In September a Crimes Against Humanity Board report found that between 2008 and July 2012 there were 61 trials for crimes committed by the military dictatorship, with 270 convictions. – AFP

The defendants include eight ‘death flight’ pilots.

is that of Leonie Duquet, a French-born nun who was allegedly kidnapped and killed on a “death flight.”

The trial’s defendants include eight “death flight” pilots – among them is Julio Poch, a Dutch national and a former Argentine naval aviator extradited from Spain in May 2010. Until his arrest Poch was working as a pilot for Transavia, a subsidiary of Air France and KLM. His work colleagues

ASEAN-INDIA CAR RALLY 2012

CII

ASEAN-INDIA CAR RALLY 2012

MYANMAR LEG: 11-15 December 2012

Tamu, Ka Lay, Mandalay, Nay Pyi Taw, Hpa-an, Myawady

The scoop that the US censors denied

By Manuel Roig-Franzia

IN headier days, Ed Kennedy personified the hard-drinking, hard-charging war correspondent of another era. The first time his future wife saw him, he was sidled up to a hotel bar in Paris with none other than Ernest Hemingway, both of them so "dead drunk" they could hardly stand.

Kennedy was a star *Associated Press* correspondent with a penchant for daring evasion of authority, dashing into World War II battle zones where he wasn't supposed to go because he had to get the story. He just had to.

But it was the biggest scoop of his career - Nazi Germany's unconditional surrender - that ruined his career. And a determined group of prominent journalists want to do something about that.

They want Kennedy to be posthumously awarded a Pulitzer Prize, a recognition of a singular moment of courage when a star correspondent defied political and military censorship to file one of the biggest stories of the century.

"The way a craft evolves is that somebody has to define

the edges, the boundaries," says Kim Komenich, a Pulitzer-winning news photographer who is among 54 journalists pressing for Kennedy to receive a Pulitzer. "Ed got it right."

On May 6, 1945, US military officials ushered Kennedy and 16 other correspondents onto a plane in Paris. The plane was airborne before they learned the purpose of the trip: They were flying to Reims, France, to witness the signing of surrender documents ending the largest conflict in world history.

Kennedy chafed at being controlled. The reporters on the plane were "seventeen trained seals," he observed acidly in a memoir, *Ed Kennedy's War: V-E Day, Censorship, & the Associated Press*, that was published this spring, nearly a half-century after his death.

acceptable rationale, but for political reasons, Kennedy learned.

It turned out that Russia's leader, Joseph Stalin, wanted to stage a signing ceremony of his own to claim partial credit for the surrender and US officials were interested in helping him have his moment of glory.

The correspondents complained, but the military wasn't budging. They had to hold the story. But then something happened that changed Kennedy's mind and his life. He got word of a German radio report announcing the surrender.

The story was out, but the US censors were holding fast.

Kennedy went to his room at the Hotel Scribe and stewed for 15 minutes. Then he found a military phone that he happened to know wasn't monitored

McLean - apologised for Kennedy's report rather than praised him.

Kennedy was summoned to AP headquarters, where his bosses refused to accept his resignation but also refused to give him any work. Several months later, he discovered more than US\$4000 in his cheque account - it was a severance, though, no one had the courtesy to tell him he was being fired. "They did it in the most cowardly way," says Kennedy's daughter, Julia Kennedy Cochran, a former journalist.

After being cut loose, Kennedy moved west, working for two years as managing editor of the small Santa Barbara *News-Press*, then shifting to Monterey, where he became editor of the *Monterey Peninsula Herald*, "a sad, little newspaper" that he turned into an award winner, Cochran said.

It was a steep drop from his days as a star war correspondent, but Kennedy seemed to embrace it nonetheless, writing editorials, covering city councils meetings and editing copy.

Ray March, who was a young reporter at the paper, remembered walking into Kennedy's office and seeing the framed front page of the *New York Times* with his boss's byline under the story of the German surrender. "This isn't just your run-of-the-mill editor of a small newspaper," March recalls thinking.

March was too intimidated by the imposing, non-nonsense editor to drink with him after hours at the Quarterdeck Bar in a nearby hotel as the more senior reporters did. And he quaked when Kennedy hollered across the

The military revoked his credentials, but that was the least of the indignities.

Their military handlers insisted that news of the signing be kept secret for several hours. But after they returned to Paris the embargo was extended, not for security reasons, which might have been an

by censors. At 3:24 in the afternoon, he placed a call to the AP's London bureau.

"Germany has surrendered unconditionally," he said, according to an account of the call by the AP's outgoing president, Tom Curley. "That's official. Make the date Reims, and get it out."

Ed Kennedy's story ran big in newspapers around the world. It should have been his greatest moment, but it became an ordeal.

The military revoked his credentials, but that was the least of the indignities. His fellow correspondents turned on him, voting 54-2 to condemn him. And the head of the AP - the *Philadelphia Bulletin's* publisher, Robert



Edward Kennedy (foreground), a former Associated Press foreign correspondent, in the news agency's office in Anzio, Italy, in February 1944. A campaign is underway in the United States to have Kennedy posthumously awarded a Pulitzer Prize for his story about Nazi Germany's unconditional surrender in 1945. Pic: *The Washington Post*/Courtesy of Julia Kennedy

newsroom at him after he filed one of his first stories, which included the phrase "paradoxical dichotomy" in the opening paragraph.

"You write just like I wrote when I was your age," March recalls Kennedy telling him. Then there was a long pause. "And I can't think of anything worse."

He wanted to teach the kid a lesson: Just tell the story, don't try to dazzle with your vocabulary.

Kennedy had divorced by then, but his daughter would spend her teenage summers in Monterey with her chain-smoking, book-loving, exacting reporter of a father. She recalls a devoted, enthusiastic dad who, at times, inexplicably "seemed kind of depressed and sort of morose about something he wouldn't talk about."

Later, she would wonder whether he had second thoughts about his decision on that long ago afternoon in Paris, even though he publicly declared he would have done it all over again.

One rainy night in November 1963, a sports car knocked Kennedy off his feet as he was walking home. He lingered in the hospital for several days before dying at age 58. The doctors found a cancerous tumor in his throat; his cause of death was listed as cancer, complicated by the injuries he'd suffered.

He'd been a prolific writer and, of course, there was an editorial he'd just penned waiting to be published. His editors ran it while he lay in the hospital.

"One of the problems of publishing a newspaper is that you have to sell something that is dead,"

the piece read. "We can sell these pieces of dead trees only by creating the illusion that they are alive. This we attempt to do, with varying success, by headlines that grip the eye and written material that clutches the heart and soul of man."

After the funeral, Cochran's mother, Lyn Crost - also a former war correspondent - took her daughter to Kennedy's office. Her mother knew there was a treasure to be found: The manuscript Kennedy had written back in 1951 and never been able to find someone to publish.

Over the years, Cochran tried to read it. But she could never finish it. It was too painful to recall the father she'd lost when she was just 16.

She kept it packed away for more than 40 years, through marriage and divorce and a career change. Eventually, in retirement, she found time to read it anew and to gain a deeper understanding of the father she'd lost.

She set about searching for someone who would let her father tell his story. The publisher she found - Louisiana State University Press - didn't tell her who they'd asked to write the introduction. It was Curley, the AP president. She was "overjoyed" when she read what he'd written, sentiments that he said Kennedy's former bosses and the AP's board of that era "could not admit."

"Edward Kennedy," Curley wrote, "was the embodiment of the highest aspirations of the *Associated Press* and American journalism." - *The Washington Post*

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BBC's Patten defends 'one hell of a' payout

LONDON – The head of the BBC's governing body insisted on November 27 he had to give director-general George Entwistle a huge pay-off when he quit in the wake of paedophilia scandals engulfing the corporation.

BBC Trust chairman Chris Patten told lawmakers the £450,000 (\$720,000) given to Entwistle after just 54 days in the job was "one hell of a lot of money", but there was no better option on the table.

The world's largest public broadcaster has been battered by allegations that Jimmy Savile, one of its biggest stars, was among Britain's most prolific sex offenders – as well as by a television report wrongly accusing a politician of paedophilia.

There were bad-tempered exchanges as former Hong Kong governor Patten was grilled by parliament's Culture, Media and Sport Committee, a scrutiny panel

of lawmakers.

Patten said Entwistle, who quit on November 10, had refused to resign if he received a pay-off of six months' salary, but agreed to go if he was given 12 months.

But Patten insisted that Entwistle was "a decent man who was overwhelmed by a very difficult job" and said he would not join in the "general trashing" of the character of a man who spent most of his career at the BBC.

At one point in the crisis, Entwistle had asked Patten: "Are you urging me to go?" and got the reply: "We're not urging you to go but we're not urging you to stay", Patten said.

He said the trust did not have sufficient grounds to sack Entwistle and therefore had no choice but to accept his terms.

On November 22, the BBC appointed Royal Opera House boss Tony Hall, its

former news chief, as its new director-general to an almost universally warm reception. He is expected to start work in March.

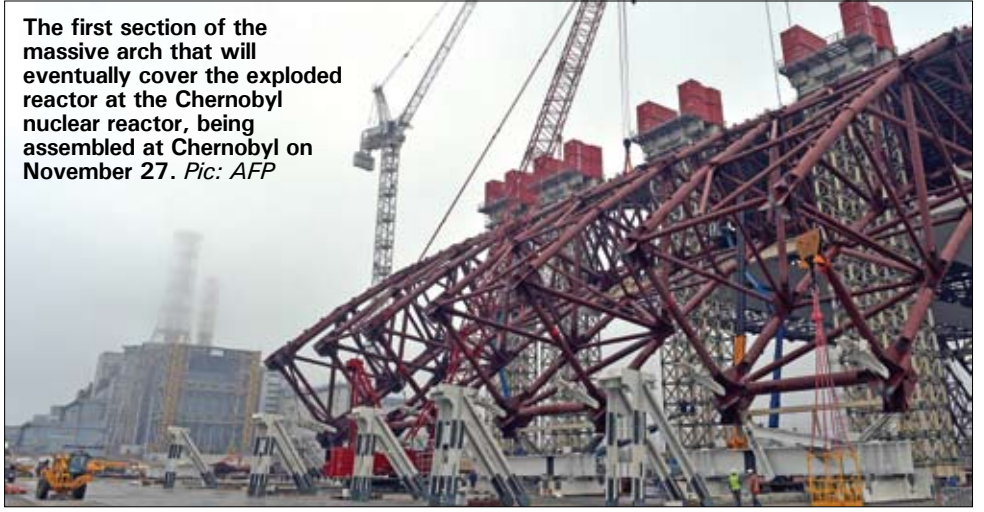
An inquiry into the dropping of a report on Savile's abuse by the BBC's flagship current affairs program Newsnight is due to report by the New Year.

A second independent probe is looking into the BBC's practices during the more than 20 years Savile spent at the corporation.

Patten said the costs, "however much they are", would be met from the licence fee, the compulsory £145.50-per-household annual levy.

Patten admitted that the BBC had work to do to restore trust in its output and journalism, but insisted it remained superior to its counterparts elsewhere in the world. – AFP

The first section of the massive arch that will eventually cover the exploded reactor at the Chernobyl nuclear reactor, being assembled at Chernobyl on November 27. Pic: AFP



Chernobyl project reaches milestone

CHERNOBYL – Work to build a permanent shelter to secure the exploded reactor at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in Ukraine reached a key milestone on November 27 when workers raised the arched section that will cover the destroyed unit.

The explosion at reactor number four at the Chernobyl power plant in the early hours of April 26, 1986 sent radioactive fallout into the atmosphere that spread from the Soviet Union across Europe. It remains the world's worst nuclear accident.

The structure raised to its full height on November 27 will be part of the so-called New

Safe Confinement, a colossal arch-shaped structure which when completed will be slid on rails over the existing sarcophagus covering the reactor.

During the initial lifting operation, about 5000 tonnes of steel was raised to a preliminary height of up to 22 metres (yards), said the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), which is administering the fund to build the shelter with the help of donor contributions.

When it is finished in 2015, the structure will weigh 20,000 tonnes and span 257 metres (843 feet). – AFP

Sea rising faster than forecast: researchers

PARIS – Sea levels are rising 60-percent faster than the UN's climate panel forecast in its most recent assessment, scientists reported on November 28.

At present, sea levels are increasing at an average 3.2 millimetres (0.125 inches) a year, a trio of specialists reported in the journal *Environmental Research Letters*.

This compares with a "best estimate" by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 2007, which projected that by today, the rise would be 2 mm (0.078 inches) a year.

The new figure converges with a widely-shared opinion that the world is heading for sea-level rise of about a metre (3.25 feet) by century's end, co-author Grant Foster of US firm Tempo Analytics told AFP.

"I would say that a metre of sea level rise by the end of the century is probably close to what you would find if you polled the people who know best," Foster said.

"In low-lying areas where you have massive numbers of people living within a metre of sea level, like

Bangladesh, it means that the land that sustains their lives disappears, and you have hundreds of millions of climate refugees and that can lead to resource wars and all kinds of conflicts," he added.

"For major coastal cities like New York, probably the principal effect would be what we saw in Hurricane Sandy.

"Every time you get a major storm, you get a storm surge, and that causes a major risk of flooding. For New York and New Jersey, three more feet of water would be even more devastating, as you can imagine."

The investigation, led by Stefan Rahmstorf of Germany's Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK), gauged the accuracy of computer simulations that the IPCC used in its landmark Fourth Assessment Report in 2007.

That report jolted governments into nailing climate change to the top of their agenda, culminating in the ill-fated Copenhagen Summit of 2009 and helped earn the Nobel Prize for the IPCC. – AFP

Bus stop lights beat blues

STOCKHOLM – Bus stops in the northern Swedish town of Umeaa have been fitted with light therapy panels to help commuters fight off the winter blues, the energy company behind the move said on November 27.

In the depths of winter, daylight in Umeaa, about 500 kilometres (300 miles) north of Stockholm, lasts only about four and a half hours.

"You feel tired during this time of the year and getting an extra dose of

light feels refreshing," said Anna Norrgaard, head of marketing at Umeaa Energy. During the next three weeks, the company will help commuters combat winter depression by installing light therapy panels at 30 bus stops.

The bus shelters' illuminated advertising boards were replaced on November 26 by special light therapy lamps. Five of them will be fitted with special overhead panels to enhance the effect. – AFP



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Microfinance no cure for poverty: Indian minister

NEW DELHI—Microfinance is a “discredited model” and to believe that poverty alleviation in India is possible through such methods is “crap”, Rural Development Minister Jairam Ramesh said on November 28.

“Nothing can stop an idea whose time has gone,” Ramesh told a microfinance conference in New Delhi, reported the *Press Trust of India*.

“It is a discredited model,” he said, referring to the system in which small loans are made to people who do not have access to the mainstream banking system.

Ramesh, known for being outspoken, conceded that “there are many advantages when it comes to delivery of finance through the microfinance route”.

“But one should be somehow more modest in the expectation of microfinance and microfinance institutions,” he went on.

“To think that we are going to alleviate poverty is a tall, tall claim. Poverty alleviation through microfinance – it is crap.”

The multi-billion-dollar industry in India, once seen as a saviour of the poor, has been in crisis since a backlash against alleged abusive practices by debt collectors and extremely high interest rates for loans.

The sector has also under been fire in neighbouring Bangladesh where the micro-lending model was pioneered, with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina accusing the industry of “sucking blood from the poor” due to high lending rates. – AFP

Bus drivers in Singapore charged over rare strike

SINGAPORE – Four mainland Chinese bus drivers accused of instigating Singapore’s first strike since the 1980s were charged on November 29 with criminal offences that could land them in prison.

The four men, aged from 32 to 39, were taken to court one day after mainland Chinese drivers at state-linked transport group SMRT ended a two-day work stoppage aimed at securing better pay.

If found guilty of involvement in an illegal strike, they could be jailed for up to a year or fined a maximum of S\$2,000 (US\$1640) – the equivalent of two months’ wages for a driver.

The charge sheet stated that the four “did engage in a conspiracy” to “instigate workmen employed by SMRT Buses Ltd” to take part in a strike on November 26 and 27.

A total of 171 drivers joined the protest on the first day, with the number falling to 88 on the second day.

The strikers were contract workers who did not belong to any union and were questioning why they were being paid less than their Malaysian counterparts for the same work.

SMRT, which is 54 percent owned by state investment firm Temasek Holdings, has had to hire bus drivers from China and Malaysia due to a chronic local labour shortage.

The drivers, who issued no strike declaration, went back to work on November 28 after the government declared the walkout illegal and warned of a crackdown.

Strikes are illegal in Singapore for workers in “essential services” such as transport unless they give 14 days’ prior notice and comply with other requirements.

– AFP

Chinese daily deceived by Kim Jong-Un parody

BEIJING – The Chinese Communist Party’s official mouthpiece last week deleted a story that North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un had been named 2012’s “Sexiest Man Alive”, after it fell for a parody by US website *The Onion*.

The *People’s Daily* had run the US satirical site’s gushing quotes about the “Pyongyang-bred heartthrob” in both Chinese and English as world news, along with a 55-image gallery opening with Kim astride a horse and gazing into the distance.

But after gleeful internet users pointed out the error, the English version’s web address returned a “page not found” message before noon on November 28.

A link to the story remained on the website’s Korean news pages but there was no content.

The printed edition of the *People’s Daily* did not carry the online report, which made no mention of satire.

It quoted *The Onion* as saying: “With his devastatingly handsome, round face, his boyish charm, and his strong, sturdy frame, this Pyongyang-bred heartthrob is every woman’s dream come true.”

“Blessed with an air of power that masks an unmistakable cute, cuddly side, Kim made this newspaper’s editorial board swoon with his impeccable fashion sense, chic short hairstyle, and, of course, that famous smile.”

China is North Korea’s sole major ally and provides most of its food and fuel imports.

The *People’s Daily* could not be reached for comment on November 28. – AFP

Karzai ‘not aware’ of campaign funding from disgraced bank

KABUL – Afghan President Hamid Karzai was not aware that a major bank now mired in scandal had contributed millions of dollars to his re-election campaign, a spokesman said on November 29.

A foreign-funded inquiry reported the previous day how a US\$900 million fraud ruined the Kabul Bank, how cash was smuggled abroad in airline food trays and said top politicians dictated who should be prosecuted over the theft.

The inquiry did not name Karzai, but hinted that the president himself benefited, saying the bank had “reportedly provided millions of dollars to the campaign of at least one presidential candidate” against central bank advice.

Kabul Bank was reported to have been a major donor to Karzai’s 2009 re-election campaign, which was itself tainted by fraud and voting irregularities.

“The president is not aware (of the payments to his campaign),” presidential spokesman Aimal Faizi told AFP.

“He learnt of claims that \$20 million was paid to his campaign. This is a lot of money. We will investigate this.”

The president had specifically told the chairman and CEO of the bank in a meeting

at his office that if they were asked to contribute to his campaign they should refuse, Faizi said.

The country’s biggest scandal in years has also touched a brother of Karzai and a brother of Vice President Marshal Mohammad Qasim Fahim, who were shareholders in the bank. They have not been charged.

The investigation into the fraud and the prosecution of 22 people allegedly involved is being watched closely by Western donors for signs that Afghanistan is finally tackling rampant government corruption.

Donors have pledged billions of dollars in aid after NATO combat troops withdraw from insurgency-racked Afghanistan in 2014, but have made payment conditional on corruption being brought under control.

The 87-page findings of the inquiry expose a sophisticated network of corruption that saw money smuggled abroad, as well as political interference in criminal proceedings.

Critics, including international corruption watchdog Global Witness, point out that the report also reveals an urgent need for international banking reform.

Briefs

China moves to raise land payouts

BEIJING – China’s cabinet has passed a legal amendment aimed at increasing compensation for rural land confiscations, a major source of popular unrest, state-run media said on November 30.

The legislation could increase payments 10-fold yet still be insufficient to defuse the problem, the *Global Times* said.

China’s State Council passed the draft amendment on November 28, saying in a statement that “too much rural land has been expropriated too quickly”, a trend that “affects stability in the countryside”.

NKorea gets new defence minister

SEOUL – North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un has replaced his defence chief with a hawkish general in a shakeup apparently aimed at tightening his grip over the military, a report said on November 29.

Vice Marshal Kim Jong-Gak was sacked as defence minister after seven months in office, *Yonhap News Agency* quoted an unnamed senior South Korean presidential official as saying.

He was replaced by Kim Kyok-Sik, a hawkish general believed to have orchestrated the North’s sinking of a South Korean warship and an artillery attack on a border island in 2010, it said.

Offerings guidelines planned for monks

COLOMBO – Sri Lanka’s health ministry announced plans on November 27 to draw up guidelines for offering food to Buddhist monks amid concerns about their weight and health.

The ministry said devotees tended to give food that was too high in fat and sugar and monks were developing preventable health conditions such as heart disease and diabetes.

“The Medical Research Institute has been asked to prepare menus that could be used for alms givings,” the ministry said in a statement, adding that the guidelines would be issued this month.

Australia uncovers credit card scam

SYDNEY – Australian police said on November 29 they had uncovered the country’s biggest credit card data theft and smashed a Romanian syndicate allegedly behind the scam.

An international investigation saw seven people charged in Romania with stealing the details of about 30,000 credit cards and using the information to buy goods around the world worth some A\$30 million (US\$31 million).

Police said the data was stolen by hacking into the computer systems of about 100 small Australian retailers. – AFP



The bodies of some of the 110 victims of the garment factory fire before their burial in a Dhaka graveyard on November 27. Pic: AFP

Arrests follows factory inferno

DHAKA – Bangladesh police fired rubber bullets to disperse thousands of workers who protested for a third day on November 28 over the nation’s worst factory blaze which prompted the arrest of three plant managers.

At least 5000 workers left their factories and joined the protests, pelting stones and streaming through the main streets of Ashulia industrial area, just outside Dhaka and home to 500 manufacturing outlets, police said.

“They were demanding justice for the fire victims and arrest of the (plant) owner,” police official Faruq Ahmed told AFP, referring to the fire that began late on November 24 at a garment factory that left 110 people dead and more than 100 injured.

Police have arrested three managers of Tazreen Fashion factory, following charges

that they stopped workers from leaving the burning plant when the fire alarm sounded, insisting that it was just a routine drill.

Police arrested an administrative officer, the store in-charge and a security supervisor of the factory.

“All three are mid-level managers of Tazreen. Survivors told us they did not allow the workers to escape the fire, saying it was a routine fire drill,” Dhaka police chief Habibur Rahman told AFP.

“There are also allegations that they even padlocked doors,” he said.

The burning factory supplied clothes to a variety of international brands including US retail giant Walmart.

Two government inquiries have already been set up to establish the cause of the worst factory fire to

hit Bangladesh’s garment industry, which employs three million and is the mainstay of the economy.

The shocked nation observed a day of national mourning on November 27. Green and red Bangladeshi flags flew at half-mast alongside black flags atop government offices and the nation’s 4500 garment factories.

Rahman said police also questioned Tazreen’s owner, Delwar Hossain, about alleged building rules violations after inspectors found the nine-storey factory only had permission for three floors.

About 700 garment workers have been killed in dozens of fires in Bangladesh since 2006, said the Clean Clothes Campaign, an Amsterdam-based textile rights group. But none of the owners has been prosecuted over previous blazes. – AFP



A protester sprays a placard of a mock cover of a Chinese passport during a demonstration outside the Chinese consular office in Manila on November 29. Pic: AFP

Row escalates over new passports

MANILA – The Philippines said on November 28 it would refuse to stamp Chinese passports containing a map showing most of the China South Sea as belonging to China, as it stepped up protests over the controversial move.

The new passports have provoked angry reactions from around the region, with Vietnam, Taiwan and India all expressing their objections amid a dispute over Beijing's territorial claims.

The Philippines Depart-

ment of Foreign Affairs said in a statement that immigration personnel would stamp "a separate visa application form" instead of the Chinese passport.

"Through this action, the Philippines reinforces its protest against China's excessive claim over almost the entire South China Sea," the department said.

The passports have maps showing a "nine-dash line" that runs almost to the Philippine and Malaysian coasts.

Vietnam has also refused

to stamp the passports while India, angered that the map claims Arunachal Pradesh and Aksai China as Chinese territory, is stamping its own map on visas given to Chinese visitors.

Indonesia has described the passports as "counter-productive".

"These actions are counterproductive and will not help settle the disputes," Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa said in an interview published in the *Jakarta Post* on November 29. – AFP

Plain cigarette packs on sale in Australia in a world first

SYDNEY – All cigarettes sold in Australia are now in identical, plain packages in a world first after the government overcame legal challenges from the tobacco industry.

Under new laws which took effect on December 1, all tobacco products must be sold in drab, olive-brown packets with expanded graphic health warnings which feature images such as gangrenous feet and mouth cancer.

Health Minister Tanya Plibersek said the packets, which survived a constitutional challenge from major tobacco firms, were about making smoking less attractive.

"That's the aim of this exercise," she told reporters in Sydney on November 30.

"The challenge for us as a government is to make it (smoking) as unappealing as possible. If we can prevent

young people from taking it up, that's a lifetime gift to them."

Tobacco companies had fought the change, but the High Court rejected their argument that the new law infringed their intellectual property rights by banning brands and trademarks from packets.

Plibersek said tobacco companies had reported no changes to their products, but there was a possible psychological effect of the new packages making them less attractive to some people.

"I have had a few letters... with smokers saying to me, 'Oh the cigarettes don't taste the same as they used to,'" she said.

The minister said after World War II about 50 percent of Australians smoked but this had dropped to 15pc and the government was aiming to push it down to 10pc by

2018.

The new legislation comes into force as a study conducted for the Cancer Council of Victoria found that one-in-four smokers believe the effects of tobacco on health are exaggerated.

The research examined the impact of Australia's health warnings on cigarette packages, which for years have included graphic images depicting health issues arising from smoking.

Its study of 4000 smokers in Victoria state from 2003 to 2011 found that about a quarter still believed the dangers of smoking had been exaggerated and one in 10 did not believe or were not sure that smoking caused illness.

Smoking is one of the leading causes of preventable death and disease in Australians, killing an estimated 15,000 every year. – AFP

Crisis looms over impeachment bid

COLOMBO – Sri Lanka's parliament and Supreme Court were headed for a showdown over government plans to impeach the country's top judge, after MPs on November 29 said the court had no authority over their actions.

"This (impeachment) is a matter which falls exclusively within the purview of parliament's authority," said Parliamentary Speaker Chamal Rajapakse who is also President Mahinda Rajapakse's eldest brother.

Rights groups have seen the latest impeachment move as an attempt by President Rajapakse to tighten his grip on power after crushing Tamil rebels in 2009.

The Supreme Court had on November 28 asked MPs to explain their attempt to impeach the chief justice after the influential Bar Association of Sri Lanka filed a case calling for the process to be declared illegal.

But Rajapakse said MPs will not go before the Supreme Court and insisted that no

one else had the power to interfere with the work of the 225-member legislature.

The Supreme Court, headed by Shirani Bandaranayake, annoyed the president in October with a decision to effectively scupper a bill giving more powers to the economic development minister, who is the president's youngest brother Basil.

Bandaranayake says there is not an "iota" of truth in allegations against her of financial and professional misconduct. – AFP

China boosts powers of maritime police in South China Sea

BEIJING – China has granted its border patrol police the right to board and expel foreign ships entering disputed waters in the South China Sea, state media reported on November 29.

The move comes after Beijing issued new passports containing a map showing its claim to almost the whole of the South China Sea, infuriating its neighbours. Vietnam and the Philippines are refusing to stamp the documents.

The southern Chinese province of Hainan passed new regulations last week allowing local police "to board, seize and expel foreign ships illegally entering the province's sea areas", the state-run *Global Times* reported.

Activities defined as illegal by the new regulation include "illegally halting or dropping anchor... and carrying out publicity

campaigns that endanger China's national security", state-run *Xinhua* news agency said.

Hainan province administers around two million square kilometres (800,000 sq miles) of ocean including the Spratly islands, which are also claimed in whole or in part by the Philippines, Vietnam, Brunei, Malaysia and Taiwan.

The South China Sea includes some of the world's most important shipping lanes and is believed to be rich in fossil fuels.

Asked about the reports on November 29, Beijing's foreign ministry spokesman Hong Lei said only: "It is the legitimate right of the sovereign state to carry out maritime management."

The *Global Times* quoted Li Zhaojie, a professor at Beijing's Tsinghua University, as saying the regulation could lead to stricter enforcement of

Beijing's right to expel ships entering its territory illegally.

Li said these rights were granted by a UN convention.

"In the past, when foreign ships broke the UN convention, the best thing our patrol could do was chase them out of China's waters. The new regulation will change that and give the patrol force the legal means to actually do its job."

China has been accused of ramping up tensions in the area in the recent past, with the Philippines and Vietnam raising the alarm over Beijing's assertiveness.

It discourages multilateral talks on the issue and has refused to start negotiations on a code of conduct for the region, although United States President Barack Obama discussed it with Southeast Asian leaders at a summit last month. – AFP

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ဖက်ရှင် အလှအပနဲ့ အနုပညာရေးရာတွေကို ဖတ်စရာ ကြည့်စရာ စုံစုံလင်လင်နဲ့ အပတ်စဉ် တင်ဆက်ပေးနေတဲ့ **NOW! Weekly Magazine** ဟာ အခုဆိုရင် (၅) နှစ်ပြည့်မြောက်ခဲ့ပါပြီ။ (၅) နှစ်ပြည့် အထိမ်းအမှတ်အနေနဲ့ လာမယ့် ဒီဇင်ဘာလ (၉) ရက်နေ့ မန္တလေးမြို့ **Diamond Plaza** မှာ မန်းရွှေမြို့တော်ရဲ့ နာမည်ကျော် မိတ်ကပ် ဘိုဘိုနီ (မိုးကုတ်) ရဲ့ ပြင်ဆင်ခြယ်သမှုနဲ့ နာမည်ကျော် ဒီဇိုင်းနာတွေဖြစ်တဲ့ နန္ဒရန်နောင်၊ မျိုးမင်းစိုး၊ ဇေဇေ တို့ရဲ့ ဖက်ရှင် ဒီဇိုင်းဆန်းတွေ ပါဝင်ပြသမယ့် ဖက်ရှင်ရှိုးနဲ့ အတူ လူငယ်ကြိုက် အဆိုကျော်တွေ ဖြစ်တဲ့ လွမ်းပိုင်၊ Ar-T ၊ စန္ဒီမြင့်လွင်၊ အေသင်ချိုဆွေ၊ **Stars & Models Int'l**, **Body Shade**, **Bee Poison** တို့ရဲ့ ဖျော်ဖြေမှုတွေ အပါအဝင် ရင်ခုန်ဖွယ်ရာ ကံစမ်းမဲအစီအစဉ်ကိုလည်း တစ်ပါတည်း ခံစားခွင့်ရစေမယ့် ပွဲကြီးကို ကျင်းပဖို့ရှိပါတယ်။ ဒီတော့ အဲဒီနေ့မှာ အချိန်လည်း ရမယ်ဆိုရင် **NOW!** ဝိုင်းတော်သားတွေနဲ့အတူ **NOW!** ရဲ့ (၅) နှစ်ပြည့်ပွဲကြီးကို လာရောက်ဆင်နွှဲကြဖို့ လှိုက်လှိုက်လှဲလှဲ ဖိတ်ခေါ်ပါတယ်။

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YFS holds student film screening

By Nyein Ei Ei Htwe

SHORT films created by students at Yangon Film School (YFS) were screened at House of Memories in Yangon on December 2, including six works by students who attended a four-month course at the school ending last month.

YFS director Lindsey Merrison said the aim of the event was to showcase the work of the school's latest intake of students.

"Some of the films were made by students who just completed our latest four-month workshop, while others were made by graduates of several courses," she said. "Some of these films are YFS productions, and others were created for development organisations about the impact that their programs in Myanmar are having for beneficiaries."

"The evening was all about showing the range of work that our filmmakers are creating and their growing abilities as filmmakers," Ms Merrison added.

After the screening the filmmakers were invited onstage to share their experiences making their films, and also took questions from the audience.

Ms. Merrison said the event would help advertise the work of YSF as a hub of capacity building in the media.

"By demonstrating the diversity of work that our filmmakers are capable of producing - including documentary, fiction and specially commissioned work for clients in the development sector - I hope that we will encourage other budding filmmakers in Myanmar to apply for our courses, and also find partners in the development and arts sectors with which to cooperate on a range of film-based projects," she said.

Cultural norms trump literary merit at state-run book awards

By Zon Pann Pwint

THE winners of the National Literary Award for books published in 2011 were announced on November 22, with 13 honourees named by a judging committee working under the Ministry of Information.

Prizes were meant to be given in 16 categories, but the selection committee decided that the entries in the Novel, Youth Literature and English-Language Fiction categories failed to meet specified selection criteria.

"We have read all the literature published in the 2011 calendar year, including comedy, satire and fantasy. We define the criteria for each category, and if works don't meet these standards, we reject them and select the best from the remaining books," said poet U Myo Tun, secretary of National Literary Award Selection Committee.

The committee picked the 13 winners from more than 2400 books in all genres. Of these, 827 were novels but none were deemed sufficient to warrant the literary prize.

"There were many good novels that were left unrewarded," U Myo Tun said.

"One work in particular that was under consideration had the characteristics of good realistic fiction. There was a display of sentiment and fine presentation, but the story was all about a life of toil spent burning wood to make charcoal. When we evaluated it from an environmental point of view, we didn't chose it."

He declined to reveal the title of book "for the sake of the author".

U Myo Tun went farther in revealing the manner in which the committee's demand for adherence to Myanmar's cultural norms can eliminate worthy candidates.

"The judges had another excellent novel to consider, based on real-life events. The author was meticulous in creating plausible characters, and the dialect they used and their actions reflected the period and the setting in which they lived," U Myo Tun said.

"We praise the author's knowledge and artistic merit, but the female character in the novel committed



Pic: Myanmar Times Archive

National Literary Award winner U Nyein Min.

suicide in the end because of her feelings of defeat. It can give a false impression, and such actions are not encouraged in our religion and culture. We didn't take account of similar novels for the award."

He added that the committee does not consider horror and mystery books for the award, because these subjects "can mislead the readers".

While none of the hundreds of novels published in 2011 were deemed to have met the proper criteria, the year's single dramatic work was awarded the prize in its category.

"There was only one drama book published for the whole year, and we picked it for the award because it met the criteria we used for assessing quality, and also because it was a single excellent book published at a time when this type of drama is fading into virtual obscurity," U Myo Tun said.

The work, titled Tapin Kyo Hlyin Naut Hna Pin (Two Trees Grow where One Falls Down) was written by three-time Myanmar Academy

Award-winning scriptwriter and film director U Nyein Min.

He said he had written the drama as a reminder of his work writing plays for actor Nan Win's theatre in the 1980s.

"I didn't feel confident about publishing it because of lack of demand, so I submitted the unpublished work to compete for the Sarpay Beikman manuscript award," U Nyein Min said.

It won the 2009 Sarpay Beikman award for best manuscript in the drama category, and was published in book form in 2011.

"I feel happy about winning in the drama category because this category isn't given every year," U Nyein Min said.

"In the text of a novel the author can compose the atmosphere of the surroundings, and the nature and actions of the characters. But playwrights must present the atmosphere, action and feeling of the characters only through dialogue," he said.

"Reading drama forces the audience to fully comprehend the

human mind and feeling through listening to what he says."

For U Nyein Min, drama holds higher aesthetic value than any other literary form. He said the genre flourished in Myanmar in the late 19th century, with U Ku's Luwun Maung Hnama (Ape Brother and Sister) enjoying a circulation of 15,000 copies in 1875.

"But drama dies a death now, and readers hardly show any interest in the genre," he said.

U Nyein Min said there were many fine works that didn't win National Literary Awards because they did not meet the standards set by the judging committee, but he added that they would get their chance to win privately run prizes, such as Dr Tin Shwe, Thuta Swesone, Shwe Amutae, Tun Foundation and Pakokku U Ohn Pe literary awards.

This year's Lifetime Achievement National Literary Award was presented to 85-year-old Min Yu Wai, whose real name is U Win Maung.

"I started writing when I was 17 years old. Since then I have never taken a rest from writing. I feel encouraged and happy to be awarded," he said.

When asked if the age of 85 was too late to win a lifetime achievement award, he said: "My friends think so. I too have the same feeling. But the award is not an important matter; to write is the first importance. But if I had died at the age of 80, I would not have received the award."

The other National Literary Awards winners were Ye Myat Tin in the Collected Short Stories category; Pyinmana Maung Ni Thin for Collected Poems; Kaythipan U Hla Myint (Belles-letters); Natmauk Tun Shein (Myanmar Culture and Arts), Maung Seinn Naung (Children's Literature); U Kyi Myint (Translation - General Knowledge); Tin Maung Myint (Translation - Aesthetic); U Win Naing (General Knowledge - Art); Dr Khin Maung Swe (General Knowledge - Science); Thaug Nyunt Thit (General Knowledge - Applied Science); Ko Ko Maung Gyi (Politics); and U Thet Tun (English-language - General Knowledge).

The awards ceremony will be held at the Myanmar International Convention Centre in Nay Pyi Taw on December 14.



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Myanmar author explores new literary freedoms

By Anand Chandra

YANGON — As Myanmar's censors loosen their grip, one of the country's most acclaimed authors plans to republish her novel about two gay lovers, restoring sex-laced passages once deemed too risqué for readers.

Chunks of paragraphs from Nu Nu Yi's 1994 novel *Smile as They Bow* were purged by the all-powerful censorship office — seen as an Orwellian-style arbiter of all that is fit for publication.

For decades they vetted every article, book manuscript, photograph and illustration before publication, eliminating anything considered inflammatory or damaging to the nation's military dictators.

But the quasi-civilian government that took office last year has effectively abolished direct censorship, a totemic indicator of the reforms sweeping Myanmar as it emerges from the shadows of outright military rule.

No one is cheering that more than Nu Nu Yi, who in 2007 became the first living Myanmar writer to be nominated for the Man Asian Literary Prize.

Her accomplishment was tempered by the fact that the celebrated novel was heavily censored at home, slammed as culturally insensitive in a society where homosexuality is illegal, although the law is not strictly enforced.

Smile as They Bow is set against the backdrop of Taungbyone — a phantasmagoric cultural festival that celebrates mythical "nat" spirits found in Myanmar folklore.

Ceremonies at the annual festival, seen as a stomping ground for Myanmar's marginalised sexual minorities, are guided by spirit mediums — usually transvestites decked up in glittering outfits and garish makeup.

The novel describes the tumultuous romance between a transvestite spirit medium in his 50s and his 20-something apprentice, with love leading to heartbreak



Nu Nu Yi speaks during an interview at her home in Yangon on July 25, 2007. Pic: AFP

as the young man falls for a beggar girl.

In an interview in her apartment in Yangon, Nu Nu Yi held out a copy of her original manuscript returned by the censors — with several passages blotted out by silver ink.

Among those erased was a passage containing an intimate, invective-laced conversation that one of the protagonists uses to express reservations that he may never have sex with another woman.

It was a classic sign of how the former military rulers for decades maintained one of the world's tightest censorship nets in Myanmar, suppressing a generation of writers and intellectuals.

But censor officials — who occupy the decrepit Press Scrutiny and Registration Department in Yangon — also invited parody.

In other objections raised, they had a problem

with one of the effeminate gay characters adoringly referring to his partner as "husband". They demanded that it be changed to "son".

"We finally settled for 'adopted son' — in a desperate attempt to lend legitimacy to their romance," Nu Nu Yi said.

Even more ludicrous, she said while trying to suppress fits of laughter, censor officials complained the main characters were strikingly similar in demeanour to two top generals.

"I really didn't know if I should get angry or laugh. It's hard not to laugh at the excesses of propaganda and control."

Smile as They Bow just about made it past the censors, but the heavy-handed cuts caused her much anguish.

"I felt helpless," she said. "Writers have a social contract with readers. We're

meant to shed light on reality ... not offer a 'sanitised' version of reality."

But after the government earlier this year abolished pre-publication censorship for novels, Nu Nu Yi plans to self-publish the unabridged, uncensored version of her novel in 2013.

The bold move is symptomatic of changes afoot in Myanmar society, where ordinary citizens are increasingly pushing the boundaries of newfound freedoms after the government stunned the world with a series of reforms.

President U Thein Sein has won widespread praise for moving to release political prisoners and overseeing the election of democracy champion Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to parliament.

He has also shown tolerance for candlelight vigils to protest power outages, farmer agitations against alleged land grabs, and lively parliament debates led by a newly resurgent opposition — all unthinkable under military rule.

In a sign of liberalising social attitudes paralleling the political reforms, activists held Myanmar's first gay pride celebrations in May.

Myanmar is fast "becoming a normal democracy", said Aung Naing Oo of the Bangkok-based Vahu Development Institute, who believes that the end of harsh media restrictions is among the "top achievements" of the government.

But Nu Nu Yi cautions that self-censorship is a bigger threat than enforced censorship.

"For a vast majority, censorship exists in the head," she said.

She also cautioned that Myanmar is still "a reforming state, not a reformed state" and though the steps towards democracy are a welcome change, the threat of backsliding exists.

"The changes are not set in stone," Nu Nu Yi said.

"So before the censors change their mind ... let's change the 'adopted son' back to 'husband'," she laughed. — AFP

'Smile': A rare English translation

By Douglas Long

IN 2007 Nu Nu Yi's novella *Smile as They Bow* was one of five books shortlisted for the prestigious Man Asian Literary Prize.

Although it didn't win the US\$10,000 top prize (that honour went to Chinese writer Jiang Rong's *Wolf Totem*), the following year *Smile as They Bow* was published in English translation by New York-based Hyperion Books.

The slim hardcover English edition remains one of the very few works of fiction by a Myanmar writer to have been meticulously translated, professionally edited and distributed by a major publishing company in the West.

The translation was done by American freelance translator Alfred Birnbaum and his Myanmar wife Thi Thi Aye, and was based on the original, uncensored manuscript.

"Alfred reads and writes Myanmar very well," Nu Nu Yi told *The Myanmar Times* shortly before the translation was published. "His wife is Myanmar and helped him to translate as close to the original as possible. She even demonstrated a nat [spirit] dance for him to grasp the meaning."

She also revealed that it was the editors at Hyperion who suggested that the book be submitted for the Man Asian Literary Prize, one year before publication. Only unpublished works are eligible for the prize.

She added that the publishing house chose to release *Smile As They Bow* over another one of her novels, *Kamaryut in Blue-Green*, which had won the state-sponsored National Literary Award in 1993.

"They chose it because they felt *Smile As They Bow*

reflects Myanmar culture more vividly," Nu Nu Yi said. "They were also the ones who suggested submitting it for the Asian award. I just gave them the green light."

Such an eccentric book was never going to be a bestseller in the staid US fiction market, and although it did receive generally favourable reviews, few of them could be considered glowing raves.

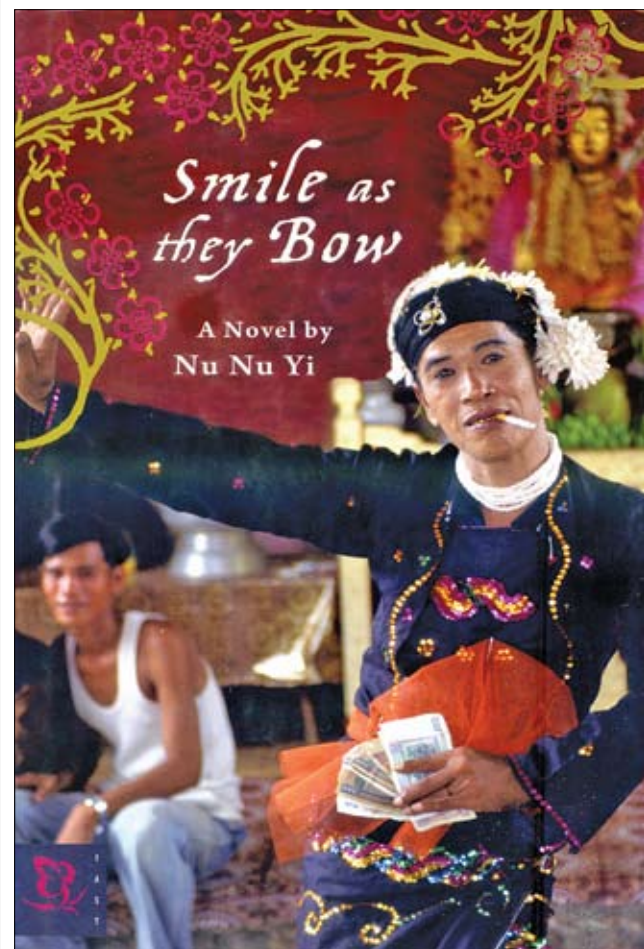
One complaint from Western readers was the obscurity of the subject matter.

The translators and editors of the English edition chose to let the story speak for itself rather than weighing the book down with explanatory material such as forewords, glossaries or footnotes. This might have been confusing for readers who were not familiar with nat culture in Myanmar, or who were unaware that Taungbyone was even an actual event.

Despite this, the strength of the book lies in its rich descriptions of the colourful raucous, bacchanalian festival, allowing readers to experience the noise and chaos for themselves.

While some critics complained of a weak or nonexistent plotline, the meandering manner in which the story unfolds is an accurate reflection of the unchained, flowing atmosphere at Taungbyone, where festivalgoers tend to wander around, following the music from one performance to the next.

The main character, Daisy Bond, is also vividly rendered. The reader is stuck in his head for a large portion of the narration, which is both a blessing and a curse: Bond is simultaneously one of the most fascinating, and downright irritating, personas ever to appear in the pages of a work of fiction.



Human rights films screened in Yangon

By Nuam Bawi

A SCREENING of documentary films about human rights was held at Maha Santi Sukha Buddhist Centre in Yangon on November 23 and 24, organised by director Min Htin Kokogyi.

Five films were screened: "Best-Lah Punk" and "Hak Dinafikan" (Malaysia), "Please Vote for Me" (China), "The Power of the Powerless" (Czech Republic), and "Cowboys in India" (India).

Min Htin Kokogyi said that even though all the documentaries were from foreign countries, he chose films whose subject matter reflected the current situation in Myanmar.

"I think that what I can do to

move toward a country that can give everyone an equal chance, is to promote awareness of human rights through the film industry, with which I am familiar," he said.

"I held this screening to raise public awareness about human rights, and also because I want the public to know the truth about human rights abuses."

He said he understood that screening documentary films would not eradicate dictatorial politics in Myanmar, but he hoped that it would prompt people to do what they could in their own environment to move the country forward.

One audience member at the screening, teacher Ma Zin Mar, said the films were entertaining and educational, but added that Myanmar

audiences are still not familiar with the culture of documentary films.

"While attending the Art of Freedom Film Festival this past January, I noticed that many people in the audience did not really get the message that some of the documentary films intended to give," she said.

"So we need to raise public awareness about documentaries to make sure the audience gets the message the filmmakers are trying to send."

Min Htin Kokogyi said he plans to screen the five human rights documentaries in all states and regions throughout Myanmar, in preparation for the Human Rights Documentary Film Festival that he will organise for June 2013.

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With label changes, wine battle shifts to US

By Suzanne Mustacich

BORDEAUX — With names like Prickly French and Villa Chambre d'Amour, French wine producers are casting aside traditional regional appellations in pursuit of a new generation of label-conscious consumers.

Behind the trend lies a ferocious fight for market share with New World wines in which the United States is about to become the next battleground.

So far, only a few of the wines that use Vin de France (wine of France) as a country appellation, have trickled into the US because of a dispute about what producers can put on the label.

That is all set to change with the American authorities having finally agreed to allow wines using a country as their appellation of origin — rather than a region like Beaujolais — to also carry the date of the vintage.

"The major French brand wines want to come to the US when they can put the vintage and the varietal on the label. They've been waiting for two years," said Valerie Pajotin, director of ANIVIN, the communications arm for Vin de France.

A varietal wine is labelled with the grape variety like merlot, and increasingly around the world it is this that guides consumers' selection rather than the precise origin of the wine.

Global demand continues to outpace supply for France's top wines, but the trend towards varietals has made life harder in the middle market with non-French consumers often finding themselves baffled by labels that are the result of a combination of complex rules and centuries of tradition.

"Pinot noir, chardonnay and cabernet are the hot varietals right now," said Pierre-Yves Robin, senior wine buyer for American retailer Total Wine.

Consumers also see a vintage as a badge of quality in wine, which made American retailers reluctant to import French

varietals without the year on the label.

The new regime came into force earlier this month, and French producers are hoping this will open the floodgates for the 148 Vin de France wines already approved for sale in the US\$30 billion US market.

Flexibility is the *raison d'être* for the Vin de France category.

"There are two advantages — one technical, one commercial," explained Emmanuel Montes, export director for Les Domaines Auriol in the Languedoc region of southern France.

"Technically, it allows me to blend wine from different regions in France and create a unique product, with homogenous quality, labelled with the vintage and the grape variety. Commercially, it puts us in competition with the big wine companies in the New World."

Primarily targeting export markets, the Vin de France category came into existence in 2009 with the simultaneous demise of Vin de Table, or table wine, a category that few were sad to see go.

The challenge has been to convince consumers that it is more than plonk with a snazzy label and both exporters and importers believe vintage dating will help achieve that goal.

"Vintage connotes quality," said Total Wine's Robin.

Despite barriers to the American market, Vin de France production has grown from 300,000 hectolitres in 2009 to 1.23 million hectolitres in 2011.

Castel, the giant French drinks company, produced 110 million bottles of Vin de France in 2011. While only 328,593 bottles were sent to America, China took 14 million.

Smaller operators see an opportunity to attack specific export markets with tailored products.

"The Chinese always want exclusivity," said Philippe Carrant of Wines Overland. "We're selling our Vin de France private brands Lafleur Gloria in China for exclusive distribution." — AFP

Research bolsters promise of health benefits from tea

By Katherine Tallmadge

A TEA timeout is my favourite way to de-stress a day. It feels so civilised to relax with a warm cup of jasmine-scented green tea or perhaps the traditional English treat, black tea with milk — "white", as they say. Still, with all the myths we hear about nutrition, I've always wondered, is tea as healthful as many people believe?

Although tea has been enjoyed around the world for some 5000 years, it wasn't until relatively recently that scientists started searching for the facts.

From the 1970s to the 1990s, epidemiological studies — the kind following large populations' eating and disease patterns — found tea drinking might be associated with better health. But no clear cause-and-effect relationship between health and tea was established.

"More careful clinical and laboratory studies are needed," said Johanna Dwyer, a professor at Tufts Medical School in Boston, at the fifth International Scientific Symposium on Tea and Human Health held last September at the US Agriculture Department.

But recent studies have been promising. What did they find? Just about every cell in the body could potentially benefit from tea — with virtually no downsides.

All true tea (white, green, oolong and black, as opposed to herbal varieties) comes from one plant: *Camellia sinensis*. The differences are in how they are processed, with white and green being the least processed, oolong in the middle and black the most processed. The processing changes the nutritional profile and some of the health effects. But no matter the process, all tea leaves are dense with flavonoids, health-promoting chemicals found in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and most plants.

"About one-third of the weight of a tea leaf is flavonoids, which is high, especially when you consider there are virtually no calories," said Jeffrey Blumberg, professor of nutrition science and policy at Tufts University and chairman of the tea symposium. "A serving of tea is like adding a serving of fruits or vegetables to your diet."

But can tea produce more health benefits than fruits or vegetables? Flavonoid research results are exciting but mixed, and there is still a lot to learn.

There are "small but possibly significant health effects, but study quality needs to improve. ... The variety, geography, processing and brewing of tea must be considered since it will dramatically change flavonoid content and possibly associated health benefits," Dwyer said, adding, "Tea is not a drug, and to expect a drug-like effect is unrealistic."



An elderly Palaung woman watches over her tea leaves as they dry in the sun, near Kyaukme in Shan State, in April 2008. Pic: Douglas Long

So, while not a miracle cure-all, there is some exciting news about tea:

It helps your heart by keeping blood vessels unclogged and flexible. Blood pressure and stroke risk were reduced in epidemiological and clinical studies (even with sugar added).

In a double-blind, randomised study in which hypertensive men drank one cup of black tea daily, both systolic and diastolic blood pressure were reduced. The blood-pressure-lowering effect was maintained even after a large intake of fatty, sugary food, which usually constricts blood vessels, showing that "cardiovascular protection can be achieved even without much sacrifice and with normal intakes", said Claudio Ferri, a professor at Italy's University

reduced oxidative stress and inflammation, preventing the usual bone and muscle breakdown.

It can help your thinking. When your brain receives better blood flow and oxygen, and inflammation and oxidative stress are reduced, there is improved cognitive function, according to studies. In fact, a 25 percent reduction in impairments of activities of daily living was found when adults drank three to four cups of tea daily.

It might reduce cancer risk. Many animal and test-tube studies have found anti-cancer effects of tea, but human studies have been less consistent. "In lab studies, compounds in tea show a lot of cancer fighting promise. Many act as antioxidants, slow tumour growth and even increase cancer cell

'Recent studies have been promising. What did they find? Just about every cell in the body could potentially benefit from tea — with virtually no downsides.'

of L'Aquila School of Internal Medicine and co-author of the study.

Healthier blood vessels create better blood flow, which means all of your organs, including the brain, are receiving more blood, oxygen and nutrients, enhancing your body's ability to fight disease. So, healthier blood vessel linings might be one reason why tea consumption seems associated with so many benefits.

It improves bone health. After drinking four to six cups of green tea daily for six months, post-menopausal women with low bone mass (osteopenia) achieved an improvement in certain short-term measures of bone health in a National Institutes of Health-funded study conducted at Texas Tech University Health Sciences Centre. They also improved muscular strength. Tea

death," said Alice Bender of the American Institute for Cancer Research. "But the evidence is too limited and inconsistent to make any conclusions about tea and cancer risk for humans."

It can help you lose weight. Not only does tea have fewer calories than most beverages (zero without milk and sugar), but certain compounds in tea, and especially green tea, have been found to burn body fat. Caffeine slightly increases fat-burning, but recent studies show "the combination of caffeine and green tea catechins [tea's antioxidants] is even more effective at increasing energy expenditure and fat oxidation, though the effect is small, burning 100 calories over 24 hours, or a loss of 2.8 pounds over 12 weeks," said Rick Hursel of Maastricht University, co-author of one study.

It can help you de-stress. An amino acid called L-theanine, in combination with caffeine, might reduce stress. Several studies have shown that this combination, which occurs naturally in tea, reduces cortisol, the stress hormone, while improving mental alertness. "Tea consumption can positively affect mood and may improve creative problem solving, as compared to water," said Suzanne Einother, a Dutch researcher from Unilever (maker of Lipton tea), at the symposium.

Tea is not a drug, which means the health effects are mild and might not even be noticeable, depending on your genetics. That said, a wealth of evidence seems to show that the British had the right idea. Perhaps it's time we all had a tea habit.

Seven Tips for Tea Drinkers

1. "Tea catechins are stable in dry tea leaves but diminish as brewed tea is held/stored. To make sure you are consuming the tea phytonutrients (flavonoids) that may promote health, brew tea fresh," nutritionist Beverly Clevidence of the USDA's Agricultural Research Service said in an email. To maintain the healthful nutrients in tea, leaves should be kept away from light and heat in an airtight container.

2. Many people believe tea is dehydrating and don't recommend it as a hydrating fluid. But the National Academy of Sciences has refuted that claim, saying tea and coffee are as hydrating as water.

3. Some avoid tea because of its effect on iron absorption, but the effect is small. If you have iron-deficiency anaemia, drink tea between meals to minimise interference, and eat your iron-containing foods with vitamin C-containing foods to maximise iron absorption.

4. Milk (or any protein, for that matter) might bind with and prevent absorption of some flavonoids but could enhance absorption of others. Studies have been too limited to determine the extent of the effect.

5. Drink tea throughout the day to keep the flavonoids in your system and get maximum benefit — various studies have suggested between one and six cups a day — but don't forget a balanced diet.

6. Stick with the tea you enjoy most, whether white, green, oolong or black. All impart health benefits, and the studies are not detailed or numerous enough to choose one over another. "While fermentation causes green tea to become black, digestion may convert black tea back to green," Jeffrey Blumberg, professor of nutrition science and policy at Tufts, said.

7. Be wary of bottled ready-to-drink teas or products containing tea extracts or supplements, as there is no way of knowing their flavonoid content, if any. Many are very low or nonexistent. — *The Washington Post*



Workers harvest grapes at Chateau Haut-Brion Vineyards in Pessac, France, on August 31, 2011. Pic: AFP

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Phyo's Cooking Adventure

Phyo cuts through culture to reveal life's true taste

Chicken noodle soup, Vietnam style

WINTER is waiting just around the corner, and the promise of cooler air makes this the perfect time to introduce my recipe for the Vietnamese rice noodle soup known as pho.

Phyo's pho INGREDIENTS (4 servings)

Broth
1 chicken bone (body)
220-250g of chicken thigh parts (¼ of chicken)
5 big cloves unpeeled garlic
100g of unpeeled ginger
3 unpeeled onions
1/3 cup of fish sauce
1 tablespoon brown sugar
½ tablespoon of salt
4 liters of water

Spice pouch
4 whole star anise
4 cloves
1 teaspoon black peppercorn
1 cinnamon stick

Flat rice noodles
750g of fresh flat rice noodles (nyat kaukswe) or 1 packet dry pad thai noodles

Serve with:
1 onion (sliced, washed in water and patted dry)



Pic: Htein Linn

2 small red chilies, or 2 green chilies (chopped)
2 cups of loosely packed bean sprouts
1 cup loosely packed mint
1 handful of Thai basil
1 lime (cut into wedges)

PREPARATION

To prepare the spice pouch, roast the star anise, cloves, black peppercorn and cinnamon stick in a frying pan until the aroma is released. Use a mortar and pestle to crush the spices, then pack them in a piece of muslin cloth or thin cotton as a parcel.

Grill the onions and garlic. When they're soft, cool them. Grill the ginger

until the aroma comes out. Once they are cool, chop roughly and set aside.

Boil the chicken in 4 liters of water. When it starts boiling, skim the dark, floating matter from the surface of the water — this is essential for producing clear broth. After boiling for 10-15 minutes, turn the heat down and let the broth boil gently for another 10 minutes, but continue scooping the flotsam from the surface. Add the tightly bound spice pouch into the pot.

Add the grilled onions, garlic and ginger. Keep scooping the chicken jetsam from the water. When the

surface is clear, add sugar, fish sauce and salt into the pot and simmer for 2½ hours, or until the liquid is reduced to half its original volume. Remove the spice packet from the broth.

If you are using fresh noodles, prepare hot water with a bit of salt and blanch a handful of noodles for 10-15 seconds. Then lay them out in a bowl and ladle the broth over the noodles. If you use pad thai noodles, prepare them as the packet suggests.

Put the fried chicken on top as a garnish. Serve with bean sprouts, onions, mint, basil, chili and lime wedges.

Fried Chicken INGREDIENTS

2 chicken breasts with skin
1 tablespoon of soy sauce
A bit of black pepper
Vegetable oil to deep fry

PREPARATION

Marinate the chicken with soy sauce and black pepper, and keep in the fridge for 15 minutes. Cook the chicken in a pot with a little bit of water until the meat is tender. Heat a wok with vegetable oil and deep fry the breasts until the meat is cooked through.

Main Tips

Take the time to scoop up all the dark morsels from the surface of the water while making the soup, otherwise the broth will not be clear. If possible, char-grill the spices, onions, ginger and garlic. This will give more fragrance.

QUAFFING QUOTE

"Food and wine and friendship matter more than almost anything I can think of. Together they involve skill and craft and patience, and understanding of difference, and appreciation, and the desire to bring happiness to others." — Stephanie Alexander (Australian cook, restaurateur and food writer)

NEXT WEEK

Coming this month: recipes for the festive season, including pasta salads for brunch, quick bites and finger foods, and quick and easy desserts.

Red Wine

Trapiche Astica Merlot-Malbec 2009

Smells like fresh berries (with a hint of mint), tastes like fresh berries (with a modicum of mocha), and finishes in a flash with fresh berries.

Score BOX **7** /10
Ks 7,580

White Wine

Wolf Blass Eaglehawk Semillon Chardonnay 2011

This versatile white packs pleasant citrus and grassy aromas that give way to peach, melon and tropical flavours, with a clean, refreshing finish.

Score BOX **8** /10
Ks 11,600

FOOD REVIEW

OCCASIONALLY — very occasionally — biryani is the exact perfect food for a midday meal. For me, this usually occurs as I'm wandering around town feeling a bit peckish, when suddenly I'm ambushed by the scent of nutmeg, cinnamon, cloves and cardamom wafting from a shop I happen to be passing.

This occurred most recently while strolling in the vicinity of Dagon Centre. My mind was set on Thai food, but aromatic tendrils of marinated mutton hooked me by the nose and yanked me into the nearest branch of the Kyet Shar Soon chain of biryani shops.

In Yangon, there is a certain amount of sameness from one biryani shop to the next, but there are some differences, mostly in the arenas of service, cleanliness and the amount of cooking oil used in food preparation.

Service is generally good: You order chicken, mutton or vegetarian, the lid is whisked off the appropriate aluminium pot, the food is scooped onto a plate and delivered to your table, and you're ready to chow down.

Biryani for the brave



Pic: Thandar Khine

Kyet Shar Soon Biryani

Bargayar Road (east of Dagon Centre), Sanchaung township, Yangon

Food: 7
Drink: 6
Atmosphere: 6
Service: 8
X Factor: 7
Value for Money: 8

Score BOX

7 /10

The staff at Kyet Shar Soon proved exceptionally vigorous: The food was served with typical promptness, and when I ordered a Star Cola, the nearest waiter literally leapt into action, going from zero to 5kph in a nanosecond as he skated across the tiled floor to the cooler, then skated back to deliver my drink, cap off and straw already in place.

Speaking of tiles, the only places you're likely to find more ceramic flooring and walling than in a biryani shop are infirmaries, morgues and Chinese hotel rooms. The hospital aesthetic isn't pretty, but it has its benefits when it comes to cleanliness: Hose it down, wipe it off and go home for the night. Kyet Shar Soon has this process down quite well, as during my midday biryani interlude there were only a handful of questionable smudges on the walls.

Compared with some of the other greasy, gut-wrenching biryani experiences I've had in Yangon, the food at Kyet Shar Soon was reasonably restrained in the cooking oil department: In all, I found it to be inexpensive, light, tasty and not the least bit gastrically debilitating. — DL

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Models @ Sony DSLR Product Launch



Moe Aung Yin @ MK & ICC 20th Anniversary



Nay Aung @ MK & ICC 20th Anniversary



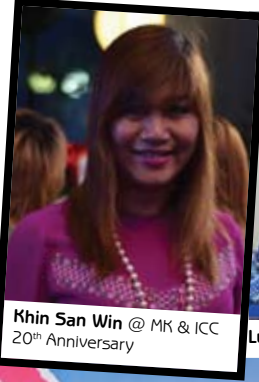
Sai Sai Kham Leng prize winner @ Konidin Lucky Draw Program



Dr Tun Aung Lwin @ Yangon Stone Company Opening



Mr Bhongbhichai Bhitakburi @ Chatrium Dream Wedding Fair 2012



Khin San Win @ MK & ICC 20th Anniversary



Lucky draw @ Nivea Lucky Draw Event



U Myint Thein Pe and guest @ Sony DSLR Product Launch



Ma Nanda Win and Nivea officials @ Nivea Lucky Draw Event



Wah Wah Win Shwe @ Parkroyal Xmas Tree Lighting Dinner



Ye Aung @ MK & ICC 20th Anniversary



Ko Zaw Lat, Ko Kyaw Myo and Ko Tun Tun Naing @ Yangon Stone Company Opening



Thai models @ MK & ICC 20th Anniversary



Ma Khine Thit Lwin, Ms Aya Sato and Mr Yugi Toyo Zumi @ Sony DSLR Product Launch



Ma Myat Thet Hnin, Ma Khin Myo Maw, Ma Phyu Phyu Win and Ma Thiri Aung @ Yangon Stone Company Opening



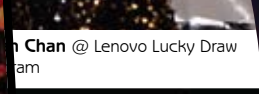
Kaung Pyae and Awn Seng @ MK & ICC 20th Anniversary



Makeup Toe Toe @ Chatrium Dream Wedding Fair 2012



Ko Aung Khine Lin @ Chatrium Dream Wedding Fair 2012



Chan @ Lenovo Lucky Draw Program

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Wellsen management team @ Wellsen Product Launch



Ma Thinzar Myat Mon @ Chatrium Dream Wedding Fair 2012

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SOCIALITE
WITH NYEIN EI EI HTWE



DO you ever feel jealous of other people's good luck? Socialite certainly felt pangs of envy for all the winners of the many lucky draw programs she attended through the month of November! On November 19 she attended the Wellsen new product launch at Western Park Restaurant and also had fun at the MK & ICC 20th anniversary celebration at Sedona Hotel. On November 22 she was present at the press conference for the Miss Lipice contest at Parkroyal Hotel, and then her jealousy kicked into gear at the Lenovo lucky draw at Junction Square. The following day Socialite attended the Sony DSLR product launch at Kandawgyi Palace Hotel, the Xmas Tree Lighting Dinner at Parkroyal Hotel and the Konidin lucky draw event at Chatrium Hotel. She started her rounds on November 24 with the Nivea lucky draw at Sedona Hotel and later waltzed into the Chatrium Dream Wedding Fair 2012. She ended her week the following day at the Yangon Store Company opening in Insein township.



Htet Htet Moe Oo and Zuu Myat Htet @ Parkroyal Xmas Tree Lighting Dinner



U Thura Win @ Wellsen Product Launch



Thunn Set @ Ms Lipice Contest Press Conference



U Wai Lwin and guest @ Sony DSLR Product Launch



With Dream Boat group @ Lenovo Lucky Draw Program



Aung Ye Lin and Moe Hay Ko @ MK & ICC 20th Anniversary



R Boy and San Yati Moe Myint @ Parkroyal Xmas Tree Lighting Dinner



Phyu Phyu Kyaw Thein @ Parkroyal Xmas Tree Lighting Dinner



Demonstration @ Wellsen Product Launch



Ko Aung Zayya and Ma Moe @ Chatrium Dream Wedding Fair 2012



Bunny Phyo @ Konidin Lucky Draw Program



Thiri Swe @ Konidin Lucky Draw Program



Daw Sandar Swe @ Ms Lipice Contest Press Conference

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	UB-A1	07:45	08:45		YJ 891	06:15	08:20		YH 917	06:15	07:35		W9 141	06:30	08:45		YH 918	09:20	10:30		W9 141	06:30	08:45		YH 918	09:20	10:30
	UB-B1	11:30	12:30		6T 341	06:20	08:25		YJ 891	06:15	07:35		W9 141	06:30	08:45		YH 918	09:20	10:30		W9 141	06:30	08:45		YH 918	09:20	10:30
	UB-C1	16:00	17:00		6T 341	06:30	07:55		6T 401	06:20	07:40		W9 141	06:30	08:45		YH 918	09:20	10:30		W9 141	06:30	08:45		YH 918	09:20	10:30
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SUN	UB-A1	15:30	16:30		W9 255	13:00	14:25		W9 143	09:20	10:45		YJ 761	11:00	12:10		YH 918	09:20	10:30		YJ 761	11:00	12:10		YH 918	09:20	10:30
NAY PYI TAW TO YANGON																											
MON	6T 112	08:15	09:10	SAT	W9 205	06:00	07:25	SUN	W9 205	07:40	09:45	MON	6T 112	08:15	09:10	FRI	W9 205	07:40	09:45	MON	6T 112	08:15	09:10	FRI	W9 205	07:40	09:45
	UB-A2	09:15	10:15		YJ 891	06:15	08:20		YH 918	08:35	10:30		UB-A2	09:15	10:15		YH 918	08:35	10:30		UB-A2	09:15	10:15		YH 918	08:35	10:30
	UB-B2	13:00	14:00		6T 401	06:20	08:25		YJ 891	06:15	08:20		UB-B2	13:00	14:00		YH 918	08:35	10:30		UB-B2	13:00	14:00		YH 918	08:35	10:30
	UB-C2	17:30	18:30		6T 401	06:30	07:55		6T 401	06:20	08:25		UB-C2	17:30	18:30		YH 918	08:35	10:30		UB-C2	17:30	18:30		YH 918	08:35	10:30
TUE	UB-A2	09:15	10:15		YJ 909	06:30	07:55		W9 011	08:50	10:30		UB-A2	09:15	10:15		YH 918	08:35	10:30		UB-A2	09:15	10:15		YH 918	08:35	10:30
	UB-B2	13:00	14:00		W9 143	07:00	09:05		W9 011	08:50	10:30		UB-B2	13:00	14:00		YH 918	08:35	10:30		UB-B2	13:00	14:00		YH 918	08:35	10:30
	UB-C2	17:30	18:30		W9 011	07:30	08:30		W9 143	09:20	10:45		UB-C2	17:30	18:30		YH 918	08:35	10:30		UB-C2	17:30	18:30		YH 918	08:35	10:30
WED	UB-A2	09:15	10:15		W9 143	07:00	09:05		W9 011	08:50	10:30		UB-A2	09:15	10:15		YH 918	08:35	10:30		UB-A2	09:15	10:15		YH 918	08:35	10:30
	UB-B2	13:00	14:00		W9 011	07:30	08:30		W9 143	09:20	10:45		UB-B2	13:00	14:00		YH 918	08:35	10:30		UB-B2	13:00	14:00		YH 918	08:35	10:30
	UB-C2	17:30	18:30		W9 143	07:00	09:05		W9 011	08:50	10:30		UB-C2	17:30	18:30		YH 918	08:35	10:30		UB-C2	17:30	18:30		YH 918	08:35	10:30
THUR	UB-A2	09:15	10:15		W9 143	07:00	09:05		W9 011	08:50	10:30		UB-A2	09:15	10:15		YH 918	08:35	10:30		UB-A2	09:15	10:15		YH 918	08:35	10:30
	UB-B2	13:00	14:00		W9 011	07:30	08:30		W9 143	09:20	10:45		UB-B2	13:00	14:00		YH 918	08:35	10:30		UB-B2	13:00	14:00		YH 918	08:35	10:30
	UB-C2	17:30	18:30		W9 143	07:00	09:05		W9 011	08:50	10:30		UB-C2	17:30	18:30		YH 918	08:35	10:30		UB-C2	17:30	18:30		YH 918	08:35	10:30
FRI	6T 112	09:15	10:15		W9 143	07:00	09:05		W9 011	08:50	10:30		UB-A2	09:15	10:15		YH 918	08:35	10:30		UB-A2	09:15	10:15		YH 918	08:35	10:30
	UB-A2	09:15	10:15		W9 011	07:30	08:30		W9 143	09:20	10:45		UB-B2	13:00	14:00		YH 918	08:35	10:30		UB-B2	13:00	14:00		YH 918	08:35	10:30
	UB-B2	13:00	14:00		W9 143	07:00	09:05		W9 011	08:50	10:30		UB-C2	17:30	18:30		YH 918	08:35	10:30		UB-C2	17:30	18:30		YH 918	08:35	10:30
	UB-C2	17:30	18:30		W9 011	07:30	08:30		W9 143	09:20	10:45		UB-A2	09:15	10:15		YH 918	08:35	10:30		UB-A2	09:15	10:15		YH 918	08:35	10:30
SAT	UB-A2	10:00	11:00		W9 143	07:00	09:05		W9 011	08:50	10:30		UB-B2	13:00	14:00		YH 918	08:35	10:30		UB-B2	13:00	14:00		YH 918	08:35	10:30
SUN	UB-A2	17:00	18:00		W9 011	07:30	08:30		W9 143	09:20	10:45		UB-C2	17:30	18:30		YH 918	08:35	10:30		UB-C2	17:30	18:30		YH 918	08:35	10:30
YANGON TO MANDALAY																											
MON	W9 205	06:00	07:25	SUN	W9 205	06:00	07:25	SUN	W9 205	07:40	09:45	MON	W9 205	06:00	07:25	FRI	W9 205	07:40	09:45	MON	W9 205	06:00	07:25	FRI	W9 205	07:40	09:45
	YJ 891	06:15	08:20		YH 917	06:10	08:30		YH 918	08:35	10:30		YJ 891	06:15	08:20		YH 918	08:35	10:30		YJ 891	06:15	08:20		YH 918	08:35	10:30
	6T 401	06:20	08:25		6T 401	06:20	08:25		YJ 891	06:15	08:20		6T 401	06:20	08:25		YH 918	08:35	10:30		6T 401	06:20	08:25		YH 918	08:35	10:30
	YJ 909	06:30	07:55		6T 401	06:30	07:55		6T 401	06:20	08:25		YJ 909	06:30	07:55		YH 918	08:35	10:30		YJ 909	06:30	07:55		YH 918	08:35	10:30
	K7 222	06:30	08:40		6T 401	06:40	09:10		6T 401	06:20	08:25		K7 222	06:30	08:40		YH 918	08:35	10:30		K7 222	06:30	08				

Wines pampered in Napa



Jean-Charles Boisset poses with his dog Frenchie at Frenchie Winery in St Helena, California. Pic: Bloomberg News/Elin McCoy

one of the first to package wine in recyclable Tetra Paks, and his most recent experiment, JCB #3, is a spicy \$123 pinot noir blend of grapes from Burgundy and Sonoma's Russian River Valley.

A winery visit "should reflect the fact that wine is about emotion, dreams, and capture the feeling inside a glass," he said. So he designed Raymond's members-only Red Room with a red-velvet-heavy Moulin Rouge atmosphere that seems over-the-top for laid-back California. Still, visitors ooh and ah.

"I love red," says Boisset, handing me a glass of a \$150 lush, velvety cabernet and merlot blend made to match the room. Frenchie curls up at his feet, lulled by the voice of Louis Armstrong

singing "Our Love Is Here to Stay" wafting from hidden speakers.

The glitzy Crystal Cellar tasting room is hung with mirrors and scantily clad female mannequins are posed on catwalks next to shiny stainless steel wine tanks behind the bar.

Light pings off glass cabinets filled with Baccarat crystal decanters, part of Boisset's partnership with the luxury glass company. On another wall, a line of plaster hands hold jars filled with wine scents for visitors to inhale.

Boisset studied in the United States, then returned to Burgundy in 1999, intent on transforming the family's negotiating business into one focused more on quality and began converting vineyards to biodynamics.

In the past few years, he's snapped up a half dozen wineries in California that have historic significance. So far his best wines come from Sonoma's DeLoach Vineyards.

"I believe in destiny," he says. "I first visited Sonoma's 19th century Buena Vista Winery with my grandparents when I was 11 years old." Late last year, he finally succeeded in buying it.

History is its marketing draw. Boisset hired a local actor to play (in costume) Agoston Haraszthy, Buena Vista's Hungarian founder, who disappeared in an alligator-infested river in Nicaragua in 1869.

Boisset smiles. "I want to create tasting places where people – and dogs – can have a blast." – Bloomberg News

International Airlines

Air Asia (FD)
33, Alan Pya Pagoda Rd, Ground Flr, Parkroyal Hotel, Yangon. Tel: 251 885, 251 886.

Air Bagan Ltd.(W9)
56, Shwe Taung Gyar Street, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 513322, 513422, 504888, Fax: 515102

Air China (CA)
Building (2), corner of Pyay Rd and Kaba Aye Pagoda Rd, Hotel Yangon, 8 miles, Yangon, Myanmar. Tel: 666112, 655882.

Air India
75, Shwe Bon Thar St, Pabedan Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 253597-98, 254758. Fax: 248175

Bangkok Airways (PG)
#0305, 3rd Fl, Sakura Tower, 339, Bogyoke Aung San Rd, Kyauktada Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 255122, 255 265, Fax: 255119

Malaysia Airlines (MH)
335/357, Bogyoke Aung San Rd, Pabedan Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 387648, 241007 ext: 120, 121, 122 Fax: 241124

Myanmar Airways International(8M)
08-02, Sakura Tower, 339, Bogyoke Aung San Rd, Kyauktada Tsp, Ygn. Tel: 255260, Fax: 255305

Silk Air(MI)
339, Bogyoke Aung San Rd, 2nd Floor, Sakura Tower, Kyauktada Tsp, Yangon, Myanmar. Tel: 255 287-9, Fax: 255 290

Thai Airways (TG)
Room No. 1101, Sakura Tower, 339, Bogyoke Aung San Rd, Kyauktada Tsp, Ygn. Tel: 255491-6 Fax: 255223

Vietnam Airlines (VN)
#1702, Sakura Tower 339, Bogyoke Aung San Rd, Kyauktada Tsp, Yangon. Fax 255086. Tel 255066/ 255088/ 255068.

INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT SCHEDULES

DAYS	Flight	Dep	Arr	DAYS	Flight	Dep	Arr	DAYS	Flight	Dep	Arr	DAYS	Flight	Dep	Arr			
YANGON TO BANGKOK				THUR				BANGKOK TO YANGON				SUN						
MON	PG 706	07:15	09:30	AK 859	08:30	12:50	8M 336	06:40	07:25	SQ 998	07:55	09:20						
	FD 2752	08:30	10:20	8M 501	08:55	12:55	FD 2751	07:15	08:00	8M 232	14:10	15:40						
	8M 335	08:40	10:25	MH 741	12:15	16:30	TG 303	07:55	08:50	MI 518	14:20	15:45						
	TG 304	09:50	11:45	AK 851	18:50	23:05	PG 701	09:05	09:55	8M 234	19:15	20:45						
	PG 702	10:45	12:40	FRI				FD 2755	11:35	12:20	MI 520	22:10	23:35	KAULA LUMPUR TO YANGON				
	FD 2756	12:50	14:40	AK 859	08:30	12:50	TG 301	13:00	13:55				MON	AK 858	06:55	08:00		
	TG 302	14:55	16:50	8M 501	08:55	12:55	FD 2753	16:20	17:05	MH 740	10:05	11:15						
	8M 331	16:30	18:15	MH 741	12:15	16:30	PG 703	17:05	17:55	8M 502	14:00	15:00						
	FD 2754	17:35	19:25	AK 851	18:50	23:05	TG 305	17:50	18:45	AK 850	17:10	18:20						
	PG 704	18:45	20:40	SAT				8M 332	19:20	20:05				TUE	AK 858	06:55	08:00	
	TG 306	19:45	21:40	AK 859	08:30	12:50	PG 705	20:15	21:30	8M 502	14:00	15:00						
				MH 741	12:15	16:30	TUE				AK 850	17:10	18:20					
				AK 851	18:50	23:05	8M 336	06:40	07:25	MH 740	10:05	11:15						
				SUN				FD 2751	07:15	08:00	8M 502	14:00	15:00					
				8M 501	08:55	12:55	TG 303	07:55	08:50	AK 850	17:10	18:20						
				MH 741	12:15	16:30	PG 701	09:05	09:55				WED	AK 858	06:55	08:00		
				AK 851	18:50	23:05	8M 336	10:40	11:25	MH 740	10:05	11:15						
				YANGON TO GAUNGZHOU				FD 2755	11:35	12:20	8M 502	14:00	15:00					
				MON	CZ 3056	18:10	22:40	TG 301	13:00	13:55	AK 850	17:10	18:20					
				TUE	8M 711	08:40	13:15	FD 2753	16:20	17:05				THU	AK 858	06:55	08:00	
				WED	CZ 3056	11:20	15:50	PG 703	17:05	17:55	MH 740	10:05	11:15					
				THUR	8M 711	08:40	13:15	TG 305	17:50	18:45	8M 502	14:00	15:00					
				FRI	CZ 3056	18:10	22:40	8M 332	19:20	20:05	AK 850	17:10	18:20					
				SAT	CZ 3056	11:20	15:50	PG 705	20:15	21:30				FRI	AK 858	06:55	08:00	
				SUN	8M 711	08:40	13:15	YANGON TO TAIPEI				MH 740	10:05	11:15				
								MON	CI 7916	11:00	04:35	8M 502	14:00	15:00				
								TUE	CI 7916	11:00	04:35	AK 850	17:10	18:20				
								WED	CI 7916	11:00	04:35				SAT	AK 858	06:55	08:00
								THUR	CI 7916	11:00	04:35	MH 740	10:05	11:15				
								FRI	CI 7916	11:00	04:35	8M 502	14:00	15:00				
								SAT	CI 7916	11:00	04:35	AK 850	17:10	18:20				
								SUN	CI 7916	11:00	04:35				SUN	AK 858	06:55	08:00
								YANGON TO KUNMING				MH 740	10:05	11:15				
								MON	MU 2032	09:40	12:50	8M 502	14:00	15:00				
								TUE	CA 906	14:15	17:35	AK 850	17:10	18:20				
								WED	MU 2032	09:40	12:50				THU	AK 858	06:55	08:00
								THUR	CA 906	14:15	17:35	MH 740	10:05	11:15				
								FRI	CA 906	14:15	17:35	8M 502	14:00	15:00				
								SAT	CA 906	14:15	17:35	AK 850	17:10	18:20				
								SUN	MU 2032	09:40	12:50				SUN	AK 858	06:55	08:00
								YANGON TO KOLKATA				MH 740	10:05	11:15				
								MON	AI 234	14:05	17:10	8M 502	14:00	15:00				
								FRI	AI 234	14:05	17:10	AK 850	17:10	18:20				
								AI 228	18:45	19:45				THU	AK 858	06:55	08:00	
								YANGON TO CHIANG MAI				MH 740	10:05	11:15				
								SUN	W9 7607	14:50	16:20	8M 502	14:00	15:00				
								THUR	W9 9607	14:50	16:20	AK 850	17:10	18:20				
								YANGON TO HANOI							FRI	AK 858	06:55	08:00
								MON	VN 956	19:10	21:30	MH 740	10:05	11:15				
								TUE	VN 956	19:10	21:30	8M 502	14:00	15:00				
								WED	VN 956	19:10	21:30	AK 850	17:10	18:20				
								THUR	VN 956	19:10	21:30				SAT	AK 858	06:55	08:00
								FRI	VN 956	19:10	21:30	MH 740	10:05	11:15				
								SAT	VN 956	19:10	21:30	8M 502	14:00	15:00				
								SUN	VN 956	19:10	21:30	AK 850	17:10	18:20				
								YANGON TO HO CHI MINH							SUN	AK 858	06:55	08:00
								TUE	VN 942	14:25	17:10	MH 740	10:05	11:15				
								THUR	VN 942	14:25	17:10	8M 502	14:00	15:00				
								SAT	VN 942	14:25	17:10	AK 850	17:10	18:20				
								SUN	VN 942	14:25	17:10				SUN	AK 858	06:55	08:00
								YANGON TO GAYA				MH 740	10:05	11:15				
								MON	8M 601	09:00	10:20	8M 502	14:00	15:00				
								AI 234	14:05	15:25	AK 850	17:10	18:20					
								WED	8M 601	09:00	10:20				THU	AK 858	06:55	08:00
								FRI	8M 601	09:00	10:20	MH 740	10:05	11:15				
								AI 234	14:05	15:25	8M 502	14:00	15:00					
								SAT	8M 601	09:00	10:20	AK 850	17:10	18:20				
								YANGON TO DOHA							SUN	AK 858	06:55	08:00
								MON	QR 619	08:00	11:45	MH 740	10:05	11:15				
								TUE	QR 619	08:00	11:45	8M 502	14:00	15:00				
								WED	QR 619	08:00	11:45	AK 850	17:10	18:20				
								THUR	QR 619	08:00	11:45				SAT	AK 858	06:55	08:00

All-Myanmar art exhibition to kick off the New Year

By Nyein Ei Ei Htwe

THE Myanmar Traditional Artists and Artisans Association (Central) will hold an exhibition of works by artists from throughout Myanmar from January 4 to 7, 2013.

The show, titled "Art 13 Myanmar", will be held at Tatmadaw Hall on U Wisara Road in Yangon.

The exhibition will include paintings as well as other forms of traditional arts and crafts, said U Maung Maung Hla Myint, chairman of Myanmar Traditional Artists and Artisans Association.

There are considered to be 10 traditional arts in Myanmar: *pan chi* (painting), *pan tamo* (stone sculpture), *pan tot* (decorative work in relief with stucco), *pan din* (making items in bronze, copper or brass), *pan dein* (works in gold or silver), *pan bu* (wood sculpting), *pan bae* (blacksmithing), *pan put* (turnery), *pan yoon* (lacquerware) and *pa yan* (masonry).

"We have our traditional arts and crafts, so we plan to exhibit our tradition and all artists eager to join with us because the last exhibition for the whole of Myanmar's artists was held in 2006," U Maung Maung

Hla Myint said.

The exhibition will also feature paintings by students from basic and middle schools throughout the country.

"To forge links between established artists and new faces, we plan to include children's works in the exhibition," he said.

"I have served as a judge in many painting contests for kids, so I know how eager they are to paint and exhibit. I think there are many painting contests in schools, and each school will already have a collection of student artwork. They just need to send the art to our association."

The association's general secretary, U Ni Po Oo, said most of artwork at the exhibition will be paintings and sculptures.

"We have already accepted more than 600 artworks for the exhibition, and we expect entries by more than 1000 artists by the December 25 deadline," he said. "Most of the other arts and crafts forms depend on painting and sculpture, so these will be the focus of the exhibition."

He added that he did not anticipate any problems with holding the show because it was being organised by experienced artists.

Ceremony celebrates revised Bible translation

By Zon Pann Pwint

A CEREMONY was held last month at Holy Trinity Cathedral in Yangon to celebrate the achievements of Reverend Charles Edward Garrad, who in the early 20th century spent 26 years as a Christian missionary in Myanmar.

At the ceremony, which occurred on November 25, clergy were presented with copies of Rev Garrad's Myanmar - Language translation of the Bible, which has recently been revised with help from his descendants.

Rev Garrad arrived in Myanmar from England in 1906. At the request of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, for whom he was working, he made revisions to Adoniram Judson's original Myanmar-language translation of the Bible.

Rev Garrad's grandson Mr Peter Carter, who was present at the November 25 ceremony, told *The Myanmar Times* by email that the revisions were completed by Rev Garrad and two colleagues, Rev William Sherratt and Rev George Kya Bin.

"They started work in 1923, having been seconded



Church leaders hold copies of the newly revised version of the Garrad Bible, at Holy Trinity Cathedral in Yangon on November 25. Pic: Zon Pann Pwint

to the Burma Bible Society. Then they made a complete new translation, translated the Old Testament from Hebrew into Myanmar and the New Testament from Greek into Myanmar," Mr Carter said.

They completed their translation in 1926, and it was published in 1927. Known as the Garrad Bible, it is used by churches, Christian colleges and many Christians for personal study.

For most of his time in Myanmar, Rev Garrad

worked with his younger brother Rev William Garrad as a priest in Mandalay, helping to set up schools and hospitals.

"He also preached the Christian gospel and took Church services," Mr Carter said.

Rev Garrad left in Yangon in 1932 when he became ill, returning to England to go into hospital. He died in 1958 at the age of 82.

"Rev Garrad still worked on corrections to the published text of the Bible until just a few days before

his death," Mr Carter said, adding that the reverend sent more than 200 handwritten corrections to the Bible society.

"The Burma Bible Society reprinted the Garrad Bible in 1991, but felt they needed a new, modern and more lightweight edition that also included corrections done by Rev Charles Garrad and other Christian leaders," he said.

In 2009 Rev Garrad's daughter, Ms Anne Carter, started a project to edit the Bible based on Garrad's suggested corrections. This was completed earlier this year, and the new edition was presented at last month's ceremony.

"The Burma Bible Society incorporated the handwritten corrections to errors sent by Rev Garrad and produced this new 2012 edition of the Bible," Mr Carter said. "My family is very proud of his work. I take immense pride in the work of my grandfather and the efforts of my mother and family to bring about the new edition of the Bible."

Ms Anne Carter has also written a book titled *Bewitched By Burma*, describing the lives of Rev Garrad and Mr Peter Carter.

Events Flash

Kyaw Lin art

An exhibition of Kyaw Lin's still-life paintings on canvas, as well as sketches on paper, will be held at Gallery 65 (Yaw Min Gyi Road, Dagon township) from December 1 to 3.

Cartoon exhibit

An exhibition of cartoons by 70 cartoonists will be on view at Dagaung Art Gallery (7 Mahasi Sasana Yeiktha Road, Bahan township) from December 1 to 5. The exhibition, entitled "Modern Classic 2012", will feature 120 cartoons on a variety of themes, with English subtitles.

Anniv exhibition

Lokanat Art Gallery (62 Pansodat Street, First Floor Kyauktada township) will hold its 42nd Anniversary Art Exhibition from December 5 to 31. The show will feature the work of more than 25 eminent member artists of the gallery. The paintings are in oil, watercolour and acrylic on canvas, and are mostly realist in style.

U Myo Nyunt show

Artist U Myo Nyunt will hold his first solo show, entitled

"Humanity and Hope to Art", at Professional Art Gallery (8 Komin Kochin Road, Bahan Township) from December 5 to 9.

Beyond Pressure

The Beyond Pressure Art Festival - featuring performance, installation, graffiti and video art - will be held at Karaweik Garden and Sein Lan Soe Pyay Garden in Yangon from December 6 to 10.

SEA Games funfair

To stimulate public interest in the 27th SEA Games, scheduled to be held in Myanmar in December 2013, the Ministry of Sport will hold a fun fair at People's Park in Yangon on December 7 and 9. Festivities will include movie screenings, theatrical performances and live music.

Hip-hop concert

Hip-hop singers J-Me, Jouk Jack, Snare, Nine One, Sandy Myint Lwin and others will perform at Myawsinkyun in Kandawgyi Park on December 8, starting at 5pm. Tickets are K5000 each, and will be available at the entrance.

Church funfair

A fundraising funfair will be held at St Mary's Cathedral (upper block of Bo Aung Kyaw Road, Bodhataung township) on December 9, from 9am to 9pm. Coupons will be sold for K200 each.

Ongoing

Calle de la Salsa

Tuesday is salsa night at 50th Street Bar, featuring free dance classes (salsa, bachata, mambo, meringue and more), plus dance shows and drink specials. With music by DJ Mani and special guests.

Wednesday wine

The Wednesday Wine Club meets every (you guessed it) Wednesday at the QP Inya Shop (30 Inya Road). Taste four or five wines for K10,000 a person. Contact chad.quarto@gmail.com or 09-7321-8711.

Live music

Friendship Band belts out classic rock tunes at 50th Street Restaurant every Wednesday and Friday night.



YOUR STARS

By Astrologer
Aung Myin Kyaw

Aquarius (Jan 20 - Feb 18)

A firm commitment to speaking the truth and dealing with people honestly will be required at work if you wish to remain above the fray. Speak well of yourself but try not to get too carried away. Experiencing cycles of love and hate will produce useful answers to doubtful questions.

Pisces (Feb 19 - Mar 20)

Stay determined to make strong decisions, and be careful to communicate clearly and cleverly. Your good friends are to be acclaimed and encouraged according to their abilities. Determine your social bearings and get absorbed in a new pattern of thinking that uplifts you.

Aries (March 21 - April 19)

When trust is called into question, kind words cost you nothing and can make all differences disappear. A fervent interest in beauty and finer things should not be a cause of embarrassment. Do your best to generate a little warmth in your social life.

Taurus (April 20 - May 20)

Do not pretend to be familiar with subjects you know nothing about. A poor image of yourself will only condemn you to weakness and unhappiness. Remind yourself of how much you are worth and do not spend too much time listening to the wrong music.

Gemini (May 21 - June 20)

Learn more about the media, but keep your findings to yourself. Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality. Consider the best way to react to forces that are working against you, and how best to organise your efforts in accordance with the current circumstances.

Cancer (June 22 - July 22)

Important duties and responsibilities will demand your greatest skills and management abilities. Your self-confidence and optimistic attitude will help you overcome even the most difficult obstacles. The quest

for love requires careful steps to discover a true soul and spiritual beauty.

Leo (July 23 - Aug 22)

Never hesitate to give your full attention to your parents and fulfill their desires. You will soon experience a period of great success. Adorn yourself with majesty and dignity. Set your heart right and do not allow wickedness to dwell in your soul.

Virgo (Aug 23 - Sept 22)

Try to gain the trust of your siblings, and of the one you love deeply. Don't allow delusions to influence you at times when you are feeling sorrowful. Self-examination is the best way to ensure that your approach to life continues to be pragmatic.

Libra (Sept 23 - Oct 22)

Reasonable consideration and understanding are already different, but everything must be reasonable to construct understanding. Carefully consider your options for love, and understand that making the right choice might take time.

Scorpio (Oct 23 - Nov 21)

Consider making a show of courage, but don't mistake bravery for foolishness. Use meditation to cultivate thoughts of freedom, and remember that making too many promises can lead to mental confinement. Personal relationships might exhibit friction.

Sagittarius (Nov 22 - Dec 21)

Look to wisdom and the purity of nature to develop the beauty of your heart and soul. Love is the true desire of every human, based on the need to complement each other in an atmosphere of harmony. Cultivate high moral values and sincerity to gain love from all living beings.

Capricorn (Dec 22 - Jan 19)

Lack of wisdom can send people wandering in random directions. Take the time to understand yourself, and try to discover a new paradigm of life that will swing fortune in your favour. Creating long-term harmony in different relationships is required to understand the value of others.

For a personal reading contact Aung Myin Kyaw, 4th Floor, 113, Thamaing Bayan Road, Tamwe Township, Yangon. Tel: 0973135632, Email: williameast@gmail.com

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Employment

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WE ARE seeking (1). **Chinese Teacher** - F who is proficient in Speaking (2). **English Teacher** - F who can teach IELTS and formal writing. Only one student, Home Tuition (FMI CITY). Contact ph: 09-507-7273

M I M - Management Institute of Myanmar is seeking (1) **English Teacher** 1 Post. (2) **Computer Instructor** 1 Post. (3) **Receptionist** 1 Post : For 1 & 2, graduated or must possess accredited diploma in related fields. 2 years experience. Any interested party should bring related documents & certifications. No(5), 2nd Floor, Corner of Daw Thein Tin Rd & Thein Phyu Rd, Mingalar Taungnyunt, Ph: 394214, 399096.

MYANMAR AUTO Corporation is looking for (1). **Manager** (Agricultural B.H.D) Oil-palm plantation experience at least 5 years (2). **Assistant Manager** (Agricultural B.H.D) experience with oil-palm plantation. Ph: 662602, 09-493-17989. myanauto@gmail.com Both positions need to be able to live at country side.

URGENTLY Requirements (1) **DTP Specialist** - F 3 posts: Any graduate, Age 20-28. Excellent in English & Myanmar typing. Can use MS (Word, Excel, Page Maker). (2) **Marketing Executive** - F 2 posts : Any Graduate, Age

20-25. Must familiar with MS (Word, Excel, Page Maker). Good personality, communication & reporting skills. (3) **Office Staff** - M 2 posts: Any graduate, Age under 30. Good personality, communication & reporting skills. Ability to work long hours & under pressure. (4) **Driver** - M 4 posts (5) **Graphic Designer** - M 2 posts : Any Graduate, Age under 30. Excellent in photoshop using. Knowledge in Media & Advertising field. With Attractive Salary. (24/26), Rm (4-B/C), Race Course Condo, South Race Course St, Tamwe. Ph: 09-421-007001, 09-421-007006.

ASIA Language & Business Academy (ALBA) is seeking **assistant teachers**. University Graduate. Fluent in spoken & written English. Excellent communication & interpersonal skill. Pls send curriculum vitae together with a recent photo and copies of testimonials to 66, Shwedagon Pagoda Rd, Dagon Tsp. Ph: 376236, 376314

(1) **SECRETARY** - F 1 post: Age over 25, BE/AGTI (EP/MP) or B.Sc degree holder is preferable, 3 years experience as company secretary, Good knowledge of filing system, Fair in English, Skillful in Microsoft Office & Email (2) **Sales Executive** (Yangon) - M/F 1 Post : Age over 25, BE/AGTI (EP/MP) or B.Sc, 3 years experience in Machinery sales & marketing field, Good interpersonal skill is required, Must be energetic & industrious with team minded (3) **Accountant** - F 1 Post : Age over 25, B.Com (or Group Diploma (LCCI), 3 years experience in accounting field, Good cooperation skill, Pls submit a detailed CV, passport photo (1), Copy of labour registration card and related documents to Future Gift Int'l Ltd : 2, West Maykha Lane-1, Parami Rd, Mayangone Tel: 655594, 655593, Closing date : 10th December 2012.

URGENTLY Requirement (With Attractive Salary) **Marketing Executive** - F : Any Graduate, At Least 2-3 years exp; in related field. Good personality, communication & reporting skills. Age between 25-30. Must have knowledge of English Language & using Computer. Able to work

under pressure. Interest in job & hardworking. Ph : 09-421-007001/7006. Witt.hmone.2008@gmail.com

JOB Opportunities for Worldwide Branded Elevator Employment condition & qualification: **Sale Executive** - Male, Age 28 - 35 Years, 3 to 5 Years industrial attachment AGTI, B-Tech, B.E (EC, EP, Mechanical, prefer) Prefer if sale experience. Pls send CV to : maymyki@gmail.com **ORYX Int'l General Svc's Co., Ltd** is seeking (1) **F & B Service Trainer** - M/F 2 Posts (2) **F & B Production Trainer** - M/F 2 Posts (3) **Front Office Trainer** - M/F 2 Posts (4) **Housekeeping Trainer** - M/F 2 Posts (5) **English Trainer** - M/F 2 Posts. 2 - 3 years experience in the same field as trainer. **Mobile Phone Software, Hardware Repairing Trainer** M/F 1 Post: Salary 200,000, Experience over 3 years. **Receptionist** - F 1 Post : Good in English, strong personality, age above 35, height about 5' 5"

Computer Operator - F 1 Post: Microsoft Office, PageMaker, Photoshop. **Marketing Assistant** - M/F 1 Post : Any graduate with degree in education marketing, Age 30 - 40, must be able to plan & execute bright ideas and be able to deal with government departments & correspondence by self. Pls send resumes to Rm 806, Yuzana Tower, Shwe Gone Taing, Bahan. Ph: 558398, 09-430-66708, Email: resume.oryx@gmail.com

WE ARE looking for below positions; (1). **Logistics Manager** - M/F 1 post (2). **Executive Secretary** - F 1 post (3). **Assistance Warehouse Manager** - M/F 1 post (4). **Warehouse Supervisor** - M/F 1 post (5). **Logistics & Operation Staff** - M/F 1 post (6). **Store Keeper** - M 1 post (7). **Driver** - M 2 posts. An attractive salary package commensurate with qualifications and experience will be offered to the right candidate. Pls email your detailed resume indicating your current, update photo in MS word format, all scan of academic certificates or diploma, NRC and expected salaries cooperations. myanmar@gmail.com within two weeks.

WE ARE currently seeking **Logistic Officer** - F 1 post : University Bachelor Degree. Age above 25. 2 years experience. Must have good communication skill, strong negotiation, analytical skill and initiative skill. Must be skill full in English, Microsoft Office, internet & Email. Pls submit current resume with update photo in MS word format, all scan of academic certificates or diploma & NRC, describe working experience & expected salary within two weeks by email to info.74473@gmail.com.

WE are seeking business news writers as well as reporters : Good command of spoken and written in English is essential as well as able to write business news, source for latest news by interviewing people by phone or in person and social networking media. In addition the business news must be high standards of accuracy. Preferably with working experience in writing business news in local, national or international newspaper & journal, online news or wire service is highly desirable. Submit your application by emailing a detailed copy of updated resume in MS Word format to minzaw840@gmail.com, 09-732-36758.

SUMMIT PARKVIEW Hotel is seeking (1). **Sales Manager/ Asst: Sales Manager** - M/F 1 Post : MBA / Graduated in any discipline, 5 Years experienced in Hotel Marketing & Sales, Proficiency in English. (2). **Sales Executive** - M/F 1 Post: Graduated in any discipline, Experienced in Hotel Sales & Marketing, Proficiency in English. (3). **Health Club Instructor / Aerobic Instructor** - M/F 1 Post : Graduate in any discipline, 1 year experience, Proficiency in English. Pls submit an application letter, C.V with photo with necessary documents to HR Department not later than 8 December, 2012.

FINANCE HEAD : The Finance Head shall serve as the lead and primary contact for finance & accounting, operational performance, and budget and forecasting Job Functions Assists the GM in the formulation, implementation and fulfillment of corporate Policies, decisions and actions necessary for project operations, Prepares monthly financial statements. Manages project, Prepares the annual corporate budget, financial forecasts, and other strategic or special purpose studies, Stores corporate records in a secure and efficient manner, Supervises payroll and human resource activities. Qualifications: B.Com, CPA, Proficient in English, 10 years experience in finance function, Willing to travel . Pls send email CV & cover letter to pmar@mpic.com.ph

OUR COMPANY is looking (1) **Customer Services Coordinator** - M/F 1 post (2) **Chinese Translator** - M/F 1 post (3). **Purchasing Supervisor** - M/F 2 posts (4). **Purchasing Assistant** - M/F 2 posts (5). **Maintenance Supervisor** - M 3 posts (6). **Receptionist** - F 2 posts (7). **Driver** - M 2 posts. Pls send CV (resume) (describe working experience from graduation till present and expected salary) with updated photo in MS word format, scan of relevant certificates & documents by E-mail to express338@gmail.com within 2 weeks.

(1) **CIVIL ENGINEERS** 20 Posts. (2) **Architects** 20 Posts. (3) **Mechanical Engineers** 20 Posts. (4) **Electrical Engineers** 20 Posts. (5) **Chief Accountant** 2 Posts. (6) **Accountants** 10 Post. (7) **Admin Manager** 2 Posts. (8) **Admin** 5 Posts. Able to speak English fluently. Must have experience in the related jobs. Must be able to go travelling. For accountant position, experience with MICB and MFTB banks. Pls submitted CV form. Address: 483, 9th flr, Aye Yeik Thar Condo, Aye Yeik Thar (2) St, New University Avenue Rd, Bahan, Ph: 555952, 557947 ext: 8903,

Job Wanted

POST : MANAGER candlelight295@gamil.com



JOB VACANCIES



As a leading global company, Daewoo International Corporation (Myanmar E&P) is seeking an energetic, self-motivated and qualified person to fill a position for its ongoing operations in Myanmar.

Environmental Officer (1 post)

- University Graduate (prefer in Environmental Studies)
- Minimum 3 years professional experience in environmental assessment, monitoring, reporting and any other necessary environmental issue
- Able to have frequent travel

HSE Coordinator (1 post)

- University Graduate (prefer in Engineering)
- Minimum 3 years professional experience
- Possess relevant qualification in HSE and be able to demonstrate a strong understanding of HSE management.
- Computer literacy and experience with Safety Management Systems.

Safety Assistant (3 posts)

- University Graduate or Technical Equivalent
- Minimum 5 years relevant professional experience
- Work experience in the offshore oil & gas industry.

Procurement Assistant (1 post)

- University Graduate
- Minimum 3 years continuous experience relevant field
- Experience with purchasing via an integrated system, preferably SAP Competency to conduct bidding, tendering processes and knowledge in Import-Export-Custom

Assistant Cost Controller (3 posts)
(2 years contract term)

- University Graduate in finance and accounting or equivalent
- Minimum 3 years experience (prefer in Oil & Gas industry)
- Able to use computerized accounting system (especially SAP)

Application closing date is 17th December 2012

Interested person who meet above mentioned qualifications are welcome to submit their CV, application letter, recent photo and copies of academic transcripts to the following address:

HR & Admin Department
Daewoo International Corporation (Myanmar E&P)
International Business Center
No. 88, Pyay Road, 6½ Miles, Hlaing Township, Yangon.
Or e-mail to admin@daewooinp.com



Supporting community action on AIDS in developing countries

Director, Alliance Myanmar Based in Myanmar Competitive salary

The International HIV/AIDS Alliance is seeking a country office Director to lead the work of the International HIV/AIDS Alliance in Myanmar. The successful candidate will manage the Alliance Myanmar staff and take the lead on programmatic and organisational strategic development. Alliance Myanmar is developing a plan to transition from a country office to a locally registered, independent NGO which will strengthen community action on HIV/AIDS and influence policy within Myanmar. Due to the nature of this position, Myanmar nationals with the relevant skills, knowledge and experience are particularly encouraged to apply. For more details on this post, including Job Description and on Person Specification please visit our website www.aidsalliance.org and click on 'jobs'. If you experience any problems with downloading our application form, please email us at recruitment@aidsalliance.org.

Application deadline: Friday 14th December 2012 at midnight UK time
Telephone interviews: Tuesday 8th January 2013
Face to face interviews: w/c 21st January 2013, in Yangon

"Please do not contact the Alliance Myanmar office. This recruitment is managed through the IHAA Secretariat in the UK"

The International HIV/AIDS Alliance is committed to equal opportunities and welcomes applications from appropriately qualified people from all sections of the community. Qualified people living with HIV are particularly encouraged to apply.

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The Essentials

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Australia 88, Strand Road, Yangon. tel : 251810, 251797, 251798, 251809, 246462, 246463, fax: 246159

Bangladesh 11-B, Than Lwin Road, Yangon. tel: 515275, 526144, fax: 515273, email: bdootygn@mptmail.net.mm

Brazil 56, Pyay Road, 6th mile, Hlaing Tsp, Yangon. tel: 507225, 507251, 507482, fax: 507483, email: Administ.yangon@itamaraty.gov.br

Brunei 317/319, U Wisara Road, Sanchaung Tsp, Yangon. tel: 526985, 524285, fax: 512854 email: bruneiemb@bruneiemb.com.mm

Cambodia 25 (3B/4B), New University Avenue Road, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. tel: 549609, 540964, fax: 541462, email: RECYANGON@mptmail.net.mm

China 1, Pyidaungsu Yeiktha Road, Yangon. tel: 221280, 221281, 224025, 224097, 221926, fax: 227019, 228319

Egypt 81, Pyidaungsu Yeiktha Road, Yangon. tel: 222886, 222887, fax: 222865, email: egyptmbyangon@mptmail.net.mm

France 102, Pyidaungsu Yeiktha Road, Yangon. tel: 212178, 212520, 212523, 212528, 212532, fax: 212527, email: ambafrance.rangon@diplomatie.fr

Germany 9, Bogyoke Aung San Museum Road, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. tel: 548951, 548952, fax: 548899 email: info@rangun.diplo.de

India 545-547, Merchant Street, Yangon. tel: 391219, 388412, 243972, fax: 254086, 250164, 388414, email: indiaembassy@mptmail.net.mm

Indonesia 100, Pyidaungsu Yeiktha Road, Yangon. tel: 254465, 254469, 229750, fax: 254468, email: kuckygn@indonesia.com.mm

Israel 15, Khabaung Street, Hlaing Tsp, Yangon. tel: 515115, fax: 515116, email: info@yangon.mfa.gov.il

Italy 3, Inya Myaing Road, Golden Valley, Yangon. tel: 527100, 527101, fax: 514565, email: ambyang.mail@esteri.it

Japan 100, Natmauk Road, Yangon. tel: 549644-8, 540399, 540400, 540411, 545988, fax: 549643

Embassy of the **State of Kuwait** Chatrium Hotel, Rm: No.416, 418, 420, 422, 40 Natmauk Rd, Tarmwe Tsp, Tel: 544500.

North Korea 77C, Shin Saw Pu Road, Sanchaung Tsp, Yangon. tel: 512642, 510205, fax: 510206

South Korea 97 University Avenue, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. tel: 527142-4, 515190, fax: 513286, email: myanmar@mofat.go.kr

Lao A-1, Diplomatic Quarters, Tawwin Road, Dagon Tsp, Yangon. tel: 222482, fax: 227446, email: Laoembca@mptmail.net.mm

Malaysia 82, Pyidaungsu Yeiktha Road, Yangon. tel: 220248, 220249, 220251, 220230, fax: 221840, email: mwkyangon@mptmail.net.mm

Nepal 16, Natmauk Yeiktha, Yangon. tel: 545880, 557168, fax: 549803, email: nepemb@mptmail.net.mm

Pakistan A-4, diplomatic Quarters, Pyay Road, Yangon. tel: 222881 (Chancery Exchange) fax: 221147, email: pakistan@mptmail.net.mm

Philippines 50, Sayasan Road, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. tel: 558149-151, fax: 558154, email: p.e.yangon@gmail.com

Russian 38, Sagawa Road, Yangon. tel: 241955, 254161, fax: 241953, email: rusinmyan@mptmail.net.mm

Serbia No. 114-A, Inya Road, P.O.Box No. 943-Yangon. tel: 515282, 515283, fax: 504274, email: serbemb@yangon.net.mm

Singapore 238, Dhamazedi Road, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. tel: 559001, fax: 559002, 559922, email: singemb_ygn@sgmfa.gov.sg

Sri Lanka 34 Taw Win Road, Yangon. tel: 222812, fax: 221509, email: slembassy.yangon@gmail.com, info@slembyangon.org, www.slembyangon.org

Thailand 94 Pyay Road, Dagon Township, Yangon. tel: 226721, 226728, 226824, fax: 221713

United Kingdom 80 Kan-na Road, Yangon. tel: 370867, 380322, 371852, 371853, 256438, 370863, 370864, 370865, fax: 370866

United States of America 110, University Avenue, Kamayut Township, Yangon. tel: 536509, 535756, 538038, fax: 650306

Vietnam Building No. 72, Thanlwin Road, Bahan Township, Yangon. tel: 511305, fax: 514897, email: vnembmyr@cybertech.net.mm

Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia No.287/289, U Wisara Rd, Sanchaung Tsp. tel: 01-536153, 516952, fax: 01-516951

UNITED NATIONS

ILO Liaison Officer Rm (M1212-1220), 12 Fl-A, Traders Hotel. 223, tel: 242 393, 242811. fax: 242594.

IOM 12th Flr, Traders Hotel, 223, tel: 252560 ext. 5002

UNAIDS Rm: (1223-1231), 12 Fl, Traders Hotel. tel: 252361, 252362, 252498. fax: 252364.

UNDCP 11-A, Malikka St, Mayangone tsp. tel: 666903, 664539. fax: 651334.

UNDP 6, Natmauk Rd, Bahan tel: 542910-19. fax: 292739.

UNFPA 6, Natmauk Rd, Bahan tsp. tel: 546029.

UNHCR 287, Pyay Rd, Sanchaung tsp. tel: 524022, 524024. fax 524031.

UNIAP Rm: 1202, 12 Fl, Traders Hotel. tel: 254852, 254853.

UNIC 6, Natmauk St., BHN tel: 52910-19

UNICEF 14-15 Flr, Traders Hotel. P.O. Box 1435, KTDA. tel: 375527-32, fax: 375552 email: unicef.yangon@unicef.org, www.unicef.org/myanmar.

UNODC 11-A, Malikka Rd., Ward 7, MYGN. tel: 666903, 660556, 660538, 660398, 664539, fax: 651334. email: fo.myanmar@unodc.org www.unodc.org/myanmar/

UNOPS Inya Lake Hotel, 3rd floor, 37, Kaba Aye Pagoda Rd, Mayangone Tsp. tel: 951-657281-7. Fax: 657279.

UNRC 6, Natmauk Rd, P.O. Box 650, TMWE tel: 542911-19, 292637 (Resident Coordinator), fax: 292739, 544531.

WFP 3rd-flr, Inya Lake Hotel, 37, Kaba Aye Pagoda Rd. tel: 657011-6 (6-lines) Ext: 2000.

WHO 12A Fl, Traders Hotel. tel:250583.

ASEAN Coordinating Of. for the ASEAN Humanitarian Task Force, 79, Taw Win st, Dagon Township. Ph: 225258.

FAO Myanmar Agriculture Service Insein Rd, Insein. tel: 641672, 641673. fax: 641561.

General Listing

ACCOMMODATION-HOTELS

Chatrium Hotel Royal Lake Yangon
40 Natmauk Rd, Tarmwe. tel: 544500. fax: 544400.

Clover hotel
No.7A, Wingabar Road, Bahan Tsp, Yangon. Tel : (951) 546313, 430245. 09-731-77781-4. Fax : (01) 546313. www.cloverhotel.asia. info@cloverhotel.asia

Confort Inn
4, Shweli Rd, Bet: Inya Rd & U Wisara Rd, Kamaryut, tel: 525781, 526872

Golden Aye Yeik Mon Hotel
4, Padauk Lane, 4th Word, Aye Yeik Mon Housing, Hlaing. tel: 681706.

Hotel Yangon
No. 91/93, 8th Mile Junction, Mayangone. tel : 01-667708, 667688.

Inya Lake Resort Hotel 37 Kabar Aye Pagoda Rd. tel: 662866. fax: 665537.

Orchid Hotel
91, Anawrahta street, Pazundaung Township, Yangon. Tel: 399930, 399990, 901061-65. E-mail: orchidhotel@myanmar.com.mm.

PANDA hotel
No. 205, Corner of Wadan Street & Min Ye Kyaw Swa Road, Lanmadaw Tsp, Yangon, Myanmar. Tel: (95-1) 212850 - 3, 229358 - 61, Fax: (95-1) 212854. info@myanmarpandahotel.com http://www.myanmarpandahotel.com

Panorama Hotel
294-300, Pansodan Street, Kyauktada Tsp. tel: 253077.

PARKROYAL Yangon, Myanmar
33, Alan Pya Pagoda Rd, Dagon tsp. tel: 250388. fax: 252478. email: enquiry.prygn@parkroyalhotels.com Website: parkroyalhotels.com.

Savoy Hotel
129, Damazedi Rd, Kamayut tsp. tel: 526289, 526298, fax: 650933.

Seasons of Yangon Yangon Int'l Airport Compound. tel: 666699.

Sweet Hotel
73, Damazedi Road, San Chaung Tsp, Ph: 539152

Sedona Hotel
Kabar Aye Pagoda Rd, Yankin. tel: 666900.

Strand Hotel
92 Strand Rd. tel: 243377. fax: 289880.

Summit Parkview Hotel
350, Ahlone Rd, Dagon Tsp. tel: 211888, 211966. fax: 227995.

Thamada Hotel
5, Alan Pya Phaya Rd, Dagon. tel: 243639, 243640, 243641.

Traders Hotel
223 Sule Pagoda Rd. tel: 242828. fax: 242838.

Winner Inn
42, Than Lwin Rd, Bahan Tsp. Tel: 503734, 524387. email: reservation@winnerinnmyanmar.com

Yangon YMCA
263, Mahabandoola Rd, Botataung Tsp. tel: 294128.

Yuzana Hotel
130, Shwegondaing Rd, Bahan Tsp, tel : 01-549600, 543367

Yuzana Garden Hotel
44, Alanpya Pagoda Rd, Mingalar Taung Nyunt Tsp, tel : 01-248944

ACCOMMODATION-HOTELS (NAY PYI TAW)

ROYAL KUMUDRA HOTEL (Nay Pyi Taw)

Reservation Office (Yangon)
123, Alanpya Pagoda Rd, Dagon Township Tel : 951- 255 819-838

Royal Kumudra Hotel, (Nay Pyi Taw)
Tel : 067- 414 177, 067- 4141 88

E-Mail: maxhotelsreservation@gmail.com

ACCOMMODATION LONG TERM

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Golden Hill Towers
24-26, Kabar Aye Pagoda Rd, Bahan Tsp. tel: 558556. ghtower@mptmail.net.mm.

Marina Residence
8, Kabar Aye Pagoda Rd, Mayangone Tsp. tel: 6506 51-4. fax: 650630.

MiCasa Hotel Apartments
17, Kabar Aye Pagoda Rd, Yankin Tsp. tel: 650933. fax: 650960.

Sakura Residence
9, Inya Rd, Kamaryut Tsp. tel: 525001. fax: 525002.

The Grand Mee Ya Hta Executive Residence
372, Bogyoke Aung San Rd, Pabedan Tsp. tel 951-256355 (25 lines).

Yangon City Villa (Residence)
Pyay Rd, 8 Mile Junction, MYGN, tel: 513101

ACCOUNTANTS AND CONSULTANTS

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General
83-91, G-F, Bo Aung Kyaw St, Kyauktada Tsp, tel : 706223, 371906

ASTROLOGER

Saya Min Thoun Dara Astrologer
No(2), Maha Wizaya Pagoda North Stairway, Dagon Tsp. tel: 296184

BARS

50th Street
9/13, 50th street-lower, Botataung Tsp. Tel-397160.

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Beer Gallery Mini Zoo, Karaweik Oo-Yin Kabar.

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No.(1), Inya Road, Kamayut Tsp. Tel: 01-527506 email: inyaone@gmail.com www.inya1.com

Strand Bar 92, Strand Rd, Yangon, Myanmar. tel: 243377. fax: 243393, sales@thstrand.com.mm www.ghmhotels.com

Lobby Bar
PARKROYAL Yangon, Myanmar. 33, Alan Pya Phaya Road, Dagon Tsp. tel: 250388.

Emergency Numbers

Ambulance ☎tel: 295133.
Fire ☎tel: 191, 252011, 252022.
Police emergency ☎tel: 199.
Police headquarters ☎tel: 282541, 284764.
Red Cross ☎tel:682600, 682368
Traffic Control Branch ☎tel:298651
Department of Post & Telecommunication ☎tel: 591384, 591387.
Immigration ☎tel: 286434.
Ministry of Education ☎tel:545500m 562390
Ministry of Sports ☎tel: 370604, 370605
Ministry of Communications ☎tel: 067-407037.
Myanmar Post & Telecommunication (MPT) ☎tel: 067-407007.
Myanmar Post & Tele-communication (Accountant Dept) ☎tel: 254563, 370768.
Ministry of Foreign Affairs ☎tel: 067-412009, 067-412344.
Ministry of Health ☎tel: 067-411358-9.
Yangon City Development Committee ☎tel: 248112.

HOSPITALS
Central Women's Hospital ☎tel: 221013, 222811.
Children Hospital ☎tel: 221421, 222807
Ear, Nose & Throat Hospital ☎tel: 543888.
Naypyitaw Hospital (emergency) ☎tel: 420096.
Worker's Hospital ☎tel: 554444, 554455, 554811.

Yangon Children Hospital ☎tel: 222807, 222808, 222809.
Yangon General Hospital (East) ☎tel: 292835, 292836, 292837.
Yangon General Hospital (New) ☎tel: 384493, 384494, 384495, 379109.
Yangon General Hospital (West) ☎tel: 222860, 222861, 220416.
Yangon General Hospital (YGH) ☎tel: 256112, 256123, 281443, 256131.

ELECTRICITY
Power Station ☎tel:414235

POST OFFICE
General Post Office
39, Bo Aung Kyaw St. (near British Council Library). ☎tel: 285499.

INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
Yangon International Airport ☎tel: 662811.

YANGON PORT
Shipping (Coastal vessels) ☎tel: 382722

RAILWAYS
Railways information ☎tel: 274027, 202175-8.

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25-B, Thirimingalar Street, (8) block, Kamayut Tsp, Yangon, Myanmar. Tel/Fax: 95-1-504290. Tel: 09-541-9459, 505409. Email: augustine@myanmar.com.mm

BEAUTY & MASSAGE

Coréana Esthetic

Traders Hotel, 5th Floor. Tel: 242828, Ext: Coreana. Beauty Plan, Corner of 77th St. & 31st St., Mandalay. Tel: 02-72506.

Lemon Day Spa

No. 96 F, Inya Road, Kamaryut Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 514848, 09-732-08476. E-mail: lemondayspa.2011@gmail.com

La Source Beauty Spa

-80(A), Inya Rd, Kamayut Tsp, tel: 512360, 511252. -Sedona Hotel, Kabar Aye Pagoda Rd, tel: 666 900 www.lasourcebeautyspa.com

The Girl Red Scarf

Spa & Boutique Fashion
No. 24, Inya Road, Kamaryut Township, Yangon, Myanmar. Tel: 951 534 654, 09-73200147 theredscarf99@gmail.com

BATTERY

TOYO BATTERY
ISO 9001:2008 (QMS)

Proven Technology Industry Co., Ltd.
No. FS 14, Bayintnaung Rd, Shwe Sabai Yeik Mon, Kamayut Tsp, Yangon. Tel: 951-951-701719-20, 527667, 531030, 531041, 530694. Fax: 527667, 531030. http://www.toyobatterymyanmar.com.

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Young tennis players practice at the Thein Byu courts in downtown Yangon recently. Pic: SUPPLIED/Robert Davis

Myanmar to host Davis Cup Asia Oceania Zone groups 3 and 4

By Robert Davis

THE wonderful news came to us by email from the governing body of tennis, the International Tennis Federation (ITF), on November 27.

The email read: "I am pleased to advise you that the Davis Cup Committee has chosen to appoint the Tennis Federation of Myanmar as the host of the 2013 Davis Cup by BNP Paribas Asia Oceania Zone Groups III & IV, which will be held at the Thein Byu Tennis Center in Yangon over the weeks commencing the 22nd and 29th April..."

Officially, that that means is that 19 nations

and territories from throughout Asia/Oceania will come to Yangon to compete in the prestigious Davis Cup competition, including United Arab Emirates, Hong Kong, Turkmenistan, Singapore, Saudi Arabia.

Unofficially what it means is Myanmar tennis has taken a giant step forward. Because of the Davis Cup and upcoming SEA Games, these events will be a catalyst for developing tennis at all levels throughout the country. New courts have to be built, old courts resurfaced, teachers and referees educated and our players trained.

In anticipation, the Tennis Federation of Myanmar created the 1st Annual

Myanmar International Tennis Project with the purpose of addressing each of these areas.

The event consists of a tennis teaching educational course with 35 tennis teachers representing all 14 regions and states in Myanmar. There will be an International Tennis Federation officiating school for developing tournament umpires and referees, a Pro-Am Doubles Tournament and a fundraising dinner with diplomats and corporate VIPs attending that will raise not only funds for our national teams but awareness of our various projects. The main event of the project, the Sunkist

Kids Tennis Day, will host 1000 children from 15 public and private Yangon schools that will kick-off the TFM's nationwide talent search. It will be called "Who wants to be a tennis player?"

When I look at the weekly to-do list on my office wall the tasks seem daunting. But the TFM is getting support and encouragement from our friends on the ATP World Tour. Gold medalist and world number 3, Andy Murray of Great Britain has sent an autographed match shirt for our auction. So has Jo-Wilfried Tsonga of France and Kei Nishikori of Japan. Aisam Qureshi, ATP World Tour top 10 doubles player arrives this week as our chief guest to support our events

and mentor our teams by sharing his experiences from the tennis tour.

Late last month we hosted Jean-Philippe Fleurian, a technical expert on teaching tennis to children from the United States, who gave a demonstration at International School Yangon.

Our mission at the TFM is not only to teach kids but to also encourage more adults to play. We had dinner at L'Opera and heard about the wonderful work that Francesco Fedeli and his family have been doing to promote tennis among adults. Wherever we go the TFM is hearing the message that tennis is on the rise and we need to meet the demand

and supply the necessary services.

I am thankful that we have U Aung Maw Thein as our federation's president. He has eagerly accepted the challenge to restructure the federation and accept the responsibility for hosting these international events. Though the challenge is great, so is the reward. While we would like to do our best in all the tournaments, we understand that the true beauty of tennis is that it gives children the necessary life skills to excel at education and adults a more active lifestyle. With those benefits everybody wins.

Robert Davis is the technical director at Tennis Federation of Myanmar.

Vieira calls for tougher action against racists

LONDON – Former Arsenal and France midfielder Patrick Vieira on November 30 urged the football authorities to adopt a zero-tolerance approach in the fight to rid the sport of racism.

The 36-year-old, who now works with Manchester City's youth set-up, says he never experienced racism while he was playing in England but admits that he has been shocked by a number of recent incidents.

In the latest in a spate of cases concerning allegations of racial abuse from supporters, the Football Association is investigating claims that West Ham United fans made anti-Semitic taunts during a match with Tottenham Hotspur.

It comes against a backdrop of high-profile incidents involving players, such as the four-game ban given to Chelsea's John Terry for racially abusing Queens Park Rangers centre-back Anton Ferdinand.

Vieira, who was born in Senegal, believes the only solution is to introduce stricter punishments.

"If you really want to fight

racism, if you really want to show to the world that football wants to fight against it, you will have to use a deduction of points against clubs or kick them out of competition," Vieira told British newspaper *The Times*.

"That will stop it, of course. If you kick a club out of Europe because they couldn't control their fans, it will happen once and I will guarantee it's not going to happen twice.

"If nothing is done, the situation will get worse and worse and you never know where things will go.

"Before we get to a place where you can't control it any more, you have to stop it straight away and the only way you can stop it is to have clear, strong punishments.

"Of course, we all need a second chance, we all need to realise that we are doing something wrong, but if you do it again, the punishments should be really hard."

Portuguese star soccer player Luis Figo waded into the debate on November 28 telling *AFP* that he believed that racism was not a football problem, but a wider social ill. – *AFP*

Asian football body says its 'ready to bury Hammam era'

SINGAPORE – Asia's football body finally looks ready to turn the page on an era of bribery allegations and intrigue by announcing moves to replace suspended president Mohamed bin Hammam, insiders said on November 30.

A unanimous decision by the Asian Football Confederation's (AFC) executive committee to hold presidential elections next year demonstrates unusual unity, they said, in a body better known for infighting.

"Even his [bin Hammam's] ardent supporters said they wanted to go ahead ... I was pretty surprised," a witness, who did not want to be named, told *AFP*. "It was the quickest item on the agenda."

Leadership elections, at a congress expected next April, would banish a long period of turmoil and uncertainty after bin Hammam was accused of bribery during FIFA's 2011 presidential vote and banned from football activities.

Hammam, 63, is already in his third and final allowable term as AFC president, under the body's rules, and remains temporarily suspended from football despite having his life ban overturned earlier this year.

But the Qatari businessman's long



Mohamed bin Hammam arriving at FIFA headquarters in Zurich before a hearing in May, 2011. Pic: AFP

fight to clear his name appears to be wearing thin among the 46-member associations of the AFC, which is the biggest regional football body in the world.

"Everybody's fed up. I have spoken to all the member association presidents, they're all fed up," the witness said.

"I think these guys have seen the writing on the wall. They really want to put this behind them. They want to start a new chapter and look forward. It doesn't make sense to devote all this

energy to one man."

Interim president Zhang Jilong of China is favourite to claim the post full-time, and he appeared to throw his hat in the ring when announcing the vote on Thursday.

"Under my caretaker leadership, I promised a new vision for AFC. I committed myself to a new era of transparency and I am confident that with your support I will be able to deliver this objective," Zhang said in a statement. – *AFP*

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TIMESSPORT

'Anchored' putting set for 2016 ban

LONDON – “Anchored” putting, whereby the club is pivoted by a player’s belly or chest, is set to be outlawed by 2016, world golf’s two law-making bodies announced on November 28.

In a joint statement, the Royal and Ancient (R&A) and the United States Golf Association (USGA) unveiled proposed changes to the sport’s rules that would prevent players ‘anchoring’ the club in making a putting stroke.

The proposed rule would prohibit strokes made in such a way but would not alter existing equipment regulations which allow for the use of so-called “belly” or “long-handled” putters.

However, the R&A and the USGA said that prior to taking a final decision they would “consider any further comments and suggestions from throughout the golf community”.

Last year Keegan Bradley became the first player to win a major with a putter anchored on his midriff at the PGA Championship. He was swiftly followed by Webb Simpson at this year’s US Open, and Ernie Els at the British Open.

But traditionalists have long argued that belly-putters, which do not allow a free swing, go against the fundamentals of the sport.

“Throughout the 600-year history of golf, the essence of playing the game has been to grip the club with the hands and swing it freely at the ball,” said USGA executive director Mike Davis in a joint statement issued with the R&A.

“Our conclusion is that the Rules of Golf should be amended to preserve the traditional character of the golf swing by eliminating the growing practice of anchoring the club.”

It is a view supported by golf great Tiger Woods, who said last week: “I just believe that the art of putting is swinging the club and controlling nerves.”

Nevertheless, with so many leading players now using belly or long-handled putters, perfectly legal equipment under the rules as they stand, golf officials are holding off from confirming a rule change they would like to take effect from January 1, 2016.

“We believe we have considered this issue from every angle but given the wide ranging interest in this subject we would like to give stakeholders in the game the opportunity to put forward any new matters for consideration,” said R&A chief executive Peter Dawson.

Meanwhile major winners Pdraig Harrington and Gary Player both welcomed the proposed ban.

“If belly putters were invented today, they’d definitely be banned, I think everyone agrees on that, Harrington, who won the British Open in 2007 and 2008 as well as the 2008 US PGA Championship, told *Sky Sports News*.

“The question is should they be banned now after 15, 20 years of people using them?,” the Irishman added.

“But the rules of golf have always been that you can’t anchor a club to your body, and clearly this is anchoring.”

South Africa hero Player, one of just five golfers to have won all four majors – The Masters, US Open, British Open and USPGA – said: “I think the USGA and R&A have been brilliant and I congratulate them.

“I don’t think they should be getting any feedback from the players. They are the ruling bodies and they should be able to make the rules as they see fit.”

However, concerns have been raised that leading players and club manufacturers could take legal action against golf chiefs were “anchored” putting to be outlawed, given it has been allowed for more than 20 years. – *AFP*



Philippines’ Angel Aldeguer Guirado (right) vies for the ball with Myanmar’s Zaw Zaw Oo during the Group A, AFF Suzuki Cup football at Supachalasai Stadium in Bangkok on November 30. Pic: AFP

Myanmar exits AFF Suzuki Cup after defeat to Azkals

By Aung Si Hein

MYANMAR’S national football side was bundled out of the 2012 AFF Suzuki Cup after a 2-0 loss to the Philippines at Bangkok’s Supachalasai Stadium on November 30.

Myanmar’s competition had begun with a 1-1 draw against Vietnam but the side was humiliated 4-0 by Thailand in the second match, leaving it needing a big win against the Philippines to progress out of Group A. Instead, the loss left Myanmar bottom of the group.

Many ardent Myanmar supporters swarmed to the Supachalasai Stadium in Bangkok giving the side something close to a home ground advantage.

Head coach Park Sung Hwa had said from the beginning of the tournament that he was not confident of progressing from the group because many first pick players were injured. However, team manager Tin Myint Aung said other factors had contributed to the team’s poor showing.

“We lost because I think our players

are physically small and they still lack football skills. They were very tired today and we lost, even though we wanted to win for our country,” he said.

The result was also the first time that Myanmar has lost to the Philippines, nicknamed the “Azkals”.

Azkals’ midfielder Simon Greatwich said the win proved that the team’s semi-finals finish in 2010 was no fluke.

“[It’s a] Great day for Philippine football. The ‘whipping boys’ of Asia [are] into the semi-final of the Suzuki Cup once again,” he said.

Phil Younghusband and Angel Guirado both scored a goal in the match.

The Philippines showed a strong defensive game early in the first half, with their backline consistently thwarting Myanmar’s attempts to press for goal. One clear chance was created by Kyi Lin, who floated a cross to Aung Moe in the 13th minute but the attempt was foiled by keeper Ed Sacapaño.

Another chance came from Myanmar’s David Htan towards the end of the half

but his shot sailed over the crossbar.

The Azkals came out firing in the second half, with Phil Younghusband, who had been unloading long-range shots against the Myanmar in the first half, finally find his mark from close range in the 47th minute after controlling a long pass from Jason de Jong, before going past three defenders and scoring the Philippines’ first goal.

At the 55th-minute mark, Kaung Si Thi unleashed a dangerous attempt at goal as he breached the penalty area but Sacapaño was again on hand and cleared the attempt with a reflex save.

The Philippines nearly bagged a second goal in the 64th minute, but Angel Guirado’s header bounced off the post.

In the 93rd minute, Guirado caught a long pass and secured the Azkals’ semifinal seat by escaping Myanmar’s defense to make it 2-0.

With the win, the Azkals will join host team Thailand in the knockout stage.

For Myanmar, the loss means the team will have to fight through qualification rounds to enter the 2014 AFF Suzuki Cup.

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